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## **Off the Shelf:**

An e-mail newsletter from the Prince William Public Library System  
September 1, 2009

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Back to School !

The first day of school is nearly here, and students will soon be working on homework assignments, research papers, and projects. The Prince William Public Library System has a variety of resources available to help students of all ages complete their assignments. Perhaps you need a book to identify autumn leaves, or you need information describing daily life in the original thirteen colonies. Maybe you need a style manual that shows the proper format for the sources in your research paper's bibliography, or you need to know which Native American tribes once lived in Virginia. Your local public library can help! To find the location and hours of the nearest library, visit <http://www.pwcgov.org/default.aspx?topic=04001000106>.

If you can't stop by your local library during normal business hours, don't panic! The Library System subscribes to dozens of research databases that are accessible from home 24 hours a day. Visit <http://www.pwcgov.org/library/electronicresources/index.htm> to see the full list. The barcode number on your library card gives you free access to these products.

Science fair projects can seem overwhelming at first, but the books and online resources available from the Library can help you get started. *The New Book of Popular Science*, *Science Online*, and *Science Resource Center* all provide project ideas, and once you've identified a potential project, you can find supporting research without leaving the comfort of home. The Library also owns many books with ideas for science projects. Visit the Library's catalog (<http://librarycatalog.pwcgov.org/#focus>) and search for the subject 'science projects' or for 'science experiments.'

Students learn about different parts of the world throughout their school career, from ancient civilizations to current events and from the history of Virginia to the cultures of other countries. *America the Beautiful* provides information about the history, geography, economy, culture, government, cities, and important people from each of the fifty states. *CultureGrams*, *Lands & Peoples*, and *Background Notes* (<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/>) all contain similar information about other countries.

Articles from newspapers, magazines, and journals can be used for a variety of assignments. The Library subscribes to databases that provide Washington Post articles published from 1877 to the present and to New York Times articles between 1851 and 2006. *America's Newspapers and World News* allows researchers to read hundreds of newspapers and to view video news clips from across the United States and around the world. *General Reference Center Gold* contains general interest articles from magazines, journals, and reference books. *JSTOR* is an archival database containing hundreds of academic journals spanning the arts and sciences.

Tests are a part of any student's life. *Learning Express Library* and *Testing and Education Reference Center* allow students to practice for many of the significant tests they'll take, including the ACT, SAT, and Advanced Placement tests. College students can practice for graduate school exams like the GRE, LSAT, GMAT, and MCAT. As students prepare for certain careers, they can use both of these resources to practice for the ASVAB, police officer or firefighter exams, nursing or teaching certification exams, and many others.

Although practice exams for the Virginia Standards of Learning tests are not available in the online databases, the Library does have study guides that can be checked out. The Prince William Public Schools provide a description of the tests that are administered to elementary,

middle, and high school students (<http://www.pwcs.edu/accountability/testing.html>), including which SOLs are required at each grade level. Once you've determined which SOLs you'll be taking, visit the Library's catalog and search for the subject 'Virginia standards of learning tests.'

The Prince William Public Library System wishes all students a successful school year. Don't forget – the Library is here to help with your informational and recreational reading needs.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT: Inspired by Dan Brown

If imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, then Dan Brown has been well-complimented. Since the remarkable success of *The DaVinci Code*, many authors have attempted to capture the complex blend of suspense, intrigue, puzzles, conspiracies, and action found in his books. For readers who are anxiously awaiting his new novel and for those who appreciate intellectual thrillers, here are some well-reviewed books that share similarities with Dan Brown's novels.

T. Davis Bunn's latest book, *Gold of Kings*, introduces Storm Syrell, an antiques dealer and art historian whose grandfather dies under suspicious circumstances. Storm finds a series of clues in her grandfather's journal which lead her and treasure hunter Harry Bennett across the world in pursuit of some valuable historical documents. Storm and Harry aren't the only people interested in the documents, and their search takes many dangerous turns.

William Dietrich's *Napoleon's Pyramids* begins in late eighteenth century Paris where an American, Ethan Gage, wins an ancient gold medallion in a card game. There are men who believe that the medallion is a key to acquiring great power, and they're willing to do anything to possess it. After being framed for a murder in Paris, Ethan escapes to Egypt with Napoleon's expedition. Along the way, he encounters spies, assassins, fierce battles, mathematical puzzles, narrow escapes, love and treachery, and the mysteries of the pyramids.

The Brotherhood of the Holy Shroud by Julia Navarro traces the history of the Holy Shroud of Turin and the group of men who have dedicated their lives to protecting the relic. *Labyrinth* by Kate Mosse ties together the story of a young woman in thirteenth century France whose family guards a set of books containing the secret of the Holy Grail with the story of a modern day woman who volunteers on an archaeological dig in France and discovers a cave containing two skeletons and a ring engraved with a labyrinth. *The Rule of Four* by Ian Caldwell and Dustin Thomason follows two college students as they try to decipher the coded secret contained in a Renaissance text and end up in a race for their lives.

For more stories that share similar themes, try *The Geographer's Library* by Jon Fasman, *The Templar Legacy* by Steve Berry, *The Secret Supper* by Javier Sierra, *The Last Templar* by Raymond Khoury, and *The Eight* by Katherine Neville, which was published more than a decade before *The Da Vinci Code*.

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