

Under the Radar is where you'll find books, movies, and other media of note that might not be getting tons of publicity, but your patrons are sure to be interested in.

Free E-Books for Happy Patrons



Back in 2001, I was in charge of developing a library collection of the very first e-reader devices, for the Chicago Public Library. We used the RocketBook, and purchased titles in various genres, assigning them to each device for circulation as a themed reader. They were initially popular

as a novelty, but most patrons were not interested once their curiosity was satisfied. After all, the devices were kind of bulky, the technology was very different from anything people had used before (remember, this was well before smartphones), and the title selection was lacking.

Fast forward ten years and what a difference! You're likely aware of the vast numbers of e-reader devices that were sold over the holiday season. Are you finding those folks coming to your library to see what you can offer them? What can you do if your library does not yet offer a subscription service such as OverDrive or NetLibrary?

Send your patrons to these sites offering free e-books in many formats. Why not create a flyer or poster advertising some of these free options?


- **InkMesh** is a search engine that searches more than thirty online sources for free e-books. You can search by title or author (<http://inkmesh.com>).
- **Project Gutenberg**, the original site for free text online, offers more than 33,000 free books that play nicely with any e-reader platform. You'll find mostly classics and public domain works here. No registration is required, and the site is easy to use. A nice feature is their "bookshelves"—collections grouped by topic (www.gutenberg.org).
- **Baen Books**, publisher of science fiction and fantasy, offers a number of their titles as free downloads. Established authors such as Eric Flint, Lois McMaster Bujold, Mercedes Lackey, and David Weber can be found here. There are currently 120 titles available, with new titles added every month. You can save e-books to your computer or send them directly to a Kindle (www.baen.com/library).
- **The Online Books Page** from the University of Pennsylvania Libraries offers an index of hundreds of thousands of online books freely readable on the Internet (<http://digital.library.upenn.edu/books>).
- Now that Kindle and Nook are open to file sharing, **eBookFling** offers users the chance to swap e-books for

free with other readers nationwide while still retaining ownership. For every five books listed to loan out, users get one credit towards borrowing (<http://ebookfling.com>).

- For library staff, **NetGalley** is a treat. They offer free e-book galleys to any professional reader. NetGalley features more than thirty categories from sixty-plus publishers. They are currently not able to support Kindle, but promise they are working on it (www.netgalley.com).

Your e-book users might also be interested in some blogs that are geared towards the e-book experience.

- **The Digital Reader** is a blog devoted to news, reviews, and opinions on everything e-book (www.the-digital-reader.com).
- **Ebookanoid** reviews e-readers, e-books, and the websites devoted to them (www.ebookanoid.com).

Wondering if you'll really need to know any of this? Considering that Amazon sold more than seven million Kindles in 2010, and analysts predict another twelve million to sell by 2012¹, more and more libraries are going to field questions about these devices from their patrons. These sources should help you get a handle on the rapidly changing e-book market. 

REFERENCE

1. Dan Frommer, "Amazon Could Sell 12 Million Kindles This Year," *Business Insider*, accessed Jan. 21, 2011, www.businessinsider.com/amazon-could-sell-12-million-kindles-this-year-2011-1.



REBECCA VNUK is a book blogger and the author of two nonfiction readers' advisory titles for Libraries Unlimited: *Read On . . . Women's Fiction: Reading Lists for Every Taste* and *Women's Fiction Authors: A Research Guide*. She was the Allie Beth Martin award winner for 2010 as well as a *Library Journal* Mover and Shaker.

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Rebecca is currently reading *Rot & Ruin* by Jonathan Maberry.

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Blogs to Books



Blogs have become an integral part of life for me. I blog regularly for both Booklist (<http://bookgroupbuzz.booklistonline.com>) and Library Journal (<http://blogs.libraryjournal.com/shelfrenewal>). My colleague Karen Kleckner Keefe and I present a program for librarians called "Readers,

Writers, Books, and Blogs," where we showcase fifty-plus blogs related to books and libraries. I obsessively check my RSS feed multiple times a day, and I love discovering new blogs. So, as a book lover, it stands to reason that it makes me happy to report that there are a multitude of books being published that originally started as blogs.

While you may be tempted to write these off as ephemeral, don't forget that the popular book and movie *Julie and Julia*¹ started off as a blog. These books tend not to make the review journals, but I'll bet your patrons would love to check them out if you had them. They're also not particularly expensive, and might make an interesting snapshot of the times in a few years. See if any of the following would be a good fit for your collections.

I Can Haz Cheezburger? A LOLCat Collecshun,² the book borne out of the LOLcats craze, brought the trend into the forefront, selling more than 100,000 copies and spawning a host of sequels and knockoffs. After all, who doesn't like pictures of cute animals with hysterical captions written phonetically?

*Regretsy: Where DIY meets WTF*³ is another of my favorites. April Winchell combs the pages of Etsy.com, the handicrafts marketplace, and pokes fun at the odder items she finds there. Not for the easily offended, Winchell's commentary will have you rolling in the aisles.


*Cake Wrecks: When Professional Cakes Go Hilariously Wrong*⁴ showcases the best picks from a photo blog of misspelled, grammatically and politically incorrect bakery cakes. The snarky commentary here is just as funny as the photos.

*Passive Aggressive Notes*⁵ bills itself as "part voyeuristic entertainment, part group therapy." Blog followers submit actual notes they've seen that showcase the best (worst?) human behavior. We've all dealt with it; now you can enjoy the misery of others.

And it's not all humor. *The Pioneer Woman* is the hugely successful blog of Ree Drummond, and two books have come out of it—a cookbook, *The Pioneer Woman Cooks: Recipes from an Accidental Country Girl*⁶ and her recently published memoir *The Pioneer Woman: Black Heels to Tractor Wheels—A Love Story*.⁷

*SoulPancake: Chew on Life's Big Questions*⁸ sprang from a website started by actor Rainn Wilson and his friends, determined to

have a collaborative, positive place on the Internet. Filled with questions, challenges, and artwork, the aim of the book and the site is to make you think and grow.

*Point, Click, and Save: Mashup Mom's Guide to Saving and Making Money Online*⁹ is a practical guide to couponing and saving money. Based on librarian Rachel Singer Gordon's blog, this is the one that will have a lasting place in your collection. 

REFERENCES

1. Julie Powell, *Julie and Julia: My Year of Cooking Dangerously* (New York: Little, Brown, 2005).
2. Eric Nakagawa, *I Can Haz Cheezburger? A LOLCat Collecshun* (New York: Gotham, 2008).
3. April Winchell. *Regretsy: Where DIY meets WTF* (New York: Villard, 2010).
4. Jen Yates. *Cake Wrecks: When Professional Cakes Go Hilariously Wrong* (Kansas City, Mo.: McMeel, 2009).
5. Kerry Miller, *Passive Aggressive Notes: Painfully Polite and Hilariously Hostile Writings* (New York: Harper, 2008).
6. Ree Drummond, *The Pioneer Woman Cooks: Recipes from an Accidental Country Girl* (New York: Morrow, 2009).
7. Ibid, *The Pioneer Woman: Black Heels to Tractor Wheels—A Love Story* (New York: Morrow, 2011).
8. Rainn Wilson, et al. *SoulPancake: Chew on Life's Big Questions* (New York: Hyperion, 2010).
9. Rachel Singer Gordon, *Point, Click, and Save: Mashup Mom's Guide to Saving and Making Money Online* (Medford, N.J.: CyberAge, 2010).



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Rebecca is currently reading *The Poison Tree* by Erin Kelly.

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Graphic Novels for the Uninitiated



One of the things I love best about readers' advisory is that moment when you can give someone a book that wasn't the most popular or famous, but one that perhaps you personally enjoyed, and make sure it finds a readership. That's why one of the features of my *Shelf Renewal* blog is

called "Dusty Book." In December 2010 I featured graphic novels, and I'd like to share some of those here.

I worry sometimes that in collection development, graphic novels are chosen based on who we perceive the readership to be. There are some really good books that might not catch the attention of your general readership (who may think they don't like graphic novels). So why not make sure to put some in your displays every once in a while—not just a display of graphic novels in general.

Craig Thompson's *Blankets*¹ is a book I've recommended countless times. In simple yet gorgeous artwork, Thompson presents a memoir of his difficult childhood, growing up in a poor and fanatically religious family. He deftly illustrates (literally) the heartbreak of falling in love, confronting a confusing faith, and coming of age in a rural area. I am absolutely in love with this lyrical story and exceptionally drawn book.

David Small's *Stitches: A Memoir*² tells the story of Small's incredibly dysfunctional childhood, marked by cold parents and an operation gone wrong. When Small was fourteen, he endured surgery that destroyed his vocal cords and left an awful scar. It's a completely riveting story with drawings that capture every detail.


Marisa Acocella Marchetto was living a great life in NYC, when she discovered she had breast cancer.

*Cancer Vixen*³ is the story of how her friends and fiancé helped her through the diagnosis and treatment. Don't let this one languish if you've got it cataloged in the 600s—get it to your chick lit lovers and memoir enthusiasts.

*Asterios Polyp*⁴ by David Mazzucchelli is the odd tale of an odd man—Asterios' relationships are far more complicated than they need to be, and he's a pretty maudlin guy. Mazzucchelli's artwork is original and essential to the storytelling—characters have a real

"feel" to them, and his use of space and color creates themes that keep the reader enthralled.

*Watchmen*⁵ by Alan Moore and David Gibbons is the perfect mix of old-school comic art and modern storytelling. Much more than a superhero story, this tale of a post-modern world gone awry appeals to anyone who would enjoy a riveting and sophisticated storyline.

*Good Eggs*⁶ by Phoebe Potts is the story of Potts' struggle with infertility. Told in simple, appealing drawings, with a funny and warm sensibility, we follow Potts and her husband as they watch their friends starting families, smile and nod at platitudes about infertility, and visit the clinic again and again. A fine example of the powerfully quiet storytelling ability of graphic novels—and another that may get lost in the stacks. 



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1. Craig Thompson, *Blankets* (Marietta, Ga.: Top Shelf, 2003).
2. David Small, *Stitches: A Memoir* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2009).
3. Marisa Acocella Marchetto, *Cancer Vixen: A True Story* (New York: Knopf, 2006).
4. David Mazzucchelli, *Asterios Polyp* (New York: Pantheon, 2009).
5. Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons, *Watchmen* (New York: DC Comics, 2008 reprint).
6. Phoebe Potts, *Good Eggs: A Memoir* (New York: Harper, 2010).



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Rebecca is reading *Heads You Lose* by Lisa Lutz and David Hayward.