

So Many Books, So Many Options to Share

By Jill Brown, co-host of the in-person meetings of The No Book Club

To paraphrase 20th century novelist Henry Miller, books, like money, should be kept in circulation. Not only can a book be a friend; it can make friends for you as well. Books enrich the reader's mind and spirit and when passed on to another, the enrichment continues.

Book clubs can be traced back to the 400's BCE when Socratic Circles formed to study philosophy. The first recorded book groups in the United States began in the mid-1800s and the love of discussing a good book continued to grow. In 1996, using the primitive tech tool of network TV, Oprah Winfrey introduced the idea of people in different locales all reading the same book. Now 25 years later, book clubs using the Zoom platform have become commonplace.

The No Book Club is a fun alternative to traditional book clubs. Instead of reading the same book, participants share a book they enjoyed reading with the group. It's a terrific way to learn about authors and books of interest and to keep great books in circulation!

A collaboration of Edgewater Branch library, Friends of the Edgewater Library and Edgewater Village Chicago, originally The No Book Club began meeting at the library in August 2017. During the pandemic the original group, hosted by Tom Welch, Joanne Kitsos and Susan Leinwohl moved to a Zoom format. A robust number of readers continues in this virtual group, finding it a convenient way to meet.

Conversations last summer surfaced interest in reviving the in-person version of The No Book Group. On September 8, eight avid readers joined together at the library to share their love of reading, to exchange book titles and brief recaps of the storylines. Questions and comments create relaxed, inclusive discussions. Connections are made and community is established. Overwhelmingly, the in-person readers appreciate the opportunity to meet and chat with others who share the common interest of reading. Several in-person readers continue to log into the Zoom group as well at 1 p.m. on the last Monday of most months.

In four short months the in-person group has more than doubled to a list of 18 readers. If you'd like to join us for discussion and community, The No Book Group meets in person on the second Friday of every month at 10 a.m. in the Betty A Barkley Community Room at the Edgewater Branch Library at 6000 N. Broadway.

Sharing a great read is an easy icebreaker for meeting potential new friends. As Abraham Lincoln wrote, "My best friend is a person who will give me a book I have not read." Come and share your favorite read and increase your reading list!

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