

Featured Volunteer Work: A Master Librarian

Being a Master Naturalist and a Volunteer Steward allows me the opportunity to expand and share my knowledge, meet terrific people, give back to the community... And became an amateur librarian.

I was enjoying a latte and reading “The Tallgrass Prairie Restoration Handbook” when Joe Swano at Volunteer Resources called. “Say Marnie, the nature center at Sagawau is looking for a volunteer to shelve some books in their library. Would you be interested?” How tough could it be, I thought? I’ve got plenty of books at home and *most* of them are on shelves.



A few days later Laura Brown, the Assistant Director, gives me a tour of the library. Actually, it’s a large room with dignified oak bookshelves on three sides rising halfway to the 20-foot ceiling. Laura explains the stacks were once organized and are “now are out of control.” New book purchases and donations coming into the library are shelved absent a cataloging system. A new book on frogs may find its way to any of seven bookcases.



Who knew there were so many cataloging systems? After some research, Laura and I agree the Library of Congress cataloging system is the best choice for Sagawau. The books will now be shelved in alphabetically by author and easily inventoried with an Excel spread sheet. Soon a crew of busy as bees Master Naturalists has created a small but professional reference library. I begin to see my short-lived amateur librarian career coming to its final chapter.

And suddenly...“Would anyone be interested in a house full of nature books?” I slowly raise my hand and somehow find myself inventorying 500 new books thanks to the dearly departed, Dick Thomas. Books on wolves, books on seashores, books on National Parks, wetlands, native plants and migratory birds.

Today I shelved a first edition, “Limnology of A Tundra Pond – Barrow, Alaska.” I can’t wait to open the rest of the boxes.

-Marnie Baker, Cook County Master Naturalist