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The Newsletter of
Webster Groves Public Library, v. 4 n. 3,
November, 2008

Are We Too Isolated, Too Insular?

Just before the Nobel Prize for Literature was awarded last month, Permanent Secretary of the Nobel Committee Horace Engdahl caused a stir by declaring that no American was likely to win the award because American writers and readers are 'too insular, too isolated.'

As a person who likes to think of himself as well read, I was quick to take offense. All literary awards suffer from politicking, and the Nobel Prize, freighted with its considerations of race, state and culture, is the worst. But at least it (usually) serves to reward an author whose work deserves recognition and a wider audience. Sure, there are some American authors I believe are getting shafted by not being considered for the award. But fully half of the fiction I read is fiction in translation, so I also know authors in Australia, Hungary, Japan, China and other countries who are similarly insulted.

Then again I realize that my reading is atypical. Most Americans rarely do read anything by an author who's not writing in English. What's more, one of the problems Engdahl cited, namely that very little of what is written in other languages gets translated and printed by American publishers, is only too true. Within weeks of a book hitting American bestseller lists, you can find the translation climbing its way up bestseller lists in Germany, France and Japan. How often does that happen in the United States? The real question is, do you think our writers are simply better and more deserving of translation, or are people in those countries simply more open to an international reading experience?

In 1996 I read a book by Akira Yoshimura called *Shipwrecks*, one of the best books I've ever read. Yoshimura is hugely popular and has many books in print in Japan; but at the time, this was the only one available in an English translation. Flash forward to 2008, and there are still only three, of the many books he has written. This story could be told about scores of deserving international authors.

So I think Engdahl's comments, as old-world snotty as they sounded at the time, were more a challenge to American publishers than to an insult to American readers. We can take up the challenge too. If you haven't done so recently, try reading something from a foreign author in translation. There are so many to choose from, especially if you haven't read many. When looking in the library's catalog, select the Subject search and type in French Literature – Translations into English (or Spanish, German, Portuguese, Japanese, Chinese, et cetera). There really is a world to discover.

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NEW SERVICE: NEED TO SEND A FAX?

For a long time library users have regularly asked if we could send faxes for them. We never offered the service because our fax machine was old and unreliable. Even when we tried to send our own faxes it sometimes took three or four tries to make it work. Good news, though: we recently purchased a new fax machine, and are now able to offer fax service.

If you need to send a fax, talk to the person on duty at the Reference Desk. The charge is \$1 per page for local phone numbers, \$2 per page for long-distance numbers. If you need a cover sheet, we can supply one for an additional page charge.



November in the Children's Room

Wednesday, Nov. 5: Storytime with Miss Michelle 2 p.m.

Thursday, Nov. 13: Pajama Storytime

with Miss Laurene 7 p.m.

Tuesday, Nov. 18: Storytime with Miss Phyllis 10 a.m.

Wednesday, Nov. 19: Storytime with Miss Phyllis 10 a.m.

Thursday, Nov. 20: Storytime with Miss Phyllis 10 a.m.

Wednesday, Nov. 26: Storytime with Miss Michelle 2 p.m.

All month long – READiscover the Classics!

Fun & Prizes – See the article on back

MLC NEWS:

What's happening in the
Municipal Library Consortium of
Saint Louis County

Book Club Kits Help Independent Groups

Two member libraries of the Municipal Library Consortium, Kirkwood Public and University City Public, have recently added book club kits for patrons to use. If you are the moderator or planner for a book discussion group, you may want to check them out.

Under 'Title' in the library's catalog, type in 'book club kit' and a list of the available titles will appear. If you find one that would be good for your group, just request it as you would any book. Each kit contains 10 copies of the book and a book discussion guide. If there is a movie, it is sometimes included in DVD form. The book discussion kits may be checked out for up to 6 weeks, which should give your group plenty of time to read the book and talk about it.

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 Tuesday, November 11th in observance of Veterans Day, and Thursday, November 27 and Friday November 28 for Thanksgiving.

This Month's Most Requested Books:

1. *The Story of Edgar Sawtelle*, David Wroblewski
2. *The Brass Verdict*, Michael Connelly
3. *Scarpetta*, Patricia Cornwell
4. *The Shack*, William P. Young
5. *Heat Lightning*, John Sandford
6. *Twilight*, Stephenie Meyer
7. *American Wife*, Curtis Sittenfeld
8. *The Lucky One*, Nicholas Sparks
9. *Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, Stieg Larsson
10. *The Other Queen*, Philippa Gregory
11. *The Gate House*, Nelson DeMille
12. *Bones*, Jonathan Kellerman

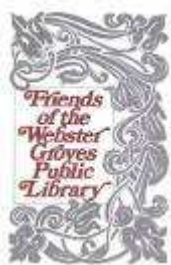
Next Month's Book Discussion Selection:

There is no meeting of the Book Discussion Group in December. Our January selection will be *You Have to be Careful in the Land of the Free*, by James Kelman.

January 5 at 6 p.m. Call 961-3784 for information.

Staff Favorites: November, 2008

1. *Human: the Science Behind What Makes Us Unique*, Michael S. Gazzaniga (Adult Non-fiction)
2. *Great Expectations*, Charles Dickens (Adult Fiction)
3. *Miss Pettigrew Lives for a Day* (Adult DVD)
4. *Silence of the Grave*, Arnaldur Indridason (Adult Mystery)
5. *In the Woods*, Tana French (Adult Fiction)
6. *Twenty Chickens for a Saddle: the Story of an African Childhood*, Robyn Scott (Adult Non-fiction)
7. *An American Tragedy*, Theodore Dreiser (Adult Fiction)
8. *Breakthrough: Eight Steps to Wellness*, Suzanne Somers (Adult Non-fiction)
9. *More than It Hurts You*, Darin Strauss (Adult Fiction)



Friends News

READiscover the Classics in the Children's Room

Starting November 1st, the Friends of the Webster Groves Public Library will be sponsoring a new program for children – READiscover the Classics. The Friends recently donated the funds to purchase fresh new copies of several children's classics. These books include the horse lover's author Marguerite Henry, the baby boomer's favorite Beverly Cleary and modern authors like Brian Jacques. To encourage children from kindergarten through 8th grade to read these wonderful books, we are awarding them a special book bag when they read one of the designated books and write a short report or draw a picture. The books are located on a separate bookstand in the children's room along with an example of the book bag. If you would like more information, they would be happy to help you in the children's room.

Website of the Month:

The History of Thanksgiving From the History Channel

<http://www.history.com/minisites/thanksgiving/>
The First Thanksgiving, Mayflower Myths exposed, and a video of the history of the holiday – a great site by the people who make history fun.

Parent/Child: Jillian Sanders
Ages 6-8: Rosalie Garzia
Adult: Doug Shaw

Ages 2-5: Lily Petersen
Ages 9-13: Anna Petersen
Staff: Joyce Arbogast

Congratulations to all!



The winning pumpkins get together to celebrate their victory.

Another Fun Pumpkin Decorating Contest
We had our annual Pumpkin Decorating Contest in October. People of all ages were invited to bring in decorated pumpkins. There were winners in 6 categories --



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