

# Libraries and the Aquarist

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It's 2009 and the vast majority of hobbyists are now very familiar with using the Internet for research. Notice I used the word vast. Vast doesn't mean everyone. The last time I checked our membership list almost all our club members have access to the internet. Even with such a high number, our members are constantly signing out books from our library at each meeting. KWAS maintains a somewhat modest library of aquarium books that can still be a valuable resource to the end user.

Our hobby is now very well established. Using the term 'Global' is not overstated. Most of this is due to the myriad of books written about fish and plants. Many hobbyists wet their feet in this hobby knowing nothing but the local public library. There's something quite special about visiting a library, doing your research and signing some books out for a few weeks.

Many beginner hobbyists may not commonly regard books as an integral part of our hobby. However as they become more advanced they will begin to realize just how important aquarium literature really is. Aquarium books should be a continuous part of our ongoing learning experience in this hobby. This combined with help from your friends, the local fish store and yes, the internet, all combine to become a valuable resource to both young and old.

I cannot even guess at the total number of books written about our hobby but if you consider that the first known book on our hobby dates back to 1665 it's suffice to say it must be huge. That book by the way was entitled "Fishes Kept in a Glass of Water" written by Samuel Pepys. Unfortunately many fascinating books written over the past 340 years are no longer in print. There is a huge variety of written literature available to the tropical and marine fish keeper these days.

Many specialty books are written that do not end up at the local fish store. For these we often seek out a local club. As stated earlier, our club maintains a modest library of just under 200 written publications. Part of our commitment to the hobbyist is to help them learn various aspects of this fascinating hobby. One way we achieve this is through providing a library of available books for them to sign out each month. I can only begin to scratch the surface of what we have available to our members. After reviewing our clubs catalogued material I have picked several categories of books that I would like to mention.

**Books for the Beginner.** These books are all capable of providing important information that is needed to help the new hobbyist learn about their setup and the fish they plan on



Books on tank maintenance and growing aquatic plants can help with challenging tanks like this...

keeping. Topics such as fish health, tank maintenance and breeding are covered by numerous authors.

**Specialty Fish.** Books on Cichlids, Catfishes, Marine Fish and Invertebrates. Given our areas water conditions it's no surprise that the KWAS library is certainly one of the better stocked club libraries when it comes to Cichlids.

**Livebearers.** It's probably safe to say that most of us got started in the hobby keeping these 'Bread and Butter' fish. Not only are they still the staple of the industry but they offer the beginner a unique experience. There are plenty of books covering all the various species that fall into this category.

**Marine.** The saltwater hobby continues to grow each month in our club and it is for

that reason that we have a number of great publications that can guide the hobbyist though these sometimes difficult waters.

**Atlases.** The fish atlas concept has been very successful over the past 20 years. These books are well received by fish keepers both young and old. These books offer the largest overview of fishes, both freshwater and saltwater and also include aquatic plants. These books are typically not available anywhere but a hobbyist club or a dedicated retailer.

If you haven't read a good book in a while, I encourage members both new and long term to stop by and take a look at what your library has to offer. The sampling of what you see on the tables at the back at each of our monthly meetings

is just that, a sampling. We have 2 large cabinets that are full with some superb reading material. Our library even has its own fund raiser each month and KWAS spends on average between three to four hundred dollars on the library annually.

Our library titles list is available online on our website for you to review prior to a meeting so you can basically walk in and sign out the book or video you've researched. If another member currently has it signed out you can request that the librarian set it aside for you the next month when it is returned. Where else are you going to find such a diverse collection of material on the hobby we enjoy so much! - Phil

**All photos courtesy of KWAS forum members and our monthly contest.**



Species specific books help with special requirements.



Learn about marine fish and their care.