

## It Was Love at First Library Card

by Paula Todd  
HOST of PAULA TODD Person 2 Person  
(Friday@10PM Saturday@5:30PM)

The library has always been sacred for me -- a sanctuary, a reservoir, a think tank. As a child, the sheer number of books at the public library thrilled me. All those words, ideas, characters. My mother taught me early about the delicious scent of a book opened for the first time; fresh ink and sweet paper, a new world waiting. So taken with the library, I immediately went home and gathered up all the books my family owned, cutting and pasting little pockets for the back of each one. I insisted my parents and sister sign out their own books and I charged them late fees -- by the minute! I wasn't in the library business long.

I'll never forget the librarians at our public library in Burlington and at Pineland Public School: they took a special interest in anyone who craved reading the way I did. When I was obsessed with the Little House on the Prairie series by Laura Ingalls Wilder, one kind woman always kept the next volume behind the counter for me so I didn't miss a beat in the action. It was a sad day when I looked around our tiny public branch and realized I'd read everything of interest to me; the halcyon days of literature were over.



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Our librarian laughed when I told her: apparently there was more than one library! It was time, she said, to venture out into the big world -- off to Burlington's Central Library, a place so vast I was scared I would get lost.

Since then, there have been more libraries and more books and great joy. The stacks at York University are still among my favourite places to think, sitting cross-legged on the floor, wrapped in that fragrant silence. It's not surprising, I suppose, that I chose to study literature at university, and wound up a journalist and lawyer. My first degree focused on Victorian and Canadian writing, and I've always been so proud of the voices we publish here. I never grew quite as fond of the Osgoode Hall Law School library, filled with the fidgeting and fussing of anxious students. But, oh, the law library at Old Osgoode on Queen Street in Toronto is a special treat -- all carved wood, creaky plank floors, spiral staircases and years upon years of dusty precedents. I spent days and days there reading law and politics and studying for the bar examination. Even today, it's the place to go when I'm in search of quiet focus.



# Telling Our Stories

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I always imagined the best moment would be seeing a book I'd written sitting on the library shelf. It wasn't. The best experience was realizing someone had checked it out!

*Paula Todd is the author of the best-selling book **A Quiet Courage: Inspiring Stories from All of Us** (Thomas Allen) -- widely available in Ontario libraries!*