

Check It Out!

Still Here

Library keeps working for our community

by Lynn Nowak

There is not such a cradle of democracy on earth as the Free Public Library, . . . where neither rank, office, nor wealth receives the slightest consideration.

— Andrew Carnegie



The Carnegie Library building closed on March 13, 2020, the week when the world seemed to come to a grinding halt because of the COVID-19 pandemic. But services at the Port Townsend Public Library never stopped.

Library director Melody Sky Eisler assures the community that the library has continued to maintain a presence even though the doors to the physical library are shut. “We knew we wanted to provide as many services as safely possible.” It’s just taken some fresh energy,

imagination, and pluck. Pivoting to maintain a functioning library has called for out-of-the-box thinking, Eisler said. “And we’ve had to be fearless, knowing that not every idea will work, but that’s OK.”

At press time, Jefferson County was still in phase 2 of Washington State’s Safe Start reopening plan, and, as Eisler described, “We’re not sure when we can get into phase 3,” which would allow the library building to reopen.

(continued on next page)

Curbside Pickup: Here's How

To take advantage of the Port Townsend Public Library's curbside service,

- **Go** to the library's online catalog at ptpubliclibrary.org/library.
- **Look** for the books or other media you want and put them on hold.
- **Come** for pickup **Tuesday–Friday, 10 am–4 pm**, or **Saturday, 10 am–1 pm**.
- If driving, park in the library parking lot, **call 360-385-3181**, and give staff your name and vehicle description. Staff will check your items out and deliver them to your vehicle trunk.
- If walking or biking, call the same number, and staff will deliver your items to the table outside the entrance.
- If you do not have a cell phone, call the library, and tell staff your estimated arrival time.

Library staff are not allowed to give or receive materials directly to or from patrons. Please place returns in the book drop and oversized items on a designated table.

Patrons and staff must follow physical distancing. Staff are required to wear gloves and masks. Patrons are encouraged to wear masks while waiting in their vehicles or outside.

And don't forget that the library also offers scores of digital resources such as e-books, e-audiobooks, streaming videos, and digital magazines through Flipster.

Check it *all* out!

Adaptation is key. Meanwhile, "We're trying to be as creative as we can. Safety is our first priority," Eisler said. Coming in a close second in importance, of course, is access. Librarians are continually trying new approaches to help propel library resources and programs into the community.

"It's wonderful that people are discovering the library in new ways," Eisler said. An adult book group might take advantage of a book group kit, then convene online via the Zoom platform for a virtual discussion. (Library staff will walk people through using Zoom, if they need help.) Families can discover, or rediscover, the well-loved music program for children called Sing-a-Ling. Organizations have the opportunity to use the "virtual Pink House" (a.k.a., the Library Learning Center, or LLC) for community meetings via Zoom.

While virtual connections have opened opportunities for some, holding library programs on Zoom has accentuated disparities in access. "Not everyone has access to personal electronic devices or the internet," Eisler said. From the beginning of the pandemic, staff were asking themselves, "How can we keep people connected and fight isolation?" "Sometimes people call just because they're lonely," Eisler added. For those who don't have the capability of connecting to the library online, she said, the library always offers reference help and a friendly

voice on the other end of the phone line. Staff know that for some, the library is their only social scene.

In the spring, after the building shut down, the only services offered—including getting a library card—were online, and the only staff carrying the workload were Eisler; Hilary Verheggen, manager of youth services, and Keith Darrock, manager of public and technical services. Then, directors of public libraries all over the state worked together to persuade the governor's office that they could safely accomplish curbside pickup of library materials under phase 2.

Now, Eisler said, her staff is nearly up to full capacity and serving the public's needs, with virtual story hours, book groups, lectures, and activities, as well as physical materials delivered to patrons when they pull up to the library building. Getting a library card can still be done on the library's website, and physical cards can be picked up curbside. In line with scientific research about virus survival on library materials and safety guidance for libraries and museums, all materials are quarantined for 96 hours before recirculating to other library patrons.

Eisler said the library directors convinced elected officials that libraries are critical to communities. "It says a lot about our state government that we were allowed to do curbside pickup," Eisler noted, which started in June; without it, books and materials would not be circulating even now. From June to mid-August, the library had checked out 4,300 items and hosted 22 virtual programs.

Another innovation is library Grab Bags. Eisler said the concept was born as an alternative to browsing the stacks. Since library patrons are unable to search shelves themselves, staff can put together bags of five to ten books or other items in a patron's stated fields of interest. An easy form to [tell staff your preferences](#) may be found under "Services" on the library's home page.

Children's programs, activity bags

Similarly, youth services director Verheggen and her team are assembling preschool craft bags to coincide with weekly Family Storytime themes.

For back-to-school, for example, Verheggen planned a school-bus craft. To support a pirate theme, kids two to six years old engaged in a parrot activity. STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art, and math) challenge bags are geared for six to eleven-year-olds. In September, these bags contained materials for kids to get creative with clothespins, popsicle sticks, rubber bands, and other common objects. Scavenger hunts with the STEAM challenge bags are organized for all ages on alternate weeks.

"Families can get in on the action by coming to the library during curbside pickup hours and grabbing a kit or a scavenger hunt paper," Verheggen said. "All bags are while supplies last!"

Check Out Some Fall Fun!

Verheggen explained that the library offers two early-literacy programs per week, Family Storytime on Tuesday mornings, and Babytime on Thursdays. On the third Thursday of the month, Keeth Apgar from Harmonica Pocket hosts Sing-a-Ling music instead.

Until this fall, no Babytime program had been offered online. “While most screen time is not recommended for those under two years of age, the American Academy of Pediatrics suggests that highly engaging interactions can be positive,” Verheggen explained. She said the purpose of the program is to help parents connect with their babies through songs, rhymes, and books.

Playing well together

Verheggen collaborated with the Jefferson County Library for the Summer Reading Program this year—just one example of how the Port Townsend Public Library, the county library, and other libraries in the CLEO (Cooperative Libraries of the Eastern Olympics) consortium have joined forces, particularly as they try to navigate the new reality of 2020 to consistently bring meaningful programming to their patrons.

CLEO’s mascot is an otter. “We like to say we play well together,” Eisler laughed. Of the considerable reciprocity between libraries, Eisler said, “We’ve tried to plan programs and services together to make them as seamless as possible. How fortunate we are to have amazing colleagues!”

Tamara Meredith, director of the Jefferson County Library, agreed. “In challenging times like these, we are grateful to have a strong partnership with our fellow CLEO libraries. We know we share many patrons between the Jefferson County Library and the Port Townsend Public Library, and all of them—from Brinnon, to Coyle, to Gardiner—benefit from our mutual efforts to provide library materials and services across the entire county.”

Meredith, like Verheggen, cited the “suddenly online” Summer Reading Program as a prime example of working together. Rather than develop two completely different programs, “we collaborated to set up a single online platform for all patrons, then shared the creation and delivery of online programs.” Meredith said the school library CLEO partners got involved, too. “We were even able to distribute information to kids via the school buses that were taking meals to some of our south county students in June when the schools were closed. This helped save our libraries money, resources, and staff time—and helped us continue our work in providing seamless, easy access to services no matter which library is a patron’s ‘home’ library.”

Eisler is also winding up a library strategic plan, part of the city’s new Engage PT campaign, which seeks input about what community members want and need with regard to city issues, ranging from future uses of the city’s

Did you know that you can borrow some unusual items at your library?

Beyond books, magazines, and films, perhaps your family is ready to discover safe ways to embark on a fall outdoor adventure, attempt a new craft, bake a cake, or watch your own home movies. Try some of these tools and equipment, available for checkout and curbside pickup:

- Backpacking tent, stove, bear canister, Thermarest sleeping pad
- Outdoor adventure backpacks containing Nikon binoculars and pocket guides for Washington state birds, flowers, wildlife, and trees
- Snowshoes, trekking poles
- Cake pans in assorted sizes
- Sewing machine; hot-glue gun; fiber-arts kits for beading, knitting, crocheting, embroidery, needle felting, and the like
- Sizzix die cutter and dies
- Kids’ microscope
- Fly-tying kit
- Electricity usage monitor
- Digital projectors and portable projector screen

For a complete list of uncommon objects to check out, visit ptpubliclibrary.org/library/page/unusual-items-borrow.

golf course to city streets to, of course, the library. The plan is designed to identify the library’s future direction. A public visioning workshop was held in early September via Zoom. The final but flexible plan intends to define core services, initiatives, and priorities reflecting community desires, while remaining within the library’s current funding, for the coming five years.

Eisler is continually proud of how the community gives back. Donating to or getting involved in the Friends of the Port Townsend Library or the Port Townsend Library Foundation are good ways to lend a hand. “Never underestimate word of mouth,” Eisler said. A “did-you-know?” to friends and family can go a long way in getting the word out about what’s happening at the library, even though the building remains closed. “The more everyone can spread the news, the better.”

Eisler also expressed a big thank-you to her own staff in Port Townsend. “I just want to underscore my deep appreciation for them,” she said. “And I’m so grateful for our patrons as we figure out how to best serve the community.” 

Port Townsend Public Library, 360-385-3181; ptpubliclibrary.org, ptlibrary@cityofpt.us; 1220 Lawrence St., Port Townsend, WA 98368

What Friends Are Reading

◆ *Why Fish Don't Exist*

Lulu Miller (2020)

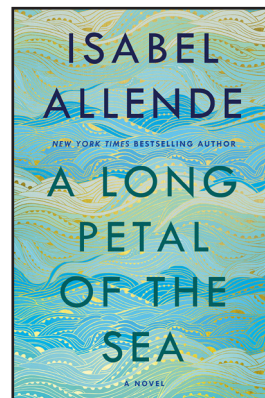
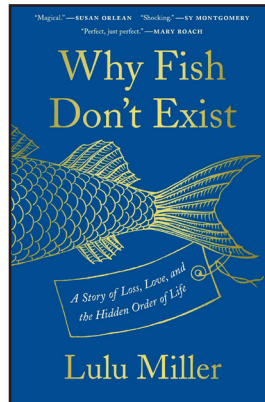
For a book ostensibly about a taxonomist, Lulu Miller's *Why Fish Don't Exist: A Story of Loss, Love, and the Hidden Order of Life* is, ironically, one tough book to categorize. It is also one great read. Moving seamlessly between biography and memoir, through natural history and scientific method, mixing in a little self-help and even a tantalizing whiff of murder, *Why Fish Don't Exist* looks at the human need to impose order on a chaotic world.

When Miller suffers a traumatic end to what she thought was her forever love, she finds herself drawn to the life of scientist David Starr Jordan, a man obsessed with catching, identifying, naming, and preserving as many fish as he possibly could. Jordan persevered in his quest, despite lightning strikes, fires, the deaths of loved ones, and even the 1906 San Francisco earthquake, which quite literally shattered his extraordinary collection. Miller wonders, then, how did he keep going? When all seemed lost, what was it that made David Jordan pick up the pieces and start over?

Looking for her own road map forward, Miller delves deeper into Jordan's life, examining his dedication to giving thousands of fish species scientific names and ranks and to place them in their proper places in the hierarchy of beings. Jordan grew from a boy interested in the fish in his creek to a major figure in the world of science, ultimately becoming the first president of newly formed Stanford University. But Miller begins to understand that even the most inspiring role model can be standing on feet of clay (bringing us to that whiff of murder). Maybe ordering the world is not the best way to understand it; maybe every life needs a little chaos.

And as for those fish . . . Well, by the end of the book, I, for one, was convinced. Fish, in fact, do not exist, at least not in the way we have always thought they did. And taking that leap with Lulu Miller was a wonderful, future-affirming, mind-opening experience.

—Kristine Kaufman



◆ *A Long Petal of the Sea*

Isabel Allende (2020)

Allende's new novel is historical fiction at its best. It begins in 1938 during the Spanish Civil War, as Catalonia battles General Francisco Franco and his Nationalist Party. Victor, a medic, flees the brutality with his brother's widow, Roser. They travel across the Pyrenees to France, where they are greeted as "undesirables," people to either be sent back to Spain or placed in concentration camps. Victor and Roser become two of 2,000 refugees whose passage was arranged by the poet Pablo Neruda on the SS *Winnipeg*, bound for his native Chile. *A Long Petal of the Sea* builds on this history.

After their voyage, the talented and passionate Victor and Roser begin their new life in Santiago, Chile. They thrive professionally, Victor becoming a respected physician, and Roser, a successful pianist. Decades pass; their lives evolve.

I love how Allende weaves historical people, including Neruda and Salvador Allende, her father's cousin, into this story. For example, Victor plays chess with Salvador Allende, even after he becomes President of Chile. Then, with the military coup of 1973, everything changes: Salvador Allende dies, and thousands of Chileans are arrested, tortured, or killed. Once again concentration camps are formed, and again Victor and Roser are confined.

Of course, Chile is Isabel Allende's homeland too. After the coup, she fled to Venezuela and switched from journalism to writing fiction. In 1987 she settled in California, beginning her custom of writing a novel every year. This is her twenty-fourth book, and one of my favorites of the eight I've read in the original Spanish.

A Long Petal of the Sea is a special novel, telling the story of memorable characters jolted by the terrors of history. And they survive. It's an important book to read now, with refugees and nationalism churning so many parts of the world. Despite everything, Allende is an optimist who believes in social and economic justice. We need her optimism in our lives.

—Wendy Feltham

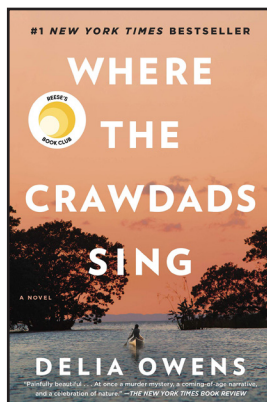
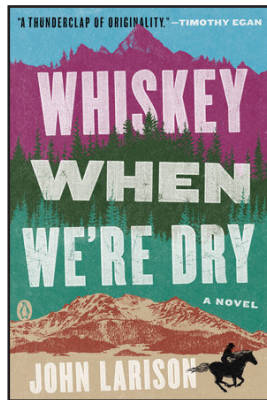
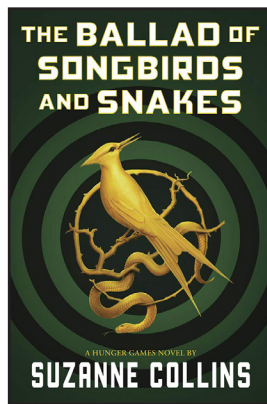
◆ *The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes*

Suzanne Collins (2020)

The Hunger Games trilogy has captivated many, young and old, with its characters and storyline, so it's not surprising that author Suzanne Collins has written this prequel. The book features eighteen-year-old Coriolanus Snow and Lucy Gray Baird, from District 12 of the fictional nation Panem. Lucy Gray is the district's female competitor in the tenth Hunger Games, and Coriolanus is her mentor. Lucy soon gets the attention of Panem's capital city, the Capitol, with her amazing singing. But problems begin when Coriolanus starts to have feelings for Lucy. He must choose between cheating in the games to save her, and losing everything himself, and watching her die.

I really enjoyed the book, although the ending was very complicated. I think the characters were well developed, and the book really makes you like Coriolanus. My favorite character was Tigris, Coriolanus's cousin. And I like how the author connected the books; I will let you find out what I mean on your own. The book is full of beautiful songs, and I promise you that it will not disappoint.

—Hilina Taylor-Lenz, age 12



◆ Which One of These Is Not like the Other?

Along with much of Port Townsend, I recently read *Whiskey When We're Dry*, by John Larison (2018). (His postponed Community Read appearance will happen virtually on November 12, 2020, by the way.) As I read, I found myself comparing it with another 2018 coming-of-age novel, *Where the Crawdads Sing*, by Delia Owens: both go beyond genres to raise complex, still-raw social issues.

Crawdads is Owens's first novel. But she is no stranger to writing. Or to nature. A wildlife scientist, she has been published in *Nature*, one of science's premier journals, and won the prestigious John Burroughs Award for Nature Writing. Given her spot-on-accurate yet near-mystical evocation of North Carolina's marshlands, neither is she a stranger to the place where her novel is set. "At once a murder mystery, a coming-of-age narrative, and a celebration of nature," according to the *New York Times Book Review*, *Crawdads* is also a potent portrait of sexism, racism, and classism in twentieth-century America.

Like *Whiskey*, which follows the girl Jesse through the Wild West from adolescence and orphanhood to sharpshooter and writer, *Crawdads* follows a girl, Kya, in America's marsh country—from childhood and parental abandonment, through adolescence and womanhood, to natural history expert and published author. Two principal men populate Kya's life; the book begins with what may be the murder of one of them. Through braided narratives detailing events in different years, the reader fully lives Kya's world.

Both Jesse's and Kya's stories are told in voices that echo their habitats: Jesse's raw, steeped in whiskey and the lexicon of a violent West; Kya's quieter, cryptic, like a bittern in the reeds. Both novels take the reader to a different place and time, to conflicts and struggles we know from our own time and place. But though I could admire the pace and originality of *Whiskey*, I doubt I'd want to be immersed in that world again. To be immersed again *Where the Crawdads Sing*—now that, I would do.

—Ellen W. Chu



... and Reading

◆ *A Death in the Rainforest*

Don Kulick (2019)

According to residents of Gapun, a Papua New Guinea village, the first words babies there utter are not “mama” and “papa” but something like, “I’m getting out of here.” Adults in this isolated village of 130 are also aware enough of the outside world that they imagine a better existence for themselves. Brief and occasional visits by missionaries over the years have served only to muddle existing beliefs, traditions, and aspirations.

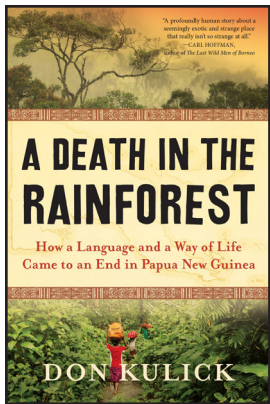
Don Kulick first visited Gapun as a twenty-five-year-old anthropologist and linguist, interested in documenting the dying language Tayap, which only ninety inhabitants could still speak fluently. Getting to the remote location was a risky undertaking, including an hour-long trek

through a swamp infested with poisonous snakes, crocodiles, black leeches, and swarms of mosquitoes.

Most anthropologists base their study of other cultures on relatively brief stays. Kulick, despite catching malaria five times and dengue fever twice, lived altogether three years in Gapun, returning repeatedly over a thirty-year period. One reason the Gapuners readily accepted him is that they thought he was the ghost of a dead relative. They also found his odd ways and unfamiliar belongings very entertaining.

Kulick ultimately managed to write a dictionary of the Tayap language, as well as an academic book documenting his anthropological work. But *A Death in the Rainforest* is different. It is the intimate story of a man’s life with Gapun’s people and the interactions and relationships that can be experienced only as an insider over a long period. The book reads as if Kulick were in your living room, telling you the stories himself. His insightful account is full of warmth and humor, even as it highlights the sadness, suffering, and danger that lurk in the rainforest.

—Christine Heycke



Fly like an Eagle

On February 1, 2019, Evelyn Lynn and three other Port Townsend girls became part of the first all-girl troop accepted in the United States to work toward the Eagle Scout Rank Requirement of the Boy Scouts of America (BSA). Lynn is offering the results of this work—she built six Little Free Libraries—free to community members who’ve joined the Friends of the Port Townsend Library.

It is not easy to become an Eagle Scout. Achieving that rank requires at least twenty-one merit badges and six months of active participation in one of four positions of responsibility, as determined by BSA, “to plan, develop, and give leadership to others in a service project helpful to any religious institution, any school, or your community.” For her service project, Lynn chose to work with the Friends of the Jefferson County Library to build and install Little Free Libraries for community members. (See our [spring 2019 issue](#) for more on Little Free Libraries in Port Townsend.)

Before she could even begin work, she needed to create the plan, identify needed materials, fill out paperwork, and submit it for approval by BSA’s regional Chief Seattle Council, which includes the Olympic Peninsula—all of which took a good six months.

Lynn began building in mid-July and finished at the end of August. Meanwhile, she completed thirty-nine merit badges; only the pandemic is holding up the conferring of awards. On October 13, Lynn participates in her Eagle Scout board of review, making her part of the first female Eagle Scout class in the country.

Homeschooled all her life, Lynn is now the equivalent of a high school senior. She begins Running Start this coming academic year, studying for an AA in Business and a certificate in welding. She enjoys working with her hands and, with travel as her goal, believes she can support herself as a welder wherever she goes. Lynn says, “I want to craft a career around my life, rather than the other way around.” No doubt, this young woman will fly!

If you would like one of Lynn’s Little Free Libraries, contact her at eagle@lynntribe.net. She and her Dad will even install the library for you! 📖



The Friends Are Still Here Too!

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Friends of the Port Townsend Library is qualified for tax exemption under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, and contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

As of June 2019, any donation to the Friends will bring you newsletters, early entry to book sales, and other annual benefits for **one year from the date of your gift**. No more due dates! No more renewal reminders! Instead, twice a year we will ask for your support and be grateful for whatever you can give. Donations may be made at the library or by credit card at the **Friends' new website**, friendsofptlibrary.org. Or you may mail this form with your check, payable to Friends of the Port Townsend Library (FOPTL), to

Friends of the Port Townsend Library
P. O. Box 452, Port Townsend, WA 98368

Newsletters are available online, at the library and Food Co-op, and elsewhere

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Welcome, New Friends!

WE THANK YOU who have joined us since June 2020:

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Saturday Market BOOK SALES October 3 & 17, 2020



Who We Are

THE PORT TOWNSEND PUBLIC LIBRARY was founded in 1898 by volunteers and, thanks to continuing community support, has remained an active Carnegie Library since its present doors opened in 1913.

The Friends of the Port Townsend Library, established in 1978, supports programs, services, and materials beyond what the city's library budget covers. Every year we fund reading programs, events, and activities for all ages; we also hold three book sales and publish three newsletters. Newsletters are available in the library, around town, and at friendsofptlibrary.org.

Our funding comes primarily from supporters, donations, and book sales. We invite anyone to become a Friend and attend our board meetings, which take place on the second Wednesday of each month, 3:30 PM, at the Library Learning Center (corner of Lawrence and Harrison). Please contact us by e-mail at friendsofptlibrary@gmail.com.

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