

What Makes A Library?

If you have more than 100 books you need or want to keep, it's probably time to think about and manage them as part of a home library. S.R. Ranganathan's Five Laws of Library Science still inform the work of professional librarians nearly 100 years after he first published them, and they can help you too. Anne Welsh shares how.

1. Books are for use



There's no point keeping a book if you're not going to use it. Here are four helpful questions to ask yourself:

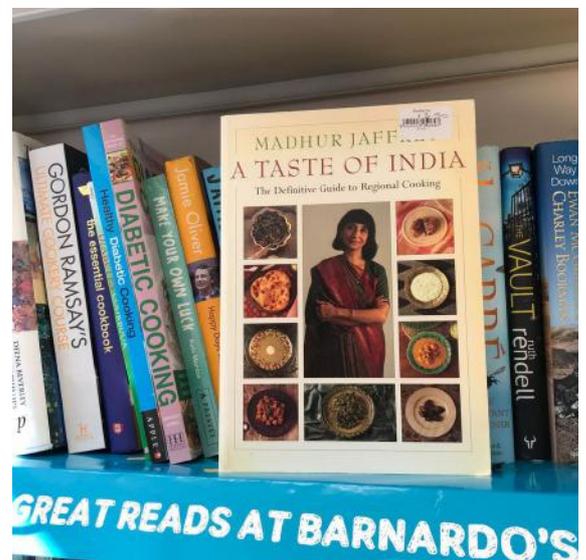
1. Am I going to read it? (If so, when?)
2. Am I going to reread it? (If so, when?)
3. Am I going to refer to it? (e.g. a dictionary, a poetry collection, a beloved novel)
4. Am I going to display it? (If so, where?)

2. Every reader their book
3. Every book its reader

These work together - one speaks to acquisition and the other to disposal:

- Where do you acquire your books?
- Where do you sell or give them away?

And the big question - are you holding a book that's no longer right for you and would be better released for someone else to read?



4. Save the time of the reader

This is about making your home library work for you. Here are some questions that may help:

1. Can I find any book I want in under 2 minutes?
2. Are all the books I need in the room in which I need them? (e.g. cookbooks in / near the kitchen; working books in the office; current read by my bed)
3. Do I know what I have? (Or do I sometimes buy an accidental duplicate)?
4. Do I know what I don't have? (So when I see a bargain I can add it)?
5. If I share my home and my library with others (e.g. partner, children), can they find what they need on the shelves quickly too?

5. The Library is a growing organism

Books love company, so curating our home library is an ongoing (and fun) process. Some helpful questions:

1. Do you like how your books look on the shelves?
2. Are you happy with the proportion of bookshelves to space?
3. Are they comfortable and safe (not too tightly or loosely packed)?
4. What do they say about you to visitors (in your public rooms)?



Image: books offered as part of an auction. Weeding and disposal are part of growing a healthy library too.

Want to know more?

If you are curating your home library, we'd love to help:

<https://beginningcataloguing.com/tidy-beginnings>

Newsletter: <https://tinyletter.com/tidybeginnings>

 **Instagram @TidyBeginnings**