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Member Series: My Personal (Baseball) Collection by Merle Branner

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You have a collection of baseball books. How did you become interested in baseball?

I have loved baseball all of my life. Being an avid baseball card collector since I was five, it was a natural progression to read about the game I love. My parents would always buy me books and I started out with Little League Library Series: Baseball's Most Valuable Players by George Vecsey (hand me down from my brother) and Major League Library Series; Baseball Greatest Sluggers by Bill Libby. These two series were by Random House. They were very popular in the 1950 – 1970's.

What media do you have in your collection? (books, CD's, journals etc.)

My collection is very diverse with mostly hardback books, with the occasional softback and some paperback. I have a very large collection of magazines, yearbooks, programs, and journals. I have CD's and DVD's are mostly movies on baseball. My library has both adult and children's books on baseball along with others sports.

How big is your collection? And how is it organized?

My baseball library consists of books, magazines, yearbooks and programs. There are about 1,642 books to date. The library is organized in a variety of ways: The pitchers, power hitters, managers, have their own sections. There is a section for Cubs, Yankees, Red Sox and Dodgers along with a section on Jackie Robinson and Negro League Baseball section. I have a very large reference section, which is divided into topics like Baseball Cards, Women in Baseball, Baseball in Japan, Cuba and various other countries. There are a few sections of children's books and a few authors have their own section too. My books cover two rooms and a collector's closet. The biggest challenge is space. My bookshelves have a double row system, which I do not like. My hope is to one day have one single room that will have floor to ceiling bookshelves that would be single rows of books. I inventory my collection using the Delicious Library application on a Macintosh computer. I carry around a spreadsheet that I export from my Delicious Library and I have it with me on my iPad and iPhone. I try not to get duplicates but even though I carry my inventory with me, it is not always possible to search it when I am at a book sale. If I get duplicates, I will either try to upgrade the book if it is in better condition than the one I have, or try to trade it to my friend Ritchie.

What are some non-fiction highlights of your collection?

Some non-fiction highlights of my collection are "Moe Berg Athlete, Scholar...Spy" by Louis Kaufman, Barbara Fitzgerald and Tom Sewell, "My Luke and I: Mrs. Lou Gehrig's Joyous and tragic love for the 'Iron Man of Baseball'" by Eleanor Gehrig and Joseph Durso and "Rickey and Robinson: The men who broke baseball's color barrier" by Harvey Frommer.

What are some fiction highlights of your collection?

There are less fiction books in my collection. However, I like a children's author Dan Guttman. He writes a series of books about time travel with baseball cards. I started reading his books with "Honus and Me" by a recommendation of a friend. She told me I would love these books even though they are on written for 5th graders. She was right, I have them all in hardback and I am waiting for the last book "Willie and Me" that will be out sometime at the end of this year or the beginning of the next year. I met Dan Guttman a few years ago. He came to Central Middle School in Highland Park, Illinois. This event was sponsored by the Highland Park Public Library. I was the only person who was not accompanied by a parent! I now have my "Honus and Me" autographed. I am not the only person over the age of 12 who reads these books. The books are historically accurate. The featured character "Stosh" can travel back in time when he holds a baseball card. What ever the year of the cards is and who ever is on the card, is about where Stosh will land in the past and meet that person. He always has a reason to go back in time and his travels are always exciting.

Which items make you the most proud to own?

I have a nice collection of Japanese baseball magazines that are absolutely beautiful. Last summer when I was in Germany, I purchased a book at a flea market on the 1932 Olympics in Los Angeles. The book is in German.

My favorite book is a small paperback that my elementary librarian gave me when I graduated 6th grade “The Baseball Life of Willie Mays,” by Lee Greene. I so wanted to read this book but I was a poor reader and it was above my reading level. She believed that I would be able to read the book and I did in the 7th grade. So I consider this a special book.

Where do you get items for your collection (Amazon, bookstore etc.)?

I have built most of my baseball book collection with the help of the Glencoe Public Library and the Highland Park Public Library Friends book sales. When I am looking for scholarly baseball books, I really enjoy going to Powell’s in Hyde Park. They have a great selection and the prices are fantastic. I enjoy buying books in my travels and online.

Do you know of other special librarians with baseball collections?

I do not know of other special librarians who have a baseball book collection. However, I do have friends out of the field who have baseball book collections.

When you are not reading about baseball, what do you like to read?

If I am not reading about baseball, I am doing professional reading on the subjects of technology, archival studies or photography. I do a lot of reading off blogs, Wiki’s and social media. This reading is mostly done on my iPad. I am an oral learner so I use the screen reading ability of the iPad and listen to the professional reading I do. This increases by retention of the information and it also increases the speed in which I can read through the material. I use this technique also to proof my writing.

Do you use a device such as an iPad or Nook?

I own an iPad and just love it. I bought my first iPad right before I graduated from Dominican University in 2010. I am on my second iPad now a third generation. I am hoping to buy a new iPad this year. I usually do my reading of professional publications, do research, take notes, record video, take still images and use the iPad for my archival work. I consider my iPad my main ready reference tool along with my iPhone.

Merle Branner is an Archivist, Photographer and Technologist Consultant and works for Ruthie & Bill Katz Archives at North Shore Congregation Israel

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- **August 7, 2014** – [Chapter Dinner with SLA President-elect, Jill Strand](#)
5:30 pm, Chapter Meeting / Event
- **September 23, 2014** – Fifteen Reasons to Quit Your Special or Solo Library Job (or Ask Someone Else to Leave)
4:00 pm, Online Webinar
- **November 18, 2014** – Solo Project Management: When You are the Whole Team
4:00 pm, Online Webinar

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