



BETWEEN THE PAGES

Huntsville Public Library Monthly Newsletter

A Brief History of Summer Reading Programs

By Rachel McPhail, City Librarian

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What's been around about as long as the invention of the zipper, stop sign, Ferris wheel, and cotton candy? Summer Reading Programs in libraries!

The first recorded Summer Reading Program began in Cleveland in the late 1890s. According to a graduate paper by Stephanie Bertin (University of North Carolina), Cleveland librarian Linda Eastman created and distributed a list of the "best books suitable for children" to local schools. She noted an increase in circulations and library attendance. In 1897, she formally created the Cleveland Children's Library League. Essentially, her library purchased one thousand new books with the goal of teaching children to care for books properly, bring new users to the library, and help children find high quality literature. Admittedly, publicity for the library was another underlying goal and it worked! The League grew to over 12,000 members, at which point Eastman developed a multitude of book clubs that could be overseen by adults and teenagers. The League also started to meet year round. At this point, the other goals faded away while the primary goal of encouraging children to read during the summer and "stay off the streets" remained firmly in place. Children were encouraged to write down the names of their six favorite books to share with their peers, a precursor to the reading logs that many librarians still use today.

Eastman's ideas spread to other libraries, which primarily focused on promoting library services and teaching children to take care of books. Here are some of the more interesting trends libraries have used throughout the decades for their "reading clubs," "vacation reading programs," or "summer reading programs."

- Librarians visited playgrounds to tell stories and read books.
- Librarians published lists of recommended books for children. Some librarians allowed children to read only these books for the summer reading program while others allowed free choice.
- Public recognition was often a prize (completion certificate, special recognition at school, name in newspaper) or a sticker.



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- Librarians advocated for children by changing lending policies for the summer to allow children to check out more books at a time.
- Libraries collaborated with schools since librarians and teachers noticed greater reading scores and larger circulation numbers following the summer program.
- Some libraries required written tests, oral reports, or book reports to prove that the books were actually read.
- Some libraries had the goal of increasing circulation, promoting the library, or teaching children how to pick quality literature. Some critics complained that children were too focused on the process or the reward of summer reading and not the actual reading.
- Historical events such as the Great Depression and World War I had significant impact on summer reading programs such as limiting supplies that a library could use or changing the theme from the previously popular world travel to all things American.
- In the 1950s librarians started offering summer reading programs for young adults. 1960s librarians were encouraged to embrace short, simple programs as people were concerned that children's leisure time was already too structured. Previously, library programs were intended to occupy children's time. 1970s programs featured less reading by having children tend vegetable gardens, play softball, skateboard, learn to cook, and run races with library staff. Popular culture icons such as superheroes and Star Wars influenced summer reading themes.
- In the 1980s some libraries had children read books for the prize of earning time on the library's computers. In the 1990s, several articles were written questioning whether prizes were necessary. The critics stated that since rewards are often associated with something unpleasant, prizes are teaching children that reading is not something to be enjoyed.

It is interesting to note that summer reading program trends have varied with ideas and values fading in and out of fashion. Technology, social values, and current events definitively shaped the way libraries offered summer reading programs to their communities. The Huntsville Public Library is pleased to offer another summer of reading as we begin our 2022 program on June 22. More information will be posted on our website myhuntsvillelibrary.com.

What's in a Database?

By Mary Kokot, Adult Services Coordinator



**TexShare
Databases**

Sometimes it's just not possible to find all the right information or vocational resources in books. Or (gasp!) your library doesn't have the exact book or resource you need. In these cases, Learning Express Library can be a lifesaver. This collection of online educational and career resources is included with Huntsville Public Library's TexShare subscription and available to you!

EBSCO LearningExpress®

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The site is beneficial not only to students, but also to adults exploring various career options. Some of the practice exams available are EMT, firefighting, and other various social worker and health certification examinations, including nursing (NCLEX). Perhaps a career in the civil service appeals to you. There is content for local, state, and federal exams available to study, including postal workers. Other practice exams for occupations such as Military (ASVAB), education, air traffic control, or law enforcement might appeal to you. Or perhaps you prefer something in the personal service arena such as hospitality, real estate or cosmetology. There's even up-to-date material to help you study for the GED, college preparatory examinations, commercial driving exam, and many more. E-books and tutorials round out this fantastic online resource. Users create their own private user name and password. Only the user has access to the results of their progress and quiz/exam results.

Any student or parent conducting research should consult the Gale and EBSCO databases. Access is available to hundreds of full text journals, magazines, newspapers, encyclopedias and reference books. Recently, I surprised myself and helped a patron find a specific article from a September 1989 issue of Atlantic Monthly! Also included in our TexShare subscription are historical and genealogical resources, health and medical resources, and do-it-yourself reference centers. EBSCO offers Explora, a colorful and informative homework assistance database for elementary and high school age children. Be sure to check out these databases at www.myhuntsvillelibrary.com next time you go online.

June is National Aquarium Month



By Josh Sabo, IT Services Coordinator



I have been fishkeeping for several years now and only just recently realized June is National Aquarium Month! It seems like the perfect time to discuss the wonders of the home aquarium and how rewarding it is to set up and maintain an aquarium.

My first tank was a 10 gallon freshwater betta tank. Within a year, I upgraded to a 30 gallon freshwater community aquarium with mollies, gouramis and, my personal favorite, upside down catfish. These fish are interesting because they spend their lives swimming upside down. Shortly thereafter, I started my first saltwater tank. I originally intended it to be a "fish only" tank but quickly threw myself into the world of coral and reefkeeping. After years of trial and error, I finally learned to maintain a stable ecosystem in my aquariums and to keep some fascinating and beautiful fish and invertebrates. These included clownfish, tangs, shrimp, sea urchins, crabs, and starfish, among others.

I would closely monitor my water parameters to make sure I was keeping the water quality stable enough for all the living organisms in the glass box in my living room. I grew to love watching how all the fish interact with their environment and with each other. They develop personalities and you get to know them very well. The reason I write in past tense is because, unfortunately, I lost both of my aquariums due to below freezing temperatures and multiple days without power during the February 2021 winter storm.



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One of the best parts of keeping an aquarium is learning things from multiple fields of science such as chemistry, biology, and ecology. It is also an excellent exercise in patience. This is because the initial setup process takes about a month before you can even put any fish in safely. Additionally, you can never make any drastic changes to the aquarium. Every change you make must be gradual or the tank will become unstable and, therefore, unsafe for the fish. The most important thing to learn when starting an aquarium is referred to in

the hobby as “cycling” the tank. This means understanding and establishing a nitrogen cycle in the tank. Without this, there would be no bacteria to convert the fish waste into nitrates and the fish would effectively drown in their own waste. These bacteria colonies are collectively referred to as the “bio-filter,” which is already well-established in natural bodies of water that contain fish and invertebrates. The bio-filter is used in tandem with physical filter media that should be changed regularly. A physical filter media can be anything from plain filter fiber, such as polyester pads that trap large debris, to more complicated things such as bio pellets or even using good algae to fight bad algae. The second most important thing to master is how to perform partial water changes regularly. A partial water change removes fish waste as well as nitrates (converted waste) from the aquarium and provides fresh, new water for the fish. At high levels, nitrates are harmful to fish and, even at low levels, are very harmful to invertebrates, so you can understand how important it is to have a balanced ecosystem.

The library has a very well-kept (by me) 40 gallon freshwater aquarium! We currently have five white skirt tetras, two zebra loaches, two neon blue dwarf gouramis, two dalmatian mollies, and a rubber-lipped pleco in the tank. Come check them out if you haven’t seen them yet!

Huntsville Public Library also has several books if you’re looking to learn more about the aquarium hobby, or just more about aquatic life in general. I personally recommend *The Inspired Aquarium: Ideas and Instructions for Living With Aquariums* by Jeff Senske and *Starting Your Marine Aquarium* by David Boruchowitz. These are a great place to start if you are interested in getting into the hobby.

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Register yourself by logging in to ReadSquared, which is accessible as an app or a website

Visit www.myhuntsvillelibrary.com and follow us on social media to see all of the summer programs we have planned!