

Libraries in a box sprouting in yards

By [Ben Jones](#), USA Today

Posted 2/27/2012 04:10:42 AM

MADISON, Wis. — MADISON, Wis. Todd Bol wanted to honor his mother, a former teacher and book lover who died a decade ago. So two years ago, Bol built a miniature model of a library, filled it with books for anyone to take, and placed it outside his home in Hudson, Wis.

He says people loved it. "People just kept coming up to it, looking at it, patting it, saying, 'Oh, it's cute,'" Bol recalls.

From that idea, hundreds of similar Little Free Libraries are popping up on lawns across the country. They're tiny -- no bigger than a dollhouse. Some look like miniature homes or barns. Others just look like a box on a post. But they all hold real books, perhaps a dozen.

"Take a book, leave a book," says Bol, explaining in a nutshell, the basic concept of these tiny libraries.

After building the first library, Bol thought the idea had potential to spread. He contacted his friend Rick Brooks, who is an outreach-program manager for the Division of Continuing Studies at the University of Wisconsin. Together, they have helped launch a small, but growing, movement.

The men provide logistical assistance and support to people who want to become mini-librarians. They have a website, littlefreelibrary.org, that provides drawings people can use to construct the boxes. It also has a map that tracks the location of Little Libraries.

Today, Little Free Libraries can be found in at least 24 states and eight countries, Brooks says. He guesses there are 300 to 400 in existence.

"We are estimating that for every one we know about, there are two or three others being built," Brooks says.

Little Libraries can now be found on lawns from Oakland to Yarmouth, Mass. Overseas, you can find them in places such as Berkhamsted, England; Hamburg, Germany; and Accra, Ghana.

Brooks says a project is in the works in [New Orleans](#) to create libraries out of [Hurricane Katrina](#) debris.