

MAGAZINE

Stark Library's Julia Shaheen shares her love for cookbooks and young adult novels

Kelsey Davis The Repository

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Julia Shaheen has been an avid reader since she was a toddler. She is the literacy manager at Stark Library where she oversees the library's literacy programming and resources such as SPARK, Summer Reading Challenge, school readiness and more.

She also provides staff training, parent workshops and professional development for educators. Julia started out in journalism and transitioned to education before joining Stark Library in 2011. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Journalism and a Master of Arts in Education.

She loves sharing her love of reading, libraries, early literacy and cooking with anyone who will listen.

More: Stark Library's Derek Gordon shares favorite books, audiobooks

What is the first book you remember reading?

"Wacky Wednesday" by Dr. Seuss. I can picture exactly where I loved to sit in my kindergarten class to read that book. I must have read it 100 times that year. It's still a favorite of mine today.

What is the last book you read?

"Roller Girl" by Victoria Jamieson. This book was recommended to me when I was looking for a gift for someone who isn't a big reader. Before I gifted it, I read it. Turned out to be a riveting graphic novel about a young girl trying to figure out her path as she and her friend start to grow apart over the summer. It was funny (like laugh out loud funny!) and serious.

More: Commentary: Stark Library investing in the community

What section of the library or bookstore do you visit first?

Either the *cookbooks* or the *young adult section*.

What is the book that shocked you the most?

“Garlic and Sapphires: The Secret Life of a Critic in Disguise” by Ruth Reichl. This was the first nonfiction book that I couldn’t put down, which is why it shocked me so much! It’s the book that got me into narrative nonfiction. The way Ruth described some of the foods made me want to fly to New York and try out the restaurants (or at least attempt to make the food at home).

What do you tell people you’re reading?

Cookbooks.

But what are you actually reading?

Cookbooks! I love reading cookbooks. There is something fun about the stories that go into recipes and the reasons why the author wrote the book in the first place. And it’s so much easier than reading a blog, often filled with pop-up ads. Reading the cookbook seems more personal, like there was more time or thought put into it. Right now, I’m making my way through *“100 Cookies: The Baking Book for Every Kitchen, with Classic Cookies, Novel Treats, Brownies, Bars, and More”* by Sarah Kieffer.

More: Stark District Library's Worth Your Time for Oct. 3

Who is your favorite author and why?

Do I have to choose just one? It’s a tie between *Beverly Cleary* and *Roald Dahl*. I don’t know any other author I have read more (besides J.K. Rowling. But “Harry Potter” doesn’t count). Cleary’s “Ramona Quimby” is one of my favorite characters of all-time. I can still remember where I was sitting or what I was doing while I read their books. They have stuck with me since I was a little girl and helped shape my love of reading, characters and stories.