

Library CEO shares gratitude for community's continued and growing interest in literature

I read an article in The Atlantic recently titled, "The End of Reading is Here," where the author Rose Horowitz examined how society has entered a postliterate age. Where people still look at words daily on screens, but deep and sustained reading for pleasure has collapsed, threatening independent critical thinking and cultural memory.

Although I am deeply concerned about the amount of screen time — particularly the consumption of polarizing content — and the evident impact on our attention spans, I don't want to believe the end of reading is here. It certainly isn't the case at Shelburne Public Library, where month over month we are seeing an increase in membership and circulation.

July, for example, was a very busy month:

• We welcomed 48 new members

• We had 5,178 visits to the library

• We circulated 6,089 physical books (that's 2,100 more books than in June, thanks to all the families stocking up on summer reading).

And last week was lively with literary events!

On Friday, we hosted our TD Summer Reading Club finale where over 75 people came to celebrate a summer of reading with pizza, prizes, and a bird of prey show.

On Sunday, we helped a wonderful team of volunteers host the annual Author in the Hills of Mulmur event,, which sold out a month early and drew over 150 people. As I listened to best-selling authors Linwood Barclay, Terry Fallis, and Heather Marshall share their passion, dedication and the extensive research that went into crafting their compelling stories, I was reassured that the end of reading is not here.

In fact, I believe we will see an increase in reading as I can't think of a better act of resistance to the rapid rise of AI (particularly in the arts), algorithms, and inauthenticity than reading a real story crafted by a real human.

So, thank you. Thank you to those reading this column, to those who attend our programs, those with library cards and stacks of library books (whether they be on your coffee table or downloaded to your device). Thank you for helping us foster a love of literacy and lifelong love of learning.

And lastly, thank you to Nancy Frater of Book Lore for connecting our community with authors like Barclay, Fallis and Marshall, whose powerful storytelling thrills us, educates us, moves and inspires us, and most importantly connects us — both to the written word, and to each other.

This week's column was written by Shannon McGrady, CEO of the Shelburne Public Library.