

Library Connections

The MOBILE PUBLIC LIBRARY Newsletter

An Evening with Author Michael Farris Smith

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by Adrienne McSwain, Special Events Coordinator

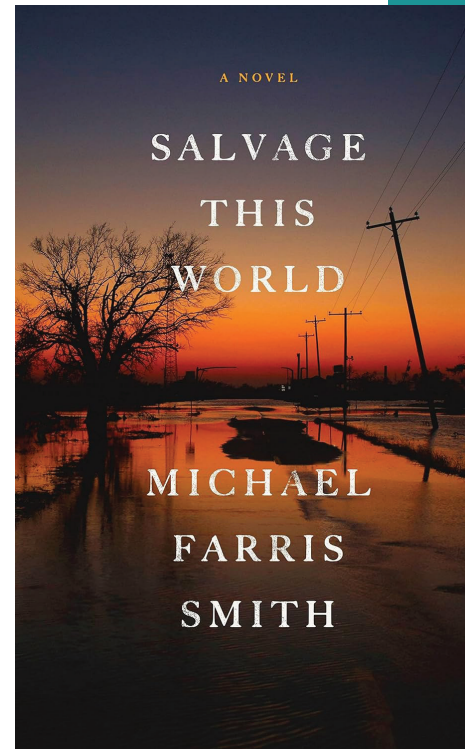


THE Friends of the Mobile Public Library (FOL) will be having their annual meeting on Thursday, Jan. 18, at 6 p.m. The event will feature a presentation by accomplished author Michael Farris Smith, a Mississippi native, who will speak on his latest book, "Salvage This World," in Ben May Main Library's Bernheim Hall. Before the presentation, there will be a brief FOL business meeting.

Smith's novels have appeared on Best of the Year lists compiled by Esquire; NPR; Southern Living; Garden & Gun; O, The Oprah Magazine; Book Riot and numerous other outlets, and have been named Indie Next, Barnes & Noble Discover, and Amazon Best of the Month selections. As of 2023, Smith has published seven novels: "The Hands of Strangers" (2011), "Rivers" (2013), "Desperation Road" (2017), "The Fighter" (2018), "Blackwood" (2020) and "Nick" (2021). Smith's newest novel, "Salvage This World," was published in April of 2023. He has also written the feature-film adaptations of his novels "Desperation Road" and "The Fighter," titled for the screen as "Rumble Through the Dark."

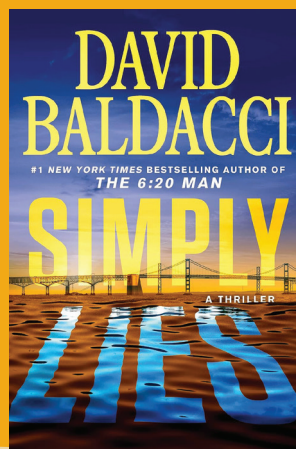
Another highlight of this event will include a presentation of awards to local teen winners of the Maryln Schwartz Creative Writing Contest. Following Smith's presentation, a reception with heavy hors d'oeuvres will be held in the Ambrecht/Briskman Meeting Room. Attendees will have the opportunity to purchase "Salvage This World" from the Haunted Book Shop, and Smith will be available to sign. The FOL annual meeting is a free event that is open to all.

For more information on this event, please email Adrienne McSwain at amcswain@mplonline.org or call (251) 494-2298. We hope to see you there.



BACK TO BASICS: MOST POPULAR NOVELS THIS YEAR AT MPL

WHAT first comes to mind when you think about the public library? Most agree they have fond memories of a special visit as a child or getting their first library card. Aside from an abundance of programs and activities to choose from (over 170 at 10 locations just in November), the traditional service of checking out items still reigns. Here is the list of our most circulated adult fiction titles in 2023:



- "Simply Lies" by David Baldacci
- "I Will Find You" by Harlan Coben
- "Twenty Thousand Fleas Under the Sea" by Dav Pilkey
- "The Five-Star Weekend" by Elin Hilderbrand
- "The Wedding Planner" by Danielle Steel
- "Happy Place" by Emily Henry
- "Hello Beautiful" by Ann Napolitano
- "Cross Down" by James Patterson

Davis Avenue Branch and the Historic Avenue Cultural Center

by Lori Boyer, Media Marketing Specialist

THE Davis Avenue Branch of the Mobile Public Library opened its doors on Oct. 1, 1931. It provided library service to the Black community in Mobile during segregation. The design was modeled on that of the Ben May Main Library, only smaller. For the next few decades, the library was used

building became home to various special collections and library departments. It was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1983. The early 1990s saw Mobile Public Library hand over the



keys to the former branch to the City of Mobile for other possible uses.

In 1993, the City Council of Mobile leased the building to a community group that opened it to the public again as the National African American Archives and Museum. The collection included documents, records, photographs, books, African carvings, furniture and special collections that relate to the African American experience in the United States. After the National African American Archives closed, the building sat vacant for several years until 2018 when the City of Mobile leased it to the Mobile

County Commission. The county subsequently invested \$500,000 in renovations and preservation.

Most recently, the former library has entered its newest phase - the Historic Avenue Cultural Center. The center opened on Oct. 4, 2023, with "Remembering the Avenue," an exhibition curated by Jada Jones. The Alabama Contemporary Art Center's website says that the exhibition "will explore not only the history and shared memory of a once thriving community but seed the potential for new growth and possibility through shared dreaming." The Historic Avenue Cultural Center is open to the public Tuesday-Saturday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.



by the active Davis Avenue community for meetings, art exhibits and other cultural and educational programs.

In 1961, Mobile Public Library was integrated and so became the first Alabama public library to embrace all its citizens. Over the next couple of decades, use of the branch declined, and the

BEST UNDER-THE-RADAR TITLES OF THE YEAR

ONE of our Acquisitions Manager Carly Akers' primary responsibilities is to purchase our adult fiction titles. She is a great person to go to for book recommendations, and she thinks these under-checked-out gems should not be missed by avid readers.

Start your 2024 reading game off strong with this list that rounds up some of the great reads 2023 had to offer.

- "The Celebrants" by Steven Rowley
- "The Curious Lives of Nonprofit Martyrs" by George Singleton
- "Your Table is Ready" by Michael Cecchi-Azzolina
- "I Have Some Questions for You" by Rebecca Makkai
- "The Hammerhead Chronicles" by Scott Gould
- "This Isn't Going to End Well" by Daniel Wallace
- "One Summer in Savannah" by Terah Shelton Harris
- "How to Stay Married" by Harrison Scott Key



Face-Lift at Local History & Genealogy

by Elizabeth Theris-Boone, Manager, Local History & Genealogy Division

IT is an exciting time of change and revitalization here at the Local History & Genealogy Division of Mobile Public Library! We appreciate your patience with us as we closed for the week of Oct. 30-Nov. 3 for renovations,



and we invite you to come visit us to see our new public service desk. In addition to a beautiful new reception desk, we were also fortunate to be able to rejuvenate the look of the vertical file collection with brand-new wooden filing cabinets.



"What is a vertical file?" you may ask. If you ever visited our library before the renovation, you may have seen a set of 10 metal file cabinets behind the old desk. These cabinets were stuffed to the brim with over 3,000 subject files pertaining to the history of Mobile and the greater Gulf Coast region. The collection covers a wide variety of topics, including

biographies, historic buildings, cemeteries, churches, Mardi Gras, schools, unpublished family histories and so much more.

Within the files, you might find manuscripts, typed histories, pamphlets and even the occasional photograph, but the largest part of the file contents are newspaper clippings. If you've ever spent hours scrolling through our collection of Mobile newspapers on microfilm because the information you were seeking fell within that dreaded date range where no content is available digitally through a searchable database, you'll understand what a treasure trove these files can be. Picture dedicated library staff clipping articles from Mobile newspapers over countless years, sorting them by topic, and keeping them organized and accessible, for you. And with the recent renovations, we are so fortunate to have even more space, which means the collection can not only get some much-needed breathing room, but it also has space to grow. Exciting times indeed!

Go to Local History & Genealogy's web page under the Locations menu at mobilepubliclibrary.org to find an index of all the subjects available.



RAISE A READER

THE library can play a major part in caregivers' goal to raise children that will be able to meet the standards set by the Alabama Literacy Act. The act requires students to be reading at grade level by the end of third grade in order to be promoted to fourth grade.

Storytimes and other free programs at the library help kids get a head start on reading before they even start school. The library staff can help caregivers select books that match their child's interests and reading level. Libraries also provide spaces meant to make reading fun and engaging for young kids.

Here are some techniques that help children become lifelong readers:

Read together as often as possible. Make attending a library storytime part of your regular schedule.

Pick books on subjects they like. Library staff can help you find books on your child's reading level that they will also enjoy.

Keep lots of books around your home. With a library card, you can stock up for free.

To raise a reader, be a reader. If you want your child to be excited about reading, you should be, too. Rediscover your own love of reading at the library.



WE HAVE 'THINGS' TO CHECK OUT

A Library of Things is a collection of items for loan that are different from the traditional library materials. Perhaps you only need to use something once, or you want to try something before you buy; our Library of Things collections can save you money and space.

Our toy collection, named CLAP Toys, focuses on critical learning skills and creative learning experiences. The toys are geared toward ages 0-10 years.

Launchpads are preloaded tablets with content for kids, designed with a simple, easy-to-use interface, and 100% secure with no need for WiFi.

Need a laptop for a special project or to get homework done? Try checking out a Chromebook. We also have hotspots available for those without internet access.

Lastly, Playaways are small handheld devices pre-loaded with an audiobook that gives you the portability and freedom to take audiobooks everywhere.

View the Eclipse with Mobile Public Library

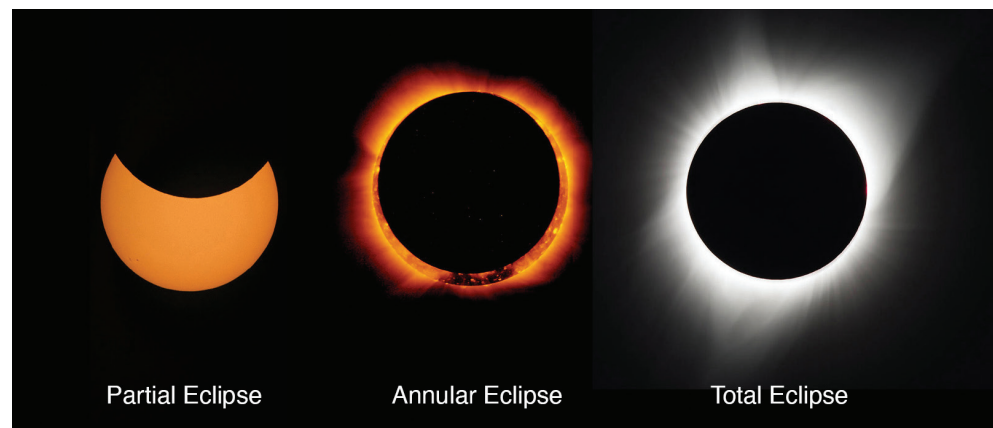
by Emmie Powell, Youth Collection Development

DR. Albert Gapud, astronomy professor at the University of South Alabama, wowed library patrons with a lecture about the solar eclipse on Saturday, Oct. 14. Lecture highlights included what a solar eclipse is, how to view it properly, and the best areas to view the next eclipse. After his lecture, Dr. Gapud provided several high-powered telescopes to safely watch the eclipse. Library staff distributed eclipse viewing glasses provided by the STAR Net, a learning network for libraries. This was an annular solar eclipse: an eclipse that happens when the moon is at its farthest point from Earth and so it appears smaller than the sun and does not completely cover the star. Mobile was not in the direct path of the eclipse, but we did see 66% of the sun covered by the moon.

Patrons who missed out on the fun will have another chance for eclipse viewing on Monday, April 8, 2024. There will be a total

solar eclipse in which the moon's 115-mile-wide shadow will cross Mexico, moving northeast from Texas to Maine, darkening eastern Canada. While Mobile is not in the path of totality, we will experience a partial solar eclipse with 79% of the sun covered a little before 2 p.m.

All library locations will have a limited number of eclipse-viewing glasses, provided by the STAR Net, available on a first-come, first-served basis. The Moorer Branch Library and the West Regional Library will host eclipse viewing parties where they will supply eclipse glasses, share information about safely viewing the eclipse, and provide fun, eclipse-themed activities. Complete details about these programs will be posted on our website, mobilepubliclibrary.org, when available. Eclipse glasses are absolutely necessary to safely enjoy the eclipse, so prepare with a visit to your local library.



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ENTERTAIN

INSPIRE

Our mission is to support literacy and connect our community.

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