

# All in a Day's Work

## Sue Cahalane – Librarian, Sherkin Island Library

Hello, my name is Sue Cahalane and I am the librarian in Sherkin Island Library off the coast of County Cork.



[www.corkcoco.ie/library](http://www.corkcoco.ie/library)



Sue Cahalane

Images courtesy of Cork County Library Services



**From top to bottom:** The book club meeting outdoors!; Learning about the “red planet” with Leo Enright; Poetry Day 2017; Sherkin Island Library.

### Have you always liked books?

I grew up in London and as a child I loved reading and looking at atlases and pictures of faraway places. I still remember going up the steps of our local redbrick library with my mother on a Friday after school when I was probably only 5 years old—though I may also have been attracted to the chocolate milk machine they had!

### What does your work entail?

Contrary to popular belief librarians do not spend all day reading! There is a lot to do, and everyday is different. I am part of a team of librarians in the county who are all working on the same programme, but on Sherkin I work alone so am responsible for everything that happens in this branch. Apart from dealing with the people who come in to borrow books and DVDs, or to find out information, I would also order new stock for the branch, and request items for borrowers that are on shelves in other branches. All the public libraries of Ireland are connected by the Sierra computer system so stock can be shared by everyone wherever they live and all for free. Of course I also have to keep the library clean and tidy as it is important that people can easily find the item they need. All the fiction goes on shelves in alphabetical order by author surname, and the non-fiction, including books on wildlife and the environment, are catalogued by a library cataloguing system known as the Dewey system.

### Is the library just about books?

The library is not just about books—it is also a place for information on local events, general citizens information and a place to access the internet. It also provides audio books and ebooks online,

via the Borrowbox App.

I also have to organise branch events, like the Tiny Tots Storytime and the monthly Book club, and the annual Children’s Summer Workshops. With the Covid restrictions most of these have not taken place this year. For now, Library HQ in Cork organise a lot of online competitions for children of all ages to do from home—even the Sherkin poetry sessions are on Zoom! I think we are all hoping to get back to the old ways soon, but until then there is nothing like sticking your head in a good story book and taking your mind somewhere else.

### What’s the best thing about your job?

I love it—it’s like Christmas everyday! People often come into the library not being sure what they want but usually leave with a smile on their face and a pile of books and DVDs under their arm. Sherkin Library is also only about 30 feet from the sea and when the tide is in a seal often pops his head up to say hello. From my window I also get to see fabulous sunsets on a Tuesday when the library is open until 8.30pm.

### What the worst thing?

Sometimes if there is a gale blowing the ferry may not be able to run for a few hours. If this happens on a Thursday then I won’t get the weekly delivery of new and requested books, which is disappointing when you know that something you are expecting is in the box. Of course, patience is a virtue and they will come in the next week.

### What training did you do for your job?

Most recent recruits to the library service have a 3<sup>rd</sup> level qualification. I think it is important to study something that you really enjoy rather than something you think might lead to a job.

The library needs staff with a wide range of interests and expertise as it caters for the general public.

### What’s the best advice you’ve ever got?

Something not book related—whether going to school, work or to sports, pack your bag the night before. Then next day you can focus on your task and not be distracted by stuff that got left behind.

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