Librarian's Shelf by Rachelle McPhillips

Keep track of your good reads with Goodreads.com

Recently a patron asked me if I could suggest ways to keep track of the things she has read. Like many readers, she records what she reads in a notebook, but she would like a "more structured or systematic way to do it."

Many readers keep a history of what they've read in a notebook of some sort. Some have full-sized, 1-subject notebooks where they record as little or as much about the book as suits them. Other readers use pocket-sized notebooks to list titles and authors.

A spreadsheet is another way to record what you read. If you store it on a flash drive, it is as portable as the notebook you carry in your pocket. A spreadsheet would be more dynamic than a notebook, since you could sort by author, title, series name, or format (depending how detailed a record you keep!) and you could use different fonts for the things you would like to read or perhaps couldn't finish despite your best efforts.

Unlike that paper notebook, there would be plenty of room to enter notes about what you liked or didn't, your favorite quotes, or whether you borrowed or bought the book.

Once you have compiled a list, you can avoid checking out the same item twice, or refer back to your notes for a passage that inspired you. If record-keeping is all you are after, the spreadsheet will work quite nicely. But what if you want more?

What if you loved a book and you want the world to know it? What if you disliked a book and you want to know how others found it worth their time? You could accost everyone you meet, waving your printed spreadsheet, or you could turn to the internet and the gift of social media.

There are several options for readers to connect online. Shelfari.com, LibraryThing.com, and Goodreads.com are probably already familiar to readers who seek out books and other readers online. These services are free. Registration is simple, requiring some basic information and your email address.

I have used all three of these services and find they all have merit. All three sites offer a free tour of their services and I encourage patrons to give them all a try and see what feels like "home" to them.

Goodreads.com is the one I have used personally for years and because of my familiarity with it, it has become what the library uses most to create book links on the library's Facebook page.

This week on the library Facebook page, I will walk visitors through the process of creating and using a Goodreads.com account. Each day we will explore an aspect of the Goodreads.com website and readers can begin setting up their own virtual library and reading wish list.

To participate, visit: www.facebook.com/columbuspubliclibrary.