

Recent Reads

April Ide, Library Director

It's a great time of year to sit outside with a book and something refreshing to drink. Here are a few of the books I've enjoyed lately.

I loved "Seasonal Work," a collection of short stories by Laura Lippman. She cleverly spins tales of spouses wronged, book thieves, scamming stepfathers, and more, with devilishly surprising conclusions. Some of these characters are downright rotten, but many more are recognizably human; the kind of people you might interact with daily, but who have just reached their limit. Lippman plays with the idea of "seasonal work," whether that might be a detective solving a small-time case, or a woman seeking revenge on her mother's lover. I can't wait for Lippman's next collection.

I've been on a streak of reading nonfiction lately, including "Graduates in Wonderland" by Jessica Pan and Rachel Kapelke-Dale. Jess and Rachel are recent graduates of Brown University. Jess is off to Beijing, while Rachel stays in New York to work at an art gallery. They write emails back and forth for three years while they crisscross the globe, to Beijing, France, Malaysia, Australia, and London. The young women share their experiences with work, travel, language, culture, and men, all the while maintaining their tight bond. This was a touching joint memoir of friendship, adventure, and finding your space in the world.

Amanda Oliver worked for nine months at the Northwest One branch of the Washington, D.C. Public Library. Her time there, along with her previous experience working as an elementary school librarian in D.C., were enough to make her reconsider her career as a librarian. During her time at Northwest One she became burned out and experienced compassion fatigue to the extreme; she was eventually diagnosed with PTSD. Many of the patrons that Oliver served were unhoused and struggling with mental illness. She and her fellow librarians had not entered the field expecting to administer overdose treatments or act as mediators to physical conflicts, nor were they trained as mental health professionals. In "Overdue: Reckoning with the Public Library," Oliver reflects on how in many communities libraries have become catch-all solutions for many of the societal challenges we face, and how these libraries need much more support to be able to face these challenges successfully.

In "Tacky: Love Letters to the Worst Culture We Have to Offer," Rax King explores the messy, exciting, and sometimes heartbreaking process of growing up, under the guise of reminiscing about the pop culture that shaped her young years. I found the essay about her father the most touching. As his health declined, he and King found a comforting routine in watching "The Jersey Shore" together, sharing their passion for the tackiness of the show. King has lived a bold, loud life, unapologetic about the gauche things she loves and the audacious ways she has conducted herself.

If you'd like to request any of these books, visit www.newulmlibrary.org and click on Library Catalog or give us a call at 507-359-8331. We'd be happy to place these or any other books on hold for you.

The library is located at 17 N. Broadway and is open to the public Monday to Thursday 9:30 a.m.-8 p.m. and Friday and Saturday 9:30 a.m.-5 p.m.