

An Epiphany from One Crazy Time when I Went to the Library for the Books

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Finals week of this past fall semester I went to the library. But this time it was different because for once it wasn't in search of a couch to sleep on between classes or a "quiet" place to study, for almost the first time in my college career I actually went there for the books. As I walked past crowded tables with kids furiously writing papers or pulling their hair out over study questions, I realized I was probably the only person who wasn't there for finals.

I was actually there to prepare for *after* finals when I would have an entire month off from school. As a senior on track to graduate in May, I had decided that over break I needed to make the most of what would probably be the very last time in my life that I would have an entire month of with almost zero obligations and decided that "making the most of my time" meant reading a *lot*.

I ended up at the library to find books because I was in search of a solid yoga asana book, one with a good balance of diagrams/pictures as well as clear explanations and tips. But I had a really difficult time deciphering from the descriptions on the library's website which book was exactly what I was looking for. So I decided to go old school and finally follow some advice my capstone professor gave me; find the call number for a book that you think you want (or at least close to what you want), then physically go find it and while you're there investigate the books on the shelf around it.

So that's what I did. And it actually worked out really well! I landed on "The Complete Illustrated Book of Yoga" by Swami Vishnudevananda, which from the plain binding and black and white pictures seemed a little dated but the contents seemed very promising. I checked it out, along with a few other books as well and headed home.

My epiphany didn't really start though until I started actually reading it later. What got me thinking was how horrible the page numbers were; sometimes picture pages accounted for page numbers and sometimes they didn't. Which was really frustrating for me because I was trying to use the index to look up certain pages the inconsistency in numbering was making it extremely difficult.

Worse, the index was poorly formatted as

well; it only listed the poses in alphabetical order by their Sanskrit names and not the English translations that I knew only slightly better.

What the hell was the editor thinking? I thought. When was this published?

Like a super book nerd, I turned to the front to check out the copyright page.

I barely saw it. It was placed randomly: after title page and adjacent to the introduction and not before the table of contents, odd—I know. It was the smallest front and shortest bit of copyright jargon I'd ever seen. I considered that it may have actually been nothing but a stamp, perhaps to save money on printing...

How old was this? I thought as I closed the book and turned it over, spine up.

I realized that it was bound rather similar to the way that the old CSU bound thesis books looked. It also had the same way-back-when-CSU font spelling out the long version of the university's name across the top of the spine. The authors name and title weren't even there at all, instead the decimal point which indicated its proper location when on the shelves was typed across the bottom to indicate its proper location on the shelf. *A librarian came up with that*, I thought. And then I realized, probably after far too long, that this was not the original binding of this book and that it had to have been rebound by CSU at some point.

A professors told me once that if you ever found books in the library that were clearly rebound like this book must have been, they were some of the books that were saved from the devastating flood in 1997. The flooding of the basement of the CSU library was only a small part of the destruction throughout the town of Fort Collins.

This book was one that was saved, I thought tenderly, probably too tenderly.

How old is it? Was it reprinted later? How many times and how long ago was the last? How could I find out without the original binding? I thought all at once until I went to my default answer, *Internet!*

I found out from Google it had been reprinted at least a few times and there had also been some later summaries and adaptations printed as well.

Wiki told me it was originally published

in 1959 but on Amazon the top two results were 1995 and 1960 reprints. The third result had absolutely nothing to do with what I was looking for at all and so I thought, *No other editions? That's probably not a good sign for getting my hands on an original...*

Or so I thought, buried on results page two and a few scrolls down was a book with an almost identical cover to the 1960 reprint that appeared as the first result. Only this edition, to my extreme delight, wasn't the royal blue as the first reprint but a beautiful teal which matched nail-polish, my yoga mat and far too many other things that I own.

I giddily clicked on it and rapidly searched up and down the resulting page for a publication date, but one didn't just jump out at me. I was forced to actually closely read the words on the webpage to try to figure it out instead of just scanning them like I usually do to find what I need from a website. After a bit I found that the line that started with "Publisher..." followed the colon up with the words "Bell, 1st edition." And I sort of wanted to gasp a little bit, I was holding the binding of a book which was less than a decade and a half old and yet it was filled with pages which were more than half a century old.

I started to understand why there were two separate pages from which little "Due Date" cards hung riddled with uneven stamped dates; one of them was adhered to significantly whiter and newer paper, presumably from the rebinding process.

I reminisced a little about the logistics of using card catalogues to keep track of books, a practice that was phased out for me in middle school. The top of each card sternly cautioned me with the explicit words:

"SUBJECT TO RECALL

DUE DATE MAY CHANGE"

Oh right, I thought, *When a student or even a professor went to write a paper about something they didn't simply pop keywords into the sleek, empty box on Google's homepage and find out in seconds what they needed to know with Ctrl+F. They couldn't paste in every question from their study guide and immediately have a link to the answer. They had to go physically find an obscure book that may or may not have the information they were searching for but they would have no choice but to search it through any way just to see if it was there. So if someone checked*

out the book you needed for a couple or even a few weeks then they had to delay writing their paper for that long.

I thought of the timeframe that I usually write my own papers in, *how could they write a paper the night before it was due that way?*

Beyond that, I realized, *They were forced to learn about a subject not just barely enough to stretch down five to eight pages of paper like I do. They had to read through pages upon pages of a variety of published books and from all those of researched pages hope to find the information they needed. After all of that research they probably had to actually cut all sorts of interesting and relevant researched information so as to get their assigned point across without exceeding the assigned number of pages.*

Somehow, thoughts about the editing flaws in *The Complete Illustrated Book of Yoga* had led me to an entirely unrelated epiphany. The internet provides instant access to an incredible number of resources, it makes it easy to find exactly what you want without “wasting” a ton of your time, and if we’re not careful it can make us lazy. I thought about what it would take for me to write every one of my papers the next semester without using the internet at all, and I thought it seemed like an *awful* lot of hard work—and that perhaps I might learn something really valuable that way.