

SOCIAL MEDIA**GARDEN LIBRARY IS ONE FOR THE BOOKS**

■ BY KATIE ROSE MCENEELY

Leora Siegel is the director at the Chicago Botanic Garden's Lenhardt Library.

Reading: "Beatrix Potter's Gardening Life," by Marta McDowell — we had the author come and speak in collaboration with the Highland Park Library. Beatrix Potter was a children's author, but she was a really incredible botanical artist and scientist.

"I live and breathe libraries. I love them and what they add to people's lives."

| Leora Siegel

Listening: I listen to awful music, my kids would call it. I'm a Zumba dance freak — that's my escape, so that's what I listen to. It's kind of loud pop music.

Watching: HDTV House Hunters! You pick it up halfway through. What do other people's houses look like? And Doctor

Who comes back on Aug. 23, so I'm waiting for that.

Following: I follow the library world and things that are happening. I'm on my city's library board, so I'm interested in what's happening in public libraries, and I'm on the Illinois Library Association board, so I follow legislation that affects libraries around the state.

Most of my social media followings have to do with the botanic gardens and libraries; I live and breathe libraries. I love them and what they add to people's lives, and I love that we can enhance knowledge.

Activity: As the director, I do all the management of people and assigning jobs and hiring and budgets. So I see my role as the captain of the ship, so to speak.

Everyone on my staff — there are eight of us — has a job to do, and it's my job to connect everyone together. I work on grand proposals and public programs. One program is public library days. We invite a public library in for a Sunday afternoon — the patrons, not the staff. They get an introduction to the library and a gallery talk and an in-person

rare book viewing. It's been really well-received; we usually have a waiting list. It's a free program.

We create four original exhibitions each year. We draw on themes of what's happening at the gardens and the world around us. We also are just finishing a grant to conserve and digitize about 50 books in three years. We requested a one-year extension. I paid a nonprofit to do the digitization for us, since we don't have a conservation lab.

We also have a science library that's not open to public, but all of the materials there are available — we have them shipped up here.

Eating: I don't eat meat and I don't eat dairy, so I eat a lot of fish and eggs and chicken. I think lunch is leftover tube steak, rice pilaf and vegetables that my husband made. He's a good cook.

What is your favorite mistake? One of our colleagues last year was selling rare books at an auction. In the end the prices were quite moderate, and we should have bought another book at the auction. We did get one, we just didn't get that second one, which would have been amazing. ■



Leora Siegel PHOTOGRAPHY BY GEORGE PFOERTNER

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