

FRIENDS NEWS

The Newsletter of the Friends of the Johnson City Public Library

Spring 2009

National Library Week

This year's National Library Week will be celebrated during April 12-18th. This is an opportunity to show our appreciation to the many people who contribute to our library. The Friends will be treating the library staff to a catered lunch. FYI – Jamie Lee Curtis is serving as the Honorary Chair nationally.

Did You Know?

Johnson City Library is hosting its 2nd annual poetry contest to kick off National Poetry Month. During the month of April poems of any length and any form can be submitted at the Adult or Youth service desks in the Library, emailed to danielw@jcpl.net, or mailed to the Library addressed to Poetry Contest at JCPL, 100 W. Millard St. Johnson City, TN 37604. Please limit entries to one poem per person. The poems will be divided into three categories: adult, teen, and children. Winners will be announced during Poetry Night on Thursday, May 14th at 6 p.m. in the Jones Meeting Room.



Spring Book Festival

Friends of the Library are excited to announce our annual Spring Book Sale and that we have teamed once again with the library for the 2nd Annual Book Festival. The theme of the book sale is "Dress like your favorite author" in honor of our Book Festival special guest author Lisa Alther. You can catch Lisa at the Book Festival and at the upcoming author dinner. **Please see insert for more details.**

JCPL Book Festival: Starring Books

Saturday, April 18, 10 am – 4 pm

Dinner with the Author: Lisa Alther

Saturday, April 18, 6 pm
Carnegie Hotel - Tickets \$30

Friends Members Book Sale Preview:

Friday, April 24, 6 pm – 8 pm

Friends Book Sale:

Saturday, April 25, 9 am – 2 pm

Bring your membership card for admittance to the preview. If you can't find your card, we will have a member's list at the door. If your membership has expired, you can renew it at the sale!

Books Gone Wild: The Digital Age Reshapes Literature

I know what you are thinking – young editions running wild without any covers sneaking in to late-night clubs, right? Well, you're close. These books have shed their clothes in a sense by going digital. In a recent article in *Time*, Lev Grossman describes technology's effect on traditional publication. In his words, "something has changed ... the publishing industry is in distress." He uses newcomer Lisa Genova as his primary example citing the recent internet-published novel *Still Alice* (see Becky McNight's recommendation). *Publisher's Weekly* predicts that this year will be the "worst year" for high-profile publishers; however, publishing isn't dead or dying, but rather, as Grossman puts it, "evolving" through technology and that "the novel itself is about to become cheaper, wilder, trashier, more democratic and more deliriously fertile than ever."

The problem is not with readers; in fact, literary reading by adults has increased almost 4% since 2002. So, what is the problem, Grossman asks? You guessed it – the economy. The risks associated with the publishing industry have become too great of a load to bear. Considering that the industry pays out nonreturnable

advances and offers full-refunds from bookstores that return unsold books, it's no wonder.

As a result, books have shrugged off their "clothes" literally by going digital. Google has already scanned more than 7 million books. Grossman talks about tech-heavy reading devices like the Sony Reader that are attracting loyal followers. We can even use some cell phones to download these books.

Don't count out the printed page just yet, though the only sure thing is that changes in the print and digital worlds are going to continue at a wild pace.



Get-2-Know

By Josh Archer

In honor of the "tech" theme of this newsletter, I chatted with Eric Job, the library's technician. Talking to Eric, I was amazed at the changes that we're undergoing at the library. See if you can keep up. How did you become associated with JCPL?

Eric - I became acquainted with the library as a subcontractor during the construction of the new building. My role was to assist with network planning. In time, that role grew into a part-time, then a full-time, Information Systems Manager position.

How long have you worked there?

Eric - I've been with JCPL for ten years.

Can you tell me about some specific technological "stuff" that's going on in the library? I've heard a bit about "going-green."

Eric - The facilities management has more to do with the green project than the Information Technology area. So far, engineers have replaced our building's HVAC unit with a high efficiency unit that will reduce our power consumption and undertaken a massive overhaul of the library's interior lighting system. We are experimenting with sensors that turn lights on and off automatically in lightly used sections of the library.

In the past year, we have seen a huge number of Information Technology improvements. We upgraded all the public and staff computers, implemented a new time and print management system, installed a new video surveillance system, replaced our backbone network hardware, improved our Internet filtering and firewall, added high-quality color printers for the public computer users, installed audio/visual equipment in the library's Board Room, introduced our first all-digital microfilm/fiche reader system, and increased our Internet bandwidth 330% with a connection to a fiber optic service.

What specific effects does advancing technology have on our library? Dare to make any predictions?

Eric - Every iteration of new technology at the library improves the patron experience and provides patrons with more, and better, information tools. Also, behind the scenes, new technologies improve our efficiency and our customer service. While my predictions are not commitments, I will suggest that within five years, patrons will benefit from a central computer lab located on the first floor and enjoy self-service options for checking out books and paying library fines and fees. Also, new ground will be broken in the realm of table-top computing that I think will delight children and adults alike. A large number of reference materials, currently in print, will be available to our patrons online. I'll even go out on a limb and suggest there may be an exciting new media library here.

What do you feel is the best advantage that technology has to offer libraries in general?

Eric - Technology enables libraries to remain relevant in the Information Age. At a time when knowledge and answers are gleaned from Internet sources, we offer a portal and expert assistance to guide those seeking clarity among a dizzying array of sources. Also, one of technology's best uses is automation, which we've been using for years to manage our items and patrons.

Can you take me through a "normal" day at the library? Can you offer a glimpse into what it means to be the library-tech?

Eric - Information Technology support works in a cyclic fashion due to the rapid pace at which it is improved and upgraded. Thus, my position spends its time in a continuum of

research, planning, learning, implementing, maintaining, and upgrading. I am responsible for over a hundred computers, nine servers, a large switched network, a telephone PBX, all audio/visual equipment, video surveillance equipment, connections to the Internet and network services, our e-mail system, our website...the list goes on and on. My current docket is writing the Three Year Technology Plan (FY2009-10 through FY2011-12), updating software on all public computers, upgrading eight back-end servers, and developing a brand-new website for JCPL.

Ok, I'm dizzy. Let's talk books.

Favorite author? Recent read?

Eric - My favorite author is C.S. Lewis and I recently read Digital Portrait Photography: Art, Business and Style by Steve Sint.

Do you ever use technology to access books?

Actually, no. I'm more of an old fashioned book guy. Books have characteristics that electronic versions don't, such as weight, volume, illustrations and photos, various tactile qualities due to paper choices, etc. And there's something special about bringing home a big bag of books to my kids and watching them devour them.

When you are not working, what are some things that you like doing?

Eric - I enjoy spending time with my family and helping out at my church. Also, as time allows, I like to take pictures, write articles, publish newsletters, create websites for people I know, and work on computers.

Are you from this area? Where did you go to school/graduate? Are you married? Kids?

Eric - I was born in Indiana but have lived in Tennessee since I was thirteen. As for education, I have bachelors and masters degrees in computer science from ETSU. I am married (fifteen wonderful years) to Kassi, and we have three awesome kids, Erika, Anna, and Tommy.

What is something about the library that few people know but should?

Eric - Donations are going to play an increasing role in enabling our library to remain technologically relevant—to maintain our systems at the state-of-the-art. Information Technology equipment, services, and software are expensive. Patrons are

asking for more public computers, faster wireless, new self-service options, and access to more media. This demand is in addition to what we already offer and support. We struggle in the budget areas to keep up and depend on gifts, grants, and selling our outdated equipment to fund our technology budget. Donations may be made directly to the library, or to the Johnson City Public Library Fund at the East Tennessee Foundation, 625 Market Street, Suite 1400, Knoxville, TN 37902.

Spring Book Recommendations

Friends Board of Directors and our new Library Director share their recommendations for a good read.

Bob Swanay - *A Short History of World War II* by James L. Stokesbury
I wanted to read a book on World War II, something that covered the whole war while being a manageable read. I'm listening to the audio version, but to give a sense of the size of the book, it clocks in at slightly less than 400 pages in its book format, impressively compact for a comprehensive take on the war. Reviews of the book consistently give the book high marks for factual accuracy, which is a good thing, but I was surprised how often the author was able to interject some interesting speculation along the way. These "what ifs" make the book more than a mere textbook-like relaying of facts. Still, the pace of the book is whirlwind, as were the tumultuous years of warfare that constituted World War II.

Charles Moore - *The Foreign Correspondent* by Alan Furst. This is a different World War II spy story. Furst seems to know his way around the business and he is fast becoming a very popular author.

Journey to the Center of the Earth by Jules Verne. Only the second Jules Verne I have ever read. It seems dated because we're so smart nowadays about everything which is good reason to read his works. Maybe we have we lost our sense of wonderment?

A Demon in My View by Ruth Rendell. This is the same Rendell that writes the Richard Jury mysteries. This one is very scary, very real, very possible. You do not have to suspend your disbelief.

Susan Burkey - I just finished reading *Deep Dish* by Mary Kay Andrews. It is a delightful novel about a rising star on the Cooking Channel - sort of a take-off on the Paula Dean story. It takes place in Georgia and is just delightful to read with a little romance thrown in. One thing I especially liked about the book is the recipes at the end. When I was a little girl, my mother used to bake a "Tomato Soup Cake" that was really good and I was unable to locate the recipe. To my delight, this was one of the cakes in a bake-off in the book and there was the recipe at the end of the story.

Becky McNight - A recent read that I found informative and engrossing was *Still Alice* by Lisa Genova. It's a novel dealing with a Harvard professor who develops early onset Alzheimer's around age 50. Apparently the progression of the disease with those developing early onset is more devastating than with those who develop it when they are older. The book was enlightening as to how the victim and her family try to cope with the disease's frustrations, anxieties, and other ramifications.



Kevin Anderson - My book: *The Lazarus Project* by Aleksandar Hemon. This novel is based on the actual 1908 killing of Lazarus Averbuch, a 19-year-old Jewish immigrant who was shot dead by George Shippey, the chief of Chicago police, after being admitted into his house. The mystery remains unsolved. Hemon moves back and forth between his imagining of the case based on the available facts, and the story of a Bosnian-American writer who gets funded to travel to Eastern Europe and unearth what

really happened. There are many parallels between the life of Averbuch, and the author who tries to piece together the mystery.

Karol Lynn Johnson - If you can get used to an omniscient narrator who has died a horrible death, Amy Tan's *Saving Fish from Dying* is an interesting tour of Myanmar (the new Burma) with many features that seem familiar from recent news reports. A diverse group of tourists, led by an inexperienced guide, are kidnapped by a jungle tribe who are convinced one of them is their long-awaited savior. Compared to another hostage novel I read recently, Ann Patchett's *Bel Canto*, this one has a relatively happy ending.

Josh Archer - I recently finished *Into the Wild* by Jon Krakauer. The book chronicles Krakauer's journey as he retraces the footsteps of Chris McCandless who died tragically in the Alaskan Wild in the early 1990's. McCandless was an avid reader and really liked the transcendentalists. He also heavily favored Jack London and Jack Kerouac. McCandless was hoping to find peace by essentially creating his own Walden. However, McCandless wasn't as successful as Thoreau. His adventure proves fatal. Although you know the story is tragic, Krakauer's narration keeps you wanting more. He accurately describes the landscape as well as the people that met Chris along the way. Having similar personalities, Krakauer makes his presence known; however, he leaves it up to his readers to form their own opinion of McCandless.

Julia Swanson - I recently read *People of the Book* by Geraldine Brooks. It is a novel in which a rare book expert analyzes and conserves an ancient Jewish manuscript. The author alternates between chapters that detail the scientific effort to pursue the book's secrets with chapters that take the reader backward through time to experience the book's journey from war torn Bosnia to its creation in 15th century Spain. Vivid characters tell a powerful story of prejudice as well as courage in this well written novel.



Be a Library Volunteer!

The Johnson City Public Library appreciates the outstanding work of its volunteers who play a vital role at the library. By volunteering their time, talent, and skills, they support and enhance the Library's programs, services and missions.

Any adult age 18 and up is welcome to volunteer. The library has five service areas that work directly with the public. Volunteers are needed in all five! Or, if you prefer to work behind the scenes, we have opportunities for you. Specific training is provided by the staff members for all volunteers.

For more information about volunteering at the library, please contact Ruby M. ElBasha, Volunteer Coordinator at 423.434.4450 or click on the volunteer link on the jcpl.net web site.

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FOL Spring Book Sale

Saturday, April 25th

9:00 am - 2:00 pm

Special Friends Preview

Friday, April 24th, 6 - 8 PM



Friends of the Johnson City Public Library
100 W. Millard St.
Johnson City, TN 37604