

New books from locals dominate literary scene

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The local lit scene is a heady one these days, with area authors regularly making best-seller lists, scads of A-listers heading to town for appearances, new libraries being built and a bevy of book festivals.

No wonder we were ranked No. 7 in last year's "America's Most Literate Cities" study by Central Connecticut State University. Add these to your reading and to-do lists:

Humor with a wry twist: Expect explosions of laughter when Calvin Trillin headlines the Mercantile Library's 20th annual Niehoff Lecture 7 p.m. Saturday. The staff writer for *The New Yorker* and "Deadline Poet" columnist for *The Nation* can make any audience - or reader, for that matter - laugh out loud with his trenchant observations on life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, whether writing about five-way Cincinnati Chili or Karl Rove.

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The dinner at the Hilton Cincinnati Netherland Plaza Hall of Mirrors is a black-tie fundraiser for the membership library (www.mercantilelibrary.com) and is \$150 members, \$175 others.

The children's hour: Cincinnati is awash in terrific children's book illustrators and writers, some of whom we'll hear from this fall. Andrea Cheng's picture book "Tire Mountain" (Boyd's Mills Press, \$15.95, out now) is the story of an eyesore transformed into a playground. David Mack's "Shy Creatures" (Feiwel & Friends/Holtzbrinck, \$16.95, out now) is straight from the pages of his comic book, "Kabuki: The Alchemy," and is a winsome picture book about a shy girl who wants to grow up to treat shy monsters. In Will Hillenbrand's "Cock-a-doodle Christmas" (Marshall Cavendish, \$16.99, October), a quiet rooster finds his voice when a miraculous birth takes place.

Teen spirit: Sharon Draper has two new teen novels: "Fire From the Rock" (Dutton, \$16.99, out now) takes place in Little Rock during the desegregation of its high school in 1957 and "November Blues" (Atheneum, \$16.99, October) is second title in a trilogy about the consequences of a high school pledge stunt. Ellen Schreiber's campy Vampire Kisses series continues with "Vampire Kisses 4: Dance with a Vampire" (HarperCollins, \$15.99, out now), which finds Goth girl Raven fending off more vamps in Dullsville and the start of a Manga spin-off "Vampire Kisses: Blood Relatives, Vol. 1" (HarperCollins/TokyoPop, \$7.99, October).

History plus: Former Enquirer reporter Randy McNutt has written a number of books about music in the region. His newest, "The Cincinnati Sound" (Arcadia, \$19.99), has a foreword by longtime Cincinnati disc jockey Jim LaBarbara and spins from the 1920s forward to the 1980s. It's mostly about the heydays of the '40s and '50s. Complementing it is a package of 15 historic postcards (\$7.99), featuring photographs from the book that's launching the new "Postcards of America" line from the publisher.

Crafts with attitude: Subversive crafts book - think "Stitch and Bitch" - have become wildly popular, and Cincinnati publisher F&W has taken note. Among new titles this fall is "Anti-Craft: Knitting, Beading and Stitching for the Slightly Sinister" by Renee Rigdon and Zabet Stewart (North Light Books, \$22.99, November). It includes tongue-in-cheek but doable designs such as a black duct-tape corset and beaded skull necklaces.

If You Can't Say Anything Nice: "Alice" by Stacy A. Cordery (Viking, \$32.95, Oct.) is the first biography in two decades of the vivacious, outspoken and politically and media savvy Alice Roosevelt Longworth, the eldest daughter of president Theodore Roosevelt. The Longworth in her name came from her marriage to wealthy Cincinnati Nicholas Longworth.

Power couple: One of the most talked about couples of the 20th century was Gerald and Sara Murphy. The American ex-pats were the models for Dick and Nicole Diver in F. Scott Fitzgerald's "Tender is the Night" and were known as stylish, smart, loyal, warm and always on the cutting edge. They attracted an army of writers and artists, from Cole Porter to Pablo Picasso. Their lives are chronicled in "Making it New" (University of California Press, \$60 hardcover, \$34.95 paperback) an illustrated collection of essays. The local connection? Sara was Sara Wiborg of Cincinnati, whose father was the Wiborg half of the famed Ault & Wiborg printing company.