

MMeet our staff! This month, we are profiling Baker & Taylor's Erica Sommer, CATS Brand Manager who normally works in our Bridgewater, NJ office. Erica hails from Altoona, Pennsylvania and celebrated her 20-year anniversary with Baker & Taylor in 2020. Learn more about her below.

Q. Hi Erica. First off, tell us a little bit about what your role entails at Baker & Taylor.

As Brand Manager, I collaborate with several departments within the company, as well as with many of our publishing partners, to provide resources and opportunities for library programming and collection building. I manage the monthly *CATS Meow* and *FollettBound* newsletters, schedule updates to our CATS website, and share news via social media. I also plan our FollettBound promotions and share responsibilities of building and managing that product line, which gives me the opportunity to work with customers on a day to day basis. Prior to joining the CATS team, I was a children's and teen book buyer, back in the days of Harry Potter being a hot new series.



Q. Is there a favorite moment you'd like to share from your time at Baker & Taylor?

It's hard to choose one, but lately BookExpo has been on my mind since it was announced that the 2021 event is cancelled. Though the travel into NYC wasn't always smooth, I'll miss the excitement of getting to meet well-known authors and illustrators and catch up with so many of our library partners that I normally communicate with by phone and email only. Fortunately, our regional CATS TitleTalk events offer that same kind of excitement, and I'm hopeful that we'll be in person again someday.

Q. What inspired your love of reading?

As a child, my elementary school and my home were just a few blocks from the Altoona Area Public Library, an enormous building erected in 1968 that seemed like the coolest place on earth to me. Fun fact: this public library collection formerly belonged to the Pennsylvania Railroad, and was known as the Mechanic's Library. Anyway, once my tiny almost-empty kid wallet contained that library card, I was walking and riding my bike there at every opportunity to get more books to read. I felt like a part of that big building, and I loved to talk about the books I found there! When an opportunity to work at the library presented itself in high school, I was thrilled, and I may have thought I was the coolest person on earth. I was by then reading books from UPSTAIRS, aka where adult fiction was housed. Wow!

Q. Any good reads you'd like to tell us about? What are you excited about for 2021?

Well, I can't stop thinking about the Magic Tree House being adapted into graphic novels this year, as I've seen firsthand how that format leads to new, avid readers. If you've followed my book reviews, I'm also a sucker for nature and nonfiction, and I've found one positive aspect of COVID lockdowns is that families are finding more time to study the world





just outside their back doors, and beyond. There are many wonderful titles that tie in to this, but at top of mind right now are *Waiting for a Warbler*, which I review in this issue, and Gloria Whelan's forthcoming *Summer of the Tree Army: A Civilian Conservation Corps Story*, about the civilian work relief program started by Franklin Roosevelt, and a program whose results can still be seen in so many of our state and national parks today. The review is forthcoming!

Q. In a COVID work-from-home scenario, how has your routine changed?

This year, the CATS Brand Manager became a CATS House Manager, too, and I've delighted in working with a group of felines who love to keep me company. My cat Canyon (shown above) has a particular affection for my boss's voice, so he's made several Teams meeting appearances, and shares his opinions on occasion, too. I also managed to coax two feral cats I've been feeding to come inside to live before winter, and I'm glad to have had the opportunity to spend socializing time with them. As an avid walker and hiker, I was able to complete my first multiple half-marathon trail challenge, which helps a great deal when you suddenly have a refrigerator full of food at your disposal during work hours. I sure miss my co-workers, though.

Q. And finally, if you were to choose an adventure for our favorite furry mascots, Baker and Taylor, what might that be?

Oh, Baker and Taylor would visit the Sommer cats at our house, and they would get along famously with my cats (or not.)! If that didn't work out, I'd consider a year-long career shift to become their personal assistant and escort, and we'd travel across the country visiting libraries, handing out cat bags, and spreading joy, while taking a lot of photos of the experience. 😊



Stay tuned for future Meet the Staff introductions, and if there's anyone you'd like to see gracing the pages of the *CATS Meow*, let us know at CATS@baker-taylor.com.

We hope you enjoy them! -*Baker & Taylor CATS*