

Amber McKinney
Class of 2010
2/25/09

Through the Glass Doors

Sometimes it feels like I live in Carlyle Campbell Library. The doorframes should have my fingerprints embedded in them by now. Between studying and work, I am in the library almost every day and usually more than once. Over the past three years, I have become familiar with many of the library's nooks and crannies, from the newly-painted study rooms on the second floor to the archives on the ground floor. The library has become a natural place for me to go for a comfortable and engaging environment to study.

Downstairs, there is a small corner between the large study room and a couple of shelves where a three-person couch, a coffee table, an end table and a matching chair have been set in a cozy arrangement. Over the past two semesters, I have come to look at this area as my own little corner of the library. Often when I have a midterm or exam to stress about, a paper to organize or a long novel to read, I strap on my backpack, make the three minute jaunt across campus and disappear downstairs to the couch. I spread my gear out on the coffee table and get down to reading or writing, whatever my English major requires. Even when I do not have an important project to work on, I sometimes stop there during classes to relax for a minute and catch up on some homework. I can focus better curled up on the couch in this small corner of the library than I usually can in my room or in one of the upstairs study rooms. Occasionally, though, my studies take me into the top level of the library.

Upstairs on the second floor, I prefer to be roaming the stacks rather than sitting at one of the tables. I love to run my fingers over the spines of the books, letting my fingertips scratch along the rough 1970s covers or glide across the smooth, glossy millennium titles. With hundreds of books surrounding me, I feel blissfully smothered by wisdom, myths, truths, intrigue, poetry, theories, romance, all of the finely-crafted words of people both ancient and modern. When I have time, I like to crack open the

hardbacks and let my eyes skim over the words just so I can get a taste of what the authors are writing about. Eventually I will go back and sit down at one of the big tables near the windows, but any small excuse will send me back into the stacks.

Often after a quest through the stacks, I usually return to the main floor with a couple of books under my arm. If you think that the library is too quiet and stuffy, spend some time on the main floor on a busy day. Students rushing in and out of the doors and up and down the stairs, phones ringing, people talking and laughing, the copiers humming, the printers whirling, fingers dashing across keyboards, and books being opened and closed, slid across tables and handed over desks. Activity, liveliness, movement: these are a part of the library, too, along with the acquisition of academic knowledge. The library is not just for learning through the books or the DVDs or the microforms, although this is a major reason for entering its doors. The library is also a place for learning through your interactions with other people, through conversations with your friends on the couches on the main floor, a debate with your group mates in a study room or a discussion with a librarian or a teacher on a topic of research. Words in both print and speech are important in the library.

Through my years at Meredith College, I have found that Carlyle Campbell Library is a place where I can find comfort in the overlooked niches, wisdom in the stacks, and knowledge and ideas from great authors and great people.