

# BookGuide Bulletin



A monthly "readers' services" newsletter from the Lincoln City Libraries

Newsletter

January 2009

Vol. 1 No. 29

Looking for a good book? Each month the [BookGuide](#) site has new fiction and non-fiction reviews.

## This Month!

Book Talks/Discussion Groups for January/February  
New and/or Featured Booklists  
Library sponsored Blogs  
Staff Reviews  
Reviewer Profile: Jessica H.  
Websites for Readers: Whichbook  
'Casting About

**Note to readers seeing this newsletter only as a paper copy** – All examples of blue underlined text in this newsletter are hotlinks to pages on the **BookGuide** or **Lincoln City Libraries** web sites. For full functionality, please visit the electronic version of this, and past issues of the **BookGuide Bulletin** at:

<http://www.lincolnlibraries.org/depts/bookguide/newsletters.htm>

## Web sites for Readers

**whichbook.net**

[www.whichbook.net](http://www.whichbook.net) is an online tool for readers to track down their next great read.

Unlike a lot of other sites or services, which start out with the books – their appeal factors, their genres, their writing styles, etc. – and try to convince the reader to give them a try, **whichbook** approaches book selection by starting with the potential reader.

When you visit the site, instead of searching through listings and sublists of books, you are asked to provide your own reading preferences – which can vary from visit to visit, so the site is highly customizable to what you're in the mood for "right now." You'll see a series of 12 slider bars showing opposing extremes in a variety of literary styles. For example: Happy – Sad, Beautiful – Disgusting, Conventional – Unusual, or Optimistic – Bleak. Each time you search, you can select up to four of the twelve "category" slider bars, on each of which you can click how far along each extreme you want to go. For example: You're interested in an action-packed, funny novel that's a bit sexy but is also relatively short. On the Funny – Serious bar, you select a point nearer the "funny" end; on the Gentle – Violent, more towards violent; on No Sex – Sex, more towards sex; and on Short – Long, more towards short. For this example, the site returned a list of about 10 recommended titles – in this case several were by humorous British author Will Self – in my opinion, a good match for the criteria provided.

There is also a secondary area in which you can provide more criteria for the program to use in making recommendations, including Character traits, Plot elements, and global Settings.

The results that are returned include Title, Author, Date of Publication, Plot blurbs (usually), Readalikes for the title provided, and occasionally First Chapter Excerpts. The books in the database are all English-language, or translated editions from other languages. The database was created by a British organization, and plots and categorizations are provided (thus far) by British librarians and book industry personnel – all of which explains a heavy British flavor in the books that come up in your results.

**Whichbook.net** is far from a perfect system. I tried it five times, using a variety of different criteria for each run-through. I was pleasantly surprised to find three of the five samples turn up titles that I knew matched the search criteria fairly closely. On one of the searches, I chose very middle-of-the-road search criteria, and the results seemed questionable. And on the fifth experiment, despite clearly defined search criteria, the results seemed considerably "off" to me. Never-the-less, **whichbook.net** is a free service and is certainly worth playing around with, especially if you're tired of the same old process of slogging through booklists or trusting Amazon.com's "people who bought this title also bought the following titles"-type of automated recommendation services. The creators of **whichbook.net** state that the books currently in the database are from 1995 to the present. As additional (hopefully older) titles continue to be added to the pool, I'll bet **whichbooks.net** becomes a much more well-rounded reader tool

Give it a try, and let us know what you thought, at [bookguide@lincolnlibraries.org](mailto:bookguide@lincolnlibraries.org) !

Profiled by Scott C. – Bennett Martin Public Library

The Bethany and Gere Books Talk discussion series have now returned for their Winter/Spring 2009 runs. Check out the topics in the box on the left!

## Book Talks & Book Discussion Groups

### Bethany Books Talk [Fridays 10:30 a.m.] [441-8550]

Jan 9 A Walk on the Wild Side  
Jan 16 The History of the Victoria Age  
Jan 23 An Assortment of Authors  
Jan 30 Baby, It's Cold Outside  
Feb 6 t.b.a.  
Feb 13 t.b.a.

### Gere Books Talk [Mondays 2:30 p.m.] [441-8560]

Jan 12 t.b.a.  
Jan 19 [closed for Martin Luther King Jr. Day]  
Jan 26 t.b.a.  
Feb 2 The History of the Victorian Age  
Feb 9 A Walk on the Wild Side

### Just Desserts Mystery Fiction Discussion Group – South Branch [last Thursday each month. 6:45 p.m.] [441-8530 / 441-8570]]

Jan 29 "Partner in Crime" by J.A. Jance  
Feb 26 "The Big Sleep" by Raymond Chandler  
Mar 26 "The Question of Blood" by Ian Rankin

### Great Books Discussion Group [Gere Branch, Thursdays 6:45-8:45 p.m.] [co-sponsored by the Lincoln City Libraries]

Jan 8 Chekov – "Uncle Vanya"  
Jan 22 Maimonides – "On Evil"  
Feb 12 Homer – "The Iliad"

Visit [Book Talks and Book Discussion Groups](#) for more info

## Featured Booklists

The following are either "new" booklists added to the **BookGuide** site recently, or older and/or seasonal lists we'd like to shine a light on! **Click on the titles to see the full booklists.**

### [The Edgar Allan Poe Awards](#)

The Edgar Award is one of the pre-eminent awards in the mystery fiction field. We've updated our Edgar Awards booklist online to include the 2008 winners.

### [Nebraska Author Patricia McGerr](#)

Looking for some classic mystery novels, written by a former Nebraskan? Then check out the Patricia McGerr booklist – McGerr was active in mystery fiction from the 1940s through the 1970s, winning awards and acclaim. You can find a list of all her known novels and many of her short stories at BookGuide.

# Welcome to a new... Reviewer Profile

Our featured Reviewer for January 2009 is **Jessica H.** Jessica has

worked for Lincoln City Libraries since 2001 at various branches, including the Bess Dodson Walt Branch library, where she's been since 2003. Her reviews show up fairly regularly on our Staff Recommendations displays and on the BookGuide web site, focusing on an eclectic variety of fiction and non-fiction titles. Reading has long been an important part of Jessica's life, as she indicates in her answers to our questions about books and reading:

Would you care to share any personal info with our readers -- such as where you grew up, what you read as a child, etc.?



Learning to read was extremely frustrating for me as a child, but with my mother's perseverance, one-on-one help and special techniques, I was eventually able to keep up with my peers.

My first memory of the public library was around age 3. My mother took me to Gere Branch Library and I remember sitting on the floor among the picture book shelves looking at



[Blueberries for Sal](#). I was thrilled to learn we could take [Blueberries for Sal](#) home with us. I am always pleased to see [Blueberries for Sal](#) is still in a title maintained in Lincoln City Libraries' collection and it makes me smile when families add it to their pile of books to take it home.

I was also big fan of Richard Scarry and Patricia Scarry's picture books. I would look at them over and over again, and although tattered and torn, I still have these in my personal collection.

How long have you been an active reader, and were there any particular books or authors or other people that "made you a reader"? Has there been any book or author that "changed your life" or strongly influenced you?

Once I started Junior High, I really disliked being told what to read. I always tried to get away with reading assigned books as little as possible and still manage to write a good paper as well as participate in class discussions. My turning point was during my Sophomore year of college when a professor assigned Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*. As I flipped through it, I was intrigued, read it from cover to cover in one night. I found the storyline to be the basis for most historical romance novels. After that I was hooked and began to branch out on fiction literature.

How important are books and reading to you?

[Click here to see Jessica's complete Review Profile, plus links to her past reviews on BookGuide](#)

## Staff Reviews

### Slash by Slash, with Anthony Bozza

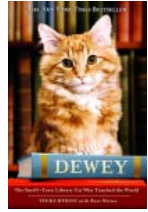
This is a captivating autobiography of one of the most talented and well known lead guitarists in the music industry. Slash was a member and original founder of the rock band, Guns n' Roses. This is one of the better biographies that I have read with new information and an inside look of what really went on between the members of Guns n' Roses. Slash includes his life story from his early childhood years up to the current day. There are many great photos. The guitarist addresses the many, many rumors of



Guns n' Roses as well as past speculations and reports on his outrageous, living on the edge personal life. He discusses his battle with drugs and alcohol, his chronic infidelity, his new projects as well as how he has finally become sober and settled into a traditional family life including a wife and two children. At the end of the biography, Slash answers once and for all the reason for his decision to leave one of the most famous rock bands in history at the height of their popularity.

-- recommended by Jessica H. -- Walt Branch Library

### Dewey by Vicki Myron



I had heard about Dewey, the library cat for the Spencer Public Library in Spencer Iowa, through a variety of national media sources over many years in the late 1990s, and had often thought of making the drive to Spencer to "check him out". Though Dewey's no longer with us, I'm very pleased that Vicki Myron, the librarian who became his surrogate "mom", put out this "biography" of this lovable and loving cat. But this book, which should appeal to animal/pet lovers, is more than just a pet bio. Myron also shares a look at what makes a small mid-America town succeed or fail, and offers some intense insight into her own life growing up and struggling with family and health issues in central Iowa. Myron writes in a very easy-to-read style, and the story of abandoned kitten Dewey and librarian Vicki is truly heartwarming.

-- recommended by Scott C. -- Bennett Martin Public Library

[Click here to see more Staff Recommendations from this month plus an archive of all past Staff Recommendations by title or reviewer](#)

## 'Casting About...

As this January issue of *The BookGuide Bulletin* goes to press, we've got 28 episodes of *BookGuide's 'Casting About'* available on-line, plus 24 podcast recordings of branch book talks, *One Book - One Lincoln* talks, or *Courtyard Book Chats* downtown. You can find them all either on the BookGuide site - look for the blue graphic (at left) next to the titles of *Books Talk* presentations at the second link below, on the booktalk booklists page (third link) - or on the main Lincoln City Libraries site - click on the *Blogs and Podcasts* link at the top of the page to get started. You can also add the Podcasts feed to your RSS feed aggregator if you'd like to automatically receive future *Books Talks*, *One Book One Lincoln* programs and *'Casting About'* Podcasts, as soon as they become available!



[www.lincolnlibraries.org/Podcasts/Podcasts.htm](http://www.lincolnlibraries.org/Podcasts/Podcasts.htm) or  
[www.lincolnlibraries.org/depts/bookguide/bookgroups.htm](http://www.lincolnlibraries.org/depts/bookguide/bookgroups.htm) or  
[www.lincolnlibraries.org/depts/bookguide/lists/booktalkbooklists.htm](http://www.lincolnlibraries.org/depts/bookguide/lists/booktalkbooklists.htm)

## Lincoln City Libraries Blogs for Readers

We encourage you to stop by the links below to visit any of the ongoing blogs, produced by the staff of the Lincoln City Libraries. Our BookGuide and Teen Post Place blogs have been going for a couple of years now, but all of the others are relatively new. All these blogs allow visitors to not only read the news/reviews/etc., but leave comments as well. We'd love to hear from you!

- [BookGuide Blog](#)
- [Just Desserts Blog](#)
- [Nebraska Writers Blog](#) [from the Heritage Room]
- [One Book One Lincoln Blog](#)
- [Teen Post Place](#)

## Feedback...

We're interested in hearing from you regarding what you'd like to see here in our e-newsletter each month. What have you enjoyed in our past issues? If you have any suggestions or comments to offer us about the *BookGuide* site or the *BookGuide Bulletin*, please drop us an e-mail at:

[bookguide@lincolnlibraries.org](mailto:bookguide@lincolnlibraries.org)



The *BookGuide* Web site and The *BookGuide Bulletin* newsletter are services of The *Lincoln City Libraries* in Lincoln, Nebraska