



How Marie Kondo Actually Talked Me Into Building Up My Library

Restocking beloved favorites brings back joyous feelings for this writer

By [Brette Sember](#)

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Credit: Marie Kondo

I grew up an only child on a country road with lots and lots of books for friends. My parents didn't hold much stock in toys or games, but books they fully supported. I got books as gifts, bought books through the Weekly Reader order form, and took books out from the library. When I went to college, I wasn't one of those people who sold their books back to the bookstore. I kept them because what if I wanted to look something up? I kept my law school textbooks for the same reason.

Fast forward to 2000; my husband and me moving into our home and settling our kids into their new rooms. Each had a full-size bookcase that was filled, because, I, like my parents, fully support books for kids. My home office was another story. It was small with limited space. My books didn't fit. The house was filled to the brim. I decided to let my books go. I rationalized that in this day and age you can get your hands on any book you might want within a few days between Kindles and online used booksellers and Amazon. There was no reason to keep them. I sold or donated almost everything, keeping only a handful of reference books and copies of books I'd written. I didn't miss them.

Since then, books have flowed in and out of my house with ease. When I can, I get books from the library in hard copy or digital form. When I buy books, I read them and then donate them to our library when I'm done. I don't keep them. This system worked, and I never had to struggle to store books and never had a toppling stack dangerously teetering on a desk or a dresser with nowhere to put it all.

Marie Kondo: Choosing Items That Spark Joy

My life has changed again, though, and my children are now grown and gone. Their bedrooms are empty guest rooms 99 percent of the time. My home office is still small, but I've started to spread out into those spare rooms bit by bit, storing off-season clothes in the closets and slowly taking over some of the drawers with wrapping paper. I have more time on my hands as well, time that used to be spent driving kids, talking through college applications or going to their events.

I read *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up* by organizer extraordinaire Marie Kondo several years ago when it was first out and was hot. Some of it made a lot of sense to me and I was blown away by her method of folding clothes and standing them up in drawers. I didn't pay any attention to her advice about unloading books, since I really had so few. I took what made sense to me from her book and then promptly donated it to the library.

When Kondo's new Netflix show, [*Tidying Up With Marie Kondo*](#), became available recently, I started watching it and saw Kondo talking about choosing items that spark joy and encouraging people to touch things and think about what they feel. I watched the people on it feeling and finding that joy as they touched their belongings.

Around the same time, *Mary Poppins Returns* came out and I saw it with my grown daughter. I enjoyed the film, but it made me reminisce about P.L. Travers' *Mary Poppins* books which I read as a child. I got one from the library and fell in love with it again. Holding that book

sparked joy. I wanted (needed!) to own it so I could see it on a shelf in my home, read passages when I wanted and dream about sharing it with (future, I hope) grandchildren. I needed to be able to touch it and feel that joy.

Filling In a Bookshelf Again

This revelation started an avalanche of longing for all my old favorites. So, I started ordering them. *Mary Poppins* and *Winnie-the-Pooh* were followed by volumes from the *Trixie Belden* girl detective series, *Pippi Longstocking* and even old, old things I'd read as flea market finds like *Cherry Ames* mysteries, *The Five Little Peppers* and *Polyanna*. The joy of holding those books and rereading them urged me on.

Jonathan Livingston Seagull needed to be on my shelf. *84 Charing Cross Road*. *The Thorn Birds*. *The Clan of the Cave Bear*. It doesn't matter to me if the book is considered a classic or just pulp, because it meant something to me when I read it the first time and now I want those feelings back.

The bookcase in one of those spare rooms is slowly filling in, with each volume one that sparks joy in me when I hold it. Seeing them gathered together on the shelves is like finally putting things to rights somehow. The missing pieces of my life are back.



By [Brette Sember](#)

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