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Can the library be good for you?

When people think of libraries, they don't always consider them as the best place for information or the latest technology. Libraries though, were among the first public buildings to have electrical lighting—better to find the information. Even the Blackstone Library, built with piping for gas lighting, opened its doors in 1896 with electric lights.

Speaking of technology, you could, and still can, find a typewriter available for public use at a library. Jump forward a decade or two and libraries are where people go to view microfilm and microfiche on the latest viewing machines. Today our microfilm reader is a computer. Likewise, another couple of decades flew by and libraries were often the one and only place to get a photocopy made.

Another decade or so and libraries were quick to realize the utility of computers in their day-to-day operations. Most librarians embraced the technology seeing how it made quick work of otherwise labor intensive jobs such as cataloging, card

filing, subject heading cross references, and circulation of materials. Attend any library conference and you will find that technology booths take up nearly the entire exhibit space.

Need I even mention the internet? Again, we were first. Early internet was anything

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but easy without the slick search engines we have today, but we as librarians gave it our best. When someone needed information that we knew could be found on the World Wide Web (as we affectionately called it back in the late 80's) we would take the twenty minutes or so to dial in through a slow modem and begin programming in language to find possible pages that might yield an answer. It was tedious at best but offered something that we felt had much potential in the world of information.

Look at us now with public pc's equipped with very fast telecommunication

connections, wi-fi accessibility, USB flash drives, self-check out, downloadable books and much more coming down the pike in the near future.

Suffice it to say, libraries are one of those misunderstood institutions. Buried beneath the dust of collective imagination, they struggle to be relevant. Not viewed as an educational organization, they touch more people's lives with knowledge, information, and technology than any school. Called frivolous, they actually save their users money. The operative word here is 'user.' It comes from the Latin word *uti* and means to use, employ, possess, enjoy, associate with, and find—all excellent words for describing a relationship with a library. If you have not been in the library lately, visit today. Forgo the fitness club or spending your time and money on a so-so movie. It is our imagination that needs calisthenics and a library is a great place to exercise your mind.

—Kathy Rieger, Library Director

Library Hours

Monday - Thursday
9 a.m. - 8 p.m.

Friday & Saturday
9 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Sunday Hours:
Sept. 9, 2007 - May 18, 2008
1 p.m. - 4 p.m.

We're Wi-Fi!

Bring your laptop to the library for free internet access.

Don't forget that Blackstone Library offers in-house access to *Ancestry Library Edition* for your genealogical research.



@ the Blackstone

Four new journal subscriptions have been added to our collection: *Cottage Living*, *Down East* and *Wired*, and *Investors Business Daily*, a daily national newspaper which provides comprehensive coverage of business, financial and economic news as well as analysis of stocks, mutual funds, and commodities.

New CD-ROMs, benefiting the Branford Historical Society, are available for purchase at the main checkout desk: **Postcards of Short Beach and Double Beach and Short Beach 120 Postcards**. Many thanks to Jane Bouley, Branford town historian, for her archival and computer expertise in publishing these CDs.



Thanks to a generous donation from the **Al Russell** family, the library has the five disc DVD set of *The Civil War*, Ken Burns's epic documentary bringing life to America's most destructive and defining conflict. Also donated by the Russell family is *The War*, a six disc DVD set which tells the story of ordinary people in four towns — Waterbury, Connecticut; Mobile, Alabama; Sacramento, California; and Luverne, Minnesota. The film examines the ways in which the Second World War touched the lives of every family on every street in every town in America. Our thanks to the Russell family for their generosity.

Dramatis personae: **Sandre**, at the main checkout desk, a boy, about three years old, and his mom. The boy is pointing to the watercolor painting of the library and saying excitedly to his mom, "We're inside that building!"

Staff Picks

☞**Linda**: I've been reading Deborah Knott's mystery series starting with the first book, *The Bootlegger's Daughter*. Good characterization, suspenseful plots and well worth the read!

☞**Sandre**: *Merle's Door: Lessons from a Freethinking Dog* by Ted Kerasote: This is a must read for all dog lovers. A true story of the love between these two; Kerasote also goes into behavior and the history of dogs. *Things I Overheard While Talking to Myself* by Alan Alda: Well-written advice book about life and its problems. The speeches Alda gave at his daughter's college graduation are chockfull of humor, love and good, and sound advice.

☞**Deirdre**: *Day of the Dandelion: An Arthur Hemmings Mystery* by Peter Pringle: Pringle, author of several nonfiction books, focuses his literary talents on the cutthroat competition and global ramifications of agricultural bioengineering and patents. *Rivalry: A Geisha's Tale* by Nagai Kafu. Originally published in serial format in 1916, this new translation successfully evokes the world of Komayo and her colleagues, rivals, clients and lovers.

☞**Patricia G.**: *The Five Lost Aunts of Harriet Bean* by Alexander McCall Smith: When nine-year old Harriet learns her father has five sisters she's never met—Veronica, Harmonica, Majolica, Japonica and Thessalonika—she can't resist turning detective and reuniting them all. Light, fun, humorous, fast-paced, and well-written, this mystery/adventure is hard to put down. Just right for ages 7-10. Also recommended: *Harriet Bean and the League of Cheats* and *The Cowgirl Aunt of Harriet Bean*.

☞**Alana**: *Magic Bites* by Ilona Andrews: These are not your average vampires and werewolves. Take one demon-slaying woman with a magic sword, add a shapeshifting pack leader who is as much lion as man, and have them face off against a necromancer on a power trip in Atlanta, Georgia after a magical meltdown—you've got the recipe for a great adventure!

☞**Kathleen**: *First the Egg* by Laura Vaccaro Seeger. This delightful picture book has been named both a Caldecott Honor Book and Theodor Seuss Geisel Honor Book. It is a fun read-aloud that encourages participation and can be used as a teaching tool. The illustrations are outstanding. Percy Jackson and the Olympians series starting with Book 1, *The Lightning Thief*—has me hooked. This is a tremendous adventure series that places a modern day 6th grader in the middle of a fight among the Greek gods. Exciting!!!

☞**Nancy**: *Starting Out in the Evening* by Brian Morton: This is a beautifully written novel about an aging writer who gets re-inspired when he meets a young graduate student who wants to write her master's thesis on his work. They develop a relationship that is very unusual. What appears at first to be a simple love story is very poignant and thought provoking. *Schulz and Peanuts* by David Michaels: A very revealing biography of Charles Schulz, showing how many of the characters in his comic strip had parallels in his real life. It also shows a much darker side of him that you might not be aware of.

☞**Mary**: *Become a Better You: 7 Keys to Improving Your Life Everyday* by Joel Osteen: This book helps you understand yourself in different ways: it helps you understand some of the issues in today's world, to try to help others who can't help themselves, to be kinder and more understanding, and be thankful for all the goodness in your life.

☞**Jason**: *The World Without Us* by Alan Weisman: A very interesting book that speculates about what would happen to the earth if humanity simply vanished. Weisman discusses how manmade structures would deteriorate, the long-lasting impact that many of our technologies will have, and how our absence would affect a variety of species. *Free for All: Oddballs, Geeks and Gangsters in the Public Library* by Don Borchert: Borchert's book is a very entertaining account of some of the surprising day-to-day happenings at a small branch library.

☞**Kathy R.**: *My Home is Far Away* by Dawn Powell: Dawn Powell is perhaps best known as a comic author but uses her serious side in this poignant story of three young sisters growing up in Ohio during the early part of the 20th century. Even though it is a novel, the story parallels with near accuracy, Powell's own childhood. If you enjoyed *The Glass Castle*, you will find this well-written book equally compelling.

☞**Patricia B.**: *Blue Bottle Club* by Penelope J. Stokes: Four young girls write down their hopes and dreams for the future, placing them in a bottle. Sixty-five years later the bottle is discovered by a reporter who seeks out these women to see if their hopes and dreams were fulfilled. *Circle of Grace* by Penelope J. Stokes: College friends promise to keep in touch through a "circle journal"



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From the Youth Services Department

After a short break for the holidays, the Youth Services Department programs are back in full swing. The Triple T kids are having a great time competing in a variety of games. Harry Potter board games are a huge hit and have led to the constructing of wizarding wands and the creation of delicious butter beer straight out of the books. Miss Mary's story times continue to entertain and educate children under the age of five.

The groups recently celebrated Elmo's birthday with a special craft, "pin the nose on Elmo" game and even a sweet treat. The children loved singing happy birthday and wearing Elmo hats! Baby Sign was also a big success and we will be offering it again in the future. There will be special programs

during the school vacation weeks so remember to check the Youth Services website. The children in Miss Dawn's Saturday story group have been hearing some great stories and completing terrific crafts. Chess club has some new players so check out the competition.

Miss Mary and Miss Kathleen are grateful to our teen volunteers who help prepare the crafts, the parents, grandparents and other caregivers who help us move tables and hand out instruments and supplies. We are also thankful to Ryan and his mom who donated stickers for the children and Gabriella and her family who gave us paper for crafts. We are most grateful to the Friends of the Blackstone Library who continually support the children of Branford through their support of the programs and activities of the Youth Services Department.

The puppet house has a new look thanks to Megan who painted the house and Janet who sewed new curtains (see photo above). The children love to put on shows and entertain their parents and friends. The preschool room is a lot of

fun for children. There are puzzles, dress up toys, stuffed animals, Legos, a Thomas Train table and many other activities to engage children's imaginations. Many friendships are forged in this space. Children become good citizens as they learn to share with each other and clean up after themselves. It is happy place that the children and parents enjoy.



Calling all Young Adult library users, we want to know what you think and what you want. There are two ways to let us know. You can contact the Youth Services Department to join our Teen Advisory Board kfeeney@blackstone.lioninc.org which will meet once a month to discuss what books, magazines etc that you think we should be buying. We also will be placing book reviews in the Young Adult Room; take a look and let us know what books you'd like to see on your shelves! — Kathleen Feeney

Youth Services Librarian

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Editor: Deirdre Santora. Contributors: Kathy Rieger, Kathleen Feeney, Deirdre Santora, Alana Abbott.

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Reviewing the Newbery

Usually when the Newbery and Caldecott book awards roll around, I'm excited if I've read the book that the American Library Association has chosen for either award. This year, when I read that *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* had won the Caldecott, I was tickled that the first novel ever chosen was one that I'd read and enjoyed—a novel where the beautiful illustrations move the story forward without words between bursts of prose. Then I read further down my e-mail and realized that the Newbery had not only gone to a book that I'd read, but a book I'd had the privilege to review. For some months now, I've had the opportunity to review books for *School Library Journal*, oftentimes graphic novels or picture books about myths or martial arts, two of my particular interests. I was very lucky to receive *Good Masters, Sweet Ladies* in the mail as one of my assignments. Written by school librarian Laura Amy Schlitz, *Good Masters, Sweet Ladies* is a series of interconnected monologues from the point of view of children in the middle ages. She wrote it as part of a history unit, giving her students a chance to make history more real. "I wanted them to have something to perform," she explained in the book's introduction. Now, her students are sharing in the celebration of the medal. She told *Publishers Weekly*, "People were crying. I wore a plastic tiara all day. My school gave me a special ceremony in the gymnasium, the kids had cards, paper flowers and cards." And as for my connection with the book? I recommended it for a starred review (the highest accolade *School Library Journal* awards), and it was later selected by the editors as a best book selection for the year. So maybe, just maybe, I helped this outstanding book get noticed—and if so, I'm even prouder of the medal. It's exactly the kind of recognition that *Good Masters, Sweet Ladies* deserved to receive. Come up to the Youth Services Department and see it for yourself!

—Alana Abbott, Reference Assistant

Alana's review was printed in the August 1, 2007 issue of *School Library Journal* and is still available for viewing at www.schoollibraryjournal.com.

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which will circulate among them. They all promise to tell the truth, but none do, not wanting to share their failures and disappointments, over a thirty-year span.

☞**Kathy B.:** *Your Cat* by Elizabeth Hodgkins, DVM: This is an informative guide written by a veterinarian whose practice only includes cats. *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly* by Jean-Dominique Bauby: This is an amazing book that was just recently made into a movie by Julian Schnabel. Bauby describes his life after a stroke leaves him at the age of forty-three with locked-in syndrome. It is a condition that leaves people totally paralyzed—in Bauby's case, he has use of his left eye and “dictates” the entire book by blinking. His memoir “cultivate[s] the art of simmering memories.”

☞**Megan:** *Heart-shaped Box* by Joe Hill: This book was definitely a page turner. It kept me in suspense until the very end—a fantastic first novel by Stephen King's son. *Deceptively Delicious* by Jessica Seinfeld: Filled with yummy recipes, this book is a great way to take the fight out of food when it comes to the kids.

☞**Joanna:** *Dead in the Water* by Dana Stabenow: This is the third book in the Kate Shugak series about a Native American investigator in Alaska. In *Dead in the Water*, Kate is looking into the disappearance of two crew members from a fishing boat off the coast of Alaska. Stabenow introduces the reader to America's last frontier and

illuminates the struggle of Native Americans to retain their culture even when it clashes with the values of the outside world.

☞**Debby:** *Down River* by John Hart: A fast-paced thriller set in North Carolina. After a five-year absence, following his acquittal on a murder charge, Adam Chase returns to his hometown only to find himself once more at the center of a series of crimes.

☞**Barbara:** *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood* is Marjane Satrapi's memoir of growing up in Iran. In stark comic strip images, Satrapi tells the story of her life in Tehran from ages six to fourteen, years that saw the overthrow of the Shah's regime, the triumph of the Islamic Revolution, and the devastating effects of war with Iraq. Revealing and moving. *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* by Sherman Alexie: Based on the author's own experiences, this heartbreaking and clever story chronicles a year in the life of Arnold “Junior” Spirit who attempts to find his place in the world. Winner of 2007 National Book Award for Young People's Literature.

☞**Robert:** *The Great Influenza* by John M. Barry: I normally don't read historical epics, but this one is absolutely gripping. It recounts, in amazing detail, the 1918-1919 influenza pandemic, which very likely originated from a mutant virus that tore out of an army base in Kansas and wound up killing 100 million people, globally. The account covers the scientists who struggled to understand, and then to control, the epidemic, and the political climate in the U.S. during that time, which likely made the spread of the virus so much more likely to erupt into a pandemic.

Novel Ideas

Upcoming fiction releases include Jodi Picoult's *Change of Heart*, David Baldacci's *The Whole Truth*, Jennifer Weiner's *Certain Girls*, Nevada Barr's *Winter Study*, Louise Erdrich's *The Plague of Doves*, Donna Leon's *The Girl of His Dreams*. Area book groups have been reading *North River* by Pete Hamill, *Three Cups of Tea* by Greg Mortensen, *Shadow Divers* by Robert Kurson and *The Things They Carried* by Tim O'Brien. Oprah's Pick, *The Pillars of the Earth* by Ken Follett has been especially popular along with its sequel, *World Without End*. There has been renewed reader interest with the recent movie releases of *Atonement* by Ian McEwan, *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly* by Jean-Dominique Bauby, *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini, *I am Legend* by Richard Matheson and *Charlie Wilson's War* by George Crile. Pick up a copy of our reader's guide *Novels to Film*, researched and designed by Patricia G. for other book/flick ideas. The New Britain Museum of American Art's recent exhibition, *Pulp Art: The Robert Lesser Collection* featured an entertaining line of titles in concert with the original, and vivacious, pulp fiction paintings: Maiden's for Satan's Death Ray; Interplanetary Graveyard; Burn, Witch, Burn! A Fantasy of Devil Dolls. For a different take on the intersection of art and the printed word, there's still time to catch the comprehensive exhibit, *Metaphor Taking Shape: Poetry, Art and the Book* at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University.

☆ *Lights of* ☆
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Ho Gai Sai, Town of Branford Planning & Zoning.