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A MESSAGE FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

By L Charles FitzGerald

Winter 2015 has arrived. Holiday decorations are stored away for another year. Children are back in school, and we're all settled in for the long, dark season. What a perfect time to sit down and read a book. And where from? Duncan, your friendly community library, of course.

If you've been reading the *Alexandria Times* or the *Gazette-Packet*, you know that our city is running a \$16 million budget deficit. This shortfall needs to be filled from somewhere, and the two most logical sources are raising taxes and/or decreasing services. I believe that both of these events will occur. So, once again, we can anticipate that the library budget will be cut. As a result, there will be less money to maintain, let alone improve, Duncan's collections. Moreover, a smaller appropriation will reduce the many programs we've come to depend on and appreciate. The upshot? The library will turn to its Friends for much-needed support.



It's important to note that many of programs sponsored by Duncan are not funded by the City. In addition to a wide variety of children's programs, two popular adult activities immediately come to mind: the Poetry Society and the Film Club. If you know someone who attends these regularly scheduled events, but is not a member of the Friends, please encourage them to join. Sponsoring these programs is expensive while Friends membership is inexpensive, tax deductible and, best yet, the right and neighborly thing to do.

The Friends rely on two major sources of funds: membership, whether corporate or individual, and the receipts from our twice yearly book sales. It's time for us to expand our horizons, and we have a variety of ideas on how to increase our presence in the community, including among the Del Ray merchants and various civic organizations. We need their involvement and their financial support.

We also need volunteers. As our Book Chair Peggy Sweeney often reminds us, "Volunteering for two hours during each book sale makes a huge difference, often between success or not." We also need volunteers for many other activities. Please consider donating your time. You will be supporting a worthy cause and get to meet other book-minded neighbors. You can volunteer by leaving your name and contact information at the circulation desk or by contacting any member of the Friends Board of Directors.

Another change is in the air. Sadly, we will be saying good-bye to our Branch Manager, Stephanie Clark. Stephanie and her husband are relocating to Florida—no more cold, dark winters for her! Stephanie's unfortunately all too brief tenure at Duncan has made a significant difference in almost every way. Moreover, she's been a huge supporter of the Friends. So stop in, check out a book, and tell Stephanie how much we will miss her.

Happy reading!

MESSAGE FROM YOUR EDITOR

By Vivian Nuñez

Happy New Year everyone! I am sure most of you already wrote down your 2015 resolutions. Live a happier life: check! Lose weight: check! Travel more: check! Be more involved in my local library: uhm...what?

Yes! A great 2015 resolution will be to be more involved in your local library. Several studies have shown the benefits of being part of a community—and the Duncan Library, its staff, patrons, and volunteers are a community. Just think how many incredible things you can accomplish by just being more involved:

You will meet people of all walks of life that benefit from our library.
You can volunteer in many of our activities.
You can help organize events.
You will be committed to having a better neighborhood and library.
You will love the space you live in.
No more dull days

As a member or volunteer of Friends of Duncan Library you will kill more than two birds with one stone. I hope to see you soon!

Feliz Año Nuevo! Estoy segura que ya la mayoría de Ustedes tienen sus propósitos para este nuevo año. Vivir una vida más feliz: hecho! Perder peso: hecho! Estar más involucrado con mi biblioteca: uhm...que?

Si! Un buen propósito para el 2015 es proponerse a estar más involucrado con la biblioteca local. Varios estudios demuestran los beneficios de ser parte de una comunidad, y la Biblioteca Duncan, sus empleados, clientes y voluntarios, son una comunidad. Solo imagínese cuantas cosas increíbles podrá lograr si estuviera más involucrado:

Conocerá a todas las personas que se benefician de nuestra biblioteca
Podrá ser voluntario
Podrá ayudar a organizar eventos
Estará comprometido a tener un mejor barrio y biblioteca
Amará el lugar donde vive
No habrán más días aburridos

Como miembro o voluntario de los Amigos de la Biblioteca Duncan matará más de dos pájaros con una sola piedra. Esperamos verles pronto!



NEWS FROM THE LIBRARY

By Stephanie Clark, Branch Manager, Duncan Library

Just as I reach my two-year anniversary at Duncan, I am very sorry to say that I am leaving at the end of February because my husband and I are relocating to Florida. This has been such an amazing two years working in this community at this very special branch library! I know that I will remember and cherish and miss the Duncan Branch, the staff, and the community always. But I have been such a small part of Duncan that I'd like to take this opportunity to recognize and thank the wonderful staff I have had the pleasure of working with.



The Circulation team is the hardest working group in the building. They are so good though that all that they do is sometimes missed. Beyond the obvious work of checking materials in and out and issuing library cards, this is the group that makes sure the whole library runs—they manage the materials; they move them within the building and throughout the library system. If they don't do what they do, the rest of us cannot function as well as we do. Marilyn Doherty leads this department and has developed a high-performing team that makes all of us look good. Thank you Marilyn, Rania, Sandra, Zack, Marianne, Barbara, Faiza, and Colleen!

Adult Services is two people strong. Both plan programs, build our collections, and field any and all questions you can think of. Ruth coordinates a long-running book discussion group and manages the volunteers in the branch. Leo has taken the lead on building programs for adults and outreach to local organizations. They are both dedicated to the Duncan branch and its patrons and have done great work in getting to know our patrons and providing excellent customer service. Thank you Ruth and Leo!

Youth Services is an area we are very strong in, as you know if you've spent any time in the branch during a morning story time. I never get tired of seeing all the children and caregivers lined up on a Tuesday morning before we open or hearing Venetta sing Sally the Camel with a room full of 3- to 5-year-olds. Elisabeth has done phenomenal work taking an already successful department to the next level. She and Venetta make it look easy, but I have seen all the hard work and preparation that goes into developing these programs and refreshing collections so there are always new books and authors for our youngest patrons to discover. Jeanne and Oscar work hard to keep all those juvenile and young adult books shelved but also jump in to help with programs and craft prep when needed. Thank you Elisabeth, Venetta, Jeanne, and Oscar!

Of course, all of this great work is supported by the Friends of Duncan Library. We are very lucky at Duncan to have such a wonderful group of people who believe in the work we do and our role in the community. It has been such a pleasure to work with this group and be supported by them. Thank you so much Friar, Carolyn, Jill, Linda, Lisa, Walter, Elaina, Peggy, Vivian, Thom, Maureen, Don, and each and every member of the Friends.

DUNCAN LIBRARY FALL 2014 BOOK SALE—SUCCESS! By Peggy Sweeney, Book Sale Chair, Friends of Duncan Library



It seems like a million years ago! But the Friends of Duncan Library Fall Book Sale was a great success, earning almost \$6,200 for Duncan Library.

This sale was especially gratifying, because we knew there had been several area library book sales in the previous two weeks. You never know how many book sales a community can support, just as you never know about the weather, how many dealers will come, and how the mix of books will appeal to the customers. In spite of all the unknowns, the Fall 2014 Book Sale ranked among our most profitable sales in the last several years!

We introduced a new feature for this book sale: coupons which were purchased in advance, then handed out at to kids at Halloween, instead of or along with candy. Five hundred coupons were sold; each coupon could be exchanged for one children's book at the sale.

A wonderful group of people made this book sale a success. I want to thank Branch Manager Stephanie Clark and her library staff, who went out of their way to help us. We have some corporate sponsors to thank: Paxton Moving and Storage, MOM's organic market, and Discover Books. And last, but not least, none of this would be possible without the volunteers who generously share their time and expertise.

We're already thinking about the Spring 2015 Book Sale. Learning from the past, we are working with the other Alexandria Library branches, and to the extent possible, libraries in neighboring areas, to schedule sales that do not conflict with each other. We are hoping to announce our spring sale dates soon.

I'd like to close with a pitch for volunteers. We are looking for people who would like to become part of the core book sale staff, able and willing to put in several hours a week during the year, plus more time during the weeks of book sales. But equally important, we need people who can volunteer during the book sales for as little as one two-hour shift (of course more time is welcome 😊). I have to say, we're a fun group of people to work, and it is a great cause. Send an email to duncanlibraryfriends@gmail.com to volunteer or to request more information.

FRIENDS OF DUNCAN LIBRARY IN SOCIAL MEDIA – CONNECT WITH US!



Like us on **Facebook**: Friends of Duncan Library



Follow us on **Twitter**: @DuncanFriends

Be a Friend. Volunteers are welcome to assist in a variety of projects that support Duncan Library and its contributions to the cultural life of the Del Ray Community. For more information, contact duncanlibraryfriends@gmail.com or drop by the library for a membership form.

GET TO KNOW YOUR LIBRARIAN: ZACK BLY, CIRCULATION DEPARTMENT

Are you from Alexandria? If not, from where?

I grew up in Cedar Grove, North Carolina, a rural township half an hour north of Chapel Hill.

Who are your favorite writers?

Alison Bechdel, Ray Bradbury, John Christopher, Barbara Ehrenreich, George Orwell, Randy Shilts, G.B. Trudeau, Bill Watterson, and Edith Wharton.

What are you reading currently?

A graphic novel called "The Gigantic Beard that was Evil" by Stephen Collins.

What are your outside interests?

Cartooning, drinking coffee, and volunteering for hunger relief.

Do you speak any language other than English? If so, which one(s)?

German, French, and Polish.

What gives you the most satisfaction as a library worker?

When I was a kid, our town's public library was like my second home. From the feedback we receive from our patrons here at Duncan, it's clear that this library is as important to many of them as my library was to me. To help maintain this welcoming, friendly place, to help create a safe space where everyone can ask questions and learn, discover new things, browse the shelves, or just sit in the sun and read—this is deeply, deeply satisfying for me.

How long have you been at the Duncan Library?

Since April 2013.

What changes have you seen at Duncan since you began working here?

Golly, do you remember those cumbersome old receipt printers we used to have? Good riddance!

How does entertainment fit into the mission of libraries?

The term "entertainment" covers a vast amount of territory. Homer and the Beowulf Poet composed their songs to entertain their friends around the fire. Shakespeare's plays, Verdi's operas, Tchaikovsky's ballets, and Hitchcock's films were written to entertain audiences. What would a public library be without them?

What do you think are Duncan's biggest needs?

Having more staff would make a tremendous difference.

From your observation how much are the public access computers used for functions other than social media or YouTube?

You can hardly find a paper job application anymore, and turning in your homework on paper is becoming a thing of the past as well. I regularly notice people working on school projects, searching for and applying for jobs, revising resumes, managing utilities or health insurance—not to mention reading the news, booking travel and printing tickets, researching family history, typing letters. Our computers get put to all kinds of uses.



I'd also like to suggest that using social media is not strictly speaking a frivolous pursuit. Our public and private lives are increasingly being lived online, and maintaining a supportive network of friends, in the real world or electronically, is a part of leading a healthy, productive life. Libraries are all about free access to information and resources, so why shouldn't we allow everyone a chance to be part of the conversation?

DUNCAN LIBRARY LANDSCAPING

By Elaina Palincsar, Beautification Committee Chair, Friends of Duncan Library

It's said that you shouldn't marry someone until you've "summered and wintered" with them. We've summered with the first phase of our landscaping program and now we'll see what winter brings. We'll see our winterscape "bones" and the urge to tweak will rise. What changes will bring more winter interest? How will the new plantings work with the existing daffodils hidden below ground when the new plantings were put in? How well will the young plants weather the cold and desiccation it brings?

As the garden lies dormant, plans begin. In winter, gardeners browse seed catalogs and read gardening websites—always looking for ways to enrich their gardens. Observing the accomplishments of the past growing season makes them, and us, long for more. We'll need seed money and volunteers to maintain what's been created and complete the landscaping.



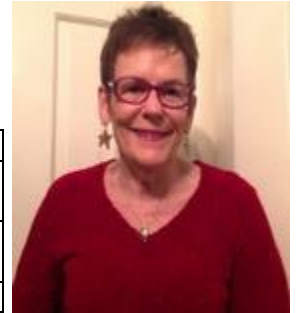
We plan to reach out to the local civic and business associations with presentations that explain our goals and encourage participation. We hope to get nominations for the 2015 Alexandria Beautification Award. We're grateful for the support we've received from the City in providing maintenance, and Greenstreet Gardens Del Ray for supplying the winter pansies we added.

The new landscaping welcomes our patrons, integrates the brick building with the site, and suits our residential neighborhood. It is the beginning of the library experience, presenting an interesting and attractive entrance to a beloved and important place. "While our garden sleeps we dream of her." You can help us fulfill that dream.

FRIENDS FUNDS AT WORK

By Carolyn Harris, Treasurer, Friends of Duncan Library

Here's a 2014 end-of-year summary of income and how the Friends used the funds throughout 2014 to support Duncan Library:



2014 Income		2014 Expenses	
Membership Donations	\$4,640	Adult Programs (Film, Poetry & Authors)	\$1,083
General Donations	\$195	Young Adult Programs (Writing, Movies)	\$979
Dedicated Donations	\$1,125	Summer Reading Programs	\$5,292
Book Sales	\$12,439	Winter Reading Program	\$325
Online Book Sales	\$5,969	Holiday Open House	\$934
Sale of Goods (T-shirts)	\$240	Staff Recognition/Hospitality	\$26
State Grant	\$325	Beautification/Landscaping	\$13,494
iGive	\$62	Newsletter	\$406
Bank Interest (checking & CD)	\$141	Library Requested Materials	
TOTAL	\$25,136	Adult Audiobooks	\$3,545
		Youth Services (Books & Materials)	\$2,878
		Equipment & Furniture	\$989
		Supplies & One-Time Needs	\$406
		Use of Dedicated Donations	\$1,125
		Operating/Fundraising Expenses	\$4,383
		TOTAL	\$35,865

The following working budget for 2015 Friends' activities was approved at the November 19, 2014 business meeting.

2015 Projected Income	2015 Projected Expenses	2015 Projected Expenses	
Membership Donations	\$5,000	Adult Programs (Film, Poetry, Authors)	\$2,400
General Donations	\$100	Young Adult Programs (Movie Club)	\$875
Dedicated Donations	\$650	All Alexandria Reads	\$850
Book Sales	\$10,000	Summer Reading Programs (less grant)	\$4,675
Online Book Sales	\$4,725	Winter Reading Program	\$350
Sale of Goods	\$250	Holiday Open House	\$1,000
State Grant	\$325	Beautification/Landscaping	\$600
AmazonSmile & iGive	\$140	Newsletter	\$500
Bank Interest (checking)	\$10	Library Requested Materials	
TOTAL	\$21,200	Books, Media, Subscriptions	\$1,000
		Youth Services (Books & Materials)	\$3,000
		Equipment & Furniture	\$1,200
		Specific Item Requests	\$100
		Supplies	\$150
		Use of Dedicated Donations	\$650
		Operating/Fundraising Expenses	\$3,850
		TOTAL	\$21,200

ADULT PROGRAMS AT DUNCAN

By Walter Gross, Adult Programs Chair, Friends of Duncan Library
and Leo Bacca, Reference Librarian, Duncan Library

Cinema Club

The audience for the Club's December 3 screening of Cecil B. De Mille's 1932 religious epic, *The Sign of the Cross*, numbered in the high teens. Members enjoyed a provocative Pre-Code film that strained the boundaries of good taste with its blend of Christian piety and sacrifice with the cruelty and decadence of Emperor Nero's Roman Empire. The film, which was a money-maker for Paramount Studios, illustrates how far the major Hollywood studios were willing to go to defy the Code and attract audiences during the Great Depression.

The next film in the Pre-Code Era series has been moved from January to Wednesday, February 4 (6:30 p.m.) due to the illness of the Chairman. It is another prime example of Hollywood's Production Code defiance. The movie depicts a young woman who flees an oppressive environment and an abusive father to prosper in the big city as she seduces her way from the mailroom to the boardroom of a major banking corporation using her wiles and her body as her keystones to success. You might call it a Horatio Alger story for the cynical. It features a young actress who became a major Hollywood star whose career spanned the Thirties through the Seventies in both film and TV.

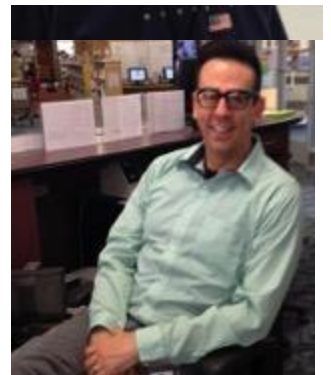
In March, the Pre Code series continues with a film about a free-spirited woman who spurns conventional mores to explore a lifestyle in which taking a lover and "living in sin" is preferable to marriage. In addition to a star-studded cast, it features gowns, dresses, and loungewear designed by Adrian, a major Hollywood costume designer of the Twenties and Thirties. One of our Cinema Club regulars, Susan Boyd, a wardrobe and image consultant whose costume choices have enhanced many productions of the Little Theater of Alexandria, will present a slide show of Adrian's designs for the movie. Call 703-746-1705 for the movie titles.

Poetry Society

The Poetry Society is on hiatus, while we try to determine if there is sufficient interest to continue this program.



Walter Gross



Leo Bacca

FRIENDS SPOTLIGHT:

Vivian Nuñez – Newsletter Editor, Friends of Duncan Library



Where are you from?

I was born in Colombia, but have already lived in seven different countries, which I guess makes me a real 'world citizen'. I was born and raised in Cali, where I had a great upbringing surrounded by nature, family and friends. I went to school for 14 years with the same people; we grew up together and made great friendships along the way.

When I was 18 years old, I left my hometown to go and study in Nice, France. And since then I have been lucky enough to have lived in Canada, Sweden, South Africa, Dominican Republic and now the United States.

Who are your favorite authors? Favorite characters/genres? Why do you love them?

One of my favorite authors is the historian Doris Kearns-Goodwin. I discovered her not too long ago when I decided to read *Team of Rivals*. I not only discovered that I am hungry to learn about the life and presidency of Abraham Lincoln, but about the Civil War. After that book, I have read all her books except for her latest one "The Bully Pulpit". That is in my list for 2015.

My favorite genre is historical novels. I think is a great way to learn while indulging in my favorite pastime. One of those novels is "The Feast of the Goat" by Mario Vargas Llosa. I highly recommend it.

What are you reading currently?

I just finished "Zealot" by Reza Aslan and "The Presidents Club" by Nancy Gibbs and Michael Duffy. I will begin reading "The Course of Human Events" by David McCullough.

What do you do professionally?

I went to university wanting to study something that would allow me to change the world. Or so I thought. So I studied political science, international relations and communications/digital marketing. As soon as I graduated, I found a job that allowed me to put everything I had learned into practice. I moved to the Dominican Republic where I worked on helping impoverished communities define their most pressing needs (roads, school, sewage, etc.) and how to work with their local government to fund projects.

I might have not changed the world, but I know my work had a positive impact in the communities and the people I worked with. I feel very lucky.

What are your outside interests?

Besides reading, which I do every day, I love to exercise, discover new trails on my bike and new restaurants. But my favorite activity is photography. As soon as I have my camera (Canon 7D) in my hands I feel that looking through the lens allows me to see things, people and places in a different way. I see the beauty of everyone and everything through it.

When did you join the Friends of Duncan Library?

My husband and I moved to Del Ray a year ago and right away we knew we wanted to put down roots here. A great way to do that is to get involved with the community in areas we are passionate about. The library (and books) was a no brainer for me.

What aspect of the Duncan Library do you think is particularly impressive?

The staff.

For the short period of time that I have been here, I can see how dedicated and passionate the Duncan Library staff is.

You walk into the library and you are always welcome with a smile. Everything is organized, clean and inviting. They make you feel like home.

Tell our readers something that might surprise us about you.

In high school, my English literature teacher would assign books for us to read and then report on them. If we read more than 5 books a bimester, we would immediately receive an A. I thought to myself what an easy way to get an A!

By the end of the academic year I had read more than 25 books. Two years in a row I received the 'All-Time Reader Award'. My parents were very proud.

A GLIMPSE OF DUNCAN LIBRARY



Photo Credit: Vivian Nuñez

BOOKS BY MY BEDSIDE

This column features books that Duncan Staff and Duncan Friends are currently reading or have recently read. If you'd like to contribute to a future newsletter issue, please contact our new Newsletter Editor, Vivian Nuñez at vnunezantia@me.com.

Review by Zachary Bly, Circulation Department, Duncan Library

Since attending the 2014 Small Press Expo in September, my bedside has been piled high with gems from Alexandria Library's graphic format collections. I'm re-reading Jay Hosler's *Clan Apis*, an informative and surprisingly moving investigation into the life-cycle of the honeybee. The faint chill in the air makes this a great time to take on Marzena Sowa's *Marzi: a Memoir*, an atmospheric autobiography set in Poland during the last days of Communism. I've enjoyed Gene Luen Yang's celebrated *American Born Chinese*, a multi-threaded coming-of-age story focusing on race and culture. Bryan Lee O'Malley's *Seconds*, new this year, is a cautionary fable about a hot-headed restaurateur from the author of the *Scott Pilgrim* series. Finally, in anticipation of Lucy Knisley's forthcoming travelogue *A Season of License*, I'm devouring her delightful food-themed memoir *Relish*, complete with recipes and helpful cooking tips. No matter what your interests or tastes, there's a graphic novel out there for you. Try one today!



Review by Marilyn Doherty, Circulation Manager, Duncan Library

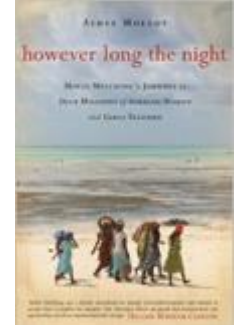
However Long the Night by Aimee Molloy

Among Schoolchildren by Tracy Kidder

However Long the Night is the story of Molly Melching, who went to Senegal as an exchange student and then spent more than 40 years trying to improve conditions for women in that country. Specifically, she worked in various communities slowly building consensus to end female genital mutilation. Don't look for this in Biography; it showed up cataloged in the 392 area, history of ceremonies. A very inspiring tale of women learning and working together.

Among Schoolchildren, by Tracy Kidder came out in 1989. I recently picked up our large print copy thinking it was probably too old to be useful. Then I started reading and was hooked. Another non-fiction title, it's about a fifth-grade teacher in Holyoke, MA, with a class of mixed abilities and backgrounds, including a few really hard cases. If you have any doubts about the importance of a good teacher to every child she spends a year with, read this book. Kidder is keenly observant, and while he digresses from time to time to give the bigger picture, the day-to-day interactions are compelling. The teacher's tough but compassionate style reminds me that teachers belong on the roster of saints.

A recent Post review reminded me that I needed to catch up on Louise Penny, one of my favorite (and Canadian) mystery writers. She just finished *The Long Way Home*, number ten in her Chief Inspector Gamache series, and I'm only half-way through. The village of Three Pines, Quebec may get the reputation of a murder capital, as Oxford did from Inspector Morse, but it sounds like a heavenly place to live, with thoughtful and interesting neighbors. For mystery fans, we've just acquired a few Simenon titles (*Inspector Maigret*) that had been out of print for some time. I can also recommend Andrea Camilleri (*Inspector Montalbano*), whose books are set in Sicily.



Review by Jill Murphy, Membership Chair, Friends of Duncan Library

In the latest Stephanie Plum novel, *Top Secret Twenty-One*, Janet Evanovich returns to her former style of keeping the story fun and slightly more believable than her last few works.

This episode centers around Trenton, NJ's favorite car dealer, who as it turns out, is dealing more than cars. He has disappeared and his closest associates are dropping like flies. Next on his list is the accountant, Randy Briggs, a regular annoyance to Plumb. She is forced to protect Briggs, as bothersome as he is, in order to catch the big boss.

As a side story, Ranger, Stephanie's long term 'distraction' is a target of a known assassin, who attempts to plant a deadly toxin into the HVAC system in his Rangeman Security headquarters.

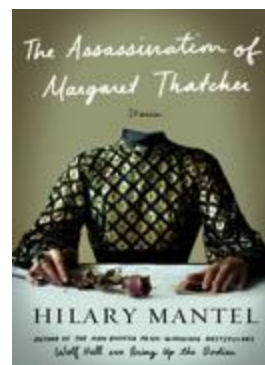
Both story lines run concurrent through the book along with at least one blown up car, stakeouts on a pizza joint, viewing at the local funeral home, a trip to Atlantic City and the hijinks of Grandma Mazur and Lula. A fun, easy read.

**Review by L Charles FitzGerald, President, Friends of Duncan Library**

As a late night reader, I often fall into the trap of saying to myself that I only have x number of pages before I finish a chapter or the book, so I stay awake to finish it. This habit doesn't do too much for my sleep patterns. However, I've found that the answer to my nightly reading habit is the short story long enough to hold my interest, but brief enough for me to get to sleep at a decent hour.

Up front, I admit that I'm a great fan of British authors. *The Stories of Jane Gardam*, best known in America for her Old Filth trilogy (*Failed in London*, *Try Hong Kong*), is a delight. The nearly 400-page collection of 30 beautifully written tales showcases Ms. Gardam's humor and insight into the human condition. Each one address ordinary people, some amazing, some odd, mostly great. I cannot recommend her *Stories* highly enough.

I'm sorry to say that Hilary Mantel's second collection of short stories, *The Assassination of Margaret Thatcher*, is a disappointment. Ms. Mantel, a two-time winner of the Man Booker Prize for her historical novels *Wolf Hall* and *Bring up the Bodies*, both of which I loved, should probably have left short fiction alone. These 10 stories, written and published elsewhere over an extended period, represent a wide variety of of themes, from gender to class, from marriage to family and sex, and finally to politics and terrorism. The stories are not only unpredictable in length but also their content. I confess that I only read about three quarters of them before I gave up.

**Review by Ruth Hailu, Reference Librarian, Duncan Library**

"A Quilt for Christmas" By Sandra Dallas

In this short story, Eliza is the main character. Her husband, Will, joins the Kansas Volunteers to fight the Confederates in 1864.

As winter draws in, Eliza imagines Will being cold and freezing in the battlefield. So she makes a special quilt— a Stars and Stripes quilt, inspired by the flag, and sends it to him as a Christmas present.

In the meantime, she struggles to keep the family farm viable; although her young children, Davy and Luzena, make big efforts to help, the job of plowing, planting and harvesting is just too much. Because all the men from Wabaubnsee County, Kansas, had gone to the civil war, men to hire were unavailable.



But the redeeming joy for Eliza and many of the women whose husbands were Volunteers were their willingness to cooperate in everything big and small. Many of them called themselves "War Widows" and became creative and self-sufficient in many activities. Above all, they found hope and comfort in their religions and in each other.

Finally, the story of the book starts with Eliza making a quilt for her husband who was out in the battlefield in mid-winter. The quilt did reach her husband, but do we know how much he used it? The quilt holds a mysterious journey, which you will find out only if you read the book to the end.

I enjoyed this book very much. I think it is truly a winter tale that warms the heart!

Review by Lisa Giamb Bruno, Secretary, Friends of Duncan Library

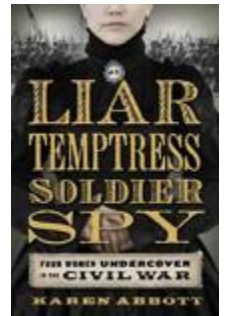
I thoroughly enjoyed *My Brilliant Friend* by the Italian author Elena Ferrante. It is the story of two bright young students growing up in late 1950s Naples. One gets to continue her studies, and one does not. It is a lovely but sometimes brutal story of friendship, family, and country. The heroines, Elena and Lila, remain best friends as their lives take different paths. The best part is that this book is just the first in a trilogy, so I don't yet have to say goodbye to Elena and Lila.



Review by Stephanie Clark, Branch Manager

Liar, Temptress, Soldier, Spy: Four Women Undercover in the Civil War is Karen Abbott's latest book and highlights four women during the Civil War. One woman disguised herself as a man and enlisted as a soldier in the Union army, another spied for the Confederates, another used her affairs with Northern politicians to gather information of use to the Confederacy, and another managed a ring of spies in Richmond to gather troop movements and other battle information of use to the Union. It's a fascinating piece of history just in terms of the Civil War, and an equally captivating look at women taking on unconventional roles.

Abbott is a wonderful author. Another of her titles, *Sin in the Second City*, focuses on Chicago during Prohibition. I did not know till I read this book that the infamous Everleigh sisters (of the notorious Everleigh Club in Chicago) were Virginians and are buried here in Alexandria. Worth a read just to learn that bit of trivia but a good read regardless!

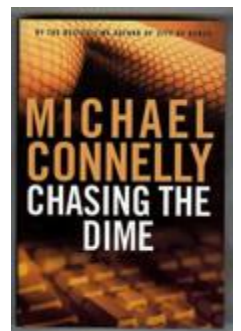


Review by Jill Murphy, Membership Chair, Friends of Duncan Library

Chasing the Dime by Michael Connelly

Chemist, entrepreneur and computer guru Henry Pierce moves into a new apartment, hooks up the phone and immediately starts getting calls for Lilly. All from men. Quickly he determines she is a call girl and vows to change the number. He can't afford the distractions while he is working on a huge breakthrough in science that will be worth millions and save lives. But he can't get the calls out of his head when he realizes there might be something wrong with Lilly.

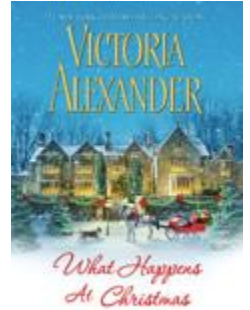
Pierce jumps into the world of syndicated online escorts, secret sex houses and much more than he ever bargained for while searching for Lilly. Then the unthinkable happens, he becomes the prime target and suspect for her murder.



Review by Carolyn Harris, Treasurer, Duncan Friends

What Happens at Christmas by Victoria Alexander was offered on Book Bub and turned out to be just a romp of a pleasant holiday read, filled with warmth, humor, and interesting—probably fairly accurate, family relationships. Camille, Lady Lydingham needs to impress a Prince, and she has the perfect plan. She will use her family's absence to hire actors to play them and create a perfect British Christmas for the

Prince, and surely he will propose to her after that and she will finally be a Princess. What could possibly go wrong? Of course, in a romance novel, there must be a tension, and it comes in this story with the return of Camille's first love, Grayson. I enjoyed following their path of getting together in the end. They both had to work through anger with one another—justified and unjustified, apologize for past mistakes, and resolve other relationships (such as the Prince) to get what they want. NOTE: I've since learned that Victoria Alexander produces an annual Christmas story, which I definitely will look for in the future.



Have you read a great book? Tell us about it!

NEW WAYS TO SUPPORT THE FRIENDS AND DUNCAN!!!

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FRIENDS SOCIAL HOUR

By Carolyn Harris, Treasurer, Friends of Duncan Library

We're going to host another Friends Social Hour on Tuesday, February 17 at the home of Jim and Carolyn Harris. We've found these events to be a good way for the adult patrons of Duncan to meet in an informal atmosphere with light refreshments and share ideas about books, the book sale, movies, the Film Club, our neighborhoods, travel, poetry, restaurants, the library, Duncan Friends, and volunteering. It's a great way to get to know a little bit more about each other!

You'll receive details prior to the February Friends Social Hour. Hope to see you!

HOLIDAYS AT DUNCAN LIBRARY

by Marilyn Doherty, Circulation Manager, Duncan Library



The Irish Breakfast Band is a group of friends and neighbors, many from the Del Ray area of Alexandria, who have been getting together every Saturday morning for over 30 years to play Irish traditional music. They play jigs and reels, slides, Irish mazurkas, and the occasional air or song. They practice primarily for the fun of learning and improving together, though from time to time the band takes on a public performance for one of the summer in the parks programs, the Folk Festival in Glen Echo, Art on the Avenue or First Night in Alexandria. And they do love playing at the Duncan Library for our December Open House. The band has released two CDs and is now recording the third one.

Over the years, several Irish dance students have enhanced the performances, including children of band members. Audience participation is encouraged! This year Duncan patron Ella Weber and her friend Maggie danced up a storm!

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Membership donations can now be made online via PayPal. Visit our website to [renew your membership!](#)