MORE HPLD SUMMER READING ADVENTURE 2026!

High Plains Library District

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40TH ANNIVERSARY

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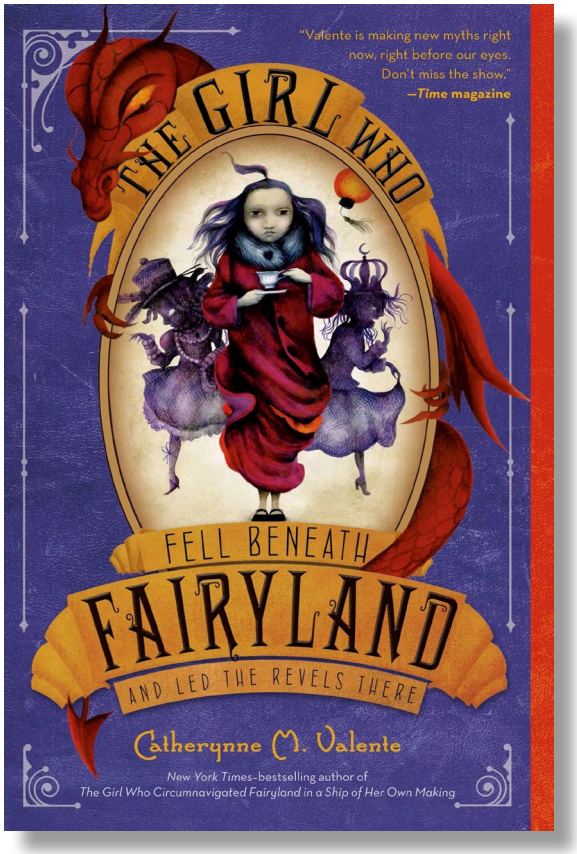
Finding Fairyland... AGAIN

In Which an Imaginative Library Worker Reads Several Books, Considers the Perilous Physicks of Growing Up, Finds Something Lost, and Makes a Choice, But Not Necessarily in That Order



By Case Rasek
Library Associate & Library Page
Farr Regional Library

Twelve years ago, I found Fairyland.

As a tween, sifting through Summer Reading prizes at Farr Regional Library, I stumbled upon Catherynne M. Valente's The Girl Who Fell Beneath Fairyland and Led the Revels There, the second book in her wildly underrated Fairyland series.

It's about a girl named September who casts no shadow, who's been to Fairyland once before, and now needs to venture into the depths of Fairyland's Underworld—full of moonlight, strange creatures, and glittering parties called Revels—and attempt to fix a problem that's draining the magic from Fairyland-Above.

As a preteen and a teenager, I latched onto this book immediately. It is, without exaggeration, a feast for the imagination. I pored over the beautifully illustrated pages (courtesy of renowned artist Ana Juan), and I even purchased and read the first book, too, because I liked the sequel so much.

I rode with September on the back of Imogen, the Leopard of Little Breezes, as she was whisked away by the cleverly clad, gentlemanly Green Wind. Through whorls of autumn leaves, between ocean

waves, my imagination leapt, grew wings, flew. Writing letters to my friends over summer vacations, I would doodle parts of the book between chunks of my writing to share the magic.

Then, something wondrously alchemical happened: I grew up.

I eventually bought the third book of the series. I did, you must understand, expect to read it. I had every intention to.

But, by then, I was treading the oftentimes thin line between growing up and Growing Up. With so many others around me peeling their imaginations from themselves like dried up onionskins, I was ashamed of reading something so whimsical. So, for a while, the books were consigned to my shelf.

Time passed. I picked them up again some years later during a flowery May, trying to start at the very beginning to refresh my memory, and only made it through a few chapters. It simply wasn't time yet. Again, the books were shelved.

But the Green Wind was coming for me, as he had come for September.

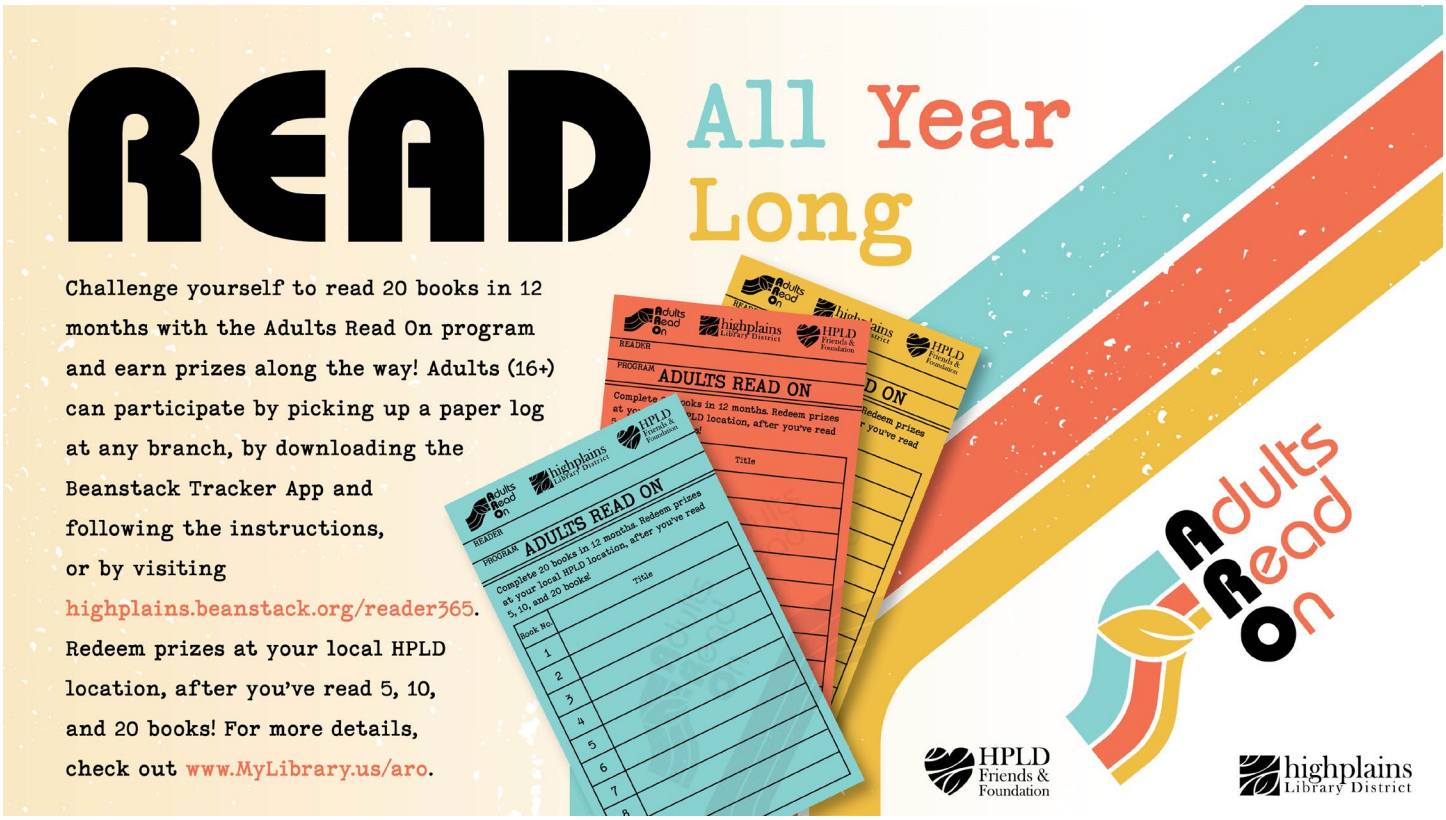
My shoulders kept brushing up against Fairyland's colorful feathers in the most unexpected places. I discovered, quite accidentally, and through a severely disjointed taste in music, an entire album written about the first book of the series: Wonders by S. J. Tucker. On rainy evenings, I'd let the music fill my ears, and see, out of the corner of my eye, the books' spines glowing on the shelf. The little cameo of September, dark-eyed and wrapped in her wine-colored cloak, poised as if to whisper to me of spicy tea in giant samovar houses.

Other things spoke to me of Fairyland, too. The light fixture in my room, a ribbed glass globe, reminded me of September's love of pumpkins and of the glass moonkin made into soup for her by the Hreinn, a race of reindeer people who live in a glass forest. And Ell, wonderful Ell, September's great red librarian-wyvern friend—his dear draconic form lingered often in my thoughts.

Then, last year, around Midsummer, I knew it was time. Slowly, carefully, I pulled the first book off the shelf once more, flipped its cover open, and this time, without warning, it swallowed me whole.

I bet you can name a dozen stories about characters falling or tripping or descending gracefully into a strange, magical world. It's a genre convention at this point. We bookish folk call it Portal Fantasy.

Now, imagine putting all those stories into a big, boiling cauldron and stirring languorously, throwing in pinches of post-modernism and heaps of magical realism here and there for seasoning, and making sure not to leave any stray bits of Wonderland or Oz or Narnia too big for chewing.



That's Fairyland. It's a place where you can ride sentient high-wheel bicycles into the sunset and bargain with witches on beaches of glinting treasure. In its underworld, Fairyland-Below, you can ride on electric eels, get lost in goblin markets, and attempt to wake sleeping princes from the darkest cellars of the cosmos. And I haven't even mentioned the Moon.

But under all the gold and gauze, Fairyland is simply what it always has been: a real place in the mind.

It exists, for me, as a playground for my imagination, no less important than it was 12 years ago. Turning pages, I'm there with the Minotaur and the Glashtyn, but I'm also somewhere different, somewhere that exists entirely within myself. That kind of place is special. It's made of adolescent summers, soft couches, raindrops on linden leaves, and slanting afternoon light. September and her adventures have opened gates into worlds almost as vivid as the one I experience when I'm not nose-deep in a book. And that is what never fails to amaze me about the power of reading.

I am reminded of Valente's works whenever I start to feel the magic draining from the world, when the shadows feel heavy and I'm lost in the labyrinth of life's monotony. The vibrant imagery and marvelously unrelenting imagination of Fairyland might not completely revive my spirit, but it's a great start.

Because what are books for if not for falling into? Now that I'm a grownup, I don't care if my reading choices are too whimsical. I want my books bright, curious, magical. I want to be amazed at the vibrancy of my own mind, to seek out the wondrous, the strange, to ponder the unfathomable. Even when it hurts. And especially when all feels hopeless. I'll remember something September once said, having already lost one of her shoes and leaving the human world behind: "...it's the wonders I'm after, even if I have to bleed for them."

As I write this, a breeze blows past my window. It's a delightfully verdant kind of breeze, rich with the scent of grass and wet leaves after the rain. And I can almost taste it now, hearty moonkin soup brewing in a sparkling forest. Salt spray from a violet-green sea far, far beyond the confines of Longitude and Latitude.

I'm older now, yes. And, oh, what wonders there are still to be found.

Summer Reading Adventure 2026:

Don Bluth Films & Preserving Our Stories

by Hannah Pratt

When I heard that the theme for this year's Summer Reading Adventure was going to be *Unearth a Story* and all my coworkers started discussing program ideas about dinosaurs and archeology, I was immediately reminded of one of my favorite childhood films, T*he Land Before Time*. I know the studio probably overdid it with so many sequels after the success of the original, but like *Air Bud*, the first one seemed to really stick with me (I think about that scene when he throws the basketball and abandons the dog on that island about once a week still).

As an adult services librarian, Summer Reading is a fun time for me to think about programming for younger audiences, but there are plenty of programs that are geared for all ages. You can check out the whole selection of Summer Reading Adventure programs here. It might be an overstatement, but I think most people, no matter their age, can connect to this year's theme, especially if we are unearthing some of our favorite stories.

So, let's go back in time to when an animator by the name of Don Bluth and his team of talented artists left Disney to start their own rival animation company in the early eighties. Bluth churned out some strange and oddly sad children's classics including: *The Secret of Nimh* (1982), *American Tail* (1986), *The Land Before Time* (1988), *All Dogs Go to Heaven* (1989), *Rock a Doodle* (1991), *Thumbelina* (1994), *The Pebble and the Penguin* (1995), *Anastasia* (1997), *Bartok* (1999), and *Titan A.E.* (2000)

When you go back to rewatch *All Dogs Go to Heaven*, as I have done recently, you might be surprised by how weirdly philosophical it is for a kid's movie. Don Bluth's characters were complex and often driven by intergenerational growth and survival instincts. Bluth was behind many animated films made around the time of the Disney Renaissance that looked similar enough to the bildungsroman princesses of that era, but felt a little stranger and left me asking 30 years later, "was that the actual story or is this a Mandela Effect?" Turns out it was real and still enjoyable to revisit those characters.

If you are looking for a story to unearth this summer, I would recommend finding one that reminds you of being a kid. Maybe that's not a Don Bluth dinosaur film, but there's probably something that your local library could provide to help you reminisce. It could also come from the new digitalization services launching out of the High Plains Library District Library and Archive branch this summer. This service will allow you to bring in your old cassette tapes, VHS home movies, photos, and slides to convert into a digital file. Our hope is that with this new location opening on June 27th, we will be able to unearth lots of stories and local history that's been hidden away in old format media.

There's more in store as we begin to roll out services to help preserve your stories for future generations to enjoy. Whether that's rewatching a mouse named Fivel or listening to audio of your grandparents for the first time in years from a VHS recording, we hope the library is a resource for your stories.

A Confession of hoopla® Misuse

This is a hard admission to make, but here goes:
I, as a library user and staff member, have been wasting taxpayer dollars.

Now, this isn't because I'm doing something like buying Corvettes on the HPLD dime. Ever since HPLD stopped charging overdue fines, it's been tough to buy luxury automobiles on a library salary, despite what they told me in library school. What a pack of liars. I was told there would be hot tubs, exotic automobiles. I was told that I should start considering major appliances disposable, such were the paychecks!

No, my wasting of taxpayer money isn't all that thrilling, it's a matter of me checking out digital items that I never use. That's how I'm wasting taxpayer dollars.

I suppose that, on the scale of criminal activity, this ranks somewhere below not returning a shopping cart to the corral, somewhere above violating the Denver law that says it's illegal to loan your vacuum cleaner to someone else (which turned out to be a big hoax, probably started by someone who was really particular about their vacuum and didn't want to loan it, so they just hid behind a fake law. I know that's what I did as an older brother when one of my younger siblings wanted to split a candy bar 50/50. "I'd love to, but it's gotta be proportional to our sizes. It's the law ¯_(□)_/¯").

See, I recently found out that each time I check out an item on Libby or Hoopla, it can cost the library money. How? Well, let me explain!

Wait, the Library Pays for Every Copy of a Digital Item?

Yep!

There are a few different ways this works.

In some cases, we can buy a digital item once, check it out as many times as we like, and it works pretty much the same way as a print item.

But that's rare these days, and most digital items are more limited.

For example, sometimes we'll pay a price for an audiobook, and that price will be for a certain number of checkouts.

Or, the price might cover a certain time period, so we'll have that audiobook in the catalog, and we can check it

out as many times as possible during that period (however, we are restricted to checking it out to one person at a time, hence those passive-aggressive moments with Libby telling me how long I have to wait for something. Our relationship is on the rocks lately, I don't want to talk about it).

And sometimes, items might be available before we've paid anything, and we pay per checkout. This is how Hoopla works. You browse what's available, and when I click to check out It's Jeff: Jeff-Verse from Hoopla, the library gets a bill. This system has big pluses and minuses. On the plus, it lets us make a huge number of things available because we don't have to buy them upfront. On the minus, it can be unpredictable. It can be hard to budget for Hoopla because some months it gets used a lot, and other months it's used a bit less.

Shouldn't The Library Be Able to Buy a Digital Copy and Then Own It, Do Whatever With It?

…maybe?

I mean, I can see both sides of the argument here. On one hand, buying digital things and not really owning them is a pet peeve of mine, dating back to the days when I would buy songs on iTunes and only be able to burn them to disc like 6 times. How am I supposed to gift everyone I know with a sweet mix CD of songs they don't want for Christmas? I know way more than 6 people. I know, like, double digits people, okay? I'm that popular.

Or Kindle books. I should be able to buy a copy of a digital book and then put it on whatever device I want, right? When I buy something in print, it's not like Amazon can restrict how many times I read it or loan it out to other people.

It stinks, it's annoying, and it does make me go to a dark place and contemplate the dubious merits of a criminal life in digital piracy when I feel like I'm living in a dystopia where I'm not allowed to own anything, even if I'm willing to pay to own it.

On the other hand, maybe we can dial back the drama a bit and look at some other factors.

I mean, okay, authors aren't typically super rich these days. With some notable exceptions, like Chip Zdarsky, who I don't KNOW to be rich, but c'mon, the way he's always swanning around, letting his fancy watches clunk on the table during interviews, bragging about writing Batman AND Daredevil AND Howard the Duck. You know that dude is loaded.

But for most authors, it's a tough financial proposition to write for a living, and I can kind of see how there's a big gap between the idea of needing to buy print copies, enough to satisfy all library users, and occasionally needing to replace well-worn books — I can see a difference between that and buying ONE digital copy of a book ONE time and using it forever and ever.

I suppose there's also a difference between me buying and owning a copy of something as an individual and a library buying and owning a copy of something with the intent to lend it out to, well, everyone.

As with most things, the best scenario is probably somewhere between a situation where authors get nothing for their work and a situation where costs are as high as they can be at times (often, a digital copy of something will cost 3 to 4 times as much as a print copy!).

I mean, the elephant, or maybe Penguin (Random House), in the room here is that publishers and the companies behind software that makes ebookin' easy take a chunk, so it's not all about greedy Zdarsky types lighting cigars with $100 dollar bills and lighting candles with $100 bills and even taking a wad of hundos camping because money burns about as well as newspaper, so why not?

Overall, what I'm saying is that, Yes, we pay for every copy, and in some cases, we pay for every checkout. It's probably not the best, most ideal situation, but it's reality. Lousy reality, always being below my expectations…

How Has Learning All This Changed How I Use Digital Items

I still check stuff out on Libby, Hoopla, Kanopy, all that good stuff, but I do try and be a little more choosy.

Not in terms of what I read or watch. I still read and watch

total garbage pretty regularly.

What's changed is that, in the past, when it was the end of the month, I would just use all my remaining Hoopla checkouts, no matter what. I kind of figured this was for the best. I mean, hey, I'm entitled, right? They're MY checkouts!

But now…now I try and check things out as I go, one thing at a time, and then I wait to check out the next thing until I'm done.

Or maybe I'll do a couple things at a time, one audiobook and one comic, because I use those in different contexts. And I listen/read with different snack accompaniments. See, when it comes to a comic, you really want to get into your salty/crunchy snacks, while with an audiobook, the crunch kind of disrupts the listening experience, and…

We don't need to get into my hyper specific lifestyle here, the point is that instead of using up all of what's available to me, just because it is there for the taking, I'll leave a checkout or two on the table now and then if I don't think I'll get to it right away. Because it saves the library a couple bucks.

My other tip: If the same item is in both Libby and Hoopla, I'll wait for the Libby version if I can. Most Libby items are purchased for a timespan, so the more checkouts on those, the better.

Don't get me wrong, I'm not telling you to stop using these resources, and I'm definitely not telling you to feel guilty about using them. They exist for your enjoyment!

And a missed checkout happens to all of us, we check stuff out and don't manage to get to it, or like 6 holds come in at once and it's feast or famine. We end up renewing something digital because we were at the peak of the drama when the checkout period ran out.

I don't feel guilty when I make an attempt and fail, I've just stopped setting an alarm and checking out ALL THE COMICS on the last day of the month.

It's like this: I'm treating digital checkouts a little less like I'm on Supermarket Sweep, or, for my fellow kids of the 80s and 90s, Nickelodeon's Super Toy Run where the goal was to stuff as much as I could into a cart, and instead to treat digital resources like I'm going to the store and weighing whether or not I'm actually going to eat the food I'm putting in the cart. Which is boring, nowhere near as fun as running down the aisles of Toys R Us, screaming and jamming things into a shopping cart, but welcome to adulthood, I guess. Put down that Domino Rally Ghost Ride set, here's a cabbage.

I'd just encourage you to (I can't believe I'm actually saying this) be a little like me, just in this one, library-oriented way. I would actively DIScourage you from being like me in almost any other way, but when it comes to not using all your checkouts all the time, just know that it's okay. Really. You're not missing out on anything by leaving behind those items you don't read/watch/listen to anyway, and it does help the library stay under budget and on track.

LOCATIONS

LIBRARIES Visit www.**MyLibrary.us/locations-and-hours** for library hours

Administration & Support Services
2650 West 29th Street
Greeley, CO 80631
1-888-861-READ(7323)

Carbon Valley Regional Library
7 Park Avenue
Firestone, CO 80504
1-888-861-READ(7323)

Centennial Park Library
2227 23rd Avenue
Greeley, CO 80634
1-888-861-READ(7323)

Eaton Public Library
132 Maple Avenue
Eaton, CO 80615
(970) 454-2189

Erie Community Library
400 Powers Street
Erie, CO 80516
1-888-861-READ(7323)

Farr Regional Library
1939 61st Avenue
Greeley, CO 80634
1-888-861-READ(7323)

Fort Lupton Public & School Library
370 S. Rollie Avenue
Fort Lupton, CO 80621
(303) 339-4089

Glenn A. Jones, M.D. Memorial Library
400 S. Parish Avenue
Johnstown, CO 80534
(970) 587-2459

Grover Library
402 Chatoga Avenue
Grover, CO 80729
1-888-861-READ(7323)

HPLD Library & Archive
2650 West 29th Street
Greeley, CO 80631
1-888-861-READ(7323)

Milliken Public Library
266B S. Irene Avenue
Milliken, CO 80543
(970) 857-1950

Hudson Public Library
100 S. Beech Street
Hudson, CO 80642
(303) 536-4550

Kersey Library
332 3rd Street
Kersey, CO 80644
1-888-861-READ(7323)

LINC Library Innovation Center
501 8th Avenue
Greeley, CO 80631
1-888-861-READ(7323)

Nantes Library
703 Birch Street
Gilcrest, CO 80623
(970) 737-1035

Northern Plains Public Library
216 2nd Street
Ault, CO 80610
(970) 834-1259

Outreach
2650 W. 29th Street
Greeley, CO 80631
1-888-861-READ(7323)

Platteville Public Library
504 Marion Avenue
Platteville, CO 80651
(970) 785-2231

Riverside Library & Cultural Center
3700 Golden Street
Evans, CO 80620
1-888-861-READ(7323)

AFFILIATED LOCATIONS

Hazel E. Johnson Research Center at the City of Greeley Museum
714 8th Street, Greeley, CO 80631
(970) 350-9220

Poudre Learning Center
8313 West F Street, Greeley, CO 80631
(970) 352-1267

PUBLIC COMPUTER CENTERS

Briggsdale Community Library
210 Main Street, Briggsdale, CO 80611

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or call
1-888-861-7323
for an appointment.