

Summer Sanford 0:12

Hello, and welcome to our library's podcast, we are going to be dropping into your news feed just about every single month to give you updates on programming we're running at the library, pitch our favorite books, delve into any questions you may have, and share some of our local history. So to get this started, I am Summer, and I'm the children's librarian here and I'm here with

Darcy Poletti Harp 0:36

I'm Darcy, I'm the PR and programming librarian. And we're really excited to use this new method to reach out to you guys in these crazy times, when you know, so much of our jobs in normal time is being together as a community in the same space. So this is just another way we can connect with everyone in Bayfield and beyond.

Summer Sanford 0:56

So let's get started by talking about how we got to be here. I just started over the summer. But I know that Darcy has been here for five years this fall. So Darcy, how did you not only get to be here, but get to be a librarian.

Darcy Poletti Harp 1:12

So yeah, I grew up in rural Alaska and Montana. And I was an only child. And so luckily, I quickly became an avid reader. And because of that, I spent a ton of my childhood in, you guessed it, libraries. And that that love of reading led me to study Spanish literature in undergrad. And then after that I lived in northern Spain teaching English for a year. And coming back from that, you know, I had to decide what I wanted to do with the rest of my life. And, I had a lot of options, teaching English, creative writing, studying Spanish more, but I just kept coming back to my love of stories and my love of libraries and sharing those stories. And so I decided to get my master's in library science at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. And you know, it's crazy. I got this job straight out of grad school, it's still definitely the best decision, the best opportunity of my whole life. I just, I, I love our library. It's such a perfect fit. For me, we have this culture of innovation of exploration, and just general fun, I have to say, and you know, this place is also just perfect for me. I love the mountains of Southwest Colorado. I mean, every weekend, year round, I'm outside adventuring in the mountains. And it's just really become my home in the last five years. So I'm a transplant here, obviously. But I now that you were lucky enough to have grown up in this part of the world Summer. So tell us a little bit about that, how you boomeranged out and came back again.

Summer Sanford 2:37

Yeah, so, I grew up here. And I heard from my mom all the time. She's from Austin, Texas. But she spent a lot of her childhood growing up in Houston. So just constantly I heard this is the most beautiful place in the whole world. It was like, yeah, it's pretty, like, you're not wrong. But also there's other pretty places in the world. And then I went up to Fort Collins to go to school, I got my bachelor's at Colorado State University. And like, it's pretty too. Estes Park, you know, but it's also in Colorado. So you got to give her that, Colorado is pretty stunning. And after that I was also running into I don't know what I want to do with my life. And I don't fully want to grow up was a big theme for me. So I went off and I studied monkeys. I spent a year there at that point. And I have probably been down in Costa Rica for close to two or three years now. I go back to visit, I see my monkeys and I travel around as much as I can. And so when I spent time

in Costa Rica, I was like, this is stunning. It's so beautiful. But it's also not like studying monkeys in the forest is not something you do for the rest of your life. So I went to graduate school, I was really interested in learning more. I love challenging myself and having new experiences. So I went to graduate school where I was going to continue that career as a monkey researcher. And I realized during that time, while I love monkeys, I really love making science accessible. So I left graduate school to teach at Animas High School, in Durango. It's our charter school and I spent two years teaching biology there. And I actually spent last fall volunteering with Kate and I did after school STEAM for it was supposed to be third through fifth graders it turned into K through fifth and I was so impressed with like, kindergarteners, first graders, like they just jumped on to something and they'll try anything. It just amazes me with how open minded kids are around science and trying new things and I just I just love it. So I've really been enjoying thinking and creating ways to make learning fun and engaging, because I love to learn. And a big part of it is just making it fun for everyone. So when you can make it fun, it's not working anymore. And that's what I love about being here.

Darcy Poletti Harp 5:11

You know, Summer, we are just so excited to have you here. I think you'll fit so perfectly into that culture of fun and innovation I was talking about earlier. I mean, to start a brand new job in the middle of a pandemic, and have to totally reimagine what programming looks like, that's pretty darn hard, and you're just knocking out of the park. So, again, we're just so proud to have you here and excited about what the future can bring.

So that's a little bit of background about us. But we thought another good way to introduce ourselves being librarians was to talk about a book that has impacted our lives, you know, day to day, your favorite book can be a different thing. So we wanted to talk about something that's had long-lasting impact on our lives. So I chose *Love in the Time of Cholera* by Gabriel Garcia Marquez. And you know, I don't read books more than once, very often. And it's one of the only books that I've read multiple times. And another thing that's quirky is I always have an extra copy on my shelf, to give away to someone that I think should read the book. And I read it first in my favorite High School AP English class. And it just totally made me fall in love with Latin American magical realism. And that actually inspired me to study Spanish literature so I could read those books in their original language. And also as just a really romantic 17 year old, it sort of even further increased my real already romantic nature. Because it's a story of the poetic kind of love that lasts a lifetime, and that sort of ruined me for a lot of years for relationships until I found the love of my life. So it's always stuck with me all these years. So what about you Summer, what book has impacted you throughout your life?

Summer Sanford 6:54

Well, yours is just so sweet Darcy, I feel like mine falls on the other end of that scale. I chose a book just totally love. And one of the first books that I really had a close connection with was the *Monkey Wrench Gang* by Edward Abbey. My family is a huge family of readers. And this was a book that when I was in high school, my whole family was reading it. And my mom very, to the point was like, Summer, you're too young for this, you have to wait. And I was like, I don't think that's true. So I went ahead and I stole the book. And I was reading it at night hiding under my covers, and then hiding it under my bed during the day, which is definitely a step I didn't need to take, like no one was really looking for anything in my room, growing up I was a really good kid. And it totally demolished the cover of the book, like just shoving it under your mattress, bad

storage space for a book. But it was about this area. And it was like my whole family was reading it, I just, I couldn't be left out. And I'm the youngest, I have two older brothers, and I'm the only girl so I spent a lot of time growing up trying to keep up with them. So this is one of the ways that I was not gonna let them do something that I wasn't allowed to do. And it's a great book about this area and environmental activism, I just love the whole thing.

Darcy Poletti Harp 8:26

You know, that's on my top list of books, too, that changed my view, and just kind of woke you up to a little throwing a wrench in the wheels of the machinery of society. And, and so I think that also that age is just such an impactful age for what we will we pick up and what we read and what we feel like is a little bit you know, beyond us and expanding our world. So I love that especially. Now to recommend some books in case you're looking for something, a good new read for the new year. My recommendation for this month is Gateway to the Moon by Mary Morris. And actually I was recommended this by my friend who I ran into at the little free library at the end of our street, and she was browsing in there and she's like, oh, Darcy, I just read this amazing book and I've been recommending it to everyone and I think you'd really like it. And I did and I actually earlier this month I just did it for book club, our Bookmarks Book Club here at the Library. And so this book, it traces the roots of New Mexico's crypto Jews all the way back to 1492, to the time of Columbus. And it's told through the intertwining stories of different generations of this one Jewish family who fled the Inquisition. First they were in Spain and Portugal, then Mexico and then they ended up in New Mexico. And so what are crypto Jews? Well, I learned this in this book. It's a phenomenon where there's New Mexican families that had held on to Jewish traditions, like for example, lighting candles on Friday nights or not eating pork and they've been doing it for generations, but they didn't know why, they didn't know that they had these Jewish roots and so historians found out when they trace back their their bloodlines generations. They found out that their ancestors had converted from quote unquote converted from Catholicism during the Inquisition, but they secretly held on to these traditions. And so why did I love it? Well, it's exactly kind of like epic, far reaching historical fiction that I love that's full of rich historical details, subplots, and you just learned a ton. And also, the modern storyline is set in one of my favorite parts of New Mexico. And that's the area between Santa Fe and Taos. And so overall, in these pandemic times, it was a really cool richly detailed escape read for me, and I really enjoyed it. So Summer, what are you recommending this month?

Summer Sanford 10:43

That sounds really good Darcy I'm gonna come in again, on the other end of the scale, I really love reading juvenile fiction, which is great, because it's what I do now. And I get to be like, this is definitely for my job, even though we shouldn't ever feel guilty about what we're reading. There's some times when I have felt that way when walking into this section, and it happened a lot when I was in college. I was like, I'm an adult, but I really want this book. Um, so what I just read and I just finished reading was Tristen Strong Punches a Hole in the Sky. This is by Kwame Mbalia. This book kind of got put in with a Rick Riordan series. So Rick Riordan's Percy Jackson series, he's very prolific. And something he's been doing is using his name, is to help lift other authors that have a very similar style to him. Oh, Kwame Mbalia is really just a beautiful storyteller. He really pulls you in. This, it's very much like this tale of gods and the interaction between this young human boy and these gods and folktales with West African history, right, and it brings them to life, this whole side of this culture that I wasn't very familiar with, with along the similar lines of Rick Riordan, like pulling in these gods in and making them real, and, and

fallible, which is like, such a great part of the story, seeing that even these individuals we put up on a pedestal are fallible, and it's a beautiful coming of age story, when Tristan Strong really steps into his own, and finds that. I really love fantasy and books that have such a sweet ending, I especially lately, I can't handle the dark, depressing stuff, I really just need to be uplifted by what I read and go to that fantasy world.

Darcy Poletti Harp 12:42

You know, I hear you on that summer. And I don't think anybody should feel bad, any adult should feel bad for reading teen books or youth books. Because you know, we're just really lucky that there's such rich, well written stories right now out there. And so I think that those stories are for everyone to share. Yeah, so we'll keep coming back each month and recommending different books and pulling in other staff members with their book recs. And we just look forward to another way to share our favorite books.

Summer Sanford 13:14

Alright, so now we're gonna move on to one of our really fun segments where we look into our Southwestern history. And I really wanted to start this off with looking at our library. I grew up in this area. So I remember when we were just a small space on Mill Street. But I don't know the full history of how we were established. How and when did we get our start here? Darcy?

Darcy Poletti Harp 13:40

Yeah, so the library started in 1930, as what was called a study club then. And that was a group of women who came together because they wanted a broader selection of reading materials. I mean, you couldn't blame them. But it wasn't until 1934 that we were officially established as a library by the town. And upon that establishment, we bought the old Farmers and Merchants Bank downtown on Mill Street for a song and a dance- just fifteen hundred dollars. But in 1972, we became a Library District officially, which is what we are today, the Pine River Library District, which means that we are allowed to be funded by property tax dollars.

Summer Sanford 14:18

So one thing I really love about our library is how we're really situated as a community space. I know families come here to play in the park, to just be in this area. It feels like people come here very naturally. But that changed a lot. So when did some of these renovations happen and improvements that really turned our library into this central community space?

Darcy Poletti Harp 14:40

Yeah, so in 1999, we won our first mill levy increase and everybody remembers that in 2019, we won our second, so thanks for that Bayfield, but our first mill levy increase allowed us to buy the property across the highway and build the new building that we are currently in now. But we outgrew that quickly and in 2012 there was an expansion project, which also added the community garden. And so because of our out of the box programming and things like the community garden, in 2014, we won the Library Journal Award for Best Small Library in America. And keeping with that tradition of going big in 2017, we built the Library Park, in collaboration with the town of Bayfield. And that was actually partially funded also by grants from Go Outdoors Colorado, and the Colorado Health Foundation. That, along with the garden, and things like yoga classes, that really helps us to promote active minds and bodies in our community, something we're really proud to do. And actually, in 2020, we're adding to all that

with a storywalk in the garden, and Summer, you have a huge part of making that happen. And we're really proud and excited to debut that for the community. And we'll be talking about that more in episodes to come. So thanks for heading that project Summer.

Summer Sanford 15:55

I'm especially excited for that storywalk. It is so pretty. So one thing that I like to think of is, I want to put this into context of the time that we're dealing with. Um, so how do we compare in establishing our library with libraries across the US?

Darcy Poletti Harp 16:13

So you know, books first came over with the colonizers, and those colonizers, they were, you know, white rich men. And so those were the people that had books, these white rich men, and the books were actually quite rare and often religious in nature. And so these men came together, and they formed these clubs and societies in the 1700s to share their reading material. And this created the idea of a social library. And these early libraries, they weren't free, of course, they were clubs funded by membership fees. But then in the 1800s, there were African American men's and white women's clubs that began to form. But it wasn't until the end of that century that African American women started to form their own clubs. And, you know, something I found in my research that was really interesting was that these women's clubs, they became really powerful advocates for sharing reading materials with people who are marginalized, people who couldn't, didn't have access to those materials. And actually, these women's groups, that's how book carts, which eventually became bookmobiles were born.

Summer Sanford 17:16

That's really amazing. I love to hear those kinds of stories. So these clubs are really different from what libraries look like today. When do we start seeing this transition to these public spaces that we're all so familiar with?

Darcy Poletti Harp 17:30

So Summer, that was around the time that people call the Progressive Era. So that was the beginning of the 20th century. So there was a bunch of efforts around this time to make America more quote unquote democratic. And so along with that, there was this huge boom in library building. And a lot of those libraries were funded by Andrew Carnegie. And because of that, he's often called the "patron saint of public libraries." And actually, just for a little stats for you, between 1883 and 1929, they built 2,509 libraries. And so a lot of those libraries, well, they're called Carnegie libraries, are still in existence today. And they're these beautiful, grand old buildings. So it's really cool, we still have a part of that history and those libraries. That's the point when libraries sort of became the public libraries we know and love today, you know, open stacks, public programming, and really great children's areas.

Summer Sanford

But these Carnegie libraries were built during Jim Crow laws, so we must have been seeing some differences in access to libraries and their materials at that time?

Darcy Poletti Harp

Yeah, you're right. I mean, at that time, they really still didn't provide truly equal access, because under those Jim Crow laws, they were segregated public spaces. And they actually became

really important grounds for equality struggles during the civil rights era. There were sit-ins at libraries, just like the sit-ins at lunch counters. And it wasn't until 1964 that they were desegregated under the Civil Rights Act. And so obviously, yeah, today's libraries have come a long way from those rich white male study clothes. And something I heard recently that I just absolutely loved is that some say that libraries are one of the last cornerstones of true democracy because, you know, they're one of the only public places where people of all socioeconomic classes interact with each other. And you know, they're the great equalizer that provides equal access to all and you know, right there Summer, that's one of the things that makes me so proud to be a librarian.

Summer Sanford 19:28

Oh, thanks, Darcy, for sharing all this. It also makes me so proud to be a librarian. And I know that's been a big thing that I've learned a lot about is thinking about equal access for everyone and what that looks like in these truly public spaces that we are part of. Alright, um, this next section, we call beyond books because this is where we get into talking about our library programming, but since we're partway through the month we only have one big thing coming up. Darcy, would you tell us more about the event that you have planned?

Darcy Poletti Harp 20:06

Yeah, so we're really excited to be hosting a program called "Finding Happiness in the Age of COVID-19." And that's going to be hosted by Dr. Brian Burke, who is a Fort Lewis College psychology professor. And actually, he was just named 2020 Best Educator in Durango. And so he's gonna be talking about how the science of happiness can be applied to living through these really crazy times we're in through the COVID-19 pandemic. And so this is going to be a Zoom program, of course, because we can't be gathering in public together. So it's gonna be on January 25, from 6 to 7pm. And we're doing email RSVPs for it. So if you can just email me at darcy@prlibrary.org for the Zoom login information, and I'll shoot you back an email with that. We really hope you can join us.

Summer Sanford 20:54

Thanks for putting that on. I think a lot of people are gonna get something out of that. And I want to thank everyone for joining us for our inaugural episode. In the future, keep an eye out in your podcatchers, be at Apple, Stitcher, Acast, or Spotify. We will be posting our podcasts on the first Friday of every month. And we also want to hear from you. So if you go to prlibrary.org/pinecast, you can record a little voice message for us and you may even get featured on our podcast. We look forward to hearing from you

Bye.

Darcy Poletti Harp 21:34

Adios

Transcribed by <https://otter.ai>