

Ann Arbor Book Society March Newsletter

a2books.org

March Event Highlights

Throughout March: [Neutral Zone presents NEA Big Read Ann Arbor](#), various locations

Monday, March 4th at 7 pm: [Dr. Debra Sullivan, author of *Cultivating the Genius of Black Children: Strategies to Close the Achievement Gap in the Early Years*](#), AADL Pittsfield Branch, 2539 Oak Valley Dr.

Tuesday, March 12th at 4 pm: [Jason Rezaian, journalist and author of *Prisoner: My 544 Days in an Iranian Prison*](#), presented by UM Wallace House, Lydia Mendelssohn Theatre, 911 N. University

Tuesday, March 12th from 4 pm to 7 pm: [Special Collections After Hours: *History of the Stars*](#), UM Hatcher Graduate Library Sixth Floor, 913 S. University

Tuesday, March 19th at 7 pm: [Nadia Bolz-Weber, author of *Shameless: A Sexual Reformation*](#), First United Methodist Church, 120 S. State St.

These events represent only a small portion of the book events taking place in Ann Arbor this month! For details on these and other March events, visit our events calendar by clicking the calendar below.

Bookstore Road Trip!

The Mitten Word Bookshop, Marshall, MI

Stepping into The Mitten Word, you would think it has occupied its charming space for ages. The wood bookshelves line the walls in perfect precision, the antiqued, tiled ceiling complements the lofty space and provides a foil for the contemporary paintings that decorate the upper walls. An ideal setting for a diverse collection of gifts, cards, candy, and, of course, books- myriad genres, new and used, local and international.

“Actually, we have been here for less than a year,” explains owner Jim Donahue, “and this space was originally an alley. It was just an open pass-through until a roof and false front were added many decades ago.” Jim and Ginny Donahue opened The Mitten Word Bookshop in April 2018, after having run a bookstore in Battle Creek. Their move to Marshall came about in the same fortuitous way as did their careers as booksellers.



Originally from New York (Jim from Brooklyn, Ginny from upstate), they managed busy careers in the medical field, moved through other states, and raised four daughters, before settling in Battle Creek over 20 years ago. Ginny worked as a laboratory technologist and Jim as a physician at the VA hospital. They had always loved reading, but never imagined they would postpone a well-earned early retirement by jumping into work as booksellers.

While searching listings for supplies for his model railroad hobby, Jim spotted an ad from a bookstore in Vermont that was closing and selling all of its furniture. Only days earlier he had read a news article about declining literacy rates in Calhoun County. That light bulb moment, 'Let's open a bookstore, and keep kids reading!', sparked the furniture being purchased, a downtown storefront scouted out and leased, and before long, their first store, Battle Creek Books, opened to the public.

Unfortunately, hard work, enthusiasm, and appreciative customers, were not enough to succeed against soaring rent. By late 2017, the Donahues feared they would have to close the business until, by chance, a Marshall resident heard of their plight and encouraged them to consider moving. The Marshall Area Economic Development Alliance (MAEDA) welcomed them with open arms, and their bookstore, renamed The Mitten Word, celebrated its move to Marshall last year with a ribbon cutting ceremony and an event featuring Michigan author Ellen Airgood.



The store's opening coincided with the release of the movie *The House with a Clock in Its Walls* based on the book written by Marshall native John Bellairs and illustrated by Edward Gorey. The movie's popularity boosted tourism in Marshall and helped The Mitten Word sell more copies of the book than even a certain major bookseller's 42nd Street store in New York City.

Jim and Ginny are dedicated to the cause of improving literacy, and to inspiring a



community through the love of reading. They offer discounts to veterans, law enforcement, teachers, and students, and routinely host authors from around Michigan and the Midwest. The Mitten Word carries books in all genres, but its children's section is particularly impressive. Named in honor of Ann La Pietra, who championed Marshall's book community and owned a beloved children's bookstore for many years, the section is furnished with festive bunting and comfy kid-sized chairs and tables.

Seating for grown-ups can be found throughout the store, too. Jim and Ginny welcome everyone to come in and stay a while, "bring your coffee and even your pets!" they laugh. Their own canine companion, Frenzy, is a constant fixture in the shop. They and their staff strive to fulfill every customer's wish, place special orders for any title, and even take full risk of getting used copies that are in good shape. Their book exchange program is a valuable resource for the community, and they donate any overflow to charity book sales or an environmentally-conscious recycler in Battle Creek.

Ginny and Jim are especially fortunate to have such a talented and enthusiastic young staff with Gail Berkompas, a Union City High School English/Spanish teacher, Shannyn Stevens, an English/Creative Writing major at Western Michigan University, and Gabe Aikins, a Ferris State graduate and busy writer for *Substream Magazine*. Opening an independent bookstore in the age of online retail giants and big box stores is not a task for the faint-hearted. The Donahues are up for the challenge, and look forward to forging strong bonds with their new hometown of Marshall and the wider community.

--Karen Alvarez



Visit The Mitten Word Bookshop:

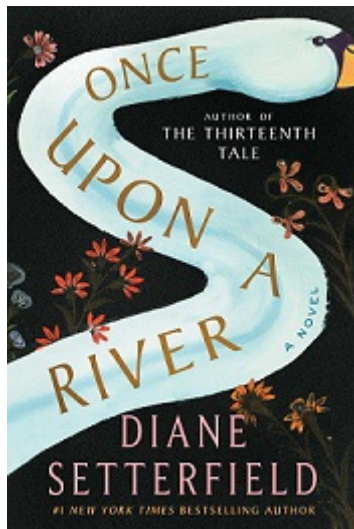
In person at 114 W. Michigan Ave., Marshall, MI

Online at <https://themittenword.com/>

On Facebook

Book Ends

On the Shelf



Once Upon a River: A Novel

by Diane Setterfield

Atria Books, 2018

Hardcover, \$28

"Something is going to happen."

It is the long night of the winter solstice
and a group of Thames riverbank
dwellers have gathered together in
their favorite pub, the Swan, for comfort

Come Join Us!

Panel Discussion: Why Do We Love Books?

Monday, April 8th at 7 pm

UM Hatcher Graduate Library Gallery

913 S. University

The Ann Arbor Book Society is honored by the invitation to participate in a panel discussion as part of the exhibit Bookmarks: Speculating the Futures of the Book and Libraries, a partnership between the Penny W. Stamps School of Art and Design and the University of Michigan Library. Founder Rachel Pastiva joins Professor Susan Gelman, from the U-M Dept. of Psychology, and Michael Gustafson, co-owner of Literati Bookstore, in what is sure to be a fascinating discussion on why we love books. Moderated by U-M librarian and Ann Arbor District

and conversation. Their favored entertainment is the exchange of well-told stories. Into their midst arrives a badly injured stranger, bearing the body of a young girl, and this new novel by Setterfield, author of the earlier *The Thirteenth Tale*, begins.

How could the child first appear to be dead and then later, living but unspeaking? Who is she? Could she be one of three missing children who have been lost on the river, or is she a gypsy girl? And most troubling of all, where does she belong when she is seemingly content, but never happy, wherever she is housed and with whoever claims her?

Several people want to claim her but there are two other people concerned about the identity of the mysterious child: Rita, a local midwife and nurse, and "Henry Daunt", the child's rescuer whose character is based on a real Victorian Era photographer, Harry Taunt of Oxford. As Henry and Rita travel the river, photographing the scenery and meeting people, they try to unravel the puzzles surrounding the child using their particular skills to meet old myths with modern explanations.

This seemingly simple tale frames an engrossing picture of the late 19th Century Thames and its people. Best of all, the strength of the author in replicating the oral cadences of timeless tale-telling provides a deeper dimension to the story. It is a book that begs to be read aloud. Pull your stool up to the fireplace and hear her words. Here is a magical tale for you, where "the dead and the living brush against each other" and where "the impossible start to edge closer to the conceivable."

Library Trustee Jamie Vander Broek.
We hope to see you there!

University of Michigan Library Exhibits

[What are Little Books Made of?](#)

[Bookmarks: Speculating the Future
of Books and Libraries](#)

[Over There: With the American...](#)

[Free Poems and Functional Art](#)

Snapshot of the Past

I love this gripping, intriguing, and beautiful book.

--Ruth Haldeman

Longtime volunteer at the Friends of the Ann Arbor District Library Book Shop and retired AADL librarian

The [Ann Arbor Antiquarian Book Fair](#) is on hiatus until 2020, as renovations continue at the Michigan Union. The book fair returns Sunday, May 17th, 2020 from 11 am to 5 pm. Mark your calendars!

March Busiest For Library

15,598 Books Taken Out During Month

Ann Arbor's Public Library in March had the busiest month in its history, Miss Frances A. Hannum, librarian, reported today.

Patrons took out 15,598 books in March, the library statistics showed today.

Of that total, 10,453 were adults' books and 5,145 were children's books.

In both groups, almost one-half of the books consisted of non-fiction writings.

Many About Homes

The heaviest demand from adults was for volume on home decorating, landscaping and gardening. Approximately 800 books on these subjects were drawn from the library.

Children took out about 300 biographies, their most popular reading material.

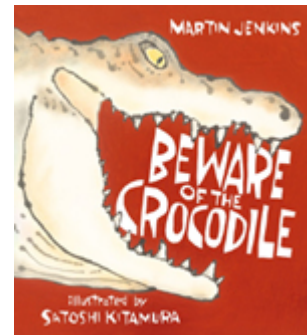
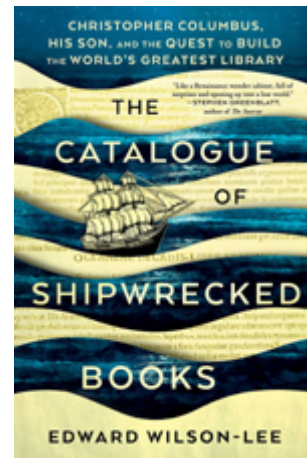
Heaviest day in the month was March 12 when 595 adults' books and 306 children's books were drawn.

The children's section of the library will be open mornings during the remainder of this week—the spring vacation period.

Hours will be from 9 o'clock in the morning until 12 noon through Saturday. Afternoon and evening hours will be the same as for other weeks—from 1:30 to 5:30 and from 6:30 to 8 o'clock.

The main library is open from 9 o'clock in the morning until 9 o'clock at night every weekday.

Ann Arbor News, April 5, 1949, Courtesy of the [AADL](#).



These selections are only a fraction of the great books coming out in March. Stop by your favorite [local indie bookstore](#) to check these out and more!

Ann Arbor Book Trivia Answer

West Side Book Shop. Owner Jay Platt was also on the planning committee that organized the first Ann Arbor Antiquarian Book Fair, a three day event in July of 1976, and remains the book fair's director.

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