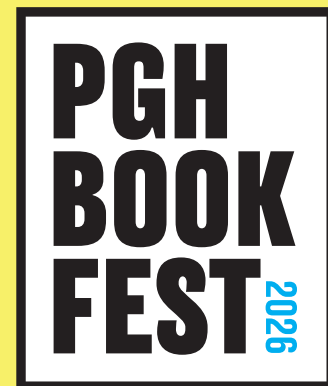


# Your Story Awaits...



**May 30**



[pghbookfest.org](http://pghbookfest.org)

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Thank you to our donors and supporters!

Barbara Footer and Marshall Cohen  
Made in PGH

# Letter from the Director

## Dear Readers,

Welcome to the 2026 Pgh Book Fest — otherwise known as your official excuse to wander around talking about books all day.

We're thrilled to have you here, whether you came to meet your favorite author or discover new books to add to your TBR.

Inside this program, you'll find the full lineup of the day's events: author talks, panels, workshops, book signings, and so much more. If you need help shaping up your Festival itinerary, we have you covered. Take our quiz to discover your perfect day at the Festival, or explore our curated pathways for yourself.

This Festival wouldn't be possible without our staff, volunteers, sponsors, authors, poets, and, most importantly, book lovers just like you. We're incredibly grateful for the people who help make Pittsburgh such a strong home for storytelling and literacy.

We hope you leave Pgh Book Fest with new connections and maybe a few more books than you planned on (it tends to happen). Most of all, we hope you feel at home in our community of readers.

Enjoy the Festival,

Mary Monaghan

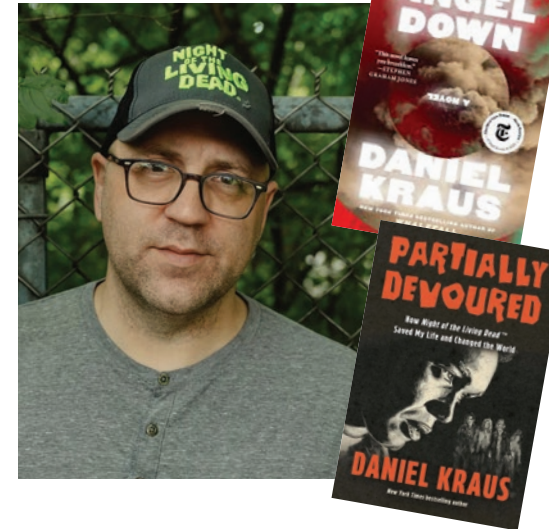


# Meet Our Headlining Authors



## Meg Medina

Meg Medina served as the 2023-2024 National Ambassador for Young People's Literature. She is the author of many notable works for young readers of all ages, including her newest middle-grade novel and first fantasy, *Graciela in the Abyss* and Newbery Medal-winning and bestselling book, *Merci Suárez Changes Gears*. The daughter of Cuban immigrants, she grew up in New York and now lives in Virginia.



## Daniel Kraus

Daniel Kraus is a *New York Times* bestselling writer of novels, TV, and film. His latest novel, *WHALEFALL*, was a Best Book of 2023 from NPR, the *New York Times*, Amazon, *Chicago Tribune*, and more. He has cowritten novels with Guillermo del Toro and George A. Romero, and has won the Bram Stoker Award, Scribe Award, two Odyssey Awards, and more. Kraus also won the 2026 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction for his novel *Angel Down*.

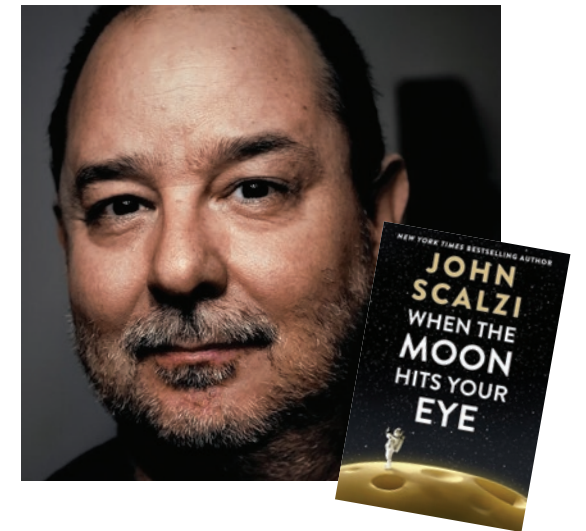
## Steven Rowley

Steven Rowley is the *New York Times* bestselling author of *Lily and the Octopus*; *The Editor*; *The Guncle*, winner of the Thurber Prize for American Humor and Goodreads Choice Awards finalist for Novel of the Year; *The Celebrants*, a Today Show Read with Jenna book club pick; *The Guncle Abroad*; and the novella *The Dogs of Venice*. He resides in Palm Springs, California.



## John Scalzi

John Scalzi is one of the most popular science fiction authors of his generation. His debut, *Old Man's War*, won him the John W. Campbell Award for Best New Writer. His *New York Times* bestsellers include *The Last Colony*, *Fuzzy Nation*, *Redshirts* (which won the 2013 Hugo Award for Best Novel), *The Last Emperox*, and 2022's *The Kaiju Preservation Society*.

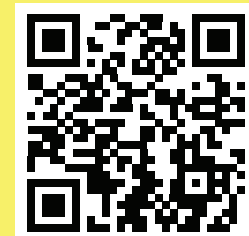


## Catherine Newman

Catherine Newman is the author of the novels *Sandwich* and *Wreck*, which were both instant *New York Times* bestsellers, the novel *We All Want Impossible Things*, the memoirs *Catastrophic Happiness* and *Waiting for Birdy*, the middle-grade novel *One Mixed-Up Night*, and the best-selling how-to books for kids *How to Be a Person* and *What Can I Say?*. She writes the *Crone Sandwich* Substack newsletter.

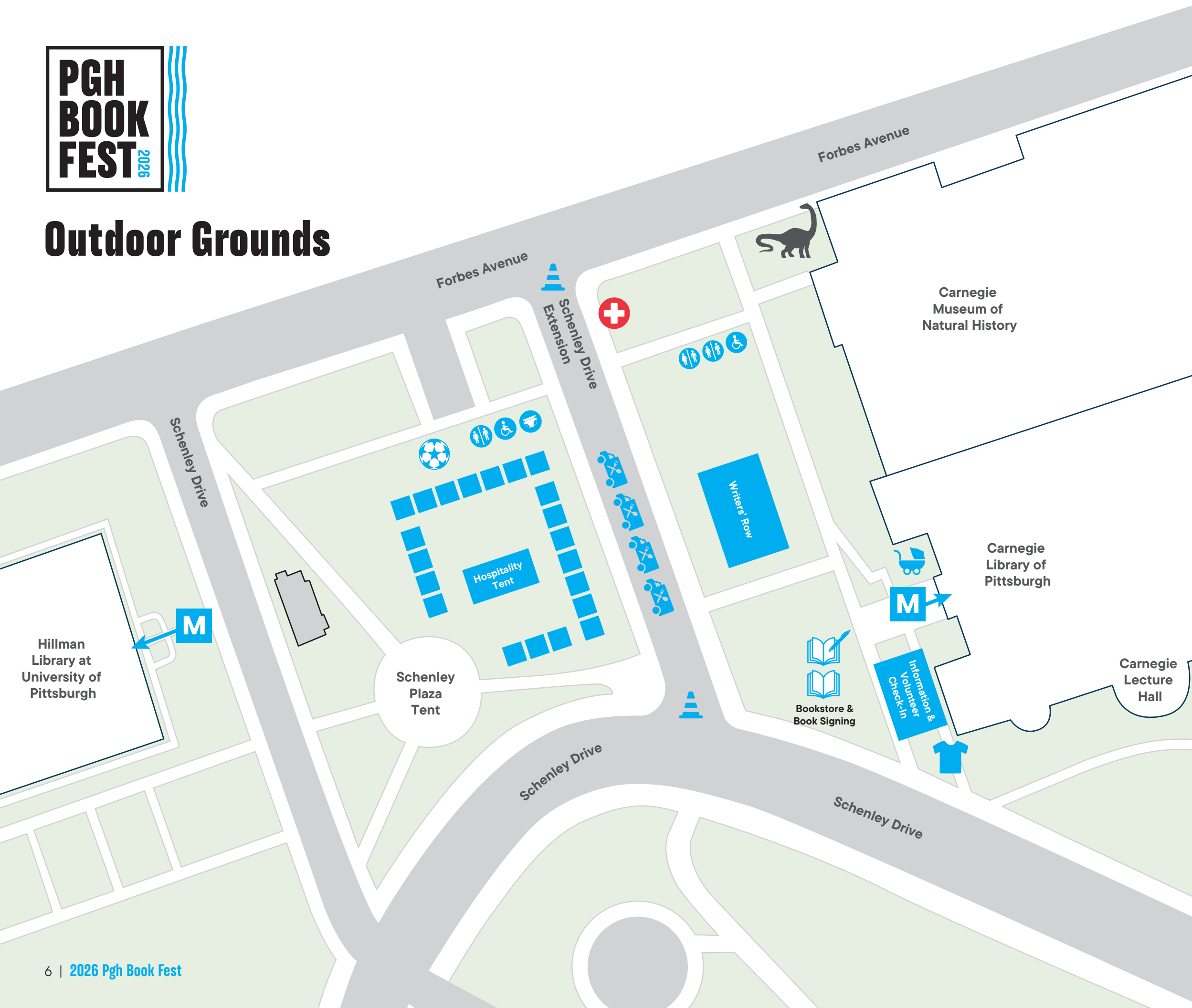


Scan to learn more about the authors taking our stage this year!


















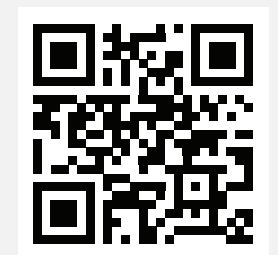
# Outdoor Grounds



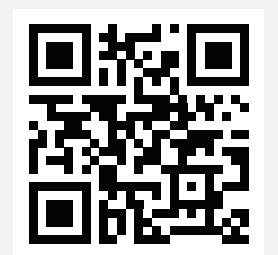
## Key

-  Main Entrance
-  Book Signing
-  Bookstore
-  Stroller Parking
-  Food Trucks
-  First Aid
-  Soft Play Area
-  Road Closure
-  Merch
-  Restrooms
-  Handicap Restrooms
-  Diaper Changing Station
-  Exhibitor/Vendor

Scan to Explore Inside CLP



Scan to Explore Inside Hillman Library



## 2nd Fl. - Information & Research

10:15 AM – 10:30 AM  
Ann Chiappetta

10:30 AM – 10:45 AM  
Judith Sanders

10:45 AM – 11:00 AM  
Bonita Lee Penn

11:00 AM – 11:15 AM  
Pablo Miguel Martínez

11:15 AM – 11:30 AM  
Maram Alwan

11:45 AM – 12:00 PM  
Jennifer Browne

12:00 PM – 12:15 PM  
Kendall Snee

12:15 PM – 12:30 PM  
Yamini Pathak

12:30 PM – 12:45 PM  
Robert Walicki

12:45 PM – 1:30 PM  
**Youth Poets:**  
Ivy Smith  
Ashley Shim  
Lillia Strickland  
Vanshika Jain  
Monroe Law

1:30 PM – 1:45 PM  
Claudia M. Reder

1:45 PM – 2:00 PM  
Najya Williams

2:00 PM – 2:15 PM  
Meredith Nnoka

2:15 PM – 2:30 PM  
Dr. Angela Campbell

3:00 PM – 3:15 PM  
Ellen McGrath Smith

3:15 PM – 3:30 PM  
Shockie G

3:30 PM – 3:45 PM  
Erica Hom

3:45 PM – 4:00 PM  
Steffan Triplett

4:00 PM – 4:15 PM  
tommy wyatt blake

4:15 PM – 4:30 PM  
Violeta Garcia-Mendoza

# The Day's Events:

## Author Talks, Panel Discussions, and Workshops

### 10:00 AM START

#### Love Is a Battlefield: Romantasy

Mai Corland, Kamilah Cole,  
& Sarah Glenn Marsh

**Lecture Hall**  
10:00 AM – 11:00 AM

Moderator: Passionate Pages

Join Mai Corland, Kamilah Cole, and Sarah Glenn Marsh as they discuss their latest novels and how they bring their worlds to life. From mythological retellings, dark academia, and political intrigue with a dash of pining for someone you can't stand, these stories run the spectrum of one of the fastest-growing genres of our time.

#### Following the Thread: Unraveling the Mystery Novel

Camille Cabrera

**Museum Portal - Guyaux Classroom**  
10:00 AM – 11:00 AM

This workshop will delve into the illusive worldbuilding of the mystery novel. Learn about the personality traits, character patterns, and background history reveals that not only elevate the tension, but drive the plot along. At the end of the workshop, participants will have the opportunity to craft their very own miniature character arc.

### Headlining Author

Meg Medina

**2nd Fl. South Wing Reading Rm.**  
10:00 AM – 11:00 AM

Moderator: Sharon G. Flake

Join Newbery Medalist Meg Medina for a lively conversation with Coretta Scott King Award winner Sharon G. Flake as Medina reflects on the impact of her work and her latest middle-grade novel, *Graciela in the Abyss*.

#### Literary Scenes: How Great Books Can Inspire Our Home Design

Annie Guest - Annie Guest Design

**CLP Portal - Classroom A**  
10:00 AM – 11:00 AM

At the workshop, Annie Guest will show how we can draw inspiration from our favorite authors and literary works when we design rooms in our own homes. Whether we're dabbling in decor of the Regency era to celebrate Jane Austen's 250th birthday, or we're yearning to reimagine Colette's apartment near the Palais Royale with her favorite tufted chaise lounge, our perspective and tastes are enriched by the worlds we visit through books. Guest will present a slideshow depicting rooms inspired by famous authors and literary works.

#### Burning the Midnight Oil: Academic Thrillers

Canwen Xu, Anna Bruno,  
& Lacey N. Dunham

**2nd Fl. - North Wing Music Rm.**  
10:00 AM – 11:00 AM

Moderator: Olive Fellows

Explore what happens when ambitions turn deadly in this discussion of Academic Thrillers with Canwen Xu, Anna Bruno, and Lacey N. Dunham. From Columbia, a secluded all-women's college, and a prep school in a wealthy Pittsburgh suburb, find out what really happens behind ivy-covered walls.

#### Healing the Inner Child Through Poetry

Dr. Angela Campbell

**2nd Fl. - Oversized Room**  
10:00 AM – 11:00 AM

"Healing the Inner Child Through Poetry" is a workshop led by Dr. Angela Campbell, author of *healing the inner child: a collection of poems*. This experience invites participants to reconnect with their younger selves through guided writing rituals and reflective poetry.

#### PGH Screams: Daniel Kraus and How the Night of the Living Dead Saved My Life and Changed the World

Daniel Kraus

**Pitt 1st Fl. Tansky Family Commons**  
10:00 AM – 11:00 AM

Moderator: Nora Fussner

Join Daniel Kraus for a deep dive into George Romero's *Night of the Living Dead*, the impact of Pittsburgh's very own horror icon's work near and far, and the type of research required for this type of project. No stranger to the University of Pittsburgh's George A. Romero Archival Collection, Kraus previously found and completed an unfinished Romero manuscript, *Pay the Piper*, and was asked by Romero's estate to complete his unfinished work, *The Living Dead*. Kraus has donated his own papers to the archive.

#### Keen to Zine

University of Pittsburgh Library System

**Pitt 3rd Fl. Text & ConTEXT Lab**  
10:00 AM – 11:00 AM

This workshop will teach participants how to create a single sheet zine. Participants will learn about the history and context around zine making and will leave with a zine!

### 10:30 AM START

#### Speculative Frontiers: Sci Fi

Elizabeth Bear, John Chu,  
& Alexandra Oliva

**Schenley Plaza**  
10:30 AM – 11:30 AM

Moderator: Jamie Lackey

Look towards the stars as you join Elizabeth Bear, John Chu, and Alexandra Oliva for an out-of-this-world Science Fiction panel. Whether it's crossing the galaxy, trying to keep the universe from falling apart, or navigating first contact, these three books are grounded by the importance and impact of family.

#### Books, Brand, & Community: Building Influence with Intention

Cecily Milligan - PGH Good Reads

**Museum Portal - Ford Mateer Classroom**  
10:30 AM – 11:30 AM

Bookstagram can be more than aesthetic photos and trending audios—it can be a powerful tool for building real community.

In this workshop, attendees will learn how to define their voice, understand and grow their audience, plan and create compelling content, build partnerships with indie bookstores and local businesses, and navigate the financial realities of being a book influencer. This session offers both inspiration and tactical guidance for anyone looking to turn their love of books into an intentional, community-driven platform.

#### From Planning to Publishing: A Book's Journey

Kat Zhang

**1st Fl. - Teenspace**  
10:30 AM – 11:15 AM

What does it take to put a book together? How do you get past page one? Learn how you can take writing beyond the draft stage.

### Storytime

Mariahadessa Ekere Tallie

**1st Fl. Pocket Rm.**  
(left side of Children's Room)  
10:30 AM – 11:00 AM

Take a pause and experience the magic of a walk through the city! Join author Mariahadessa Ekere Tallie for this interactive storytime!

### 11:00 AM START

#### What Lurks in the Shadows: The Secrets of Horror Writing

Cassandra Ramos-Gomez, Ally Russell,  
& Ryan Douglass

**1st Fl. Non-Fiction Rm.**  
(right side of Children's Room)  
11:00 AM – 11:45 AM

Moderator: Sydney Amdurs

Do you like scary stories? Hear from the minds that create ghastly and chilling tales! Come join this panel where middle grade and young adult authors will take you on a deep dive into the horror genre.

## 11:30 AM START

### Storytime

Malcolm Newsome

**1st Fl. - Pocket Rm.**  
(left side of Children's Room)  
**11:30 AM - 12:00 PM**

What's your favorite dance move? You might need it! Join author Malcolm Newsome for an interactive storytime!

### Learning About Pittsburgh Publishing

Christine Stroud, Jake Grefenstette, Nicky Agate, & Alexander Wolfe

**Earth Theater [Museum]**  
**11:30 AM - 12:30 PM**

Hosted by Pittsburgh Review of Books Ed Simon of the Pittsburgh Review of Books leads a discussion about the ins and outs of publishers located in Pittsburgh. Participants include Christine Stroud of Autumn House Press, Jake Grefenstette of the International Poetry Forum and Carnegie Mellon University Press, Nicky Agate of Carnegie Mellon University Press, and Alexander Wolfe of the University of Pittsburgh Press.

### Home is Where the Horror Is: Contemporary Gothic Novels

Vincent Tirado, Kylie Lee Baker, Leila Siddiqui, & Tlotlo Tsamaase

**Lecture Hall**  
**11:30 AM - 12:30 PM**

Moderator: Gwendolyn Kiste  
Houses hold our histories and secrets. What happens when it's no longer safe to go home? From a family home inhabited by a demon, a writers' retreat in an eerie mansion, the shores of Lake Geneva in a strange villa, and a samurai's house in Japan with a portal to the past, enter the stories of these homes...if you dare.

### From Paper Trail to Public Tales: Launching a Little Free Library with The Paper Trail Bench

Little Free Library

**CLP Portal - Classroom A**  
**11:30 AM - 12:30 PM**

Join The Paper Trail Bench for a workshop on how to start your own Little Free Library. Led by the owner and steward of The Paper Trail Bench, this session draws on hands-on experience, where participants will learn the basics of starting and maintaining a Little Free Library.

### Reigniting Your Writing Spark

The Scribbler's Den

**Museum Portal - Guyaux Classroom**  
**11:30 AM - 12:30 PM**

If you're looking to reignite your creative spark, join us for this interactive workshop. Through reflection and discussion, you'll have the opportunity to reconnect with the why behind your writing. Participants are encouraged to bring something to write with and their own journal/notebook, but supplies will be provided if you forget!

### The Past is Present: Historical Fiction

Chanel Cleeton, Milo Todd, & Radha Lin Chaddah

**2nd Fl. South Wing Reading Rm.**  
**11:30 AM - 12:30 PM**

Moderator: Adriana E. Ramirez  
In this panel, authors explore why if we don't learn from the past we're doomed to repeat it. While it may be 2026, these authors explore the toll of violence, oppression, family trauma, and how these stories impact the present. Join *New York Times* and *USA Today* bestselling author Chanel Cleeton, Stonewall Award honoree Milo Todd, and debut novelist Radha Lin Chaddah as they explore how history is never left in the past.

### Second Chances & Starting Over

Jessica Strawser and Sophie Wan

**2nd Fl. North Wing Music Rm.**  
**11:30 AM - 12:30 PM**

Moderator: Katie Kurtzman  
*The Quitters Club* joins four friends reuniting for a girls' trip all in different phases of starting over from unsatisfying marriages to burnout, infertility, and the grief of losing a partner. Described as "The Social Network meets *Daisy Jones and the Six*," in *The Social Circle*, a group of once college friends reconnect for the first time in a decade after a spectacular falling out pushed one friend out of their startup social media company.

Join Jessica Strawser and Sophie Wan to find out how friends navigate the messiness of millennials approaching middle age!

### Country Roads: Modern Appalachia

Denali Sai Nalamalapu, C. Aluka Berry, Julia Flint, & Dani Lamorte

**Pitt 1st Fl. - Tansky Family Commons**  
**11:30 AM - 12:30 PM**

Moderator: Natalie Brown  
Discover the nuanced lives and activist roots of Appalachia. Denali Sai Nalamalapu, C. Aluka Berry, Julia Flint, and Dani Lamorte share experiences that confront the stereotypes associated with the region with their diverse and complex narratives of those living in Appalachia.

### Connecting Pittsburgh through Storytelling: Children, Media, & Innovation

Lisa Dennis, Miriam Meislik, Dr. Ali Patterson, & Angela Wiley

**Pitt 3rd Fl. - Instruction Rm.**  
**11:30 AM - 12:30 PM**

Moderator: Clare Withers  
Tune in and turn back time. Discover how mid-century broadcast technology and collaboration redefined storytelling through radio and television in Pittsburgh and beyond.

## 11:45 AM START

### Panels Unraveled: The Storytelling of Graphic Novels

Kayla Miller, Jorge Aguirre, & Brenna Thummler

**1st Fl. - Teenspace**  
**11:45 AM - 12:30 PM**

Moderator: Tom Ndiaye  
What draws graphic novel authors into creating mixed media masterpieces? Learn how graphic novel authors weave together illustrations and stories to create phenomenal books.

## 12:00 PM START

### Dangerously Cozy Mysteries

Mia P. Manansala, Brandy Schillace, & Rachel Ekstrom Courage

**Schenley Plaza**  
**12:00 PM - 1:00 PM**

Moderator: Phyllis Kitzerow  
Curl up with a good murder and settle in for a conversation with Brandy Schillace, Mia P. Manansala, and Rachel Ekstrom Courage as they serve up the juicy details of their latest books. Learn about all the ingredients to write a whodunit that will keep readers guessing, packed with delicious dishes, towns where everyone has a secret, and the charming yet chaotic Golden Girls.

### Invent Your Own Form

Ellen McGrath Smith

**2nd Fl. - Oversized Room**  
**12:00 PM - 1:00 PM**

Participants will look at examples of invented forms, including Erin Murphy's demissonnet, Jericho Brown's duplex, Terrance Hayes's golden shovel, and Ellen McGrath Smith's own loom poems. Poets will reflect on how their subject matter lends itself to different forms and constraints, try out several forms for the same content, and finally write a set of "rules and rationales," along with a name, for their new form.

### Food Stories as Diaspora Stories

Isabella Moreno - Illuminating Our Voices

**Museum Portal - Ford Mateer Classroom**  
**12:00 PM - 1:00 PM**

Food traditions travel around the world, carrying memories, history and even compromises. Exploring narrative food stories from cookbooks, we will generate our own inspired and original first draft stories. This workshop centers food stories by People of Color, inviting active engagement with foods and histories that may differ from our own, yet where we will find a universal language. Around the world people gather to break bread—during scarcity and abundance; with strangers and with loved ones; to celebrate and to mourn.

### Keen to Zine

University of Pittsburgh Library System

**Pitt 3rd Fl. - Text & ConTEXT Lab**  
**12:00 PM - 1:00 PM**

This workshop will teach participants how to create a single sheet zine. Participants will learn about the history and context around zine making and will leave with a zine!

## 12:15 PM START

### The Art of "All the Stars in the Sky": A Hands On Beading Workshop

Winona Nelson

**1st Fl. Non-Fiction Rm.**  
(right side of Children's Room)  
**12:15 PM - 1:00 PM**

The pictures that bring storybook pages to life aren't always just drawings. This workshop is for kids in K-5th grade. Kids who need assistance with beading should have a caregiver bead with them.

## 1:00 PM START

### Far Out! Exploring Sci-Fi

John Scalzi & Isabel J. Kim

**Lecture Hall**  
**1:00 PM - 2:00 PM**

Moderator: Diane Turnshek  
Countdown to a supernova of a session bringing together veteran science fiction writer John Scalzi, with novelist Isabel J. Kim, author of the breakout debut *Sublimation*. Already being hailed as one of the best releases of 2026, learn more about Kim's inspiration for the book Junot Diaz describes as "Beyond candescent... after *Sublimation*, the immigrant story will never be the same."

Kim will be joined by the superstar spaceman of sci-fi John Scalzi. Scalzi is known for his blend of humor with the otherworldly. You may be familiar with the snarky spy cats of *Starter Villain*. After a decade, Scalzi returns to the galaxy of the Old Man's War series with *The Shattering Peace*. Kirkus (starred review) calls it, "Classic Scalzi space opera at its wisecracking, politically pointed, and, somehow, fiercely optimistic finest."

We'll also explore, *When the Moon Hits Your Eye*, which offers up a moon made of cheese and was one of NPR's best books of 2025 and described by Kirkus as "A ridiculous concept imbued with gravity, charm, humor, plausible cynicism, and pathos—and perhaps the merest touch of spite."

It's a moonage daydream, oh yeah!

### Pride on the Page: LGBTQIA+ Characters

Eureka O'Hara, Sonido Reyes, Ryan Douglass, & Ciera Burch

**Earth Theater [Museum]**  
**1:00 PM - 1:45 PM**

Moderator: Kat Stefanik  
Join middle grade and young adult authors as they talk through the development of LGBTQIA+ characters. What elements of the characters make it to the page, and what is left unwritten?

### 1:00 PM START CONTINUED

#### Heroes in the Attic

Lara Brenckle Malmont

**CLP Portal - Classroom A**  
1:00 PM – 2:00 PM

Family. All of us have one. But how it came together—or apart? That's your story to tell.

This workshop details how writers can use genealogical research techniques and resources to craft historically accurate, marketable fiction that is also personally meaningful. Learn how and where to uncover records that can color character details, and, in some cases, metaphorically raise the dead. This workshop also addresses how to navigate tricky discoveries that are personally challenging and professionally intriguing.

#### Crafting Character-Driven Magic Systems

Kara M. Zone

**Museum Portal - Guyaux Classroom**  
1:00 PM – 2:00 PM

World-building is a cornerstone of fantasy writing—but it's easy to get lost in the details when magic systems become overly complex or disconnected from the characters themselves.

This workshop explores how writers can use character development techniques to shape compelling magic systems. By approaching magic as if it were a character—with motivations, limitations, and personality—writers can create systems that deepen emotional stakes and strengthen the reader's connection to the story.

#### Rural Horror: Cults, Monsters, & Isolation

Grace Byron, Carter Keane, & Sam Rebelein

**2nd Fl. - South Wing Reading Rm.**  
1:00 PM – 2:00 PM

Moderator: Carina Stopenski

From accidentally creating a small town cult, being hunted in the forests of rural Ohio, and a commune meant to be a refuge but with demons of its own, Grace Byron, Carter Keane, and Sam Rebelein showcase that rural America might be the worst place to run from your troubles.

#### WQED Ceremony

**2nd Fl. - North Wing Music Rm.**  
K-2 Winners: 1:00 PM – 1:30 PM  
3-5 Winners: 1:30 PM – 2:00 PM

Celebrate the creativity of young authors at the 2026 WQED Writers Contest Awards Ceremony, where winners learn their placements and the Readers Choice story is revealed. Congratulations to all of this year's talented storytellers.

#### Rebel Women: Quilters Creating Change Through Cotton and Color

Catherine Baldwin -  
University of Pittsburgh at Bradford

**Pitt Ground Fl. K Leroy Irvis Reading Rm.**  
1:00 PM – 2:00 PM

Join this workshop to gain a sense of history in the art of quilting, and how it reflects and impacts social causes.

Physical examples, book lists, and sites will be shared regarding the history of quilt-making and show how the art has developed over time. Participants will have the opportunity to design their own quilt block with a mini kit.

#### Into the Woods: Exploring PA Forests Past and Present

Tory Mather & Andrew Moore

**Pitt 1st Fl. Tansky Family Commons**  
1:00 PM – 2:00 PM

Moderator: Bob Hoover

Explore the beauty and natural of PA, while also examining what's been lost and the efforts to restore balance. Tory Mather and Andrew Moore will highlight reasons to get outside and the unlikely comeback of wildlife across the east.

### 1:30 PM START

#### Chloe Liese & Laura Piper Lee Talk Contemporary Romance

Chloe Liese & Laura Piper Lee

**Schenley Plaza**  
1:30 PM – 2:30 PM

Moderator: Cecily Milligan

In Chloe Liese's newest novel *Happy Ending*, we meet Thea, who is a kitchen nightmare and her ex's new girlfriend's ex, Alex, the experienced gourmand. Meanwhile, in Laura Piper Lee's new book *Pot Shot*, Nomi is in a standoff with the surly doctor putting up obstacles to open a boutique cannabis dispensary. Don't miss these authors' conversation about their new opposites attract romcoms.

#### Flirting with Romantasy

Mir Benitz

**Museum Portal - Ford Mateer Classroom**  
1:30 PM – 2:30 PM

Romantasy, with its signature blend of heart-throbbing love stories and heart-pounding adventure, is everywhere these days. And it's just as fun to write as it is to read. If you're a writer who's drawn to romantasy but hasn't gotten up the courage to make the first move, join author Mir Benitz for a seminar-style workshop that will help you get to know the genre...and maybe even start something.

#### Getting Real: Nonfiction Writing for Young Readers

Erin Frankel, Michael G. Long, & Meg Medina

**1st Fl. Non-Fiction Rm.**  
(right side of Children's Room)  
1:30 PM – 2:15 PM

Moderator: Elizabeth Peprah

How does one make facts fun? Listen in on a discussion about the joys and challenges of making entertaining stories from real life events!

### 2:00 PM START

#### Word + Image: Poems Inspired by Works of Art

Pablo Miguel Martínez

**2nd Fl. - Oversized Room**  
2:00 PM – 3:00 PM

After reading three short examples of ekphrastic poems, we will look at various works of art and generate new work inspired by those artworks.

#### Bookmark Your Festival

University of Pittsburgh Library System

**Pitt 3rd Fl. - Text & ConTEXT Lab**  
2:00 PM – 3:00 PM

This drop-in workshop will introduce printmaking at the Text & ConTEXT Lab in Hillman Library. Participants will have an opportunity to explore the print making process and operate a Columbian Printing Press to create a unique bookmark. All supplies will be provided and no prior printing experience is required.

### 2:15 PM START

#### Know Your Fantasy Lore

Karuna Riazi, Kat Zhang, & Cassandra James

**1st Fl. - Teenspace**  
2:15 PM – 3:00 PM

Moderator: Cynthia Krol

Discover the magic behind fantasy stories and the adventures authors have along the way!

### 2:30 PM START

#### Wings and Whimsy: Cozy Fantasy

Jennifer Mandula & Sarah Beth Durst

**Lecture Hall**  
2:30 PM – 3:20 PM

Moderator: Jamie Sterling

Whether it's a broken-down greenhouse or a fossil shop in Victorian England, Jennifer Mandula and Sarah Beth Durst know how to fill it with love and magic. Join them as they discuss their enchanting cozy fantasy novels.

#### Literacy for Liberation: Community Support of Literacy

United Black Book Clubs of Pittsburgh

**CLP Portal - Classroom A**  
2:30 PM – 3:30 PM

Join United Black Book Clubs of Pittsburgh for a conversation on literacy in our community. This presentation will invite attendees to learn about the history of literacy and how it's defined, what the state of literacy looks like in our community, and what resources are available within our community to help build literacy. Attendees will leave with a resolve to do what they can to build literacy in their community.

#### A Freelance Writer's Secrets

Ed Simon - Pittsburgh Review of Books

**Museum Portal - Guyaux Classroom**  
2:30 PM – 3:30 PM

Editor and writer Ed Simon demystifies the process of not just writing, but publishing what you've written. Subjects will include pitching stories, working with an editor, dealing with rejection, building a portfolio, and promoting your work.

#### Konbit: Reading and Conversation

Sony Ton-Aime

**2nd Fl. - South Wing Reading Rm.**  
2:30 PM – 3:30 PM

Moderator: Jake Grefenstette

Celebrate the publication of Sony Ton-Aime's poetry collection, *Konbit*, bearing the title of the Haitian Creole word for community-centered, communal lives. Sony will read from his work and appear in conversation with Jake Grefenstette. The conversation will touch on the poet's work exploring alternative futures, where everyone has the opportunity to live with dignity, via lenses of climate catastrophe and the Haitian revolution.

#### Yes, And... Instead of "Did You Like It?": Improv Games for Book Talk

Kelly Peña -  
University of Pittsburgh

**Pitt Ground Fl. K Leroy Irvis Reading Rm.**  
2:30 PM – 3:30 PM

"Did you like it?" is often where book conversations stall. This workshop uses improv games to help readers move beyond yes/no opinions and into meaningful book talk. You'll play with ways of responding to books, listening, and staying in conversation when reactions don't match. The games are useful for opening discussions, sparking topics, navigating disagreement, and keeping conversations alive. No improv or performance experience required.

**2:30 PM START CONTINUED**

**All in the Family: Memoirs**  
Adriana E. Ramirez, Manil Suri, & Anna Monardo

**2nd Fl. - North Wing Music Rm.**  
**2:30 PM - 3:30 PM**

Moderator: Sherrie Flick  
Anna Monardo, Adriana E. Ramirez, and Manil Suri will discuss their memoirs and how place and family inform their sense of self. From close to home in Braddock to oceans away in Colombia and India, hear about the journeys these authors trace.

**How the West Got Weird**

Frederic Durbin, Sheldon Costa, Nicholas Belardes, & Elizabeth Bear

**Pitt 1st Fl.**  
**Tansky Family Commons**  
**2:30 PM - 3:30 PM**

Moderator: Joy Stancato  
Elizabeth Bear, Nicholas Belardes, Sheldon Costa, and Frederic Durbin discuss the different takes on the western and how weirdness shows up in each one. Adventure, murder, and survival in majestic landscapes mix with alchemy, strange creatures, steampunk, ghost trains, and cosmic horror.

**2:45 PM START**

**Serving Up Stories: A Genre Buffet in Middle Grade and YA**  
Michael G. Long, Ally Russell, Sonido Reyes, & Brenna Thummler

**1st Fl. Non-Fiction Rm.**  
*(right side of Children's Room)*  
**2:45 PM - 3:30 PM**

Moderator: Kevin McGuire  
There's a book out there for everyone—you just might not know your favorite flavor yet! Check out stories of all kinds and learn what authors think is similar and different across genres.

**3:00 PM START**

**Storytime**  
Steven Rowley

**Earth Theater [Museum]**  
**3:00 PM - 3:30 PM**

Moderator: Andrew Medlar  
Join *New York Times* bestselling author Steven Rowley for a lively reading of his debut picture book, *Our Guncle*. The reading will be followed by a conversation about Rowley's experience writing for a new age group.

**The Suspense is Killing Me: Thrillers**

CJ Leede, Marisa Walz, & Allison LaMothe

**Schenley Plaza**  
**3:00 PM - 4:00 PM**

Moderator: Mallika Narayanan  
Unsettling situations, sinister secrets, and psychological angst abound in three new thrillers by CJ Leede, Marisa Walz, and Allison LaMothe. Join the authors as they talk about putting tension on every page and delving into the depths of troubled characters' minds.

**30 Books in 30 Minutes**

Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh Staff

**Museum Portal - Ford Mateer Classroom**  
**3:00 PM - 3:30 PM**

Join Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh staff as they "race against the clock" to recommend thirty of their favorite titles. No genre is too niche, no audience unreached—thirty one-minute book talks will help you find your next great read.

**3:30 PM START**

**Meet in the Middle: InbeTWEEN Fiction**  
Ciera Burch, Cassandra Ramos-Gomez, & Jorge Aguirre

**1st Fl. - Teenspace**  
**3:30 PM - 4:15 PM**

Moderator: Denise LaRosa  
How do you capture the unique experiences of middle grade? Learn how authors craft stories to meet readers in between childhood and teenage years.

**"America's Agatha Christie", Pittsburgh, & Allegheny City**

Jennie Benford & University of Pittsburgh Archival Display

**Pitt 3rd Fl. Instruction Rm.**  
**3:30 PM - 4:30 PM**

"America's Agatha Christie" was a nurse from Allegheny City. Mary Roberts Rhinehart dominated the mystery literature market in the early 1900s. She also finagled her way to Europe as a war reporter in WWI, advocated for Women's Suffrage, and translated her successful books into Hollywood films. This talk will introduce you to one of America's most influential writers and will focus specifically on her ties to Allegheny City and the Pittsburgh area.

**3:40 PM START**

**From Best Sellers to Blockbusters**

Daniel Kraus

**Lecture Hall**  
**3:40 PM - 4:30 PM**

Moderator: Allen Hitchens  
What does it take to write a blockbuster novel? Find out from Daniel Kraus, who is a *New York Times* bestselling writer whose work encompasses novels, TV, and film. His recent novel, *Angel Down*, was a *New York Times* Top 10 Book of 2025 described as "a thunderous gallop of a war novel, a new classic, a best-in-class example of speculative fiction." *Whalefall* was the best book of 2023 from NPR, the *New York Times*, Amazon, *Chicago Tribune*, and more. *Whalefall* will also be making the leap to the silver screen with a film based on the novel set to release in October!

**4:00 PM START**

**The Uses of Fanfiction**  
Phil Goetz

**CLP Portal - Classroom A**  
**4:00 PM - 5:00 PM**

Join this fanfiction writing workshop to talk about what authors can learn from writing "wildfic" (fiction posted without gatekeepers, usually fanfic). Participants will also use cell phones to submit the cover copy for their story and we'll create a web page to see how many clicks each gets.

**Crafting a Character**

Kayla Miller

**1st Fl. Non-Fiction Rm.**  
*(right side of Children's Room)*  
**4:00 PM - 4:45 PM**

Bring your own graphic novel character to life in a discussion with an acclaimed graphic novelist! Develop a personality, backstory, and design for your character and leave with your very own creation. This workshop is for kids and teens.

**No One is Typical: Neurodiverse and Disabled Voices**

Brandy Schillace

**Museum Portal - Ford Mateer Classroom**  
**4:00 PM - 5:00 PM**

Brandy Schillace, autistic and disabled author (*The Framed Women of Ardmore House, The Dead Come to Stay*), has worked for years in the disability rights and social justice arena. Hear what it's like to write for representation, and what it means to be neurodivergent or disabled today.

**Readin' from the Heart: How to Keep AI Off of Our Bookshelves**

Readin' Magazine

**Museum Portal - Guyaux Classroom**  
**4:00 PM - 5:00 PM**

Artificial Intelligence is taking over... Well, everything. This workshop will highlight how it's manifested within the book community, the pros (assistive) and cons (generative) of AI in reader spaces, and how we as readers have the power to influence the current leaders of the book industry by way of voice and money.

**Growing Together: Black History Through Family, Food, & Foliage**

Dr. Ashanté M. Reese & Dr. Beronda Montgomery

**2nd Fl. - South Wing Reading Rm.**  
**4:00 PM - 5:00 PM**

Moderator: Deborah Rogers  
Explore food justice rooted in Black communities, alongside a reclamation of Black history and botanical mastery through the stories of trees. Dr. Ashanté M. Reese and Dr. Beronda L. Montgomery share their insights on the deep connections between ecology, culture, and community care.

The 2026 Summer Reading theme is "Grow." What better way to kick off the season than with this conversation that nurtures knowledge and collective flourishing?

**Centos in Solidarity**

Meredith Nnoka

**2nd Fl. - Oversized Room**  
**4:00 PM - 5:00 PM**

Join poet and prison abolitionist Meredith Nnoka for a generative workshop focusing on centos, or poems that are built using lines from other texts, written in solidarity with incarcerated students. We'll look at examples of centos written by students incarcerated at Stateville Correctional Center outside of Chicago and work on creating our own centos from a selection of texts.

**4:30 PM START**

**Masquerades, Make-Outs, & Mischief: Redefining Regency Romance**

Emma R. Alban, Liana De la Rosa, & TJ Alexander

**Schenley Plaza**  
**4:30 PM - 5:30 PM**

Moderator: Lisa Dennis  
Binging *Bridgerton* and need more swoonworthy dukes and rogues in your life? Make sure you're near a fainting couch! This Regency Romance panel provides more masquerades, mischief, and, most importantly, spice to get you by while you wait for your own viscount.

**5:00 PM START**

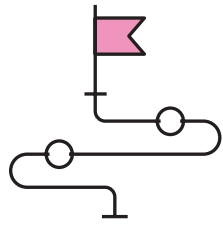
**Steven Rowley & Catherine Newman in Conversation**

Steven Rowley & Catherine Newman

**Lecture Hall**  
**5:00 PM - 6:00 PM**

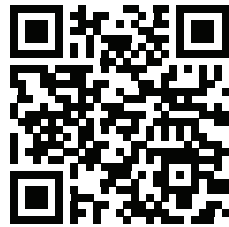
Moderator: Shannon Reed  
What happens when life doesn't quite go as planned? Join *New York Times* bestselling authors Steven Rowley and Catherine Newman as they discuss the beauty and pain of everyday life and relationships with humor and heart.

# Plan Your Day



## Programming Pathways

Every Festival experience is unique. That's why we've assembled Programming Pathways based on your favorite genres.



## Not Sure Where to Start?

Take the quiz to find the programming that fits you best.



# TBR List

Use this space to jot down the new authors and reads you discover today!

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# Writers' Row

Writers' Row offers a diverse array of authors, each showcasing and selling their own books in person. Check out the authors you'll find at Writers' Row this year.

- Alex Alvin
- Alexandria Long
- Allison Ivy
- Angela Oddling
- Angola Hone
- Anne Marie Stahl
- Brian Colella
- Caleb Thusat
- Candace Nola
- Corey McCullough
- Courtney Morstatter
- Dr. Sharnez Givens-Williams
- Elle Nestico
- Frank J. Camacho
- Grant Lankard
- Janet Roberts
- Jessa Grey
- Joshua David Bellin
- KA Bauer / Kate Bauer / Annie Grentz
- Kara M. Zone
- Laura S. Scherling
- Lauren Bomberger Fischer
- Laurie Cowin
- Lynn Almengor
- Marie Weller and Paula Vertikoff
- Matt McGinnis
- Michael Thornhill
- N.E. Valla
- Nathaniel E. Troupe
- Nina Mandell
- Ralph L. Hollis, Jr.
- Renae Bolton
- Ron Chandler
- Sam Rininger
- Samantha Jo
- Steven Ray Wriston
- T.M. Baylor
- Valtinen Erik Karille
- Vanshika Jain
- Zariah L. Banks

# Exhibitors & Vendors

Books aren't the only thing worth browsing at this year's Festival... check out the local vendors and exhibitors joining us!

- |   |                                   |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| After Happy Hour Review                                       | Literacy Pittsburgh               |
| Amelia Kieras Paper Arts                                      | LostInWonderArt                   |
| Archposters   | No Longer Bound                   |
| Arrow & Pine Design Co.                                       | Novel Breads Co.                  |
| Backroads Bookstore   | Novel Escapes, LLC                |
| Barks and Books Creations                                     | Pen & Page Pittsburgh             |
| Black Cat Wire Works  | Pipsburgh Arts & Gifts            |
| Black Cats & Company  | Pittsburgh Regional Transit       |
| Chinese Library for Children                                  | Polliia Design                    |
| Clementina  | Provident Charter School          |
| ComicsBurch   | Reading is FUNdamental Pittsburgh |
| Davenport Dyes & Designs                                      | Reading Ready Pittsburgh          |
| Editorial Freelancers Association – Pittsburgh Chapter        | Serene Design Co.                 |
| Ex Libris Fibers  | Stained Design Studio             |
| Flyaway Fox   | StormChaserD                      |
| Gray Rabbit Art   | Studio 42 Books                   |
| High Street Society   | Ten Thousand Villages Pittsburgh  |
| Historic Pittsburgh (University of Pittsburgh Library System) | The Queen of the Lists            |
| Illuminating Our Voices                                       | the salty hive candle co          |
| J. Paris Designs  | The Scribbler's Den LLC           |
| JWStickerShop   | VDV Creative                      |
| Kamboo Village  | Write Pittsburgh                  |
| KaraBeeCo   | You Can Call Me YOKO              |
| LAMP – Library of Accessible Media for Pennsylvanians         |                                   |

## Sponsoring Bookstores



Helen Campbell, Independent Bookseller



**Summer Reading 2026**  
June 1 – August 9



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3. Track your books.
4. Get prizes!



# EXTRA GANZA

A family-friendly outdoor festival for all ages!

**Sunday, August 9**  
12 - 5 pm  
CLP-Main (Oakland)

# Time to Turn the Page

Be part of next year's plot by taking our survey.



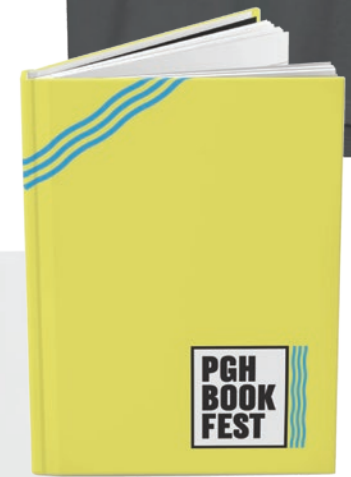
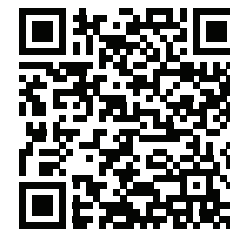
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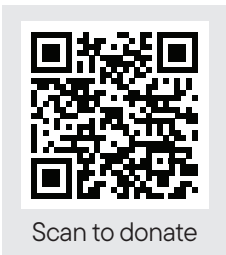
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