If you’re like me, bookstores are your third home (after your real home and the library, of course)! I’m lucky to live in an area with a “big box” store, a welcoming independent shop, a half-price joint and even a large Goodwill store with an abundant and excellent used books section. Most weekends, you’ll find me at one, or more of those places.

That’s why I was so confused when someone asked me why, since I was a librarian, I frequented bookstores so much. “Don’t you get all your books at the library?” he asked.

I was impressed that this person realized libraries are still vital—since all too often we hear the opposite, “Does anyone even go to the library anymore?” But I was still surprised at the comment. Of course librarians buy books, but I think more than that, it’s simply the need to be around books—no matter where we are.

I relish in the smell of crisp new books—with my hands first to grab the stiff spine and delicately turn the pages. I even can sense that well-worn book smell before I enter the used bookstore—eager to see what’s available and what stories the books might share about their previous owners (maybe they left behind a bookmark or, better yet, a photograph!). I could spend hours poring over the vintage treasures at the used bookstore, and I’m often the only one digging through the overflowing boxes of books at a rummage sale.

Quite simply, I can’t imagine myself without books or a bookstore—to hang out in, scanning the shelves and losing track of time. Heck, I might even meet an author or two—like when I recently attended a reading by children’s book author Barbara Joosse.

Here’s hoping your weekends—or any free time for that matter—include plenty of trips to bookstores . . . even if you don’t buy anything!