

WELCOME TO THE MBC RICHMOND BOOK CLUB!

May 2006

What we are reading in 2006:

Jan 3: *No. 1 Ladies Detective Agency* by Alexander McCall Smith

Feb 2: *Hard Times* by Charles Dickens*

Mar 2: *The Poisonwood Bible* by Barbara Kingsolver*

Apr 6: *Angry Housewives Eating Bon Bons* by Lorna Landvik

May 4: *Life of Pi* by Yann Martel

June 1: *Secret Life of Bees* by Sue Monk Kidd

July 6: *The Red Tent* by Anita Diamant

Aug 3: *My Sister's Keeper* by Jodi Picoult

Sept 7: *Girl With a Pearl Earring* by Tracy Chevalier

Oct 5: *The Time Traveler's Wife* by Audrey Niffenegger

Nov 2: To be announced

Dec 7: To be announced

*These are selections from the MBC Reading Group for faculty and staff on campus.

All meeting times are 7pm and last approximately 1 hour.

We are on the MBC website!!!!

<http://www.mbc.edu/alumnae/events.asp>

Please make note of the date changes. We are now meeting on the first **Thursday** of every month instead of the first Tuesday of every month.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact Theresa Cash Lewis '99 at tcash_va@mail2world.com or the Alumnae/i office at 1-800-763-7359.

Invitation to Current ADP Students!!

The book club would like to invite the current Richmond ADP students to join us each month. A newsletter with all of the information will be posted in the ADP office.

Local Book Events

Writing Group!!!! Creative writing group, not specific to any genre or format, meeting the second Thursday of each month to critique and discuss. New members welcome.

Location: Creatures 'n Crooks Bookshoppe

Cary Court Park and Shop, Carytown

Time: 7:00 pm

Contact: 340-0277

May 5: Sheri Reynolds, author of the New York Times #1 bestseller and Oprah Book Club selection *The Rapture of Canaan*, reads from her long-awaited new novel, *Firefly Cloak*. A haunting story of a young girl's journey to find the mother who abandoned her, *Firefly Cloak*, is a vivid coming of age drama about family, loss and redemption.

Location: Richmond Main Library

Time: 7:00pm

Cost: Free

For all of you Comic Lovers!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

May 6: Free Comic Book Day!

This is a national celebration of the art form of comics, and publishers to suit every taste are providing FREE comic books.

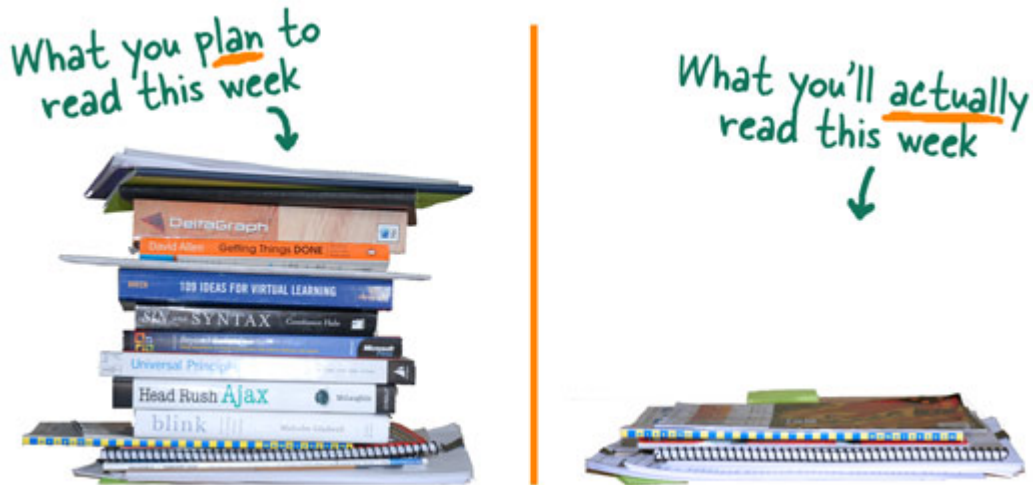
Location: Velocity Comics

818 West Grace Street, in the heart of VCU and just west of Belvidere

Time: Open 11am to 6pm

Cost: Free!!

The myth of "keeping up"



Do you have a stack of books, journals, manuals, articles, API docs, and blog printouts that you *think* you'll get to? That you think you *need* to read? Now, based on past experience, what are the odds you'll get to all of it? Half of it? *Any* of it? (except for maybe the Wired magazine)

So you let the stack of "things to read" pile up, then eventually when the pile gets to high you end up tossing half of it--or worse, moving it to a deeper "stuff to read *someday* stack. We have selective amnesia about what we'll ever get to, but mainly because most of us keep feeling like we have to keep up! Keep up with what?

You can't keep up. There is no way. And *trying* to keep up will probably just make you *dumber*. You can never be current on *everything* you think you should be. You can't simultaneously be current on:

Technology

Current events

Pop culture

Professional practices

Health/fitness/diet trends

And on and on and on...

Why do we pressure ourselves? Why do we constantly feel like we're struggling to keep up, yet never succeeding? I remember when Java 1.02 came out (the first public release), and it had 200 classes. You could fit the entire class library in the same space as Miss January (magazine centerfold). But then 1.1 came out and the API more than doubled, to 500 classes. It no longer fit on a centerfold, but you could get it on a wall poster. With 200 classes, you really could master the entire API. With 500, it took some effort, but you could at least be familiar with just about everything, given enough time. But then... by Java 1.4, the library had swelled to 2300 classes. And today? It's something like 3500 classes just in the Standard Edition (not including the mobile and enterprise extensions). You could wallpaper an entire room with the class library.

By the year 2000, it had become impossible for even a Sun Java engineer--someone *creating* the API--to be familiar with everything in the standard library. Yet the rest of us were feeling guilty. Like we were falling behind. Like we weren't hardcore Java programmers.

So... it's time to let that go. You're not keeping up. I'm not keeping up. And neither is anyone else. At least not in *everything*. Sure, you'll find the guy who is absolutely cutting-edge up to date on some technology, software upgrade, language beta, whatever. But when you start feeling inferior about it, just think to yourself, "Yeah, but I bet he thinks Weezer is still a cool new band..."

Besides letting go, what else can we do to combat [Information Anxiety](#)? I have just a few tips, but I'm hoping you'll add more:

Find the best aggregators

Aggregators become increasingly more important. Finding the right person, business, web site, etc. who does the best job of filtering (attenuating) in a specific area adds time to your life.

Get summaries

Publisher Joe Wikert recently [blogged quite positively](#) about a service called [getAbstract](#), that offers online book summaries. Initially skeptical, Joe found getAbstract to be a tremendous time saver. (I haven't checked it out, but I tend to trust Joe's advice)

Cut the redundancy!

Do you really need *three* news magazines? Do you have to subscribe to *every* technical journal? Get with your friends or colleagues and divide up the main ones. Each person is responsible for subscribing to and keeping up with just one, letting the others know IF there's something in a particular issue worth a read.

Unsubscribe to as many things as possible

Like the previous point, you probably have way too much redundancy in both your printed and online subscriptions. Again, if you're using the right aggregators, they'll tell you when something is worth it. For print, you can save some trees if you give up more of your physical newspapers and magazines.

Recognize that gossip and celebrity entertainment are black holes

It's like watching a car accident despite our best intentions... we just can't help look, so the more you can stay away from the publications that document every personal detail of every music and film star the better. Let that be your guilty pleasure for when you're at the dentist's office...

Pick the categories you want for a balanced perspective, and include some from OUTSIDE your main field of interest

Better to have one design magazine (architecture, product design, graphic design, etc.) (regardless of whether you're a designer or not), one news magazine, one arts magazine (music, photography, etc.), and one technology/lifestyle magazine (Wired, Make, etc.) than to get rid of everything but your three software development journals. Keeping up with a *different* field is sometimes just as useful (if not more) than keeping up with your current one.

Be a LOT more realistic about what you're likely to get to, and throw the rest out.

Don't file it. Don't store it. What you don't have piling up you can't feel guilty about. Some people put little height limits on their "to read" stack. (OK, when it gets as high as that drawer, I must throw out the oldest 50%...)

In any thing you need to learn, find a person who can tell you what is:

- * **Need to know**
- * **Should know**
- * **Nice to know**
- * **Edge case, only if it applies to you specifically**
- * **Useless**

Too many product manuals, tech docs, books, etc. include *everything* without necessarily giving you the "weighting" for how important each thing is.

Finally, are WE part of the problem? Are we overwhelming our users with documentation? Or are we part of the solution to their info anxiety? We're the ones that should be helping our users really focus on the things they need at any stage. While we all recognize that *we* are stressed for time and on info overload, we tend to think our users have all the time in the world to figure it all out (RTFM).

There's an opportunity for all of us to help our users (or start a business around helping people reduce the info overload/pressure-to-keep-up stress most of us feel).

In the meantime, take a deep breath and repeat after me, "I will never keep up. Keeping up is a myth." And if it makes you feel any better, add, "John isn't keeping up *either*."

Once we let go of trying to be more-current-than-thou, we can spend more time on things that *really* matter. Like learning to [Ollie](#).

(And thanks to Miles Davies for the spectacular tip from an earlier post: "stop trying to ollie. get zen on its ass...be point b.")

Posted by Kathy Sierra on April 29, 2006 | [Permalink](#)