



# JUST ASKING

BY MARY KLEST  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY SUSAN MCCONNELL

## How is it decided what books are purchased for the Barrington Area Library?

We asked library director Barbara Sugden, who will be retiring in June after 33 years of service to our community.

“New books appear on the shelves throughout the year,” says Barbara Sugden of the Barrington Area Library. In fact, the library added nearly 20,000 books to its collection last year. The professional librarians and department heads make recommendations based on their reading of book reviews and other periodicals targeted to libraries.



Each of the librarians who select books holds a Master of Library Science degree, and during their coursework they will usually take a class about book selection. A particular book is considered for the library collection after meeting the following criteria: Does it

fit the library’s mission? Is it likely to be used? What is the price? Is there a demand for it? What is the quality of its physical condition and the writing?

Once a book passes that test, librarians make a recommendation. When the recommendation is approved by the head of Adult Services or head of Young People’s Services, the purchase is made online by staff in Technical Services from well-established book jobbers. These wholesalers know the library market, work with publishers to get the best price, and deliver quickly.

“Some books that currently are very popular with our readers are *A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Khaled Hosseini, *Loving Frank* by Nancy Horan, *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan* by Lisa See, *Nineteen Minutes* by Jodi Picoult, and *Eat, Pray, Love* by Elizabeth Gilbert,” Barbara says.

Mysteries have always been popular with patrons, and right now Sue Grafton’s *T is for Trespass* is hot. *The Price of Privilege* by Madeline Levine continues to be requested. Some other nonfiction favorites are *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* by Barbara Kingsolver, *An Inconvenient Truth* by Al Gore, and *Age of Turbulence* by Alan Greenspan.

The library’s total book collection amounts to 276,172. The library also added nearly 5,000 audio-visual items this year, bringing that collection to just under 41,000 items (DVDs, CDs, kits, videos, cassettes). To find out what’s new, inquire at the Popular Materials Desk (the semi-circular desk between the videos/DVDs and magazine area).

Susan’s photograph above shows Barbara peering through the library shelves surrounded by her personal favorites – the books she loves. She will now have more time to enjoy all that she has reaped.

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