

# Best Sellers

*Our favorite stories about your Library's impact* • WINTER 2019

## Ready for a Quest Into Your Past?

If you're hot on the trail of your past, make Flint Public Library your first stop. There, you can get expert help from volunteers like Burt Mathews, descendent of Welsh clan leader "Mad Dog." No kidding...Burt tracked his family back more than 2,000 years to find this fascinating tidbit!

**H**ow, you might ask, does someone trace his or her lineage back that far? "It's like a treasure hunt," Burt says. "You can research online, but you also have to hit the road if you're serious. My brother and I have walked through countless cemeteries and dug through dusty records in Podunk libraries, trying to track down our history."

Burt is like a Sherpa for those traveling through the past. He provides advice for people who are just staring their search. He also shares the special tips and tricks he's discovered during the course of his personal research. He's a member of the Flint Genealogical Society, which has partnered with the Library for more than 60 years. Through this unique partnership, experienced genealogy volunteers like Burt spend 20 to 25 hours each week assisting patrons. "I happened to be here researching my family during a school field trip 25 years ago," he recalls. "The scheduled volunteer guide



didn't show up, so I filled in. And I've been doing it ever since!"

Flint Public Library's 12,000-piece genealogy collection is a treasure trove of unique and irreplaceable documents. The Library also provides access to many subscription databases that can assist patrons in their search. And perhaps most important of all, they have volunteers like Burt who know all the tricks for finding and verifying information.

So how do you get started? "You need to have information about a relative who was

alive before 1940 (the last census year we have access to) if you want to go back more than a couple generations," Burt says. "We have a handout to share with first-time family researchers, and of course we are available to offer advice. It takes effort and desire, because people change names, misspell names, and report incorrect information. You have to verify everything."

Flint Public Library earned the prestigious Michigan State History Award in 2018 for its vast local history and genealogy collection, and unique relationship with the Flint Genealogical Society. "People from all over the state come here to research," Burt notes. "Word of mouth is amazing. I've had people call from out of state, and even ship-to-shore!"

Flint Public Library has a well-earned reputation for its collection and volunteer support. We are very grateful for people like Burt, who help patrons embark upon a journey to the past.

*Interested in learning about your family tree? Consult with the expert volunteers at Flint Public Library!*

## Lifetime Love Turns Into Monthly Gift

Picture a small but determined four-year-old girl marching up to the checkout desk at Flint Public Library. Stretching on tiptoe, she proudly displays her new library card, with “Dawn Marie Hibbard” running along the signature line. (And, okay, up the side! She’s 4, after all, and it’s a small line.)

“That was my first Library card,” Dawn recalls fondly. “My parents took me to the Library every Saturday when I was a child. My mom insisted I get a library card because I kept maxing out the number of checkouts on hers! She taught me to sign my name so that I could get my own card to indulge my love of reading.”

Dawn’s love affair with reading began when she was young and never waned. Her

parents read to her, and enjoyed reading themselves. “I secretly dreamed of being a writer when I was in high school,” she admits. “I nurtured this private fantasy of writing books and living in Greenwich Village.” Reality set in, and Dawn pursued a journalism major instead. But her love affair with books never wavered. “I went through an Anglophile period, and a historical biographies period. I explored

non-white, non-male authors for a bit. I spent some time with mysteries — “brain candy” as I call them. I just love it all. It’s no wonder my entire house is decorated with books!”

Dawn attended the Flint Public Library *Learn for Life* luncheon two years ago, and re-discovered the amazing things the Library is doing for the community. “I wanted to give a gift on the spot, but I couldn’t give it all right away. So I asked if the Library could do monthly pledges, like public radio and public television. They worked on it a bit, and then came back with a ‘Yes!’ So I was able to give the gift I really wanted to give by budgeting it into 12 monthly payments.”

Dawn is now a staunch supporter of the Library. She brought her husband, Ray Rust, to the 2018 luncheon. He was so impressed that he also committed to a monthly gift. In addition, Dawn makes honorary and memorial gifts for people she loves by purchasing books for the Library.

She also supports the purpose of the Library. “I believe the Library should stand for free speech and free access,” she notes. “I’ve always believed this. I recently ran across a letter to the editor of the Flint Journal that I penned many years ago. In this letter, I chastised the editorial board for trying to exclude certain publications from the Library. I thought then, and I believe now, that the Library exists to make materials available to the public.”



● Books Dawn donated in memory of Elizabeth Hans.



● Dawn’s earliest photo with a book.

**Enrich your community through a monthly gift to the Library!**  
**It’s easy...just visit [fpl.info](http://fpl.info) and click the Donate button to find the giving option that’s best for you.**

# Let's Get Messy!

It's so sad that adults don't learn the same way children do. We would all have a lot more fun! Luckily for kids, Flint Public Library is now offering a sensory (and sometimes messy) way to learn through Little Explorers.

“The reality is that young children learn with their senses,” says Donna Comstock-Herman, Children's Learning Specialist. “And although we often forget about them, body awareness and balance are just as important as the other senses — sight, touch, hearing, taste and smell. Kids learn balance and spatial relationships by playing with objects. They can pick up motor skills and mathematical concepts. They build language, increase cognitive growth and develop social skills. These are all important abilities to have when they start school.”

Unfortunately, many children don't get to experience as much sensory play as they need. So the Library is now offering Little Explorers Sensory Exploration for toddlers ages 1-5.

“This is all about safe, tactile fun,” says Donna. Since there are so many kids and she needs a lot of space, Donna sets up camp in the General Reading Room one Saturday each month. The kids get to play with rice, pasta, water, finger paints, play-doh, slime and much more. “My goal is to let them do things they wouldn't get to do at home.”

You'd be amazed at how much creativity kids can show when given the chance! “I provide the supplies and some simple ways to move or measure them...like pouring beans through a funnel or loading seed corn with a dump truck. The kids



*Do you know a toddler who might enjoy getting a little messy? Join us for some sensory play! Pick up a program guide at the Library, or check our online calendar at [fpl.info](http://fpl.info).*

take it from there! They have a great time together.”

The program caught on very quickly. “We started in September of last year, and we've had as many as 20 kids show up on a Saturday with their parents,” says Donna. “It can get a little chaotic, but it's fun! I try

to choose things that allow them to play, create, investigate and explore.”

Donna knows that the connections between sensory play and school success are important and real. “If a child has not learned to hold small objects, how is he or she going to hold a pencil? If he or she has not learned to play nicely with others, what will happen on the playground? How does a child learn to express him or herself without early exposure to paints and crayons? Brain development, social interaction and cognitive growth all come from this simple play strategy. If parents or caretakers can experience it at the Library, they may find inspiration to bring some of these ideas home for even greater benefit.”



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Our mission  
is to be Flint's go-to place  
to learn for life.

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## Check Out Without Getting Out!

So you're sitting at home... it's nasty outside... maybe you're not excited about risking the roads. Maybe you have a kid home from school with a cold. Or maybe you're going on a trip and need something to occupy your travel time. Good news! You have a whole world of Library resources available for your phone or device anywhere you have a Wi-Fi connection. Select from thousands of e-books, audiobooks, magazines and songs using our downloadable resources.

Now before you start to worry, please note that the Library still has lots of actual books! And according to the Pew Research Center, print books are still the most popular format, with 67 percent of Americans having read a print book in the past year.

That being said, other formats like e-books and audiobooks also have their place. Almost 3 in 10 Americans read both print and digitally formatted books. The top reasons include convenience, travel and commuting, which makes sense given that a typical e-reader can hold up to 1,000 books!

"We have almost 7,000 e-books," says Kay Schwartz, Library Director. "This offers our patrons choice as well as convenience. Sometimes you can check out one version sooner than another. Sometimes it's easier to download a book than visit the Library. And unless you plan to keep a particular book, it's certainly more cost effective to borrow than to purchase!"

Not sure how to download? "Anyone who needs a little help setting up their device for downloads can call us," Kay says. "Our Book an Expert program offers free, one-on-one coaching to help people learn to use their devices."

So don't let weather, fear, or time stand in your way! Visit [fpl.info](http://fpl.info) to learn more about downloading, or call the Library to schedule a lesson today.