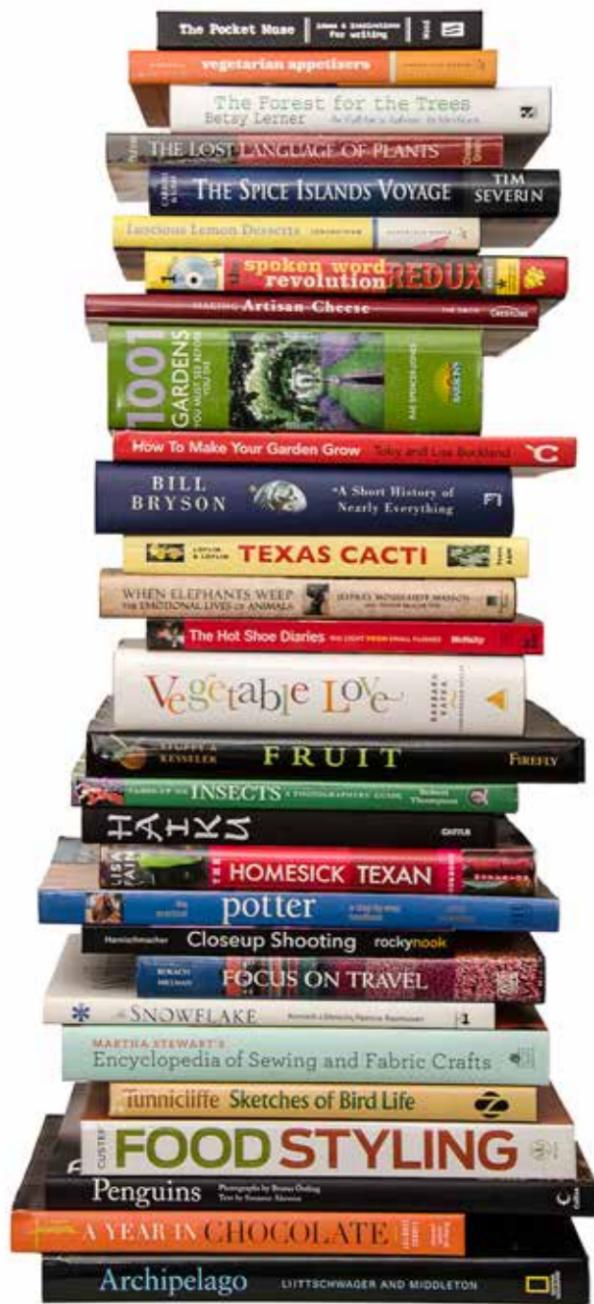


# Rampant Biblioholism

Interview with **Cindy Dyer** by **Marisa Sarto** • Photography by **Marisa Sarto**



**B**ooks have played an essential role in the development of our culture—so pivotal a role in our lives, that it would seem ungrateful not to simply acknowledge this contribution with a collection—and Cindy Dyer has one worth noting. When I took my first steps through her front door, my mouth dropped at the sight of her library. Normally, libraries are known to be quiet, but her library wasn't the least bit quiet. Her shelves are clamoring with the voices of many authors, calling out their ideas, themes, stories, morals, and lessons. I sat down with her to learn more about her passion for books.

**Tell me what you think of when you hear this aphorism by Edward Bulwer-Lytton: "Do you want to get at new ideas? Read old books. Do you want to find old ideas? Read new ones."**

Books have informed me for most of my life. I've learned skills in so many different areas because of books. I've become a better artist, photographer, writer, traveler, craftsman, gardener and cook—mostly because of the information I have gleaned from books. I love that quote because books inspire me and they really are a constant source of ideas and inspiration.

**No doubt, books have been an influence on you—but what kind of books and how much of an effect did they have?**

My parents always had books, magazines and the daily newspaper in our house when I was growing up. I loved reading *Newsweek* and *Time*. For years my father subscribed to *National Geographic Magazine*. That magazine was so inspiring that it fostered a love of exploring and travel.

I haven't traveled nearly as much as I want to, but the magazine was the impetus for my curiosity about the world.

As my love of art morphed into a love of photography, I fantasized about being hired by the National Geographic Society to go out and record the world for their readers. I still fantasize about it and ironically, I now live less than 20 minutes from their headquarters in Washington, D.C.!

I have always been a zealous consumer of information of any kind, on virtually any topic. My newfound motto is "Always stay curious!"

**Are you influenced solely by the look of a book?**

I have been known to purchase a book based entirely on its design. One of my favorite books is *Quiet Pride* by photographer Robert Alan Clayton. It stands out in my collection first because of its size—it is 9" x 12" in landscape format, which isn't common for books. The photographs are all black and white and the paper has a beautiful, tactile matte finish. The color palette is sage green, tan and black, giving it a very soft and earthy look—the design is actually "quiet," a literal reflection of the book's title.

On the flip side, I have turned away many books simply due to their poor design and poor illustrations or photography (or poor writing and editing). I love thoughtfully-designed, expertly-illustrated, and beautifully-written books and I feel my library reflects that.

**When you were younger, did you have someone or something that motivated you to read, and in turn inspired you to start your collection?**

Because my parents always had books on hand, I would say that they instigated this lifelong addiction to books. My mother was an avid consumer of current information (newspapers, magazines, news programs on tv), although she did enjoy reading biographies and autobiographies. I share her love of reading magazines, too.

My father is probably most to "blame" for my biblioholism, though. He has never met a book or bookstore he didn't like. He has a wonderful collection of books on myriad topics and I suppose my collection is a not-so-silent nod to his. I'm also a constant recipient of books he has purchased

over the years, my favorite being a signed copy of Ansel Adams' *Yosemite and the Range of Light*.

**Have you ever felt the presence of an author coming to you through the words?**

I'm going to answer that with a quote by Diane Setterfield, author of *The Thirteenth Tale*, that explains my passion for words better than I can: "There is something about words. In expert hands, manipulated deftly, they take you prisoner. Wind themselves around your limbs like spider silk, and when you are so enthralled you cannot move, they pierce your skin, enter your blood, numb your thoughts. Inside you they work their magic."

Another quote that I love is by John Green, author of *The Fault in Our Stars*. "Sometimes, you read a book and it fills you with this weird evangelical zeal, and you become convinced that the shattered world will never be put back together unless and until all living humans read the book."

There are several books I feel like sharing with anyone who loves to read and appreciates being moved by the written word. These include *Words of Wisdom for Women* by Rachel Snyder; *When Elephants Weep: The Emotional Life of Animals* and *The Pig Who Sang to the Moon: The Emotional Life of Farm Animals* by Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson; and *The Power of the Powerless: A Brother's Legacy of Love* by Christopher de Vinck.

I also love the late May Sarton's poetry—her words inspire my own poetry. In the humorous books genre, I especially appreciate the happy childhood memoirs of Haven Kimmel, author of *A Girl Named Zippy* and *She Got Off the Couch*. I relate to her humorous outlook on growing up in the 60s and 70s.

My younger sister, Kelley, introduced me to Amy Crouse Rosenthal, author of the irreverent *Encyclopedia of an Ordinary Life*. On books, Rosenthal writes, "To get a true sense of the book, I have to spend a few moments inside. I'll glance at the first couple pages, then flip around to somewhere in the middle, see if the language matches me somehow. It's like dating, only with sentences...It could be something as simple yet weirdly potent as a single word (tangerine). We're

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## THE COLLECTOR

meant to be, that sentence and me. And when it happens, you just know.”

### You probably own more books than you'll ever have time to read. Do you have a strategy or schedule for getting through your books?

The majority of my books are reference books on every topic imaginable—writing, gardening, photography, crafting, art, painting, cooking, sewing, nature, travel. I do read novels as well, but I gravitate toward books that teach me how to do something or do something better—whether it is a creative endeavor or a self-help book on how to deal with difficult situations or people. I look for books that inspire me. My favorite question from a first-time visitor to my library is “Do you actually read all these books?” My response is always, “Yes, simultaneously!” Do I read all of them? Eventually, yes. Novels, definitely. But most of my books are referenced as needed.

### Do you have a certain way you read? In bed, a special chair, time of the day, or with tea?

I am rarely without a book nearby. The stack next to my side of the bed frequently grows to the height of collapsing and regularly requires culling. If I'm eating by myself, I always have a book on hand. My husband, Michael, and I had a well-loved ritual when Borders Books was still open. Sometimes we would go to Borders first, followed by

dinner. In those instances, we would both bring in a magazine or book and flip through it while talking and waiting for our order to arrive. We would joke about how onlookers might think we disliked conversing with each other.

There are always books and magazines tucked into the driver's seat back pocket in my car, for those times I'm waiting to pick someone up or waiting in line somewhere. On road trips, I bring a tote bag with craft or photography how-to books.

### With so many books, what kind of filing system do you have? Do you keep inventory?

I jokingly call my system, “The Cindy Decimal System,” partly because there isn't a file card system like in the libraries of my youth and second, decimals require numbers and, like water and oil, numbers and I don't mix!

I group my books by subject. Though the number of times I cook reads in only the double digits (yes, you read that right), my cookbook collection spans more than 10 shelves (careful, no judging!). They are grouped by discipline: baking, entertaining, vegetarian, desserts, soups, etc. For me, a cookbook must be as appetizing visually—both photographically and in its design—as it is culinary. Now that I'm photographing food, I use them as reference for styling and lighting. See there? One of the hallmarks of a biblioholic is justification. I'm a master at it!

## THE COLLECTOR

My garden book section spans about the same amount of space and is grouped by tasks and types of plants. Books on garden design, planning, seed-starting and composting are all in one section. I love reading essays written by other gardeners, so there's a section just for those books.

Photography books are grouped by sections on lighting, posing, business and specialized photography subjects (fashion, macro, travel, product, nature and weddings, post production). My section on writing has its divisions, too, such as poetry, blogging, editing, publishing, and so on. The system works well for me. Years ago, when the collection was more manageable, I had an online database started, but I've neglected that for some time. I even bought one of those gadgets that you use to scan the barcode of each book to automatically compile a list of acquisitions. That would have come in handy many times—especially yesterday when I was putting away the books on writing that I bought at a book fair last weekend. Turns out there's a reason that one book on crafting essays looks familiar. I already own it. Presto—it would make a great gift for a fellow writer. You can't get more serendipitous than that!

### Do you have a book about books?

I'd like to respond with a definitive, “Of course not! That would be a complete waste of money.” I must confess that I do have a few books related to

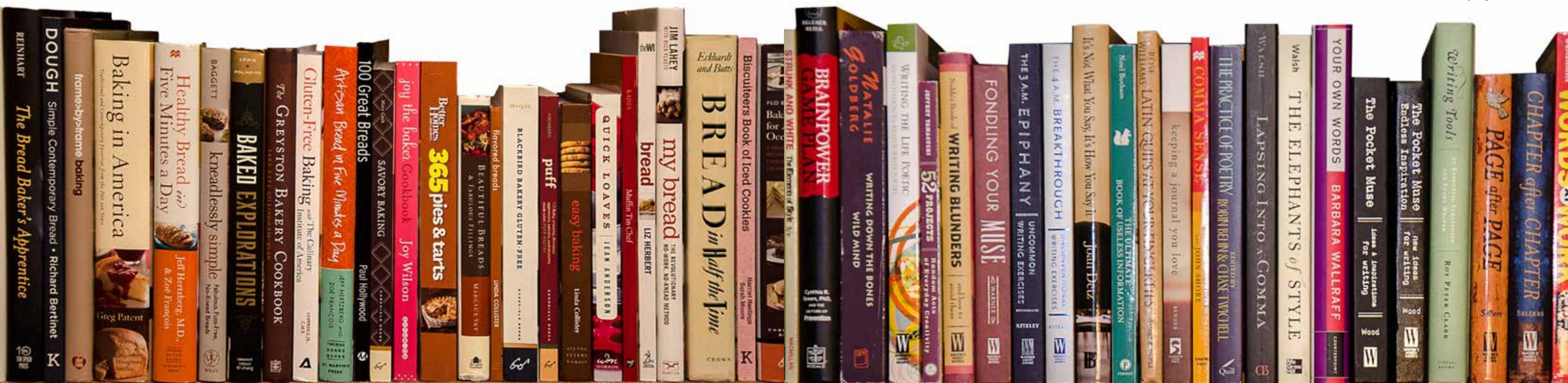
book collecting and my favorite is titled, *Biblioholism: The Literary Addiction*, by Tom Raabe. Until I stumbled upon this book in Sedona, Arizona, I didn't know my affliction even had a name!

Others in my library include *The Art of the Bookplate* by James P. Keenan, *The Book on the Shelf* by Henry Petroski, *A Passion for Books* by Harold Rabinowitz and Rob Kaplan and *The Know-It-All* by A.J. Jacobs. I know I have a coffee table sized-book about the libraries of the elite, but apparently my Cindy Decimal System is on the fritz—I have no idea where I tucked that volume!

### Have you ever read a 'bad' book? What makes a book 'bad' to you?

Oprah's Book Club enticed me to part with money on a few books. I read James Frye's book, *A Million Little Pieces*, before the controversy about whether his memoir was truthful erupted (most parts were, some were fabricated). It was originally touted as a memoir, but after the controversy, it morphed into a semi-fictional novel. The story was a riveting account of the author's drug and alcohol abuse and rehab experience, but the half-truths and embellishments weren't what bothered me most. I was put off by the formatting of the text—flush left, no quotation marks around dialogue, capitalizing of nouns for no apparent reason, heavy repetition

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of words and no paragraph indents or breaks. Forget the controversy; it's the unusual formatting that makes this a 'bad' book to me!

**When spring-cleaning time arrives, how do you choose which books to get rid of?**

In a three-level townhouse, there is only so much room to house books, although I have done a splendid job of finding space, haven't I? I donate books several times a year, and this process comes as a result of several events. For instance, while watching episodes of *Hoarders* or *Buried Alive*, I will glance around my library, silently mutter to myself, "I'm not like *that* woman, right?," then pause the program, grab a paper ream box, and start pulling less-favored books off the shelf.

When books start going in sideways on top of upright books, it's time to cull some more. Old ones are donated or sold to a used book store to make room for the new. Now our problem is, once we found out they give you more in-store credit than cash, we've built up a sizeable stash from which to purchase more used books!

When I started gardening, I went a little crazy collecting books on the subject—everything from seed-starting to building a greenhouse to square-foot-gardening to composting to beautiful books paying homage to just one type of flower. As I've grown as a gardener, the beginner books are donated to my favorite local place to photograph flowers—Green Spring Gardens in Alexandria, VA. They are happy to see me coming with boxes of books, which they incorporate into their library. If they already have a particular book in their library, my duplicate books are sold in their gift shop to raise money for educational programs.

**Would you say your exposure to books has inspired your work as a graphic designer and photographer for Celebrate Home Magazine?**

Most definitely! Because I'm a person who certainly "judges a book by its cover" (as well as its interior), I think I have developed a refined eye and taste for clean, simple and elegant design. Before embarking on the magazine project, I hadn't photographed food (except for the occasional blog post about beginning bread-baking or look-at-what-I-just-grew-in-my-garden essays). Tasked

with photography duty for the magazine, I've perused home, decorating, craft and cookbooks to see what current photographic styles are trending for those subjects. I now own several reference books on food styling and food photography.

**Are books making the endangered species list by electronic media?**

I'd like to say that printed books will remain relevant, at least in my lifetime, but you can never be too sure. With the advent of computers for desktop publishing, entire staffs of typesetters and paste-up artists were eliminated in the publishing world. Never say never, I guess. While I do own a Kindle (that I rarely use), the cost of electronic books is still higher than I pay when buying remainders in a book store or even online. But for me, it's not just a matter of cost. I love the look, feel and even the smell of a book in print.

**Do you have plans to write a book of your own?**

That is definitely on my bucket list. I have put together several publications of my botanical photography and had them printed at [www.magcloud.com](http://www.magcloud.com), a print-on-demand site. It is truly magical seeing your work in print, whether you are a writer, artist or photographer!

**Most bibliophiles are always more than ready to suggest favorite books to their friends. If I wanted to learn more about gardening with a particular type of plant—let's say, succulents—what would you recommend?**

Well, funny you should ask about this topic, but I actually own 13 books pertaining to cacti and succulents (yes, I counted!). My newest favorite is *Succulents Simplified: Growing, Designing, and Crafting with 100 Easy-Care Varieties*, which was written by Debra Lee Baldwin, a fellow gardener, blogger and Facebook friend of mine. Tied for top position is *Succulent: Nature's Sculptural Wonders*, by Steven Hammer, with beautifully artistic photographs by Béla Kolman. Two more practical books about the care and feeding of these plants is *Growing Cacti and Other Succulents in the Conservatory and Indoors*, by Shirley-Anne Bell and *Cactus & Succulents: A Care Manual*, by Tom and Suzanne Mace. Now do you think I'm a biblioholic? **CHM**

# Why I Love Books

Written by **Michael R. Schwehr**

**For some of us, books are as important as almost anything else on earth. What a miracle it is that out of these small, flat, rigid squares of paper unfolds world after world after world, worlds that sing to you, comfort and quiet or excite you. Books help us understand who we are and how we are to behave. They show us what community and friendship mean; they show us how to live and die.**

—Anne Lamott, *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life*

I love books. It is a love that was instilled in me at an early age. I can remember going to the library and checking out my limit of four books every two weeks. The local library was an estate that had been turned over to the city of South Euclid, Ohio, to become the South Euclid-Lyndhurst Library. The children's books were under the spiral stairway and in the neighboring room, and the periodicals room had an enormous dry fountain in a windowed room with sweeping views of the front lawn. The driveway was the original drive for the estate, and was a narrow winding affair that actually passed through a portion of the building. Each visit was like an adventure to an enchanted castle.

**Reading Memories**

I still remember my stepmother reading to me, and having me read back to her. Bedtime was not complete without it, but she spent time during the day to do this as well. I wasn't allowed to just read the words back to her, but I had to add emphasis. This required me to interpret what I read while I was reading it. Once I had mastered this

skill, I was required to read an hour each day. There wasn't a limitation on what type of books I wished to spend my time with, just a requirement to read books for one hour each day.

I considered it a labor until I discovered science fiction and eventually expanded my horizons to include most fiction and some biographies. After that, nobody could stop me from reading! My parents had to set a rule that I could not take a book into the bathroom because I would take too long. I loved the

privacy, a good seat, and great reading light, but in a family of five children with two common bathrooms, this rule was probably necessary.

I don't think that I can ever thank my stepmother enough for the time and dedication it took to teach me to read and to get comfortable with reading. More than any other skill I have ever learned, reading changed my life. Reading opened the door to learn new skills, be exposed to new thoughts and opened my mind to new perspectives. I never "walked a mile in someone else's shoes" until I began to read. I could travel in my mind to other countries, other ages, and other realities.

Alfred Hitchcock introduced me to suspense and the perfect plans that fall apart in the face of life. Rod Serling showed me the human condition in improbable circumstances, and just how human we all are. Stephen King explained how the end of the world was exactly the time and place to stick to your principles, and how good might triumph over evil for those who toughed it out. I once read a non-fiction book of essays by science fiction writers where I

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was tutored by L. Ron Hubbard on how one could create a religion for the purpose of getting wealthy. Little did I know that he would found Scientology.

**Traveling Through the Pages**

No other medium but books could affect me so strongly. TV shows were spoon-fed stories, but books forced me to open my mind and imagination and consider the perspectives of others that I might never have considered otherwise. The ability to read and absorb information has allowed me to chase my curiosity to the limits of my imagination. Need to repair a faucet, lay tile or fix a flat tire? Reading has allowed me to pick up a tool and do what I didn't know how to do only a few short hours before. Need to drive to Texas? Before GPS was even an idea, I was reading road atlases and street signs and made the trip out and back because I could read. Need to operate Microsoft Word on the home computer? I read how to do so and did it.

Need to cook up salmon for dinner in a new and exciting way? I read from a recipe book and tried steaming fish in parchment paper. I didn't even know such a thing was possible until I read it in a book! I've brewed beer and taught wilderness survival to Boy Scouts and discovered that the obelisk of the Washington Monument is topped with an aluminum pyramid, a material more expensive than gold at the time it was created. All of this infor-

mation was revealed in books. I can converse with anyone on almost any subject, or at least find a common point of interest because I have remembered a fact here, a tidbit there, and I can spout these items at will.

Without the ability to read and study books, my life would be a pale shadow of what it is now. My teachers led me down prescribed paths of instruction. Where I went from there was determined by my access to books, my motivation, and my imagination. Gaining the abilities to shape my life depends on a large part on books and where they can lead me, and that access is something that we should all hold dear.

When you stand in a library and see the rows of shelves of books, do you think of dusty tomes, or do you see the voices

of thousands who felt that their voice was important enough to put down on paper? I see instructions and knowledge and philosophies made manifest over generations. I see the accumulated knowledge of scores of people who labored months and years to put pen to paper and write out the stories of their hearts and give voice to the churnings of their minds. Without books, these ideas would remain mute and possibly unknown.

The ability to read coupled with the vast resources to be unleashed through books can change a life, a community, the world. I see nothing but promise and hope for a better life and the ability to give those goals a voice. This is what I like about books. Visit your local library and help keep those resources alive. **CHM**

*Celebrate* **HOME**  
MAGAZINE

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*Celebrate Home Magazine* free at  
**[www.celebratehomemagazine.com](http://www.celebratehomemagazine.com)**



# Alas, poor Borders, I knew you...

Written by **Cindy Dyer**

**O**n a balmy November morning in 2011, I was at a Home Depot, parked in the upper level garage, when I noticed this guy in a cherry picker removing the last vestiges of our local Borders bookstore. The last evidence that it ever existed. We frequented this Borders for so many years. It was our place to go after dinner on Saturday nights. Sometimes we would be out riding around and we would say at the same time, "Wanna go to Borders?" When our friends Carmen and George still lived in Virginia, we would go to dinner (usually Mexican at El Paso) and straight to Borders afterward—scattering in four different directions, then returning with an armload of books.

Borders enticed me to part with my money many a time, but I have a confession to make. More often than not, I only purchased when I possessed a 40 or 50% coupon or if there was a discount book that I simply had to have off their remainder racks. Okay, I confess all. I'm a magazine junkie, too, so it was not uncommon for me to go in and spend \$40 on photography, craft and gardening magazines in one visit—until I buckled down and learned that subscribing to them was much cheaper. I was just one of the many bookstore regulars who would occasionally look at a book, write down the title and price, then go order it for 25-40% less on Amazon. For this, Borders, I apologize. However, I talked to one of your loyal salespeople



and she told me it was poor management that got you in the end. That relieved me of at least some of my guilt. (Although truth be told, I contributed to your success for many years—it's not my fault you chose to squander it recklessly!)

So, as a tribute to you, dearly departed Borders, I offer my Top 10 Memories (in no particular order) throughout the years.

**Memory #1:** Borders in Tysons Corner, one summer evening. Scores of coffee table books stacked up against the windows. Each marked with that lovely red triangular-shaped sticker—\$1. \$1? It can't be. Gorgeous color books on every subject imaginable (some interesting, some not so much). I promptly buy one of each. Yes, you read that right. One of each. It takes four trips for me and Michael to carry my loot out of the store. Most topics were of interest to me; those

that were not could surely be gifts for someone else, no? It is my fondest moment shopping at Borders. We would go on to find other instances where beautiful books were marked that low, but this excursion was magnificent in its quality and range of subjects. It certainly doesn't help that in my profession, I've actually designed books. On numerous occasions, I've been known to buy a book solely for its brilliant presentation. Besides, who doesn't need an oversized book about the history of the John Deere tractor for just \$1? I still have dents in my forearms from holding overstuffed plastic carts while standing in line. Truly good management would have provided those mini-grocery carts for bibliophiles like me.

**Memory #2:** Michael catches up on his zzzzzz's in a public forum—ah, fond memories of finalizing my (seemingly random) selection for the evening, then heading to find Michael. Where would I find him tonight? Battling cyborgs in the science fiction aisle? Woodworking? Contemplating learning more about the harmonica, lap harp or guitar? Considering hydroponics or welding as a sideline? Pondering on whether we already owned this particular one-pot cookbook? Honing his wilderness survival skills in the nature section? Having an overpriced coffee and skimming through books he didn't plan on purchasing in the coffee shop? Wherever

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he was, he would invariably be nested in a comfy chair, head bowed, an open computer book in his lap. Asleep.

**Memory #3:** When we first learned just a few of our area Borders were closing, we took advantage of the closing sales. As usual, the discounts came painfully slow, seemingly like this: Now going out of business—everything in the store—10% off (Really Borders? 10%? How bad do you really want to close?), then week after week, finally progressing to 60, then 70% off. Thank you for finally breaking the 70% barrier and filling in those gaps on my shelves (as if there were any gaps).

One would think there wouldn't be much to choose from at that point. Au contraire! We are fascinated by virtually any subject (just call me a bower bird). Of course, there are exceptions—anything mathematical immediately sends me back to painful days in college, wondering how I could finagle a diploma without passing math that final year. I did manage to graduate, much to my relief. I am fairly adept at many things; aptitude with numerals isn't one of them.

**Memory #4:** My father was the bearer of the bad news: all Borders were closing. Deep down, I subconsciously knew it was coming. Mercy, I was in such denial. No Borders? Where would we buy an overpriced hot chocolate with yummy foam, white chocolate shavings and that cute little chocolate stick in the middle (even in the summer)? Where else could I buy yet another obscure cookbook for just \$1.99? I still possess *A Taste of Eritrea*

**I was just one of the many bookstore regulars who would occasionally look at a book, write down the title and price, then go order it for 25-40% less on Amazon. For this, Borders, I apologize.**

(really, Cindy?) among my culinary tomes. This is particularly funny, given that I cook maybe once a month and only if you can catch me in that kind of domestic mood.

Michael and I hit every single Borders once the discount got to 60% and higher. Our best purchases were three short chrome bar stools covered in black pleather. Now we have some of the Borders coffee shop ambiance in my craft room.

And you know those black plastic divider labels with the circular tags that stick out from each section? I scored a complete set for my own library—one for each letter in the alphabet. Just 25 cents each! (You do the math; you know how I am with numbers.)

**Memory #5:** Borders was one of the first stores (to my recollection) that let you listen to the music of select artists. I fell in love with Eva Cassidy's voice when she was a staff selection and I eventually bought everything she recorded in her short life. Thanks for introducing me to Tingstad and Rumbel, Cheryl Wheeler, Katie Melua, Lara Fabian, Christine Kane and Tina Arena as well.

**Memory #6:** Free coffee grounds for my garden. Thank

you for enriching my little paradise for so many years, Borders.

**Memory #7:** Lindt white chocolate balls, impulse buys at checkout. Three for \$1. I was visiting my family one Christmas and my dad and I went to a Borders. I bought three and handed him one. He hadn't ever had one and the look on his face when he bit into one was priceless. All he said, with his voice trembling, was "ooooooooohhhhhh." I only had one complaint, Borders. When you sell them three for \$1 and there are two people involved, it's virtually impossible to evenly split that third one without getting greedy with the oozy (and best) part!

**Memory #8:** Ah, love me some 40-50% off coupons in my e-mail. And Borders Bucks. And Borders Rewards Plus. And free drink coupons. They may have been part of why you went out of business, Borders, but they did not go unappreciated. These were the times when I could justify buying that lovely coffee table book about fancy chickens or one of Martha Stewart's many visually arresting "look what I have that you don't" books.

And, oh, how you discounted those gardening books. You're the main reason my shelves are overflowing with hundreds of books on that very subject (and no, I will not tell you just how many). Although you are gone from my life, Borders, I will always love you more than Barnes & Noble. They are now the only game in town, and although I am forced to frequent them now, I will do so with a wee bit of disdain. And by the way, I know you probably profited

by selling them that membership list with my name on it, but unless they're going to start sending me 50% off coupons, I am ignoring their repeated attempts to lure me in completely.

**Memory #9:** When the periodicals hit 80% off, I could afford one issue each of those \$15 craft and foreign Photoshop magazines I always avoided!

**Memory #10:** And my final memory...my very last visit to a Borders. It was in Woodbridge, VA, at the end of summer. I drove by and saw "last day" on the storefront. (How could I not stop?) As I got closer, I saw "everything 2 for \$1." Then the "2" was crossed out and "4" was written over it. Everything was 4 for \$1. Really? Surely there wasn't much left at that bargain, right? Think again. After passing over the romance novels and books written entirely in Spanish, I scored enough books to spend \$4.50 total. At those prices, I even considered a book on math (but only for a nanosecond).

Thank you to my husband, Michael, for all those wonderful \$50 and \$100 Borders gift cards he begifted me throughout the years on various occasions—birthdays, anniversaries and Valentine's Days. These cards are the reason why my library is topped off with oversized, gloriously illustrated books whose sole topics are snowflakes, penguins and succulents (to name an obscure few). Though some might find it an impersonal gift, he is a man after my own heart. Only a biblioholic would truly understand. **CHM**

## Biblioholic Playgrounds

We have the **Green Valley Book Fair** (and my friend Karen Byer-Storch) to blame for **most** of our acquisitions. Karen introduced me to this attraction more than 25 years ago. Located just south of Harrisonburg, Virginia (we drive 2.5 hours each way to buy discount books several times a year), the Green Valley Book Fair is a discount book outlet store featuring more than 500,000 new books at bargain prices (up to 90% off retail) on more than 30,000 different titles in more than 60 different categories—including fiction, history, health and self-help, children's books, religion, science, sports, cooking, home and garden, crafts, art, reference, nature and outdoors, and more. The Book Fair is only open during their scheduled dates; check their website for more information. [www.gvbookfair.com](http://www.gvbookfair.com)

One of our favorite chains is **Half Price Books, Records & Magazines, Inc.**, the largest family-owned chain of new and used bookstores in the United States. Founders Ken Gjemre and Pat Anderson opened the first store in 1972 in a former laundromat in Dallas, Texas, filling the shelves with 2,000 books out of their personal libraries (*Is that all it takes to open up a store? I confess we possess more than that in our townhouse!*). The company operates more than 100 stores in 15 states. I make a beeline to the clearance section, which accounts for the multitude of \$1-3 cookbooks, gardening books and various other genres that fill our shelves. Alas, the closest location is more than three hours away in Pennsylvania. Trust me, I make up for it when I'm in Texas, where there are 43 locations (five of which are in San Antonio, where my family lives). [www.hpb.com](http://www.hpb.com)

When I watch *Hoarders* or *Hoarders: Buried Alive*, I find myself pausing the recording and packing up a few boxes of books to trade in at **2nd & Charles**, a used bookstore in Woodbridge, Virginia. When I cull down my gardening section, I always donate them to Green Spring Gardens' horticulture center library. It's my way of giving back to a place where I've created some of my best botanical photographs. [www.2ndandcharles.com](http://www.2ndandcharles.com)

When Michael and I travel, we search for local bookstores. Some of our other favorites include:

**Powell's Books** is a chain of bookstores in Portland, Oregon, and was founded in 1971 by Walter Powell. In 2002, Powell's was cited by *USA Today* as one of America's 10 best bookstores. I especially love the cooking and gardening specialty book store near their Hawthorne District location. [www.powells.com](http://www.powells.com)

**The Elliot Bay Book Company** is an independent, family-owned bookstore, founded in 1973 by Walter Carr. Located in the heart of Seattle, Washington's Capitol Hill neighborhood business district, this full service bookstore is home to more than 150,000 titles, set on cedar shelves in a multi-level, inviting unique atmosphere. [www.elliottbaybook.com](http://www.elliottbaybook.com)

David Hutchinson owns and operates the tiny **Flora and Fauna Books** store, a treasure trove of hard-to-find-new, rare, and out-of-print books dealing with the life sciences. A master birder, gardener and naturalist, Hutchinson opened the business in 1983. Store hours are by appointment, although every time we've popped in, he was open for business. [www.ffbooks.net](http://www.ffbooks.net)

The **Tattered Cover Book Store**, a Denver literary landmark, began as a small independent store with only 950 square feet in the Cherry Creek district of Denver, Colorado. It has grown for more than 40 years to include three expansive locations in the greater Denver Metro area. This indie bookstore has nooks and crannies that offer the intimacy and comfort of smaller bookshops, furnished with sofas, overstuffed chairs, free wi-fi in the cafe; and a world-class newsstand in each location. We hit all three locations when we're in the area. [www.tatteredcover.com](http://www.tatteredcover.com)