

## ***“Librarian’s Shelf” by Rachelle McPhillips***

What should I read next?

“What should I read next?” is one of my favorite questions for many reasons. It means I get to have a conversation with a reader, and readers are some of my favorite people. I get to find out the likes and dislikes for this particular reader and I get to know a patron better.

It also means I get to have a conversation about books. I love books! Though I have less time than ever to actually read a book cover to cover, I read a lot about books and I love talking about them with other people who love books.

Answering, “What should I read next?” gives me a chance to play matchmaker. It makes my day when a patron comes back with the book I suggested and says, “I loved it.” When they don’t love it? I get another chance to learn more about the reader and we get to talk some more about books!

In addition to all the readers on staff, Columbus Public Library now employs a resource for leisure readers wondering what the heck they should read next. Gale’s “Books & Authors” works similarly to internet resources I’ve directed patrons to in the past, but has some neat features that have helped me answer patron questions. “Books & Authors” gives patrons a place to store reading lists, rate the books they have read, and find read-a-likes for favorite books and authors.

From the library’s homepage ([www.columbuslibrary.info](http://www.columbuslibrary.info)), click “Electronic Databases” in the left sidebar. On the right side of that page, near the bottom, there is a button for “Books & Authors.” Patrons using a computer in the library will have to click “Proceed” to get to the main page. From home, enter your Columbus Public Library or Plate County Bookmobile card number without spaces for access.

One of the hottest books recently is Kathryn Stockett’s, “The Help.” Book clubs are clamoring for this title and for those who have enjoyed it, I’d like to make suggestions for what to try next. I do a title search for “the help” and select the book. The first page summarizes the book, provides a link to more information about the author and lists the setting and subject headings. This title has a list of “expert picks” and a list of recommended reads that are similar.

At the top, I can select a tab for more about the author or another to read reviews. My favorite feature of “Books and Authors” is the “read-a-likes” tab. There are eighteen read-a-likes suggested for “The Help.” I can click on each suggestion and view the book summary and see subjects and setting for those, too. One of the suggested titles is “The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society” by Mary Ann Shaffer. Like “The Help,” this story includes a main character who is a writer, an historical setting, and people meeting in secret despite high risk.

If you have any questions about how to use “Books & Authors” or want to ask us what to read next, stop in or call us at 402/564-7116 option 2.