

## MAGAZINE

# Jo Schofield talks job at Stark Library, experience on Newbery Committee, favorite books

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Jo Schofield is the manager of the Main Library. Here she shares what her job entails, her experience being on the Newbery Award Selection Committee, her favorite thing about Stark Library and more.

**Q. I understand you were recently promoted to the Manager of the Main Library. Congratulations! Can you tell me what your job entails?**

**A.** I have one of the best jobs on the planet. As the Main Library Manager, I support programming, services and patron engagement at our Main Library in downtown Canton. I manage the adult services department, who are the friendly faces you see working the desk and helping you find your next great book when you visit. I also work with community partners and help to extend our reach into the community.

**Q. How did you come to work at the library in your current position?**

**A.** I began as a children's librarian right out of graduate school, and I worked at two other library systems before coming to Stark County. I joined the team here as the Branch Manager at our DeHoff Memorial Branch, which was a wonderful opportunity to work with a stellar team and passionate community. After a little over two years at DeHoff, I accepted the position here as Main Library Manager.

**Insider's look at Stark Library:** Lisa Szeles shares Stark Library's 'central inventory' concept, exciting things at library

**Q. I see you were on the Newbery Award Selection Committee last year. What was that like?**

**A.** Serving on the 2021 Newbery Committee was one of the highlights of my professional career. I have served on other book award committees before, but the Newbery Medal has a heightened prestige and historical legacy. We can all remember finding books as children with the sticker on the front, right? During my Newbery year, I read approximately 81,000 pages and read over 350 books.

In January of 2021, I met with 15 of the most intelligent and thoughtful readers from around the country to select our winner, “When You Trap a Tiger” by Tae Keller. The deliberations were mentally exhausting, but they were also exciting and invigorating. Sharing a love of reading and a passion for connecting children with high-quality books with other professionals is a joy, and I’m incredibly thankful to have been able to be a part of the Newbery legacy. I truly believe readers will be selecting “When You Trap a Tiger” from the Newbery shelves for years to come, much in the same way I picked up books like “The Midwife’s Apprentice” (Karen Cushman) or “A Wrinkle in Time” (Madeleine L’engle) when I was a little girl.

**Q. I also hear you’re working on your doctorate. Can you tell me more about this?**

**A.** I am almost two years into my doctorate in organizational leadership at the University of Dayton. I completed my dissertation proposal defense last night (in January), so I am in an extra joyful mood this morning! My dissertation focuses on staff engagement with readers’ advisory service in the public library, which is a fancy way of saying that I am examining how library workers help patrons connect with their next reads at the library. Many people ask me if I am looking to move into academia once I graduate since few public librarians earn a doctorate, but my motivation for doing my research and earning this degree is so that I can do my job better and help my team better support the community. I want to be a research practitioner, someone who does research and improves practice while also working as a public librarian.

**Q. If you could tell *About* readers one thing about Stark Library, what would you want them to know?**

**A.** Stark Library is a magical place where trusted and caring staff are here to help you with a wide range of assistance. We are one of the last free community spaces where you can enter and not be expected to purchase anything. We are a vibrant organization that offers assistance in finding your next read, learning new technologies, exploring new and fun learning opportunities and connecting with other people in the community.

**Q. What's your favorite thing about the library?**

**A.** The staff I work with here at the library are my favorite part of Stark Library. The library is so much more than the physical and digital offerings we offer to the community. I work with some of the brightest, most charming and excited group of people I've ever met. They have vast experiences and are immensely interesting. Best of all, they are committed to helping the Stark County community and are genuine in their desire to share their expertise. My favorite thing about the library? People and community!

**Q. Please share any other details about your job or Stark Library that you'd like About readers to know.**

**A.** The library is no longer a solely quiet and dusty building of old books. The public library is a vibrant community center where people can come together not only for assistance and research, but also to connect with others, improve our community and engage in life-long learning. If you haven't visited your public library recently, I strongly encourage you to stop in. If you're in downtown Canton, please stop in and say hello!

**On Jo's Bookshelf****What are you currently reading?**

I'm one of those readers who reads multiple things at one time depending on my mood, so I'm currently reading *Jennifer Egan's new book (due out in April) called "The Candy House: A Novel,"* a bunch of text books for school, and my best friend and I are reading together N.K. Jemisin's award winning sci-fi novel "The Fifth Season."

**Stark Library grants:** Stark Library gets grants for children's programs

**What's your favorite book of all time?**

Reading "*Love in the Time of Cholera*" by *Gabriel Garcia Marquez* shaped me into a hopeless romantic and captured a unique reading experience I have never been able to recreate; that special magic left a significant impression on me, and for that reason, it is my favorite book of all time.

**What is the book that shocked you the most?**

Anything illustrated by *Kadir Nelson* always shocks me because his illustrations are truly immaculate, captivating and fine art.

**What is your favorite book twist?**

*John Green's "Looking for Alaska"* has a twist part-way through that absolutely blew my mind. No spoilers, but wow!

**What is your guilty pleasure book?**

I really love anything by *Katie MacAlister*, but whenever I need to be immersed in a world with dragons and magic, I reread the *Aisling Grey series*. I even named my son after one of the dragons!

**What is the last book you read?**

This past year I served on the American Library Association's Notable Book Council, and I evaluated "*Matrix*" by *Lauren Groff*.

**What is the book you always come back to?**

"*Dragons Love Tacos*" by *Adam Rubin* is my favorite storytime book to perform in front of children; it is the perfect blend of exasperated pleas and hysterical interjections that keep adults and children laughing!

**What book have you read more than once because you love it so much?**

As a high-schooler, I read "*The Collector*" by *John Fowles*, which taught me the power of perspective and made me question everything I knew about evil in the world. I reread it every year to remind me that everyone has their own way of looking at the world, and everyone has their own motivations for their actions.

**What is next up on your reading list?**

I always have an enormous to-be-read (TBR) pile, but at the top of my list is *Meghan O'Rourke's "The Invisible Kingdom: Reimagining Chronic Illness"* (due out in March) and "*Special Topics in Calamity Physics*" by *Marisha Pessl*.

**What is the last book that made you cry?**

"*The Renunciations: Poems*" by *Donika Kelly* is an emotional and heart-wrenching collection of poems whose pain translates through the page in a way I've never experienced.

**What book would you take to a deserted island?**

I have always wanted to read “*Middlemarch*” by *George Eliot*, so I would bring that along to take advantage of the opportunity to savor a book beloved by so many.

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