Brewton Public Library ready to rock

Madison Baxter, a staffer at Brewton Public Library, works on making posters for their Summer Reading Program. Adriane Johnson (not pictured) took the lead on Brewster Public Library’s poster designs.
Alabama Public Library Service Director Nancy C. Pack provided key context in the ongoing net neutrality debate at a forum that also featured Sen. Doug Jones, D-Ala. The forum, “A Conversation on Net Neutrality,” was held Friday, April 13 at the Ferguson Center auditorium on the campus of the University of Alabama, and was attended by students, faculty, and the public.

Pack moderated the forum and provided necessary background for the Alabama senator’s presentation by defining net neutrality and explaining how the practice benefits libraries and their users. Jones discussed legislation he is co-sponsoring to repeal the Federal Communications Commission’s (FCC) decision to end net neutrality. Also known as the Open Internet Order, net neutrality was adopted in 2015 to prohibit internet service providers from blocking, throttling, or discriminating certain online content. Repealing net neutrality could potentially lead to higher prices for access to the internet, slower internet traffic, and blocked websites.

At the forum, Jones defended his stance for a free and open internet by stating the internet’s essential use as a communications tool. Jones said that because the internet is a communications device, it should remain under the jurisdiction of the FCC. “A free and open internet is crucial for our nation to remain a leader in the global economy,” Jones said. “Restoring net neutrality is the right thing to do to protect Alabama consumers and to provide an equitable platform for companies of all sizes to compete for their customers.”

Jones, a vocal proponent of open access to information and equitable distribution of resources to all citizens, defeated Republican candidate Roy S. Moore in an election that garnered national attention in December 2017. Pack said Sen. Jones is supportive of social justice and the need to have internet access for everyone, regardless of financial, geographical, or political situations.

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Thasia is ruled by the Others, a dominant predatory race older and more powerful than humankind. They’re shifters, blood-suckers, and ancient forms so frightening they are spoken of in hushed whispered legend. They control Thasia. They decide which humans live and die. They should not be underestimated.

The Jumble, situated on the shores of Lake Silence, consists of a main building and a few remote cabins near the town of Sproinger, and Vicki DeVine received it as part of her divorce settlement. She longs for peace and quiet after years of marital turmoil, and she’s hoping the Jumble will not only be her haven, but a profitable business as well. Everything is fine until the day she walks in on her lodger, Aggie Crowe, heating a snack — a human eyeball — in the wave cooker. It turns out Aggie isn’t human after all; she’s one of the Others.

Meanwhile Vicki’s ex-husband, Yorik Dane, has put in motion a plan to illegally evict Vicki from her property by any underhanded means necessary. Once he’s reclaimed the Jumble, he and his new business partners will tear it down and build a fancy resort on the land. Yorik pays little attention to the original land agreement, the one that states the Jumble is in territory controlled by the Others.

When the rest of the body is discovered, police detectives attempt to implicate Vicki in the death, though it’s obvious the killer wasn’t human. Pushing her, trying to scare her, the detectives continue to hound Vicki far beyond what would be considered reasonable. It’s almost as if they want her to run.

Through it all, the Others watch, and a fight begins to brew between those aligned with Yorik and the older, and far more powerful, beings who have claimed Vicki as one of theirs.

The Others series is one of my favorites, and although Lake Silence takes place in a new town, with all new characters, the magic of that world is intact. The world-building in Lake Silence is more understated, but doesn’t assume readers are familiar with the series. The plot captivated me immediately with a very effective hook, and the plot continued at a steady pace that made it difficult to actually put the book down. Bishop has a talent for character development as well, and draws them deftly with omniscient narration, subtly filling in back story as needed.

**Recommended for:** Fans of The Others, fantasy, and mystery. Lake Silence is book six of The Others series, but it can be read as a standalone. Characters from the first five books are very briefly mentioned but prior knowledge of who they are, why they’re important, etc. is not necessary.

**Things to Note:** Vicki is recovering from years of verbal, physical, and sexual abuse doled out by her ex-husband. She has severe, sometimes crippling, anxiety around angry men. None of the abuse is graphically described, but readers know what happened within that marriage. There are graphic descriptions of dead bodies - and body parts - as well as some swearing, though very little considering the stresses going on in the plot.
Vanessa Landa, a seventh grader at Irondale Middle School, was awarded the bronze level President’s Volunteer Service Award at the April 17 Irondale City Council meeting.

Landa completed 50 hours of service as a teen volunteer at the Irondale Public Library. Irondale Mayor Charles Moore and Irondale Library Volunteer Coordinator Michelle Hamrick presented the award.

The award is an initiative of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) and is administered by the international nonprofit organization Points of Light. The Irondale Public Library became a certifying organization for the award in 2017 to recognize the commitment and service of its teen volunteers. Landa is the first recipient of the award for service to the library.

The Odenville Public Library has art classes each month, and in April the adult class created altered book “junk journals,” while the youth/teen group painted acrylic sugar skulls on canvas.

Betty Corley, Odenville Public Library director said, “There is always something going on at the library. Our patrons love the library and love the classes we offer — from music and art to handwriting analysis classes. This is the community center for Odenville.

In May, the Odenville adult group will make “Franken-paper” out of scraps.
In an interview with Birmingham Public Library Public Relations Director Roy L. Williams, Wayne Wiegand talked about his new book, *The Desegregation of Public Libraries in the Jim Crow South*, and how he hopes it educates people about those who paved the way for African-Americans and other non-whites to be able to use library services in Birmingham and across the nation today. The following is a transcript of the conversation:

**What message do you want to get across during your May 1 lecture in Birmingham?**

**Wiegand:** There are some hidden figures in history who have been kind of overlooked by civil rights historians, by Southern historians and by library historians. Let’s get them recognized for their contributions to their local communities before more of them die. A number of them have passed, but there are a whole bunch who are still alive like U.W. Clemon and Shelly Millender.

My hope is that Birmingham will recognize them for their contributions to local history when they helped desegregate the Birmingham Public Library. The same thing happened in Danville, Va., Greenville, S.C., Hattiesburg, Miss. Most of the places where I am visiting former protesters are showing up and many of them are being acknowledged for their contributions.

The back of the book has a list of names for every one of the sites we focused on in the book. A lot of people moved from the area they protested. The third message is we hope this book finally brings them some recognition.

**Tell the story of desegregation of Birmingham Public Library and how the Miles College students led the sit-ins.**

**Wiegand:** It started in the summer of 1962 when a black female named Lola Hendricks entered the Birmingham Public Library to check out a book and the library refused her because she was black. They told her to go to the black branch. Within a month, she and others filed suit in federal court to desegregate Birmingham Public Libraries and all public buildings.

We discovered in our research there are a whole bunch of young people who did these protests of segregation at public libraries and they’ve never been recognized. We hope this book finally brings them some recognition.

Here in Birmingham, many might not know that before he became Alabama’s first black federal judge, U.W. Clemon was involved in the movement to desegregate Birmingham public libraries.

**What inspired this book?**

**Wiegand:** On my previous book about libraries, *Part of Our Lives: A People’s History of the American Public Library*, it became obvious to me there was a tale that needed to be told about the desegregation of public libraries. While I did research using a library vendor called ProQuest Markets, I found a black newspaper database that had about eight to 10 black newspapers that were digitized. In searching public libraries I found all these stories of protests at southern public libraries that the national media and white newspapers were ignoring.

Black newspaper editors were making phone calls to these places asking what’s going on. The responses constituted the groundwork for research. In addition to that, we discovered a number of cases the NAACP filed to desegregate libraries. We knew if cases were filed in the local or federal courts they left a paper trail that we could follow.

**Were any of those cases in Birmingham?**

**Wiegand:** Yes, there was one. Although when the library desegregated in Birmingham, there was no reason to pursue it.

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**While that suit was pending, the**
following summer (1963) was the really violent in Birmingham. That’s when the city was nicknamed “Bombingham” by a lot of people and Bull Connor was fire hosing and sicking police dogs on black protesters. That spring was when Wyatt T. Walker, then the director of the SCLC, recruited a young teenager named Deenie Drew — her real name was Adine Drew — to case the Birmingham Public Library. She was a fair-skinned African-American and could pass as white.

Wyatt Walker had experience in desegregating a public library when he was the pastor of the Gilford Baptist Church in Petersburg, Va. He knew what was going on. He recruited her to case the joint. She remembered walking through looking down at her feet because she was so scared. On April 9, 1963, she and several other black students entered the library and sat reading at a desk undisturbed. Whites said nothing; librarians never approached them, so they left.

Walker didn’t like that because he wanted to force some type of reaction, so he did it again. This time he recruited U.W. Clemon and Shelly Millender among others. Records indicate Shelly Millender was kind of the spokesperson for the group of blacks who entered the library on April 10, 1963. That’s when the local photographer took pictures of the group after they entered the library and were sitting quietly at desks.

Shelly Millender engaged the librarian who told him you should be going to the colored library. Shelly said, “No, I want to use this library.”

The librarian must have called the police. Police came, but didn’t bother to arrest them. Because they weren’t arrested, the students left because they were there to be arrested. Unnerved, the librarian called a special board meeting the next day on April 11, 1963.

He said, “We’ve got black students coming in and I’ve chosen not to engage them because it appears there is no law that prevents them from being able to use the Birmingham Public Library main branch. What should I do?”

The library board at this time was a group of people who were concerned about the reputation Bull Connor was giving Birmingham nationwide. They said, “Why don’t we just integrate the library?” They made the decision to integrate the library that summer (1963). The surprise was it was during an extremely violent summer in Birmingham. The fact the library became integrated peacefully in the middle of that violent summer is kind of lost on people.

It was the sole site of racial conciliation in the middle of a town that was hosing African-Americans and turning dogs on them. The media, of course, was constantly looking for photos and images that attracted attention, and paid no attention to the integration of the Birmingham Public Library. So it kind of got lost in history.

Describe the book.

Wiegand: What did we do was follow the highest profile incidents of desegregation in public libraries that also had well-known civil rights figures in the story. In essence, first we cover the issue of Jim Crow libraries and how they evolved. Then we cover the resistance to desegregating public libraries before Brown vs. the Board of Education in 1954. Then, we have chapters covering states in general — Virginia, South Carolina, Tennessee, Alabama and Mississippi. We end up with a chapter exploring what the American Library Association did and didn’t do. We have a listing of all of the public libraries that desegregated. The epilogue summarizes the whole book and summarizes what this means for the future.

Do you see those who desegregated libraries as heroes, just like the foot soldiers who marched in Birmingham?

Wiegand: I do. The thing that is most consistent is that they were almost all kids. The adults are the vast minority. The kids were the vast majority. These kids ranged from 9 years old into their 20s but most of them were teenagers. They were sparked by the Greensboro, N.C. lunch counter sit-ins. The 1954 Brown vs. Board of Education decision certainly was a part of it as well, as was the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. They said, “Why can’t we use these facilities since federal law says we can.” These kids risked their lives to force their local public libraries to live up to their rhetoric of being free for all.

Where do we go from here in this fight for equality?

Wiegand: I don’t know that our book is a guideline for the future. What I hope is this can inform a number of people to recognize that public libraries had a role in the civil rights movement, and there are certain systemic racist practices that are built into library practice in part because they have not come to grips with their past on the issue of race. We hope this stimulates a discussion in the library profession about what they have done on the issue of race and reflect on that.

Any closing remarks?

Wiegand: Particular to Birmingham, I’d say when African-Americans protested certain public sites in the 1960s, many of them closed — swimming pools for example. But libraries that closed eventually reopened. Most of them became sites of reconciliation. For Birmingham, I’d point to the civil rights archives you have that are attached to the downtown public library. An irony is you’ve got Bull Connor’s papers in your Civil Rights museum. I find that extremely ironic. I know it was 20 years after the city library desegregated, Birmingham elected its first black mayor. He said, “We need to remember our past,” and he led the opening of the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute. There you have an evidence of the library eventually becoming a site for racial reconciliation.
Oneonta presents coding project

Oneonta Public Library Director Ricky Statham presented at the 51st Annual Fay B. Kaigler Children’s Book Festival on the campus of the University of Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg.

Statham discussed the library’s “Code a Human” program, which is a novel way to introduce children to various coding concepts and computational thinking.

The Oneonta Public Library noticed that several small libraries avoided coding programs due to perceived expense. They developed Code a Human as a no-cost program as a response.

Said Statham, “If you have a loaf of bread, a jar of peanut butter, a jar of jelly, and a plastic knife, you can have your own coding program.”