



Summer 2008

You've Gotta Read This: Summer Reading at Musselman Library (2008)

Musselman Library
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You've Gotta Read This: Summer Reading at Musselman Library (2008)

Abstract

Each year Musselman Library asks Gettysburg College faculty, staff, and administrators to help create a suggested summer reading list to inspire students and the rest of our campus community to take time in the summer to sit back, relax, and read. These summer reading picks are guaranteed to offer much adventure, drama, and fun!

Keywords

Musselman Library, summer reading, fiction, non-fiction, film

Disciplines

Library and Information Science

Comments

Found on Musselman Library's website at <http://www.gettysburg.edu/library/information/general/browsing/index.dot>.

You've gotta read this!!!



Summer Reading @ Musselman Library

“There are books. . . which take rank in your life with parents and lovers and passionate experiences.”

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

• Summer 2008 •



Summer is right around the corner! Classes are coming to a close, the days are longer, and the time is right to unwind. Heading off to your summer vacation? Make sure to stock up on “must read” titles before leaving campus.

If you need help selecting a title, this is the guide for you! Musselman Library scoured the campus asking faculty, staff and administrators for their favorite summer reads. Among these pages you find books ranging from food topics to war and second chances. Whether you thumb your way through a new book on the beach or curl up with an old favorite, enjoy a happy and safe summer. See you in the fall!

From the staff at Musselman Library

May 2008

Organized alphabetically by faculty/administrator/staff member:

Gale Baker, Musselman Library

Title: *For One More Day* by Mitch Albom

“*For One More Day* by Mitch Albom is the story of an extraordinary gift given to an ordinary man. A young sports reporter tries to commit suicide; he wakes up in a world between life and death where he gets the chance to spend one more day with his mother, who died eight years earlier. He was supposed to be with his mother the day she died, and he still harbors guilt over the fact that he wasn't. The central idea or message of the story is the eternal power of a mother's love, and the sacrifices that you don't see happening in front of you. Ultimately, it is a story of love, family, mistakes and a chance to forgive and make peace with one's past. I would recommend *For One More Day* to anyone looking for a quick, inspirational read. What if you had one more day with someone you lost?” ~ Gale Baker

Emelio Betances, Sociology/Anthropology and Latin American Studies

Title: *News from the Empire* by Fernando del Paso

“The Fundamental Novel of the French Invasion of Mexico (I have not yet seen the English version, but it is just fantastic for a summer read).” ~ Emelio Betances

Title: *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Gabriel Garcia Marquez

“Lots of people have heard of this novel, but many have not yet read it.” ~ Emelio Betances

Michael Birkner, History

Title: *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay* by Michael Chabon

“Michael Chabon's multi-layered, consistently absorbing novel is easy to recommend but difficult to summarize. It is first and foremost, a great read. One key strand treats the holocaust, capturing the determination of the talented, tortured, and obsessed protagonist Joe Kavalier as he tried to save his younger brother back in Czechoslovakia. The brother, alas, was trapped both by Hitler and history. On another track, this novel offers a trenchant and often hilarious account of the comic book industry in the USA from the 1930s through World War II and beyond. The plot lines are enriched by a spot-on evocation of New York City and its post war suburbs. Yet another thread raises issues of sexual identity, existential loneliness and manifestations of love. Houdiniesque magic and the Jewish Kabbalah also make more than cameo appearances. Chabon's mastery of the minutiae of history is impressive, but that's only a fraction of the value of reading *Kavalier and Clay*. The roller coaster story-line will grab you and not let you go. After reaching the satisfying conclusion, you'll ask yourself, 'how, oh how, did this young author get it all so right?'”

~ Michael Birkner

Kathy Cain, Provost Office and Psychology

Title: *The Blood of Flowers* by Anita Amirrezvani

“Set in 17th-century Persia, this first novel by an Iranian-American author tells the story of a 14-year-old village girl who has learned to make carpets with her father while waiting to reach the age of marriage. When misfortune befalls her family, the girl and her mother travel to Isfahan to stay with her wealthy uncle, who is a carpet-maker to the Shah. The story of the nameless young narrator trying to find her voice and develop her skills in a society that overlooks her is both gripping and moving. Most striking of all, though, were the visual images - the colors of the yarns, the patterns on the carpets, the sparkling buildings of Isfahan, the characters in the Iranian fables woven into the plot. The narrator’s uncle tells the narrator that as artisans, ‘our response to cruelty, suffering and sorrow is to remind the world of the face of beauty.’ Overall, this book presents a poignant story and beautiful portrait of Iran’s past.” ~ Kathy Cain

John Commito, Environmental Studies

Title: *Motherless Brooklyn* by Jonathan Lethem

“This spring semester, my wife and I have the good fortune of spending our sabbatical doing research in Italy at the University of Pisa. We live in a little apartment in the *centro storico*. It didn’t come with much furniture, but it does have a bookcase with books in English and Italian. It’s always fun to read someone else’s books, and beggars can’t be choosers. My favorite from the shelf is Jonathan Lethem’s *Motherless Brooklyn*. Maybe you love gritty New York City, too. And how many stories have you ever read about a detective with Tourette’s Syndrome? Probably...um... none, right? So give this one a shot.” ~ John Commito

Nancy Cushing-Daniels, Spanish

Title: *People of the Book* by Geraldine Brooks

“The last time I was at the Alhambra, the Muslim fortress built in southern Spain in the thirteenth century, we were fortunate enough to get a guide who agreed to speak to us in Spanish. This meant that, instead of rattling off the memorized, and greatly summarized descriptions in his clipped English, the guide actually let us engage him in conversation about the marvels we were looking at. My husband asked him about the figures of animals that were carved into the wall in one of the rooms of the palace, because we had both been taught that the depiction of animal and human figures was not permitted by the Koran. The guide told us that, although this was a widely held belief and was indeed customary, it was not true everywhere. As I was to find out later, as I studied this period of Spanish history more in detail, the blending of artistic styles that existed in the Iberian peninsula from the 10th to the 15th centuries was due to the coexistence of all three “people of the book,” Christians, Jews and Muslims, all living in Al-Andalus – what is now Andalucía, in Southern Spain, and this was one example of many of the cultural borrowing that went on.

“I love well-researched historical fiction, love books about Spain and am fascinated with this period in Spanish and European history, so it is no surprise that I loved this book. When it comes to research, Geraldine Brooks is no slouch, and the book has so many appealing elements, in addition to this rich history: heroic librarians saving manuscripts from the ravages of war, romantic entanglements that defy cultural and familial taboos, the condemnation of fanaticism, a tormented mother-daughter relationship, and a strong feminist message. Like the novels of Tracy Chevalier (*The Girl with the Pearl Earring; The Lady and the Unicorn*), Brooks’ new novel is able to reconstruct in fiction the kind of history of women that we can only speculate about when limited to historical documents. If you are interested in any of these areas, this is the book for you! It was worth every minute I spent on the couch, ignoring the stack of papers I was supposed to be correcting!”

~ Nancy Cushing-Daniels

Pamela Dalrymple, Civil War Institute

Title: *Miracles on the Water: The Heroic Survivors of a World War II U-Boat Attack*

by Tom Nagorski

“This was a tragic event that I had never read about before and that touched me deeply. In September 1940, ninety English children were placed aboard the S.S. City of Benares by their parents, bound for Canada and away from their war ravaged homes. This was the first group of children to be sent by ship from their homeland. Tom Nagorski, senior broadcast producer for ABC’s *World News Tonight*, gives a stirring account, based on interviews with survivors including his own great-uncle, of the terrible ordeal of the night of September 17. I could not put this book down until I knew the outcome.” ~ Pamela Dalrymple

Charley Dittrich, Education

Title: *The Assault on Reason* by Al Gore

“A forthright examination of fear as a weapon of power, intimidation, and irrational behavior, Gore’s analysis of present day political thought is a disturbing reminder of how fragile Democracy can be for the average American.” ~ Charley Dittrich

Ann Fender, Economics

Title: *The Making of June* by Annie Nigh Ward

“When I spent much of 2004-5 in Bulgaria, I did not really understand the stories of excruciating economic conditions that many of my new colleagues told about the mid-1990s. After reading this book, I finally got what they were saying about the economic transition and I understood the anger directed toward the new ‘billionaires.’ I’m not sure that this novel reflects great writing (and I wouldn’t take my recommendation about what is great fiction writing anyway), but the book certainly made real the ambiance of post communism Sofia as it faced the consequences of a kleptocratic leadership, many carried over from the 1980s, combined with less than enlightened

macroeconomic policy in the 1990s. Although the descriptions of life in transition are weighted with the dreariness of the struggle to survive, the characters are lively and interesting, making the book a quick and enjoyable read.” ~ Ann Fender

Darren Glass, Mathematics

Title: *It Must Have Been Something I Ate: The Return of the Man Who Ate Everything*
by Jeffrey Steingarten

“Anyone who has watched him be a judge on *Iron Chef* knows that Steingarten can be opinionated and humorous while still being extremely knowledgeable about food. This book is one of his collections of essays from *Vogue* in which he writes about the history, science, and culture of food. Whether he is trying out new recipes, auditioning espresso makers, getting an MRI to understand the origins of his foodie behavior, going on expeditions to find the perfect tuna, or debunking food myths, Steingarten’s writing is incredibly informative and well researched while still managing to be quite witty.” ~ Darren Glass

Nathalie Goubet, Psychology Department

Title: *The Devil in the White City* by Erik Larson

“*The Devil in the White City* is a wonderful book about the construction of the Chicago world fair in 1893 and about a serial killer operating in Chicago at the time.” ~ Natalie Goubet

Mary Holland, Musselman Library

Title: *From Slave to Priest: A Biography of the Reverend Augustine Tolton (1854 – 1897): First Black American Priest of the United States* by Sister Caroline Hemsath

“I highly recommend the biography of Augustine Tolton, who emerged out of slavery and post-Civil War America to become the first black priest in the United States; it is inspiring to see the transformative power that faith and education can have on an individual against the forces of prejudice both outside and within the Church he sought to pastor. Whether you are interested in African American history, Catholic history, or generally love biographies, like I do, you’re sure to be pleased with reading this book.” ~ Mary Holland

Deb Hydock, Dining Services

Title: *The Double Bind* by Chris Bohjalian

“A young woman, the victim of a brutal attack, discovers a secret meant to be kept hidden. She discovers the secret as she develops photographs from the estate of a deceased man who once was a resident in the homeless shelter. The story involves the novel *The Great Gatsby* and has an ending that you probably won’t see coming.” ~ Deb Hydock

Musselman Library's Senior Stars

Every year Musselman Library asks its graduating student workers to select a book or a film to be plated in their honor. Below are this year's seniors' selections – enjoy!



Nazli Inal, English major with Creative Writing concentration

Title: *The Passion* by Jeanette Winterson

"I sit on his desk and read to him from *The Passion* by Jeanette Winterson.

'I think now that being free is not being powerful or rich or well regarded or without obligations, but being able to love. To love someone else enough to forget about yourself even for a moment is to be free.' I don't look at him as I read, nor do I look at him when I pause. I keep looking into the book, as if I see myself there, and in a way I do. With *The Passion*, I vowed not to fear love. Since *The Passion*, everything in life turned into a love relationship as I started to think only in terms of love. I began to do things not because I needed to but because I wanted to. Because I would have loved to. ... I tell myself there is not one thing I have to do, including being alive. I have to choose life from death every second to continue living, and I do so because I love living. When one is choosing life, each breath is sweet, as if the air has fruit juice in it and the clouds are made of cotton candy." ~ Nazli Inal (Excerpted from my memoir *Summer of Our Fiction*, written for ENG 306 in the Fall of 2007)



Shannon Johnson, English major, French & Film Studies minors

Title: *The Eyre Affair* by Jasper Fforde

"Imagine you had the ability to step into your favorite book and interact with its characters (Hello, Mr. Darcy!). It is hard to tell when I fell in love with this book, somewhere between the reference to the great classic Jane Eyre, time travel, and the militant Baconians. Fforde invites you to get lost (literally) in books." ~ Shannon Johnson



Desiree Koser, English major

Title: *Near Breathing* by Kathryn Rhett

"The language, structure, and pacing compel the reader through the fear, anxiety, and anger of a mother struck by the complicated birth of her first child. The emotion the book evokes inspires me to accomplish the same in my own writing. It was through Kathryn Rhett's course on memoir writing that I finally realized I am a writer." ~ Desiree Koser



Jason Leiter, English major, Secondary Education minor

Title: *East of Eden* by John Steinbeck

"I discovered this book for the first time this year while working on my thesis on John Steinbeck. One of Steinbeck's later works, *East of Eden* is the monumental saga of two families split apart. I fell in love with the novel's characters, whose personalities and ordeals are brought to life by Steinbeck's fine and simplistic style of writing." ~ Jason Leiter



Kayla Lenkner, Classical Studies major

Title: *The Book of Lost Books* by Stuart Kelly

"This is one of the most unique and interesting books I have ever read. It is an entertaining account of all the literature that once existed, but has since been lost, making this a fun and educational read."

~ Kayla Lenkner



Katie MacKellar, Music major

Title: *Candide* by Leonard Bernstein

"My sophomore year, this book was ordered for me because of a project I was doing on the Operetta. This project made me totally fall in love with this Operetta, and now it is very exciting to be able to put my name in this score that I cherish!" ~ Katie MacKellar



Sergio J. A. Ragno III, History major

Title: *The Writings of William James* by William James

"William James is one of the greatest philosophers America, if not the world, has ever seen and is a definite must-read for any up and coming philosopher, writing in prose highly enjoyable even to strangers and novices in the field. James touches upon psychology, pragmatism, history, ethics, and faith. I must recommend his work *The Will to Believe* as a personal favorite." ~ Sergio J. A. Ragno III



Lyle Roser, History major

Title: *The Best War Ever* by Michael C.C. Adams

"I chose this book because it embodies the job of a historian, which is to use the evidence at hand to come to a conclusion about a historical event. As he explains, World War II was not the best war ever and much of it has become myth." ~Lyle Roser



Brock Russell, Physics & Mathmatics majors

Title: *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* by Douglas Adams

"This book is hilarious; the humor and satire are nonstop. Douglas Adams is a great author. Even after reading this book and the four others in the series, I still wanted more. Simply put, this book is great!"

~ Brock Russell



Leah Sigle, French & Music majors

Title: *A Moveable Feast* by Ernest Hemingway

"I love Hemingway's writing style and I read this book the week before I left to spend a semester abroad in the south of France – so the book has a special meaning for me. (It's about Hemingway's life in Paris in the 1920s)." ~ Leah Sigle



Peter Suchowacky, Philosophy & French majors

Title: *Mulholland Drive* (DVD) by David Lynch

"I love cinema, and this one is one of the first films I really fell in love with. Also, David Lynch is one of my favorite directors. His eccentric films seem to fit my personality." ~ Peter Suchowacky



Kim Tenure, History & Political Science majors

Title: "The Lottery" (or, "The Adventures of James Harris") by Shirley Jackson

"The Lottery' is probably my favorite short story of all time. Especially in college, I've found it easier to read short stories and come back to the book when I have time. I have yet to read one of her short novels or stories and be disappointed. If I had to be stuck on a deserted island for the rest of my life, I would want one of her collected works with me." ~ Kim Tenure



Tina Toburen, Psychology major, History & Religion minors

Title: *The Historian* by Elizabeth Kostova

"This is by far one of the best books I've ever read. Kostova wrote an amazing narrative that was almost impossible to put down. It's one of the first books I recommend to someone looking for a good book to read." ~ Tina Toburen



Amelia Viars, Anthropology & Art History majors

Title: *The Darjeeling Limited* (DVD) by Wes Anderson

"This amazing film captures the spontaneous and colorful experiences of three brothers traveling through India. Anderson (the Director) really brought the country's culture alive for the viewer. The soundtrack was great, too! *The Darjeeling Limited* reaffirmed my desire to visit India, soon!" ~ Amelia Viars



Heather Walsh, English major, Women's Studies minor

Title: *Beyond Bad Girls* by Meda Chesney-Lind & Katherine Irwin

"Includes essays on contemporary subjects in women's studies. Discusses media images of young girls and their place in current society. This book especially interests me because I am a Women's Studies minor." ~ Heather Walsh



Kathy Iannello, Political Science

Title: *The Assault on Reason* by Al Gore

“In this book, Gore discusses ‘the politics of fear’ which, he argues, has been a detriment to democracy. The book is a ‘manifesto,’ as the publisher explains, ‘for clear thinking.’ Gore argues for the restoration of ‘reason’ at the center of politics. A ‘must read’ before the presidential election in November.” - Kathy Iannello

Ian Isherwood, English

Title: *Homage to Catalonia* by George Orwell

“Orwell’s experience in the Spanish Civil War is a complete disaster. He spends more time in the trenches killing lice and scrounging for cigarettes than he spends firing his rifle. Orwell, with good intentions, decides to fight with the anti-Stalinists and anarchists in Spain against the fascists. Eventually he gets shot in the neck, watches his ‘militia’ disintegrate, and he is nearly killed in a quasi Stalinist purge of his allied political party. This is one of the great political books of the last century. It transcends the typical war memoir because it is written by a supreme stylist making his life’s argument against political power in the hands of ruthless ideologies. Don’t let that last sentence discourage you – it’s a good read.” - Ian Isherwood

Jennifer Leigh, Management

Title: *A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Khaled Hosseini

“This book is the second novel by acclaimed writer Khaled Hosseini of *Kite Runner* fame. In this tale he presents the reader a heart-wrenching and compelling female-centered narrative about how the political battles in Afghanistan have impacted individuals’ dreams, goals, and options.”
- Jennifer Leigh

Larry Marschall, Physics & Astronomy

Title: *Slicing the Silence: Voyaging to Antarctica* by Tom Griffiths

“On the 17th of December, 2002, Tom Griffiths, an environmental historian at the Australian National University in Canberra, sailed south from Tasmania aboard a ship bringing supplies to Antarctica’s Casey Station. It was hardly the kind of heroic expedition that characterized trips to the frozen continent a century earlier, and judging from the journal entries in *Slicing the Silence*, not much out of the ordinary happened during the entire round-trip voyage. But even an ordinary trip to Antarctica is extraordinary compared to anything else on earth, and this is an extraordinary book. Griffiths turns otherwise humdrum shipboard jottings into starting points for exciting tales from the past and the present that illuminate the meaning of the Antarctic experience. Few of us will ever visit Antarctica, even though tourist ships now bring tens of thousands of high-rolling tourists to its coasts yearly. Griffiths’ book makes it clear just how special this land is, and, for all

its ruggedness, how fragile. Better to leave Antarctic travels to a select few scientists, adventurers, and support staff. And, from time to time – for those of us who stay at home – eloquent writers like Tom Griffiths.” ~ Larry Marschall

Sheila Mulligan, English

Title: *I Am Legend* by Richard Matheson

“I recommend the novella *I Am Legend* by Richard Matheson, first published in 1954. This was my favorite book for years, and then it went out of print, and then there was a recent film adaptation starring Will Smith, and the movie is terrible. See Will Smith in *Six Degrees of Separation* instead.”
~ Sheila Mulligan

Mimi O’Neill, Psychology

Title: *Blue Like Jazz* by Donald Miller

“I just read *Blue Like Jazz* by Don Miller and loved it. It is a memoir of Don’s struggle with organized religion and how he comes to a deeper spiritual place through his own journey and reflections on it. It is funny and clever and incredibly thought provoking. For example, he says that the closest experience he has had of knowing Jesus Christ came from spending 30 days living in the woods with hippies who smoked pot every day yet loved everyone without judgment.” ~ Mimi O’Neill

Alan Perry, Italian

Title: *The Day of Battle: The War in Sicily and Italy, 1943-1944 (The Liberation Trilogy)*
by Rick Atkinson

“Atkinson won the Pulitzer Prize for history in 2003 with his *An Army at Dawn*. *The Day of Battle* is his follow-up study to the war in North Africa and covers the harsh battles Allied Armies faced in Italy. Atkinson is a marvelous historical narrative writer, much in the vein of Bruce Catton. The descriptions of Churchill, Roosevelt, and other major WWII Allied leaders match his attention to the travails of the common soldier as he slogged his way up the Italian boot.” ~ Alan Perry

Jonelle Pool, Education

Title: *Shantaram* by Gregory David Roberts

“This is the story of an Australian serving time for armed robbery who escapes to Bombay. He sets up a free medical clinic in the slums, gets involved with the mafia to procure medicine and fights in Afghanistan. Quite a yarn and truly an engrossing story, it’s a lengthy book, but a fast read. The author also has an interesting website to visit: www.shantaram.com and I understand there is a movie in the works with Johnny Depp playing the lead. I’ll be in line for this one!” ~ Jonelle Pool

Jean Potuchek, Sociology/Anthropology and Women's Studies

Title: *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals* and *In Defense of Food: An Eater's Manifesto* by Michael Pollan

"I have been a Michael Pollan fan since I first picked up a copy of *Second Nature* in an independent book store, and I have read every book he has written since. I think *The Omnivore's Dilemma* is Pollan at his best. With his characteristic talent for explaining complex ideas in a clear and compelling way, he examines the way we eat by following three 'food chains' from their source to the resulting meals. Along the way, he raises a lot of disturbing questions about the way we eat and how our food is produced. This logically leads to the question of how we should eat, a question Pollan takes up in *In Defense of Food* and answers with three rules: eat food (not highly processed food products), not too much, mostly plants. I recommend reading these books as they were written, first *The Omnivore's Dilemma* and then its sequel. *The Omnivore's Dilemma* is better written and more intellectually satisfying, but *In Defense of Food*, with its celebration of eating and whole food, is joyful and inspirational. These books will almost surely change the way you think about your food, and they will probably change the way you eat." ~ Jean Potuchek

Janet Powers, Religion and Asian Studies

Title: *The Thrall's Tale* by Judith Lindbergh

"An engrossing novel of a female Viking slave who participates in the settlement of Greenland c.1000 CE. The work is meticulously researched with deities, characters, and lifeways based on historical counterparts from the Icelandic Eddas and Sagas. Best is the author's language which is spare, poetic and alliterated just enough to give a hint of Scandinavian culture. The struggle between traditional Norse religion and Christianity is absorbing." ~ Janet Powers

Virginia Rinehart, Dining Services

Title: *The Time Traveler's Wife* by Audrey Niffenegger

"*The Time Traveler's Wife* is one of the most interesting, powerful books I've read in a long time. Audrey Niffenegger did a beautiful job taking some of the most complex ideas - time travel, marriage, love, children, friends, literary and artistic allusions, religion, death, drugs, childhood, growing, loss, and what it means to be human - and weaving them together poetically and with amazing clarity. Her characters are wonderful, 'real' people with strengths and flaws, and I really grew to adore them. Despite skipping around time at the same rate as Henry, the time traveler, the events are sequenced in such a way that you still witness each character's growth as a person, as well as discover many surprises along the way. Clare and Henry's story is one of the best love stories I've read in a very long time. I highly and enthusiastically recommend this book."

~ Virginia Rinehart

Jack Ryan, English

Title: *Clockers* by Richard Price

“Richard Price’s fifth novel removed him from the New York City subcultures that dominated his early work. Set in the housing projects of a fictional New Jersey city called Dempsey, *Clockers* revolves around Strike Dunham, a nineteen-year old who runs his illicit drug operation from a bench protected by high-rise apartment buildings. After a member of Strike’s organization is murdered—which brings Rocco Klein, a well-worn homicide detective into Strike’s world—an intriguing and complicated use of the police procedural adds a deeper dimension to Price’s paired protagonist narrative design. The murder mystery is far less important than the urban terrain Price’s characters walk.” - Jack Ryan

Title: *The Wire* (Seasons One-Five) by David Simon

“David Simon, the creative force behind *The Wire*, borrowed Price’s narrative structure for the first season of his HBO program, which was undervalued but critically praised. For most of the first two seasons, D’Angelo Barksdale is Simon’s Strike Dunham. Price appears in season two of *The Wire* as a teacher; he also wrote numerous episodes over the five season run of this ambitious dissection of Baltimore, Maryland. Coupled with Price’s *Clockers*, *The Wire*, especially season four, which focuses on grade-school kids before they go ‘on the clock,’ exposes flawed people, workplaces, and institutions with staggering clarity.” - Jack Ryan

Charles Saltzman, English

Title: *The Day of Battle: The War in Sicily and Italy, 1943-1944 (The Liberation Trilogy)*
by Rick Atkinson

“My motive for reading this work is that my father was involved as a colonel and later a brigadier general in the North African, Sicilian, and Italian campaigns, so I am naturally curious about that part of World War II. More important for other readers is to know that Atkinson seems to be not only a good military historian but a fine writer.” - Charles Saltzman

Tim Shannon, History

Title: *Good Poems* by Garrison Keillor

“The book I have enjoyed the most over the past year is *Good Poems*, edited by Garrison Keillor (New York: Penguin, 2003). A compilation of selections from the NPR program, ‘The Writer’s Almanac,’ it is perfect for random readings and successfully dodges the stuffiness of poetry anthologies designed for classroom use.” - Tim Shannon

Ralph Sorensen, Biology

Title: *The Terrors of Ice and Darkness* by Christoph Ransmayr

“A terrifying chronicle of the 19th century exploration of the Arctic by Carl Weyprecht and the discovery of Franz Josef Land. Despite their boats being locked in the ice for two consecutive winters in the company of ravenous polar bears, the explorers managed to survive. Ransmayr’s narrative, however, is the startling part of this story. He intertwines the travails of the expedition with the odyssey of Josef Mazzini, a contemporary of our own, who, obsessed with the Weyprecht expedition, dies alone on the ice in 1981. The story collapses two centuries into the timeless and terrible beauty of the Arctic.” ~ Ralph Sorensen

Miranda Speelman, Musselman Library

Title: *Lamb: The Gospel According to Biff, Christ’s Childhood Pal* by Christopher Moore

“Divinely inspired men may have written the word of God in the Bible, but it does not give the complete story of the life of Jesus Christ. After two millennia of speculation by theologians and scholars, Christ’s childhood pal, Levi, who is called Biff, is brought back from the dead to fill in 30 years of missing history. This story is an adventurous (and incredibly funny) tale of their meeting and coming of age following a divinely inspired path toward salvation for all mankind. *Lamb* goes on to answer such questions as: Why do people eat Chinese food at Christmas? Where did the Easter Bunny come from? and most importantly, Why was Levi originally left out of the gospels? While this book is not intended to change anyone’s religious views, the reader can come away from the book with the understanding of Jesus as a human being who went through childhood and teenage strife before becoming the man portrayed in the Bible. Humor fans, believers, and non-believers alike who have ever wondered about the life and times of biblical characters can love this story.” ~ Miranda Speelman

James Udden, Film Studies/Interdisciplinary Studies

Title: *Sabbatical: A Romance* by John Barth

“I have long been a fan of John Barth. However, not until last summer did I read this novel because 1) I lived in Maryland at the time, and 2) I was about to go on sabbatical myself. What I got pleasantly defied my positive expectations. The novel was something unlike my previous experiences with Barth since it employs a breezy yet experimental use of a dual first-person point-of-view, or what Barth himself labels “the first-person-duple voice of a well-coupled couple.” Not only do the characters recite their versions of events of their return to the Chesapeake Bay to a year-long sabbatical on a sailboat, they constantly correct and comment on each other’s narration. Moreover, mysteries abound in the Bay itself, mysteries somehow connected to the shadowy machinations of the CIA, to which both characters share a discomfiting connection. This novel was the best of both worlds: an intellectually challenging read, yet pleasant enough to wile away a number lazy summer afternoons by the pool.” ~ James Udden

Janelle Wertzberger, Musselman Library

Title: *Deep Economy: The Wealth of Communities and the Durable Future* by Bill McKibben

“Normally I am not one to read a book with the word ‘economy’ in the title. I never took an economics class and do not gravitate toward business and economic reading. Occasionally I hear a bit of business news on the radio and wonder aloud ‘Why is it so critical that the economy continue to expand? It can’t do so indefinitely, can it?’ McKibben helped me answer those questions. He argues that for most of human history, humans have benefited from economic expansion. However, this trend reversed itself sometime around 1950, and the earn-consume loop is now making most of us ill and unhappy. This book could easily have been another gloom-and-doom-reader, but McKibben is a masterful storyteller, and he infuses his thesis with hope by telling us about people who left the loop and are playing a different game. There is much to consider here. Since reading this book a couple months ago, I have recommended it to more people than I can remember.”

~ Janelle Wertzberger