2022

Staff Picks

Check out our favorite books, movies and more!



1

Adult Fiction

Daisy Darker by Alice Feeney

Alice Feeney is one of my favorite authors, partly because her twists are hard for me to predict. She really sucked me in with this title! The ending was something I couldn't predict.

-Stephanie, Information Services Librarian





Embroideries by Marjane Satrapi

Satrapi is more widely know for Persepolis, a graphic memoir growing up during the Islamic Revolution. Embroideries is a day of tea and gossip with an adult Satrapi, her mother, and their friends. I loved this story because it reminded me of my own mother and friends and is a reminder that no matter what side of the globe we live on, we have a lot more in common than we might think.

-Bianca, Fairmount Branch Supervisor

The Great Believers by Rebecca Makkai This is the story of Yale, Fiona and their group of friends during the AIDS crisis in Chicago in the 1980's. Yale is acquiring a new collection for his art gallery. However, there is heartbreak as their friends die from AIDS. Fiona and other survivors are in Paris in contemporary times and the effects of the AIDS crisis are felt by the survivors.



-Rachel, Information Services Librarian



The Idiot by Fyodor Dostoyevsky

In spite of its flaws, there is something really compelling in Dostoevsky's depiction of "a completely beautiful human being" attempting to navigate the political, psychological, and social complexities of the upper classes in 19th century St. Petersburg.

-Wes, Customer Services Senior Clerk



Lucy by the Sea by Elizabeth Strout

As a panicked world goes into lockdown, Lucy Barton is uprooted from her life in Manhattan and bundled away to a small town in Maine by her ex-husband and longtime friend, William. I was happy to find a new book in this series. I really enjoyed finding out what happened with Lucy during the pandemic.

-Joanna, Cataloger Librarian

My Year of Rest and Relaxation by Ottessa Moshfegh

This novel feels like Catcher in the Rye for melancholy millennial women. The nameless narrator literally sleeps for a year and still this book is one of the most thoughtprovoking books I've read in recent memory.



-Claire, Information Services Librarian



Remarkably Bright Creatures by Shelby Van Pelt

A lovely story about the unlikely friendship between an octopus living at the Sowell Bay Aquarium and the elderly widow cleaning lady. Both heartbreaking and uplifting, a story of love and grief, friendship and loyalty, healing and sacrifice.

-Ann, Information Services Librarian

The Rose Code by Kate Quinn

Based on true events, this is the story of code breakers that worked at Bletchley Park during World War II. Three women from very different backgrounds are quartered at a nearby house. The book follows these women as they form friendships, fall in love and their struggles trying to break codes.



-Rachel, Information Services Librarian

The Rosie Project by Graeme Simsion

Don has decided that it is time to find a significant other. After drafting a perfect match checklist, a young woman quite the opposite of what Don is looking for enters his life. This love story is beautiful and sweet, I loved it very much.



-Brittany, Community Outreach & Marketing Supervisor



Sourdough by Robin Sloan

As society slides into dystopia, we need more books like this that show a relatable journey toward a fulfilling, happy life. Addictive, funny, and charming, with characters you come to love like family.

-Callen, Information Services Librarian

Such a Fun Age by Kiley Reid

Alix has just moved from New York City to Philadelphia. She hires a babysitter named Emira, who is an African American college graduate. After a racist incident at the store, Alix tries to befriend Emira but Emira only regards Alix as her employer. Little do the two women know that someone that they are both connected to will threaten to undo them both.



-Rachel, Information Services Librarian



Tomorrow, and Tomorrow, and Tomorrow by Gabrielle Zevin

An enthralling story of the decades that two friends spend together designing video games. I could not put it down!

-Lexie, Assistant Director



We Were the Lucky Ones by Georgia Hunter A multi-generational Jewish family in Poland try to live normal lives even as the shadow of war overtakes them in 1939. Scattered across Europe and facing multiple threats, the family struggles to survive and reunite.

-Ann, Information Services Librarian

When Gracie Met the Grump by Mariana Zapata

Zapata's characters are deliciously imperfect. In this story the two main characters appear to have nothing in common. As the story progresses you see how, despite economic and other world differences, their internal fears and goals are very similar.



-Amy, Archivist

Horror

The Only Good Indians by Stephen Graham Jones

Four hunters discover a herd of elk. Their decision that day has lasting repercussions. A gut wrenching horror novel.

-Joe, Youth Services Library Assistant

If you seek tearjerking horror stories and find them few and far between, look no further than this reimagining of the American Indian Deer Woman legend. It had me spellbound from start to finish.



-Nikki, Technical Services Clerk



We Have Always Lived in the Castle by Shirley Jackson

We Have Always Lived in the Castle is so weird and beautifully written, the whole reading experience is like a fever dream about murder and gardening. I loved every second of it.

-Claire, Information Services Librarian

Mystery

The Bullet that Missed by Richard Osman This is the 3rd book in the Thursday Murder Club series. The characters are quirky and the story kept my interest. I like that with each book in the series we are learning more about the 4 main characters - Elizabeth, Joyce, Ron, and Ibrahim.



-Merideth, Technical Services Supervisor



A Death, a Duke, and Miss Mifford by Claudia Stone

What can go wrong with a cozy mystery set in the Regency period? Nice character development in the start of this fun series.

-Amy, Archivist

Devil's Chew Toy by Rob Osler

Warm-hearted and exciting, this is a captivating mystery and a love letter to the LGBTQ community -- and I was utterly obsessed from the first page.



-Callen, Information Services Librarian



Finlay Donovan is Killing It by Elle Cosimano Mom with a minivan solving crimes!

-Stephanie, Information Services Librarian



The Marlow Murder Club by Robert Thorogood

The main character witnesses a murder but the police don't believe her. So, she decides to investigate. This is a mystery with a lot of twists and turns and some humor. There are interesting female characters, three of whom form an unlikely friendship while trying to solve the mystery. I really liked the antics of the characters. It reminds me some of the Thursday Murder Club series as the main character is in her 70s.



-Merideth, Technical Services Supervisor



Thursday Murder Club by Richard Osman This book came highly recommended by many staff. I adored it. A group of elderly peope at a retirement village get together to investiage unsolved murders in the Thursday Murder Club!

-Stephanie, Information Services Librarian

Under Lock and Skeleton Key: A Secret Staircase Mystery by Gigi Pandian

This is a locked room mystery. I liked the characters and learning their background information. The architecture of the hidden rooms was interesting. There were 2 puzzles to this mystery - who did it and how the body got locked in the room.



-Merideth, Technical Services Supervisor

Romance



The Cheat Sheet by Sarah Adams This is a light, fluffy, clean romantic comedy with fun characters.

-Merideth, Technical Services Supervisor

Delilah Green Doesn't Care by Ashley Herring Blake

A fun, steamy queer romance about Delilah, a jaded New Yorker who reluctantly goes back to visit her small hometown and gets more than she bargained for when she meets sweet single mom Claire. This has tons of heart and a delightful cast of characters!



-Lexie, Assistant Director



Love on the Brain by Ali Hazelwood I love these very thinly-veiled "Adam Driver is actually much nicer than you would think, and, by the way, did I mention he is TALL?!" fanfics, and I would read fifty more of them. Plus, Hazelwood's message of support for women in STEM is a cherry on top of this cake.

-Nikki, Technical Services Clerk

The Perfect Crimes of Marian Hayes by Cat Sebastian

A historical romance in which Marian, a duchess fleeing town after murdering her evil husband, slowly falls in love with Rob, the Robin Hood-style criminal she kidnapped after he blackmailed her. Funny, charming, sweet, impossible to put down!



-Lexie, Assistant Director

Science Fiction/Fantasy

The Priority of the Orange Tree by Samantha Shannon

So beautiful, intricate, detailed, diverse, and hopeful that it takes your breath away. It immerses you in a different world and so many things happen you feel you've lived a lifetime when you're done - but you won't want it to end.



-Callen, Information Services Librarian



Under the Whispering Door by TJ Klune A beautiful story about a man whose life doesn't really begin until he dies. A compelling cast of characters and a moving story about fully living and found family.

-Lexie, Assistant Director

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Nonfiction



1000 Years of Joys and Sorrows by Ai Weiwei

Hailed as "an eloquent and seemingly unsilenceable voice of freedom" by The New York Times, Ai Weiwei has written a sweeping memoir that presents a remarkable history of China over the last hundred years while also illuminating his artistic process. (Goodreads)

-Cristina, Special Collections Principal Clerk

The Art of Gathering by Priya Parker

A surprisingly interesting book about the most boring of topics: meetings. This book shares examples of how to make every meeting productive and maybe enjoyable, whether it's a business meeting, meeting a friend for coffee, or even a funeral.



-Beth, Technical Services Acquisitions Clerk



The Facemaker by Lindsey Fitzharris Never sensationalist, this book reveals not only the terror of trench warfare, but the terrible price paid by the wounded and the incredible devotion of the doctors and nurses to heal them.

-Ann, Information Services Librarian

It is Good. It is Written by Aubs A collection of poems by a new and talented author (Goodreads).

-Cristina, Special Collections Principal Clerk



Joe Gould's Teeth by Jill Lepore

In Joe Gould's Teeth, Jill Lepore finds herself on a hunt to find out the truth about Gould and the mystery of his lost life's work, An Oral History of Our Time, which was supposedly the longest book ever written.



-Amber, Youth Services Librarian



Just a Thought by Amy Johnson I enjoyed learning about how the mind works and ways we can grow our positivity and experience more joy.

-Joanna, Cataloger Librarian

Just Mercy by Bryan Stevenson

An eye-opening look at the American justice system as Stevenson fights to prove the innocence of a man on death row. Corruption and racism are rampant, but the book is ultimately hopeful. Compulsviely readable.



-Ann, Information Services Librarian



A Life in Light by Mary Pipher

Lyrical and philosophical essays about growing up with unconventional parents, coming of age during the 60's counterculture, becoming a famous writer and now, coping with the challenges of aging. Pipher, a psychologist, has chronicled the female journey, from Reviving Ophelia to Women Rowing North.

-Lynn, Information Services Libarian

Maid by Stephanie Land

In this memoir, Stephanie Land shows her struggles navigating poverty while raising a young child. Land writes with clarity and strength.

-Beth, Technical Services Clerk





Nöthin' But a Good Time by Richard Bienstock & Tom Beaujour Never has debauchery been so humanizing. Covering every major (and not so major) of the glam metal bands, this oral history was definitely one of my favorite reads.

-Joe, Youth Services Library Assistant

These Precious Days by Ann Patchett I love Ann Patchett's insights and her writing style. My favorite essay is "These precious days". but all are definitely worth reading.

-Joanna, Cataloger Librarian





Unmasked by Paul Holes

A first memoir from the cold case investigator who helped apprehend the Golden State Killer in 2018. This is the antidote to hardened cop stories.

-Nikki, Technical Services Clerk

The Voice in the Mountains by Peggy Jackson & Chris Armagost This account follows the abduction and survival of Peggy Ann Bradnick in 1966. It also explores her survival and journey after her rescue which is just as interesting.



-Amy, Archivist



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Audiobooks



The Anthropocene Reviewed by John Green

This essay collection feels like a friend in the most tender and sincere way. John Green managed to give me permission to sit in my hopelessness about the world but in a way that made me feel less alone. The audiobook also has some really profound additions that are not included in the physical version. I think about some of these essays nearly every day, a signifier of a truly wonderful book.

-Claire, Information Services Librarian

Just Mercy by Bryan Stevenson

Bryan Stevenson is the founder of The Equal Justice initiative and Just Mercy is his journey as a new lawyer working endless hours to save inmates on death row. Stevenson sheds much needed light on American judicial system and the stories of those who the system has failed. It is an absolute must read.



-Bianca, Fairmount Branch Supervisor



The Lincoln Highway by Amor Towles Highly recommend listening to the audio version by Edoardo Ballerini as he truly brings alive the unique voices of Towles' amazing characters. I was engaged from page 1 and the plot never dulled with an ending, for better or worse, I absolutely didn't see coming.

-Bianca, Fairmount Branch Supervisor

Local Woman Missing by Mary Kubica Meredeth and her 6 year old daughter go missing shortly after a local woman disappears during her evening jog. Are they connected? 11 years later, a young girl held captive escapes and is believed to be Meredeth's daughter. What happened that day? Where has she been? Told in last and present tense, Kubica had me constantly guessing!



-Brittany, Community Outreach & Marketing Supervisor



Pride and Premeditation by Tirzah Price

In this retelling of Pride and Prejudice, Price weaves the tale of Lizzie Bennett who is trying desperately to pave a way for herself in a world where women are to marry and bear children. Working for her father, a solicitor, Lizzie is tasked with proving a man's innocence in a murder case to earn a spot in her father's law firm.

-Brittany, Community Outreach & Marketing Supervisor

Rosaline Palmer Takes the Cake

by Alexis Hall

Great British Baking Show in romance novel form! This book was everything I never knew that I needed!

-Brittany, Community Outreach & Marketing Supervisor





Taste by Stanley Tucci

A must-read for those with Italian heritage or for anyone whose life has been shaped significantly by their experiences with food. I laughed out loud at the parallels between Tucci's family and mine.

-Nikki, Technical Services Clerk

Graphic Novels



Chainsaw Man by Tatsuki Fujimoto Part 1 already has a reputation among its fanbase of being "peak fiction" - an assessment that even I as something of a fiction snob am hard-pressed to disagree with - and so far the second part is delivering chapters of the same (if not higher) quality.

-Wes, Customer Services Clerk

Crimson Cage by John Leese & Alex Cormack Ric Flair meets MacBeth in 80s Louisiana in this fabulous comic series (now collected). I'd also recommend Do A Powerbomb by Daniel Warren Johnson, my current favorite ongoing comic.



-Joe, Youth Services Library Assistant



Hakim's Odyssey by Fabien Toulme

This graphic novel draws the reader into the life of a Syrian refugee. Hakim's Odyssey offers a beautiful glimpse into how one person finds themselves in one of the unluckiest of situations. It opened my mind and my heart. Vol 2 pub. 3/22; Vol 3 10/22

-Brenda, Information Services Librarian

The Parakeet by Espe

This graphic novel deals with the heavy issue of parental mental illness from the viewpoint of a child. I appreciated the unflinching portrayal of a difficult topic.

-Holly, Youth Services Library Assistant



Sheets by Brenna Thumbler

The color pallete, the story, the charactersit's all so lovely and cozy!

-Claire, Information Services Librarian





Super Late Bloomer by Julia Kaye Kaye is an artist and illustrator who chronicled her transition through sketches and comic strips.

-Bianca, Fairmount Branch Supervisor

Young Adult

Ain't Burned All the Bright

by Jason Reynolds & Jason Griffin A piece of art in book form. This gorgeously illustrated YA title deals with a Black family living during the tumultuous year of 2020. Both heart-rending and uplifting.



-Holly, Youth Services Library Assistant



Augusta Savage by Marilyn Nelson A slim biography told in verse about the art and life of Augusta Savage, a leader in the Harlem Renaissance.

-Amber, Youth Services Librarian





Code Name Verity by Elizabeth Wein

An older book about two women working as spies for the Allies during World War II. When one is captured, it seems that, after being mercilessly tortured, she will give up her fellow compatriots. Simply amazing.

-Ann, Information Services Librarian

The Firekeeper's Daughter by Angeline Boulley

Daunis must balance protecting her Ojibwe community while working as a witness to a murder and drug investigation.



-Beth, Technical Services Acquisitions Clerk



Himawari House by Harmony Becker Such a lovely graphic novel about a sharehouse of young people from different countries studying and working in Tokyo! If I never make it to visit Japan, at least I have read this book.

-Amber, Youth Services Librarian

I Kissed Shara Wheeler by Casey McQuiston High-school student Chloe's nemesis Shara

high-school student Chloe's nemesis Shara kisses her out of nowhere and then disappears. It's thrilling to discover the pieces to the puzzle along with Chloe as she searches for answers and finds love in a completely unexpected place!



-Lexie, Assistant Director



The Inheritance Games by Jennifer Lynn Barnes Teen girl realizes she bas

Teen girl realizes she has inherited billions from a man she has never met. She must live in a mansion for a year while solving puzzles/riddles to get her inheritance.

-Stephanie, Information Services Librarian

The Last Cuentista by Donna Barba Higuera

This book was beautifully written. It was the Newbery Award Winner for 2022 as well as the Youth Author Pura Belpré Award Winner for 2022. It's a dystopian fantasy that revolves around memory and fairy tales/folklore.

-Stephanie, Information Services Librarian

This was my favorite book of the year (and I'm not the only one who feels this way since it won both the Newbery Award and the Pura Belpré Award!)



-Amber, Youth Services Librarian



Learning to Swear in America by Katie Kennedy Laugh out loud funny. A 17-year-old

physicist prodigy helps NASA stop an asteroid from hitting Earth while also socializing with a normal family not afraid of the impending doom.

-Beth, Technical Services Acquisitions Clerk



Juvenile

Dozens of Doughnuts by Carrie Finison My toddler loves looking at the variety of doughnuts on the inside cover of this picture book. He also loves the rhyming scheme that is interrupted by LouAnn's forest friends ringing the doorbell. Ding dong!



-Beth, Technical Services Acquisitions Clerk



Friends Forever

by Shannon Hale & LeUyen Pham The third in the classic middle grade graphic novel series that is based on Shannon Hales' real life experiences with friendships in middle school.

-Amber, Youth Services Librarian

People Don't Bite People by Lisa Wheeler and Molly Idle

This book is a favorite in our house and I have been sure to tell everyone that I know just how much I love it! Wheeler rhymes what you should and should not bite. I created a tune to this book and my kiddos love it!



-Brittany, Community Outreach & Marketing Supervisor

Movies & Television



Avenue 5

Forty years in the future, a luxury cruise space ship runs into technical problems in space. The captain of the ship dies and there is no one left to be in charge. This comical T.V. show set in space follows the misadventures of the remaining passengers and crew.

-Rachel, Information Services Librarian

Better Call Saul Season 6

When Better Call Saul was first announced, I laughed and assumed it was going to be a cynical cash-grab. Instead, showrunner Vince Gilligan gave us a series that actually surpassed the show it was spun off from, and it's absolutely absurd it didn't win a single Emmy. #justiceforbob



-Wes, Customer Services Senior Clerk



Clue

I watched this cult classic for the first time this year and laughed out loud throughout. It's the ultimate 80s movie, slapstick comedy, and twisty mystery to boot - and my new comfort movie.

-Callen, Information Services Librarian

Everything, Everywhere, All at Once This truly is a 'you'll laugh, you'll cry' film. At turns heartfelt and hilarious, it is astonishingly well-acted and well-written. I watched it with my 15-year-old son and we



-Holly, Youth Services Library Assistant



both loved it.

Inu-Oh

I typically can't stand musicals, so it should tell you something that my favorite movie of the year was this rock opera from Masaaki Yuasa. The mind-bending visuals alone would be enough to recommend the film to animation enthusiasts.

-Wes, Customer Services Senior Clerk



The Kids in the Hall "The Kids in the Hall" are a sketch comedy troupe, set apart by their cross-dressing antics and seemingly infinite supply of unique characters. (synopsis by IMDB)



-Cristina, Special Collections Principal Clerk



The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel

A comedy/drama from the creator of Gilmore Girls about a young woman in the 1950s who pursues a career in stand-up comedy. It's hilarious, endearing, and the costuming is outstanding. I am eagerly awaiting the next season!

-Claire, Information Services Librarian

Nope

Creeping dread builds in this excellent film from Jordan Peele. Daniel Kaluuya is the person I would try to be in a horror film. Nope, get me outta there. A gorgeous movie.



-Joe, Youth Services Library Assistant

Studio 666 Starring the Foo Fighters

Fans of the Foo Fighters will be delighted with this movie starring their favorite band. In the movie, the band decided to record an album in a house and as time goes on, sinister things happen. Perfect for fans of horror comedies, this movie will be sure to entertain.

-Rachel, Information Services Librarian

Music

Dance Fever by Florence + the Machine Indie rock singer Florence Welch at the height of her magical powers. She weaves mythology, folk horror, history, and selfdeprecating humor into songs that are at once sad, defiant, and euphoric.



-Nikki, Technical Services Clerk



Future Nostalgia by Dua Lipa

It took me over a year to stop listening to this one. This entire album was my earworm for the bulk of 2022. Not a bad song exists here, no sophomore slump.

-Joe, Youth Services Library Assistant

In Defense of My Own Happiness by Joy Oladokun

This album has immaculate vibes -reflective, lyrical, and catchy -- that move through sorrow, hope, and defiance for a healing experience and an irresistible earworm.



-Callen, Information Services Librarian



MUNA by MUNA

I played this self-titled album by LGBTQ+ indie pop trio MUNA pretty much nonstop this year, especially the lead track, the bright and joyful "Silk Chiffon". Whether you want to dance to "What I Want" or slow down with "Kind of Girl", there's something for everyone on this empowering album.

-Lexie, Assistant Director



Pink Dolphins by Anteloper

Pink Dolphins is fearless in scaling from jazz to punkish anarchy and psychedelia because branch is a kindred spirit to both jazz and punk and Nazary can deliver beats that could propel bop or drum 'n' bass while turning knobs to change the ambient atmosphere. (synopsis by jazztimes.com)







QC Nights by Centaur Noir

Centaur Noir is the musical project of artist/musician Jon Burns. Creating music under this name since 2005 Centaur Noir has written, recorded, and released over 200 original songs in the form of 7 full length albums and a variety of EPs. (synopsis by qcbeats.org)

-Cristina, Special Collections Principal Clerk

Video Games

Elden Ring

When developers FromSoftware announced Elden Ring in 2019, the elevator pitch was Dark Souls but open world (with worldbuilding help from none other than George R.R. Martin, who will seemingly do anything to avoid finishing A Song of Ice and Fire). Three years and a few delays later, that's more or less what we got, and it was everything I hoped for and more.



-Wes, Customer Services Senior Clerk