

Exploring The Book Loft

IN THE GERMAN Village section of Columbus, Ohio, you can reach The Book Loft by any number of surrounding brick streets, which are lined with hundred-year-old houses. In the case of The Book Loft, it's true that the journey itself is worth the trip. Once there, though, you'll find yourself in the dream place for anyone who loves language.

The Book Loft is housed in 32 rooms that look as if they were put together on a whim. Visitors are provided with a map to help them work their way through the stacks. A combination of joined Victorian Houses and commercial buildings, The Book Loft may be large, but its unique layout provides an intimate atmosphere. There are long rooms next to short ones and fat rooms next to small ones where you can barely squeeze through the doorway. Shelves overflow with books on nearly every subject imaginable; staircases of every sort lead to rooms where, from certain angles, you can't find the door. It's like a bookstore designed by Willy Wonka. There's even an unofficial mascot, a cat named Winky.

The Book Loft carries books and



The Book Loft is located in the charming German Village section of Columbus, Ohio.

related items (journals, reading lights, etc.) of nearly every shape and size. The store offers frequent specials and discounts on nearly all of their selections. And what selections they are.

They claim to stock more than a million books. Besides the map to help visitors navigate, there are footsteps to follow on the floor and numerous signs alerting customers to what's in the room and through the next door. But half of the fun here is literally losing yourself in books. It's the excitement of turn-

ing a corner and being completely surprised by the books that you find, of seeing some old friends and some new intrigues.

The Book Loft is, perhaps most importantly for a writer, a great place for inspiration. In the presence of so many amazing works, both old and new, you can't help but re-light those creative fires. Because of the sheer number of books, a writer can also see what has been published on a particular subject, either for research or to check up on the competition. And of course it is an ideal place to pick up a book or two.

You can visit The Book Loft at 631 South Third Street in Columbus on Sunday through Thursday from 10 a.m. to 11 p.m. and on Friday and Saturday from 10 a.m. to midnight. (If you're not coming to Columbus anytime soon, do the next best thing and visit them online at www.bookloft.com.) When you go, block out a good amount of time, take a pencil and paper to capture your inspired thoughts, and be prepared to give Winky the store cat a rub on the stomach. ❖

by Noell Wolfgram Evans