

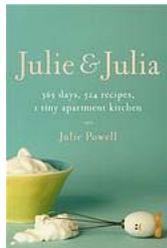
LIBRARY STAFF SUGGESTIONS

What We Read in 2007

Welcome to our third annual list of good books we read in the past year. Happy New Year from the University of Idaho Library staff.

--Rami Attebury--

Julie and Julia: 365 Days, 524 Recipes, and 1 Tiny Apartment Kitchen, by Julie Powell. (UI Library Main Stacks [TX649.P66A3 2005](#))



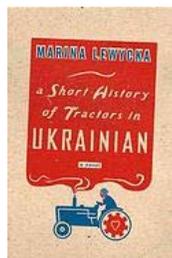
It is a personal memoir of a 30-year-old secretary who undertakes the task of cooking every recipe in Julia Child's *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*. Although the author's irreverent language and tendency to overdramatize her life's woes have caused some to criticize the book, her sense of dedication to the project is praiseworthy. Between the messy kitchen details, she offers readers a glimpse of life in New York and what it is like to work as a drudge in a government agency where nearly all of her co-workers are at the opposite end of the political spectrum. For all of the book's faults (who enjoys reading about maggots in a dish pan?), the book is an engaging read that I found hard to put down.

--MaryJane Bailey--

Water for Elephants, by Sara Gruen

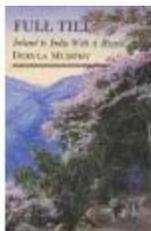
Marian Murta-Bell--

A Short History of Tractors in Ukrainian, Marina Lewycka. It is about a Ukrainian-British family. Two sisters who can't along find common ground while trying to thwart their father's plans to remarry. It exceptionally witty and moving!



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--Linnea Marshall--



Full Tilt: Ireland to India with a Bicycle, By Dervla Murphy

On her 10th birthday, Dervla Murphy received two gifts that were to make a big impact in her life. These gifts, an atlas and a bicycle, inspired her to want to ride a bicycle from her home in Ireland to India. But it wasn't until twenty years

later, in 1963, when she finally made that journey. During the trip she described her daily experiences in a journal. This book is derived from that journal and focuses on the portion of her journey when she traveled through Afghanistan and Pakistan, two countries that she came to love. The conditions she rode under were sometimes extreme, but the beauty of the country and the hospitality she received made it a fabulous experience. This book is a good companion to *The Places in Between*, Rory Stewart's account of his walk across Afghanistan in 2002.

--Cort Northrop--

1919: The Year Our World Began, by William K. Klingaman, (UI Library Main Stacks D723.K54 1987)

The seeds planted in 1919, the immediate aftermath of World War I, would ultimately turn the world upside down for generations to come. It was published 20 years ago, but is more timely today than it was then.

--Ron Force--

I have a couple of recommendations. When you're retired AND have canceled the Cable TV, you can have time to read a bunch of books. whole series, in fact. The British author Michael Dibdin spent some time teaching English in Italy, and from that experience created an Italian police detective, Aurelio Zen. Zen is the perpetual outsider, a Venetian among Romans, separated from his wife, living with his mother. His cases lead him through the Italy of the 80s and 90s, highly political and corrupt. Zen would like to cash in on corruption as those around him do, but things rarely work out for his pocketbook. He does seem to



stumble to satisfactory conclusions to his cases, which add to his reputation. As he's transferred around the country, the sights and cuisine of Italy get a thorough description in the ten books. Dibdin passed away in Seattle last year, so no more will be forthcoming.

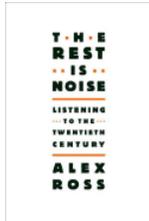
The Zen series share some qualities with another series from an author who just passed away, George MacDonald Fraser, who satirizes the concept of the Victorian hero by borrowing a character from *Tom Brown's School Days*, the quintessential 19th century novel. In that book, Harry Flashman is a drunkard, bully and coward who is ultimately overcome by the virtuous Tom Brown. Fraser imagines the further career of Flashman and places him in many of the dramatic historical events of the 19th century. Despite his character flaws Flashman becomes the hero in event after event, through luck and happenstance, his charm for the ladies and his uncanny ability with languages. The twelve books are extremely historically accurate (sans Flashman, of course), and hilarious.

---Ben Hunter--

**Remainder by Tom McCarthy.
(BROWSING MCCARTHY)**

The unnamed narrator suffers an unspecified head injury, receives a large cash settlement, and uses the money to hire actors to repeatedly recreate banal events for reasons that are never made entirely clear. Surprisingly, it's almost impossible to put down.

**The Rest is Noise: Listening to the Twentieth Century, by Alex Ross.
(UI Library Main Stacks ML197.R76 2007)**



Alex Ross (music critic for the New Yorker) manages to trace the history of twentieth-century art music in a way that is entirely accessible to any reader, yet does not sacrifice detail or depth. A must-read for anyone with even a passing interest in the subject.

----- --Nancy Young--

Loving Frank, by Nancy Horan (BROWSING

HORAN) Well-written novel based very closely on the true story of renowned architect Frank Lloyd Wright's scandalous affair with a married woman (Mamah Bouton Bothwick), their flight to Europe and the subsequent tragedy that befell them.



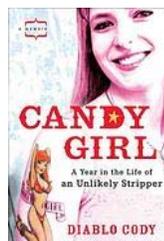
Four Seasons in Rome: On Twins, Insomnia and the Biggest Funeral in the History of the World, by Anthony Doerr. (UI Library Main Stacks

PS3604.O34Z46 2007) Award-winning Idaho author Anthony Doerr was notified that he had received the prestigious Rome Prize from the American Academy of Arts and Letters (which includes a stipend and writing studio in Rome for a year) the day he and his wife came home from the hospital with newborn twins. They travel to Rome, take the babies, and this delightful book records all that transpired, including Pope John Paul II's death and funeral.

----- --Jesse Thomas--

**No Country for Old Men, by Cormac McCarthy.
(UI Library Main Stacks**

PS3563.C337N6 2005) Read



the book, then watch the Coen Brothers' film adaptation, and then spend the rest of your life stewing over the philosophical implications of a world where fairness and morality mean jack-squat!

The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford, by Ron Hansen. A must read for anyone who loves deliberate, polished prose. This historical novel revisits the mythology surrounding the assassination of Jesse James. But instead of vilifying Robert Ford, as everyone else has in the past, Hansen casts him in a much more sympathetic light. Poor Robert Ford!

Candy Girl: A Year in the Life of an Unlikely Stripper, by Diablo Cody. I'm not sure if I have the requisite "tools of the trade," but after reading this book I still feel like I could make a pretty decent living on the stripclub circuit. Very informative-- maybe a little TOO informative at times!

The Left Hand of Darkness, by Ursula K. Le Guin. (UI Library Main Stacks [PS3562.E42L39 2000](#)) The only sci-fi writer to ever win the Hugo and Nebula awards for the same novel TWICE (*The Dispossessed* was the other). Take that Isaac Asimov and Arthur C. Clarke!! No one delves into the stigmas associated with race and gender better than Ursula K. Le Guin. This novel imagines what it would be like for an envoy from Earth on an alien planet populated entirely by hermaphrodites. Another clever vehicle for serious social commentary.

Banvard's Folly: Thirteen Tales of People Who Didn't Change the World, by Paul S. Collins. For fans of Bill Bryson's *A Short History of Nearly Everything*, this novel similarly revels in the past. But rather than championing the pioneers of science and industry, as Bryson does, Collins focuses on a motley assortment of lovable losers whose contributions have long since been forgotten.

The Braindead Megaphone, by George Saunders. (UI Library Main Stacks [PS3569.A7897B73 2007](#)) This is a collection of essays that Saunders wrote for *GQ*, *The New Yorker*, and *McSweeney's*. I can't figure out what aspect I like most about his writing: his compassion, his intelligence, or his humor. Modern Library could have chosen anyone to write the introduction to their latest edition of Huckleberry Finn, but they settled on Saunders. Why? Cuz he's a genius! A genius who cares
