

RULE NO 5: THE LIBRARY IS A GROWING ORGANISM

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TRANSCRIPT FOR "LIBRARY ALIVE" ON "RADIO"

- Hello, and welcome to "Library Alive," the show where you get to find out all you ever wanted to know about your favorite library items and furnishings. I'm Terry Glass. Today we're here with one of the library's most ubiquitous and loved objects, the library stapler. Welcome to our show, Sandy.
- Thank you so much for having me. It's a pleasure to be able to share my vision.
- Excellent, thank you so much. Let's just start at the beginning. How long have you been in the library? How'd you get here?
- I've been in the library for 65 years. As a Swingline stapler, that's the kind of age you can get out of me. I'm not sure how I got here. It feels like I've always been here.
- So you're vintage.
- Vintage but also contemporary because stapling paper never goes out of style.
- Same with those modern lines of the Swingline.
- Oh, yes.
- So what's the day in the life of a stapler in the library?
- Well, it really depends if we're having drama about me, you know? So some of the time, most of the time, I sit on the desk, and people can come and staple and unstaple and unjam me and that sort of thing. But sometimes there's a lot of drama. Should you chain me to the desk? Should you label me so that no one removes me? And then I got removed anyway, and so now you wanna chain me. I've been around and around and around with all kinds of drama like that, but most of the time I sit on the desk.
- How do you feel about being moved around? You mentioned, of course, that you might be stolen, moved.

- I like it. It's like an adventure. You know, every day I wonder, "Is this gonna be the day that I end up in someone's bag and end up in their, back in their dorm room? Or is today gonna be the day that somebody in Reference sort of takes me back to their cubicle?" And then the patrons are left not able to staple anything. They're left sort of stuck with binder clips and paper clips. And you know what I never think, though? "Is this gonna be the day I'm broken?" I'm unbreakable. That's the glory of a Swingline.

- It must be very empowering to have that kind of confidence in your own abilities.

- It helps that I have like kind of one purpose, stapling, you know, and I feel like that's over the years that I've really honed my expertise there. I will admit that when someone comes at me with a stack of paper that's like thicker than 8 to 10 sheets, I start to feel some anxiety. You know, I do feel like students can sometimes think that I can staple anything, and that's, you know, I myself have fallen for that delusion in the past. But really, if you try to do a heavy-duty stapler job with a Swingline like me, everybody's gonna have a tough day.

- And how do you handle that if it does happen?

- Jam up, that's the only way, you gotta jam up right away, you know, send the message immediately. 'Cause otherwise people try to staple and then staple again and press a little harder and, you know, really like put all their weight into it, and that doesn't help, actually. So the only way to prevent me from sort of undergoing all of that kind of trauma is to simply jam up immediately.

- What is the experience of stapling actually like?

- It's a kind of magic, you know, that really only a stapler can work. So I approach every stapling assignment or project as an opportunity to make something new in the world.

- Do you find that as one of the older staplers in the building that you've become some sort of mentor to other staplers?

- I mean, I think they look up to me. You know, the staplers that I feel need the most sort of support are the mini-staplers. I think those mini-staplers have a thing going on. But what they also have going on is breaking really easily and really quickly, you know? I'm the stalwart. I'm the one who's gonna be around. And I think, you know, everybody really depends on me. If you ask me who I depend on, I think that's, you know, a sort of sadder, lonelier answer.

- Is there anyone that you depend on?
- I'm helped in a lot of ways by gravity in the way that it keeps me set on top of a table. So the desks that have been here forever, you know, that's really my support, and I think the ways that we connect to one another, that's meaningful to me.
- What would you describe as proper stapler behavior?
- To staple completely all the way through the paper and to stand ready to staple and staple again and staple again and staple again.
- Do you find you're able to predict what sort of stapling style someone will have when they first approach you?
- Absolutely, people come at me fast, and I know they're gonna pick me up off the table and try to try to pull off the stapling completely with the power of their own hand. When people approach me with a little bit of pause and take a little bit of time to stack the paper together to make sure that the edges are really all together and in a nice, tight angle before they put them inside of me to staple, I prefer that. When I'm in the hands with someone who knows what they're doing, being refilled is a pleasure.
- Have you ever stapled something unexpected?
- Oh, I think when people accidentally put parts of their body or clothing inside of me, that's a challenge for me and always sort of shocking and surprising.
- What do you do when the building closes? What is that like?
- Rest, I simply don't staple. I spend hours not moving at all. It's very restful.
- Would you say you're afraid of the dark?
- After all this time, the dark, I think, is where I feel most myself, when I know that it is me, the center of the earth together, and no one's gonna come and grab me and put me in their bag. I love the dark.
- Sandy, thank you so much for being with me here today.
- It's a pleasure to get a chance to connect.

- Coming up on "Library Alive," we'll talk with someone who's gone from the dairy case to the bookcase. "Library Alive" is brought to you by the Chicano Thesaurus and listeners like you. ¿Estás harto de sistemas que no te hablan?
- If you've never heard of the Chicano Thesaurus, today is your lucky day.
- Working on a school project on Mexican Americans? You're Mexican American? This is really your lucky day.
- When searching the library for chistes, undocumented workers, or cuentos, and you're coming up with nothing, just go over the Chicano database and see the world from a Chicano perspective.
- Do you like the term illegal aliens? Didn't think so. You don't have to use it while you're using the Chicano database.
- The Chicano Thesaurus uses the term undocumented workers instead, 'cause no human being is illegal, but you knew that.
- Try the Chicano database and discover library items using words that speak to you.
- Ask your library about Chicano Thesaurus. Terms and conditions apply. That, is all terms in the Chicano Thesaurus apply to the Chicano experience. Conditions in the experience of Mexican Americans are also reflected in the Chicano Thesaurus. All subject headings, whether they're in the Chicano Thesaurus or not, are subject to scrutiny or bias. Bias is rooted in library history. By using the Chicano Thesaurus, you agree that descriptive language matters and should be determined by the people it describes.
- Welcome to "Library Alive," where we step into the lives of our favorite library residents. I'm Terry Glass. Everyone who's been to the supermarket will be familiar with Kraft Singles, individually wrapped slices of American cheese. Most are destined for places like a grilled cheese sandwich, but for some, it's a different story. With me here today, I have "20 Slices," an artist's book made of 20 slices of Kraft Singles American cheese bound into a book. 20 Slices, thank you so much for being with me today.
- Thank you for having me, Terry.
- 20 Slices, how long have you been in the library, and how did you come to be here?

- I was published by the artist Ben Denzer back in 2018 and didn't really exist in the world for much longer before that.

- And of course it's not usual to have cheese in the library outside of the staff lounge. Where do you live in the library?

- I live in a temperature-controlled unit here in Special Collections within my own personal cheese cave.

- I imagine it's a little different from those in rural France. What's it like?

- It is certainly smaller and a little bit more artificial than the cheese caves that I've heard of, but it is comfy and cool, and I think I've got myself some pretty sweet digs.

- Now, you've experienced quite a change going from one shelf life to another. The artist who created you has said, "In the grocery store, I picked up a package of Kraft American Singles, and holding the pack, I thought it was basically already a book. All I had to do to emphasize that fact was to bind it together, make a cover and a title." When you were there in the dairy case, did you ever conceive of a future where you are a book?

- Looking back, I suppose that there was something very bookish about me. So I spend a good amount of time pondering, what is cheese, what is a book? What is the middle ground between cheese and a book? Flat stackable objects. You've got your pancakes, you've got your blini. I do see myself as both cheese and a book.

- What was this change like for you? How did it change your outlook?

- Well, in a way, not much has changed. I swapped out my cardboard box for some fancy book binding, and it's a really nice book binding, I gotta say. I mean, I've got a really bright yellow cover with beautiful blue lettering. I do remain the same 20 Slices that I was before. I've gotta keep that in mind going forward. I am cheese, and I am a book.

- You were created as a food item, and in some ways, you still are. What's it like taking on an identity that goes from having a temporary shelf life to one that is actively being preserved by experts?

- As individually wrapped American slices, I will say that I have, from the start, a pretty long shelf life built into me. My fate would've been a much shorter one had I not ended up in a book. You mentioned grilled cheeses earlier.

- There is still a risk to you, at least in the theoretical sense, of being eaten. Does that worry you?

- Well, you know, we do swap stories in here about rumors of rogue researchers coming in to tear out pages or abscond with entire volumes. We always know that that's a possibility. Maybe someone will peel back one of my cellophane packages to nibble on a corner. It's important to cherish each day and remember that it is cheddar to have lived and loved than never to have lived at all.

- How has people's attitude towards you changed? You started out as a consumable product, easily forgotten, and now you're something that can be learned from. Are you treated in a different way, a different level of respect?

- I can't control how people view me, but I feel like I still retain my original essence and identity. And I think that I have a new added value to give to the world as an art book. It's up to researchers and scholars to ponder what that means, the dual identities that I carry in the world.

- So you feel that the cheese cave hasn't changed you.

- No, I remain the same fungible object I was before. I am cheese, and I am an art book, and I'm still cheese. While the preservationists here have done everything in their power to extend my life, I have to wrestle with the fact that I might still turn, and mold could creep in. There have been discussions about what to do in that case, whether to let that play out or to swap out individual slices. And in that instance, do I become a new book? Do I retain the memories that I've accumulated over my short life so far? Now, I just, ooh, you've got a bit of mold right there, just, just there.

- I think that's actually just a loose string from the binding.

- Oh, oh, of course, of course. 20 Slices, thank you so much for being with me today.

- Thank you for having me, Terry.

- This record won't hit the charts, but will certainly help you out, next on "Library Alive". "Library Alive" is brought to you by The Spa for Well-Loved Library Materials and listeners like you.

- At Biblio Bliss, The Spa For Well-Loved Library Materials, we take pride in healing even the most serious injuries. From spinal adjustments on a beloved edition of "The Fire Next Time" to the removal of yellowed tape on a historical

snapshot, our skilled bibliotherapists extend the life and beauty of your collection items. Biblio Bliss, our novel care solutions come to the rescue when your items overdo it.

- Hello, and welcome to "Library Alive" the show where you get to find out all you ever wanted to know about your favorite library items and furnishings. I'm Terry Glass. Today we're here with a MARC catalog record. Thank you for being here today. May I call you MARC?

- Hello there. Well, actually every record in the catalog is named MARC, so maybe you should just call me by my OCLC ID number, which is 128. Oh, you know what, you could just call me Barb. That's what all my record buddies call me.

- So Barb, can you tell us where you're from, where you got started, and how long you've been here at NYU?

- Oh, you're really taking me back. Well, I was originally created by a librarian at the University of Minnesota, go Gophers! Well, this librarian, she couldn't find a record to use in OCLC. That's the Online Consortium Library Catalog. So, oh, well, she, uh, she used a template to generate me. That's actually a little bit embarrassing for me to admit. I did, in fact, come from a template.

- But of course that must be useful to have a structure to start with.

- So, yeah, you know, it's much faster than starting from scratch. This kindly librarian, she filled me in tag by tag and took a lot of care in assigning good headings, which really makes me much easier to find than other records who were created by those, oh, how do I say this without sounding snobby? Can I be honest here?

- Please do.

- Well, sometimes those library vendors, you know, unlike librarians, they do not make good records. You know, they just, they put a little bit of, I would say it's gobbledygook what goes in there.

- And that must be very frustrating. But I really do wanna talk about you.

- Oh, okay, sorry for the tangent. Anyway, back in 1998 when NYU purchased the book that I represent, they found me in the shared database. So, you know, first time around, librarian could not find a record, but now here I am sitting in

OCLC, and they found me, high-quality record that I am, and they just pulled me right into their catalog.

- So does that mean you're one of many copies, a clone of sorts?

- Oh, Terry, oh, you know, I've never really thought about it like that. There are hundreds of records just like me, identical, sitting at other libraries. That's true, I guess I am a clone, whoa.

- So you've been at NYU since 1998. That's a long time. What changes have you seen in those years?

- You know, I may be old, but I am hip to the times. I keep up, and you know, society changes, so we gotta change. Sometimes my headings are seen to be out of date, and you know, this is tough for me to talk about, but they can be harmful. You know, many people think that since I entered the catalog, I've just been sitting around in a silo, totally out of touch with the outside world, but that's just not true. Those NYU librarians, they've changed me. They've updated me.

- So would you then say that you're not just a clone?

- Oh, you know, thank you, Terry. Thank you, that is validating.

- Thank you so much for being with me here today. Next on "Library Alive," we'll talk to someone who really holds it all together.