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Power of (Dogeared)Pages

by BROCK WEIR

I've never really been a morning person.

Then again, I haven't really been a coffee person until relatively recently, so maybe that helped set the trend.

My grandmother often joked that I would only get up early in the morning if I had something specific to do. On the one hand, considering her motto was, ?Don't talk to me until I've finished my second cup of coffee,? she really didn't have much ground in this argument, but, on the other hand, isn't that true of most people?

If you're naturally a night owl, chances are you're probably not going to set the alarm at some ungodly hour just for the sport of it; no, there should be a pretty good reason. If you're less of a night owl and more of an early bird, however, you're getting up with the crows anyway, and probably cutting it short in the evenings to catch up.

Admittedly, I know the value of being an early riser.

On the rare mornings that I'm up before the sun, I do marvel on how much more time there is to clear the day's to-do list with a fair bit of time left over to spend the way you want to when all is said and done.

Getting my brain in gear to make it a full-on lifestyle change is always a goal, but is yet to be a hurdle I can fully clear.

My grandmother was right, though; if there was clear motivation on the other side, I could make it happen ? and one such motivator was in the cards this past Saturday when one of my favourite used book stores in the Greater Toronto Area hosted its annual-ish summer book sale.

Now, I've loved a good second-hand book for as long as I can remember. One of the first instances of this love affair I can remember is hours pent poring over the stacks of vaguely sorted books, magazines, and other cool, old stuff at a store called Green Books, which used to be located on the southeast corner of Yonge and Wellington in Aurora.

I was in single digits at the time, always went in there without a specific objective, but always knew when I found what I was looking for.

It's an interest that hasn't abated at all in the intervening decades, and was in full bloom on Saturday ? and with a couple hundred other booklovers that had the same idea and started a dauntingly long lineup before we were even out of the subway.

My goal of snagging a couple of books by L. Frank Baum, author of The Wonderful Wizard of Oz, including a $5 first edition of one of Dorothy's later adventures, tantalizingly teased by the bookseller over Instagram, might have been thwarted by the line-holders, but as far as missions go, it was still fruitful.

No matter what type of book each person was looking for, I think it's fair to say that most of the people who were lined up Saturday morning were there for the thrill of the hunt. Myself included. But it was more than that; over my years of book collecting, I've found it's never just about finding a deal.

It can be a matter of unwittingly stumbling into a world between the pages that open up new possibilities.

It can be a matter of finding a long-forgotten biography or memoir, by or about a long-forgotten person, whose life and contributions should be remembered.

It can be as simple as being a part a new chapter for the book itself, especially when you find one with signatures, inscriptions, or other indicators of where it's been and whose fingers helped mellow the pages and turn down the dogears.

It can also simply be a matter of taking in that unique smell that comes only with a used book of a certain age.

In this era of e-Books, streamed audio books, and other media that can fall under this umbrella, there's also something comforting about having a physical book in your hands that you can read and enjoy at your leisure ? a definite selling point for this slower-but-deliberate reader ? without having it snatched away at the whim of the publisher or other stakeholders.

This is a reality so many ?collectors? of digital films, video games, and more are now living with as movies and shows get removed from streaming services and games get deleted or fall victim to expired licenses, thus putting the whole question of ?ownership? into, well, question.

Another bonus of buying used books is supporting largely independent retailers and small businesses, while keeping ?previously enjoyed? volumes out of the landfill when readers are done with them ? contributing to the circular economy in ways that are not always considered.

?When you choose between new and used books, you're making a significant decision about your carbon footprint,? agrees Wolfman Home Repair. ?Buying a new book typically results in about 7.5 kilograms of carbon dioxide emissions and consumes two kilowatt hours of fossil fuels, whereas opting for a used book reduces those emissions to less than one fifth of that amount. This stark difference highlights the carbon-saving power of book reuse, as it prevents books from ending up in landfills where they generate double the global warming emissions during decomposition.

?Buying used books supports bookstore sustainability and promotes a culture of reuse?. Since used books do not require new resources or manufacturing processes, they offer a nearly carbon-neutral option for readers. This approach to sustainable reading not only helps the environment but also fosters a sense of community through book exchanges and events at community-centred bookstores. By opting for pre-loved books, you contribute to a more eco-friendly lifestyle and help minimize the overall carbon footprint associated with reading.?

Our local libraries are a great place to check out the latest bestseller or the most up-to-date reference book on just about any topic under the sun, not to mention take advantage of the myriad programs and services they offer that make them true community hubs for all.

They are also, on the flipside, a great starting point in finding used books ? volumes either donated for sale by patrons or discarded from the collection after not being checked out in a while ? and the money raised in these sales, in turn, helps them buy new books to take their place.

Truth be told, however, it always pains me to see books ?discarded? from library collections and strewn to the proverbial wind. Obviously libraries want to keep the newest and most up-to-date books on their shelves ? space is, after all, at a premium ? but once they're out of the collection, there's no turning back. It does, yes, lead to the thrill of the hunt, but a hunt that can feel unnecessary, especially when the hunt yields a former library book!

I'm so thankful that used book stores help give these volumes a new lease on life and firmly believe every community should have at least one.