As the semester winds down, Schmidt Library wishes students well in the completion of assignments and final exams, and faculty lots of caffeine during grading. May you find the time to read a good book or two over break. “A reader lives a thousand lives before he dies.... The man who never reads lives only one.” — George R.R. Martin, A Dance with Dragons

**The Word Exchange** by Alena Graedon (2014)

This dystopian story is set in the not too distant future. A debut novel by Alena Graedon, this book is both entertaining and thought-provoking. As the characters race to find the editor of the very last dictionary who has gone missing on the eve of its final release, they find themselves in subterranean tunnels and at underground resistance meetings while trying to avoid being caught by those in pursuit. In the midst of this confusion, they may no longer rely on their electronic devices; the word flu, which causes spoken and written language to be corrupted into gibberish is spreading rapidly and may develop into a pandemic. I thoroughly enjoyed the book. It was a successful combination of action and a reflection on language and how it may be affected by the digital age. ~ Peggy Herr

**Saree** by Su Dharmapala (2014)

Threads of the exquisite silk wedding saree weave through many lives in Su Dharmapala’s novel Saree. Set in the 1980s during Sri Lanka’s civil war, the complex novel follows the lives of six heroic people who deal with ethnic and class conflict, poverty, war, and forbidden love. The saree, designed and made with love, touches each person until it reaches its final designation. This book is a fascinating introduction to the culture and history of Sri Lanka and a beautiful love story. ~ Joy Rusonis

**Gifted Hands** by Ben Carson (1990)

Carson, 2016 presidential Republican candidate, remembers in elementary school having the lowest grades in his class. That is until his mother got him glasses. He tells the story of wearing those glasses to school for the first day, and thinking, "So that's what she's doing up there!" He went on to be the valedictorian of his high school class, and then made medical history by separating Siamese twins. Carson overcame tremendous obstacles to find success. Like an inspirational book? Read Gifted Hands! ~ Barb Zmolek
H is for Hawk by Helen Macdonald (2014)

Devastated by the sudden death of her father, the author decides to train a goshawk in this moving memoir. Macdonald is an experienced falconer but has never trained goshawks, which she describes as “things of death and difficulty: spooky, pale-eyed psychopaths.” As she trains her juvenile goshawk, the author works through her grief and intertwines the story of T.H. White’s training of a hawk as told in his book The Goshawk (1951). While fascinating for anyone interested in hawks, the narrative sometimes suffers from the author’s overabundance of poetic descriptions. Set in England, the reader should be prepared for numerous Britishisms. ~ Beth Jacoby

Featured Library Resource

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The next What We’re Reading will be published in February. Please submit your reviews of 100 words or less to bjacoby@ycp.edu by January 22.