



Quarterly Issue No. 67

Spring 2005

Laptops Now Available to Use in the Library

The Palo Alto City Library now has laptop computers to loan to customers for use in the Main and Mitchell Park libraries.

This service is a pilot program made possible in part by a Cable Co-op Grant under the Friends of the Palo Alto Library "9 Libraries" Project. The grant funded the purchase of seven laptops for each of the two libraries.

"Space limitations in library facilities make it difficult to provide sufficient wired Internet computers to meet demand", said Library Director Paula Simpson. "By loaning laptops for in-house use, we hope to increase access to the Internet and the Library's broad range of commercial databases, particularly for those who can't afford computers."

The laptops are equipped with Microsoft Office 2003 software and are configured for Internet access via the existing wireless networks at the libraries. Customers ten years and older will be able to use their library cards to borrow a laptop for up to two hours per day.

From the President

Busy Time for Our Libraries

Walk in to any Palo Alto library and you can have a quiet and restful time, perhaps sitting contemplatively at a garden window and reading an absorbing book. You would never know that, behind the scenes, there's enormous activity going on. Here's a glimpse of what's happening.

College Terrace Library Working Group

Galvanized by proposals last year to close the College Terrace Library and discussion of withdrawing all paid staff from it this year, avid fans of the branch are working to keep it strong. The group plans to survey patrons of the branch to find out which services are popular now and what changes would increase usage. They are also held a used book collection drive to provide more books for our sales. The group is led by Paula Sandas, known to many of our readers as a past officer of the Friends. We are working closely with the group and hoping it serves as a model for tapping neighborhood talent and resources to advocate for and improve Palo Alto's other four branches too.

If you're interested in participating in the College Terrace Library Working Group, please contact Paula Sandas at paula_sandas@yahoo.com or (650) 494-8806.

Children's Library

Groundbreaking is scheduled this fall for the \$2.6 million Children's Library renovation and expansion project. The architects have been working for many months now on the plans, which are being reviewed by the City's Historic Resources Board, Architectural Review Board, and Library Advisory Commission. As a major donor to the project, we also participate in the review.

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Although the construction costs are in place, funds are still needed for the furniture, fixture, and equipment that will go into the enlarged branch.

Once construction begins, the Children's Library will close and its collection and staff will temporarily move elsewhere. Some of the children's books and staff will be housed at the Main Library, although the majority of the books will be put into storage. The other libraries will probably be more crowded until the Children's Library reopens in 2007.

Downtown and Main Reorganization Plans

Partly to accommodate the closure of the Children's Library for the next two years, the City has allocated about \$352,000 to reorganize the Downtown and Main libraries. The large circulation desks will shrink, since modern computer systems have eliminated the need for bulky card files once used to track checkouts. However, the proposed reorganization will also permanently move some administrative personnel into the Downtown Library, dramatically shrinking the branch's public area by taking away two of the four wings and the reference room as well. Meanwhile, considerably less public space will be gained back at the Main Library, forcing many to question whether the tradeoff makes sense. The Downtown Library has already lost all of its community rooms when other administrative offices moved in.

At the Main Library, some areas will shift around to accommodate some materials and staff from the Children's Library and to expand the space for teens.

We are working with many others, including neighborhood groups, to ensure that the public and the City Council have an opportunity to review the plans and consider possible alternatives, such as using a temporary building to house the Children's collection and services during the construction. Please check our website at www.friendspaloaltolib.org for the latest information.

School/City Efforts

Last year, we contacted the Palo Alto school district to better coordinate the way we give money to the libraries. For example, we found ourselves funding the very same online encyclopedia for the library that the district was subscribing to for its students. Obviously, having the library and schools both buy the same resource didn't make much sense. We're very happy to see the district and library working together now on this and other

issues, such as the possibility of letting students pick up and return city library books at school libraries.

Meanwhile, we've given the library money to run some literature programs in the schools, which we hope will better acquaint students with library staff and resources. Friends has also donated boxes of books that the high schools needed to fill out their collections, as well as many unsold books selected by school librarians from our Cubberley booksale.

Redefinition of Distributed Libraries

As you may have read in our previous issue [Winter 2005, page 3], the City's Library Advisory Commission has taken on the enormous challenge of looking into the future at what an improved library system might be. Juggling with literally hundreds of ways to distribute various services (books, reference help, study space, etc.) using various means (large branches, small branches, bookmobiles, the Internet, etc.), the commission hopes to identify new ways that cost-effectively better serve the city. It's anyone's guess as to how long this redefinition will take, and one commissioner has argued persuasively that going slowly is likely to yield better results. However, some pilot project might start this year or next, such as a location to pick up and drop off books in the underserved southwest part of Palo Alto.

There's a lot more coming. The City Council approved in March a \$269,000 project to design seismic, electrical, mechanical, and accessibility improvements for the Mitchell Park Library and Community Center. The College Terrace Library will be upgraded too, including rewiring to permit more computers using \$45,000 from our Cable Co-op Legacy Grant. Many other improvements underwritten from that grant are coming too at all branches.

All in all, the library community is working feverishly to improve our already wonderfully busy libraries. To give you a sense of it, this author alone attended twenty-seven different meetings in Palo Alto about the libraries in one month. Yes, that hardly left time to actually *use* the libraries!

Jeff Levinsky

President

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Thoughts from the Library Director



Happy spring! Palo Alto is beautiful at this time of year, isn't it? I love the flowering trees, the abundant and fragrant jasmine, and that intense

carpet of green in the parks and on the hills around us. I feel very fortunate to live in such a lovely area.

Springtime is bringing new beginnings in the Library. We are excited that the Library Advisory Commission is working on its tasking from the City Council to develop a plan for a full-service library accompanied by distributed library services. The LAC is taking this responsibility very seriously, and I know they are very eager to hear your suggestions and ideas for the Library's long-term vision. Please share your thoughts with me, and I'll see that they are conveyed to all LAC members.

We're also beginning the planning process to make some changes at the Main Library and the Downtown Branch. The City Council funded this remodeling project as part of the midyear budget review process on March 7. We are extremely grateful to the Council for their support of the Library in this way.

There are multiple facets to this project.

1. Some children's materials and services will be shifted from Children's Library to Main when Children's closes in the fall for construction/renovation.

2. The extensive staff work area between the check-out and reference desks will be removed. The newly captured space will be opened to the public for popular collections, possibly new books, and/or DVDs and media. The existing public service desks will be replaced with a much smaller accounts desk and a re-oriented reference desk.

3. Check-in of returned materials will be shifted to an off-desk area, similar to what has already been done at the Mitchell Park branch. This change will allow us to handle the check-in process in a more efficient way, by making the work area more ergonomic, and we'll be able to have greater flexibility in scheduling staff and volunteers to help with the check-in process.

4. The Technical Services staff work area will move from the Main Library to the Downtown Branch. The area formerly occupied by Tech Services at Main Library will be turned over to public service uses – possibly for the magazine reading area or the historical resources.

5. To accommodate the Technical Services staff, the public space at the Downtown Branch will be reduced, but the most-used services will remain, including popular reading, DVDs and media, and Internet stations for the public. We will be taking out most of the inventory in the stacks at Downtown to maintain adequate seating, and to put a greater emphasis on best sellers and popular materials.

As this project develops, I'll keep library customers at both locations well informed, and of course I welcome your comments and

suggestions. It's a definite challenge to deliver contemporary library services in outdated and undersized facilities and with limited resources, but we're doing our best. We appreciate your patience and support.

Lastly, in response to public demand, I'm delighted to report that the Palo Alto City Library now offers eBooks. eBooks are downloadable digital books in text or audiobook format. The Library is able to try eBooks on an experimental basis thanks to an agreement with a statewide purchasing consortium for libraries. If you (or perhaps your child or grandchild) want more information about the Library's eBook collection, just go to the Library's website at cityofpaloalto.org/library and click on "New at the Library: eBooks and Digital books".

I'm always eager to hear from you, so please continue to share your opinions with me. Also, I'd love to come to speak to your service club, book club or other organization. The more Palo Altans I meet and hear from, the more effective library leader I will be. Thanks for your continued and strong support for the Library! You can reach me at 650-329-2403, or paula.simpson@cityofpaloalto.org.

Paula Simpson
Library Director

Friends of the Palo Alto Book Group

At our April meeting, members of the book group selected the books we will read for the next 11 months. Our members brought in suggestions of books that they have read and enjoyed or would like to read. Then we had a delightful time discussing all the nominees before we settled down to the hard work of voting for only eleven books.



Joanne Koltnow, Sylvia Gartner and Isabel Peterson discussing the book choices.

Here are this year's books:

May 2005

The Kite Runner by Khaled Hosseini

June 2005

The Tipping Point by Malcolm Gladwell

July 2005

Under the Banner of Heaven: A Story of Violent Faith by Jon Krakauer

August 2005

The Professor and the Madman: A Tale of Murder, Insanity, and the Making of The Oxford English Dictionary by Simon Winchester

The following books (listed alphabetically) were selected but stay tuned for dates:

The Bird Man and the Lap Dancer: Close Encounters with Strangers by Eric Han

Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed by Jared Diamond

Drop City by T. Coraghessan Boyle

Embers by Sandor Marai

Mrs. Dalloway by Virginia Woolf

Dubliners by James Joyce

The Trouble with Islam: A Muslim's Call for Reform in Her Faith by Irshad Manji

The Friends of the Palo Alto Library would like to invite you to join our Book Discussion Group.

Everyone is welcome to attend!

We meet the 2nd Thursday of each month in Palo Alto at the Lucie Stern Community Center, Fireside Room from 7:30-9 pm. The address is 1305 Middlefield Road.

Contact Crystal with any questions at bookorg@yahoo.com

FAQ's about the FOPAL Book Group

Q) When, what time, where are the meetings?

A) The meetings are once a month on the second Thursday of the month at 7:30 and usually run until 9 pm. We meet in the Palo Alto at Lucie Stern Community Center on Middlefield Road in the Fireside Room.

Q) How are books chosen?

A) Every April we select the books we will read for the next 11 months. Members bring in book suggestions of books that they have read and enjoyed or would like to read. Then the Book Group as a whole picks the books from the books suggested at the April meeting.

Q) What kind of books have been chosen?

A) We read most anything: fiction, non fiction, travel, biographies, classics, foreign authors, poetry, plays and best sellers. Our only restrictions are that the books should be available in paperback and are under 500 pages.

Q) How are the meetings run?

A) One member, usually the person that suggested the book, is in charge of presenting and leading the discussion. Common formats are to present some research on the author's life and other writings and then to ask the group questions about the book and a general discussion begins.

Q) How big is the group?

A) Depending on the month anywhere from 10 -20 people come to each meeting. We welcome all newcomers.

Q) How do I join?

A) Members should join the Friends of the Palo Alto Library. Then just come to our monthly book discussion group meetings.

Q) What if I am not a member of FOPAL yet?

A) We encourage you to visit anyway and if you like our group, then we would need you to join the Friends of the Palo Alto Library.

Selections for May—August 2005

May 2005

The Kite Runner by Khaled Hosseini

From Booklist: Hosseini's debut novel opens in Kabul in the mid-1970s. Amir is the son of a wealthy man, but his best friend is Hassan, the son of one of his father's servants. His father encourages the friendship and dotes on Hassan, who worships the ground Amir walks on. But Amir is envious of Hassan and his own father's apparent affection for the boy. Amir is not nearly as loyal to Hassan, and one day, when he comes across a group of local bullies raping Hassan, he does nothing. Shamed by his own inaction, Amir pushes Hassan away, even going so far as to accuse him of stealing. Eventually, Hassan and his father are forced to leave. Years later, Amir, now living in America, receives a visit from an old family friend who gives him an opportunity to make amends for his treatment of Hassan. Current events will garner interest for this novel; the quality of Hosseini's writing and the emotional impact of the story will guarantee its longevity.

Kristine Huntley, Copyright © American Library Association.

June 2005

The Tipping Point by Malcolm Gladwell

From Booklist: Gladwell, a *New Yorker* staff writer, offers an incisive and piquant theory of social dynamics that is bound to provoke a paradigm shift in our understanding of mass behavioral change. Defining such dramatic turnarounds as the abrupt drop in crime on New York's subways, or the unexpected popularity of a novel, as epidemics, Gladwell searches for catalysts that precipitate the "tipping point," or critical mass, that generates those events. What he finds, after analyzing a number of fascinating psychological studies, is that tipping points are attributable to minor alterations in the environment, such as the eradication of graffiti, and the actions of a surprisingly small number of people, who fit the profiles of personality types that he terms connectors, mavens, and salesmen. As he applies his strikingly counterintuitive hypotheses to everything from the "stickiness," or popularity, of certain children's television shows to the spread of sexually transmitted diseases, Gladwell reveals that our cherished belief in the autonomy of the self is based in great part on wishful thinking. *Donna Seaman, Copyright © American Library Association.*

July 2005

Under the Banner of Heaven: A Story of Violent Faith by Jon Krakauer

From Booklist: On July 24, 1984, Dan and Ron Lafferty cut the throats of their brother Allan's wife, Brenda, and baby daughter, Erica, fulfilling part of a revelation Ron received from God. Ron is now on death row. Brother Dan, serving two life sentences for the murders, has never denied killing his sister-in-law and niece but has absolutely no remorse. "I was doing God's will," he says, "which is not a crime." Krakauer, best known for his adventure writing in *Outside* magazine and his books *Into the Wild* (1995) and *Into Thin Air* (1997), has shifted gears to tackle issues of faith in this true-crime/religious expose, which delves deep into the heart of Mormon fundamentalism, where revelations from God are commonplace and polygamy not only still exists but is "a matter of religious duty." Alternating between the bloodier aspects of the origins of the Mormon Church (Joseph Smith Jr.'s lynching in Nauvoo, Illinois, and the Mountain Meadows Massacre in Utah) and some of the more extreme aspects of today's Fundamentalist Latter Day Saints (fraud, incest, and murder), Krakauer's account is gripping yet deeply disturbing. Not only does he interview Dan, an admitted murderer, but also he talks with former child brides and victims of incest. Debbie Palmer, raised to be an obedient wife in FLDS, married at 14 and became a stepmother to 31 kids, including her own stepmother, which made her "a stepmother to her stepmother, and thus a step grandmother to herself." *Benjamin Segegin, Copyright © American Library Association.*

August 2005

The Professor and the Madman: A Tale of Murder, Insanity, and the Making of The Oxford English Dictionary by Simon Winchester

From Booklist: Distinguished journalist Winchester tells a marvelous, true story that few readers will have heard about. His narrative is based on official government files locked away for more than a century. As everyone knows, the *Oxford English Dictionary* is an essential library reference tool. The 12-volume *OED* took more than 70 years to produce, and one of its most distinguishing features is the copious quotations from published works to illustrate every shade of word usage. By the late 1890s the huge project was nearly half done, and the editor at the time, Professor James Murray, felt the need to meet and personally thank Dr. William Minor, with whom he had been in lengthy contact and who had contributed a lion's share of the quotations. As it turned out, Dr. Minor was an American surgeon who many years before had been found not guilty of murder by reason of insanity but had been incarcerated in an English asylum ever since. The tale of their affiliation and friendship reads like a creatively conceived novel. *Brad Hooper, Copyright © American Library Association.*

Please join us...

Volunteers Make it Happen

Over 130 volunteers helped run our booksales and other activities during 2004, contributing an amazing 19,189 hours of their time. That's the equivalent of almost ten fulltime people. You've probably met many of the volunteers who cashier and assist customers at the sales, but many others sort, shelve, price, organize, and help promote the sale. Volunteers also handle our accounting, membership, events, news, and advocacy activities. We're all united by a love of libraries and a strong belief in helping our community. If you're interested in volunteering at the booksale or in other ways, please contact us at volunteer@friendspaloaltolib.org or (650) 213-8755.

New Gold Cards for Life Members

When you sign up for life membership in the Friends, you receive a special gold-colored Palo Alto library card. The gold cards issued in the past will not work with the new self-check machines, so FOPAL has paid for new gold cards in the correct format.

If you have one of the older cards, you can get one in the new format by visiting any library branch.

Want to be a Doctor? A Lawyer?

Using funds from the Friends of the Palo Alto Library, the library offers free online practice entrance exams that you can take from home or at a library computer. This spectacular set of tests covers everything from 4th grade academics through graduate school admissions. It takes just a minute to register, using a Palo Alto Library card, and then you can immediately start taking the exams. Here's what's available:

Academic: 4th Grade, 8th Grade, Catholic High School, FCAT, NYC Specialized High School, TASP

Advanced Placement: Biology, Calculus, English Literature and Composition, U.S. History

Basic Skills Success: Grammar For Writing Skills, Practical Math Skills, Reading Comprehension Skills, Vocabulary And Spelling Skills

Civil Service: Civil Service Careers, Federal Clerical, Postal Worker

College Preparation: ACT, CUNY, SAT Practice Tests, SAT Exam Success Course Series

Cosmetology: Cosmetology

EMS: EMT - Basic, Paramedic

ESL (Spanish) Skills Improvement Courses: ESL Grammar For Writing, ESL Math, ESL Reading Comprehension, ESL Vocabulary And Spelling

Firefighter: Firefighter

GED: GED Preparation

Graduate School Entrance: GMAT, GRE, LSAT, MCAT

Law Enforcement: Border Patrol, California Highway Patrol, Corrections Officer, Police Officer, Police Sergeant, Treasury Enforcement Agent

Military: ASVAB Preparation

Nurse Aide: Nurse Aide/Nursing Assistant

Real Estate: Broker, Sales Agent

Skills Improvement Courses: Grammar for Writing, Practical Math, Reading Comprehension, Vocabulary and Spelling, SAT Exam Success Course Series

Teacher Certification: CBEST, PPST: Praxis 1

Technical And Career College: Math, Reading, Writing

TOEFL Exam Preparation: About the TOEFL Exam, TOEFL Exam Study Skills and Strategies, TOEFL Exam Listening Comprehension, TOEFL Exam Structure-Grammar and Style, TOEFL Exam Reading Comprehension Skills, TOEFL Exam Writing Skills

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Monthly Book Sales: Second Weekend

Cubberley Community Center, 4000 Middlefield Rd.

Saturday

Main room: 11 am to 4 pm

(Free tickets to reserve place in line available at 8 am)

Children's (Room K6) & Bargain (Room K7): 10 am to 4 pm

Sunday

All rooms: 1 pm to 4 pm

See www.friendspaloaltolib.org for details

Library Commission: Fourth Thursday

Council Conference Room, 250 Hamilton Ave. 7 pm

See www.city.palo-alto.ca.us/clerk/schedule.html
to confirm meeting date and time.

Board of Directors Meeting: Second Wednesday

Cubberley Book Sale Room
4000 Middlefield Road 8:30 to 10:30 am

Book Discussion Group: Second Thursday

Lucie Stern Community Center Fireside Room

1305 Middlefield Road 7:30 to 9 pm

For information, call Crystal 961-1528 or see

www.fopalbookgroup.homestead.com

Great Books: Second Wednesday

Oak Creek Apartments Club House

1600 Sand Hill Road, Palo Alto. 7:30 to 9:30 pm

For information, call Elsie Taboroff at 493-8629

History Book Discussion Group

For information, call Floyd Gardner (9 am to 7 pm)
at 328-8855

Friends of the Palo Alto Library (FOPAL) Board of Directors: Jeff Levinsky, President; Wendy Akers-Ghose, Vice-President; Martha Schmidt, Secretary; Bob Moss, Treasurer and Bob Otnes, Assistant Treasurer; Marty Paddock, Book Sale Manager. Members: Betsy Allyn, Althea Andersen, Rudy Batties, Gretchen Emmons, Gerry Masteller, Gloria Reade, Jim Schmidt, Barbara Silberling, Patricia Sohl, Steve Staiger, Ellen Wyman. Library Representatives to the Board: Paula Simpson, Library Director. Foreword Staff: Wendy Akers-Ghose; Webmaster: Jeff Levinsky; Circulation: Post Haste Direct