

# OFF THE SHELF



A NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF THE SAN JUAN ISLAND LIBRARY

NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 2006

## Laura Tretter is the New Library Director

In August of this year, former Assistant Director / Youth Services librarian Laura Tretter returned to San Juan Island to assume her new role as Library Director.

Laura's first paid library job was as a shelver at the Seattle Public Library's Broadview branch. While working on her MLS at the University of Washington, she also worked at The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Bush School, the King County Library System, and managed to pull a stint as a librarian on board a cruise ship in Alaska. She also performed volunteer work and internships at several school libraries

"I've always been drawn to the education and the outreach side of librarianship," Laura wrote recently.

"When this opportunity came up, I couldn't pass up the chance to come back to the island [and a] new and challenging position to serve a library and community I love," she said.

After graduating with her MLS in 2001, she came to the San Juan Island library as the Assistant Director and Youth Services Librarian, a position she held for three and a half years. Laura left the library and the island to pursue one of her outside interests, but returned to librarianship and the Denver Public Library, before returning here.

Earlier in September, Laura took the helm at her first Literary Salon, which is held the third Thursday of every month. In her View from the Library column (at sanjuanisland.com), she writes:

"I love the chance it gives me to connect with patrons and I am always energized by the exchanges. I find Literary Salon to be particularly great because who isn't always looking for another good book to read or a new author to discover? I know I am."



## New at Treasure Cove

Have you checked out what's new in Treasure Cove lately? Besides our regular inventory of hard cover and paperback books, videos, magazines, book bags, t-shirts, children's items and jewelry, we have added greeting cards by local artists. We also have a beautiful, framed, original watercolor by Hugh Stanley of an island scene. New bookmarks have also been added.

In addition to many new children's and adult videos recently donated, we now have for sale blank journals, paperweights, and several styles of pens to use with the journals. There are lots of new beaded bracelets and bookmarks as well. Stop in at the Treasure Cove when you next visit the library. Remember, your purchases support the library and its many programs for kids and adults.



## 2006 Annual Book Sale a Huge Success

*A note from FOL president, Fred Henley*

The summer book sale was a huge success! We ended up with a greater income than last year - a little over \$5200. I want to thank all of the friends of the library that helped to make this a banner sale.

You might want to know a little about the process each item goes through before it is looked at by you at the sale. Each book, video, and au-

*See Book Sale on page 3*



**Save the Date!**

**Holiday Book Sale**  
November 18 / 10 a.m. — 2 p.m.  
Library Meeting Room



## Is Library Funding at Risk?

*Editorial*

Libraries rely almost exclusively on tax revenues, leaving them vulnerable to the will of taxpayers and politicians

Each year, the National Center for Education Statistics publishes its Public Library Survey (among other surveys) which, as you might expect, is read largely by policy wonks, librarians and researchers mostly for its data on internet use, reference transactions, public service hours, etc. One set of figures getting some attention lately is the Operating Revenue statistics; namely, that in FY 2004, 82 percent of all libraries' operating revenues came from 'local sources' — that is, city and/or county tax revenues. (Nationally, another 11 percent comes from state and federal sources, the remaining balance, about 8 percent, from gifts, donations, grants, fees and fines.)

Over the last several years, these percentages have remained largely unchanged. However, as a percentage of the total municipal budget, the average library's take has diminished from around 2 percent in the 1950s, to less than 0.5 percent in 2005; a 75 percent reduction. And since that money comes from a pool shared by other vital municipal services, libraries are often in competition with the likes of police, fire, schools and other infrastructure projects that can quickly cut into the budgets for library programs and services.

The San Juan Island Library, like many across the country, is lucky enough to have its own taxing district, reducing the chances monies will be diverted to fund other municipal projects or services. But there are other risks that threaten every library so dependant on such a high percentage of tax dollars. One of these is the political threat posed when voters and politicians choose not to renew or increase the tax levies that keep many public libraries open. An aversion to increased property taxes, which often takes the form of anti-tax initiatives, has crippled many libraries, forcing them to cut back hours, staff and

programs. Where public funding is involved, citizens and politicians can block passage of spending bills if they object to the way the money is spent. (Last year, a bond measure to expand library facilities in Vancouver, Washington was threatened by a vocal, anti-pornography group that objected to the library's internet filtering policy.)

Tax revenues tend to be static. Levy increases are typically capped (in Washington, initiative 747 caps property tax revenues at 1 percent a year), which prevents funding levels from keeping pace with the ever increasing costs of such things as medical coverage for employees, internet access, and other essential programs. (In Tacoma this year, such caps forced the Pierce County Library System to make \$1 million in cuts, closing a branch library and several services, such as its book bindery.)

The sluggish economy over the last five years (not to mention the current slump in housing prices) means that this situation is unlikely to change in the near future. Further, the static nature of tax based revenues takes away much of the incentive to implement programs that, if hugely successful, might not get the additional funding they need to continue operating into the next fiscal year. Fortunately for many libraries, FOL groups are able to provide the funding necessary to handle special programs as well as many unanticipated gaps in the library's funding structure.

The San Juan Island library enjoys the support of an active and energetic group of volunteers who offer both their time and money to keep the library and its programs running. This kind of support helps to soften the blow caused by sudden gaps in funding or budget shortfalls. San Juan Island taxpayers, too, have traditionally supported the property tax levies needed to fund our schools and libraries. However, this does not diminish our library's susceptibility to the risks inherent in a tax based funding model. The San Juan Island library doesn't have any branches to close, non-essential staff to lay off, or programs that its pa-

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*See FOL on next page*



*FOL (cont'd from page 2)*

trons can afford to see shut down. FOL groups most often raise money for capital projects, as well as library programs, but they cannot pay staff salaries, utility bills, or many of the other ongoing costs of essential services. (Some FOLs may, in a crisis, manage to do so temporarily, though these efforts are often limited by both regulatory as well as fiscal constraints.)


In our next issue, we'll look at one person's ideas for diversifying the library's revenue portfolio. We'll also look at some of the fundraising programs set up by FOLs around the country, and the types of programs they support.

Also in the next issue, we check out one of the ways you can help the San Juan Island FOL raise money by simply shopping online. 

— *Editor*

*Book Sale (cont'd from page 1)*

dio item donated to the Friends is first reviewed to see if it is suitable for sale at Treasure Cove. Items are then moved to the basement, where they are sorted and shelved by category. Once a category shelf is filled, all the items in that category are put into a box and labeled. Full boxes are moved to a storage facility and later moved from the storage facility to the elementary school for the big sale. There, books are placed on various tables for browsing and purchase.

Each of these steps is done by dedicated volunteers. It's a big job to get the sale ready, but with the results of this sale, it is a job we can be proud of. So to each of you who helped move an item along the chain, and to each of you who came out to the book sale - **THANKS!** 

— *Fred Henley, President FOL*

Friends of the San Juan Island Library Board Members

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Barry Jacobson, Vice President  
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## On the Shelf

New fiction for fall ... a reading list from the October issue of *Atlantic Monthly*

### When Madeline Was Young

by Jane Hamilton  
Call No: HAMILTO

### Paint it Black

by Janet Fitch  
Call No: FITCH

### A Spot of Bother

by Mark Hadden  
Call No: HADDON

### Talk Talk

by T.C. Boyle  
Call No: BOYLE

### The Keep

by Jennifer Egan  
Call No: EGAN

Look for these titles on the library's NEW BOOK SHELVES.

## The Friends of the San Juan Island Library would like to thank all our 2006 business members

Alphabet Soup Childcare  
Animal Inn  
Friday Harbor Eye Clinic  
Guard and Associates  
Island Architecture  
Islanders Insurance  
Kris King Design  
LaCrover Farm  
Missing Mountain  
San Juan Pest Control  
Synergy Farm  
Waterworks Gallery



ND06

I/We would like to join *Friends of the San Juan Island Library* (a volunteer, non-profit, tax-exempt organization).

**Levels of Membership:**

- Individual \$10+
- Family \$25+
- Business/Supporter \$50+
- Sustainer \$75+
- Benefactor \$100+
- Additional Donations

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail (to receive *Friends & Library* news): \_\_\_\_\_

Yes, please call with information about Library volunteer opportunities.

Yes, please call — I am interested in helping with Friends activities.

Membership Year: January through December - Renewal notice mailed annually.

**Thank you! Our membership dues are a tax-deductible donation, and a fundraiser to support the SJI Library.**

**Mail with dues to: Friends of the San Juan Island Library, PO Box 786, Friday Harbor, WA 98250**

***San Juan Island Library Information***

**Hours:** Mon., Wed., & Fri. 10-6  
 Tue. & Thur. 10-8  
 Saturday 10-5  
 Sunday 1-5

**Address:** 1010 Guard Street, Friday Harbor, WA

**Phone:** 360-378-2798

**Website:** www.sjlib.org &

**E-mail:** sjlib@sjlib.org

***San Juan Island Library Staff***

Laura Tretter, Library Director  
 Shannan Sword, Youth Services  
 Linda Barnhart, Interlibrary Loans Coordinator  
 Floyd Bourne, Technology Specialist  
 Beth Helstien, Bookkeeper & Outreach Coordinator  
 Adrienne Bourne, Outreach Associate  
 Heidi Lewis, Library Associate  
 Diana Warner, Library Associate  
 Emily Wolf, Library Associate

**Treasure Cove: 11 AM to 3 PM — Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays**

A fundraising outlet of the *Friends of the San Juan Island Library* for the benefit of the San Juan Island Library.

***FRIENDS OF THE SAN JUAN ISLAND LIBRARY***

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