



the **ORLA** newsletter.

JANUARY 2026



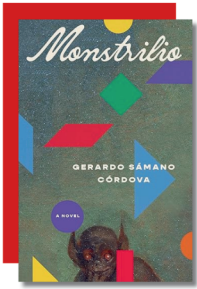
THE **BEST** BOOKS OF **2025**



WHAT WE'RE READING

 Available on Libby

some of the other characters. Please make no mistake, I enjoy a book with a diverse cast. It just feels so one-dimensional and uninteresting, especially when compared to the writing in the first section. I would like to cut out the first part & have it be a novella. Try it & see, maybe I'm just not picking up on the characters in the later chapters.” Amanda Barker, Franklin Public Library

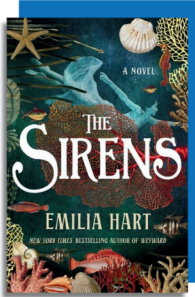


MONSTRILIO GERARDO SÁMANO CÓRDOVA

Grieving mother Magos cuts out a piece of her deceased eleven-year-old son Santiago's lung. Acting on fierce maternal instinct and the dubious logic of an old folktale, she nurtures the lung until it gains sentience, growing into the carnivorous little Monstrilio she keeps hidden within the walls of her family's decaying Mexico City estate. Eventually, Monstrilio begins to resemble the Santiago he once was, but his innate impulses--though curbed by his biological and chosen family's communal care--threaten to destroy this fragile second chance at life.

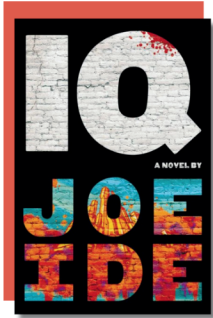
“I'm so conflicted about this book. The first part is an amazing look at a mother's desperation at the fact of losing her child to disease & the insanity that grief can cause. 5-star character study. The rest is a mediocre monster novel. It feels like an entirely different & heavy-handed book about the queer experience, both in metaphor with the 'monster' & spelled out with

THE SIRENS EMILIA HART



2019: Lucy awakens from a dream to find her hands around her ex-lover's throat. Horrified, she flees to her older sister's house on the Australian coast, hoping she can help explain the strangely vivid nightmare that preceded the attack - but Jess is nowhere to be found. As Lucy awaits her return, the rumors surrounding Jess's strange small town start to emerge. Numerous men have gone missing at sea, spread over decades. A tiny baby was found hidden in a cave. And sailors tell of hearing women's voices on the waves. Desperate for answers, Lucy finds and begins to read her sister's adolescent diary. 1999: Jess is a lonely 16-year-old in a rural town in the middle of the continent. Diagnosed with a rare allergy to water, she has always felt different, until her young, charming art teacher takes an interest in her drawings, seeing a power and maturity in them - and in her - that no one else has. 1800: Twin sisters Mary and Eliza have been torn from their loving father in Ireland and forced onto a convict ship bound for Australia. For their entire lives, they've feared the ocean, as their mother tragically drowned when they were just girls. Yet as the boat bears them further & further from all they know, they begin to notice changes in their bodies that they can't explain, & they feel the sea beginning to call to them... A breathtaking tale of female resilience & the bonds of sisterhood across time & space, *The Sirens* captures the power of dreams & the mystery and magic of the sea.

“I love mythology and will read any book with this theme. Hart wrote of sirens different from the Greek ones I know best, but that's not to say I liked them any less. I think these sirens were inspired by Irish folklore, where the Merrow is their closest match. I must say, I didn't see the twist in this book coming, and by the end, I was surprised I hadn't seen it coming. Hart created an enjoyable mystery, and I appreciated getting an inside look into folklore I hadn't previously been introduced to.” Daidre Green, Franklin & Oil City Libraries



IQ JOE IDE

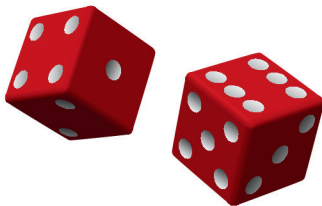
East Long Beach. The LAPD is barely keeping up with the neighborhood's high crime rate. Murders go unsolved, lost children unrecovered. But someone from the neighborhood has taken it upon himself to help solve the cases the police can't or won't touch. They call him IQ. He's a loner and a high school dropout, his unassuming nature disguising a relentless determination and a fierce intelligence. He charges his clients whatever they can afford, which might be a set of tires or a homemade casserole. To get by, he's forced to take on clients who can pay. This time, it's a rap mogul whose life is in danger. As Isaiah investigates, he encounters a vengeful ex-wife, a crew of notorious cutthroats, a monstrous attack dog, and a hit man who even other hit men say is a lunatic. The deeper Isaiah digs, the more far-reaching and dangerous the case becomes.

“I'm not sure why I put this book on my list; the blurb isn't really what I normally would choose. However...it's the awesome narrator that kept me listening, and I'm glad I did. The main character is so calm, he's accepted his life. He's crazy observant, and he's able to connect clues that the police overlook. This talent puts him in some interesting situations. He has a heart to go with his talent, so I look forward to listening to the rest of the series as they become available on Libby; there are 6 of them.” Debra Houser, Franklin Public Library

Franklin Library Hosting Bunco Party Fundraisers

Join us at the Franklin Public Library for a Bunco Party on **Thursday, January 8th & Thursday, February 12th!** Registration is required - sign up at the Franklin Public Library or by calling (814) 432-5062. Games start at 11:00AM. The registration fee is \$20/player and includes lunch. All proceeds benefit the Franklin Public Library.

Bunco is a dice game generally played with twelve or more players, divided into groups of four, trying to score points while taking turns rolling three dice in a series of six rounds. A bunco is achieved when a person rolls three-of-a-kind and all three numbers match the round number.



ORLA Receives New Laptops From Grant

We're excited to announce the addition of new HP EliteBook x360 laptops, made possible through a recent grant award. These versatile, high-performance devices feature flexible touchscreen displays that can be used as traditional laptops or folded into tablet mode, making them ideal for a wide range of tasks. Whether patrons are writing resumes, completing school assignments, attending virtual meetings, or exploring creative projects, the new laptops offer reliable performance and modern features to support their needs.

The HP EliteBook x360 laptops will be available for in-library use at both ORLA locations, expanding access to up-to-date technology for the community. By offering these devices on-site, ORLA continues its commitment to bridging the digital divide and ensuring that all patrons have the tools they need to learn, work, and connect. Library staff will be available to assist patrons with getting started and to answer any questions about using the new equipment.



NEW!
HP EliteBook x360
Laptops Now at
Your Library



PICTURE THIS

WRITTEN AND
CREATED BY

EMILY ANTKOWIAK

Each month, I take one historical image & photograph it superimposed over the same area as it appears today. This allows you to see what Venango County looked like in the past with a modern reference. My hope is to share neat photos from the library's archives to make them and their history more attainable.



Anyone else love snow as much as I do? No? Your loss! This image from the 1940s shows State Street in Oil City after a fair amount of accumulation. Can you imagine driving one of those cars through all that snow?

THEN



NOW

Do you have an image or location you'd like to see featured?
Email eamtkowiak@oilregionlibraries.org with your suggestions!



Libby.
The library reading app

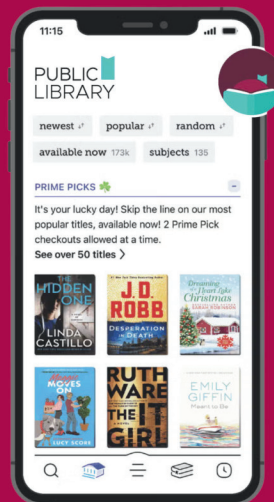
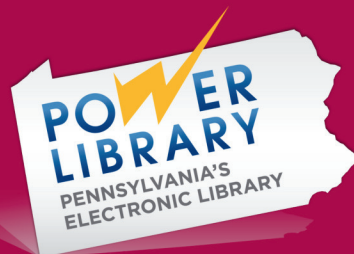


TIP OF THE MONTH

Adding the POWER Library Card

Looking for more eBooks & audiobooks in Libby? After you've connected to the Oil Creek Library District collection, as well as our Partner Libraries (Erie County Public Library, Seneca District Libraries & Crawford County Federated Library System), add the POWER Library collection to your Libby app! Simply add **POWER Library** as another library. Here's how:

- Navigate to the Menu page
- Tap **Add a Library**
- Search for **POWER Library**
- Scroll down and select **Oil City Library, Franklin Public Library** or **Cooperstown Public Library** as your local library
- Log in with your library card number & start reading!



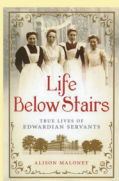
Next Month's **BOOK CLUB** Selections

FEBRUARY 2026

Oil City Library Book Club

Oil City Library

Meets First Thursday
of the Month at 10:30 AM



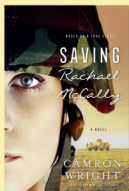
Life Below Stairs
Alison Maloney



The Bookmarkers Book Club

Franklin Public Library

Meets Second Tuesday
of the Month at 12:00 PM



Saving Rachel McCally
Camron Wright

Thursday Evening Book Club

Franklin Public Library

Meets Third Thursday
of the Month at 5:00 PM



Flight of Dreams
Ariel Lawhon

ORLA Annual Appeal Has Raised Over \$40,000

ORLA's 7th Annual Appeal, which was launched in mid-December of 2025, has now raised over \$40,000 and counting! We want to sincerely thank YOU for supporting your library and spreading the word about the value of libraries to others. Financial support helps us to provide more materials and resources for the communities we serve.

If you haven't already, we hope you will contribute to help us maintain our library services and support our efforts moving forward. We always welcome your comments and recommendations for your libraries. Thank you so much for promoting our services to others and helping us expand our reach in 2026.

**WANT TO HELP US
MAINTAIN LIBRARY SERVICES?**

Donate Online Today at

**[www.oilregionlibraries.org/
annual-appeal](http://www.oilregionlibraries.org/annual-appeal)**





2026 PUZZLE CHALLENGE

AT LIBRARY HALL, OIL CITY LIBRARY

SATURDAY JAN. 31ST



The Puzzle Challenge is back for a fifth year! Teams will race against the clock to see who can finish their 1000-piece jigsaw puzzle in the fastest time.

TOURNAMENT/TEAM INFO

The 2026 Puzzle Challenge is open to up to 20 teams with up to 4 participants per team. Teams will have 4 hours to complete their puzzle. The team that **finishes its puzzle first** will be the winner. If no team finishes their puzzle within the allotted time, the team with the most pieces assembled will win.

Please have Team Name and all Team Member names submitted no later than January 24, 2026.

DAY OF PUZZLE CHALLENGE

Doors open at 11:00AM. Teams should arrive by 11:45AM for opening remarks and a run down of the rules. The clock starts at 12:00PM sharp!

There will be scheduled breaks during which all work on puzzles **must stop**. These breaks are to allow teams to use the restroom, get concessions, etc.

The Puzzle Challenge will run until 4:30PM. If the winner is determined before the clock runs out, other teams are encouraged to keep working until the 4 hours are up to set their own team record!

Sorting bins and extra lighting are allowed.

Concessions will be available for sale, provided by the Belles Lettres Club.

including...



BASKET RAFFLE



PUZZLE SWAP



50/50 RAFFLE



REGISTER YOUR TEAM TODAY!

Pick up a registration form for your team at the Oil City Library. There is a \$20 registration fee per team (which includes the puzzle that your team will get to keep).



THE BEST BOOKS OF 2025 WINNERS

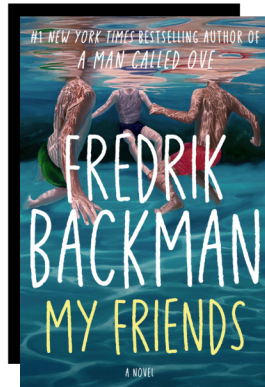
We asked you last month to vote for the best books of the year in 6 different categories. The following titles were voted as "Best of 2025" by ORLA patrons.

MY FRIENDS

FREDRIK BACKMAN



BEST FICTION



4 teenagers form a deep friendship that offers them refuge from troubled home lives & inspires the creation of a mysterious painting. 25 years later, Louisa, a young artist, inherits the artwork & sets out on a journey to uncover its origin. As she pieces together the story behind the painting & its creators - Joar, Ted, Ali, & the reclusive artist - Louisa discovers not only their lasting impact on one another but also how art & connection can change lives. Blending humor & emotional depth, Backman explores themes of friendship, healing, & self-discovery.

WHY READERS LOVED IT

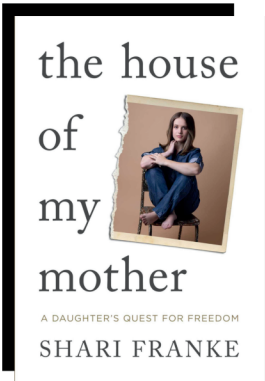
Readers loved the deeply human characters and the moving blend of humor & heart that explores friendship, grief, and the families we choose.

THE HOUSE OF MY MOTHER

SHARI FRANKE



BEST NON FICTION



Shari Franke's brave memoir exposes the hidden abuse she endured from her mother, Ruby Franke, behind the scenes of the popular 8 Passengers YouTube channel, detailing Ruby's strict control, influence from relationship coach Jodi Hildebrandt, & Shari's path to healing after her mother's 2023 arrest for child abuse.

WHY READERS LOVED IT

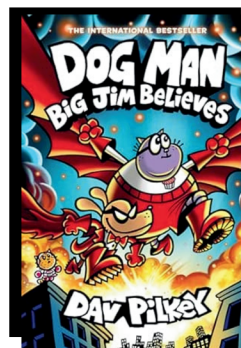
Readers connected with the raw honesty & courage of this memoir, which offers powerful insight into complex family dynamics & the journey toward healing.

DOG MAN: BIG JIM BELIEVES

DAV PILKEY



BEST KIDS GRAPHIC NOVEL



The celebration comes to a halt for our heroes when the mischievous Space Cuties From Space return. Our caped crusaders - Dog Man, Commander Cupcake, & Sprinkles - along with Mecha Molly discover that the city has changed, & nothing is how it should be. Can Big Jim's positivity & innocence help our heroes? Will Dog Man, Big Jim, Grampa, & Molly have the courage to trust each other & save the day?

WHY READERS LOVED IT

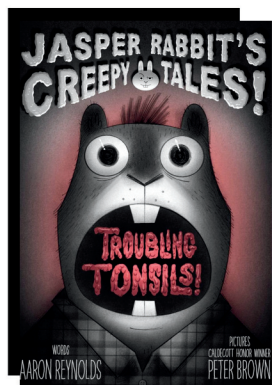
Readers enjoyed the laugh-out-loud humor, expressive illustrations, & uplifting message about self-belief and redemption that keep kids turning pages.

TROUBLING TONSILS!

AARON REYNOLDS



BEST KIDS FICTION



Charlie has a problem: his tonsils have become infected & have to come out. No biggie, right? But when he decides he wants to keep them in a jar for show & tell, things get creepy... First, strange slurping sounds in his room keep Charlie awake the night before his surgery. Then, he goes to the doctor only to be told his tonsils are already gone! Could it be they're out for revenge?

WHY READERS LOVED IT

Readers loved the clever wordplay & over-the-top humor that transform an everyday childhood problem into a perfect read-aloud favorite.

THE LAST BOOKSTORE ON EARTH

LILY BRAUN-ARNOLD



BEST YOUNG ADULT FICTION



In a dystopian world devastated by The Storm, seventeen-year-old Liz finds refuge in her old bookstore, but when Maeve breaks in seeking shelter from another impending storm, the two confront their secrets and inner demons as they fight for their lives.

WHY READERS LOVED IT

Readers were drawn to the imaginative post-apocalyptic setting and hopeful celebration of books, storytelling, & human connection.

BRUCE SAVES THE PLANET

RYAN T. HIGGINS



BEST PICTURE BOOK



Bruce was a bear who liked to be by himself. But that wasn't easy for him, as mother to 4 geese and 3 mice. Luckily, he could enjoy a day of peace & quiet while fishing. But his quiet haven is full of beetles stealing his lunch. And protestors loudly trying to save the forest from the construction of a factory. Will Bruce and the residents of Soggy Hollow manage to save the planet?

WHY READERS LOVED IT

Readers adored Bruce's grumpy charm, laugh-filled illustrations, & an engaging environmental message that makes big ideas fun and accessible.



THANK YOU

We're so happy to give these books the recognition they deserve. Did your favorite of 2025 not make the cut? Submit a book review so that it can be featured in a future issue!

ORLA Ceases Operations at Cooperstown Public Library

It is with heavy hearts & great disappointment that we announce the closure of our ORLA branch in Cooperstown beginning January 2026. Residents who utilize this outlet are encouraged to maintain their access to our libraries at the locations in Oil City & Franklin, or through our robust digital collection.

It's important to know that this decision did not come lightly & was never the intention of ORLA. Unfortunately, our efforts to seek dedicated countywide support in the recent election failed to pass. Ongoing fundraising campaigns over the years have also been unable to raise sustainable-level funding to adequately fund the Cooperstown location. Therefore, we are consolidating our efforts further to provide the best level of library services we can promise and that the community expects. Thank you for your understanding & support.



NEW HOURS

As of January 1st, 2026, Oil City & Franklin libraries have changed their hours slightly:

- Franklin Public Library's Saturday hours will now be 11:00-4:00PM instead of 10:00-3:00PM.
- Oil City Library will now be closing at 7:00PM instead of 7:30PM on Mondays, Tuesdays & Wednesdays.



Oil City Library

Monday	9:00am-7:00pm
Tuesday	9:00am-7:00pm
Wednesday	9:00am-7:00pm
Thursday	9:00am-5:00pm
Friday	9:00am-5:00pm
Saturday	9:00am-3:00pm
Sunday	CLOSED



Franklin Public Library

Monday	10:00am-6:00pm
Tuesday	10:00am-6:00pm
Wednesday	10:00am-6:00pm
Thursday	10:00am-6:00pm
Friday	10:00am-6:00pm
Saturday	11:00am-4:00pm
Sunday	CLOSED



Why Participate?

There's no better time to lay the groundwork for independent learning than early childhood. Reading 1,000 books before kindergarten is a low pressure way to close the vocabulary gap & develop the early literacy skills so crucial to success in school. Any child can participate as long as they are not yet in kindergarten.

Register your child in person at your library or online at www.oilregionlibraries.org/youth/1000-books-before-kindergarten/

Keep track of the books you read with the library's easy color-the-shapes log!




These readers hit milestones recently!



LIBRARY LOTT

2026 tickets are
available NOW!

EACH TICKET
\$20
ONLY 1000 SOLD

DECEMBER WINNERS!

\$75

NO WINNER

THIS COULD BE YOU NEXT
MONTH! GET YOUR TICKET
TODAY AT YOUR LIBRARY!

\$100

TOM L.
SOMERVILLE, MA

\$200

NO WINNER

THIS COULD BE YOU NEXT
MONTH! GET YOUR TICKET
TODAY AT YOUR LIBRARY!

A total of 36 winners will be
determined by the **Pennsylvania**
Daily Pick 3 evening drawing at
7:00PM on the 1st, 2nd and 3rd days
of each month in 2026.

Inclusive Connections

at the
Franklin Public Library

Inclusive Connections is a new program at the Franklin Public Library aimed at providing a safe space for adults with disabilities and their caregivers while promoting community, creativity and connections.

Since the program's start in September 2025, we've had a blast with participants doing activities like painting & sand art. Join us on one Tuesday a month for crafts, games, puzzles & more!

Our next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, January 20th at 1:00 PM. This program is free & registration is not required. Hope to see you there!



ADULT
CRAFT
CLUB

Spring
2026

at Oil City & Franklin Libraries!

Join us this Spring for more Adult Craft Club! All sessions are free to attend & all materials will be provided.

Projects, program dates & registration will be announced next month, so watch our social media & newsletter for updates!


FEATURED RESOURCES



libby
The library reading app

Local Book Club Picks
What Our Book Clubs are Reading in 2026

Book covers featured include: *Life on Low Stairs*, *BUCKEYE*, *PATRICK*, *THE BOOK CLUB TROUBLESOME WOMEN*, *MARIE BOSTWICK*, *ELLEN MARIE WISEMAN*, *the lost girls of willowbrook*, *BRAIDING SWEETGRASS*, *THE BOOK WOMAN OF TROUBLESOME CREEK*, *KIM MICHELE RICHARDSON*, *KEN FOLLETT*, *CIRCLE of DAYS*, *Here One Moment*, and *Liane Moriarty*.



MANGO
Language-learning centered around you.

Is learning a new language on YOUR New Year's resolution list? Download Mango Languages on your phone or tablet to start your FREE language-learning journey with your library card. Choose from over 70 world languages to learn with an easy-to-follow curriculum along the way!



Most Watched Films of 2025

2025's Most Watched Films on **kanopy**

Movie posters featured include: *ANATOMY OF A FALL*, *LATE NIGHT OF THE DEVIL*, *LONGLEGS*, *INTERSTELLAR*, *ANORA*, *CUCKOO*, *Where Will Be Blood*, and *LEE*.



Oil City Library

2 Central Ave.
Oil City, PA 16301
(814) 678-3072

Monday	9:00am-7:00pm
Tuesday	9:00am-7:00pm
Wednesday	9:00am-7:00pm
Thursday	9:00am-5:00pm
Friday	9:00am-5:00pm
Saturday	9:00am-3:00pm
Sunday	CLOSED



Franklin Public Library

421 12th St.
Franklin, PA 16323
(814) 432-5062

Monday	10:00am-6:00pm
Tuesday	10:00am-6:00pm
Wednesday	10:00am-6:00pm
Thursday	10:00am-6:00pm
Friday	10:00am-6:00pm
Saturday	11:00am-4:00pm
Sunday	CLOSED

FIND US ONLINE

oilregionlibraries.org



Libby, Mango Languages & Kanopy are available to you for FREE with your library card at oilregionlibraries.org



@ortalibraries