

Welcome to TimesPeople [Share and Discover the Best of NYTimes.com](#) 3:12 AM [Log In or Register](#)
 No, thanks

HOME PAGE MY TIMES TODAY'S PAPER VIDEO MOST POPULAR TIMES TOPICS [Get Home Delivery](#) [Log In](#) [Register Now](#)

The New York Times **U.S.** Search All NYTimes.com

WORLD U.S. N.Y. / REGION BUSINESS TECHNOLOGY SCIENCE HEALTH SPORTS OPINION ARTS STYLE TRAVEL **JOBS** REAL ESTATE

AUTOS
 POLITICS WASHINGTON EDUCATION



Advertise on NYTimes.com

Santa Monica Library Offers Books That Talk Back

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS
Published: October 17, 2008

Filed at 5:30 p.m. ET

SANTA MONICA, Calif. (AP) -- You know those people you can read just like a book?

Well, on Saturday you will be able to borrow one of them when this city turns its main library into a "Living Library."

Fourteen "living books" will be on hand in this trendy, liberal city, representing an encyclopedia of knowledge on such subjects as nudism, Buddhism and foodism. That's because one of them is a real, live nudist, two are Buddhists and another is a vegan.

Library visitors will be allowed to check out any of the 14 people for up to 30 minutes. The hope is that library patrons will learn something about the culture and beliefs of other people, erasing stereotypes in the process.

"A personal conversation breaks down barriers and connects two strangers who might not otherwise have the opportunity to speak to each other," said Rachel Foyt, an administrative analyst at the Santa Monica Public Library.

Want to know what it's like to be homeless? There will be a couple of folks who can speak volumes about it. What are celebrities really like? Ask the celebrity publicist. What are Oaxacan-Americans like? Ask the person whose roots are in the Mexican state of Oaxaca (wah-HAH-ka).

This being a library, the talking books will have to do their talking outside in the courtyard, or in study rooms, so they won't disturb readers.

People who can't finish in 30 minutes may book another session if no one else has placed a hold on the person. Patrons who return their living book late won't be fined, but Foyt said the library may revoke the souvenir T-shirt they get for taking part.

The idea was thought up by a group of young people in Copenhagen, Denmark, in the 1990s after one of their friends was stabbed during a night out. Since then, Living Libraries have brought people of different backgrounds together in numerous countries.

"Everyone wants to know if the nudist will be wearing clothes," Foyt said with a laugh. (Sorry, yes, he will be.)

There won't be any bra-burning by the feminist, either. That went out in the 1970s, said Lindsey Horvath, the 26-year-old president of the Hollywood chapter of the [National Organization for Women](#). But Horvath said she is surprised at how many people still cling to that image.

"Something I frequently encounter is that people feel that we're of a previous generation," she said. "Or we're really angry or not part of the mainstream culture or we all hate men. I couldn't be more different than that. I'm originally a Midwest American.

SIGN IN TO E-MAIL OR SAVE THIS

PRINT

ARTICLE TOOLS SPONSORED BY

THE SECRET LIFE OF BEES

[More Articles in US »](#)

Advertise on NYTimes.com

MOST POPULAR

- E-MAILED BLOGGED SEARCHED
- Op-Ed Contributor: Buy American. I Am.
 - David Brooks: Thinking About Obama
 - Paul Krugman: Let's Get Fiscal
 - Real Deal on 'Joe the Plumber' Reveals New Slant
 - In Downturn, Families Strain to Pay Tuition
 - Who's on Line? Even the Referees Don't Know
 - Reaching an Autistic Teenager
 - Editorial: The Acorn Story
 - 36 Hours in Paris
 - Home Prices Seem Far From Bottom
- [Go to Complete List »](#)

The New York Times **REAL ESTATE**
 nytimes.com/realestate

For sale in ... Belize

Also in Real Estate:
[Gifts for skittish buyers](#)
[Some REIT's like the smallest spaces](#)
[How talks can avert defaults](#)

ADVERTISEMENTS

Welcome to TimesPeople
What's this?

Share and Discover the Best of NYTimes.com

3:12 AM

Log In or Register
No, thanks

Margaret Oakley will be there with some of her favorite vegan recipes, in part to show meat-eaters that she doesn't really hate them.

Lesleigh Owen will be there too. She is a self-proclaimed "fat activist," who stands up for the rights of plus-size people. She concludes her e-mails with a quote from the Muppets' Miss Piggy: "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder, and it may be necessary from time to time to give a stupid or misinformed beholder a black eye."

KNOW
What would you like to know now?
Learn online. Visit us at nytimes.com/knownow

The New York Times
Knowledge Network

INSIDE NYTIMES.COM

Not that any trouble is expected Saturday. But just to make sure, library officials are issuing a set of rules borrowers must agree to:

"The reader must return the book in the same mental and physical condition as borrowed. It is forbidden to cause damage to the book, tear out or bend pages, get food or drink spilled over the book or hurt her or his dignity in any other way."

^-----

On the Net:

www.smpl.org

www.living-library.org

[More Articles in US »](#)

Enjoy the convenience of home delivery of The Times for less than \$1 a day

U.S. »



Arapaho Tribe Teaches Its Language to the Young

NEW JERSEY »



Dairy Land Yields to Wine Country

OPINION »

Campaign Stops

While on his journey westward, Bill Barich encounters beauty, anxiety and a reverence for tradition.

WORLD »



Courts Compound Pain of China's Tainted Milk

OPINION »



Letters: Voters Weigh In After the Last Debate

ESCAPES »



Zippering Through the Treetops