

A Library Adieu
Paulina Poplawska, Library Director

The first week of October saw the retirement of Betty Roiger. She's been with the library for 37 years in a plethora of roles - Circulation, Head of Circulation, Assistant Director, and most recently as Acquisitions Librarian extraordinaire. She saw the library through many changes over the years sharing her love of reading, imagination, and fun. She obliged to answer the questions I asked her about her time at the library.

What brought you to New Ulm in 1982?

A car. It was a crazy winter. We lived in Sleepy Eye so I had to drive through a tunnel of snow to get to my interview. The snow banks towered over the car, and in some places there was only one lane so I had to pray that no one was coming from the other direction because then I would have to back up. I think I wasn't crazy nervous during the interview because the drive was so awful that I was dreading the drive home.

What did you do before you started working at the library?

In high school I worked in the library. In college I worked in the library. I am sensing a pattern here. I went to college with no idea what to do. My mom suggested that I take library science. Kids listen to your mom. Ha!

What have you enjoyed most about working in libraries?

I love to commune with readers so I've really enjoyed everyone I've worked with and sharing with patrons over the desk. I love books and stories and plots and characters. It's fun to recommend a book I've really enjoyed to another person.

What was your favorite element of the library back in the day?

I have worked with all sorts of people, oh, don't get me started. Some of those experiences have been brilliant. I started working for a director named Dan Reilly. I learned so much from him. He was kind and soft spoken. I was young and flippant. He would throw quotes out during the course of a work day. Like when the copier broke down: "Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold" (Yeats) to let us know chaos was descending. At the time I was often impatient, like: "Yeah, but meanwhile how will we make copies?" But, now that I'm older, these quotes sing in my head. I have this one on my fridge because Dan shared it: "Finish each day and be done with it. You have done what you could. Some blunders and absurdities have crept in; forget them as soon as you can. Tomorrow is a new day. You shall begin it serenely and with too high a spirit to be encumbered with your own nonsense" (Emerson). He gave it to me when I was hard on myself. It's good to learn from someone like that.

**I live vicariously through your book recommendations pretending I read them:
What are you currently reading?**

I just finished *Tuesday Mooney talks to Ghosts* by Kate Racculia. It was everything I wanted it to be: quirky, engaging characters with secrets and a twisty-turny plot. And with that title: possible ghosts?!?! Tuesday is a loner who had one friend in school who went missing when she was 16. Now as an adult she has one friend, Dex, with whom

she occasionally participates in trivia tournaments. When a gazillionaire dies, his will challenges all of Boston to a puzzling scavenger hunt for money and eccentric prizes. Tuesday and Dex jump at the opportunity.

What is your favorite book of all time?

Come on! I remember asking one of our regular patrons who was an avid reader (his name was Marlowe which is a brilliant book name) what his favorite was, and he said, "Whatever I'm reading now." If you are seriously asking, run all these together: *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Lord of the Rings*, *Wuthering Heights*, *Lord of the Flies*, *Game of Thrones*, *Harry Potter*, *Trixie Belden*, *The Color Kittens*: a little golden book, and on and on... so my answer is: so many books at so many different times have meant so much to me. I cannot choose.

What recent book would you recommend?

Rainbow Rowell just came out with a sequel: *Wayward Son* that I thoroughly enjoyed reading about Simon and Baz and Penny again. Mason Cross' *Don't Look for Me* was a good fast paced thriller. A woman's neighbors go missing so she phones an anonymous number to recruit the help of Carter Blake to find out what happened. If you like Jason Bourne you might like Carter Blake. *New Orleans Rush* (Kelly Siskind) is a fun way to pass the time. Huxley is a semi successful magician who meets unemployed, homeless Beatrice when she keys his car. It's a goof ball romance with the tag line: "Falling for your surly boss is a rotten idea. Letting him saw you in half is even worse..." Did you seriously think I would just mention one?

What is your favorite movie or show?

Same as books: how can I pick? I love scary movies, love love love them. I love it when a character says, "I'll just go alone to get the flashlight", and you know that is not a good idea. In fact, just do not go up to that old decrepit house; stay home under the covers. I love old black and white movies too. Maybe I'd pick "The Wizard of Oz". I was mesmerized by the flying monkeys. So cool. But there are so many others too.

What change in libraries over the decades has surprised you the most?

When we first got video cassettes, I didn't realize how popular movies would be. I remember going to a meeting at Traverse des Sioux, and the director held up a shiny, rainbow hued Laser Disc and said, "This is the future. It is virtually indestructible." Then he slapped it down on the corner of a desk, and it splintered into a thousand pieces. I don't remember if I laughed out loud then, but we all howled afterwards. It actually was representative of its upcoming demise. Laser discs died and videos became king. But it was a scream at the time.