

# LIT PICKS

## A curated selection of the Web's literary tidbits

"Lit Picks" is our DC Public Library insider's guide to the literary pieces we're reading, liking and sharing. We hope you enjoy our look at some of the best and most interesting items the Web has to offer on books, reading and life.

This edition of Lit Picks arrives with groundbreaking DC Public Library news. Earlier this week, Mayor Vincent C. Gray joined Interim Chief Librarian Joi Mecks and members of the DC Public Library Board of Trustees to announce that the team of Martinez + Johnson and Mecanoo Architecture has been selected to renovate and re-design the [Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Library](#).

Martinez + Johnson and Mecanoo will bring their international perspective on libraries to downtown D.C. Imagine a modern central library inundated with light via open, glass walls. Imagine a cafe, rooftop garden, beautiful auditorium and bookstore. All of these and more can be ours in a newly renovated MLK Library - to share your vision of what a world-class central library in D.C. should be, contribute your ideas [here](#).



Click [here](#) to see the winning design concept, and you may also watch the live presentations with the top three architecture firms [here](#).



## The World's Most Stunning Public Libraries

How do you envision your ideal central library? Would you like to see a building with the pristine, minimalist architecture of Germany's [Stuttgart City Library](#), or the cozy, tree-house design of Bangkok's [Old Market Library](#)? Perhaps you imagine an interior space lined entirely with books from floor to ceiling, such as the [Royal Portuguese Reading Room](#) in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

As we consider designs for our own renovated central library here in D.C., this [slideshow](#) featuring 25 of the most visually outstanding public libraries across the globe will be sure to inspire and excite you.



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## The Many Faces of Today's Librarian



As part of a project to debunk outdated stereotypes of librarians, photographer Kyle Cassidy snapped photos of contemporary librarians while attending the American Library Association's Midwinter Meeting. The [results](#), published by *Slate* magazine, reveal diverse portraits of public librarians from across the country - varying in age, ethnicity, gender, style and specialty. This project is a wonderful way to celebrate the local heroes in our communities who believe in the equalizing power of free access to information and technology. DCPL's librarians are as diverse as the librarians pictured in the essay - stop by a library today to visit them.

Another noteworthy finding in this article is [Keith Richards'](#) quote about public libraries, shared by JP Porcaro, one of the profiled librarians. The guitarist for the Rolling Stones once said, "**When you are growing up there are two institutional places that affect you most powerfully: the church, which belongs to God and the public library, which belongs to you. The public library is a great equalizer.**"

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## Our Changing Relationship with Public Libraries

Some people say that the ever-evolving digital landscape poses a threat to the very existence of conventional books and the institutions that house them.

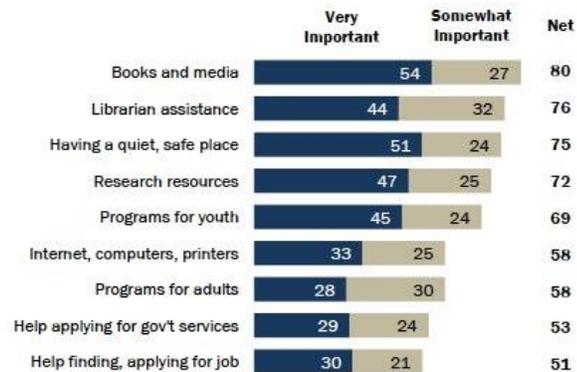
However, the reality is that people are still reading hard books. And libraries are much more than just a place to check out books -- they offer a variety of services to the community. Libraries are demonstrating their relevancy in this adapt-to-survive digital age. Librarians are also needed now more than ever to help us navigate the overwhelming explosion of information and technology.

A [recent Pew study](#) examined the relationship between Americans and libraries. One of the greatest challenges facing libraries is not the struggle to meet the changing needs of their community, but rather, making the community aware of all services that libraries have to offer. Another important finding reveals that 90% of Americans acknowledge the essential role public libraries play in the community.

As *Wall Street Journal* columnist Christopher John Farley noted in [his post](#) about the survey, "Libraries of the future could be places we go not to just check out books, but to check out each other-to participate, face to face, in cultural activities in a way we can't do over the internet."

### How important are these library services to you and your family?

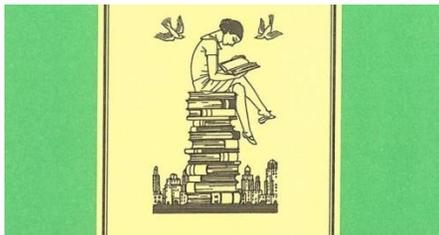
*Among Americans ages 16+ who have ever used a public library or had a household member use a public library, the percentage who say these services are...*



Source: Pew Research Center's Library Services Survey of 6,224 Americans ages 16 and older conducted July 18-September 30, 2013. The margin of error for the overall sample is plus or minus 1.4 percentage points. The survey was conducted in English and Spanish and on landline and cell phones.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

## Marrying Libraries: One Couple's Re-Commitment to Marriage



In Anne Fadiman's essay *Marrying Libraries*, she recounts the eventual decision to merge libraries with her husband of five years (and partner of ten years). *Book Keeping*, the FSG blog, recently [revisited](#) this humorous account of Anne's personal process, which serves as a metaphor for marital compromise and collaboration. She and her husband must establish a unified library,

reconciling the Type A, hyper-organization of her library with the Type B, chaotic clutter of his library. The result is a testament to their mutual devotion, comparable to renewing wedding vows.

Both Anne and her husband are writers and devout bibliophiles, experiencing sentimental attachment to each book. As she explains in the essay, true love is retiring your copy of [The Magic Mountain](#) in favor of your husband's edition.

Click [here](#) to locate Anne Fadiman's book *Ex Libris: Confessions of a Common Reader*, where this essay was originally published, and more of her work at a DC Public Library near you.

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## Bar Crawl for Bookworms

Nothing combats a stubborn bout of writer's block quite like a stiff drink - just ask William Faulkner.

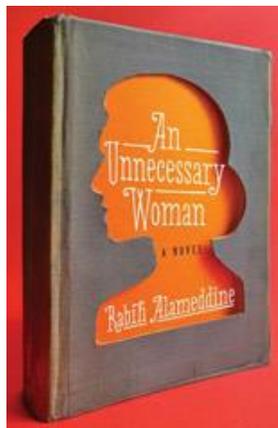
*BuzzFeed* compiled a [list of historic pubs](#) and bars with famous literary patrons such as Jack Kerouac, Oscar Wilde, Gertrude Stein and Kurt Vonnegut. Ernest Hemingway appears to have visited at least five out of the twelve bars included in this list -- bar hopping from Cuba to New Orleans to Paris. Each intellectual hot spot boasts a unique offering, such as the rotating carousel bar at New Orleans' Hotel Monteleone, or the original furnishing and décor from 1892 at NYC's Old Town Bar and Restaurant.



Speaking of the relationship between authors and bars, the MLK Library has reinvented the traditional book club by offering the Books & Bars program. The group meets each month at the Laughing Man Tavern to discuss their latest read. Click [here](#) to learn more about Books & Bars.

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## February's Fresh Finds



The month of February is known for the celebration of [Black History](#), Valentine's Day, snow storms, and George Washington's Birthday. According to this [literary list](#) provided by *Page Turner*, *The New Yorker's* book blog, there are also a number of great new books to enjoy throughout the shortest month of the year.

Although Valentine's Day has come and gone, *Flavorwire* was kind enough to compile a list of 50 [steamy reads](#). Let romance persist beyond February 14th by picking up one of these suggested novels. It beats binge-eating a box of chocolates while re-watching *Chocolat*. This list has you covered from Jane Austen's [Pride and Prejudice](#) to [Vox](#) by Nicholson Baker, both of which can be found at DCPL.

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The DC Public Library Foundation thanks you for your support! Now is a very exciting time to invest in the future of the DC Public Library. If you haven't already, please give this year! Visit [dclibrary.org/giving](https://dclibrary.org/giving) to learn more about the Literati and the Ex Libris Society giving memberships, and donate today!