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The Newsletter of
Webster Groves Public Library, v. 3 n. 6,
February, 2008

Milking the Franchise

There is a phenomenon in popular culture known as 'milking the franchise.' You see it when Rod Stewart releases a wonderful, well-done recording of American Songbook standards, then follows it up with mediocre, pointless volumes two, three and four: or when a clever and well-made children's film like *Air Bud* (or *Home Alone*) gets multiple, successively stupider sequels.

But it happens just as much in popular literature. Some franchises start out golden and wind up that way. J. K. Rowling had the sense and dignity to keep a vision of where she wanted the Harry Potter series to wind up, and she went there, even though this all-time bestselling series could have been stretched out until Harry, Ron and Hermione were all middle-aged and grouching about the high tuition costs for sending their own kids to Hogwarts.

Other series would be wise to follow suit. Robert Jordan started his initially very popular *Wheel of Time* fantasy saga in 1990, and had not finished the story when he died just last year. Somewhere along about the fifth or sixth book, readers frustrated with the tales' lack of forward progress began referring to the 'waste of time' series.

Bernard Cornwell wrote quite a few stories about Richard Sharpe between 1981 and 1990, when he wrote *Waterloo*, which was subtitled *Sharpe's Final Adventure*. There have been seven Sharpe books since then. Do you suppose it was Cornwell himself, or an ambitious publisher who said, 'C'mon, a few more won't hurt!'

My point is that you should be discerning about how you spend your time. If you love a group of characters, or you're swept up in a long story, you naturally want to read more. But you have to learn to trust your instincts when you feel you're being used by the author. If the characters are no longer compelling, if the story doesn't resonate, if you're *bored* with what you're reading, put it down and read something else!

This is hard sometimes. Series like Sue Grafton's Kinsey Milhone mysteries may have a little 'milking' built into them, since she named the first book *A is for Alibi*, and interested readers are still holding on, hoping they live to see *Z is for Zapped*. I don't read the books. I wonder how they're holding up. There are very few detectives in history who have held up over more than a handful of books: Miss Marple, Hercule Poirot, Inspector Morse. Even Sherlock Holmes, for all his fame, appeared in few enough stories that they can all be printed in a one-volume edition.

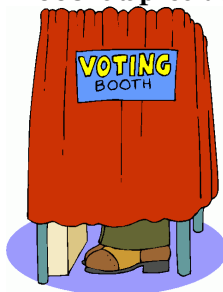
So go with your instinct. If the books feel like they're getting progressively worse and the stories are losing steam, you're probably right. The author is as tired of the story as you are. The only difference is, the author is still getting paid, and you are wasting your time.

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Big Election Year Brings the Usual Problems for the Library

2008 is a presidential election year. Each election from now through November will attract many more voters than usual. This library serves as one of the main polling places in Webster Groves, a role we are happy to fill; we only wish we had a community room where the election could be staged, and where people could enter and vote without disturbing the normal business of the library.

As it is, voting is done in the main reading room of the library, and anyone who shows up on an election day for quiet study or reading is pretty much out of luck. We know this situation is not ideal, but we are given no choice by the Board of Election Commissioners. There's no place else to hold the election. All we ask is that you bear with us during the several days this year when pandemonium reigns in the library. And if you don't believe democracy is a messy process, visit the library on election day!



February in the Children's Room

- * Tuesday, February 12: Storytime with Miss Phyllis – 10 a.m.
- * Wednesday, February 13: Storytime with Miss Phyllis – 10 a.m.
- * Thursday, February 14: Storytime with Miss Phyllis – 10 a.m.
- * Wednesday, February 20: Storytime with Miss Michelle – 2 p.m.
- * Thursday, February 21: Pajama Storytime with Miss Laurene, 7:30 p.m.
- * Tuesday, February 26: Storytime with Miss Phyllis – 10 a.m.
- * Wednesday, February 27: Storytime with Miss Phyllis – 10 a.m.
- * Thursday, February 28: Storytime 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, February 18th, in observance of Presidents' Day

This Month's Most Requested Books:

1. *T is for Trespass*, Sue Grafton
2. *The Appeal*, John Grisham
3. *The People of the Book*, Geraldine Brooks
4. *7th Heaven*, James Patterson
5. *Duma Key*, Stephen King
6. *Shadow Music*, Julie Garwood
7. *Senator's Wife*, Sue Miller
8. *Double Cross*, James Patterson
9. *Pillars of the Earth*, Ken Follett
10. *Ellington Boulevard*, Adam Langer
11. *Sizzle and Burn*, Jayne Ann Krentz
12. *Blasphemy*, Douglas J. Preston

Next Month's Book Discussion Selection:

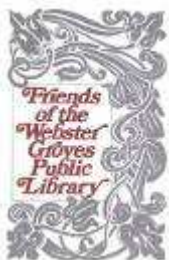
***Flight*, by Sherman Alexie**

Zits, a half-Indian, half-Irish teen, hurtles through time and several identities in search of himself.

March 4 at 6 p.m. Call 961-3784 for information.

Staff Favorites: February, 2008

1. *A View of the Ocean*, Jan de Hartog (Adult Biography)
2. *Where the Roots Reach for Water*, Jeffrey Smith (Adult Non-fiction)
3. *Atonement*, Ian McEwan (Adult Fiction)
4. *Call of Cthulhu* (DVD)
5. *Sunshine*, Robin McKinley (Adult Fiction)
6. *The Deep Blue Good-by*, John MacDonald (Adult Mystery: Travis McGee series)
7. *So Your Dog's Not Lassie*, Betty Fisher and Suzanne Delzio (Adult Non-fiction)
8. *Across the Universe* (Movie Soundtrack CD)
9. *A Long Way Gone*, Ishmael Beah
10. *Davita's Harp*, Chaim Potok

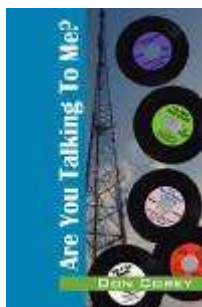


Friends News

The Friends of the Webster Groves Public Library are in the midst of their 2008 membership drive. If you received a membership brochure in the mail and were thinking of joining, consider that in the past 18 months, the Friends have contributed several thousand dollars to help update the library's computers by purchasing new equipment and the wireless access system. We provide more than 80% of the funds for the Children's Summer Reading Program and for the purchase of Large Print books. We also sponsor adult programs and provide extras, like a brochure stand and landscaping plants, that aren't in the library's annual budget. Membership dues and proceeds from our annual Book Fair are the major sources of our funding so we really appreciate the support of our members. If you would like to join and do not have a brochure, they are available at the circulation desk.

Sorting for our annual Book Fair begins soon and we always need volunteers to help. For book lovers, it can be a fun treasure hunt and we have found many valuable and/or interesting books over the years. If you are a parent with young children, they are welcome. For more information, call Nancy Hiatt at 962-4846.

RELIVE THE EARLY DAYS OF K-SHE RADIO



Don Corey, one of the key figures in the early days of radio station K-SHE, died suddenly last year. At the time, he was finishing up a memoir about growing up in Webster Groves, how he got his job as the midnight to 6 a.m. DJ at K-SHE, and what he did after leaving the station. The book, *Are You Talking to Me?*, is out now, and in the library's collection. It is a funny and sentimental tale of a kid who was just not going to be like everybody else, and how he pursued his dream to be on the radio. It is also the proverbial 'trip down memory lane' for anybody who grew up in the Webster Groves or Crestwood area, and listened to K-SHE from the late sixties to the early seventies.

At 2 p.m. on Saturday, March 1st, the library will host a reading and reception to introduce the book. Meet Don's wife Kathy, and hear readings from the book by old friends and colleagues of his like 'Radio' Rich Dalton and Mark Klose, both now on-air personalities with K-HITS 96. Copies of the book will be available for sale at the event, but if you just can't wait, come check it out at the library.



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A Member of the Municipal Library Consortium of St. Louis County