



AT THE LIBRARY

By Julie Winkelstein
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“Knowledge is of two kinds. We know a subject ourselves, or we know where we can find information about it.”

-Samuel Johnson, 1709-1784

In these times of budget cuts and shortened library hours, it seems appropriate that April 18 to April 24 is National Library Week. Started in 1958, by the American Library Association (ALA) and the American Book Publishers, the goal was to get Americans reading books again, instead of spending their time on “radios, televisions and musical instruments” (from the ALA website). (I, of course, couldn’t help wondering which musical instruments were being played by the non-reading Americans, but I haven’t found any information about that yet.)

Libraries all across the country, including the Bay Area, are participating in National Library Week, providing events as diverse as taiko drummers, visiting authors, storytelling and hiking. Many of the local libraries, including Contra Costa County, San Francisco, Alameda County, Berkeley and Oakland, belong to the Bay Area Library and Information System (BALIS)

and they have worked together on a campaign to promote libraries this week, using the slogan “Discover the Bay Area’s best value...your library.”

Part of this joint effort was a desire to emphasize the library facts they think are important. They have put together a list, which includes items like: Each year, Bay Area Libraries serve more than 17.1 million people, provide over 225,000 hours of free Internet access, and provide more than 21,000 free programs.

This weekend will be the final days of the 2004 National Library Week and there will be many events to choose from. For instance, on Saturday, April 24, there will be events at many of the Contra Costa County libraries, including El Cerrito, Concord and Pittsburg. And at 9 a.m. on Sunday, the Pleasant Hill Library will finish the week with a Fun Run/Walk for all ages, starting at Pleasant Oaks Park, behind the library.

The Albany Library will

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have two events on April 24. First, from 1 to 3 p.m., there will be a National Library Week reception, with refreshments for everyone. Then, at 3 p.m., Word for Word, a San Francisco Theater Group, will act out the "The Wonderful Story of Zaal," in a performance for all ages.

It is difficult to understand how libraries, which provide such diverse and critical services, can be faced with budget cuts. Several people have asked me what they can do to help and I think the best answer is to let your state legislator know you support library funding. Shorter hours, less materials and fewer staff will greatly undermine the services library users expect and need. When I stand back and look at what our governments - local, state and Federal - should be doing for us as a society, I think the opportunity to access information, in any format - book, in-person,

DVD, Internet - is the best way for all of us to participate in a democracy. Libraries are not just for homework questions or the latest video - they make it possible for anyone to learn more about anything. Good libraries make everyone rich. What more could you want? important one for our time."

Mary submitted this week's book review and it for David Fromkin's *A Peace to End All Peace*. She says it is "the account of military actions in the Middle East during World War I and the problems Great Britain had controlling its conquest after the war." Mary includes this quote in the review: "...in a predominantly Moslem world which could abide being ruled by almost anybody except non-Moslems, a foreign Christian country ought to have expected hostility when it attempted to impose its own rule..." Mary concludes with: "Fromkin's history is an