Well, another winter has arrived. It sure took a long time in coming; the forsythia was blooming in my neighbor’s yard during the December holidays. Maybe, just maybe, that burst of color was a sign that February won’t be a freezing, snow-filled month. However, there is something to be said about curling up with a good book when the weather outside isn’t terribly inviting.

By any measure, 2013 was a busy and rewarding year. Our successes are attributable to your generous financial support and willingness to volunteer. Your membership and personal involvement in Friends activities continue to make Duncan one of the best community libraries in the state.

One of the Board’s primary responsibilities is to be good stewards of the funds we oversee. Importantly, every dollar received is a dollar invested in Duncan; nothing is held back for administrative costs. Here are just a few ways your contributions matter:

- The Friends website was completely revamped to make it more comprehensive and accessible;
- Music supplies were bought for the children’s story time;
- Many nonfiction titles were updated in the reference collections;
- Patron requests for material not in the Duncan’s collections were considered and then added to the shelves;
- Extra movie licenses were purchased for the monthly Duncan Film Club presentations; and
- Live music was incorporated in the member-supported poetry club.

Board members have begun to rotate their attendance at the Del Ray Business Association’s monthly meetings. This way the Friends can keep abreast of the community’s activities while the association’s membership learns what’s new at their library. This activity has led to the creation of a corporate sponsorship program, bringing in essential support from the Del Ray business community. And, last but not least, our two very successful book sales were complemented by another fruitful source of income - on-line book sales under the able leadership of Thom Downing.
President’s Letter—continued from page 1

Thank you for expressing your confidence in the Board by returning its current directors to another two year term. On behalf of my colleagues, I want to assure you that we will continue to help Duncan bring to our community books, media and programs for which there are no funds in the city’s library budget. For example, a writing workshop for teens is coming this spring.

Your Board meets at 7 pm on the fourth Wednesday of each month in the Duncan meeting room and is open to one and all. Please join us. We welcome your participation, concerns and ideas.

Thank you,
Friar

Friends’ T-shirts!!

You know you want one—or both—of the Friends T-shirts. There’s a literary theme and a cinema theme. Stop by the Duncan circulation desk, ask for the desired size, hand over $20, and walk away with your cool shirt!
Thanks – and Another Book Sale is on the Way!

By Peggy Sweeney, Book Sale Chair, Friends of Duncan Library

As many of you know, the 2013 Fall Book Sale was a huge success, raising more than $7,500! The tent sale was a hit, and many thanks go to Thom Downing for proposing and organizing it. (I have to admit, I had some doubts, but Thom prevailed!)

Now it’s time to look ahead to the 2014 Spring Book Sale! Mark your calendars:

Friends Preview Night       April 30, 2014
Sale Days                   May 1-3, 2014

You know we can’t do this without you. Great donations are coming in, and we will be looking for our wonderful volunteers when the time comes. The whole community benefits from the spirit of the Friends of the Duncan Library! In the past year, the Friends have funded:

- SummerQuest, the summer reading program for the grade school children. Friends made this program possible during June and July.
- SummerQuest Jr., performance based educational programming for ages 0-5. The funding for this allows Duncan Library to bring in amazing performers during the summer.
- Bird feeder kits for “Saturday is Dad-urday” special event. Parents loved that they had one-on-one time with their kids and that their kids learned construction skills.
- Music supplies for story times including rhythm scarves, egg shakers, fruit and vegetable music shakers and tambourines.
- Non-fiction literature update—many books in the children's non-fiction collection were out of date.
- Friends paid for the movie licenses that allow the library to show movies—like the Hitchcock Series and the Film Noir Series.
- The projector screen and sound system in the meeting room are also thanks to the Friends.
- Patron book requests. The library is not always able to get patron requests through the library ordering system. Your support allows them to add these items to the collection.

THANK YOU!

Some items on the wish list for 2014 are:

- Continued funding for the SummerQuest and SummerQuest Jr. programs
- Additional upgrades to the children’s non-fiction collection
- Children’s Story Time new props and instruments

Landscaping Update

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

We have begun the information-seeking phase of developing a Landscaping Master Plan for the Duncan Library. How exciting and satisfying it will be to see our neighborhood library surrounded by beautiful grounds. If the plan is developed and approved in time for some fall planting, help will be needed to keep the new plants watered. We hope that you’re as enthusiastic about this project as we are and will lend your support.

Elaina Palincsar
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 pollyjmo@verizon.net.

From Stephanie Clark, Branch Manager, Duncan Library:

*Rot, Riot, and Rebellion: Mr. Jefferson’s Struggle to Save the University That Changed America*, by Rex Bowman and Carlos Santos, is a short book about the first 20 years at the University of Virginia. Now one of the most respected universities in the country and the model for universities as we know them today, its early years were better known for duels, riots, and general mayhem. A quick read that will give you a new appreciation for honor codes everywhere!

*Diana Vreeland: The Eye Has to Travel* (2012, PG-13, ©Samuel Goldwyn Films) is a recent documentary about a real-life Auntie Mame. Vreeland is best known for her time at *Harper’s Bazaar* and *Vogue* where she launched many a model’s and/or actress’s career. When fired from *Vogue*, she went to work for the Costume Institute of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Fun bonus trivia gleaned from the film include Vreeland’s claim that she sold Wallis Simpson the negligee that took down the monarchy and her advice to Manolo Blahnik to “think extremities!” (thus, his shoe empire today). She was known as “the high priestess of fashion,” and the documentary is a fun retrospective of 40 years of fashion and one amazing life.

From Jill Murphy, Membership Chair, Friends of Duncan Library:

The winter break allows me much needed and enjoyable reading time. This year’s reading included *Takedown Twenty*, the latest Stephanie Plum novel by Janet Evanovich. Always an easy read, this book was a little more far-fetched than Evanovich’s usual laugh-out-loud tomes (A giraffe on the loose in Trenton, NJ? I think not!) It certainly has its funny moments in the fugitive apprehension business and the much anticipated scenes of whether Stephanie will end up with Ranger or Morelli, but it is by far not her best work in this series. I’ve donated my copy to Duncan if you are a diehard fan and inclined to read it.

From L Charles "Friar" FitzGerald, President, Friends of Duncan Library:

If you are looking for a well written, emotionally charged story, *The Two Hotel Francforts* by David Leavitt may just be the ticket. This novel is set in 1940 Lisbon, the only remaining neutral port in Western Europe. While the story never addresses World War II directly, it does serve as the backdrop for this tale of two couples who meet as they await passage on the SS Manhattan, one of the very few remaining ships sailing to America. The couples become friendly when they discover that they are staying in different hotels, each of which has exactly the same name. Their story is a deceptive and painful one for all four. More disparate characters could hardly be found. Highly recommended.

*Savage Continent: Europe in the Aftermath of World War II* by Keith Lowe: The Second World War in Europe may have officially ended in May 1945 but, for all intents and purposes, it continued for another 10 years. Images of victory celebrations belie the fact that what followed has been largely forgotten. Across Europe, entire cities had been destroyed, and the institutions that govern society were either absent or badly compromised. Crime was rampant; economies had collapsed; famine was a fact of life; and large sections of the population had not accepted that the war was over. Starving communities and whole nations sought vengeance for what had been done to them during the war. Germans with suspicious backgrounds, Nazis and their collaborators were rounded up and killed; concentrations camps were reconstituted; violent anti-Semitism resurfaced; brutal civil
wars erupted; ethnic cleansing ran rampant; and tens of millions were driven from their ancestral homelands.

Savage Continent is a story of post-World War II in all its horrific detail, from the official end of the war until 1950. It is a frightening, yet fascinating, chronicle of a world gone mad that is rarely taught. Frequently glossed over in official histories and European studies, this account of a continent fragmented by national conflicts is unfamiliar to most of us.

Award winning British historian Keith Lowe’s work “thoroughly researched and written with scrupulous objectivity promises to be the year’s best book on European history” (Financial Times). I concur. Savage Continent is a “must read”, especially for those who want to understand more fully the bloody civil wars and ethnic cleansing in post-World War II Europe of the 1990’s.

The Square of Revenge: An Inspector Van In Mystery by Pieter Aspe is his English-language debut novel in which we are introduced to Commissioner Pieter Van In of the Bruges Special Investigations Department. Wealthy and powerful Ludovic Degroof’s jewelry store in an expensive shopping district of Bruges is broken into, but nothing is taken. The jewels have been dissolved in jars of acid strong enough to melt gold. In the store’s empty safe is a scrap of paper on which a strange square has been drawn. When Degroof’s adult children also receive letters with an identical square, the inspector finds himself unraveling a complex web that includes puzzling Latin phrases, a baroness’ fallen family and Degroof’s relationship with a hostage grandchild. A quick but entertaining read set in one of Europe’s most atmospheric medieval cities.

From Carolyn Harris, Treasurer, Friends of Duncan Library:

Yikes! It’s been a rough spell for finding a book that I really enjoy. Although, I am reading Goldfinch (by) now and am really enjoying it.

Someone: A Novel by Alice McDermott left me cold. I usually enjoy McDermott’s work, but I just couldn’t get into this one. I was confused and bored. I decided to move on. Unfortunately, I tried And The Mountains Echoed by Khaled Hosseini, whose first two books I really enjoyed. Once again, I found the story disjointed and confusing. I read and re-read AND re-read. Again, I decided to move on.

Jodi Picoult’s Plain Truth was my rescue. I am a fan, although I admit to screaming at some of her characters on occasion out of frustrations at their actions! As usual, I find Picoult’s ending very rushed and often so unbelievable as to negate the premise of the story. Nevertheless, I found the characters in this book interesting enough to follow to the end. I liked learning more about Amish culture, too.

From Linda Walker, Vice President, Friends of Duncan Library:

I recently read Allegiant, the third book in the trilogy by Veronica Roth. Roth has received quite a bit of press lately, because the first book in the series, Divergent, has been made into a movie that is scheduled to be released in March of this year. The story is set in the future and features teenager Beatrice Prior as the lead character. The society of the future is divided into factions. When you turn 16, you are given a test that tells you what faction you are best suited for. Beatrice is tested and shows equal attributes for three of the five factions, making her what is known as “Divergent”. The trilogy tells Beatrice’s story, a story of friendship, rebellion, family, young love, war, and of the consequence of the choices we make. The ending of the trilogy has been very controversial. I
won’t go into details in case you plan to read the book and haven’t yet. After finishing the book, I read a blog post Roth wrote explaining why she ended the book the way she did. I thought the ending very appropriate and am glad Roth ended it the way she did. I enjoyed Allegiant the best of the three books in the trilogy. It took me getting to this book to truly care about the character Tris, as Beatrice chose to be known. I finished Allegiant one night around midnight, thinking, WOW, I wish I knew someone who’s read the book that I could call and talk to about it. I’ve asked my dad to read the books so we can do just that!

From Marilyn Doher, Circulation Manager, Duncan Library:

Hard to pick a top book for the holiday season, from so many good ones. As well, the bedside pile always includes a few old ones. I will never forget putting aside The English Patient, by Michael Ondaatje, for many years after its publication, only to be blown away when I finally read it.

I have just finished Sandrine’s Case, by Thomas Cook. A professor is accused of murdering his wife. Did he or didn’t he? He claims she committed suicide but the prosecutor comes up with damning evidence. The book keeps you guessing until the very end—a bit like Gone Girl, but with somewhat more likeable characters.

A book group got me started on Dreiser’s An American Tragedy. Not finished yet—it runs to 900 pages—but the theme of inequality between rich and poor makes the book still pertinent almost 90 years after it was written, even though the language is a bit dated. The library has this title as a book on CD also.

Non-fiction can be fun! If you find Project Runway amusing, try The Hundred Dresses—no, not the children’s story from the 1940s, but the book by fashion historian, linguist and home seamstress extraordinaire Erin McKean. With sketches and a few brief paragraphs each, she describes 100 key dress styles. She brings back those you wore—and those you wish you had—in a witty and memorable way. The book emerged from her blog, www.dressaday.com, worth visiting if only for the dress pattern captions.

Last summer I visited Montana for the first time, and admired beautiful public spaces in downtown Missoula along the Clark Fork. In this college town, the parks were lively and folks were boating and tubing late into the evening in a river that looked pristine. In the fall, I came across Opportunity, Montana: Big Copper, Bad Water, and the Burial of an American Landscape, by Brad Tyer. Opportunity is the place well north of Missoula where toxic waste from the state’s copper mines had been stored for a hundred years. Cleaning started in the 1980s bringing the Clark Fork to the lovely condition I had admired. Opportunity was the unlucky recipient of even more toxic material from the river. Tyer tells the story from the discovery of copper to the present; it is clear that the influence of power, money and politics didn’t end with the demise of the copper kings. It’s a book that makes you think.
The Duncan Book Discussion Group  
By Ruth Hailu, Reference Librarian, Duncan Library

The Duncan Book Discussion club that started in December 2005 is still thriving thanks to the dedicated participants whose number remains stable if not growing. We meet once a month. We can be as many as 24 or as little as nine, depending on the book and/or the season, for summer and the holiday seasons can be challenging.

Our group is probably one of the few clubs which does not fetter about genres. We read non-fiction, literary fiction, historical fiction, classics, biographies, mysteries and so forth. Twice a year we all suggest titles, then we select by vote. That way we know what we need to read for six months.

Even though discussed a while ago, I’d like to mention some of the stories which had given us the opportunity to have a heartfelt discussion.

In *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* by Rebecca Skloot, our discussion took an extraordinary journey from the “colored” ward of Johns Hopkins Hospital in the 1950s to laboratories with freezers full of HeLa (her name abbreviated) cells; from her house in the wooden slave quarters, in Clover, Virginia, to Baltimore today, where her children and grandchildren live and struggle with the legacy of her cells.

*Unbroken* by Laura Hillenbrand. In this story about the importance of hope and perseverance in human lives, Louis Zamperini personified these characteristics through unthinkable hardship.

In *The Paris Wife* by Paula McLain, a fiction, we entered into the remarkable love affair between Hemingway and his wife, Hadley; how he left her for another woman, but how, in the end, after four marriages, he wrote in his memoir: “I wished I had died before I loved anyone but her...I loved her and love no one else and we had a lovely magic time when we were alone.”

The Duncan Library Friends kindly sponsored Jameela Alter, the author of *On Clipped Wings*, to give an Author Talk to the Discussion Group. On January 16, 2013, Ms. Alter came and told us what had prompted her to write the book: How class, cast and religious differences had impacted the society in India; how the leading characters in the book, two girls, one wealthy and one poor, came to bridge those differences through education and friendship. We really enjoyed Ms. Alter’s analysis of her book and we were happy she could answer all our questions.

We discussed *The Innocents Abroad* by Mark Twain on November 20, 2013. As it sometimes happens, the moderator was unable to come that evening, so I led the discussion and was joined by very enthusiastic participants praising Mark Twain for being one of the earliest American authors who wrote about their travels in Europe and parts of the Middle East.

The discussion group has been busy since November reviewing and suggesting books we will discuss during the next few months. Among many wonderful choices, the following titles have won the votes and will be discussed over the next seven months:

- **February 19** – *The Rise to Greatness: Abraham Lincoln and America’s Most Perilous Year*, by David Von Drehle
- **March 19** – *The Cutting Season*, by Attica Locke
- **April 16** – *Caleb’s Crossing*, by Geraldine Brooks
- **May 21** – the All Alexandria Reads book will be discussed (title still to be determined)
- **June 18** – *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic*, by Alison Bechdel
- **July 16** – *The Reader*, by Bernard Schlink
News from the Library
By Stephanie Clark, Branch Manager, Duncan Library

Happy New Year! We’re excited about 2014! We begin the year with a new librarian in the Reference/Information Department. Leo Baca joined us on January 6. He has been in a part-time position at the Beatley Branch most recently, and we’re excited to have him join the Duncan team. Please stop by to meet him!

Elisabeth Murray, Youth Services Manager, continues to offer new programs. We don’t know how she does it—every time we think the calendar is full, she finds room for just one more event! Beginning in January, she will offer a Kids Only Book Club and a Family Book Club. Both will be held on the 4th Monday of every month. In January, the Kids Only group will be reading The Tale of Despereaux by Kate DiCamillo and the Family group will be reading Stuart Little by E.B. White. For February and later selections, please call the Children’s desk at 703-746-1783.

During 2014, the Alexandria Library will be marking the 75th anniversary of the 1939 sit-in at the Barrett Branch on Queen Street. It is a little known event that took place more than 15 years before the Civil Rights Movement. Read the full story on the Library’s website at http://bit.ly/1fCzrrV. Throughout the year, the Library will be offering programs around the themes of civil rights, human rights, and the African diaspora. We hope you’ll join us to learn more about and commemorate this important event that took place right here in Alexandria!

January 2014 also marks my 1-year anniversary here at Duncan. I would like to take this opportunity to say thank you to all of our Friends and community supporters! I knew when I first came to Duncan that this was a special place, but I have spent this past year learning how very much this neighborhood and surrounding community value and feel connected to the Duncan Branch. So much of that has to do with the excellent staff at Duncan as well as the Friends of Duncan Library’s stellar support – all are committed to providing the very best services, collections, and programming to our patrons. It’s been such an honor and privilege to come to work every day this past year. I look forward to 2014 and can’t wait to see what it holds for us!

Do you have a little spare time each month?

If you do, then the Friends need your help........ A large quantity of books and other materials are donated daily to Duncan. Each item needs to be scanned in order to determine where it will ultimately end up: an addition to the collection, a sale online or at our semi-annual book sales.

Scanning is necessary and really easy. Please volunteer a little time, whether it be an hour a week or a month. And, importantly, scanning can be done during normal library hours. Get in on the ground floor. To volunteer, please contact Book Sale Chair Peggy Sweeney at 703-577-0561 or by email at dlsweeney@comcast.net
Get to Know Your Librarian – Ruth Hailu, Reference Librarian

What is your particular function at the Duncan Library and how long have you been working here?
I do reference work; I help patrons in any way I can. I’ve been at Duncan for 8 years and 3 months.

Are you from Alexandria? If not, from where? What drew you to Alexandria?
I was born and raised in Ethiopia, but I’ve been living in Fairfax County, Virginia, since 1986. The job market brought me to Alexandria.

Who are your favorite authors? Favorite books? Why do you love them?
A short list, and not in any particular order: Charlotte Bronte, Philip Roth, Doris Goodman, E.B. White, Rosamunde Pilcher, Edward P. Jones, Anne Moody, Proust, Scott Fitzgerald, Tolstoy, Hemingway, Camus, etc. I love them because I enjoy their prose, and through their work I learn all that had been thought and said about humans and our world.

What are you reading currently?
I am reading “Molok’i,” by Alan Brennert, the book selected by the Duncan Book Discussion Group for December reading.

What are your outside interests?
Tennis, swimming, knitting, sewing, playing the piano.

Do you speak any language other than English? If so, which one(s)?
Ethiopian languages: Amharic and Tigregna. French.

What influenced you to become a librarian?
My mother’s love for reading rubbed on to me! Also, as I have always wanted to help people, this, combined with my love of books led me to choose a career in the library.

What gives you the most satisfaction as a librarian?
Witnessing the satisfaction of a patron when I have found what he/she is looking for, be it just by walking to the shelves, or doing an in-depth research using both print and electronic formats.

What aspect of the Duncan Library do you think is particularly laudable?
The friendliness of the staff, particularly the Circulation desk staff; most of the variety of programs organized by library staff and the Friends of the Library, The Open House! Etc.

What changes have you seen at Duncan since you began working here?
Increased number of patrons using the library; increased number of programs, hosted by staff and the Friends.
Adult Programs at Duncan

By Walter Gross, Chair, Adult Programs Committee, Friends of Duncan Library

Film Series
The Hitchcock Film Series is entering the home stretch. Only two of his films, Vertigo on February 5 and Psycho on March 5, remain on the schedule. The series concludes on April 2 with the screening of the biopic, Hitchcock. Attendance continues to be good with about 20 people on average attending the last three screenings.

In May, we will begin a new series, Films of the Pre Code Era. These films, produced from 1930 to mid-1934, contained sex, violence, and suggestive themes prohibited by the industry’s own Motion Picture Production Code. By 1934, public reaction forced Hollywood to finally enforce the Code stringently. Today, most of the films would hardly cause a ripple of indignation, given the much racier content of prime time television shows, and they would likely be rated PG or PG-13 at best (or worse) under the current film rating system. Nonetheless, they showcased a bevy of young actors who became some of the biggest stars of the 40s and 50s, including Cary Grant, Barbara Stanwyck, Joan Crawford, Clark Gable, Claudette Colbert, Gary Cooper, Greta Garbo, and James Cagney, not to mention Mae West, Jean Harlow, and the Marx Brothers. We hope to make the series both entertaining and instructive of a period of American history that began with the introduction of “the talkies” and spanned Prohibition, the Great Depression, Art Deco, and the New Deal.

Poetry Society
Attendance at the meetings of the Poetry Society continues to run at about 12 to 15 poetry fans. In November the topic was Virginia Poets. The Music Lyrics as Poetry program, which was scheduled for January, has been re-scheduled to February 10 at Duncan’s meeting room. We meet on the first Monday of alternate months, and after the February program, the next meeting is scheduled for March with a theme yet to be determined. We welcome new members and no one should be intimidated by the subject matter. The idea is to enjoy poetry in a comfortable, informal atmosphere, meet new friends, and mostly have fun.

The Friends of Duncan Library now offer Corporate Sponsorships!

Paperback Sponsor ($100)
Hardback Sponsor ($250)
Trilogy Sponsor ($500)
Best Seller Sponsor ($750)
Top of the List Sponsor ($1,000+)

We are pleased to welcome our first two corporate sponsors: Jen Walker and the Greener Side Lawn and Landscaping.
Friends Funds at Work
By Carolyn Harris, Treasurer, Friends of Duncan Library

Here's a 2013 end-of-year summary of income and how the Friends used the funds throughout 2013 to support Duncan Library. Below that, please find the working budget for 2014 Friends’ activities that was approved at the November 20, 2013 business meeting.

### 2013 Income

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### 2014 Projected Income

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### 2014 Projected Expenses

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E-Communications

Visit the Friends of Duncan Library website to learn about Upcoming Events at the Duncan Library! You can also Like our Facebook page to receive notifications of Upcoming Events on your News Feed.

Membership donations can now be made online via PayPal. Visit our website to renew your membership!