

## 'Guerrilla libraries' pop up along Meewasin Trail

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The StarPhoenix

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Anya Hamman steps over the painted rocks under the Broadway Bridge and points to a hollow under one of its massive pillars.

In the hollow stands two full book shelves attached together in the shape of a traffic sign, one of six collections around the city that Hamman and her team call guerrilla libraries.

"We hope people will take them, trade them, maybe even make something with them," she said.

Hamman and four others started the project as part of a larger group called Finding City, where groups of artists come up with annual projects that encourage people to engage with their city.

"There are these things that people do every day, like walk somewhere or bike, and they see these familiar things around them, but they never really stop to think why they're there, or who made them. It's really an opportunity to take some time to find out more about the place you live in."

There are six spots in total, all located along the Meewasin Trail - two collections on each end of the train bridge, one on the east end of the University Bridge, a library set into the historic ski jump near the university, near a power box by the Mendel Gallery and a large collection in the pillar on the south side of the Broadway Bridge.

The guerrilla libraries are like an interactive outdoor art project, says Hamman.

"My favourite projects are the ones that are out in public, not in galleries. Not everyone is comfortable going into an art gallery."

She has been telling people to take their dates there.

"It's totally free and you get to go on a nice romantic walk."

The idea for the libraries came after Pike Lake resident Shaunna Raycraft threatened to burn her inherited collection of 300,000 unsorted books if she didn't get help sorting and donating them. They drove out to her residence along with dozens of others during Raycraft's big sort and handpicked books for their collection.



CREDIT: Richard Marjan, The StarPhoenix  
Anya Hamman checks out a book from the installation under the head of the Broadway Bridge in Saskatoon on Friday.

"We wanted to give new life to something that's being thrown away ... We wanted to rescue the books. We didn't want her to burn them. We're all book lovers. The more people that take them the better."

Some books were chosen for the subject matter. The ski jump contains sporty books, and Hamman says they originally intended the Broadway library to be located closer to the beach so they picked materials that were playful and would suit a day at the beach, like romance novels and a book on massage.

Others were chosen more for the esthetic value, like the beautiful old red-covered books set into the steel girders of the Train Bridge.

There are similar minilibraries in Toronto and across the U.S. built by a group called Little Free Library, dedicated to promoting literacy and a sense of community. Run on a take-a-book, leave-a-book principle, their libraries are about the size of bird houses. Plans and schematics are available on their website.

Hamman says they wanted guerrilla libraries to be on the Meewasin Trail because it is used by the entire city. Many of the shelves were also made with materials found near the sites.

"The one under the university bridge we built right there. We took the books, and we found this old rusted grocery trolley and some sticks and we built a shelf," she said.

The guerrilla libraries have only been in place for a few days and already the reaction has been strong and positive, says Hamman.

"We thought we would get in trouble. We didn't think people would take it really seriously, but we thought people would come up with a reason why we have to take it down. The fact the community is reacting positively to this is great. We will feel fairly satisfied with the project even if the city makes us take it down."

An exhibition of guerrilla libraries and other Finding City projects will be on display at the SCYAP and Gordon Snelgrove Art Galleries from July 19 to Aug. 3.

Receptions with performances will be held at SCYAP on July 19 from 7 to 9 p.m., and at Snelgrove on July 20 from 7 to 10 p.m.

For a map of library locations, find this story online at [TheStarPhoenix.com](http://TheStarPhoenix.com).

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