

# Connections



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## BLIND DATE WITH A BOOK

It's that time of year again! Blind Date With A Book starts on Thursday, January 10, with a booth across from the Capitol Cafe. There will be a wide range of genres available in multiple formats, including audiobook and large print, so be sure to stop by to check one out.

After you've completed your "date," be sure to fill out the "Rate Your Date" card and send it back through inside mail with the book prior to February 28 in order to be eligible for a prize.

If you are unable to stop by the booth, just send an e-mail to [statelib@nd.gov](mailto:statelib@nd.gov) and we will send one to you right away.

## DIGITAL PUBLIC LIBRARY OF AMERICA

Submitted by Trevor Martinson

The North Dakota State Library (NDSL) is excited to announce it has joined the Digital Public Library of America (DPLA), through a partnership with the [Big Sky Country Digital Network \(BSCDN\)](#) consortium in Montana. By partnering with BSCDN, NDSL joins other contributors like the Montana State Library, Montana State University, University of Montana, and the Montana Historical Society.

Through this partnership, the items from NDSL's four digital collections on [Digital Horizons](#) – ND County & Town Histories, ND Memories, ND State Documents, and ND School for the Deaf Banner – are now a part of the 29+ million items available online on DPLA.

NDSL joins the many other partners already contributing to DPLA, such as the National Archives and Records Administration, Smithsonian Institution, New York Public Library, Library of Congress, Internet Archive, Harvard, and the Minnesota Digital Library – which includes the Minnesota Historical Society, University of Minnesota, and South Dakota State University.

NDSL is paving the way for other North Dakota institutions and their digital collections to join DPLA as well. Additional members of Digital Horizons and other institutions on different platforms have expressed interest in joining, and their content may soon follow. If your institution would like to contribute its digital collections to DPLA or if you have any questions on this project, contact [Digital Initiatives](#) at the State Library.

[DPLA](#) is an online repository that connects people to the hidden riches held within libraries, archives, museums, and other cultural heritage institutions. DPLA is a one stop shop that allows you to instantly and easily search hundreds of separate digital collections, containing millions of items, from across the country. DPLA has a user-friendly website that can be utilized for education, genealogy, lifelong learning, and scholarly research.

On DPLA, you can do a general search to access items or you can browse topic, partner, or exhibitions. DPLA has [guides](#) to help you get started and to get the most out of their robust website. DPLA also has a [Primary Source Sets](#) resource on their website which is specifically catered to educators and students – complete with teaching guides for use in the classroom.

[Click here](#) to browse the nearly 70,000 items available from the Big Sky Country Digital Network on DPLA. To view the 2,000+ NDSL items available on DPLA, visit <http://bit.ly/ndsldpla>

## DATABASE SPOTLIGHT: NEWSSTREAM

**Newsstream** is the newspaper database that the State Library subscribes to for your convenience. This database has the most popular newspapers in the country as well as local ones, such as the Bismarck Tribune and the Grand Forks Herald. This is a great place to find those New York Times articles without having a subscription to the newspaper. It has everything that the subscribers would get except the photographs and the ads.

The database has the most recent issues of each newspaper and it will even tell you how far back the paper is digitized (generally through the 1980s). What most people don't know is that the database also covers Magazines, Scholarly Journals, Podcasts, Trade Journals, and more. So, not only can you get newspapers without having to pay extra but you can take that information and do further research within the same database. Sign up for a free account in order to save your favorite newspapers and articles. All you need to access the database is a state or public library card.

Check it out! This database could be your new spot to read the morning newspaper!

### AGENCY TRAININGS

Submitted by Angie Houser

With the start of the legislative session, the State Library would like to remind everyone that we are available for trainings. The Continuing Education Coordinator can come to your office and teach you and your staff how to navigate the library databases, use the library catalog, and how to request materials. The trainings are typically 30 minutes long but can be tailored on request for length and content. Trainings can also be done over Zoom if needed. However, if you just don't have the time to do a training check out our YouTube channel for short videos that will get you started with your research.

Contact Angie for trainings at [ndsitrain@nd.gov](mailto:ndsitrain@nd.gov)

### LIBRARY OF CONGRESS PROJECT

Submitted by Abby Ebach

The Library of Congress is using crowd-sourcing to expand access to its digital collections. Users are asked to transcribe various historical writings, review them for corrections, and tag the texts for ease of discovery. The transcribed texts help researchers locate helpful documents as well as let the casual browser find some new gems. Since many people find reading historic handwriting difficult, the transcription process allows a broader audience to view the collections.

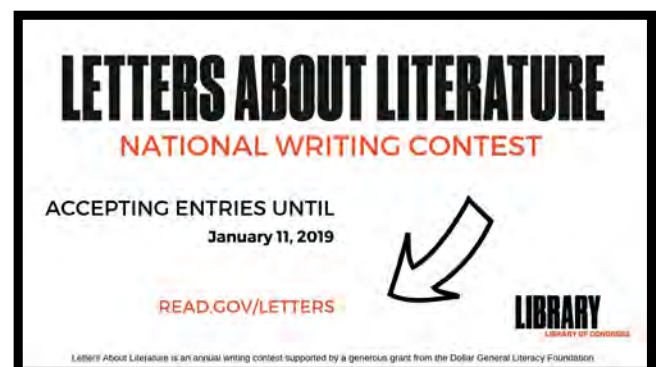
People around the world can help LOC transcribe, review, and tag the letters by simply logging on to <https://crowd.loc.gov/>. There is no training required.

## LETTERS ABOUT LITERATURE

Letters About Literature is a reading and writing contest for students in grades 4-12. Students are asked to read a book, poem, or speech and write to the author, living or dead, about how the book affected them personally. Letters are judged on state and national levels.

Submit your letter before January 11!

For guidelines, official rules, and additional information, please visit [read.gov/letters](http://read.gov/letters)



## “The Handmaid’s Tale” by Margaret Atwood

Reviewed by Abby Ebach

I finally did it; I jumped on the bandwagon and decided to read *The Handmaid’s Tale* before watching the Hulu series. Going into this book, I didn’t know what to expect beyond a puritanical government and the suppression of female characters. It turns out, though, that I didn’t need anything more than that.

*The Handmaid’s Tale* captures the experiences of those that live in the Republic of Gilead. Gilead strives for the ideals brought forward in the biblical book of Genesis, and thus, men are considered hierarchically superior to women. The women have their own social strata that is highly dependent on if they are considered ‘sinners’ and if they are able to have children. Infertile women of high esteem are Wives to the Commanders while other infertile women may be “Unwomen” who work in the fields or “Marthas” who work in the home. Fertile women who have not challenged the new government and religion are Econowives who are allowed to live with their husbands and children. The other fertile women are the Handmaids who are assigned to the house of a Commander for the sole purpose of providing the household with a child through a ritualistic ceremony.

The world is complex with its unspoken rules. Handmaids are not allowed to read or write and must cater to the Wife of their Commander. No eye contact is allowed between the Handmaids and other people as their role is viewed as atonement for their past sins. Most notably, Handmaids are not allowed to use their original names. Instead, they are given the names

of ownership by their commander. In the case of this novel, Offred literally means “The Handmaid of Fred.”

Offred narrates this tale, and she tells the reader about both the present and how she remembers her past. She remembers falling in love and raising a child with her boyfriend. She tells of how they tried and failed to escape the Eyes—government spies—that tracked them down. Most vividly, Offred remembers her time at the Red Center where fertile women are trained by the Aunts to become Handmaids. The Red Center is where they were indoctrinated into this new way of life and religion. While some women embraced the new structure with open arms, others were more resistant. Offred often wonders what happened to her feminist best friend Moira who tried to escape the Red Center. In the present, though, Offred shows the reader a world of unexpected violence, compliance, and fear that has been brought forth under this new religion. As her relationship with her Commander changes and she develops deeper relationships with the house hand, Nick, and her walking partner, Ofglen, Offred begins to learn that Gilead isn’t as infallible as she had originally believed.

*The Handmaid’s Tale* has had a resurgence in popularity that stems primarily from the Hulu series and the recent announcement of a sequel. However, the cultural discussion surrounding feminism and Atwood’s striking critiques of violence, suppression, and freedom make it a relevant addition to your 2019 To Read list.

***The Handmaid’s Tale* is available from the State Library in multiple formats: a regular print book, large print book, audiobook, and an eBook on [RBdigital](#).**

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