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The Newsletter of
Webster Groves Public Library, v. 2 n. 5,
January, 2007

DO FILM RATINGS HELP?

Recently I checked out the old movie *Airplane!*, remembering it as a funny film that I thought would be fun to watch with the family. It had a PG rating, the same rating you see on *Over the Hedge* and many other decidedly family-friendly films. But I was surprised and upset that the film included quite a few four-letter words, sexual jokes, drug references, and at least one quick shot of a nude woman – all of which I considered inappropriate for my young daughter.

Airplane! was released in 1980, *Over the Hedge* in 2006. The rating system has changed over time. A PG rating (parental guidance suggested) today means that a movie is probably fine for most kids, it just has some elements some parents won't like. In the case of *Over the Hedge* it's 'rude humor and mild comic violence.' But a PG in 1980 was much closer to what today would be considered PG-13, or even R.

The concern for librarians is being able to advise parents who ask whether a movie is appropriate for their school-aged kids. We don't always know, and the ratings, vague and changeable as they are, don't help much. We haven't seen every movie in our collection. This surprises some parents, but we can't pay someone to sit and watch movies. And what conclusions do we draw from what we've seen? What one family considers appropriate might be perfectly ghastly to another. I know my daughter plays with children whose parents take them to movies I wouldn't even consider letting her see.

As a rule of thumb, I would say that a G rating is always reliable. A PG is usually safe, except in the case of movies made more than ten years ago. I have found a certain Web site, called Kids in Mind (www.kids-in-mind.com) to be extremely helpful. It lists most of the movies currently available on DVD, and breaks down their content into three categories: Sex & Nudity, Violence & Gore, and Profanity. It gives a rating of 0-10 in each category, and lists exactly what the rating is based on: how many kisses, how many skimpy outfits, how many bad words, the nature of each act of violence. It even states what moral lessons can be deduced

Last Month's Question:

Why do we say 'three square meals?'

In his book *To Rule the Waves: how the British Navy shaped the modern world*, Arthur Herman explains that while the navy was being reformed in the 18th century, every sailor was promised three meals a day. They ate these meals off of square plates, because they rolled around less.

This month's question:

Why is it called 'corned beef' when there's no corn in it?

from the film, so a parent can make a decision that if a movie teaches that, for instance, honesty and virtue always win out, it might be worth tolerating a few bad words.

For my part, I'll be checking closely before I watch any more older PG movies with the family.

Survey Results Available Online or at the Library

During September the library conducted a survey of the community. The survey, paid for by a grant from the Institute for Museum and Library Services, was meant to measure people's perceptions about library services, facilities, and collections; about the library as a community asset; and about library finances.

Between August and November a Strategic Planning Committee made up of community members, library staff, library board trustees, Friends of the Library and community leaders met at the library. They looked at current library services, toured other local libraries, and analyzed the results of the community survey. In the end they made a series of recommendations for the direction the library should take in its strategic planning over the next few years.

Soon the Advance Planning Committee of the Library Board will meet to work out a formal strategic plan based on these recommendations.

Anyone interested in seeing either the survey results or the Strategic Planning Committee's service recommendations may access them online at www.wgpl.lib.mo.us, or drop by the library to see a copy.

January in the Children's Room

Tuesday, Jan. 9: Story Time & Crafts with Miss Phyllis – 10 a.m.

Wednesday, Jan. 10: Story Time & Crafts with Miss Phyllis – 10 a.m.

Thursday, Jan. 11: Story Time & Crafts with Miss Phyllis – 10 a.m.

Wednesday, Jan. 17: Story Time & Crafts with Miss Michelle – 2 p.m.

Tuesday, Jan. 23: Story Time & Crafts with Miss Phyllis – 10 a.m.

Wednesday, Jan. 24: Story Time & Crafts with Miss Phyllis – 10 a.m.

Thursday, Jan. 25: Story Time & Crafts with Miss Phyllis – 10 a.m.

Library Hours

Monday-Thursday 9 am to 9 pm

Friday and Saturday 9 am to 4:30 pm

Sunday 2 pm to 5 pm

The library will be closed Monday, January 15th in observance of the birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr

This Month's Most Requested Books:

1. *Wild Fire*, Nelson Demille
2. *Cross*, James Patterson
3. *Nature Girl*, Carl Hiaasen
4. *The Shape Shifter*, Tony Hillerman
5. *Echo Park*, John Connolly
6. *True Evil*, Greg Iles
7. *Lisey's Story*, Stephen King
8. *For One More Day*, Mitch Albom
9. *The Collectors*, David Baldacci
10. *What Came Before He Shot Her*, Elizabeth George
11. *Hannibal Rising*, Thomas Harris
12. *Next*, Michael Crichton

Two Choices for a Book Discussion Group

The library's book discussion group has been meeting for several months now on the first Tuesday of each month. Our next two meetings will be on February 6, when we will discuss *The Omnivore's Dilemma* by Michael Pollan, and March 6, when the selection is *Water for Elephants* by Sara Gruen.

But did you know that there is a second choice for a book discussion group? Every other month, Webster University hosts a book discussion group at Emerson Library.

The discussion is open to anyone. The day varies, but it's always at noon, and many people bring their lunches. If you prefer a daytime book discussion group, this is the one for you – especially if you like the comfortable surroundings of the University's beautiful new library building.

The next meeting will be on Monday, January 22, and the book will be *Mayflower: a Story of Courage, Community and War* by Nathaniel Philbrick.

Library Concludes Its Series of Story Hours for Families with Special Needs Children

On Friday, December 15th, occupational therapist Karyn Pemberton and children's librarian Michelle Haffer conducted a story hour and craft time for kids with special needs. The program, which took place after the library closed, was called 'It's Snow Fun.' The kids made snowmen pillows, heard stories about snow, and then decorated snowman cookies.

This was the third in a series of programs that were paid for by a generous grant from Target. The response from parents has been overwhelmingly positive, and our sense is that we could easily do one of these programs every month and always attract an eager audience. But we are at the end of our money from Target, and we need to seek out a new source of funding now.

It has been a pleasure offering these programs for children who don't usually come to library programs, and we really hope we'll be able to do more very soon.

AWARD WINNING PROFS SUGGEST BOOKS

It seems that people who love books can never get enough suggested reading lists. At the library they ask us all the time for recommendations, and we're happy to give them. We're also happy to pass along suggested reading lists from any other source. Recently a group of Kemper Award-winning professors at the University of Missouri put together a list of books that had either influenced their lives or society in general. It's a great list, and there's hardly a book on it we would hesitate to recommend as well. You can access the list by visiting our Web site, www.wgpl.lib.mo.us and checking on the Reader's Page.

