

Satisfaction Guaranteed — A System of Asynchronous Desire

by **Kate Holvoet** (Head, Government Documents, Marriott Library, University of Utah, 295 S 1500 East, Salt Lake City, UT 84112; Phone: 801-581-8394) <kate.holvoet@utah.edu>

I have a confession to make. Whenever I walk into a library, I can't remember the title or author of any book I've been meaning to read, or CD I've wanted to listen to. Unless I have a written list, I end up racking my brain, vainly trying to recall the name of any author I like, and then browsing the new books section, and then leaving, possibly empty-handed. Sometimes a large space and too many choices are overwhelming, inducing a sort of decision-making exhaustion. Once I graduated from library school, I drifted into buying books rather than checking them out. I went from having more time than money to having slightly more money than time, making a several hour trip to the library too expensive.

Thanks to several popular online book seller sites, I now have an extensive "to read" list. Online bookstore catalogs often have features such as reviews, ratings, and recommendations that lead me to explore new authors, formats and subjects that I usually wouldn't come across. What I like about the **Salt Lake County Library** system is that because of the way it is set up, I am 100% guaranteed to have a good experience before I even get there. I don't have to remember that I read something about a book I wouldn't usually be interested in — since I already added it to my "to read" list. And once a book is on my "to read" list, it makes its way to my library hold list. Sooner or later, I get an email that it's in. Sometimes I can't remember why I wanted it — but I know that I did — so I go and get it. This makes a sort of browsing experience which means I read books of a sort I never would have read before — because it is so easy to just put them on hold and get to them when they become available. I



can browse online, put the book on hold, and be notified when it's ready, all without ever having to leave my house.

Through this process I fell in love with audio books. I find that I listen to books that I probably wouldn't read. There is something about the format that suits some books and makes them more compelling. I particularly tend to read non-fiction books as audio, but I do also read novels. The **Salt Lake County Library** system also offers eBooks for download, and the process works for me much the same as with printed books. I go through and find books I think sound interesting — I am reading a much wider variety than I might have in the print world.

This new browsing/requesting process has eliminated the biggest barrier between me and a good book — effort. Because I can put a hold on up to ten books at a time, I only go to the library when I know my trip is going to be successful. Every time I go to the library I leave with at least one book. Often, I pick up my book on hold and browse the new shelves, and pick up some more. I probably check out between ten and 20 books a month using this method. I always have ten books on hold, thanks

to my very long "to read" list. As soon as I check out one book, I put another on hold. I can even put books on order on hold, which let me check out the fifth **Harry Potter** book from the library the day it was available for sale in bookstores.

I have heard people argue that browsing books on a shelf is better than browsing online. The opposite is true for me. It's easier to click

on a link in an online bookstore catalog than to pick a book up off the shelf to read the cover blurb. All I have to feel is a tug of interest, and it goes on the list. I don't have to have any real sense that I am going to even like a book to put it on my list, and eventually check it out from the library. Friends and family use my list for gift giving, insuring that I get something every time that I am interested in reading, and that **Amazon.com** gets something out of offering their fabulous wish list service.

I am reading more books now than I ever have before, and reading more widely than ever. I check out more books from the library, and buy more books from the bookstore because I have an easier way to learn what is available, and to decide where I am going to get it.

But the bottom line, for both printed and audio-books, is that in the online world, I hear about and get intrigued by and stumble upon lots and lots of books that sound really interesting — through many more channels than I did in the pre-online world. And, because of the ease of keeping track and remembering that I wanted to have a look at something, I actually put my hands on a lot more books. And I read more of them and a greater diversity of titles than I think I would have in a print world.

It's a sort of system for asynchronous desire. Between **Amazon** and the County system, I don't have to find the idea interesting and actually go get the book at this same time. When I'd like to read it, I request it. Later on, I get it and then look it over and remember why it is that I wanted it. It's a new sort of browsing and it has let me read books I never would have read in the print-only world. 🌱

Head, Government Documents and Microforms Division
(the comma is my favorite part of my title!)
University of Utah, 295 S 1500 East, Salt Lake City, UT 84112
Phone: 801-581-8394 • <kate.holvoet@utah.edu>

Katherine Gail Holvoet

BORN & LIVED: Born in Aberdeen Army Proving Grounds hospital — lived in Maryland, Virginia, Iowa, Nevada, Florida, Niigata prefecture (Japan), and Aichi prefecture.

FAMILY: My son **Jackson** (pictured below) is now nine months old and aspires to be a Labrador retriever — he chews on electrical cords and my shoes, with a particular interest in my good, black, work shoes. He had the brilliant taste to be born on my husband's birthday, March 8th, so I can't forget either (or conversely, I'll forget both at the same time).

EDUCATION: M.A. in Library Science from **University of Iowa**, B.A. in Studio Art from **University of Iowa** — that's why I lived in Japan for three years. I couldn't get a job in the US with a B.A. in Studio Art.

FIRST REAL JOB: Soda jerk in an old fashioned pharmacy.

PROFESSIONAL CAREER AND ACTIVITIES: I went into government documents because the information is fascinating, and because even if everything goes online, people still need help finding what they are looking for.

IN MY SPARE TIME I LIKE TO: Quilt, read read read, agitate for greater common grounds freedoms with my home owner's association.

FAVORITE BOOKS: Trashy romance novels, *The Gift of Fear* (it's not about what you think it's about), *A Wrinkle in Time*.

PET PEEVES/WHAT MAKES ME MAD: When people use the word nauseous incorrectly. One never feels nauseous, one feels nauseated.

PHILOSOPHY: Today is the only (insert full date here) that I will get to spend with my family and friends — how do I want to spend that time?.

MOST MEANINGFUL EDUCATION ACHIEVEMENT: Finishing my 30-page paper on the symbology of **Elvis'** jumpsuits. As a result of that experience, I learned that writing papers is easier if you have roughly two sources per page, rather than 1/10 of a source per page, and I pass that hard won knowledge on to stressed out college students every semester. 🐾

