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## Off the Shelf:

An e-mail newsletter from the Prince William Public Library System  
May 2, 2009

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Wedding Planning!

Getting married is one of the biggest events in a person's life. Many couples plan for over a year, invite more than 100 people, and reportedly spend nearly \$30,000 on their big day, although Carl Bialik, the Numbers Guy at *The Wall Street Journal*, analyzes why that figure may be inaccurate (<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB118790518546107112.html>). Many couples turn to the Internet for inspiration and for help planning their wedding, regardless of the type and size of their event.

The best known wedding web sites offer a wealth of information for people planning a wedding. These sites provide photo galleries of dresses, hairstyles, flowers, and cakes to help a bride identify her own style. They also include helpful tools, such as checklists, budget calculators, seating chart programs, and guest list managers to help a busy bride stay organized, on schedule, and on budget. Some even allow the couple to design their own wedding web site to share with friends and family. In order to access all of the features on these sites, free registration is required. Check out the features on some of these popular sites: <http://www.theknot.com/>, <http://www.brides.com/>, <http://weddings.weddingchannel.com/>, <http://www.weddingsolutions.com/>, and <http://www.marthastewartweddings.com/>.

Although the bride usually takes the lead in planning their wedding, the groom also has certain responsibilities and may choose to be more involved in the planning process. Two basic wedding planning sites, Brides.com and The Knot, include sections specifically designed for the groom. (<http://www.brides.com/package/groom/> ; <http://wedding.theknot.com/groom-groomsmen.aspx>) Grooms can also turn to <http://www.groomgroove.com/> to find information written by guys, for guys. For a humorous, slightly irreverent, approach, check out <http://www.groom411.com/>.

While the traditional, religious ceremony is still the most common, many couples are choosing destination weddings. Las Vegas (<http://www.visitlasvegas.com/vegas/play/weddings/>) is a popular choice, but couples literally have a world of options and can choose a location that suits their style, whether that's a cruise ship, a beach wedding in Hawaii, or a Disney theme park (<http://www.disneyweddings.go.com/site/gate/index.jsp>). Several sites provide valuable information for couples interested in a destination wedding, including: <http://destinationbride.com/> and <http://www.personal.umich.edu/~kzaruba/wedding.html>.

There are also some unique options in Virginia. Within Prince William County, there are three historic locations (<http://www.pwcgov.org/default.aspx?topic=030035002120002254>) that can be rented for weddings, receptions, and other special events. The City of Manassas also has several parks (<http://www.manassascity.org/index.asp?NID=375>) that are available for outdoor events. A Washington Post article identifies other locations in Virginia and Maryland that are ideal for couples planning to elope or have a very small wedding. (<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/10/19/AR2006101901806.html>)

The green movement has had an impact on the wedding industry, and there are now options for couples who want to have an environmentally friendly wedding. Try these sites to get started: <http://www.catalogs.com/info/weddings-invitations/how-to-plan-a-green-wedding.html>, <http://www.americanchronicle.com/articles/view/39415>, and <http://portover.com/home>.

For those couples who embrace the idea of a nontraditional wedding, here are some helpful sites. http://www.lifescrypt.com/Life/Relationships/Marriage/Planning_Tips_For_Untraditional_Weddings.aspx provides general information about planning a unique celebration. Ideas for theme

weddings can be found at <http://weddings.about.com/cs/bridesandgrooms/a/weddingstyle.htm>. The Offbeat Bride website (<http://offbeatbride.com/>) is a blog that celebrates unusual weddings, including punk weddings, science-fiction themed weddings, and costumed Halloween weddings.

The Library System owns many books that can help you plan the perfect event. Here are a few to get you started:

Bridal bargains: secrets to throwing a fantastic wedding on a realistic budget by Denise and Alan Fields (395.22 Fie)

The wedding book: the big book for your big day by Mindy Weiss (395.22 Wei)

Wedding chic: 1001 ideas for every moment of your celebration by Colin Cowie (395.22 Cow)

Southern weddings: new looks from the Old South by Tara Guerard (395.22 Gue)

Fodor's destination weddings by Elizabeth Coggins (395.22 Cog)

Green wedding: planning your eco-friendly celebration by Mireya Navarro (395.22 Nav)

Ex-etiquette for weddings: the blended families' guide to tying the knot by Jann Blackstone-Ford and Sharyl Jupe (395.22 Bla)

IN THE SPOTLIGHT: Senior Sleuths

May is Older Americans Month, established by John F. Kennedy in 1963 to encourage the country to pay tribute to older people. This month, In the Spotlight highlights authors who have created vibrant older characters. Regardless of their age, these characters can entertain readers of all ages.

In the minds of several mystery writers, sleuthing is a popular pastime for active retirees. Author Mike Befeler introduced octogenarian Paul Jacobson in *Retirement Homes are Murder* and returns to the character later this month in *Living with Your Kids is Murder*. Paul, who suffers from short term memory loss, is moving to Colorado to live with his son and his son's family. He takes a nap on the airplane and wakes to find a dead man in the next seat. Because of his memory loss, he doesn't have any useful information for the police, and they release him after questioning. However, the police become suspicious when Paul finds another dead body. Both of the dead men worked for Colorado Mountain Retirement Properties, and Paul thinks there's something illegal going on at the company. With the help of his twelve-year-old granddaughter, he begins to investigate the company and the recent deaths.

Here are other recommended mysteries featuring dynamic older characters. Rita Lakin began her Gladdy Gold series with *Getting Old is Murder*. Seventy-five-year-old Gladdy Gold and her eccentric friends, all retirees living in Florida, investigate when several of their neighbors die unexpectedly. Gladdy is suspicious because in each case, the death occurred on the day before the victim's birthday. Patricia Houck Sprinkle's Thoroughly Southern mystery series is a Christian series set in a small town in Georgia. Main character MacLaren Yarbrough is a county magistrate, co-owns the Yarbrough Feed, Seed, and Nursery with her husband, and has a tendency to risk her life investigating crimes. Her husband even threatens to shackle her to her desk to keep her from "meddling in murder." The Maxie and Stretch series by Sue Henry, author of several different mystery series, features free-spirited Maxie McNabb who travels the country in her Winnebago with her miniature dachshund, Stretch. No matter how far they travel from their Alaskan home, they always find mysteries to solve. Look for these series in both the Mystery and the Large Print collections.

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