



THE
PUBLIC
LIBRARY
of Cincinnati
and
Hamilton County

800 Vine Street
Cincinnati, Ohio
45202-2071

Contact
Phyllis Hegner
Phone•369•4571
or
Richard Helmes
Phone•369•6959

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Fax 513•369•4565

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39 Years of Creative Expression for Students

Seven Hills Review Now a Teen eZine

For nearly four decades, the *Seven Hills Review* has been a means of creative expression for teens. Published by the Public Library of Cincinnati & Hamilton County, this unique publication, which was originally sponsored by the Friends of the Public Library, began as a book review in the fall of 1963. Teens from around the Cincinnati and Hamilton County area were invited to submit their thoughts about books while creating original artwork for the cover. Several years later teen poetry by area students became its main thrust.

Today, although the format has changed from a print publication to a web-based eZine, the concept remains the same—a creative publication produced by the Public Library, by teens, for teens, grades 7 through 12. The new online version offers more flexibility with more reach so teens can conveniently log onto the web page from anywhere, whether at home, at school, or at their neighborhood library. Creative expression, such as writing, artwork and photography, once limited by printing costs and space constraints, can now more effectively and efficiently showcase a broader range of submissions.

As with the previous print version, the driving force behind the *Seven Hills Review* is the Teen Editorial Board. Made up of high school students from around the Cincinnati and Hamilton County area, the editors select poems and categories for the new web edition, type in entries, write editorials and submit other creative work of their own, as well as spend a few hours each month at the Main Library working on the eZine.

Recently unveiled at the Main Library during a special reception for all of the teen writers, this first eZine edition of the new web-based *Seven Hills Review* was officially launched on the Library's web site. It's now available in the publications section on the homepage at www.CincinnatiLibrary.org. The new eZine reflects the emphasis being placed on highlighting reading materials geared toward teen interests (such as teen novels and books, teen magazines, graphic novels, and comic books as well as music and books-on-CD) throughout the library system.

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Separate teen areas, wired for the future with multiple computers providing Internet access and CD-ROM stations, are being created in various branches. And teens are adding their own special touches by attaching names and artwork to them. In the teen area at the Harrison Branch Library the CD-ROM station became known as the “Cool Cube” and a magnetic message wall presents other opportunities for expressing ideas. Upon painting a mural backdrop at Green Township Branch Library, teens designated the area “Rump Park.” Library programs, such as poetry slams, teen book clubs and drama clubs, teen mystery nights and Medieval nights, and various teen gatherings like BACKTALK, are also being fashioned to respond to teen interests.

“By providing ways for teens to put their own mark on certain aspects of the Library, whether in areas specially designed for them or through the Library’s web site, it allows them to take creative ownership in their neighborhood library,” said Teen Coordinator Paula Brehm-Heeger. “As a result more and more teens are showing up at the Library, and it’s a trend we’re encouraging and nurturing.”

“Driven by creative interaction, the new online eZine is one more way the Library can expand its services beyond books and become more integrated in the lives of teens,” she added. “It reflects how teens see themselves and the value of the Library.”

Teens should also remember that the *Seven Hills Review* is not only a creative outlet for them, it’s a social outlet. It’s a fun way to develop their own creativity while taking an interest in the talents of others. Writers and editors, as well as other artists, can participate in various interactive functions such as poetry readings, art shows, and pizza parties. And, since the initial eZine launch reception was a “virtual” success, it’s likely an annual reception will be held at the Main Library for the writers/artists whose submissions were published.

About the Teen Editorial Board & Submissions

- Currently, ten Teen Editorial Board members from around the Cincinnati and Hamilton County area serve on the board and select submissions to be included in upcoming editions. Several of the members are graduating seniors, so there will be positions vacant for next year. Teens from incoming freshman to grade 12 from the Cincinnati and Hamilton County area with an interest in writing or art, who have demonstrated involvement in these areas, are encouraged to apply. Those selected must be willing to meet once or twice a month at the Main Library. While seventh and eighth graders may submit materials, they are not eligible to serve on the board.
- Two to three issues a year are to be published in the fall, winter and spring. In this issue there are 75 submissions written by more than 50 students from various middle and high schools. New modes of creativity, such as art and photography, have been added. An art gallery to spotlight these works is planned.
- Teens (grades 7-12) can make submissions online at www.cincinnati.library.org/sevenhillsreview or send them to: Teen Coordinator, Public Library of Cincinnati & Hamilton County, 800 Vine Street, Cincinnati, OH 45202. There’s no cost to be involved or to submit materials. See submission guidelines online.