Fiction

*All the Light We Cannot See* by Anthony Doerr: This is a story that jumps back and forth between time/place/people, which makes it all the more compelling to read. It is a beautifully told story that takes place in Germany and France before and during WW II. It goes back and forth between the lives of Marie-Laure, a blind French girl, and Werner, a German orphan living in a coal mining town. The children’s lives intersect with the passage of time in an excellent historical fiction tale.  
*Audrey’s pick*

*Brown Girl Dreaming* by Jacqueline Woodson: A graceful, free verse, rhythmic telling of an African-American girl’s experiences growing up in the 1960s and 70s, both North and South. Although this is a youth/children’s book about a ‘brown girl,’ this white adult could easily empathize with the thoughts, struggles and experiences that are narrated in lyrical language by a young girl. Awards: National Book Award 2014 (Young People’s Literature), Newbery Honor, NAACP Image Award for Outstanding Literary Work - Youth/Teens. This book is a treasure that I will read again and again.  
*Davonne’s pick*

*The Century Trilogy* including *Fall of Giants, Winter of The World, and Edge of Eternity* by Ken Follett: If you are interested in history and love a good story then you will get hooked on this series by Ken Follett. His books follow the lives of five interrelated families beginning during World War I and continuing through World War II to the end of Twentieth Century. In this series he describes the lives of an American, Russian, Welsh, German, and British family and how events impacted each of their families.  
*Roger’s pick*

*Family Furnishings: Selected Stories 1995-2014* by Alice Munro: A large and intriguing — collection of succinct, all encompassing, yet detailed stories of simple people living in small towns and rural areas of Ontario. Munro’s characters interweave life experiences and decisions — right and wrong — that are recognizable to all of us. Many of the stories are worth reading twice.  
*Davonne’s pick*

*The Lewis Man* by Peter May: The second (*The Blackhouse* is #1) of Scottish screen writer turned novelist Peter May’s Lewis trilogy, *The Lewis Man* is likewise set in the Outer Hebrides. A body is found during the cutting of peat that is at first thought to be thousands of years old, until the coroner finds a tattoo of Elvis Presley on one arm. Former police detective, Fin Macleod has just returned to his native island, and begins to help investigate the mystery of the murdered man. Evocative descriptions of land and weathers put the reader right on the island. The characters and story are skillfully developed and revealed to a very satisfying ending.  
*Judith’s pick*

*Lila* by Marilynne Robinson: Revisiting the beloved characters and setting of Marilynne Robinson’s novels, Gilead and Home, Lila is a moving expression of the mysteries of existence. Lila, homeless and alone after years of roaming the countryside, steps inside a small-town Iowa church, the only available shelter from the rain, and ignites a romance and a debate that will reshape her life. She becomes the wife of a minister and begins a new existence while trying to make sense of the life that preceded her newfound security.  
*Sarah’s pick*
Playing James by Sarah Mason: Getting a recommendation from a patron for a good read is always refreshing. I tried this and want to pass it on. Light, funny, set in UK, so there is a freshness added to the romance due to nuances in vocabulary and setting. Playing James is the story of a newspaper reporter being assigned to shadow the local police detective and write a daily diary of the encounters. The PR idea is that the police force gets positive press, and the paper increases readership. It works, despite (or maybe because of) the usual complications – he’s getting married in 5 weeks, and she is accident prone. Judith’s pick

Rain Reign by Ann M. Martin: A lovely story about Rose and her dog, Rain. Told from the perspective of an 11-year-old girl with Asperger’s Syndrome as she navigates her challenging life using coping mechanisms such as her relationship with Rain, and her focus on homonyms and prime numbers. The heart of the story is the strength of character which leads her to pursue a worthy goal regardless of personal consequences. This is the book discussion choice for the new, upcoming Youth Department Book Club. Davonne’s pick

Someone by Alice McDermott: A deceptively simple and quiet book about the ordinary life of Brooklyn-born Irish-American, Marie Comerford beginning in the 1920s. She shares her scattered memories of the full range of human experiences, as we view her myopic movement (both figurative and literal) through the unsympathetic world. Davonne’s pick

Something Rich and Strange: Selected Stories by Ron Rash: Full of searing, crisp, revelatory stories set in Appalachia, this book speaks universal truths that are also stark and tragic, yet almost beautiful. Davonne’s pick

Station Eleven by Emily St. John Mandel: A story that connects characters while shifting between the pre and post-apocalyptic world, twenty years apart. The focal point is a Shakespearean troupe that travels around Michigan, often along the lakeshore, offering classic plays and music to the scattered survivors of an altered world. The struggle for survival after the pandemic prompts thoughtful consideration of the definition of a civilized world. This was recently chosen by the Michigan Humanities Council for the next “Great Michigan Read”. Beth and Davonne’s pick

NON-FICTION:

The Art of Asking by Amanda Palmer: a little bit diary, a little bit TED talk, and a little bit how-to guide. Palmer, Neil Gaiman’s wife and one-half of the band the Dresden Dolls, had a well-publicized break from her record label and asked her fans to front the money for her next venture via Kickstarter. She asked for $100,000 and received $1.2 million. From this successful experiment in asking for help, she produced a sort of philosophy of asking, built on trust and reciprocity. Sarah’s pick

Living the Secular Life: New Answers to Old Questions by Phil Zuckerman: Excellent review and explanation of how people who embrace a non-religious life still have a strong moral compass that makes them good parents, and conscientious, patriotic Americans who have strong commitments to being constructive citizens. Zuckerman discusses the current trend of the role of religion in politics, the rise of irreligion in today’s society, and reminds the reader that religious freedom was one of the primary intentions of the founding fathers as they crafted the Constitution and Bill of Rights, and that separation of church and state is essential for a successful democracy. Linda’s pick

Not my Father’s Son: a memoir by Alan Cumming: I don’t read many “celebrity” biographies, but found this actor’s (The Good Wife, Cabaret, etc.) very personal memoir both engrossing and disturbing. In it Cumming recounts his life growing up on a rural Scottish estate under the brutal reign of his physically and emotionally abusive father. He blends this story of childhood trauma with that of his acting career and coming to terms with his sexuality, and the mysteries surrounding the heroic life of his maternal grandfather, as profiled in 2010 on a popular British celebrity genealogy series (Who Do You Think You Are?). This is a story of family secrets, heartbreaking courage, and ultimately, forgiveness. I listened to this on audio, read by the author. Beth’s pick

Vivian Maier: Street Photographer by Vivian Maier: Viewing the movie, Finding Vivian Maier, which illustrates the discovery of a previously unknown photographer, led me to this book of her photographs. Beginning with a brief summary about Vivian Maier and the discovery of the photos, the bulk of this photographic display depicts exceptionally poignant black & white streetscape images of Chicago in the 1950s and 60s. Davonne’s pick