

Neil

WCLS in Whatcom County presents Library Stories, a podcast to open your eyes to all the ways your local public libraries matter. Join us as we reveal the power of sharing at the library. I'm your host Neil McKay, Online Experience Coordinator for the Whatcom County Library System, and today...

All right, we're back again for another podcast episode, and I'm here with my boss, Mary Vermilion. Hi, Mary.

Mary

Hi Neil. It feels like it's been a while. It's great to hear your voice again and to talk about our subject today.

Neil

To talk about something exciting. It's a big festival we're going to put on called Open Book.

Mary

Yep, Open Book, a festival for readers, and this is an inaugural event hosted by Whatcom County Library System, along with our partners, Village Books and Paper Dreams and the Whatcom County Library Foundation. And you know, we've been thinking about this and working on it for a while. And now that we're out starting to talk to people about it, I get more and more excited and I think it's helpful to go back to think about why we decided to create this book festival, you know.

It's something that you could certainly go to book festivals all around the country, all around the world, in Seattle, nearby. You know, as readers and library people, we've been observing that and thinking, you know, Whatcom County is a big community of readers and writers. We could host one of these ourselves. Kind of a year-end gift to the community and you know from our perspective as the library we it's also a great way for people to experience first-hand all the amazing things that the library system offers and we can talk about it. We talk about it here on the podcast, we talk about on social media and talk about events we do we talk face to face as people come into the library. But talking versus showing and having people actually experience the different library services is huge.

So, we're so excited to put together this sort of, it's this, you know, spicy masala of authors and book experiences and we think people are going to come to it and have so much fun and form a stronger connection with their local libraries and the literary community, and maybe make some new friends along the way too. It's just going to be so much fun.

Neil

Yeah, well, let's put these details out before we get too far in. When is it?

Mary

It is Sunday, November 5th, from 12:00 PM to 5:00 PM at the Ferndale Events Center, which is at exit 262 in Ferndale. Super easy to get to, lots of free parking. The event itself is free. You can come and spend the whole time. There's plenty to do, or you can just drop in as your schedule allows. So, it's easy to do, easy to get there, easy to experience and it's just one big celebration of readers, writers and bookish enthusiasm, as we've been saying.

Neil

In this episode, we're going to hear from a couple of people who are going to talk about what all the experiences and all the writers and people who are going to be presenting things, it's really going to be a fun festival.

Mary

Yeah, absolutely. And that's, you know, we chose that word deliberately and you and I don't need to go into all the details because you're guests, we'll be doing that. But I think together we just want to issue a personal invitation to everyone listening to please join us at Open Book on Sunday, November 5th from 12:00 PM to 5:00 PM.

You are so welcome to be there. And we would love to see you there. Come and be part of our literary community, our welcoming, curious, excited literary community. Hang out with librarians, library staff, booksellers. We really want to see you there, so please come and join us.

Neil

All right. Well, without any further ado, let's jump into my interviews with Christine Perkins, Executive Director of WCLS, of course. And Paul Hanson, who is one of the co-owners of Village Books and just to note that Paul, I interviewed Paul at Village Books and Village Books is a bustling high energy place, especially the day that I interviewed him. It was an early dismissal day and it was packed.

Mary

Ohh, wow. Lots of kids.

Neil

Full of kids. And so, there was a lot of noise going on.

Mary

Yeah, that's appropriate. You know, I mean, Open Book will be the same thing. It's gonna be a big buzz filled event. So that energy that you hear in the background in Village Books, that will be the same thing in Open Book. So, it seems fitting, Neil. So, let's listen.

Neil

We're rolling with it. Here we go.

(Interlude music plays)

Neil

So, I'm here with Christine Perkins, who is the Executive Director of the Whatcom County Library System. Hi, Christine.

Christine

Hi, Neil.

Neil

We're talking about Open Book. Christine, what is your take on this event? Why are we doing this? What is it for?

Christine

We need a spot of sunshine in the dreary fall months. I'm looking out the window right now at the gray sky and the rain coming down, and it's only going to be a little wetter come November, and we need, we have this one window of opportunity before the holiday season really starts revving up to spend a minute to focus on oneself and giving people some sustenance to make it through that busy time of year and we thought Open Book would be a great way to bring book lovers, readers, writers, just people who enjoy libraries and books together to have fun and that's what we're putting together, is a day full of fun.

Neil

So, it's a little a little self-care and a little kind of treat yourself thing.

Christine

Exactly, in a surprise kind of way. We are telling people, this is our first time that we're ever doing this. Come and be ready to be entertained and surprised and delighted. Just go with it and we have got great things happening all day on November 5th from 12:00 PM until 5:00 PM at that Ferndale Event Center, people can show up right when we open at 12:00 PM and have things going the entire time that will dazzle and delight and spark their brain. Or if you've got other things going on that day, you can kind of dip in like an open house and take part in some of the presentations that you have time for.

The whole schedule is online on the WCLS website at [wcls.org/openbook](http://wcls.org/openbook). The event schedule is clearly listed out there, but like I said, if you just show up between 12:00 and 5:00, there's going to be something there that teaches you something new, exposes you to a new book or author. Connects you with another book lover in the community and leaves you with a feel good, warm, fuzzy feeling that will sustain you for the darker months ahead.

Neil

Well, it doesn't just leave you with a feeling either. There are things you can actually take away from this, right?

Christine

Oh, absolutely. Village Books and Comics Place will be on hand with pop-up shops, so some of the books and authors that will be talked about at Open Book will be available for you for instant gratification, to take home. You may be inspired to purchase gifts for people, and we have a wonderful selection of local

crafters who are making book related crafts. I've heard there's book earrings and stuffies and bookmarks and all sorts of great stuff that you won't want to miss. There's gonna be grilled cheese sandwiches and tomato soup provided by the Friends of the Birch Bay Library as a fundraiser for their library building project. I mean, some people I've talked to grilled cheese sandwiches alone is enough of a reason to come out in the rain.

Neil

That would bring me there.

Christine

Yeah, so there's gonna be all sorts of opportunities to take a little bit home with you. We also have prizes and some wonderful authors and libraries/literacy literati are sharing their gifts with us. America's favorite librarian, Nancy Pearl, has offered to do an online chat with the lucky prize winner. We have our local children's book, author and illustrator Phoebe Wahl is going to be signing a whole selection of her children's books for people as a giveaway. We have renowned poet Ross Gay, who is willing to connect with people as well and do a book discussion with folks. So, lots of great prizes happening. There's going to be a silent disco, Neil. Like how can we pass up that? That's going to be great.

Neil

Oh, I know about the silent disco. I'm excited about that.

Christine

Totally. Our bookmobile will be on site, which is always a treat, especially for people who don't regularly use the bookmobile, but have fond memories of the bookmobile from their childhood. You can see we got a brand new one to celebrate our 75th anniversary of the Whatcom County Library System. It's bright blue. We call it Huckleberry. So, our bookmobile staff will be on hand to give tours of that.

Neil

Yeah and you can ask them what the significance of Huckleberry is.

Christine

Yep, I won't give it away.

Neil

It's not just the color.

Christine

Yeah, I won't give it away but, all sorts of good stuff. I think book clubs are going to want to come to this event, all the members of the book clubs because you'll get inspired for books that you could be reading and discussing with your club in the coming year. You can maybe find book clubs that are looking for new members and chat with people about what books they really loved and resonated with them. So lots of reasons to go. Poetry readings if you love poetry. You won't want to miss that.

Neil

Local poets.

Christine

Local poets.

Christine

We've got some tremendous local poets that will be showcasing their works that came out in 2023 that is going to be hosted by our former Poet Laureate Rena Priest. I just heard her speak again the other night and she is just lovely. Her poems are just simple and beautiful and nature filled and profound and I'm really excited to hear some more from her. Our current Poet Laureate, Arianne True, will also be at the event, so looking forward to hearing their poetry. And then we have Thor Hanson. If peoples reading interests are more along the lines of nonfiction, he writes about science and nature and has a great book about climate change that's out now. I mentioned that Phoebe Wahl will be on hand, talking about her young adult work that just came out. So, we're trying to appeal to readers and writers and book lovers with varied interests, and I really do think there's going to be something for everybody.

Neil

It's exciting. I've known about this, I've been involved and every time I look, I see more things. It's like, oh, I gotta make sure I touch base with the Puget Sound Book Artists. You know that just sounds, I don't even know exactly what they're doing, but I want to be there.

Christine

Right. Who knew that was a whole organization of people who are affiliated with art and books. It's perfect. Bison Letterpress is going to be there and offering people the opportunity to try letterpress printing, right? That's what started off this whole book technology. So, it'll be interesting to hear from them.

Neil

Right. Yeah. And of course, Kanopy, we're going to have a little movie theater in there. I'm fascinated to see how we pull that off.

Christine

Well, and Neil, you know what goes really well with movies.

Neil

Books?

Christine

Can you think of it?

Neil

Grilled cheese sandwiches?

Christine

Popcorn! We'll have popcorn. Yeah, you have to have popcorn.

Christine

So, we're not messing around here. You gotta have popcorn to go with your movie so, we're really thrilled about that. Washington Talking Book and Braille Library will be on hand that they do a great service for anybody with vision issues in our state where they will mail talking books to their house. They even have special devices that people with vision impairments can use that make it simpler to listen to an audiobook than maybe checking out an audiobook on CD or trying to fiddle around with downloading something from Libby or some of the other things and they'll be on hand to show people how that works and I believe they're bringing some Braille titles with them as well to give people both a sense of their service and just an understanding of what it's like to access books in a different way.

Neil

Interestingly, I actually know someone who transcribes books into Braille as a contractor.

Christine

Yeah, one of their services is they type up the news, right?

Neil

Like the Daily News.

Christine

This is not just like every once in a while they type up a book like every day, they're typing up the newspaper, making sure that that's accessible to people. That's an amazing service and that's available to anybody in our community with vision issues.

Neil

And we're giving away some awards.

Christine

We are. Our Youth Services team have identified some top educators in the county and will be honoring them with the Golden Apple Awards. So, we'll be presenting that in the middle of the day.

Neil

That's great. Well, this is an exciting event and it's November 5th. That's a Sunday, right?

Christine

It's a Sunday. It starts at 12:00 PM, gives you time to, you know, head out to some services or get a late start if you need to, but still join us at the Ferndale Event Center. We hope that people will come and cheer on all of our local authors on the local author stage. Whatcom County Library Foundation has generously sponsored the local author stage, so we've got speakers from Red Wheelbarrow Writers and as I mentioned, a bunch of our recently published local poets. We'll also have a publishing panel for

aspiring writers, and that's led by three people who are really active in the local publishing scene and can give tips and information, I think that's going to be of a big interest to people. Oh, and Teen Open Mic Night. Gosh, there's going to be so many opportunities to be inspired by other people's creativity and hopefully that will spark some creativity in others as well.

Neil

Oh, and the Whatcomics bus.

Christine

Yep. Oh, that's a great example. That's where our teens, all the teens who contributed to our Whatcomics art anthology in the past year, were selected to have their art on a brand-new WTA bus. It's both on the outside of the bus and on the inside of the bus to thrill and delight passengers who are taking WTA around town. And so, we'll have that on site of Open Book so that others can enjoy it.

Neil

It's like a mobile art gallery.

Christine

Absolutely. Absolutely. The teens' art is just phenomenal, and I am so happy that WTA saw this as a great way to showcase their work. And I just don't think it's every day that you can say my art has been published on a bus.

Neil

Yeah, I mean that really looks good on your resume or your college application.

Christine

I would think so, yeah.

(Interlude music)

Neil

Well, I want to bring another voice into this conversation. I have the opportunity to stop by Village Books in Fairhaven and speak with Paul Hanson, who is one of the owners of Village Books and we had a great time talking about Open Book and getting excited about what was to come. It was a busy day at Village Books that day, and so it's quite noisy in the background and I hope that doesn't take away from the listening experience, but it was such a such a nice conversation, and Paul had so many good things to say about Open Book and about the relationship between Village Books and the Whatcom County Library System that I just wanted to make sure you had a chance to hear him. So, let's take a listen.

Neil

Hi, Paul.

Paul

Hi. How you doing, Neil?

Neil

I'm doing great and you know why I came down here?

Paul

No, why?

Neil

It's like the radio show. I mean it's not scripted. I'm here to talk about Open Book.

Paul

We are so excited about the Open Book festival coming up, yeah. Especially when there's opportunities for people to come together and connect and community building, then you'll know that we're going to be in the middle of it.

Neil

Well, that's great because we are all about community building and I know that you, from interviewing you in the past, I know how committed you are to community building, which is different than selling books.

Paul

Yeah, it is. It's very different. We talked about this last night at our literary citizenship event. We talked about how building community is our mission and when we're gonna decide where we're going to put our resources or put our energies, put our money, put our time we ask ourselves the first question is, is it going to help build community? And if the answer is yes, then we do it.

Well, in the Open Book festival, not only is it a great community event that we're doing, but it's another demonstration of our partnership with the library, which we love. And I think Christine Perkins said it well last night. She said that we do this together and we have a shared and common cause and there may be communities out there where the bookstores and the libraries don't get along or don't get along as well as we do, but I can't imagine a better partnership and a more natural partnership. So, this is just a fantastic celebration of books that we can come together.

Neil

Well, that's great and we're so happy to partner with you because in the end it's about reading, it's about literature. It's about, let's say it again, community.

Paul

Yeah, yeah. And the strong and well-read community is a good community.

Neil

Yeah, so. So, let's talk a little about the Open Book fest, the actual festival, you know. It's going to be on a Sunday, November 5th in Ferndale.



Paul

And only for five hours. We're going to be fitting a lot into those five hours.

Neil

It's jam packed. Give us some ideas of what you're involved in.

Paul

Well, first off, there's going to be a bunch of great authors. Rena Priest, our former poet Washington State Poet Laureate is going to be there. As well as Arianne True, the current Washington State Poet Laureate, so that's gonna be fun. They've already done the handoff so nobody's gonna be witnessing that. But it's great to have them there together. Local, I guess celebrity-author Phoebe Wahl is gonna be there and oh boy, when she came to the store last, it was as we said, we're going to need a bigger boat. So, she's always a joy, and she's just beloved for her children's books, and there's a ton, a ton of other authors, so I'm just naming a few, but one of my personal favorites Thor Hansen and not just because we have the same last name, but because he is so dynamic and anybody who knows him enjoys him. And I would go to the Open Book festival just to hear him.

Neil

And he'll be talking about...

Paul

*Hurricane Lizards and Plastic Squid*, it's talking about climate change and the way the world is responding to it, so he's not a climate change alarmist. He looks to see what's happening, and he does it in such an engaging and fun way. And if you don't know what a hurricane lizard is you should go so you can find out.

Neil

I don't know what a hurricane lizard.

Paul

Yeah, it is a fun story. There's a YouTube video that goes along with it.

Neil

I'm imagining it in my head. The lizard flying through the air in the hurricane.

Paul

Yeah, you got the gist of it, yeah. He's talking about evolution that's happening in our time because of climate change and how they're measuring that and how the Earth and its residents are adapting to it, for good or ill.

Neil

That does sound exciting. Yeah, so those are our four headlines, right?

Paul

Yeah, so, we're going to have the Red Wheelbarrow group there.

Neil

So, the the Red Wheelbarrow group, do they meet here?

Paul

They come here a lot and speaking of great literary citizens, so they're, it's a community of writers here in Bellingham and they support each other, and they help each other along their journey and whenever one of them has a book, they all turn out in the event and they all support each other. There's some really, really fantastic, well, not some - they're all fantastic people and they're producing great books and there's going to be a good number, I lose track of how many of them are, and we're still working on the list, but they're going to be there doing readings and featuring some of their books.

Neil

That's great.

Paul

We'll be there selling the books.

Neil

And they're writing everything from...

Paul

Travel memoirs to historical fiction to science fiction to mystery to romance, yeah. It's everywhere.

Neil

Besides them, speaking of local writers, we're going to have some local poets as well. Local published poems. Which is a difference because we do know a lot of poets, but a published poet is a little bit different because they've done the work because publishing is a whole other job than writing poems. I write poems, but I'm not a published poet.

Paul

And what did somebody say? This was again last night, Sabina, she was talking about sharing your work for the first time is one of the hardest things to do.

Neil

Oh, for sure.

Paul

She says it's like putting your child on the bus for the first time to go to school, man.

Neil

That makes sense to me. I can see, I've experienced that. I've experienced both.

Paul

Yeah.

Neil

Giving my poems to people that have never heard them before and putting my child on a bus never to see him again.

Neil

They changed that because both the child and the poem change once you handed it out to the public. This is, this is getting deep.

Paul

And to that end, we're also going to have things that encourage. There's going to be workshops and rooms and exercises and people to help writers in our community tell their stories.

Neil

Right. Tell us. Tell me more about that.

Paul

So, if folks don't know about Stephanie Dethlefs, she works here at Village Books now and we're so happy about it. We hired her just a few months ago and she is our Writing Community Outreach Coordinator and her former role, if nobody knows, was with the Whatcom Young Writers, the nonprofit here in Bellingham that reached out to hundreds of kids in the school district and outside of the school district to encourage their writing. So, she started here a few months ago with a mandate of we do a lot of things for writers here at Village Books and she's going to be reaching out to the young writers specifically because she's got that skill set.

So, she's going to be there on site, working with a room and so young writers can come in, and we're gonna have exercises to get people inspired. And it's just one of those, it's like an illustration of what we're going to be doing and we're working on here in the store with the Kid's Open Mic Night and a young writers group and were in formulations for doing a young writers magazine.

Neil

Wow. So, that's all kind of in the works?

Paul

That's in the works and this is a way to get people in the know.

Neil

That's great. Yeah, and it kind of goes hand in hand with what the library has been doing as far as young writers, young poets with a Forest of Words publication we do every year. Along with the art publication, we also do Whatcomics, which both will be represented at Open Book there as well.

Paul

Well, yeah, yeah, that's good.

Neil

There's so much there.

Paul

There's so many doorways.

Neil

And a lot of it is, is kind of demonstrating what's at the library with our Library of Things, which is a whole other, you know, aspect of the library different than books because we're providing things like Wi-Fi hotspots you can check out and American Girl dolls, of course. The Washington Trails pass that you can also check out. These things that cost money, and you can check them out at the library and enjoy them for a few weeks and then bring them back and share.

Paul

I love the accessibility.

Neil

But the other thing, most important thing about Open Book is the silent disco. Do you know about this?

Paul

No, I didn't hear about the silent disco.

Neil

Well, you wouldn't hear about it. Nobody hears about a silent disco.

Paul

Is that the first rule of a silent disco?

Neil

The first rule of silent disco is no one talks about it. You do you know what a silent disco is?

Paul

I think, I imagine what it is, but I would love to hear your description.

Neil

Well, I would love to hear it too so here I go. Apparently, in urban places like New York and stuff there were discotheques and places that played music that had noise issues.

Paul

I have a feeling it disturbed the neighbors.

Neil

Yes, and so they'd get complaints and so someone came up with the idea of having everyone wear a set of headphones, wireless headphones that a stream of music is being streamed out to so you're listening to the same music as the person across from you, but the people outside can't hear you. So, it looks like you're dancing to nothing.

Paul

That's fantastic. I think I saw, I think I've seen one of those, but I don't know if they were, but they all looked like they were hearing something different.

Neil

So, one of the things this, of course things evolved as we talked about with climate change and everything, what we're going to do is we're allowing, we'll have two tracks to choose from.

Paul

Choose your own adventure or choose your own disco.

Neil

So, if you're listening to one and it's playing someone that you don't like, some song you don't like you can switch over to this other channel and see what they're playing there.

Paul

Whoa.

Neil

And we're picking all of the music from Freegal, which is our, which is the library's streaming music service so if you like the tracks that the DJ chose, you'll be able to, you know, download them and create your own playlist. We'll actually have a playlist available on Freegal to listen to.

Paul

That's fantastic. You can have your silent disco at home.

Neil

So, you can have your silent disco at home, on the bus, in Village Books. You can be wearing your headphones in Village Books.

Paul

That's right, you can. That'd be great.

Neil

All your crew could be wearing headphones and just be bopping away. That's the thing that I'm really looking forward to because they asked me to put together the soundtracks.

Paul

I think I have an idea for our next staff holiday Christmas party.

Neil

There you go. So, I just wanted to push that because that's one of my -- .

Paul

Yeah, that's really fun and not something I would expect at an Open Book festival.

Neil

Exactly, which we have the unexpected. You can expect the unexpected at Open Book.

Paul

Excellent, excellent.

Neil

We'll also have a theater to showcase some movies from our streaming movie service Kanopy. So, we're trying to demonstrate what the library is offering to people and part of that is that connection with Village Books and that partnership with you. So, I'm really glad that Village Books is going to be representing themselves here and that you'll be there.

Paul

Yeah, yeah, that's fantastic. Good, good, good. I should also mention that this isn't probably as exciting as this silent disco or the streaming is, but.

Neil

Right, go ahead.

Paul

Well, it's exciting for us because Chloe, our Publishing Director is going to be there along with Lisa Dailey from Sidekick Press and they're going to be talking about how to publish or how to get it published, the many pathways to getting published.

Neil

The many pathways?

Paul

Many pathways. There are a lot of ways to get published, and a lot of options, and it's not there's no one-size-fits-all out there. Sidekick Press has publishing services. Village Books has publishing services. A lot of places have publishing services. There's also traditional publishing. There's also hybrid publishing. There's micro publishing. There's a lot of different ways to go.

So, it depends on and we do this with each of our clients that come in, we ask what their goals are for their book and we go from there. If we're a good fit, we'll tell them what we can help them with. If there's somebody else who can help them to achieve their goals, we'll send them that way. We even refer to people, to traditional publishers, and we'll recommend them if we feel like it's going to be a good fit.

Neil

And of course, you know at Village Books you could buy the Writer's Digest. Do you have the Writer's Digest the magazine?

Paul

Yeah, yeah, yeah, we have the magazine and the Writer's Digest books and the different access with the editors.

Neil

I used to get the annual every year when I was trying to publish, but you know that was back in the 80s when there was one way to publish and now it's like I can just go down to my local bookstore and say, hey, I want to self-publish or...

Paul

We can do that and get national distribution.

Neil

I like the idea of a hybrid publishing because it seems you would get more pages to the gallon.

Paul

Hybrid publishing, so just for the listeners who wanted -- that's really funny. I just got that joke. That's really good. Oh, I wish, I got.

Neil

I know. You wish you'd said it.

Paul

I do wish I'd said it.

Neil

You can have it. You can have it.

Paul

So, hybrid publishing now. All joking aside, the, so there's traditional publishing, which the author doesn't have very much control over it. The publisher has all the control and there's self-publishing where the author has all the control, but they do all the work and the other one traditional publishing, the publishers do all the work, the marketing and the and all the other stuff. Hybrid is a little bit of both. So, you get to pick and choose what you're good at and what you want to do, and you still have some control, but you don't have to do all the work.

Neil

OK. That makes sense.

Paul

Probably is more miles to the gallon.

Neil

Sure. It all makes sense. So that's exciting. And so, we'll learn all about that at Open Book. Yeah. OK. Well, you heard it from Paul Hanson, co-owner of Village Books. Thank you, Paul.

Paul

Yeah. Thank you, Neil. It's always a pleasure.

Neil

Oh, yeah, we'll do this again.

Paul

Excellent.

Neil

Yeah. Alright. Well, Christine, I know you got a lot of work to do, so I'm gonna let you go. Thank you for stopping in to be excited with me about the Open Book.

Christine

Oh anytime. As I've been telling everybody, bring a friend. Bring six friends with you to Open Book. There's room for everyone. Ferndale arts center is right off of, oh Ferndale Events Center, excuse me. It's right off of I5, easy to get to, lots of parking. This event is free of charge, there's no reason not to stop by and spend a little time getting excited about open books.

Neil

Yeah. Yes, that's wonderful. One of the wonderful things we do, The Whatcom County Library System does for the community.

Christine



I agree, thanks Neil.

(interlude music playing)

Neil

Well, that's our show. We want to thank our guests today. Christine Perkins, Executive Director of the Whatcom County Library System, and Paul Hanson, the co-owner of Village Books. If you'd like to find out more about the Open Book festival, coming Sunday, November 5<sup>th</sup> check our website [wcls.org/openbook](http://wcls.org/openbook). You can also check our website for this and past episodes of our podcast at [wcls.org/podcast](http://wcls.org/podcast). Until next time, this is Neil McKay saying we'll see you next time.