

Library Cats and Their Favorite Books

Ten literary cats give you the scoop on the books they feel are worthy of two paws up.

By Erika Sorocco

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It is no surprise that a cat who resides in a library would have a passion for books. But not all felines are easy to please; many are very particular about the novels chosen to surround them. To keep these 10 felines in story style, it is up to library staff and patrons to ensure that only the pick of the litter is available when kitty is present!

Judge Kitty. Fairplay Library, Fairplay, Colo.

Judge Kitty is a Fairplay Library celebrity. His picture appears on T-shirts, refrigerator magnets, calendar, and mugs, all of which are used to support fundraising for the new library building. Whene he's not hamming it up for the paparazzi, Judge Kitty likes to delve deep into the classics.

"Judge Kitty's favorite book is "Frankenstein" by Mary Shelley," said Patty Chapman, library director. "One of the high school English classes, as part of their study of the novel, prepared a mock trial of Dr. Frankenstein vs. the Monster complete with a real judge, and costumes and makeup for the student actors. ... Was the Monster evil by circumstances or did Dr. Frankenstein create evil? As the prosecution was trying to make its point that the monster was by nature evil, Judge Kitty, who generally avoids large crowds, walked through the courtroom and sat on the Monster's lap, thereby dispelling the evidence of evil."

Agatha "Agie" Christie. Willamina Public Library, Willamina, Ore.

While Agie can't get enough of snoozing on newspapers spread haphazardly over reading tables, the calico female prefers to spend most of her time surrounded by children's books starring felines. Some of her absolute favorites are "Mr. Pusskins" by Sam Lloyd, Lois Simmie's "Mr. Got to Go" and "Mr. Got to Go and Arnie," "Groucho's Eyebrows" by Tricia Brown, and Denise Fleming's "Mama Cat Had Three Kittens."

Alex. Arkansas School for the Blind Library, Little Rock, Ark.

Alex arrived at the Arkansas School for the Blind, an educational institution for blind students ages 3-21, in October 2003. At the time he was a 3-week-old kitten needing to be bottle-fed at all hours of the day and night. Virtually overnight he was promoted to Assistant Library Cat. When the school's longtime Head Library Cat, Big Footsie, passed on, Alex took his place in both body and literature choices.

"Go Home! The True Story of James the Cat" by Libby Meggs is Alex's favorite book, according to librarian Susan Loesch. "After an article about Big Footsie appeared in our state newspaper last fall, Footsie received an autographed copy of 'Go Home!' from the author, and it became everyone's favorite," Loesch said. "Also, 'Hero Cat' by Eileen Spinelli, 'Cat Heaven' by Cynthia Rylant, 'Castaway Cats' by Lisa Wheeler, 'The Dog Who Had Kittens' by Polly Robertus, and 'Animal Rescue: The Best Job There Is' by Susan Goodman. And, of course, 'Alex's Story,' 'Big Footsie's Story,' 'Piper's Story' and 'Daisy's Story' — books I have written for the students about our library cats!"

Patrick, known as Paddy. Pacelli High School Library, Stevens Point, Wisc.

Despite the fact that Paddy is missing one eye, the 11-year-old Maine Coon does not allow the condition to interfere with his love of books. Aside from being an avid fan of "Dewey: The Small Town Library Cat Who Touched the World," Paddy can often be found with his nose buried in T.S. Eliot's "Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats" and is also quite fond of the mysteries penned by Elizabeth Peters — he simply can't get enough of the Egyptian cats who pop up in all of her stories.

Top Library Cat, known as TLC. Broken Bow Public Library, Broken Bow, Neb.

You can always find TLC at the center of celebration. He has stood front and center at the wedding of a former library board member, and always works the room as host when poets, authors and various other speakers stop in for a visit. But when he's not entertaining others, TLC finds that the writing of Lillian Jackson Braun is entertaining him. Of course, he's

never against perusing literature that stars fellow felines or fluttering fish!

Emma. Lyme Public Library, Lyme, Conn.

Perhaps Emma, also referred to as Queen Emma, Her Royal Highness, or The Boss, has allowed her various titles to go to her head. While the 12-year-old Maine Coon can't get enough of Rita Mae Brown and Sneaky Pie Brown's Mrs. Murphy novels, she also fancies reading about herself as much as possible. In fact, her favorite book is "Working Cats of Southern New England" by Barbara E. Moss and Melissa E. Moss for the sheer fact that there is an entire chapter devoted solely to her.

Hannah. William A. Clark Memorial Library, UCLA, Los Angeles

Named after 18th century playwright, moralist and poet Hannah More, Hannah does not easily fall into enjoyment with mere fiction. She prefers to conduct research while she reads, so her favorite books are fairly out of the ordinary. Her favorite, according to reference librarian Carol Sommer, is "Bird songs = Aves ambrosiana: A Poetical Ornithology," by Miller Hageman, circa 1905. "This is a manuscript that has the musical notation of actual bird songs, and also includes poems based on the songs and, in some cases, illustrations of birds," Somer said.

Star. J. Robert Jamerson Memorial Library, Appomattox, Va.

Star is the voice behind Appomattox County's "Star's Pick of the Litter," a library feature that promotes books of Star's choosing that focus on animals. Star is a lover of books that feature mischievous kitties. Two of his favorites are "What's That Awful Smell" by Heather Tekavec and "Lucky Russell."

Browser. Pine River Public Library Branch at Kitchigami Regional Library System, Pine River, Minn.

Browser is a large cat who loves to eat, which would explain why his taste for books lies not only in the feline-friendly fiction crafted by Lillian Jackson Braun, but includes Joanne Fluke's Hannah Swensen whodunit's, a series that stars a small-town bakery owner with a taste for sweets!

Louie. Freedom Public Library, Freedom, N.H.

Louie is a sharp fellow. The 6-year-old male tabby knows that he's unable to read books himself, despite the fact that he adores them; therefore, he looks for books that encourage library patrons to read to him. Currently his two favorites are "Three Stories You Can Read to Your Cat" and "Three More Stories You Can Read to Your Cat." Both are written by Swan Miller and illustrated by True Kelley.

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