



Season 4, Episode 13: Bookish Multitudes + Be a Library Ambassador

Mon, 10/25 • 54:28

Meredith Monday Schwartz 00:10

Hey readers, welcome to the Currently Reading podcast. We are bookish best friends who spend time every week talking about books that we've read recently. And you should know we never shy away from strong opinions. So you're going to need to get ready.

Kaytee Cobb 00:25

We are light on the chitchat, heavy on the book talk and our descriptions will always be spoiler free. We are going to discuss our current reads, a bookish deep dive, and then we'll press books into your hands.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 00:36

I'm Meredith Monday Schwartz, a mom of four and full time CEO living in Austin, Texas. And always but especially today, I contain bookish multitudes.

Kaytee Cobb 00:45

And I'm Kaytee Cobb, a homeschooling mom of four living in New Mexico and sometimes reading feels like work. This is episode number 13 of season four. And we are so glad you're here.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 00:57

Whew Kaytee that's the dirty secret of the reading life that very few people talk about, but we all experience it. Sometimes reading feels like work. You're going to tell us about that a little bit later. Yes. All right. Well, we'll let you know right here at the top that we are going to be doing our deep dive today on a topic that is near and dear to Kaytee and I's hearts and to so many of your hearts. And that is how can we as a community best support our libraries? We have some really, really executable things that you guys can do that will make a big difference to your library and also to your library circulation budget, which is helpful to you, too. So we're going to talk about that later on. We're really, really excited about it. But first start the way we always do talking about our bookish moments of the week. What have you got Kaytee?

Kaytee Cobb 01:45

All right, my bookish moment this week, Meredith, is that I am going to publicly acknowledge and admit that I am in a slump. And I'm going to be okay with it for right now. I've been slumpy for about three weeks at this point, which feels like forever. And so let me be clear, I have read books in those three

weeks. But reading is not calling to me. It feels like work right? It feels like something I'm supposed to be doing rather than something I want to do right now. So when I have some free time I'll immerse myself in other projects or mindlessly scroll social media or literally just stare at a corner of my room for a while. Until I realize well "Kaytee, you probably should pick up your book because that's what you need to be doing right now". And you all heard me last week gush about All the Lonely People by Mike Gayle with Mary. This is the book that broke my reading. It was exactly three weeks ago today that I finished All the Lonely People. And at this point I am considering, basically I'm considering reading it again hoping that that will be enough to be like "you love reading pick this up again," you know, and just being really excited about what I have in my ears or what I have in my hands. So it's manifesting as like I'm reading good books, but they're not calling to me. There's nothing in my current read stack or on my TBR that has me excited about reading. And that's okay. It'll come back. I know it'll come back and I'll keep picking stuff up. And I'll keep reading when I need to or want to and eventually those wheels will start turning again

Meredith Monday Schwartz 03:22

Right no I'm glad that you said that because it happens to every single person who reads with a lot of regularity and it does suck but it sounds like you I mean it sounds like you had a major book hangover right? Then turned into this longer slump right and sometimes we can have book hangovers and then kind of get take the Advil and get through it right go on with our lives and sometimes like we need to call in sick for a little bit right? So I wondered after you read, after you read that particular book because sometimes when we have a book that just rocks our world right I mean I slumped so badly after A Curse so Dark and Lonely in 2019 it just really nothing else can nothing else compared to it you know, but I think you're right go with the slump lean into the lean into the role that go with the slump. Don't try to tell yourself that you're gonna get out of it because you simply can't snap your fingers and be out of it.

Kaytee Cobb 04:18

So true.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 04:19

But it sucks I hate it.

Kaytee Cobb 04:20

It does, it does. What's your bookish moment? Are you going to bring us up? You're going to sing me a little song?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 04:25

Yeah, no, no, no singing but I will say that I'm going to bring us up because this is something that is really really exciting to me so so you guys know Johnny and I have three older kids, right? And, and like 11 years ago, I decided that I was going to put the full court press on Johnny and tell him I really wanted to have a fourth kid because I just wasn't done parenting yet. Luckily he capitulated and, and tada Jackson, right? Blessing of our life, joy of our existence. But the major thing, one of the main one of the major things that we had to give up when we decided to reset the clock and start again was our Barnes

and Noble dates, right? Because now don't get me wrong, we have had Jack.... So we, Johnny and I, for the first 11 years being together, we would go to Barnes and Noble every single Sunday for an extended period of time. And we would just have these long multi hour reading sessions and snack and everything else. This was what we did from the beginning of our relationship. It's so great, but then we had Jackson. And so you know how it is with a little one. They don't for it takes a very long time for them to get to a place where they can sort of leave you alone enough to approximate that, but then it's just not the same when they're still there. Well, now Jackson is finally old enough, and has enough friends, for us to regularly get an afternoon on the weekends to ourselves. And we have immediately jumped back into our Barnes and Noble dates, just the two of us, nary, nary an annoying child in sight. And we don't feel like we have to rush. And it just you know, it's one of those things that I knew at the time we were going to give up for a while, but we were going to get it back. But it's been a long time and it feels really good in our relationship to get that connective time again. So those Barnes and Noble book and magazine reading dates, they're, they're important to the foundation of our relationship, and I'm just grateful that we can do them again. Okay, let's start talking about some of those books that we've been reading. What is your first book this week?

Kaytee Cobb 06:37

Okay. The first book I want to talk about this week is *The Gentleman's Guide to Vice and Virtue* by Mackenzi Lee. Oh, God, this book was so fun. It came on my radar during the Listener Press episode of the end of season three, when the lovely Amy Iniguez pressed it into our hands, and then it was pushed further up the TBR when one of my favorite book bossy friends, Candace Whitney, told me that I specifically needed to read it immediately without delay. So I checked it out from the library and devoured it within 24 hours, I believe. We have Monty, he's our main character. He is the gentleman Henry Montague. Well, he's supposed to be a gentleman. But despite the boarding schools he's attended and the looks down his nose from his disapproving father, he continues to find his entertainment in gambling halls, the beds of both men and women and libations from both the top and bottom shelf of the bar. He's awesome. His drunken escapades have left his uptight father exasperated with him in every single way. So Monty, his best friend Percy, and he's crushing hard on Percy, and his sister Felicity are touring across Europe in a last hurrah sort of situation before each of them has to continue with their studies. Obviously, we know Monty has to make a reckless decision right at the beginning of the book that turns their trip into more of an adventure than they bargained for. We've got jewels and pirates, crushes and swordfights, snarky dialogue, great characters, excellent kissing scenes, love them. This book upends the status quo in the best way as possible. And we fall for three wonderful 1700s era Brits, their disdain for high society, and their willingness to push against what they're told is right and true and good. Had me laughing, pumping my fist in the air. And it's the very best kind of way, the kind that makes you feel like you are a young adult again, rather than the kind that makes you roll your eyes at young adults and say, "Why are you all such idiots?" I hope that all y'all pick it up and you read it with a dashing smile on your face. As you get to know Monty and Percy and Felicity in *The Gentleman's Guide to Vice and Virtue* by Mackenzi Lee.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 08:53

Kaytee, I told you before we were when we were doing our kind of pre preparation for the show, I told you that I was going to do something that I don't think I've ever done, or maybe I've done one other

time. I'm going to go ahead and talk right now about a book that I literally just finished minutes ago, okay? Because Kaytee and I prepare our sort of outline... It's not a script, but our outline, our heavily prepared outline in advance. I did all that preparation yesterday. I just finished a book that I feel is so timely, perfect that I need to talk about it and you're going to understand immediately why I need to talk about it right now, Kaytee, and it's because it's called Hallowe'en Party. And it is and it is by Agatha Christie.

Kaytee Cobb 09:39

Oh,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 09:41

Did you know that Agatha Christie had a book called Hallowe'en Party because I feel like I'd never heard of this before.

Kaytee Cobb 09:48

No, I had no idea.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 09:49

Yeah, never run across it but all of a sudden it came up on my recommend my recommendations for an Audible and I was just I was like, oh it's so perfect for the season so I jumped into it. Doesn't take a lot to set it up. It's not a very, very long book. And it's pretty simple. We simply have Hercule Poirot, my fantastic. I absolutely adore. He basically is called in because there has been a Halloween party for like tweens, like 10-11, 12-13 year olds. Okay, so this is the age of the Halloween party, all the busybody women in the village, the English village where this is happening, they're planning this Halloween party and it's kind of cute the way that they give you all the details about what a middle of the century British Halloween party included. But the bad news is that one of the tween girls gets murdered.

Kaytee Cobb 10:43

Oh no,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 10:45

She gets herself drowned in an apple, bobbing for apples bucket.

Kaytee Cobb 10:52

Oh, no.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 10:54

Now, is this as surprising to you as it was to me? This was surprising. That's the whole setup, you guys. That's it. Hercule Poirot comes in. We solve the mystery. That's it. But I did not know when I literally I did not know Hallowe'en Party existed. When I pressed play, I had no idea about the setup. I'd never I never read anything about the setup of Agatha Christie. I did not know a child is the victim. I don't think in all of my Agatha Christie reading I have ever read a book where a child is victim.

Kaytee Cobb 11:22

That's pretty unusual.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 11:23

And children figure prominently in the story which is also very out of the ordinary. So Hercule interviewing, like 12 and 10 year olds was very, very interesting, was very different. I will say that it was perfect for this time of year. It's that and again, it's very, very short. I listened I listened to my Audible at one and a half speed, which is not super fast. I realize, Kaytee, it's slower than you listen. But with that, I think I was through it in like three hours and 45 minutes. It's very short. But it's, it's great for this time of year. If you want something for just this next week, to pick up and burn through really, really quickly, I want to bring it up. Now I will say that from a perspective of the story, it's not my favorite Agatha Christie. I do feel like it was a little more linear than what I like in my stories. Usually you kind of follow Hercule around and he kind of is he usually has kind of a partner with which he's having discussions during the mystery. So you kind of know how he's figuring things out. This one didn't really do a lot of that reveal until the very end, so it felt like we didn't really get a chance to play along. So this wasn't my favorite Agatha Christie, but her canon is so deep and so wide. And I've read so much of it that has been really really really satisfying that I think I have to be okay with there being one that was not quite a five star read for me. I'm just going to consider it a one off and I'm going to continue in my Agatha Christie reading. But this one, seasonal seasonal book for you Halloween Party by Agatha Christie,

Kaytee Cobb 13:07

Okay for this one, because a lot of the characters are like middle graders, would you hand this to middle graders that like scary stuff, like we hear from constantly?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 13:16

No, no, no, because it just wasn't that interesting. It was just a lot of exposition, okay. And a lot of like, long dialogue, long conversations that I found myself thinking "Agatha. We got it. Let's move on". Like so, I don't know. It was just not, it didn't feel the from start to finish, it felt like a real outlier to me. All right, what's your next book?

Kaytee Cobb 13:45

Right, my next one is called Meg, Jo, Beth and Amy. It's adapted by Ray Terciero and illustrated by Bre Indigo. This is such fun. Again, apparently all my books this week are such fun. No, that's not true. The one of them not fun at all. So this one is Little Women with a twist. It is a modern graphic novel retelling of the classic Little Women by Louisa May Alcott that almost follows the original storyline, but not quite. Meg, Jo, Beth and Amy are sisters in a blended family. Half and step sisters. Meg is Black, Jo is white and the younger girls are mixed because their mom and dad got together right? Each one has her own distinct personality. Each one has some struggles she's got to work through and each one has a pretty decent challenge within this graphic novel to make it through. But the endings for each girl here are so satisfyingly wonderful, I was able to breeze through this because it's a graphic novel in a pretty short period of time, because it's a graphic novel. I've already put it onto my boys shelf. My older boys, they love graphic novels in their room, and every time I walk in and out of there, you know to say goodnight to them or get them up in the morning, I look at this book and I smile because it makes me happy to

think about the way that Rey Terciero developed these characters, the way that he worked diversity intentionally into a storyline, but not in a way that you feel like you're beaten over the head with it. The illustrations are vibrant and exciting. And it's told in a mix of comic book panels and almost epistolary email formats because the girls are writing to their dad via email, who is a soldier in Afghanistan in this book, because it's set in modern times, right? So I thought that was just really like a fun way to adapt the story and make it feel very fresh for us. I did feel like there were a few moments that should have gotten a longer scene or a longer treatment like, Oh, you know, couldn't we explore that a little bit more? Or Oh, no, I guess we're just moving right along at this point. And I wanted a little more dialogue in some of those scenes, but it's also written for a younger audience, not a 37 year old married mom of four. Either way, I did get I did get teary a few times I hugged it to my chest when I was done, and as I mentioned, directly, plopped it onto my children's shelf because I know that they are going to love it. It's Meg, Jo, Beth and Amy, adapted by Ray Terciero and illustrated by Bre Indigo.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 16:11

Okay, well to make up for my sort of meh first book, I'm going to bring you guys two five star books for my next two reads. I'm excited about both of them, but they could not be more different one from the other. Again, I contain multitudes. Alright, this one is A Place to Hang the Moon by Kate Albus. Have you read this Kaytee?

Kaytee Cobb 16:32

I haven't, but I know that you like that.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 16:35

This is totally this, anybody who loves middle grade, absolutely listen up. If you loved The War that Saved My Life, this, you have to you have to get the A Place to Hang the Moon. It's absolutely wonderful. And I really like it for this time of year too. It's that kind of cozy under a blanket, drink some tea while you read it kind of book. Alright, here's our setup. A Place to Hang the Moon is the story of three orphaned siblings. Kaytee, you know, I'm happy when we've got a passel of orphans, right?

Kaytee Cobb 17:06

A bushel even.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 17:07

Right. They are. It's 1940. And William who's 12, Edmund who's 11 and Anna, who is nine, they aren't terribly upset that the recently they have lost their not so grandmotherly grandmother, who has taken care of them since their parents died. Okay, so it's 1940, their guardian dies. Also, at the same time, the evacuations in London are happening. So they hatched this plan, that they are basically going to try to make it onto one of these orphan trains and just sort of not admit to the fact that they don't have a guardian anywhere, right? Because they would like that's not supposed to be how it is you're supposed to have a guardian put you on the Orphan Train, and then you're taken out of London, but they just sort of join all the other children. And they hope very, very much that they can turn what is a temporary home in the countryside into a permanent home because after the war, they don't have anyone to go back to. You can just feel the impending heartbreak can't you? Can you feel can you feel it happening?

Kaytee Cobb 18:17

I'm a little concerned that's for sure.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 18:20

Yes, exactly. So they they get to the countryside, and they move from one temporary placement to another. The children suffer like really cruel foster brothers. They they live in places where there's only outdoor toilets. They, they live in places where they mostly go hungry. It's bleak people. It's bleak. But and this is where things start to get good. They do find comfort in the village lending library, whose kind librarian, whose name is Nora, seems to be an excellent choice for a placement right. But for some reason that no one will tell the children, she is deemed unsuitable. So we're asking ourselves why? What's wrong with poor Nora, the librarian who seems so lovely? And will the kids finally not be hungry, dirty and using porta potties like this... These are the mysteries that are being solved in this book. This book is so so great. When I started it, I have to say I was in one of those spots, like you Kaytee have talked about today, I was having the hardest time finding a book that would that I could just fall into. I just kept sort of like picking things up and putting them down and picking them up and putting them down. I was just in a weird, I was just in a weird mood. And I'd had this book from the library for a while had been sitting on my library shelf, and I felt like I wanted to read it but I just wasn't in the place of wanting to read something heavy or sad. But it turns out that although the setup of this book sounds heavy and sad, this was the perfect book at the perfect time. It was published in 2021, but it has the feeling of a book that was written in the 40s. It has that provincial kind of old fashioned feeling that I really love in my middle grade fiction. And it's a perfect example, Kaytee of one of our favorite kinds of books, the swing up book, things are really not happy at the start and then they swing up through the course of the book to a very satisfying ending. And I should also mention that it's really wonderful that even the bad or tough parts of this book are not going to going to bring down your mood. I was actually feeling really tender at the moment that I read this book, and I wasn't able to take much heartache. But this book was really just perfect. The bad parts aren't as horrible as for example, in *The War that Saved My Life*. So it definitely gave me the vibes of *The War that Saved My Life*, but even more so if you mixed that with *The Penderwicks*, kind of that more gentle *Penderwicks* kind of nostalgic feeling. I really, really ended up feeling like it was a wonderful combination. So if you love the idea of found family, this book has it in spades. And if you love cozy rooms decorated with books, and tables filled with delicious scones and tea, you will love this book. It's a really nice winter read aloud for your family and I loved it. I bought it for my permanent middle grade shelf, because it definitely belongs there. So this is *A Place to Hang the Moon* by Kate Albus.

Kaytee Cobb 21:32

Well, I downloaded it on Scribd while you were talking, because I sat here with a stupid smile on my face while you were talking. It sounds perfect. And I finished my audio book that I was listening to maybe 20 minutes before we sat down today. So I need one to go into that slot. Anyway, so this sounds perfect. I'm excited.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 21:52

Excellent. Excellent. I hope you like it. It's just perfect for this time of year. Okay, what's your third book?

Kaytee Cobb 21:57

Okay, my third book, Meredith comes with a holy Hannah. So I know you're gonna love it. It's Stillhouse Lake by Rachel Caine. Have you read this one?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 22:06

No, but I have it on my Kindle.

Kaytee Cobb 22:10

Yeah, exactly. So hang on to your butts, folks. Because this starts with a bang and does not let you go. Just like Meredith, I've had it on my Kindle for years at this point. I bought it as a Kindle daily deal, probably five years ago, maybe three years ago. And it just languished, because that's what Kindle books do for me. So I finally picked it up. Here's what we've got. Gina Royal is returning home after picking up her kids from school, when she realized her street is blocked off by cop cars on both ends. And really, they're swarming around her house. When she approaches and says, hey, that's my home. She is roughly pulled from her vehicle handcuffed, because the officers are sure there's no way that she couldn't have known that her husband is a prolific serial killer. They walk her over to the garage, which has been smashed by another car in a car accident, right? So total accident that this garage gets opened up. And she sees a woman's body hanging from the ceiling and immediately starts screaming at the gruesome sight in front of her. It is gory. There is lots of details in this book about Melvin Royal, her husband, and the crimes he committed. It's icky. It's icky. It will get under your skin. A few years later, that's just the very, very first chapter right? A few years later, we meet Gina again. But now she's Gwen Proctor. She has spent the intervening years defending herself at trial and then running, running, running, trying to keep herself and her children off the radar of the internet sickos who are sure that she is actually guilty of assisting her husband and has gotten off scot free. Melvin was monstrous. He is despicable. Gwen has settled this time in Stillhouse Lake, our title right, a small town where she dares to hope that they can stay for a while. But of course that's not the case. A body floats to the surface of the lake, which is right behind her home. And the police are interested in her, her kids, her activities, and letters full of threats start showing up at her home. Her daily internet sicko patrol, what she calls it, where she Googles herself to try and find the threats that people are making against her has a huge spike in activity. Now that they're all embroiled in this new investigation, all she wants to do is run. She wants to start over again. But of course the police are not keen on letting her out of their sight. I could not put this down. I read it on Kindle, like I said, and usually those are my longest reads right? They take me three and four weeks to finish a single book because I read for five minutes before I go to bed at night. And then I fall asleep with my Kindle propped up in front of my face. And I've only made it 1% in the book. So that's what happens. Yeah, but in this case, I was constantly going to bed freaked out beyond belief, giving myself bad dreams and then waking up to read some more at 2am because I couldn't sleep because I was dreaming about murders and serial killers and people being flayed open. So Oh, that was fun. As with many thrillers, there were moments in this one that made me want to take said Kindle and bash it against my head and be like, "Gwen just make a good decision". Like, come on, do not get in that car. Overall, I really I found it to be gripping. And I'm excited that it is actually the first in a series. So even though I grabbed this on Kindle and let it languish for a very long time, I did get it as a great deal. It sounds like Meredith did too it's likely to show up again in that format.

If this sounds exciting to you, if you like scary, gory edge of your seat thrillers, keep an eye out because this is a good one for your scary lovers. It's Stillhouse Lake by Rachel Caine.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 25:48

I like it when we record a podcast A. that includes the word the words "flayed open," and I also like it when I am not the one saying it. It just makes me feel better.

Kaytee Cobb 26:00

Right? We switched roles in this podcast, Meredith. If you're like, "You want to hear about delightful middle grade and found family?" and I'm like "Yes, added to TBR" and I'm like, "Do you want to hear about flayed open serial killers?" And you're like, "Yes, added to TBR."

Meredith Monday Schwartz 26:12

We contain multitudes. This is the this is clearly clearly the title of the episode. Okay, well, lest anybody be afraid that I am not going to be bringing the murder, I am super excited today to be bringing one of my definitely top 10 books of the year. And if you follow me on Instagram, you know that I absolutely loved it. I'm going to talk about 56 Days by Catherine Ryan Howard. Kaytee you read this one right?

Kaytee Cobb 26:40

I read The Nothing Man. But I'd started writing Catherine Ryan Howard in my notes before you even said the title because I figured that's where we were going.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 26:48

You know, she is like I don't even care if people are rolling their eyes like "Meredith I'm so sick of you talking about Catherine Ryan Howard and The Nothing Man" and you know, all of that. I have now read three of her books. This is the second one that I'm bringing to the show. I'm gonna be bringing the third one to the show a little bit later on. She is just so dang good. I it has been forever since I have found a writer that I A. want to read multiple books by you know, very, very close in time. And who can keep them so fresh. 56 Days is excellent. Let me tell you what the setup is. You've probably heard about it again. Here's another book that doesn't require a lot of setup. It starts as a countdown, right? So 56 days is when is when ago is when we start this book, we meet Ciara and Oliver and they're, this is in Dublin and they are shopping in a grocery store. And they happen to meet in line at a grocery store and they start dating and it's very, very meet cute. Problem is this is the same week that the COVID, that COVID basically comes to Ireland. So within just a couple of weeks, they are basically forced to make a decision like they so they date for a couple weeks. And within like 21 days, they have to make a decision, like do we stop dating because we're like everything's locking down. And Ireland was really, really, really strict with their lockdown, like, extraordinarily strict with their lockdown. So it was like we either stop dating, or we move in together. This was the choice that they had the right had to face. And that just, that's not a good choice to have to make 20 you know, three weeks in ish to your relationship. And then today and the present POV of this book, a decomposing body has been found in an apartment, and we don't know who it is, what it is, how it's related. But you guys pick up this book, because you need to find out how this story unwinds. Now, I do want to say a lot of people I think, especially when it first came out, we're kind of like, Oh, COVID I don't want to read anything. This book

is not about COVID. I mean, it's about a lockdown. But it's not about COVID. It's not about this the illness. It's not about any of the medical parts of COVID. So we're not faced with any of that. Okay. It's really a lot. This is basically a locked room mystery kind of writ large, right? It is so amazingly constructed. And this is the thing you're gonna hear me talk about this every time I talk about one of Catherine Ryan Howard's books. It's the construction of her book that elevates them so far past popcorn thriller. This is not a popcorn thriller. This is this is smart crime fiction. That's what this is. Because the construction of this book has you, keeps you guessing all the way through. But then she also balances... so we've got some unreliable narrator stuff going on because you don't really know exactly who you can trust, but then she also weaves in the police voice that police who are finding this decomposing body and trying to figure out what happens. The way she weaves back and forth in time, and through the points of view, had me abs, it's not confusing, which a lot of times this would get away from an author. She is so tight and focused, but it doesn't get away from her and become confusing. It just keeps you flipping these pages. As soon as I was done, I drove this book to one of my close friends who loves these kinds of books. And I was like, "I'm sorry, you're making dinner. I'm handing you this book right now." Because you and by that night, she was texting me, "Oh, my gosh, this book is it had me on pins and needles, not wanting to go anywhere until I finished". It was absolutely amazingly well done. And I am in love with Catherine Ryan Howard and her writing. I love that she's not writing a series, but she writes kind of within the same universe or are in the same universe, she puts these little easter eggs in. So when you're reading 56 Days, if you've read some of her books before you're like, it's like an if you know, you know, not, they're not spoilers, right, right. But just this little like, ooh, I get what you did there. It's just all so smart and fun. And like, for the love of smart crime fiction, that's how it feels. And I loved it. This is 56 Days by Catherine Ryan Howard.

Kaytee Cobb 27:00

It sounds so good.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 29:20

So let's talk about our deep dive today. And like I said, at the top of the show, Kaytee, you and I, from the time we were very tiny, we've been in love with libraries, right? And so over the course of this last year, we have been spending a lot of our time and talent, investing in how to make sure that we as a podcast and as a community invest in independent booksellers, because that's really close to our hearts. We want to make sure we're doing that. But then the other part of the place where we get our books, our recommendations, and our actual books is through our library. So a couple weeks ago, you and I were together. If you guys have seen this, we talked about it last week, we were together, we did a photoshoot at my library, the Lake Travis Community Library, and the director of the library. Morgan is so, so excellent. And she allowed us to do the photoshoot there. And we went back the next day, because we wanted to make sure we grabbed a picture with her. And we got to talking. And that conversation led to this deep dive today. Because what we were asking Morgan about is we were basically saying, we want to pick your brain as the director of a large and successful library. What are the things that we as a podcast can do to support our own personal local libraries? Right, right, you in New Mexico, and me in Austin. But what can we as a community of Currently Reading, we are a large community now, how can we basically take this amazing group of readers and support our libraries

across the country and across the you know, in all the countries that listen, what does support actually look like? Right? Morgan was really great to have that conversation with us.

Kaytee Cobb 33:29

Yeah, and we, we especially wanted to address the word support, right, because we hear all the time, support your local library. And many of us also think of that as like support your local PBS station, right? A pledge drive, a Friends of the Library program, where you donate a certain amount per month or per year in order to get your name on the website or whatever, and know that you are supporting the library in that way. But Morgan, really disabused us of that notion. And said "No, when we talk about support, we mean, use your library, use your library, get in the doors, take advantage of the programs, check out materials, talk to the librarians, let them give you a book recommendation, let them show you how to install an app on your phone, let them be utile for you." And all of that counts as support even though it doesn't have anything to do with taking out your wallet and putting money on the desk. Right? None of that is part of what what she means by support when she's telling us "yeah, we want people to support their libraries" so that that was the first thing we really wanted to like hone in on.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 34:33

Exactly. What does support look like and so this really helps us to double back and it underscores what we've been talking about for a while here on the podcast and we've been talking about "when in doubt check it out." Right we've talked about how I do my book flights. Kaytee, you do a lot of this too where we go and we we actually check out a lot of books every time we go to the library, or more than read far more than we can read. Exactly. So we're checking them out, to come home and do a tasting, a book flight to let our kids do this the exact same thing. So we are really, really heavily checking out books. That is, right now, if any of your listeners are thinking, I don't really know what I can do. The next time you're at the library, check out more books than you normally would guess, allow yourself to check out more books than you normally would. Because, and this is I think the piece that we want to be super, super clear about. When we check out books, it goes into their data system, and it tells their data system "This is what our circulation numbers are". When your circulation when you check out books, it equals circulation, when you increase circulation, you increase their budget, yes. So even more than you and I pulling our wallet out, we actually are helping by checking out a lot of books. Now, we do want to be responsible library patrons. We don't want to lose books. We don't want to lose track of them. We don't want to let them come to harm. We don't want to keep them out for long periods of time irresponsibly, when we know for a fact we're not going to read them. So we want to be responsible patrons. I think for a lot of people, that feels like checking out as little as possible. And we want to encourage you to double or triple what you are currently checking out or what your kids are checking out. And then we also want you to encourage your friends to do the same thing. Well, how can you actually do that? You can of course, do that at the library, let people see that you're doing that. You can get a currently a brand new Currently Reading, "When in Doubt, Check it Out" tote bag and tell everybody I mean, Kaytee and I make pennies on the dollar for that. So you know, it's not like we're trying to make money, but like it's a way to spread the message. But you can put on social media, your book stacks, you can hashtag #libraryhaul, you can make sure on your social media that you are captioning, "I check out a ton of books because that is how I support my library." This message, we have the power as a group to exponentially amplify that one particular message.

Kaytee Cobb 37:15

Especially if every single one of you takes one additional person to the library. Even more if you take five additional people to the library at some point, right? That is exponential growth. One of the other things that Morgan said about this checking out without reading thing is that aside from the actual circulation number she let us know that also helps libraries know what is interesting to their patrons, even if you don't read it. Why did that book grab your eye? It could have been the cover, it could have been the genre, it could have been you heard it on Currently Reading podcast. Whatever it is, for some reason, and they want to know, these books are interesting to people. I will go check out books that I've already read. I have no intention of reading them, again, to make content for Instagram, to talk about things that we've talked about on the show that we're excited about in podcasting world. But I know that that also increases my library circulation, and it helps their bottom line. So again, like go library wild, pole dance in the library, just enjoy it, use it to all its capabilities.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 38:18

We want you to metaphorically pole dance in the library. I'm not sure that that we want to make that a literal part of our ambassador program. Because that's really what we're wanting to do is we're trying we're gonna weaponize you guys. We're gonna take this Oh, okay, you're, you say deploy, I say weaponize, you This group has proven to be so powerful. We can absolutely change the budgets of our libraries by doing this one thing. So Kaytee, then the other thing that we really wanted to talk to Morgan about, was something that I am very new to. I am still a noob on this, but I'm learning and I'm I'm taking steps to get better and better at it, using my library to take out ebooks that I can read on my Kindle, right? So it's something that I'm now doing. I have the Libby app, it's very, very simple to set up. But I also have been reading a lot of articles about the concept or the the way that the pricing structure differs for libraries between ebooks and printed books. So I personally had some hesitation about well, but should I really profligately be using my ebooks through the library because I know they cost you guys money in a different way. So do you want to talk a little bit about what Morgan said to that point?

Kaytee Cobb 39:39

Yeah, we asked Morgan directly we said look, we've been reading these articles. We know that ebooks are very expensive for libraries to lend out, should we be indiscriminately checking them out as well and she said you know what, it gives us the same data. It increases our circulation numbers, so we can then go to the city and ask for a budget bigger budget for e-resources, which is an even bigger budget, because we need the larger dollar amount to be able to pay for these e-resources. It also tells us what people are interested in. Maybe that means we buy an extra paper copy for the library, because the electronic version is getting checked out over and over and over again. So even with ebooks, director of the library, Morgan said, "yes, continue to check them out, use them with abandon." And so I asked her the same thing about having multiple library cards. And I said, "Look, Morgan, I have eight library cards. And I know that's a lot. And I don't know if I'm abusing the system," and she said, "You know what, Kaytee, I have five. And I'm just hoping that I can get up to eight." So she was very excited about the idea of being able to share library cards with friends and family all over the country, maybe having access to additional resources, and being able to support libraries that aren't even close to you, just like we do with the Indie Press List. When we are telling people, here's an indie bookstore that you might

love across the entire country or across the world from you. Do you want to give it a shot, and they order one or two books, and that's still a great way to support them, even if they don't live in that local community. So Morgan made it really clear that using those e-resources, and empowering your people to use those resources, is also really important to the library's bottom line. Obviously, we've all just gone through a year and a half of like, gross with not being able to go to the library, not being able to do in person events, not being able to browse the stacks. Using those e-resources is the antidote to this. It's the answer, right? Being able to browse through, what does your library recommend? What are titles that are similar to what you've been checking out and what you've been enjoying? How long did it take you to listen to that title, all that stuff is included in your Libby app. It's so cool. It's my favorite app.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 41:49

Well, and what I didn't realize until just a little bit ago, when I started using Libby app is I really thought it was just for ebooks to read on my Kindle. I didn't realize that it was also for audiobooks. I realized you guys, I realized that I was late to this party. But I want to say this, because there might be other people who are kind of hanging on to that same notion. So print books, ebooks, audio books, they all are available through your library. The other thing that I want to say about using our libraries in different library systems handle this differently. But check and see. Because like, for example, my library, my my book buyer, she's not my book buyer, where she's not personally assigned to me, I realize that, but sometimes it feels like it, her name is Raj, and she is the book buyer for Lake Travis Community Library. If we don't have a book in our system, they have created a very easy way for any patron who's logged into the library system to request a book. And I often will get those either through interlibrary loan, or they'll just buy a copy to have in our library almost as quickly as any other book that I put a hold on. So just because your library doesn't currently have it, check with your librarian, get to know your library. Because they will be able to tell you well, "Yeah, we actually can place an order for that." And then we have it within our system, we have a budget for being able to do that. So that's another thing that I think a lot of people don't know about their library that you're empowered to ask your library to buy a book that you want to you want it to have.

Kaytee Cobb 43:21

Yes, yes. And, and usually a library is very transparent about the limits on those resources, like mine allows me to request 60 books a year, you guys for a lot of readers, they're not even going to read 60 books a year. That's incredible. That's so great, right? And it's it goes on a rolling basis. So you can just request away. Some libraries, it's only 10. And you need to be more judicious with your request. But that's okay, ask your librarian. Figure out, you know where your limits are and how you do it, they will be happy to empower you. Librarians are all about getting resources into our hands. So with that in mind, we're gonna have Megan put the Getting Started with Libby link in the show notes. It'll walk you through how to do it on Android or iPhone, and then how to add a library card and how to switch between libraries and how to search and add books to your shelves and all of that. And I also really want to encourage you, just like when we ask you to share the podcast with other people that maybe you take this deep dive of this episode and you share it with someone else who is a little on the fence about the library, or doesn't know. Just like how you might take your mom's phone and download a podcast app and subscribe her to Currently Reading. You can also download Libby, add a library card, take her to the library and empower her also to get these e-resources and get these paper books into her hands or

his hands or whoever, whoever's hands they are and just make it so that we are again weaponizing you or deploying you and turning you into a force for library good. That is the whole point of this deep dive that we want you to feel totally empowered to go into your library to request resources, to use it with abandon, and to be a great ambassador for Currently Reading in the library system.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 45:06

Absolutely and teach your babies that this is something that you can do too. When you go in be like, "You know what, you can check out as many books as you want." Now, yes, you have to keep track of them. But we have systems for that, right? We can create a system for that. But when we teach them right from the get that the library is an embarrassment of bookish riches, then it feels like the treasure chest that it really, really is. So yes, I am so excited about our ability to to be able to spread this message because libraries have brought so much joy to my life from the time I was very small. And I'm just so grateful to have a great one today. And I know Kaytee, you are too so yes, I'm excited about what we're gonna be able to do with this.

Kaytee Cobb 45:47

For sure. Finally, I do want to add, you can use not just Libby. Some libraries use Hoopla, which gives you instant access to borrows. Some libraries use Cloud Library. There are a number of digital apps that you might have access to through your system. Again, go make friends with your librarian. Ask them what are my options for digital borrowing and digital resources and they will get you set up in the twinkle of an eye like Santa.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 46:12

Yes. Let's get ready to press some books that they might be able to go get from their library. What book do you want to press today?

Kaytee Cobb 46:19

Mine is an oldie but a goodie. So I'm almost positive it'll be on your library shelves. This is one of those rare books that I watched the movie first like a heathen, but then I went back and read the book and it was even better than I imagined. It's Stardust by Neil Gaiman. Backlist gem like I said, published in 1998. So 21 years ago, the movie released in 2007. And I probably saw it shortly thereafter. Let me tell you what, you guys I fell in love with it. This is a great movie. If you're a fan of The Princess Bride, which you know I am. It's a fairy tale mishmash, which with a bunch of witty snark rolled in. You've got to first love a mythic quest. Three diabolical but ridiculous witches, a fallen star, brothers fighting for a throne, a father son relationship that totally slays me, sky pirates, one of whom is played in the movie by Robert De Niro and all of this is circling around Tristran Thorn, our main character. He's a young man from Wall England who just wants to win the heart of the town damsel, Victoria. The book is only 248 pages in paperback but it would be great for a winter afternoon, or an evening with a cozy blanky and a toasty fire and a cup of hot tea. Because you will journey with Tristran to the other side of the wall where his village gets his name, and you will enter a fantasy world beyond your imagination. It is such fun, and the sparkly dialogue will keep you giggling and turning pages all through the night. But Neil Gaiman take you on a journey of epic proportions and make you laugh along the way. I hope you love it. It's Stardust by Neil Gaiman.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 47:58

Wow, that you really have added to my TBR today, like a lot of books this episode that you're talking about. People are gonna you know have to have to be okay with me reading and talking about in the distant future because you've really done your job today, Kaytee. Okay, well, to balance out a lot of the sweetness that we have had, which I love, I am going to bring a book that is definitely one of my favorites of all time, but it's something that is not going to be everyone's favorite. But for the people who love it, they will love it. You guys know that I love a business biography. It's one of my weird nichey things that I absolutely love. But I know that there are other people who feel the same way. Well, recently, I've read a couple back to back that were good and I'm going to be talking about on the show at some point. But this one that I want to talk about today is great. And I just have to have it on the press list. It's Disney War by James B. Stewart. Okay, so obviously we all know that Disney is the happiest place on earth, right? And I think when I was younger I always thought that it was run by like some really nice people like my grandpa. Like I sort of thought that my grandpa ran it right. Wrong. Totally wrong.

Kaytee Cobb 49:08

Cutthroat pirates?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 49:10

Oh, so cutthroat. Pirates are nicer. So our drama in Disney World which is near which is nonfiction, narrative nonfiction, this is a business biography. Okay, so this is all real, highly researched real. So our drama starts when Roy Disney, who was the chairman of the Walt Disney Animation company, and he's the nephew of of course, Walt Disney, the founder, abruptly resigns from the Disney Corp in November of 2003. And he declares war on the chairman and chief executive Michael Eisner. This was so shocking. Shockwaves went through the entertainment industry, corporate boardrooms and through the media, who love to report anything that happens at the Mouse House, right. Here's the thing that makes this book great. James B. Stewart has and I've read multiple books by him. He's very, very good. He has absolutely unprecedented access to both Eisner and Roy Disney to current and former executives and board members as well as 1000s of pages of never before seen letter letters, memos, transcripts. It's amazing what he had for this book. We get the down and dirty into all the drama that enveloped Disney in the early 2000s. What really caused the rupture between Jeffrey Katzenberg and Eisner who were supposedly like father and son. How could Eisner have so misjudged Michael Ovitz, a man who was not only often called the most powerful man in Hollywood, but also a very close friend of his to the point where as soon as he hired, Eisner hired Ovitz, he wanted to fire him. What happened in that relationship? What caused the breakdown between Eisner and Pixar Chairman Steve Jobs and why did Pixar abruptly abandon its then partnership with Disney? And why did why did Eisner so mistrust Roy Disney that he hired a bunch of executives to spy on Roy Disney? And they did.

Kaytee Cobb 51:22

It sounds like a gossip magazine.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 51:24

It is so soapy. I read this book, but it's all totally true. I read this book in 2006. And I still remember some of the scenes so incredibly vividly. Now I will have to say that whenever I run across it at a bookstore, I always will open it up and read like a chapter here and there because it's like candy to me. I just delight. I absolutely delight in it. Now, this book is for sure for a specific audience. I loved it mostly because the business machination part of it absolutely fascinates me. And for my whole life, I've been weirdly entranced by the business elements of Disney. I'm not totally sure why. I think it's the intersection of like family entertainment and cutthroat corporate politics. But I loved this book because after reading it, I knew way more about that particular 20 years of its history than I ever did before. And those were really pivotal 20 years since probably the most pivotal since Disney's founding. Disney War is kind of a big, chunky book, but it is a fast engrossing read, I couldn't put it down. I will say that this book did make me glad once again, that I don't work for a huge mammoth corporation or for Michael Eisner in particular because what a douche. But this book is wonderful. If this is your cup of tea if you like this kind of book, Disney War should be on your list. This is by James B. Stewart,

Kaytee Cobb 52:58

Like, white dudes behaving badly.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 53:01

Oh, gosh, for sure. Oh, narcissists gone wild.

Kaytee Cobb 53:05

Oh, I like that one. New subtitle.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 53:09

Seriously. All right. That is it for this week. As a reminder, here's where you can connect with us. You can find me on Meredith at @Meredith.reads on Instagram.

Kaytee Cobb 53:18

And you can find me Kaytee at @notesonbookmarks on Instagram.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 53:22

Full show notes with the title of every book we mentioned in the episode and timestamps, so you can zoom right to where we talked about it can be found on our website at currentlyreadingpodcast.com.

Kaytee Cobb 53:32

You can also follow the show at @currentlyreadingpodcast on Instagram or email us at currentlyreadingpodcast@gmail.com.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 53:39

And if you really want to help us, you can do a few things starting with becoming a Patreon subscriber. For just \$5 a month you can become a bookish friend of currently reading and you get all manner of fantastic additional content and access to our Facebook group, which is the place to be for great

bookish conversation. You can also rate and review us on Apple podcasts and shout us out on social media. All of those things make a huge difference toward us finding our perfect audience.

Kaytee Cobb 54:07

Yes, bookish friends are the best friends. We are so close to 1500. All of those things are helping us grow and get closer to our goals. Thanks for doing that friends.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 54:16

Alright, until next week. Happy reading Kaytee.

Kaytee Cobb 54:18

Happy reading Meredith.