Meet Jay Aranton, Senior Storekeeper at Physical Sciences Stores

Jay Aranton handled all of the mail for Physical Sciences during the pandemic. But he wasn’t alone.

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Aranton on a bench in Aldrich Park, wearing one of his many figurines.

Picture Credit:
Lucas Van Wyk Joel

Jay Aranton, Senior Storekeeper of Physical Sciences Stores, is the reason the mail kept coming to the school after the pandemic curtailed campus deliveries. He took care of the mail for so many: samples for George Miller in the Nuclear Reactor Lab; COVID samples for Professor James Nowick's lab; large-scale equipment for Professors Luis Jauregui, Huolin Xin and Sarah Finkeldei; cabinets and furniture for several labs; bovine serum; congratulatory chocolate for Professor Suzanne Blum; supplies for a graduate student in the lab of Professor Kate Mackey who's busy studying the effects of the recent Orange County oil spill on marine microorganisms; and once Aranton even got a call from someone about an emergency in a bathroom involving something unmentionable on a bathroom wall.

"People needed us for critical research," said Aranton, who started working at Physical Sciences Stores after leaving an accounting job on campus seven years ago. "We got the influx of everything."

Aranton's one of the countless invisible hands that help make the science at Physical Sciences happen — but he wasn't alone in his work. Through the gated door at PS stores and to the right there stand more than just packages, but monsters and heroes and villains, stormtroopers and Darth Vaders and Captain Americas and Supermen and Wonder Women and everything in between. It's a mass protest of figurines from movies and comics and games, and to try and count them all would be folly.

The things we chose to surround ourselves with are often extensions of who we imagine ourselves to be. That's why it's no surprise that whenever you catch a glimpse of someone's bookshelf in a video call, you can't help but scan the titles because you think they can tell you something about the person in front of you. But you'll only get a vague sense of the person this way, because you're reading titles that meant something to the person at some other time in their lives, and so what they mean right now is unclear.

When asked which of his figurines he'd most associate with right now, Aranton replied: "Right now? Probably Harry Potter," as he motioned to what seemed like a complete collection of the characters from the books about a boy wizard. It's a fitting choice, because anyone who can handle everything from chemical deliveries to bathroom emergencies must be a kind of wizard himself.

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