

SWING
General Membership Meeting
Montgomery-Floyd Regional Library, Blacksburg Branch
10 October 2003

The SWING membership met Friday, 10 October 2003 at the Blacksburg Branch of the Montgomery-Floyd Regional Library at 10 am.

Program

President Lorraine Abraham introduced the program, given by Beth Macy of *The Roanoke Times* and followed by a panel on the topic of the expanding popularity of book clubs in communities and libraries.

Beth said that among the reasons we read is to find a friend on the page. Book clubs take this to the next level, allowing us to make connections beyond family and friends to strangers and finding humanity in a broader context. People join book clubs for social reasons, because of venerable tradition (some clubs have existed for decades), because of shared interests, and because of an urgent need to discuss books. *The Roanoke Times* began a club because it wanted to capitalize on an important trend, to promote literacy, books and reading, to take advantage of a good public relations opportunity at minimal cost (\$3000 a year covers food and discussion leader honorariums), to exploit the success of Oprah's discussions, and to connect readers with other readers and writers.

Beth described the mechanics of the club's development. She researched clubs online, talked with newspaper librarians, met with the public library and the newspaper marketing department. She noted that relying on the Internet to keep people informed and participating in discussions does not work well. The newspaper might consider satellite activities in the future. She announced that Lee Smith will be at Lockhaven Lake in July to discuss *The Last Girls*. The program will feature bluegrass and barbecue and will benefit the Library of Virginia.

She holds a monthly discussion program which requires advance registration. It has been very popular, with space for only 12 to encourage people to talk, so participants vary from one program to another. She enlists area college professors and other experts to lead discussions. The club does have an online component for discussion, and discussion questions are posted on the website at www.roanoke.com/bookclub.

She said her club chooses good, literary titles with appeal to a broad range of readers; they must also be available in paperback. Titles which have worked well include *The Secret Life of Bees*, *Year of Wonders*, *Harry Potter* series, *Seabiscuit*, *The Life of Pi*, *Bel Canto*. They include classics as well.

A panel discussion followed. Ruth Arnold, director of the Staunton Public Library, has two groups, one of which uses the Great Books discussion program focusing on classics. This has been functioning well for 10 years, with mainly middle-aged women, and some men. It is a patron-driven group.

Michael Gilley, director of the Wythe-Grayson Regional Library, began with Adriana Trigiani's books set in Big Stone Gap. He offered incentives and prizes similar to those used in the summer reading program to encourage participation, including a Big Stone Gap getaway for two, tickets to the author dinner, and drawings for books.

Betty Jo Fulcher, at Blue Ridge Regional Library, has been leading a discussion group for four years. It meets monthly, with summers off, and members select titles to read. The group goes out to lunch after the discussion.

Chrissie Anderson has been leading a group for one year at Northeast State Technical College. Her group is open to faculty, staff, and students, and attracts mainly men. Classics didn't draw many attendees, but more popular titles have been successful, including *The Songcatcher*, *Wish You Well*, and *Come Home to Reading*.

Great Books offers a program to train discussion leaders, and would present this regionally if enough people are interested. Ruth Arnold and Charlotte Parsons have more information.

Following a lunch break, Lorraine called the business meeting to order at 1:15 pm.

Upon a motion by Kelly McBride, seconded by Brenda Collins, the minutes of the spring meeting were approved as distributed.

The Treasurer's report was accepted as prepared.

Scholarship Committee

Steve Vest reported that the Scholarship Committee had awarded \$500 scholarships to Christopher Peters and Shannon Steffey. The next application deadline is 1 November; he currently has no applicants. Discussion raised the options of increasing the scholarship amounts or offering more scholarships at \$500. Suggestions included evaluating the number and amount of awards annually, considering the budget and financial obligations, and beginning an endowment to perpetuate this function. Upon a motion by Ann Fisher, seconded by Marsha Hertel, membership approved allowing up to four scholarships, depending of SWING's financial status. Lorraine said SWING would address this in the spring and consider creating a development fund.

Children's Librarians

The children's librarians group has \$1100 for budget purposes, to include Ellison dies. The group has been encouraged to strengthen communication to insure that all children's staff are aware of meeting dates in time to plan for attendance.

Library of Virginia

Carol Adams represented the Library of Virginia. She noted that there is no information about budget; LVA is assuming that state aid will be the same as last year. Action on certification proposals is still pending. The Find It Virginia project is expanding to serve

K-12 students. Ask It Virginia, a statewide reference referral service, will offer 24-7 assistance via email, and live assistance Sunday through Thursday 3-9 pm. LSTA has been reauthorized, but the amount is unknown. A number of changes to the e-rate program, especially CIPA-related elements, are being made. Nelson Worley will present a workshop at Washington County Public Library 20 October to address these changes.

Continuing Education

“When Bad Things Happen in Good Libraries” is the fall workshop to be presented by staff of the Fairfax County Public Library. The program will focus on dealing with Internet-related problem behavior. Lorraine asked for suggestions for the spring meeting. She noted that the book repair workshop held at Emory & Henry in July was very successful. Members feel the need for a comparable workshop on audiovisual repair.

Website

The website prototype is up, and the url will be emailed to the listserv when links are completed. Send any postings to Lorraine Abraham or Matt Peltier.

Contracts

Beth Horn presented a spreadsheet summary of responses to the RFP for materials and will post this data to the website. The current RFP expires 31 December, and the new contract will take effect 1 January 2004. Upon a motion by Janis Augustine, seconded by Steve Vest, the group approved removing UPM from the list of vendors. Upon a motion by Janis Augustine, seconded by Kelly McBride, the group accepted proposals from the 23 vendors on Beth’s list, and rejected 14, as recommended.

Beth will begin work on the serials contracts in January; they will be ready by July.

The group discussed the need for contracts for electronic databases. Lorraine will revisit this issue in mid-January and consider appointments to a committee to work with Beth.

Legislation

Janis Augustine reported that VLA will hold the annual Legislative Day and Reception Thursday, 22 January 2004. The LVA Foundation sponsors the reception and needs financial support for it; total cost is about \$6000. She suggested that SWING donate \$500 toward this project. Much discussion ensued, including questions about whether vendors are supporting the reception, whether SWING can afford to contribute, the need to increase SWING’s continuing education budget, the impact of the reception, whether supporters will be recognized, the need to also support the legislative liaison. Upon a motion by Brenda Collins, seconded by Charlotte Parsons, the group decided to donate \$250 and expect recognition on the program for the reception.

Paid Position

Lorraine raised the issue of providing financial support for the Treasurer’s position, which is labor-intensive, requiring tracking down members and much time in negotiating with some. Lorraine proposed a \$500 stipend or annual honorarium. This lead into

questions about the role and direction of SWING. Charlotte noted that responsibility for continuing education program registration is also labor-intensive. A suggestion was made to create a second small contractual position to handle these responsibilities. Lorraine appointed Charlotte Parsons, Marsha Hertel, and herself to a committee to make a recommendation to the executive board in January. This would be presented to the membership in the spring.

Future of SWING

Lorraine raised two issues for discussion: the fee structure and long range planning for SWING's direction. The group has been growing, pushing physical boundaries with members from around the state and some seeking membership from out-of-state, and exploring new service directions, as, for example, with possible new contracts for electronic databases.

Out-of-area members have objected to the current fee structure, so the possibility of restructuring fees and/or of eliminating the service area designation was raised. Confusion over calculating the fee for out-of-area members has created difficulties. School system members could well afford an increase in dues to \$150, or some flat fee. A flat fee would make it possible to expand membership to more small and medium-sized libraries. Carol Adams offered a cautionary note about expecting too much benefit from database contracts (and promising more than we can deliver to potential members): contracts only work when you use one pot of money, pricing is not published as list, and SWING has no power to negotiate better pricing. A suggestion to retain the original mission and move to a flat rate fee was offered. After much discussion, upon a motion by Dot Ogburn, seconded by Marsha Hertel, the group voted unanimously to adopt a flat rate of \$150 membership fee for all members effective 1 July 2004. Lorraine asked members to think about SWING's direction for later discussion, and to consider membership changes resulting from changes in the fee structure.

There being no further business before the membership, the meeting adjourned at 3:00.

Laurie S. Roberts, Secretary