



AT THE LIBRARY

By Julie Winkelstein
August 1, 2008

*“And if we cannot
end now our differ-
ences, at least we can
help make the world
safe for diversity.”*

-John F. Kennedy,
American University
Commencement, June 10,
1963

It is difficult to believe this is my final column. For weeks I have been writing it in my head, late at night when I can't sleep, and now that I am sitting down to actually put words on the page, I can't remember what I wanted to say. I should have used my flashlight pen and written it all down then.

For those readers who may not know, I am leaving my job as Children's Librarian at the Albany Library and going back to school, in a doctoral program at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. I will be in the College of Communications, with an emphasis on Library Science, and my subject will be diversity. It is a topic that has become more and more important to me, as some of you may have noticed. I want to be part of the research and teaching that will - I hope - lead to a more culturally and ethnically diverse group of librarians. It is a battle that has been fought for many, many years, with not great success, but I am going to join it anyway. Maybe I can help.

I have loved being a librarian. I love the daily interactions with the public. I love answering questions and finding information and recommending books. I love finding slips of paper or even books in my box, as library patrons give me title suggestions. Just last week, I found Geraldine Brooks' *People of the Book* there, with a note from one of my favorite book recommenders, Ruth Wellemeier. The note said simply: "Julie - one of the best!" And she's right - I am about halfway through and it is terrific.

I also love sitting at my desk in the back room and listening to my fellow staff members talking as they work. I have overheard conversations about philosophy, movies, politics - I work with a group of people who are interesting, engaged and supportive of each other. I have been fortunate to work at the Albany Library, in the Albany community - a community that enthusiastically supports its library and has an amazing Friends group.

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And I have loved being a columnist. I have never gotten used to being recognized wherever I am, whether it is the library, the YMCA or even – once – on a flight from Oakland. In my mind, my husband,

my daughters and my branch manager are the only ones who read my column. Yet I know that's not true because over the

last five and half years – through emails, telephone messages, conversations and letters – people have thanked, corrected, questioned and shared with me, and I have greatly appreciated all of it.

In addition, I have loved getting to write down my views every week. Although I have usually chosen a topic before I sit down to type, I don't necessarily know what I am going to say about it. My thoughts and my fingers create a duet

that can lead to new ideas and insights. I will miss that – although I will look for another venue, perhaps through the university or maybe simply a blog.

On August 2, from 2 to 4 p.m., in the lobby of the Albany community center and library, the wonderful Duo Amaranto will be playing at an event to acknowledge my

leaving. Everyone is welcome.

I will end by thanking all of you who have been reading my column. If you like, keep in touch. My new email is jwinkels@utk.edu. I'd love to hear from you.

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