

Spotlight

Wednesday, May 30th

I have lived with a deep shame as a librarian since graduating from library school five years ago. Until recently, I had never read any of the Harry Potter books. I would panic and remain tight-lipped when patrons approached me wanting to chat casually about the series or even share favourite moments. I would laugh anxiously hoping I was demonstrating the proper amount of care and concern for the right characters and demonstrating the appropriate amount of scorn for others. Finally, this burden has been lifted.

Last week, the library held its first ever escape room based on the first book of the series, Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone (please note the use of the Philosopher's Stone rather than the Sorcerer's Stone title as it reflects a certain degree of snobbery that I am now very happy to feel entitled to). The escape room ran for a week and saw total of 13 teams and over 50 apprentice wizards. With my new found sense of belonging in the Potter World I delighted in some of the best team names including: Straight Outta Azkaban and Granger Danger. However, what struck me most about the response to the room was the enduring power a good story has on us. I was late to immerse myself in Hogwarts and feel a bit foolish to now be recommending the first book in one of the best-read series of all times to you but I do so to encourage you to revisit the magic of Harry Potter or whatever story has found a cozy place in your heart and never left. There are a lot of good and academic arguments for reading aloud with children, sharing books with teens, and setting aside time to read as an adult but none are as affective as seeing people gush over silly Hogwarts references and share stories about the first time they read which book and where. Books give us a sense of place, a sense of belonging, and a sense of self. Importantly, they also give us a window into other people, places, experiences, and worlds. They grow our capacity for compassion and self-awareness. They make the world a sillier, stranger, and more special place. So, if you haven't been to Hogwarts in a while – why not take a visit? And if Hogwarts isn't your place of choice stop by the library because there are a million more worlds waiting for you.

If you're interested in participating in the Harry Potter Escape Room, don't worry! You haven't missed your chance. We will be running more sessions in July and August. Contact the library for more information.

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