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The Newsletter of
Webster Groves Public Library, v. 4 n. 1,
September, 2008

OLD BOOKS

When I hadn't been at this job for very long I got a letter of complaint from a lady. She didn't know that the library had joined the Municipal Library Consortium, and was complaining about the lack of materials at Webster Groves Public Library. She was rather angry, and said something like 'if I want *old* books, I'll read my own.' Any complaint hurts, and this one really bothered me. In my response to her I mentioned that our catalog now has more than 600,000 items and that we have books every bit as current as any library in the area.

Which is all true. We buy scores of books every month. But our budget for new materials has been languishing for a few years, and we are not as current as we could be in medicine, travel, science, and other very time-sensitive areas: but we're working on that.

Still, I've thought about that 'old' book complaint ever since. Recently I asked someone to run a report of all the books we have in our collection dated from before 1970. Using that list, I started checking things out. Of our collection of over 44,000 adult books, only 2500 fell into the pre-1970 category – that's just a bit more than 5%. And as I checked into those books, I soon learned something. Most of them were there for a reason. I mean, will I be taking Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962) out of the collection? How about Thomas Merton's *The Seven Storey Mountain* (1948)? There are hundreds of such books that need to be in even a modest library collection.

Even among lesser known titles, there are reasons to keep many older books on the shelf. There's a book called *Cactus*, by A. J. van Laren, published in 1935. It is about identifying various types of cactus. The pictures of those cactus are beautiful, hand-tinted plates, each a separate piece of card stock affixed to the page: a beautifully done book that deserves its place on our shelves no matter how old it gets. Another is *Fabre's Book of Insects* from 1925. Sure, the information may be out of date, but the original illustrations by E. J. Detmold, who illustrated quite a number of older nature books, are wonderful and priceless. Many old books have bindings, plates, cover art, frontispieces and other features that make them works of art in their own right, and worth preserving in a library collection.

I am aware that we could be more up to date on a number of our collections, and that is a budgetary problem we're working to resolve. But it doesn't mean that our collection will ever be purged of 'old' books. This is the difference between a book store and a library. Book stores are for people who love information and literature.

Libraries are for people who love information and literature, but also love *books*.

tcoper@wgpl.org

SEPTEMBER IN THE CHILDREN'S ROOM



Tuesday, September 9: Storytime with Miss Phyllis – 10 am

Wednesday, September 10: Storytime with Miss Phyllis – 10 am

Thursday, September 11: Storytime with Miss Phyllis – 10 am

Wednesday, September 17: Storytime with Miss Michelle – 2 pm

Thursday, September 18: Pajama Storytime with Miss Laurene – 7:30 pm

Tuesday, September 23: Storytime with Miss Phyllis – 10 am

Wednesday, September 24: Storytime with Miss Phyllis – 10 am

Thursday, September 25: Storytime with Miss Phyllis – 10 am

Journalist Authors to Appear in September: Both Have Webster Groves Connections

The library will feature appearances by two authors in September, both presenting books of interest to people who enjoy journalism and the history of journalism – and both with connections to Webster Groves.

On Monday September 8 at 7 p.m. Roy J. Harris Jr. will present his book *Pulitzer's Gold:*



Behind the Prize for Public Service Journalism. Harris, a one-time reporter for the Wall Street Journal and current senior editor for CFO Magazine has written an engaging history of twentieth century

journalism as told through the winners of the most coveted of the Pulitzer Prizes. A graduate of Webster Groves High School, he is excited to return to his home town to read from and sign copies of his book.

On Tuesday, September 23 at 7 p.m. Don Marsh, host of KWMU Radio's St. Louis On the Air,



will present his memoir *Flash Frames: the Journey of a Journeyman Journalist*. Marsh, a long-time resident of Webster Groves, spent a long career in television and radio news, reporting on many of the most important events of

the latter half of the twentieth century.

For information about either event, please call 314 961-3784.

Library Hours

Monday-Thursday	9 am to 9 pm
Friday and Saturday	9 am to 4:30 pm
Sunday	2 pm to 5 pm

This Month's Most Requested Books:

1. *The Story of Edgar Sawtelle*, David Wroblewski
2. *Three Cups of Tea*, Greg Mortenson
3. *Killer View*, Ridley Pearson
4. *Beach House*, Jane Green
5. *When You Are Engulfed in Flames*, David Sedaris
6. *Fearless Fourteen*, Janet Evanovich
7. *Love the One You're With*, Emily Giffin
8. *Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Society*, Mary Ann Shaffer
9. *The Shack*, William P. Young
10. *Moscow Rules*, Daniel Silva
11. *Devil Bones*, Kathy Reichs
12. *Chasing Harry Winston*, Lauren Weisberger

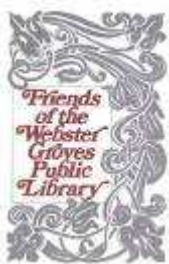
Next Month's Book Discussion Selection:

The Birth House, by Ami McKay.

October 7 at 6 p.m. Call 961-3784 for information.

Staff Favorites: September, 2008

1. *Just Who Will You Be?: Big Question, Little Book, Answer Within*, Maria Shriver (Adult Non-fiction)
2. *Still Waters*, Nigel McCrery (Adult Mystery)
3. *Made in the USA*, Billie Letts (Adult Fiction)
4. *Inklings*, Melanie M. Jeschke (YA Fiction)
5. *Slaughterhouse 5*, Kurt Vonnegut (Adult Fiction)
6. *Lace Reader*, Brunonia Barry (Adult Fiction)
7. *Secrets of a Family Album*, Isla Dewar (Adult Fiction)
8. *The Things They Carried*, Tim O'Brien (Adult Fiction)
9. *Spring Snow*, Yukio Mishima
10. *Flash Frames: Journey of a Journeyman Journalist*, Don Marsh (Adult Non-fiction)



Friends News

The Friends are not going to have a Book Fair next spring but we are still selling books – at the library! We have two display stands full of books of every type from children's books to popular fiction to the most erudite non-fiction. Most of the books are like new and are tremendous bargains usually selling for only \$1.00 to \$3.00. Children's books are usually \$0.25-\$1.00. We also have a table with almost new paperback books, videotapes, CDs, and audiotapes. Look for one of the display stands right by the circulation desk. The other display stand and the audiovisual table are just past the reference desk. New items appear almost daily, and all of the proceeds from these items go directly into buying new books and other materials for the library.

INNOVATIONS IN AUDIO-VISUAL CIRCULATION

Sometime during the month of September, we will change how you select and check out audio-visual materials like DVDs and compact discs. For a long time we have had a complicated system of selecting a sleeve with the information about the item on it, which you exchange for the actual item at the desk. This system started a long time ago, when we first started circulating various audio-visual formats, because we didn't have room to display the items. As these collections grow, and as more formats are added, this system gets ever more complicated and time-consuming.

Soon we will get new shelves to hold our DVD and compact disc collections. When you browse these items, you will browse the actual cases, rather than the sleeves, and bring those to the front desk. There the item (the DVD or compact disc) will be put into the case and checked out. It is a simpler system, and since the cases will be spread out over a larger shelving area, more people should be able to browse movies and music at the same time.

It is the compact size of the newer formats that permits us to change how we circulate them – we can fit three times as many DVDs on the shelf as videocassettes. The old system will still be in effect for movies on videocassette and books on tape – what we call the 'outgoing formats.' Yes, though it might be sad news for some people, the trusty old videocassettes and audiocassettes are not long for this world. We have not added any new ones for quite a while. Most movies are not even available on videocassette any more, and most recorded books are either on CD or simply downloadable. In fact, this may be the last time we even have to think about how to shelve movies and books on tape. The future points toward a time when libraries won't actually circulate movies, music or recorded books in *any* physical form: soon it will probably all be downloaded straight to a computer, MP3, or some other kind of player. But rest assured, that time is some years in the future. We may soon begin experimenting with the downloadable forms, but we will likely have DVDs and compact discs for some years to come.



Webster Groves Public Library 301 E. Lockwood Webster Groves, MO 63119
(314) 961-3784 www.wgpl.org

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