

CheckItOut!

Winter 2010

Finding Ramona

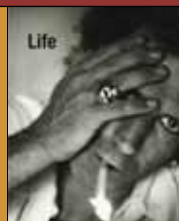
Newsletter of the Solano County Library, serving the cities of Fairfield, Rio Vista, Suisun, Vacaville, and Vallejo



**93 Years
Young and
Learning
to Read**

Impressionists
at your
Library

**Keith
Richards
as a
Librarian?**



**The Library:
A Bang for
Your Buck**

January is the time that the staff of Solano County Library says “thank you” to local residents who show their support by using their libraries and through their tax dollars. Solano County Library is funded primarily through property taxes and an 1/8th of a penny sales tax that is devoted exclusively to libraries. This portion of the sales tax, which cannot be spent on anything but libraries in Solano County, accounts for 25% of Solano County Library’s revenue and will end in 2014 if it is not renewed.

Getting Technical



More libraries—5,400—offer technology training classes than there are computer training businesses in the U.S. Every day, 14,700 people attend free library computer classes—a retail value of \$2.2 million. That’s \$629 million worth of computer classes annually (based on 286 business days per year).

Computer classes at Solano County Library include everything from basic keyboarding and mouse skills to advanced Google and genealogy research. Volunteer personal trainers provide one-to-one help too.

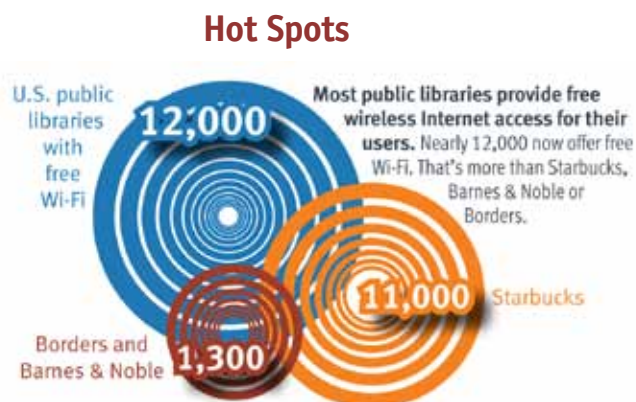
The Promise

Like many libraries in the state, by 1998 Solano had been on a downward financial spiral for a number of years. Shelves were bare, buildings were deteriorating and the library branches were closed many mornings and every Friday. Only two were open on Sundays. “We were facing the difficult necessity of closing branches and

cutting hours even further,” explains Bonnie Katz, Director of Library Services. The limits to service and resources were directly related to the decline in property tax dollars as the State shifted taxes away from local government. When given a chance to change this scenario, Solano County voters stepped forward and showed how much they supported their libraries by voting and passing the 1/8th of a penny sales tax devoted to libraries. The ballot measure, known as Measure B, passed by over a 68% majority. Library leaders promised more books and materials, more hours, and more programs for children.

A Bang for

All Solano County Libraries have free Wi-Fi.



Every year in January Solano County Library celebrates the keeping of those promises with the theme, “Promises Made, Promises Kept.”

Tough Times

The current and unprecedented downturn in the economy has made it increasingly challenging to keep those promises but the commitment continues to be met. Currently, the Library has a structural deficit of approximately five million dollars. The deficit is the result of significant losses in two sources of revenue: sales tax and property tax. At its peak in FY 2007/2008 property tax revenue for the Library

was \$7,532,557. In FY 2009-2010 it was \$6,162,542. Even as the economy inches toward recovery, property tax revenue will remain low due to a 54% loss in home prices. Property tax revenue isn’t expected to increase till fiscal year 2012-2013, and only then by 2%. “The Library’s two major areas where spending can be reduced are staff and library materials – such as books, magazines, and DVDs,” explains Katz.



Your Buck

Working Smart

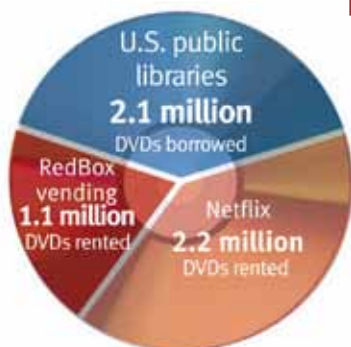
By prudently saving during the good years, and using technology to streamline workflow, Solano County Library has been able to keep the promises made in 1998. Technology has freed staff from repetitive behind-the-

scenes tasks to focus on person-to-person customer service. A centralized telephone assistance center, online library card registration, automated fee payment and a 24/7 "virtual branch" on the Library's website are examples of how the investment in technology has allowed the Library to improve



Solano County Library offers two career databases, resume webinars and online career counselors who give one-to-one help with resumes, cover letters, and interview prep.

Movie Night



An average of **3500 DVDs** are borrowed every day from Solano County Library branches.

Every day, Americans borrow **2.1 million DVDs** from libraries, and we spend over \$22 million for DVD rentals at outlets like Netflix and RedBox vending machines.

An average of **9.5 thousand** items are checked out from Solano County Library each day.

service, even as staffing levels decrease. Hours at Solano County Library branches have more than doubled what they were before the 1/8th of a cent sales tax, from 207 hours per week in 1998 to 454 hours per week today. Purchases of books, magazines, best sellers, recorded books, DVDs and music have increased from \$432,000 in 1998 to \$2,000,000 this past year.

"No one could have predicted the extent of the financial crisis that we all face. We are working hard to keep the doors to the libraries open. We know that now more

Career Assistance When We Need it Most



Americans turn to libraries when searching for new jobs. Both public libraries and One-stop Career Centers provide career counseling resources, resumé assistance and help in filling out online applications.

than ever, people need their libraries, last year over two million people walked through our doors. As always, we appreciate the support from the community, their time, their financial support and their use of our services." said Katz.

On the Move

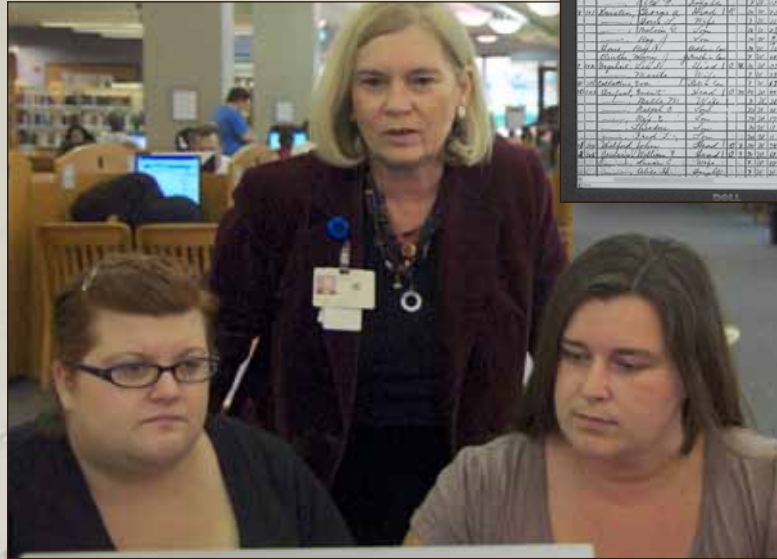
U.S. public libraries circulate as many materials every day as FedEx ships packages worldwide. We enjoy \$82 million of value every day from the materials we check out at libraries.

Items worldwide: **8 million**
Library circulation: **7.9 million**



Finding Ramona

Suisun Girl
Discovered
Through Her
1924 Diary



When she saw the composition book at the bottom of a box in her mother's antique store, Amanda Olsen could not have known that she was about to embark on a quest, in fact, almost an obsession, to learn about the woman whose life was recorded there.

The composition book turned out to be a diary for the year 1924, the diary Ramona Burdick kept in her sophomore year at Armijo High School. Later Amanda and her best friend and sleuthing partner, Ashley Williams learned that Ramona kept a diary every year of her life, but this one had somehow slipped away from the others.

The search for Ramona started – doesn't everything? – with a Google search, but it didn't turn up much information. After making calls to the high school's alumni association and the local historical society, the women contacted the Fairfield Civic Center Library to see if there was an Armijo yearbook in its collection. It was there they met librarian Linda Williams who connected them with an Armijo yearbook, along with some research suggestions for filling out the story of Ramona.

Through the diary they learned that Ramona had not met her birth mother until that year. It was also the year she met the man she would later marry, Frank Orput. She must have known he was special because she made a point of recording the meeting. Amanda and Ashley filled in the blanks using census records available through the Library's genealogy database, Heritage Quest.

According to Ashley, "One thing led to another. First we found her husband's name, then her father's name, then her stepmom, then her real mom." Linda Williams also introduced them to the Library's collection of old newspapers that can be read and printed from microfilm. Solano newspapers at that time recorded not only obituaries, marriage announcements and divorce proceedings, but also social news that detailed who went to whose house for dinner.

Between this most personal of documents, the diary, and public sources such as census records, newspaper accounts and even a quirky website called findagrave.com, Ashley and Amanda felt like they knew Ramona. Eventually they visited the house where she lived in Suisun, met her neighbors, found her grave and even visited the police substation named for Ramona's uncle who was killed in action. The diary details how Ramona regularly visited her birth mother in San Francisco. "Her father absolutely hated it when Ramona would visit her mother because there were always sailors. Ramona and her mother would go out all hours of the night every day that she was there." Good times figure prominently in the diary but she was modest when describing her romantic adventures, using a blank as a stand-in for the word "kiss." Ramona loved to sleep late and found it difficult to get to school on time. "Almost every day she says 'I was almost late for school,'" said Ashley. "Whenever she wrote about school it was this much (holding fingers an inch apart). You knew it was the weekend because it was always 'We danced and I met a sailor named such and such.'"

Amanda and Ashley became immersed in the diary and the glimpses it gave of this sixteen-year-old Suisun girl, living in the jazz age. But one aspect of her life remained elusive. What did Ramona look like?

The Armijo yearbook at the library was from Ramona's sophomore year, and only the seniors had individual pictures with attending names. Ramona was sure to be in the sophomore class group photograph but Amanda and Ashley had no way of knowing which one she was. "It was driving us crazy looking at her yearbook because we would look at these group pictures and wonder, 'Who are you? Which one are you?'" said Amanda. "She was staring us in the face and

All the digging and research was rewarding but "the diary was really hard to let go of because we became super attached to it," said Ashley. "I would have loved to get to know her. What if we found this diary before she died?"

Where is the diary now? With Ramona's great-granddaughter, Jennifer. "Everyone who knew us at the time was trying to



we didn't know who she was," added Ashley.

After a story was published in Fairfield's Daily Republic a woman came forward who had an Armijo yearbook from 1926, Ramona's senior year. Finally Amanda and Ashley could see what Ramona looked like. "She was very much of the times, closely cropped curly hair. She was only about five feet tall," said Amanda.

find out information for us. My sister texted me and said, I think I found Ramona's great granddaughter - on Facebook! She's our age, 26 and she has two kids. She came out to see us from San Lorenzo. We shared everything we had learned and gave her the diary," said Amanda.

"The biggest reward was to find the person who would appreciate it the most."

93 Years Young and Learning to Read



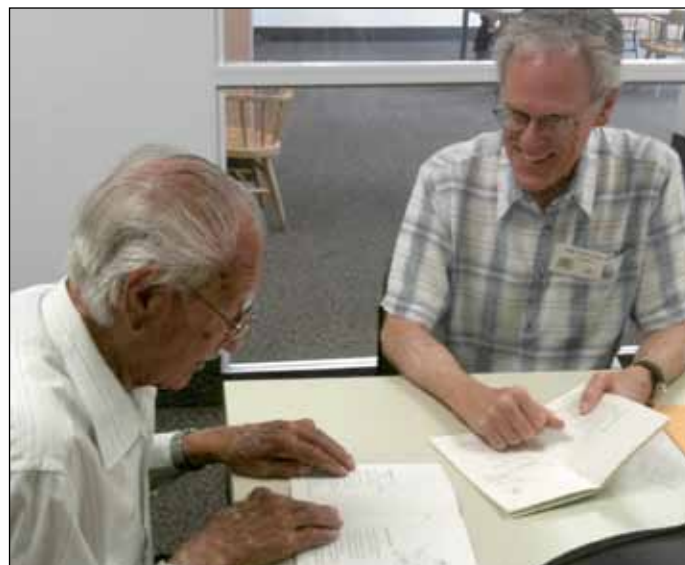
At 93, Vallejo resident, Cayetano Maes, is making reading a priority. After a 37 year career working for the C&H factory in Crocket, California, Cayetano Maes is spending his retirement doing what he wants to do, learn to read. Cayetano decided that he has waited long enough and now it is time.

Born and raised on a farm in New Mexico, Cayetano had his share of responsibilities. When there was work to do on the farm, his father thought nothing about getting Cayetano out of school to help. As a result Cayetano was only in school one day a week during the first grade and never returned to complete the second.

When asked about the importance of reading for work, Cayetano replied, "Didn't need it." He didn't need to read to drive a forklift, work the boilers, or use the palletizer machine. But he did admit that if it weren't for his wife, he wouldn't have been able to apply for those positions. He also said that he was often afraid of learning anything new because it would mean that he might have to read, and he didn't want anyone to know he couldn't.

Cayetano is like the other 32 million American adults who can't read or read at a very low level. But, Cayetano is doing something about it. At age 90, Cayetano enrolled in the library's literacy program. He is reading for the first time in his life. He smiles and says how impressed his kids are with his progress.

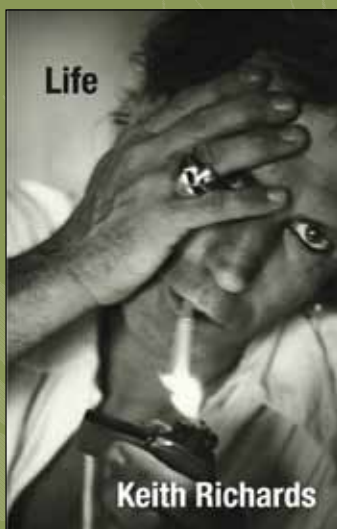
Cayetano says, "If you want to learn to read, come to the library." The library's



literacy program matches adult students, like Cayetano with patient and caring volunteer tutors who work with students one-on-one or in small groups.

Al Stains, Cayetano's current tutor says, "After seeing Cayetano's face brighten after reading his first story, after hearing him say, 'That's nice!,' I realized the satisfaction that keeps so many tutors at this for so long."

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Keith Richards as a Librarian?

Librarian stereotypes have come a long way. In his autobiography, *Life*, the Rolling Stone admits to his secret bookworm tendencies and says he considered getting professional training in order to manage his personal library of thousands of volumes. He lends to friends and even started to arrange his books according to the Dewey Decimal system.

Richards escaped into reading as a child before he found his indelible niche in music. "When you are growing up there are two institutional places that affect you most powerfully: the church, which belongs to God, and the public library, which belongs to you. The public library is a great equalizer."

By David Lewis,
Literacy Program Assistant

Impressionists at your *Library*

When it comes to cultural experiences, some things come to the neighborhood only once in a lifetime. Take, for example, the Impressionist show at the De Young Museum in Golden Gate Park. Over a hundred artworks have traveled from the Musée d'Orsay in Paris and are on display now through January 18, 2011. If you like impressionist art and don't see a trip to Paris on the horizon, it is worthwhile to see what has come to town.

To expand the value of the show, there is a wealth of information, education and entertainment on the subject of art and artists at your local library. If you are fascinated by the difficult life of Van Gogh, or want to see more of his work, you can find books and movies galore to expand your experience. Van Gogh is so much a part of the fabric of our culture that books about him range from easy books for children through mysteries and novels in which he is not a character as much as a reference point.

There are books that describe the relationships among the painters whose work is recognizable to most everyone alive who cares anything for art. Several recount the year or so Van Gogh spent in Arles in the iconic yellow house, part of the time in the company of Gauguin.

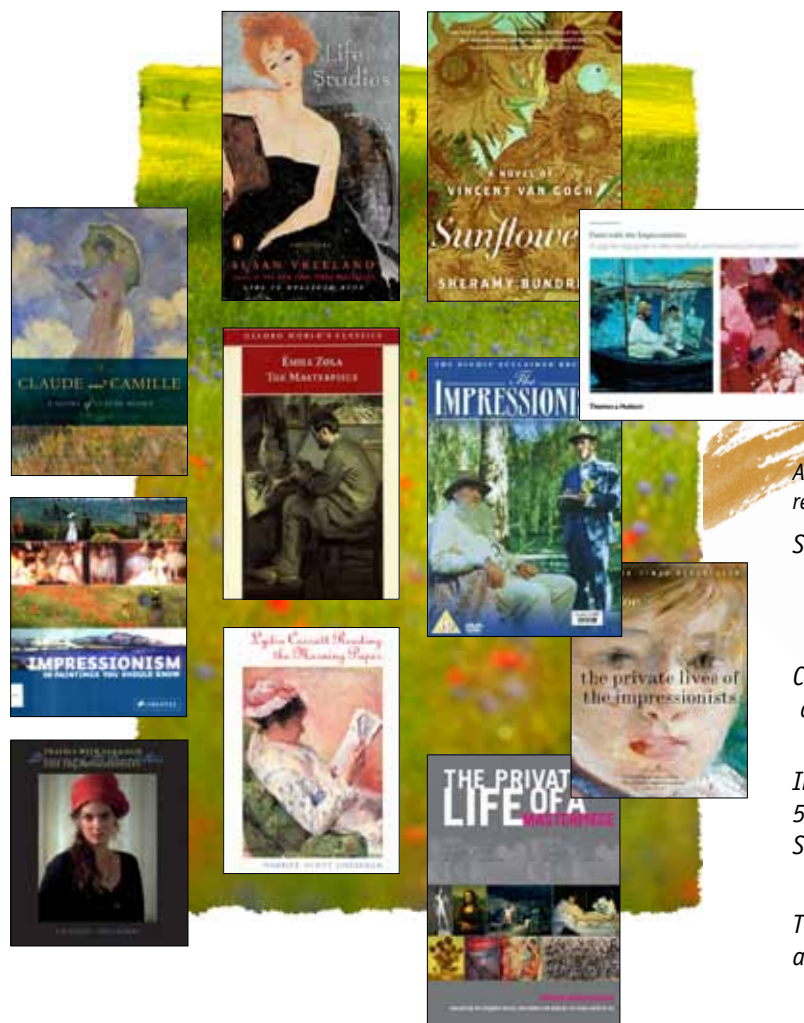
Monet and Cezanne each have dozens of works about their lives, their work, and their influence. There are even fictional accounts of adventures they might have had or how their works might have featured in thefts, scams and adventures of their own.

The Luncheon of the Boating Party is a recent novel recounting the process of

Renoir completing the painting of the title. It is set at a turning point in the European art world when the Impressionists as a group were seeking attention and credibility within the art establishment, so the success of this master work made a tremendous difference to the Impressionist movement. We all know the works of these now renowned artists but

in the late 19th century, it was not at all taken for granted that the Impressionists would ever be able to sell a painting.

Take the never to be repeated opportunity to see some of the artworks that are icons of our culture. Broaden the experience by browsing your library for books and movies that bring the lives of the Impressionists into fascinating focus.



A few suggestions for reading and viewing:

Sunflowers
a novel of Vincent
Van Gogh in Arles
by Sheramy Bundrick

*Claude and Camille:
a novel of Monet*
by Stephanie Cowell

*Impressionism:
50 Paintings You
Should Know*
by Janet Engelman

*The Private Life of
a Masterpiece*

a DVD which covers the techniques of painting over many centuries

*By Janet Snowden, Librarian,
John F. Kennedy Library, Vallejo*

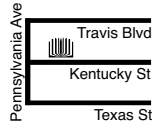
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FAIRFIELD CIVIC CENTER LIBRARY

1150 KENTUCKY ST
FAIRFIELD, CA 94533

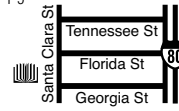
MON-THU: 10-9
FRI-SAT: 10-5
SUN: 1-5



VALLEJO- JOHN F. KENNEDY LIBRARY

505 SANTA CLARA ST • VALLEJO, CA 94590

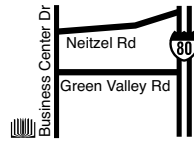
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SUN: 1-5



FAIRFIELD CORDELIA LIBRARY

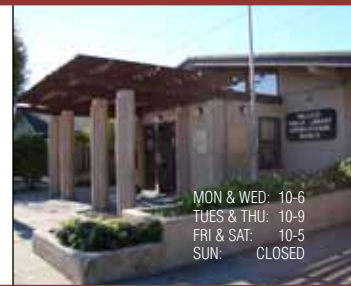
5050 BUSINESS CENTER DR
FAIRFIELD, CA
94534

MON & WED: 10-6
TUES & THU: 10-9
FRI & SAT: 10-5
SUN: 1-5



VALLEJO-SPRINGS- TOWNE LIBRARY

1003 OAKWOOD AVE
VALLEJO, CA 94591



MON & WED: 10-6
TUES & THU: 10-9
FRI & SAT: 10-5
SUN: CLOSED

SUISUN CITY LIBRARY

601 PINTAIL DR.
SUITE 280
SUISUN CITY, CA 94585

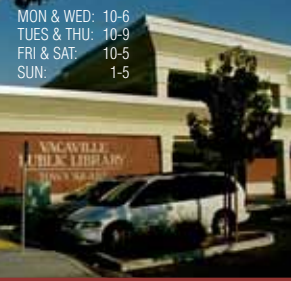
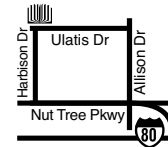


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FRI & SAT: 10-5
SUN: CLOSED



VACAVILLE PUBLIC LIBRARY- CULTURAL CENTER

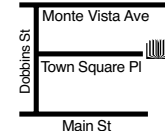
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SUN: 1-5

VACAVILLE PUBLIC LIBRARY- TOWN SQUARE

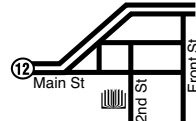
1 TOWN SQUARE PLACE
VACAVILLE, CA 95688



RIO VISTA LIBRARY

44 S. 2ND STREET
RIO VISTA, CA 94571

MON & WED: 10-6
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FRI & SAT: 10-5
SUN: CLOSED



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