

# News Release: American Library Association

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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A new weekly column of book reviews, written by members of the American Library Association staff, is being distributed to over 700 daily newspapers by Newspaper Enterprise Association (NEA).

The column, called "About Books," has appeared every week since late October in newspapers ranging in size from the Detroit News to the Shelbyville Indiana News. NEA, the largest independent feature news service in the country includes "About Books" as part of its regular service to client papers.

Each column contains reviews of three-to-five recently published books on a related subject. Accompanying the review is "What Americans are Reading," a library "best-seller" list which shows which fiction and nonfiction titles are most frequently requested at libraries. One-hundred-and-fifty libraries throughout the U.S. participate in the survey by keeping weekly tabulations of book requests.

According to Robert Wedgeworth, ALA Executive Director, the column is an extremely significant venture for the Association because "While the ALA provides an extensive book reviewing service to the library profession, this is the first time that its experienced staff will write for national newspapers. This is also the first time a continuing national poll has been undertaken to track what books are most requested in libraries from coast to coast. Finally, the ALA's unique, on-going communication with libraries makes it possible to pin-point new reading trends and review books

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which people are actually interested in--interests which may not be reflected in other reviewing media."

Each column contains critical evaluations so the reader can make an informed decision as to whether a book is worth checking out of the library. Also, because each column encompasses several books on a common subject, the reader knows how new books, for example, on American medicine, stack up against each other.

Recently published reviews have covered a wide range of fiction and nonfiction--everything from detective stories to divorce to unusual reference books to the woman's side of Watergate.

The column is under the editorial direction of Carol Felsenthal, Professional Assistant in the ALA's Public Information Office.