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## Tulsa Library program matches readers with books

■ Questionnaire helps librarians make suggestions.

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**Tulsa Library program matches readers with books**

Laura Raphael (left) and Rebecca Howard, pictured at Hardesty Regional Library, help match readers with books they will enjoy. Raphael helped launch the Tulsa library's Your Next Great Read program, and Howard is the program coordinator. STEPHEN PINGRY / Tulsa World

Posted: Monday, December 2, 2013 12:00 am | Updated: 6:46 am, Mon Dec 2, 2013.

By NOUR HABIB World Staff Writer | 0 comments



Shirley Pomeranz wasn't expecting much when she filled out an online questionnaire on the Tulsa library's website that promised to find her "next great read."

"I thought it would be automated," Pomeranz said.

But the library's Your Next Great Read program is no algorithm-based service. The guide featuring suggested authors and titles is put together by an actual librarian who has carefully read the questionnaire-taker's answers.

"We spend time on it. We really try to think carefully about each person," said Laura Raphael, one of two librarians who launched the Tulsa City-County Library's readers advisory service about two years ago.

The result is a list that offers individualized suggestions of 3-5 authors and 8-10 titles, complete with the reasoning behind why the librarian thinks you will enjoy the book.

Tulsa's library is not the first to create a written reader's advisory system, but Your Next Great Read has gained some national attention recently for its depth.

An article submitted by Raphael and program coordinator Rebecca Howard was published in Library Journal in October. And the two are currently in the middle of leading a six-week e-course offered to other librarians across the country through the American Library Association.

"We realized that other libraries may be looking for guidance on creating something like this," Raphael said.

Tulsa librarians have completed more than 1,000 personalized lists since the service began, with an average of 25-30 per month. Eight people, including Raphael and Howard, work on the lists.

Howard said the time it takes to make each list differs. Some can take 1-2 hours, if a librarian has similar tastes as a reader and can therefore identify books more easily. Others may take more time because research is needed.

Raphael said the survey answers provide pieces in a puzzle that help librarians form the lists. For example, the Tulsa questionnaire asks readers about their favorite TV shows.

"TV shows help you understand what humor is acceptable to them," Howard said.

Reader's advisory has always been a service that libraries offer, though most of the time it was through in-person, on-the-spot contact.

The written forms have enabled librarians to spend more time contemplating readers' explanations of what books they like and why, so as to make better suggestions.

Pomeranz, who went through all the suggestions on her first list and is now making her way through the second, said she was amazed at how much she enjoyed all the suggested titles.

"It's given me such pleasure," she said.

Reader's advisory is one of the most rewarding aspects of a librarian's job, Howard said.

"This is what we signed up for," she said.

Raphael said she views librarians as the "conduit between readers and books."

"I think we've turned people onto things that they wouldn't have discovered," she said.

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**Your Next Great Read**

**What:** A reader's advisory service that provides a personalized suggestion list for library patrons who are ages 16 and older. Lists are generated within 7-10 days of when a questionnaire is submitted.

**Link:** [tulsalibrary.org/your-next-great-read](http://tulsalibrary.org/your-next-great-read)

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## Registry tracks exonerations

♦ A group says data about exonerated inmates are weakly reported, but a new online database could help.

**By David E. Mack**

A group of exonerated inmates and their advocates says a new online database will help track exonerations and prevent wrongful convictions. The database, called the National Registry of Exonerations, is a joint effort of Michigan State University and the University of California, Berkeley. The database will track exonerations across the United States, including the number of inmates exonerated, the reasons for their exoneration, and the time it took for them to be cleared. The group says the database will help identify systemic problems in the justice system and improve the process of exoneration.

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## Marriage program has spent millions

♦ Federal says it will pay for the cost of the program, but says it will not cover the cost of the program.

**By David E. Mack**

The federal government says it will pay for the cost of the program, but says it will not cover the cost of the program. The program, called the Marriage Program, is a joint effort of the federal government and the states. The program is designed to help couples get married and improve their financial situation. The federal government says it will pay for the cost of the program, but says it will not cover the cost of the program.

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## OKPOP MUSEUM: BRINGING HERITAGE HOME

**By David E. Mack**

The Oklahoma State University (OSU) is creating a new museum to bring heritage home. The museum, called the Oklahoma State University Heritage Museum, is a joint effort of OSU and the Oklahoma Historical Society. The museum is designed to showcase the state's rich cultural heritage and provide a space for research and education. The museum is currently under construction and is expected to open in the fall.

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## A-F system study called 'misleading' in report

♦ Education Department says the A-F system study was misleading and that the system is not working.

**By David E. Mack**

The Education Department says the A-F system study was misleading and that the system is not working. The study, called the A-F System Study, was conducted by the Education Department and the Oklahoma State Board of Education. The study found that the A-F system is not working and that the system is misleading. The Education Department says it will be taking steps to improve the system and ensure that it is accurate and fair.

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## Take me back to Tulsa

OKPOP will house collections from state artists

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