

THE CHECKOUT

A REVIEW SOURCE WRITTEN BY LIBRARY
PATRONS FOR LIBRARY PATRONS

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ARTWORK BY SUE K.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS & HAPPY READING!

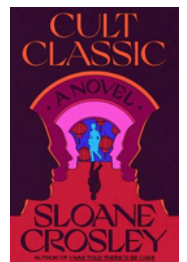
BY STUART R.

Feeling good about our third issue of The Checkout. The dedicated, high-spirited library patrons continue to review a wide variety of literature, some of which we're sure have not been reviewed by professional critics. Keep in mind that some of the best recommendations come from material that is peer reviewed. Enjoy this issue. We welcome your feedback. Feel free to submit your own reviews for upcoming issues (see the last page for how to submit reviews). Best wishes for a happy, healthy holiday season. Looking forward to seeing you at the Kenmore Library!

NEW & RECOMMENDED

BY MICHAELA M.

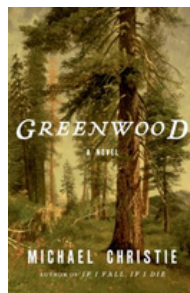
Cult Classic
by Sloane Crosley



Cults, magic, and ex-boyfriends (lots of them). These are just a few of the elements that make up Cult Classic, the new romantic-comedy-fantasy from Sloane Crosley. The novel follows Lola, a recently engaged 30-something in New York, who's getting cold feet. After dinner one night in Chinatown with her former boss-turned-New-Age-guru, she runs into one old boyfriend after another until it's clear the encounters are not a coincidence. From there, the book untangles Lola's memories, life choices, and fears while she investigates the mystical forces at work. If you're looking for a lighthearted read, Cult Classic is an entertaining and occasionally insightful look at relationships.

DEEP-ROOTED MYSTERY

BY CHLOE S.



Greenwood
by Michael Christie

A post-apocalyptic, environmental collapse novel fitting for our climate change fears of today, *Greenwood* follows the titular family across generations who have always been tied to nature.

In 2038, Jake Greenwood is a tour guide for one of the world's last remaining forests, rambling facts and lies to the rich who have escaped the climate armageddon that most of the world are living through. One day during her tour, she notices some of the tree needles have started to brown. Panicked, she sets off to try to save them and ends up discovering more about her family's past with trees, survival, and hope.

Told from multiple points of view following the generations of Greenwoods as one would count the rings on the inside of a tree trunk, the book is not only a story of climate change but one of people who are faced with enormous life challenges. The Greenwoods' secrets, crimes, and sacrifices will keep you guessing until the very end and leave you with a cautionary environmental tale of what could happen if humanity is left unchecked.

AN ORDINARY LIFE?

BY KAREN B.

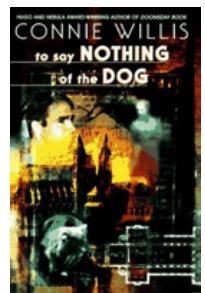
The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry
by Rachel Joyce



Harold Fry is a recently retired man who lives in the south of England. He and his wife seem somehow frozen in time, simply existing, until one fateful day. That is the day that Harold receives a note from a long-ago friend informing him that she is dying. Harold writes a note to her, goes to post it, and then decides on the spot that he is going to see her in person to say goodbye. Thus starts his journey, on foot, unprepared, to walk the whole length of England before she dies. What starts off as a spontaneous decision soon turns into a pilgrimage of faith that she will hang on long enough for him to get there, and for him to come to terms with his own life along the way. Harold experiences many challenges and discouragements, but also moments of joy, and his wife's evolving encouragement. He does succeed in reaching his goal, and then becomes able to start a new chapter with his wife going forward. Despite pondering the sadness that one life can hold, I found it an uplifting read in the end. This book is a testament to the extraordinariness that an ordinary life can encompass.

TRAVEL THROUGH TIME

BY JILL J.



To Say Nothing of the Dog: or,
How We Found the Bishop's Bird Stump at Last
by Connie Willis

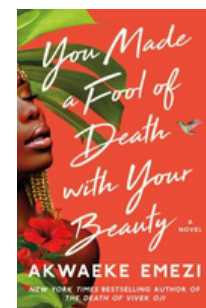
Connie Willis is a master of time travel-based science fiction. Novels like *Doomsday Book* and *Blackout/All Clear* deal with more serious topics—the Black Death and World War II, respectively. *To Say Nothing of the Dog* is a much more lighthearted affair that I would dare even call a romp. Our time traveler here is Ned Henry, who is sent back to 1880s England to rehabilitate from the dreaded “time lag” common amongst frequent time travelers. Chaos, as it often does, ensues. Ned, head still muddled from time lag, has to contend with mistaken identity, odd Victorian customs and sensibilities, nouveau riche Americans, and a cat named Princess Arjumand. If you're in the mood for some silly science fiction, *To Say Nothing of the Dog* is for you.

IT'S COMPLICATED

BY NICOLE B.

You Made a Fool of Love With Your Beauty

by Akwaeke Emezi



Grief, love, lust, friendship, and family can swirl in such messiness that it's hard to say what is right or wrong, or even if there is such a distinction. This novel delves into the life of Feyi, a young woman whose planned life was cut short after a tragic car accident killed her husband. We meet her after five years of grief and numbness have passed, and we journey with her as she rediscovers life and love in a truly unexpected place. When a friendship with a connected man brings her to an island to be part of an art show, her world is turned upside down after meeting the man's famous and alluring father. This novel is heartbreaking, lush to the senses, sexy, and full of the conflicts between coming to terms with death and rediscovering passion and life. Highly recommended for those who enjoy complex, steamy romances that go deep to reveal truths about the characters and, in turn, help us broaden our perceptions of love.

IN THE STACKS: BIOGRAPHIES & MEMOIRS

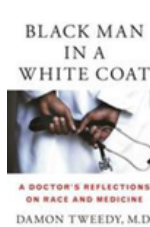
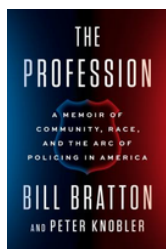
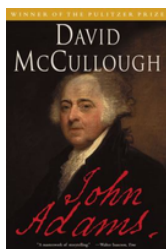
BY STUART R.

I missed one of my favorite places due to health issues during the later part of the summer, and appreciated kind words and support from library staff during my convalescence. I've enjoyed recent conversations with Pat and Nicole B. about authors and books--it's stimulating to be around people who love reading.

Our library has a tremendous biography section. I began reading a biography of our second president John Adams, written by Pulitzer Prize winning author David McCullough. A real page turner. The hardcover edition has a tremendous section of illustrations and pictures.

I highly recommend *The Profession*, the biography of William Bratton, former police commissioner of New York City and Los Angeles. It's a real master class in developing leadership skills. Mr. Bratton is a great role model for anyone in the law enforcement profession.

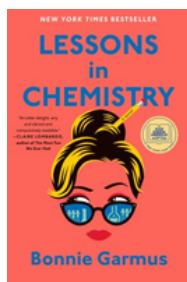
Other inspirational reads include *Black Man in a White Coat*, the biography of Damon Tweedy, a prominent African American psychiatrist. It brings to mind the shortage of mental health professionals in general and especially in minority communities. Also, *Both/And: A Life in Many Worlds*, the biography of Huma Abedin, who rose through the ranks to become Hillary Clinton's "right hand woman." She talks in depth about her wonderful relationship with her parents and siblings, her personal and professional relationship with Clinton, and her turbulent marriage with ex-congressman Anthony Weiner, which eventually ended in divorce.



LIFE LESSONS

BY CHRISTINA L.

Lessons in Chemistry
by Bonnie Garmus



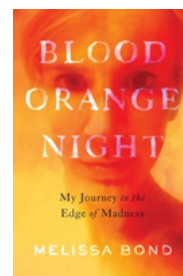
Lessons in Chemistry by Bonnie Garmus is worth all the hype it's generating. It delves into life back in the 1960s, following a chemist named Elizabeth Zott as she struggles to pave the way for women in science. I often think about my beautiful grandmother, Charlotte, and wonder what she could have become if she didn't have seven young children to care for in the early 1960s. What would she have done if her societal expectations (both professional and personal) were equal to my grandfather's? The history of gender inequality in America is no doubt an important topic to discuss. However, this book is so much more than an ode to a generation of overlooked women. The supporting characters are just as lovely as our main heroine. Each of them in their own right work to remain true to self despite the obstacles along the way. Lesson: Life is indeed unpredictable. Horrible things happen and beautiful moments take our breath away. This book reminds us that when we are forced with adversity, we can back down, or we can stand firmly to who we truly are... even if those attributes don't fit with what society thinks we should be.

P.S. I did have a short wait to get this book on the Libby app. It's worth it! 😊

TO SLEEP

BY NICOLE B.

Blood Orange Night: My Journey to the
Edge of Madness
by Melissa Bond

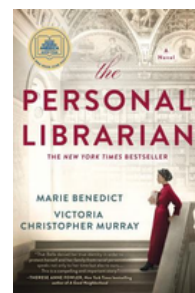


Sleep can be an elusive thing at times, and when insomnia grips us, we can turn to anything that may break the cycle. When Melissa Bond was unable to sleep fully for months on end, she went to a doctor who prescribed her a "miracle cure"--Ativan. What followed was a harrowing benzodiazepine dependence that altered her brain and bodily functions and left her in a prolonged life-threatening condition, all while trying to care for two young children and keep her marriage and life intact. Quitting cold turkey wasn't an option--fatal seizures or psychosis could develop--so the author was forced to slowly wean herself down, enduring years of withdrawal symptoms and requiring the assistance of several friends, family members, and medical professionals to get to any point of normalcy. Reading this book was both fascinating and horrendous. The portrayal of her menacing descent into addiction was unrelenting and completely engrossing, leaving me wondering if I might "catch" her insomnia simply by reading the words on the page. The fact that she survived those tortuous years of addiction and withdrawal are a testament to human endurance, and her somewhat surprising current status is a testament to the power of brain-altering drugs. I am grateful to the author for being willing to share her story and help us understand what is behind the relatively under-the-radar prescription benzodiazepine epidemic.

SUCCESS IN THE GILDED AGE

BY KAREN B.

The Personal Librarian
by Marie Benedict and Victoria Christopher Murray



This novel about wealthy financier J. P. Morgan's personal librarian weaves an interesting tale of how a Black woman navigated a white world in Gilded Age America by passing herself off as a white person. Born the daughter of a father who was the first Black graduate of Harvard and an ardent supporter of racial equality, Belle Marion Greener followed her mother's advice and became Belle da Costa Greene, a supposed Portuguese descendant, in order to explain her darker skin. Under this alias, she achieved much success in the world of rare books and manuscripts, building the collection of the now famous Pierpont Morgan Library in New York City and becoming a celebrated member of high society in her own right along the way. This book offers a glimpse into another era, one in which stark and almost insurmountable divisions existed between races and classes that still resonate today. How one woman crossed these divides, and the decisions that she had to make in order to do so, are thought provoking and informative still.

AUTHOR SPOTLIGHT: KATE ATKINSON

BY SUE K.



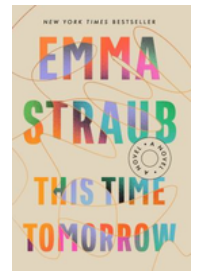
Image: <https://www.kateatkinson.co.uk/>

It is such fun to discover an author only to find out there are a whole bunch of books to treasure. Having first encountered Atkinson with her book *Case Studies*, I was hooked for life. Her latest, *Shrines of Gaiety*, is a great read. You only have to go back and read her book titles to know you will be charmed by her love affair with words and turns of phrase. How could you not pick up a book titled *Started Early, Took My Dog* or *When Will There Be Good News?* *Shrines Of Gaiety* takes on the seamy underworld of early 20th century nightlife in London. She follows a mob madam and her goofy offspring, a vigilante cop determined to solve a string of murders he believes are connected to the clubs, and a WWI nurse who comes home to a job as a librarian but ends up going undercover to help Scotland Yard. Atkinson takes on a wide range of premises for her novels, including *Transcription*, which follows a female code breaker caught up in a male-dominated war room. If you love depth in characters you grow to love, and fantastic turns of phrase that will make you laugh out loud, Kate Atkinson is the author for you.

TIMELESS LOVE

BY REBECCA K.

This Time Tomorrow
by Emma Straub



Time. Something we take for granted, never feel that we have enough and wish would move either quicker or slower. Imagine having the ability to keep returning to just the day of your 16th birthday. Would you believe that a change or many changes in just one day could alter your present? Would you go back and relive it exactly the same way? Would you do something you always wished you had but didn't? Would you spend as much time as you can with one person who may not be in your present? This novel addresses all those questions while not being the typical time traveling novel. In fact it references many of the popular books and movies where this is the theme, which sets itself apart from other narratives. The main focus of *This Time Tomorrow* is the relationship between the protagonist, Alice, and her dying father, Leonard. For the most part Alice is content with her current life, so she's not striving for something way better. She tweaks things to see if she can have more fun, live her best life, or figure out if the path not taken would have gotten her someplace different. When she wakes up every morning on the day after her 40th birthday, sometimes her changes work out for the better, other times not so much--but her main focus always remains, figuring out if she can prevent Leonard's mysterious illness. This is a love story between a girl and her father, a man who was always there for her, especially after her mother left the family. As the story goes on, Alice begins to realize how important it is to really be with the people you love. Not just going about your day and taking their presence for granted but really being with them, even if you aren't doing anything monumental. The best moments shared are often the most mundane and are the best way to really get to know another person, not just what you think you know about them. "Alice just wanted to push her hands against the walls of her life and see if they would move. She wanted to hit the reset button over and over again until everyone was happy, forever." Will it work?

PROJECT ROMANCE



BY CHRISTINA L.

One Day in December
by Josie Silver

We know that timing is everything in matters of the heart, and the holidays are prime time for those warm and fuzzy romantic reads. You know the drill. A super crazy moment on the streets of London where you lock eyes and feel an immediate connection. Love at first sight! Aw! Swoon! Then, you find out the chance encounter was with the same guy your flatmate just began dating. Ugh.

Told over 10 years of love, loss, and friendship, Josie Silver's *One Day in December* is a perfect cozy read. We learn just how much fate may have a hand in life. And, if the timing could ever match up, maybe a chance encounter can lead to that happy ending.

SUPERSTAR!

BY CHLOE S.

Hello Molly: A Memoir
by Molly Shannon



Actress and Saturday Night Live alum Molly Shannon's story will leave you simultaneously laughing and heartbroken. After losing her mother, baby sister, and cousin in a car crash with her father behind the wheel at age four, her life was altered forever. Her codependent relationship with her father and the devastating grief follows her throughout her rise to fame, and the memoir covers everything in between. The dedication she brings to any character she has played over the years is unmatched, and this book gives a glimpse into how pieces of herself are put into all of them. Her humanity, kindness, and humor makes this a must-read!



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and Edward Sts.

ARTWORK BY SUE K.

UNEXPECTED FAVORITE



BY NICOLE B.

Out of the Clear Blue Sky
by Kristan Higgins

I hadn't ever thought to pick up a book by Kristan Higgins, but a recommendation brought me to the audiobook version of *Out of the Clear Blue Sky* and honestly, it was a pure joy to listen to and one of my favorite books of the year.

Lillie is an established resident and midwife of Cape Cod, and we meet her just as she's reflecting on the bittersweet pride of sending her only son to college, the fulfillment she feels in her profession, and the upcoming plans of being an empty-nester with her wonderful husband.

Nice and idyllic, right? Well...then her husband dumps her for another (much younger) woman. Boom--life shattered. Whereas some books may take this overused trope and make you roll your eyes, this book was so funny, so heartwarming (and heartbreaking), and so multi-layered that you just can't help but feel a sympathetic connection to all of the characters. Well, all except one, I suppose (I'll let you guess which one). Lillie shows vulnerability, strength, and just plain humanity in how she copes with her unexpected and difficult situation, and I feel like anyone who reads this will identify with her feelings of love and loss.

Whether you listen to the audiobook version or read the book, I can guarantee you'll find yourself laughing out loud and yes, you may even shed a tear or two. Though not my usual genre, I was pleasantly surprised how much I enjoyed this book. Highly recommended.

Available on audio on



Libby.

DELICIOUSLY DISTURBING

BY CHLOE S.



Bones & All
by Camille DeAngelis

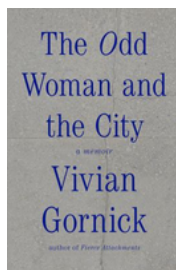


Maren Yearly is a young woman with a dark secret that has forced her and her single mother on the run every time she does the “bad thing,” starting when she was just a baby. On her 16th birthday, her mother can’t take it anymore and abandons her.

Homeless with only the books she has taken from her victims in her backpack, she sets off on a road trip adventure to find her father whom she suspects is also like herself --a cannibal. A soon-to-be movie starring Taylor Russell and Timothee Chalamet, *Bones & All* will leave your head spinning from Maren’s journey on the fringe of society. A coming-of-age tale with a tinge of horror, you can’t help but to read on after taking a bite.

MEMORABLE MEMOIR

BY MICHAELA M.

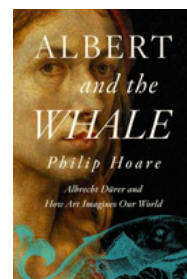


The Odd Woman and the City
by Vivian Gornick

Vivian Gornick’s *The Odd Woman and the City* is not a straightforward memoir. Instead, it’s a collection of vignettes from her decades spent in New York City, interspersed with anecdotes, snippets of people-watching on the street, and observations of the changing seasons of her life. Gornick takes the reader through her miles-long walks through the city, the textures of urban existence that she finds solace in, and her friendship with the enigmatic Leonard. A personal highlight for me was the addition of miniature stories about literary figures that Gornick connects to throughout the book. In this memoir, Gornick explores the chasm between her vivid fantasy world of daydreams and reality, the gifts and anguishes of solitude, and the effects of living as a single woman all her literary career. You’ll also find loose associations between ideas that are meandering but engaging. However, at times, you may wonder if particular anecdotes are noteworthy, and the book admittedly begins dragging towards the end. But the overall result is a breezy and often poignant collage of a lifetime of experiences.

LIFE THROUGH THE LENS OF ART

BY KAREN B.



**Albert and the Whale: Albrecht Dürer and How Art
Imagines Our World**
by Philip Hoare

Albrecht Dürer was a famous German Renaissance painter. Among his most well-known works is the painting of the Praying Hands, which has become an iconic image for many. In addition to many painted religious works and woodcuts, he also painted myriad animals, both real and imagined, in the late 1400s and early 1500s. He was the first celebrated artist to paint a whale, a creature almost unknown in the time period, and one which he vainly attempted to see in person when sighting reports were made on the shores of western Europe. (The whale had disappeared back into the sea before he arrived.) This book is a search for the meaning of whales and other animals, both in art and in life, from that time period to our current times. Not an easy read, it is nevertheless worthwhile for the insights it draws from artists’ minds. It also serves as a memoir through the biographical lens of the author as he tries to find and make sense of how animals are understood and may themselves understand the world. Anyone interested in the intersections of art, history, nature, and biography would find plenty to ponder in this book.



Kenmore Library 1916-1925

ARTWORK BY SUE K.

REEL REVIEWS

Yellowstone

(TV Series, 2018-,
created by Taylor Sheridan)



I don't love westerns or anything to do with cowboys. Whenever Gunsmoke, Bonanza, or a John Wayne movie would come on TV growing up, I would leave the room. So when my husband suggested we watch the TV show Yellowstone, I figured I would be out by the middle of the first episode. I was wrong. This is a compelling story about the Dutton family fighting to keep their ranch and cowboy way of life alive. It also tells the story of Indigenous Americans, who live on the nearby reservation, residents whose income does not come from cattle and the politics that surround them all. The characters in the show are worried their way of life is being threatened and they want to get back what was or should be theirs. Most of the characters are not good guys who you love because they are doing good things, but severely flawed, bereft people who make choices that are not always popular and have serious repercussions. I believe that is what makes it captivating, as well as the amazing cinematography and backdrops that leave you breathless. The show is realistically violent which made me announce "I am done" after the second season because I do not love violence. But I found I had to keep watching. I finished watching all seasons, sometimes with my eyes closed, and am anxiously awaiting the release of season five this month. The library has all four seasons of Yellowstone available on DVD.

(REVIEW BY REBECCA K.)

Men

(2022, directed by
Alex Garland)



Alex Garland, director of films such as Ex Machina and Annihilation, has brought us another mind-bender. Men, released earlier this year, follows a woman named Harper, who, recovering from her husband's unexpected death, takes refuge in the idyllic English countryside. There she enjoys peace and quiet in an old cabin and wanders the lush forests, picking fallen apples from the trees. The odd townsfolk--the police officer, bartender, local priest--all seem to be men. What's more, they look very similar. Is it déjà vu, perhaps, or something more nefarious? Soon, what started as a healing retreat quickly becomes a suffocating nightmare. Men is suspenseful, with haunting visuals and a jaw-dropping ending that's been divisive among moviegoers. No matter how you feel about the final climax, this is one you'll want to talk about afterward.

(REVIEW BY MICHAELA M.)



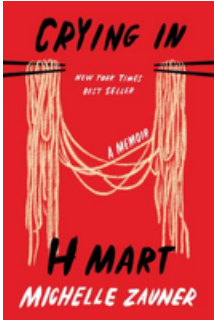
The Asphalt Jungle

(1950, directed by John Huston)

This timeless black and white noir follows Dix, who has pulled together a gang to help carry out a million-dollar jewelry heist. Everything is planned to a T until betrayal strikes and a stray bullet kills a gang member. The fallout and web of lies that ensues after only brings more trouble. This film was nominated for four Academy Awards and is a fun watch! Plus, it features Marilyn Monroe in one of her earliest roles, who subsequently steals the show despite her minor character.

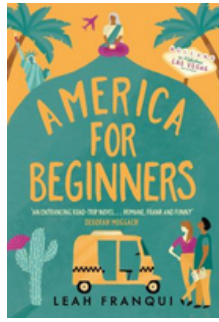
(REVIEW BY CHLOE S.)

QUICK TAKES



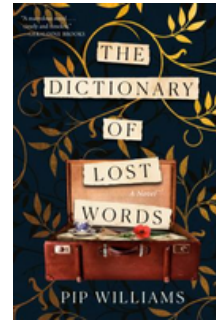
Crying in H Mart: a Memoir
by Michelle Zauner

Better known to music fans as Japanese Breakfast, Michelle Zauner dons her memoirist hat for this deeply emotional account of the loss of her mother and dealing with the fallout of grief, often through food. Crying in H Mart has been on the New York Times Best Seller list for over a year, so if you haven't read it yet, what are you waiting for?



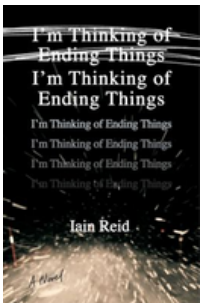
America for Beginners
by Leah Franqui

A tour of America is given for a recently widowed woman from India who is looking for her son long after he was disowned by his father for being gay. The widow tours the country through an agency that assigns a young American woman and a young Bangladeshi immigrant as her tour guides. What follows is a rite of passage for all three, not only through American culture but also through their own life journeys.



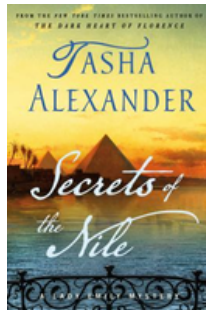
The Dictionary of Lost Words
by Pip Williams

This book is an ode to language. It tells a fictionalized tale of how the venerable Oxford English Dictionary came into being. It follows the story of a woman who contributed to its contents not least of all by stealing the word "bondmaid" and befriending a woman with that status in society, but also by ensuring its eventual success through the many and varied contributions of multiple men and women.



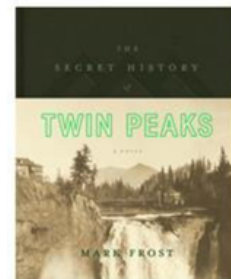
I'm Thinking of Ending Things
by Iain Reid

In this suspenseful thriller, a woman contemplates ending her relationship as she drives with her boyfriend to his parent's rural farm. Equal parts creepy and hard to put down, the book's shocking reveal is worth the wait.



Secrets of the Nile
by Tasha Alexander

A meticulously researched mystery in the style of Agatha Christie, with dual plotlines following an artist in ancient Egypt and a murder mystery set in 1906 Luxor.



The Secret History of Twin Peaks
by Mark Frost

Whether you love the hit show or are confused by it, this helps fill in the holes by going back in time before Agent Cooper even got his FBI badge. Go through letters and archival files dating back to the time of Lewis and Clark's expedition as you delve deeper into the mysterious woods and happenings of the northeastern Washington town.



Vegetarian Chinese Soul Food
by Hsiao-Ching Chou

Filled to the brim with easy-to-follow recipes that aren't intimidating. It even has tips as to what cookware items to use and how to maintain them! Dim sum delights like soup dumplings, stir-fries, and noodle dishes shine.

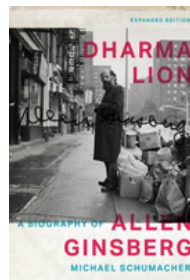
PATRON RECOMMENDATIONS



Frankissstein: A Love Story
by Jeanette Winterson

This novel defies genres as a contemplative, witty, romantic science and historical fiction. Winterson guides the reader through the fraught romances and adventures of Frankenstein's author Mary Shelley circa 1816 alongside a present day Dr. Ry Shelley. The book's themes leap off from those of the seminal science fiction work Frankenstein, such as the borders of life and death. In Ry's time, toying with the existential is born from robotics, cryogenically frozen people, and artificial intelligence (AI) in the hands of romantic interest and AI expert Victor Stein. Frankissstein is a must read for those who love thinking about the future and love itself.

(Review by Liz S.)



Dharma Lion: A Biography of Allen Ginsberg
by Michael Schumacher

This is a colossal tome and a brilliant attempt to document the colorful, overflowing, and surprisingly wholesome life of one of America's greatest poets. Borrowing its title from Ginsberg's given Buddhist name Lion of Dharma, the biography captures his countless adventures in every continent on Earth, from the romantic museums of Paris and Italy to the depths of Southern America. The life of Allen Ginsberg is anything but dull, and Schumacher leaves no detail out, completely absorbing the reader in the rich inner world that Ginsberg shared with us through his poetry. Following a pleasing pattern of the chronological release of Ginsberg's poetry collections, Schumacher is able to highlight important verses from Ginsberg's work as he simultaneously details the life being lived behind the poems. Plenty of background is given for each of Ginsberg's most important poems, diving deep into the social, political, and spiritual motivations that Ginsberg pursued in his writing. For some poems Schumacher gives us the exact time, location, and state of mind Ginsberg was in when he wrote the words. The personal journey Ginsberg went on as he wrote works that would later be immortalized and celebrated across the world truly began with a simple quest to experience life to the fullest.

As a Lion of Dharma, Ginsberg roared his way through life and took every available opportunity to advance his creative, social, and spiritual skillsets. He took endless trips and immersed himself in the cultures he encountered, writing thorough accounts of what he saw and saving virtually every type of paper record and memorabilia. His collected archives and journals would fill over 700 3-by-7-foot bookshelves. A man of infinite inquisitiveness and sentimentality, Ginsberg's endless productivity extended well into his old age, leaving us with a vast range and body of work that reflects the multifaceted life of the poet.

Schumacher's Dharma Lion is a must-read for lovers of the Beat Generation and manages to be an accurate portrayal of the counterculture in the 50s and 60s. Allen Ginsberg's integral part in America's literary, political, and social history is impossible to ignore and easy to appreciate after reading about his incredible life from start to finish.

(Review by Shawn S.)



Good Omens
by Neil Gaiman

Good Omens is one of those books I will never stop recommending no matter how much time passes since last I've read it. Following several characters' narratives, such as a stuffy angel with a book hoarding problem, a plant-threatening demon who thinks that inconveniencing humans by gluing quarters to sidewalks is an acceptable evil deed, and a gaggle of mischievous children led by a boy who has no idea that he is actually the antichrist, Gaiman and Pratchett weave an incredible tale that you won't want to put down. The intensity of the apocalyptic plot itself is smoothed over with sharp wit and charming character interactions, with twists that I never would have seen coming as someone who reads supernatural fiction regularly. As a standalone, Good Omens is perfect for those who want a light palate cleanser between heavy reads, especially considering its endless bouts of humor.

(Review by Emily L.)

SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST

BY REBECCA K.



In *Mexican Gothic* by Silvia Moreno-Garcia, Noemí Taboada, the daughter of a wealthy family in Mexico City, is an independent, unafraid, educated woman in the patriarchal 1950s who is bored with her current life. She would like a career while everyone else would like her to find a husband. When her father receives a disturbing letter from her newly married cousin, Catalina Doyle, he reluctantly sends Noemí to a distant house in the Mexican countryside to figure out the truth of what is happening. Thus begins this updated twist on the classic Gothic horror story.

Like most Gothic horror, this novel contains a castle like setting, an atmosphere of mystery/suspense, ominous portents, inexplicable events, overwrought emotions, a woman in distress threatened by powerful males, and gloom. So much gloom. While reading, or in my case listening to the audiobook, you could feel the oppressive nature of this typical English manor house and the inhospitable land on which it sits. The gloom clung to you and hung on every word.

As Noemí tries to figure out what is causing Catalina's sickness, catatonic behavior, and personality change, she is thwarted by various members of the controlling Doyle family who do not want her to find out their ugly truth and derail their plans. The longer she stays at High Place, Noemí finds her thoughts and dreams are being haunted and perverted so she too believes she is being drawn into madness. Thankfully she finds an ally in Francis, the nephew of her cousin's husband, who is also a prisoner of his family. Francis turns out not to be the rescuer but an adept accomplice to a very confident heroine who is determined to rescue her cousin, herself and Francis from this supernatural horror story. There are many twists and turns in this novel. Some are expected and anticipated while others are not.

This book also brings up themes of eugenics and what happened to the indigenous people during European colonialism. In this case the Doyle family's outward business of silver mining, that has left them with a faded empire, and their covert quest for immortality.

'TIS THE SEASON

BY CHRISTINA L.

Lindsey Sterling

Snow Waltz (2022)

Warmer in the Winter (2017)



These (mostly) instrumental albums are a must-listen over the hustle and bustle of holiday time. Unlike classical violinists, Sterling's focus is more on fun, and her "pop violin" style is in a different genre that takes us outside of the box... or should I say a beautifully-wrapped holiday gift. If you need that motivation to keep moving on the never-ending list of errands, I recommend checking out these albums. Our wonderful library has a great selection of winter-themed music. I hope these songs find you dancing your way through the last few months of 2022!



DIOR DARLING

BY CHLOE S.

Mrs. Harris Goes to Paris and Mrs. Harris Goes to New York
by Paul Gallico

Mrs. Harris Goes to Paris (film)
(2022, directed by Anthony Fabian)

Paul Gallico's charming 1950's tale of a cleaning lady with a big heart who is determined to get her very own Christian Dior dress sweeps you away. After widow Mrs. Ada Harris sees a dress by the iconic designer hanging in one of her client's closet, she can think of nothing else she wants more. Her journey to get one is zany and quirky before she even leaves London.

Getting a Dior dress is not for the faint of heart, but Mrs. Harris charms everyone she meets in the fashion house - even making it her mission to help a Dior model and staff member find their way to love and changing the very future of the brand along the way. When her kindness ends up biting her in the back, Gallico ends her Parisian adventure in a way that will touch your heart.

The sequel to her Paris adventure is not as strong as the first, but takes her across the sea to the US in hopes of finding a little boy named Henry's real father. Her closest friend Mrs. Butterfield joins her in this adventure that goes haywire in both good and bad ways.

The film adaptation of the first book has a few deviations for the original plot that only make it better. Academy Award nominee Lesley Manville's performance as Mrs. Harris captivates you as if she is a real friend of yours, and you can't beat the magical experience of seeing the recreations of real Dior dresses on screen.

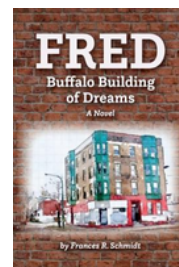
A rare occurrence where you can watch the film or read the book first and have equal appreciation and understanding of both!



WELCOME TO BUFFALO!

BY KAREN B.

Fred: Buffalo Building of Dreams: A Novel
by Frances Schmidt



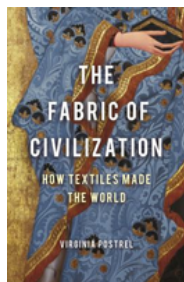
A gem of local history, this book tells the story of immigration in Buffalo through the voice of a building named Fred. Fred, a historic building still standing, has a long history of welcoming immigrants from all over the world as tenants in its physical structure. This book describes their plights, their lives in coming to a new place, and their relationships with other Buffalonians past and present. It paints a vivid portrayal of the many trials and tribulations experienced by new immigrants in many different time periods. The stories begin with an English woman who came to Buffalo via Canada and was the first owner of the building at the start of the 19th century. She would shortly be joined and then followed by immigrants from France and Germany, as well as Italy, Ireland, Russia, and Hungary. Further tenants also came from other parts of the United States, such as the Southern states after the Civil War, New York City, and Puerto Rico. Their stories are set against a backdrop of social changes such as emancipation, women's suffrage, world wars, and ongoing political upheaval all over the world. Truly a snapshot of immigration, this novel relates Buffalo's role.

FABRIC CHANGED THE WORLD

BY KAREN B.

The Fabric of Civilization: How Textiles Made the World
by Virginia Postrel

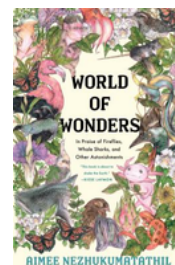
This fascinating book tells the story of human history through the making and trading of textiles. It begins in prehistory with early humans using a form of string, only recently discovered, to hold their stone weapons together. From there, the story follows the chronological production of thread, cloth, and dye throughout many human cultures around the world. The author further considers how traders and consumers used cloth as a commodity to propel newer forms of accounting, banking, and other financial developments. These changes took place through enhanced innovations and knowledge in science and technology (new means of production), trade (new routes of commerce), and consumerism (new choices for buyers). Fields as diverse as agriculture, chemistry, economics, and politics all contributed to the creation and use of textiles as a fundamental human activity. This activity continues today with current investigations of technology-embedded clothing, material that warms and cools its wearers, and textiles that may not need to be laundered with detergent and water in the future. All of these changes, of course, have brought benefits to some and hardships to others, a point that the author does not overlook. In short, however, this book gives readers a chance to marvel at human ingenuity through something as seemingly commonplace as fabric.



CELEBRATE NATURE!

BY KAREN B.

World of Wonders: In Praise of Fireflies, Whale Sharks, and Other Astonishments
by Aimee Nezhukumatathil



A collection of essays that read like poetry, this book is both a celebration of the wonders of the natural world as well as a biographical window into the author's life. Born the daughter of a Filipina mother and an Indian father, Aimee Nezhukumatathil is a celebrated poet in her own right. She offers essays here on unique plants and animals she is drawn to in a personal way. She describes their colors, behaviors, habitats, and her own experiences of interactions with each. In addition, she shares how her views of each plant or animal resonate with her own life in terms of her upbringing, places she has lived (including Gowanda in Western New York), and people she has met or developed relationships with. Essay subjects include not only the fireflies and whale sharks of the title, but also corpse flowers, cactus wrens, peacocks, dancing frogs, flamingos, dragon fruit, and the catalpa tree, among other entries. This book is charming. It is lyrical and emotive, but also informative. It is the perfect book to read outside on a pleasant day.



ARTWORK BY SUE K.

The first Lookie Bookie van
in late 1960s.

DISCONNECTED

BY MICHAELA M.

The Chaos Machine: The Inside Story of How Social Media Rewired Our Minds and Our World

by Max Fisher

Many people can feel that something is wrong with today's cultural landscape, but what has caused it? Max Fisher's in-depth look at the history of tech companies, *The Chaos Machine: The Inside Story of How Social Media Rewired Our Minds and Our World*, gives a compelling (and infuriating) case for social media as the culprit. Fisher argues that platforms like Facebook, YouTube, and Google have not only set the stage for some of the worst tendencies in human beings since their inception, but have fueled them. In other words, they've knowingly exploited the way our brains work in order to increase profit and engagement. The book explores the beginnings of Silicon Valley, how algorithms incentivize divisiveness and conspiracy theories, and the rise of targeted online harassment, hate speech, political upheaval, and violence across the globe. If you enjoyed the Netflix documentary *The Social Dilemma*, you might find this book interesting.



LOCAL MYSTERY

BY JILL J.

Cold Case Investigation series

by Lissa Marie Redmond

If you're looking for a crime thriller series with local interest, Lissa Marie Redmond's Cold Case Investigation series is for you. Written by a retired cold case homicide detective from the Buffalo Police Department, Redmond writes what she knows and excels at it. The series follows Detective Lauren Riley and her partner Shane Reese as they work to solve cold case homicides, most of which take them around familiar locales for Western New Yorkers. It's fun to read about real and fictionalized versions of Buffalo while you follow Riley and Reese around the area--cliché as it is, the city really feels like its own character in these books.

This is a six-book series, so be prepared to get attached to characters. Riley is complex and flawed, capable and intelligent while still remaining human. Her relationship with Reese grows with the series, as partners who have each other's backs and playfully jab at one another, to a complicated, will-they-or-won't-they dynamic. The cases they investigate together and separately are intriguing and harrowing at times, with the mysteries leading to satisfying and surprising conclusions.

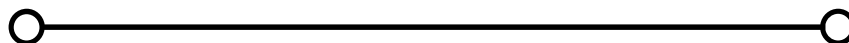
Get ready to pull some all-nighters reading this series.

The mysteries and characters are so compelling that you won't want to put your book down.



THE CHECKOUT STAFF

Christina L., Chloe S., Jill J., Karen B., Michaela M., Nicole B., Nicole D., Rebecca K., Sue K., and Stuart R.



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