

Check It Out!

Adapt and Change

Library shifts to online Summer Reading and services

by Lynn Nowak

IT IS CERTAIN that much of what we know and love about our community has become unrecognizable in these virus-driven days, weeks, and months of quarantine. But like spring growth, signs of life are slowly emerging. New adjustments, fresh modifications, and creative alternatives are waiting to be discovered. Port Townsend is adapting, and so is the Port Townsend Public Library.

Although visiting the library in person has not been possible since its closure from COVID-19, library staff are pursuing a Summer Reading Program with a new look.

"I thank our community for its patience in these uncertain times," said Library Director Melody Sky Eisler. She understands that people miss the library. "We miss you, too! Our Carnegie library is lonely without her patrons."

Keith Darrock, library public and technical services manager, said it's a tricky time since people are keenly feeling the absence of a library with open doors.

"We are such a hub of daily activities for many—using a computer, picking up a book or movie, reading the newspaper, visiting with friends and staff. There are so

many patrons we see every day. All those things are impossible now, and they'll likely be different in the future."

Eisler explained that staff are working on phased reopening plans to offer services again. She said they are eager to get physical books back in patrons' hands when it is safe to do so for staff and the public. Meanwhile, the library continues to provide digital services such as e-books, audiobooks, movies, magazines, databases, and programs.

"We are also hosting virtual book clubs and meeting spaces for groups. We are answering the phone and e-mail daily, helping people get access to these services, and also just being a voice for someone to talk to," Darrock said.

"Know that libraries are great at adapting and transforming to meet the times. We come to this profession

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out of a deep calling to serve our community. We will always find creative ways to offer services," Eisler assured.

Summer Reading still on

Youth services manager Hilary Verheggen explained that all Summer Reading Program events will be online via Zoom, with scheduled offerings June 19–Aug. 7. The goal is at least one activity each week for early literacy in young children (Storytime); for elementary kids ages approximately 6–11; and for teens. Other programs will include crafts and presenters, such as local illustrators Dana Sullivan and Faith Pray.

Read to Rover likely will make an appearance, too, Verheggen said. Eisler's own blue heeler, Gryfin, is now a licensed certified therapy dog through the Read to Rover program. "Gryfin adores children and is truly the sweetest dog I have ever known," Eisler said. "Kids will get to read to him live over Zoom. They most likely will sign up and read books they have at home. Gryfin is a very good reader! Therapy

dogs can help give children confidence in reading by listening and wagging to their stories."

Teens will have the opportunity to participate in BattleSnake, a computer game that teaches older kids how to write code and compete against rival "snakes." It's particularly geared for the teen who enjoys puzzles and problem solving. Coding Club volunteer Gage Pacifera leads.

Summer Reading programs are tailored loosely around such themes as dragons, castles, woodlands, and more.

The Port Townsend Public Library will work in cooperation with the Jefferson County Library (contact information on page 3). All programs for both libraries will be on one calendar. "We are jointly planning and promoting programs," Eisler said. "We have strived for years to have seamless services between our two libraries, and now community members can easily attend programs and events from either library at home. We both want to promote a lifelong love of reading. Now more than ever is a great time to cuddle up with a good book."

"We are part of the Cooperative Libraries of the Eastern Olympics (CLEO), and our mascot is an otter. We like to say, 'We play well together,'" Eisler explained. CLEO participants include the Port Townsend and Jefferson County public libraries; Port Townsend, Quilcene, and Brinnon school libraries; and the H. W. McCurdy Library associated with the Northwest Maritime Center.

Verheggen said she looks forward to collaborating with Scott Bahlmann, the new youth services librarian at the Jefferson County Library. The two will trade off Zoom presentations and programs, and they will also offer prompts to Summer Reading Program participants. Those who have e-mail will get ideas via e-mail; those who don't will have the option to sign up for weekly postcards.

Both libraries intend to use an online book-tracking program called Read Squared, Verheggen said. It allows readers of all ages to log their reading hours and activities on their own. Those who don't have internet

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Adults Enjoy Summer Reading Too

While Port Townsend Public Library staff have been hard at work developing online programs for kids, they haven't forgotten adults. To date, three **Zoom events** have been scheduled, one per summer month, at **7 PM on Thursdays**. Check the library's website, ptpubliclibrary.org, for changes and updates.

Thursday, June 25, 7:00 PM

Judith Adams: The Poetic Apothecary: Poems for Healing and Comfort

Poet and performer Judith Adams explores poetry's restorative powers by reciting and exploring poems that help us understand grief, fear, sadness, loss, and more. By sharing her love of poetry, Adams encourages audiences to share poems that have deeply touched their lives and discusses how writing poetry can be a potent medicine for us all.

Zoom link: <https://zoom.us/j/91724730517?pwd=OUkwTTduYEtUT1JCMTROdkFmKoxnUTog>

Calendar link: <https://ptpubliclibrary.org/library/page/live-online-ptl-poetic-apothecary-poems-healing-and-comfort-judith-adams>

Thursday, July 16, 7:00 PM

Summer Reads with Samantha Ladwig of Imprint Books

Join local bookseller and writer Samantha Ladwig as she shares her favorite books for the summer.

Zoom link: <https://zoom.us/j/96379130296>

Calendar link: <https://ptpubliclibrary.org/library/page/live-online-ptl-summer-reads-samantha-ladwig-imprint-books>

Thursday, August 20, 7:00 PM

The Art and Writing of Erwin Dence

Erwin's writing and art can be found on his website, realsurfers.net. He was a long-time columnist for the Port Townsend *Leader* with his beloved column, "So, Anyway . . ." He is now at work on his novel, *Swamis*.

Zoom link: <https://zoom.us/j/91279664230?pwd=ZlR6QU41VVRyUEtGWjlxZlVFWndFZz09>

Calendar link: <https://ptpubliclibrary.org/library/page/live-online-ptl-art-and-writing-erwin-dence>

access will still be able to call in and sign up for the reading program and log their time. “Readers will select their branch at sign-up, and track reading for prizes,” Verheggen explained. Details on prize offerings are still being worked out, but prizes will be part of Summer Reading, as always.

Where to find books

Librarians are hopeful that sometime this summer, curbside pickup of books might be possible. Until it is safe to do so, Eisler recommends e-books, e-audiobooks, and e-magazines through the Washington Anytime Library, accessible through both city and county library websites. For library patrons who do not have digital access, or those who simply prefer reading physical books, Eisler encourages supporting local bookstores if they can. Sam Ladwig from Imprint Bookstore plans an online library program in July, sharing her favorite summer reads.

Readers in search of books can get creative, too. Neighbors might swap books at a neutral location while physical distancing. Those out for a stroll might stumble upon a new discovery at one of Port Townsend’s many Little Free Libraries. Friends could tap other friends who have been cleaning and sorting during self-quarantine and who might be ready to unload a bag of books. “I also recommend rereading favorite books in your home,” Eisler said. “It can be comforting to revisit beloved stories and characters during these difficult times.”

“I am proud of everything our community has done to stay safe and healthy,” Eisler went on. “I do worry, however, about how social distancing can lead to social isolation. Libraries across the country are working to keep strong social connections and to create new ones, like offering programs online and still offering phone and e-mail reference services. Also, libraries want to make sure people have access to authoritative sources and that we are countering the ‘infodemic’ and spread of misinformation.”

Verheggen noted that “we’re all going through this together, but all in different ways. I hope that our community holds on to its grace and kindness in this tough time. I miss the daily interactions I am used to having with all of our library patrons. I miss the building filled with laughter and conversation, but I know it will be again,” said Verheggen. “We’ll be back soon,” said Darrock. As the library eases back to operations, “things might look a little different for a while, but we’ll get there together.” 

Check out ptpubliclibrary.org or jclibrary.info for up-to-date online events and programs. Or call Port Townsend Public Library at 360-385-3181 or Jefferson County Library at 360-385-6544.

Antidotes for a Pandemic

Library staff have a few suggestions about books that can offer **comfort, escape, or understanding**—or at least a means to take our minds off our worries.

- ◆ **Keith Darrock**, public and technical services manager, says he is currently reading **Trask** by Don Berry. Originally published in 1960, the book was reissued in 2004 by Oregon State University Press. “It’s the Oregon Coast in 1848, a wild place where Elbridge Trask sets off on an adventure across a rugged landscape to seek new opportunities,” Darrock said. “Maybe it’s not a comfort, but there is some kind of understanding in reading about hardship and struggle, which makes what we are dealing with now more possible.”
- ◆ **Hilary Verheggen**, youth services manager, recommends a couple of titles she thinks are hilarious, including **Beauty Queens**, by Libba Bray, especially the audio version, and anything by the contemporary author Christopher Moore. She praises the young adult novel **Jackaby** by William Ritter, which the Chicago Tribune described as “Sherlock Holmes crossed with Buffy the Vampire Slayer.” Also on her list is the nonfiction **Palaces for the People: How Social Infrastructure Can Help Fight Inequality, Polarization, and the Decline of Civic Life**, by Eric Klinenberg. Kids might try the **Bunnica** series by James and Deborah Howe, and the **Dead Max Comix** graphic novels by “local author-illustrator extraordinaire” Dana Sullivan.
- ◆ **Melody Sky Eisler**, library director, encourages people to reread their favorite books since it’s comforting to revisit old friends and stories. “There is immense solace in the known in uncertain times,” she said. She enjoyed Port Townsend author Erica Bauermeister’s new memoir, **House Lessons: Renovating a Life**. “It’s such a lovely book to read while staying home and staying safe, and to contemplate the meaning of a home.” She also recommends reading travel or adventure memoirs. “If we cannot physically travel, we can still go anywhere in the world or the universe thanks to a great book.”

Friends Finding Comfort . . .

◆ *Esperanza Rising*

Pam Muñoz Ryan (2000)

Esperanza thought that her life would always stay the same. The same beautiful house. The same vast grape fields. The same loving family and doting servants. But one fateful evening, Esperanza's life spirals out of control because her father is murdered.

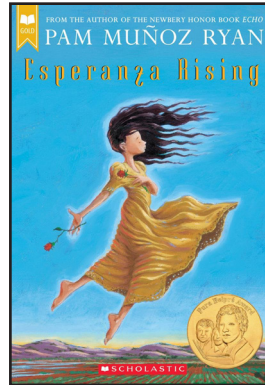
Then Esperanza's uncle wants to marry her mother, and she turns him down. So he burns down their house and threatens Esperanza's mother. Their lives in pieces, Esperanza and her mother flee Mexico for California with Esperanza's friend Miguel and his mother. There they live with relatives of Miguel in housing for Mexican farmworkers.

As Esperanza is adapting to new hardships, her mother gets sick. Now Esperanza must work even harder to pay for her mother's hospital bills. She will have to rise above the hardships and use all her strength to keep herself together and save her mother. Both her mother's and her own fate rest in her hands. Will she have the strength to rise resilient over the hardships? One thing for sure, nothing will be the same and neither will Esperanza.

I enjoyed the book because of how inspiring the character of Esperanza is. She overcomes challenges, like working despite threats in order to save money for her family. I also enjoyed the author's word choices. She introduces the reader to Spanish words and weaves them throughout the story. The interactions between the characters, especially between Miguel and Esperanza, made the story interesting. Their relationship keeps the reader guessing: Are they friends, less than friends, or more than friends? My favorite interaction was when Esperanza gave Miguel's little cousin Isabel a porcelain doll. This act of kindness showed that she was willing to give up for a child in need the last belonging she still had from her father and really shined a light on Esperanza's character. Esperanza has many more qualities, but I will leave them for you to discover.

I recommend this book to everyone ages 9 to 16. It was one of the first books I could not put down for hours.

—Hilina Taylor-Lenz, age 12



◆ *The Sun Is Also a Star*

Nicola Yoon (2016)

This novel really fooled me. Because it is classified as young-adult fiction, I thought I would find it a quick, light read. I was right on the first point: it was a quick read—because I couldn't put it down. Taking place over a single, eventful day, it is the story of two young people in their late teens, but it hardly qualifies as a lightweight romance, grappling as it does with a number of weighty topics, including race and racism, culture and class, while throwing in bits of history and physics.

The two young protagonists are strangers: Natasha, Jamaican by birth but raised in New York City, is smart, pragmatic and brash. And tomorrow her entire family is slated to be deported back to Jamaica because her father made a mistake on their immigration papers. Daniel is a sweet and thoughtful young man, born of Korean immigrant parents who are pushing him hard to apply to Yale and become a doctor. But his real passion is poetry.

The narrative covers a broad spectrum of current social issues including spectrum of current social issues including interracial relationships, racism, stereotyping, and legal and illegal immigration—all mixed up with personal identity and coming of age. Telling the story in the voices of both the protagonists, as well as several other characters, is an unusual device that opens insights into the *whys* and *hows* of this tale. As a bonus, we get to tour New York City as our young folks move about, going to and from stores, shops, and offices in different neighborhoods as their story unfolds. This is a rich and moving book, fast paced and compelling. It kept me on the edge of my seat, anticipating the next turn in the tale.

—Fran Post



... Escape ...

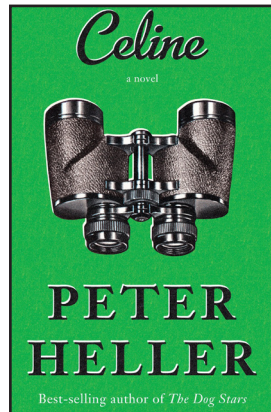
◆ *Celine*

Peter Heller (2014)

Celine is a delightful romp through some lovely, interesting people's lives, including enough drama to keep the unfolding story moving right along. Celine—closely modeled after Heller's mother—is an artist, an expert on many weird, obscure subjects. She is also a detective who specializes in finding missing persons and reuniting families for better or worse. She has connections in many professions and levels of society and a deep knowledge of guns and how to use them. Celine's husband is always up for adventure. Together they make a terrific team, both personally and as a tracking unit.

This is a book I didn't want to end: all the major characters are people who would be fun and rewarding to hang out with in real life.

—Geraldyn Rackowski



◆ A Few Favorites from the Friends' Board

Since spring 2017, [Check It Out](#) has reviewed upward of fifty books, and you can still find all the reviews (and more) on our website. Whether or not they wrote a review, Friends board members have some all-time favorite titles and authors. Here is a completely unscientific list you may wish to sample:

◆ **Titles:** *Alice in Wonderland*, *Angle of Repose*, *The Book Thief*, *Boys in the Boat*, *Everything I Never Told You*, *A Gentleman in Moscow*, *The Master and Margarita*, *Middlemarch*, *The Snow Leopard*, and *Suite Française*. Among our reviewed books, board members rated highly both *The Elegance of the Hedgehog* and *The Overstory*.

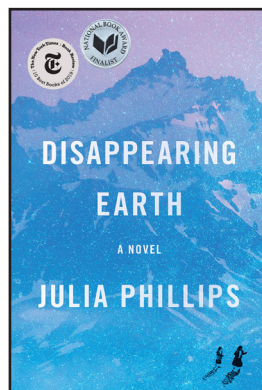
◆ **Authors:** Jane Austen, Lucia Berlin, Tana French, Laurie King, John Le Carré, Patrick O'Brian, Ann Patchett, Louise Penny, Wallace Stegner, Colm Tóibín, and Anthony Trollope.

◆ *Disappearing Earth*

Julia Phillips (2019)

In the first chapter of this debut novel—a finalist for the National Book Award and one of the *New York Times*'s five best novels of the year—two girls are kidnapped from the Kamchatka Peninsula's main city on a summer afternoon. From here unspool a mystery, a full cast of characters, and the whole peninsula. I couldn't put the book down, and after I finished reading it, I felt in shock.

Phillips guides us through the geography, cultural and ethnic history, and modern life of this remote tip of Russia, nine hours earlier than Moscow time. This novel is Phillips's first, and it took her ten years to write. She had always been fascinated with Russia, studied Russian for years, and wanted to become a writer. A Fulbright fellowship allowed her to live in Russia for a year and a half to write a book. She ultimately chose to spend her time exploring Kamchatka, a land of volcanos across the Bering Sea from Alaska. Phillips unveils what she learned of the region's ethnic and racial dynamics, and its history with the Soviet Union, through her story of the girls' kidnapping. Although the setting is the Kamchatka Peninsula, the book's lessons are global.



The disappearance of Alyona and Sophia Golosovskaya, ages 11 and 8, reverberates throughout the novel. One chapter gives a brief radio update on the missing girls; in another, characters discuss news reports about the

case. Each chapter presents a new month and new characters, mostly strong and intriguing women, including Marina, the girls' mother. As I followed these miniplots, like stand-alone short stories, I suddenly noticed links among them. I constantly consulted the book's list of main characters and regional map, discovering connections among the people and places, searching for what happened to the missing girls.

The kidnapping is a compelling mystery, and unusual because the ending is ambiguous. Such ambiguity made reading and discussing it with my old Bay Area book club particularly interesting. Nearly everyone raved about it, but a couple of members disliked that each chapter introduced new characters, and their interpretation of the ending differed completely from mine. Surprised though I was, I think *Disappearing Earth* is fabulous, deserving of the honors it has received.

—Wendy Feltham

... and Understanding

◆ *The Mirror and the Light*

Hilary Mantel (2020)

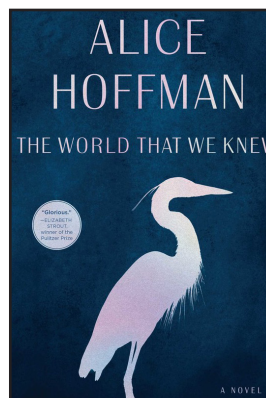
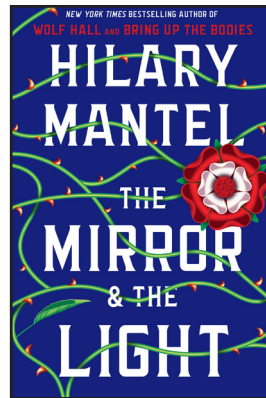
In this last volume of her trilogy about Henry VIII and his putatively heartless consigliere and fixer Thomas Cromwell, an imprisoned Cromwell reflects, “[M]ost will not think me a martyr for anything, except the great cause of getting on with life.” No fake news here: In reality and in this novel, Cromwell was more than adept at getting on with life.

Readers of Mantel’s previous two Man Booker Prize-winning books (*Wolf Hall* and *Bring Up the Bodies*), as well as viewers of the PBS series *Wolf Hall*, know that Mantel depicts Cromwell more kindly than most. At best he was an aloof lawyer and statesman who escaped his low birth and blacksmith father to become Henry’s chief minister and eventually Earl of Essex. A man of overweening ambition, supreme competence, and methodical ruthlessness, Cromwell spent eight years (1532–1540) “getting on with” the politics, religion, and marital obsessions of his moody and mercurial king. Henry had Cromwell beheaded but eventually came to lament him as “the most faithful servant he ever had.”

What makes Mantel’s portrait so compelling is that she fully inhabits her subject, writing Cromwell’s life from within his own head, even as she refers to him in the third person. Her prose is so rich, her images so lush, that I felt like a fly trapped in honey, alternating between sweetness and revulsion: seeing through Cromwell’s eyes the religious and political turmoil of Tudor England in all its splendor and squalor; extolling plums in a single paragraph of more than 200 words and only three sentences; regretfully but calmly witnessing a defiant priest burning at the stake, then, as Lord Privy Seal and Knight of the Garter, turning back to “work, of course”; meeting with Henry when “the air [is] as damp as if the afternoon had been rubbed with snails.”

I shared Cromwell’s thoughts, reflections, and nightmares for weeks as he got on with his life. Mantel’s series may be fiction, but it mirrors the real history of Thomas Cromwell. Is it any wonder, then, that I put the book aside for days before I could walk out of prison with him into the light?

—Ellen W. Chu



◆ *The World That We Knew*

Alice Hoffman (2019)

Hoffman, one of my all-time favorite novelists, often gives her characters otherworldly abilities and attributes, but she goes one step further in *The World That We Knew* with Ava, a creature created from mysticism and mud.

In the darkest days of 1941, a mother, Hanni, makes the difficult decision to send her 12-year-old daughter, Lea, away from Berlin to escape the increasing madness of Nazi Germany. Unable to go herself and with no other way to protect her child, Hanni joins forces with Ettie, the daughter of a rabbi, and together they secretly forge a golem—a woman made from mud. Ava is not human, although she looks it; she wields great strength and adopts languages easily (including the language of the birds) and, above all, she is compelled to protect Lea at any cost.

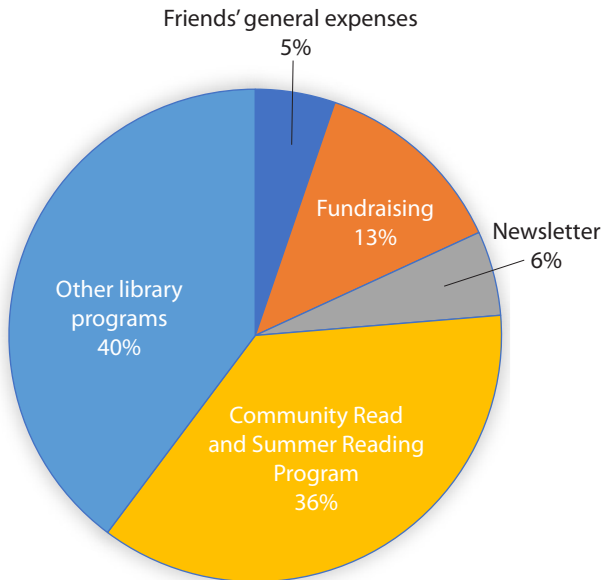
As conditions in Berlin grow more dire, Ava and Lea board a train headed west and find themselves sharing a compartment with Ettie and her younger sister Marta, who have also left family and home for the promise of safety. The journey ahead will be long and dangerous, eventually leading Lea and Ettie on separate paths. Lea, under the constantly vigilant eye of Ava, escapes the worst of the war by taking on the identity of a Catholic girl, traveling first to Paris, then to a convent school protecting Jewish girls, and finally to an isolated village to wait out the danger. Ettie and Marta’s course is more difficult, and Ettie ends up fighting with the Resistance to avenge the losses she cannot forget or forgive. And Ava, while never veering from the charge she was given at her creation, grows a little more human, or humanlike, as she navigates between a blossoming of real emotion and her innate sense of duty.

Hoffman is a masterful and mesmerizing storyteller, covering familiar historical ground with a fresh eye and offering up a compelling tale that is both timeless and timely. A perfect book for book groups, *The World That We Knew* reminds us of who we are at our best, and of what it means to be truly human in a world turned upside down.

—Kristine Kaufman

Follow the Money

WANT TO KNOW where the Friends' 2019 money came from and how we spent it? Three book sales brought in 45 percent of our income; your donations, 53 percent. As for expenses, here's how they were distributed in 2019:



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THANK YOU, business and nonprofit partners! Friends, let's help keep their doors open. And join us in thanking them for their service in our community.

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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

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Keep calm, keep safe, keep reading!



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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