

VALLEY VOLUNTEER - JACKSON HOLE NEWS&amp;GUIDE, Wednesday, March 11, 2026 - 9

# Contemplating a book's fate

*Being a bookworm and knowing the preferences of local readers help volunteers find best use for donated books.*

By Alex Viveros

If you've donated a book to the Teton County Library, Pat Snyder more than likely decided its fate.

That was the case one recent Friday morning, as Snyder and fellow volunteer Susan Brown worked their way through a pile of donated books in a library room. One by one, the duo interrogated each book, seeing whether it would be a good fit for readers in Teton County — either on the library's shelves or in the Friends of the Teton County Library Book Nook — or whether it would be sent elsewhere.

"Bup bup bup," Snyder excitedly said after scanning a book with her phone. A green checkmark had popped up on her device, indicating that a wholesaler in San Diego was interested in selling the book.

Snyder, who recently turned 90, has been volunteering at the library for 15 years. Or something like that. She hasn't been keeping track.

"I've never kept track," Snyder said. "It's like my dog. I don't know how old he is either."

By Snyder's conservative estimate, the volunteers sort through around 5,000 books a month. Sometimes, See **BOOKS** on 16



Susan Brown, left, scans donated books while volunteering with Pat Snyder, right, at the Teton County Library last month. The library receives a large volume of book donations and rely on volunteers to sort through the stacks.

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## BOOKS

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there's enough books to fill up stacks of boxes. Like many aspects of growth in Teton County, the pace doesn't show signs of slowing down.

"This town used to be we had a down season, and we don't really anymore. It's the same with the books," Snyder said. "If you don't come in every day, it gets away from you."

Though Snyder describes her job as simply going through donations and seeing where the books should go, her peers suggested that the job centers around understanding the reading patterns of her community.

"She has a really great ability to know where the best place is for these books to be reused," Brown said.

"Whether it's here in the book nook or it's in the free library, she's just got a good feeling for knowing where people will read the most."

Books about nature, local issues and travel are hot topics among residents. As she elaborated, Snyder picked up a paperback copy of "The Emerald Mile," a book about the 1983 speed-record-beating boat ride through the Grand Canyon.

"This is a great book," Snyder said. "I'll put it on the shelf, and it'll be gone in a heartbeat."

The library can also be overwhelmed with a "tremendous" supply of young adult books. By nature of



Pat Snyder, left, and Susan Brown, right, chat while sorting through all the donated book at the Teton County Library last month.

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being a sorter for so many years, Snyder has picked up on evolving reading trends in the Tetons.

"Self-help never used to move," Snyder said. "Now you can hardly keep a book on that shelf."

Not every book is a good fit for either the Teton Coun-

ty Library's shelves or the shelves of the Book Nook, where lightly used books are sold. Textbooks, for example, might not be hot sellers.

Fortunately, the library sends many books to out-of-state entities who want to sell the books. San Diego-based Operation Book Sup-

port, for example, partners with libraries to raise funds by selling high-value books.

"Almost everything that they want, we don't," Snyder said. "Which is interesting."

Money from book sales goes to fundraising for library programs and services. Last year, the efforts raised

over \$30,000. Snyder's priority is to keep books in the community, Brown said.

"Pat has a great feeling for [books] we keep here," Brown said.

Book donations may also offer a peek into what people in Teton County were

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Holding a book headed to Operation Book Support in San Diego, Pat Snyder, a long time volunteer, smiles while explaining the process of sorting the books last month at the Teton County Library.

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reading, as well as the occasional unexpected souvenir.

“A lot of them don’t clean out their books as they bring them in, and we will get photographs, and letters,” Brown said. “We wish we could return those, but they don’t come in with a name and an address.”

There was one exception.

“We found a person that had put a savings bond or something [in a book],” Snyder said.

The sense of purpose, and providing a service for her neighbors, motivates Snyder to volunteer.

“It gives me something to do, and I feel like I accomplish something,” Snyder said. “It just feels worthwhile. Never mind your bed’s unmade, your house is dusty, and your dogs want to go for a walk, whatever — you’ve actually accomplished something.”

Beyond the act of sorting books, Snyder’s prolific reading habits may rank her as a top book connoisseur in the valley. One corner of the Book

Nook — “Pat’s Corner” — is dedicated to her rotating recommendations. A News&Guide reporter walked away with a copy of “A Gentleman in Moscow,” by Amor Towles.

“He’s a terrific writer,” Snyder said of Towles. “He’s the kind of writer [where] you read a page, and then you have to go back and read that page again just for the writing, let alone the story.”

For readers that want fun, Snyder eagerly recommends “The Lemon,” a novel by S.E. Boyd.

“It’s hysterically funny,” Snyder said.

Snyder has talked about the book so much that, during her recent 90th birthday celebration at the library, her cake was decorated with a shoutout to it.

“The cake said ‘The Lemon’ on the top, and I didn’t realize that no one would know what that meant,” Brown said. “So random, I’m sure people were wondering what the heck that was.”

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