



# the *Library Insider*

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*Courtesy of the US  
Department of Agriculture*

## “Dust, Drought, and Dreams Gone Dry”

Pasadena Public Library has won the privilege of displaying a remarkable exhibit about the drought and dust storms of the 1930s that spurred many Great Plains families to migrate to California. The six-week exhibit may be viewed in the Great Hall at Central Library from September 1 until October 9.

The traveling exhibit, called “Dust, Drought, and Dreams Gone Dry,” will tour 25 public and academic libraries over a two-year period. Pasadena is the lone California site selected by the American Library Association (ALA) Public Programs Office. The exhibit is financed in part by a major grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

ALA developed the project with the Oklahoma State University Library and the Mount Holyoke College Library. Mount Holyoke owns letters, essays and articles by Caroline Henderson, who farmed throughout the period; the Oklahoma library holds *Women in the Dust Bowl* oral histories.

ALA said the project was inspired in part by *The Dust Bowl*, the Ken Burns film. The Friends of the Pasadena Public Library will show the Burns film in two parts (on September 3 and September 10) during its *Films for All Ages* program on Wednesdays at 1 p.m. in the Donald R. Wright Auditorium at Central Library. The Friends present *The Grapes of Wrath* on September 17, and *Bound for Glory* on September 24 in the same location. For information about other programs related to the exhibit, visit the library website at <http://www.ci.pasadena.ca.us/library>.

## 2014 Summer Reading Challenge Attracts nearly 4,500 participants

The Pasadena Public Library staff has tallied the numbers: 379 teens and 3,383 children registered for the June 7-August 3 reading programs. The number of teens nearly doubled from the previous summer, while participation among children up to 12 years of age declined by approximately 500. The trend may reflect citywide demographic changes, said Catherine Haskett Hany, the library’s communications director.

New to the summer offerings: an adult program, sponsored by The Friends of the Pasadena Public Library. In addition to reading books, participants were encouraged to explore more of the library’s resources by visiting a different branch; attending a program; checking out an electronic book; borrowing a CD or DVD or visiting The Friends’ bookstore at Central. Such activities—logged weekly in an online account—qualified participants for raffles. We’re happy to learn that the challenge drew 704 adults!

Don’t Miss  
the Gala!  
September 14th  
Central Library.

*See page 4*

# Curious about Book Clubs? Test the waters

Some enthusiastic readers have “commitment” issues when it comes to books or clubs. Check the appropriate boxes if you

- Have a variety of books you’re reading at any given time
- Cannot predict your work or family schedule
- Hate the notion of being told what or when to read for pleasure
- Hesitate to make a commitment that you fear you may regret or not keep
- Feel compelled to repair/remodel/redecorate before opening your home to a group

Whew! We understand angst, but there is good news for those want to dip a toe in the reading-club pool. It is possible to sample book clubs and reading circles without risking friendships or taking on a second mortgage.

Perhaps the most obvious resource is the most overlooked. Public libraries often host book discussions that do not even require you to buy the selected titles. The Pasadena Public Library currently hosts seven groups that meet on a monthly basis. For the schedule, consult the library’s *Off the Shelf* newsletter, available in all branches or online at [www.ci.pasadena.ca.us/library/news\\_events/newsletter/](http://www.ci.pasadena.ca.us/library/news_events/newsletter/).

Jeanne Leonhard discovered the group at the San Rafael branch five years ago. She was newly retired from teaching in Arcadia, but she had other obligations that made her unsure she could commit to a reading club. She took someone’s suggestion to read a few of the group’s selections on her own. After two books, she began attending the discussions. She’s now joined at the table by Maureen O’Brien, a friend and former

colleague. Another regular: Pasadena librarian Zyrel Rojo, who decided to join after he began working at the branch.

If the group at the San Rafael branch is typical, the atmosphere is welcoming and the price is right. Books are selected from a list of “kits” that reserve multiple copies of a single title for library-hosted reading groups. (For the current selections, see page 3). There are limitations, of course. Current bestsellers are not available; the kits favor older titles and the San Rafael group has nearly exhausted the Pasadena Public Library’s list. The San Rafael readers are enterprising, however. They’re tapping the resources of the Glendale Public Library, which has a generous book kit program, and they also have ideas of how to obtain newer titles. One suggestion: One City, One Story committee members who screen books for the annual program in Pasadena might donate their copies to create kits of fresh titles.



Three members of the San Rafael reading group (from left): Zyrel Rojo, Maureen O’Brien and Jeanne Leonhard

Local bookstores certainly embrace book-club readers, often offering book discounts or organizing an on-site group. Pasadena is fortunate to have a renowned independent bookseller in Vroman’s, which currently hosts six “in-store” reading groups devoted to genres ranging from mystery to Shakespeare. On its website

## What’s on Your Nightstand?

As The Friends co-host a September fundraiser to restore Central Library’s southern façade, thoughts turn to people in Pasadena who work tirelessly to document and preserve historic homes and landmarks. Their ranks include activists, architects, archivists, and artisans—and that’s just the start of an alphabetized list! What do they like to read?

*The Library Insider* posed the question to Sue Mossman, the executive director of Pasadena Heritage, and to archivist Tim Gregory, who has served previously on that organization’s board. Mossman says her nightstand is piled high because she loves books. Reading, she says, is a blissful way to end most days or to take a break from her work that is “almost all-consuming.” She has been on staff at the non-profit historic preservation organization for 36 of its 37 years, working to save endangered buildings and help people restore their historic treasures.

It’s no surprise that both are library patrons. Indeed, public library management was Gregory’s first career. He worked in Beverly Hills and Newport Beach before launching his Pasadena-based research business in 1992. Gregory has since prepared more than 2,500 property histories for homeowners and real estate firms, earning his moniker: “The Building Biographer.”



Tim Gregory

“I am finally getting around to reading the Harry Potter books and can see why everyone got so hooked on them,” Gregory said. “In between volumes I’ve been ‘cleansing my palate’ with *Frozen Music* edited by David Chu.”

(continued page 5)



## before taking the plunge.

([www.vromansbookstore.com](http://www.vromansbookstore.com)), Vroman's posts the meeting times and the titles selected for the current and upcoming months. The bookseller says it also rents a room to private book clubs for a modest fee. The Vroman's website offers some great tips—attributed to Random House Publishers—if you want to start a club of your own.

Meanwhile, “clubs” aren't the only way to go. Have you heard of “circles”? Reader's Circle, Inc., a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, defines a circle as “a book club where people attend with whatever they're reading. The only structure is if participants decide to have an ‘optional book.’ Otherwise, people just bring their own books, articles, magazines, and conversation goes from there.” The organization's website ([www.readerscircle.org](http://www.readerscircle.org)) offers a search function, by postal zip code, to locate existing book groups or parties eager to start one.

Think a book discussion goes better with wine? Some bars and restaurants eagerly accommodate groups. If breakfast is more to your liking, you can find that, too. Literary Affairs, a Beverly Hills firm headed by Julie Robinson, currently features on its website ([www.literaryaffairs.net](http://www.literaryaffairs.net)) a monthly “drop-in” book group at Café Chez Marie (west of Century City in Los Angeles) that includes a continental breakfast for the \$40 admission. Book selections are posted in advance; discussions are led by one of the firm's facilitators.

Readers beware: don't assume a book group still meets in the tony bar described in an older news story or web posting. Do your research and call ahead.

Finally, you might give an online group a try. It might suit your schedule or other needs. As you explore, you'll appreciate other readers' odysseys in the book club world. Major newspapers and magazines have published some humorous or thoughtful accounts in the past year.

Judy Abel, writing in the Fashion & Style section of *The New York Times* (September 20, 2013), eyed online clubs favorably after she fled a heated exchange in her Manhattan reading group. “I had long dismissed online book clubs, believing they lacked the intimacy and spontaneity of in-person get-togethers and that they were the terrain of quiet loners who feared eye contact and physical closeness,” Abel wrote. “These days I've come to think book club intimacy is largely overrated and, depending on who's on the other end, eye contact can be quite terrifying.”

James Atlas—also writing in *The New York Times* (March 22, 2014)—acknowledged the time demands of reading club-selected books, but he praised the communal experience. “Reading is a solitary act, an experience of interiority. To read a book is to burst the confines of one's consciousness and enter another world. What happens when you read a book in the company of others? You enter its world together but see it in your own way; and it's through sharing those differences of perception that the book group acquires its emotional power.”

John Kelly, a *Washington Post* columnist, recently wrote of a Maryland women's book club that has met for 51 years (surviving an early and tense debate of *The Feminine Mystique*, Betty Friedan's 1963 book that decried the fulltime homemaker's life). The Maryland group initially met in the evenings after children were put to bed; now its aging members gather at 10 a.m.

Who knows? You may find or form an enduring group. If so, tell *The Library Insider* a bit about your club and list the books you're reading. Email us at [friendsppl@yahoo.com](mailto:friendsppl@yahoo.com), with “clubs” in the subject line.

—Katie Harris

## What the Book Clubs Are Reading at San Rafael Branch

Julia Child with Alex Prud'Homme, *My Life in France* (September)

Barbara Kingsolver, *The Bean Trees* (October)

Mark Haddon, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* (November)

Sue Monk Kidd, *The Mermaid Chair* (December)

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email at [friendsppl@yahoo.com](mailto:friendsppl@yahoo.com)



# A Word from The Friends' president

Our organization is participating directly in a number of exciting events in the fall of 2014. We thank our loyal members for their volunteer hours and cash contributions, which make it possible for The Friends to support specific programs of the Pasadena Public Library. Here are some of the highlights!

On September 4, The Friends host a 6 p.m. reception at Central, prior to a 7 p.m. program featuring Marisa Silver, the Los Angeles filmmaker-turned-author who has published two collections of short stories and three novels. Her most recent work, *Mary Coin*, won the 2013 Southern California Independent Bookseller's Award.

On September 14, The Friends co-host a gala with the Pasadena Public Library Foundation to raise funds to restore the southern façade of Central Library. The event is a cocktail party from 5 to 7 p.m. in Central Library's Great Hall at 285 East Walnut Street. We are pleased to help conserve one of the more beautiful features of Central Library, designed by Myron Hunt, the architect noted for such other landmarks as the Rose Bowl and the Henry E. Huntington mansion and library in San Marino. Tickets (\$130 per person) are available for purchase through the Pasadena Community Foundation website at [www.pasadenacf.org](http://www.pasadenacf.org).

On October 10, our organization helps underwrite ArtNight at Central Library. Local authors and artists will be on hand from 6 to 10 p.m., with a variety of activities for all ages.

October 19-25 marks the ninth annual National Friends of Libraries Week. It's an excellent time to renew your membership or become a first-time member in our local organization, which is celebrating its 39th year!

On Saturday, November 1, The Friends host a 2 p.m. reception at Central, prior to the 3 p.m. appearance of author Lisa See, whose ninth book, *China Dolls*, was published by Random House earlier this year.

To honor the library's enduring history and importance in our community, The Friends agreed to contribute \$3,000 to a special event on November 15 that will mark the culmination of the library's yearlong celebration called "130 Years of Reading." Library administrators say daylong activities will be patterned after a county fair. Come one, come all!

—Joan F. Cathcart

## Friends Shop at Vroman's



Pasadena's independent bookseller has a marvelous "Gives Back" program that returns a portion of in-store purchases to local nonprofits—and our organization is one! Please designate The Friends of the Pasadena Public Library as the charity that you wish to benefit. Not yet a member of the Vroman's Gives Back program? Enroll at a store register, or sign up online at [www.vromansbookstore.com](http://www.vromansbookstore.com). Make every purchase count!

### Central Library 626.744.4066

285 East Walnut Street  
Mon - Thurs 9:00 am - 9:00 pm  
Fri and Sat 9:00 am - 6:00 pm  
Sunday 1:00 pm - 5:00 pm

### Allendale Branch 626.744.7260

1130 South Marengo  
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1355 North Raymond Ave.  
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### Linda Vista Branch 626.744.7278

1281 Bryant Street  
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### San Rafael Branch 626.744.7270

1260 Nithsdale Road  
Mon - Thurs & Sat 10 am - 6 pm  
Fri 10 am - 2 pm

### Santa Catalina Branch 626.744.7272

999 E. Washington Blvd.  
Mon - Thurs & Sat 10 am - 6 pm  
Fri 2 - 6 pm

### Villa Parke Branch 626.744.6510

363 E. Villa Street  
Mon - Fri 10 am - 6 pm  
Sat 9 am - 1 pm



# What's on Your Nightstand (continued from page 2)

Published in 2010, *Frozen Music: A Literary Exploration of California Architecture* uses excerpts of essays, poems, novels and memoirs to tell the story of California's diverse architecture from the earliest missions to present day.

Gregory said he's also reading *A Place of Hiding* by Elizabeth George. "I find her mysteries to be very gripping, but this one, set in Santa Barbara and the island of Guernsey—my two favorite places in the world—is the best so far!"

As for Pasadena's Central Library? Gregory knows it inside and out. He lists some of its resources that he most values: old city directories, biographical files and other resources in the Centennial Room, architecture periodicals (such as *The Architectural Digest*) in the basement, older biographical compilations (most of which are now in storage, he says regretfully), and online sources like the Gale Biographical and Genealogy Master Index, the *Los Angeles Times* Historical Archives, the Pasadena News Index, and Sanborn Maps.

Mossman, describing Central as a "special place," said she loves every opportunity to experience its tranquility and beauty. Although she owns a Kindle, she said she prefers to browse among shelves and hold books in her hands. An avid mystery fan, she also reads a mix of other fiction and biography. She buys some of her books at The Friends' bookstore at Central and in other library used-book shops. With the help of the U.S. postal system, she also exchanges books with a sister, brother and sister-in-law who live in Ann Arbor, Michigan. ("Thank goodness for media mail rates!" she said.)

Among her recent favorites, Mossman cited three novels. *The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy is "well worth reading for the story but perhaps even more for the beautiful, original language," she said. "I found myself reading lines and paragraphs over and over again, just for the sound of them—a simply stunning book."

She chose Nancy Horan's *Loving Frank* because of the subject, Frank Lloyd Wright. A work of historical fiction, the 2008 book draws on Wright's autobiography, newspaper accounts and some private letters to tell the story of Wright's romance with Mamah Borthwick Cheney. Their affair made headlines in 1909 when the two bolted from Chicago—and their respective spouses and children—to live in Europe, then Wisconsin. "I thought I knew something of his life as well as his revolutionary architectural design, but this book made



Sue Mossman

him and Mamah, his mistress, come alive for me. I never imagined this relationship to be understandable, but it became more so as I read this book, and I never before knew much about the tragic end of her life," Mossman said.

*The Lock Artist*, an offbeat thriller by Steven Hamilton, is "perhaps the book that stands out most" among the titles she read in recent years, Mossman said. "I'm not sure why it caught my eye, but once I started reading it, I couldn't stop, and I've shared copies and copies with friends and family. I just loved it. It was pure fun, a fast read, but very satisfying too."

Mossman's eye is discerning. A year after its 2010 publication, *The Lock Artist* won three prestigious awards: an "Edgar" for Best Novel, the "Ian Fleming Steel Dagger" awarded by the Crime Writers' Association for the best thriller published in the United Kingdom, and an "Alex," awarded annually by the American Library Association to ten books written for adults that have special appeal to young adults.

—Katie Harris

## Hear the Voice of Women in American Poetry

Cyrus Cassells, Carol Muske-Dukes and Maggie Nelson are the guest speakers in the Pasadena segment of the Poetry Society of America's 2014 national series. On Thursday, September 18, these contemporary poets will discuss the influence and work of three 20th century poets and read poems of their own.

The program, co-sponsored by the Pasadena Public Library, begins at 7 p.m. in Central's Donald Wright Auditorium. Admission is free.

Maggie Nelson, a faculty member of CalArts who has authored nine books of poetry and prose, will speak about Eileen Myles. Carol Muske-Dukes, founder of the PhD program in Creative Writing/Literature at USC, will discuss Ina Coolbrith. Cyrus Cassells, who teaches poetry at the Texas State University-San Marcos, will speak about Ai, the late poet who was named Florence Anthony at birth but legally changed her name to a Japanese word meaning love.



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The mission of The Friends is to support the library's programs, special services and cultural events. Priority is given to projects that instill the excitement of discovery and the love reading in library patrons of all ages.

### *The Friends'* Upcoming Book Sales

Saturdays  
September 13,  
October 11 &  
November 8

#### Central Library's East Patio

If you wish to donate books to The Friends' monthly sales to help raise funds for library programs, you may deposit books in the Book Drop container on the loading dock next to Central Library's north entrance.

Donations may also be left inside at the Circulation Desk or in The Friends' book store during store hours (11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday).

Need help with your donation?  
Call us at 626.744.4680

All donations are tax-deductible.  
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The Friends thank you!



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