

THE LIBRARY AND TIM HORTONS

The Importance of Proximity

By **Elyse Pike**

When I do orientation for new staff at my hospital, I point out that the library is close to the hospital's Tim Hortons. They immediately know where I can be found. The library occupies prime real estate between the elevators and the coffee shop. Most staff and visitors pass by my door two or three times a day!

Coffee is probably the most frequently consumed beverage worldwide. The first Parisian café to serve coffee opened in 1689. And we have been in love ever since. In 1732, Bach even wrote the Coffee Cantata in praise of the stuff. Since 1689, our addiction has grown. Caf, half-caf, decaf, black or double double, espresso, mocha, latte, cappuccino, fair trade, organic, shade grown. Any way you like it. Coffee represents 75% of all the caffeine consumed in the United States and Canada.

Whether or not coffee is actually good for us remains much in debate. Studies show it may prevent Parkinson's disease, liver disease, and type 2 diabetes. One recent study, titled Midlife Coffee and Tea Drinking and the Risk of Late-Life Dementia: A Population-Based CAIDE Study, indicates it also lowers the risk of developing Alzheimer's by 60 to 65 per cent. Other studies seem to indicate it's not so good for pregnant women and should be avoided by those with high blood pressure or other cardiovascular problems. Go to PubMed and type in "coffee adverse effects" to scare yourself silly. Search PubMed for "caffeine adverse effects" and scare yourself even sillier.

Librarians, along with night-shift cabbies and police officers, seem to be big coffee consumers. So much so that Intelligentsia Coffee company in Chicago even markets a Librarians' Blend. They describe it this way: "This blend is representative of the soul of a librarian: steady, reassuring and always there with that slight edge of eccentricity. It has a bold base with a bit of sparkle." At \$14 per pound, too bad it's decaf!

People seek out good coffee shops with the dedication of big game hunters looking for trophy horns. Once that coffee place is located, patrons remain fiercely loyal. The recent closing of more than six hundred Starbucks outlets in the US caused a public uproar. Never mind the idea that the money spent daily on high-priced coffee concoctions with multi-syllabic titles may have been one of the causes of the current credit crunch! Where will Rachel and Phoebe go now? Good coffee shops don't just provide a hot dark-brown beverage, but also social space and interaction as well. "Time for a coffee?" really means, "Friend, can you spare me some time for a visit and a chat?"

Perhaps a good coffee shop and the good coffee they serve can be viewed as a good metaphor for a library. A good coffee shop, like a good library, provides a reliable product day after day. Both provide a comfortable social atmosphere. They provide an escape – just for a little while – from the outside world. Good coffee raises your spirits and doesn't bankrupt your resources. Libraries are

free. Great coffee shop staff, like great librarians, look after you. They know what you want or if they don't, they will ask. They go the extra mile, be it for a little more foam or an extra few minutes to help you locate your favourite book.

Starbucks' operating manual, *The Green Apron Book*, encourages its staff to "provide an uplifting experience that enriches people's daily lives." That's a pretty lofty goal for a cup of coffee, but perhaps not a bad goal for librarians to claim as their own.

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WEBSITES TO CHECK FOR MORE COFFEE TRIVIA AND FACTS

Librarians' Internet index - coffee resources
lii.org/pub/subtopic/1068

PubMed
ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/sites/entrez

Intelligentsia Coffee & Tea, Inc.
intelligentsiacoffee.com/store/coffee/decaf/dlibrarian

And for a great blog on the Starbucks library connection, go to Starry Dynamo Librarians
[dynamolibrarians.wordpress.com / 2008/11/17/wake-up-and-smell-the-coffee](http://dynamolibrarians.wordpress.com/2008/11/17/wake-up-and-smell-the-coffee)