

DAN JORGENSEN INTERVIEW: THE RETURN OF READCON!



High Plains Library District  
**CommUNITY**

JANUARY 2025

# AAROO

## A Year of Reading

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# *Resolutions for a Year of Reading:* **A Commitment to Growth, One Page at a Time**

by *Dania Laubach*

The start of a new year is a moment for reflection and growth. It's the perfect time to set intentions, whether that means striving for a healthier lifestyle, embracing new hobbies, or simply taking time to slow down. But one of the most rewarding resolutions you can make in 2025 might be the one that takes you on a journey without ever leaving home: reading more.

For many of us, reading can be sidelined by life's demands — work, family, friends, or just the hustle of keeping up with everything. But what if we made reading a non-negotiable part of our daily routine?

Whether you're looking to dive into fiction that transports you, non-fiction that challenges your thinking, or books that align with your personal or professional goals, 2025 is a great year to reconnect with the power of the page.

Here's how you can approach your reading resolution and make it stick, without adding stress or feeling overwhelmed:

## **1. Set Realistic Goals — and Be Kind to Yourself**

The beauty of reading is that there's no "right" or "wrong" way. If the idea of reading 52 books in a year feels daunting, then start smaller. Maybe your goal is 12, or 20, or perhaps just setting aside a few minutes each day to read a chapter or two. The key is making it sustainable — don't set yourself up for failure by aiming too high. Instead, focus on the consistency of making reading a habit, rather than obsessing over the



number of books or pages. Small reminders and rewards can create great forward momentum.

## **2. Create a Reading Ritual**

Life can be chaotic, but carving out time for reading can be a grounding ritual. Whether it's a cup of coffee/tea in hand as you sit down with your current book in the morning, or a chapter before bed to wind down, establish a moment in your day that's dedicated to reading. Leave a book or magazine next to your coffee or teapot for a quick morning page. Pack in a paperback with your lunch. Setting this small, intentional routine helps keep reading as a priority and can serve as a daily anchor amidst the busyness of life.

If you're someone who is constantly on the go, audiobooks can be a game changer. You can read

while commuting, working out, or even doing household chores. The key is to make the act of consuming books fit seamlessly into your life, rather than adding another task to the to-do list.

### 3. Embrace the Beauty of Books in Every Season

Books aren't just something to check off a list. They can reflect the seasons of your life, and they can reflect the literal seasons throughout the year. January might be the perfect time to cozy up with a thought-provoking novel, while summer could be the season for lighter beach reads. Books have a way of capturing the mood of the moment, and you can allow your reading list to evolve as the year unfolds. Maybe you'll find inspiration in an ambitious historical fiction novel when the weather is cold and turn to self-improvement or travel memoirs as the days grow longer.

### 4. Diversify Your Reading List

A reading resolution doesn't have to be about quantity alone. The start of a new year is a great time to diversify your reading. Branch out into genres or topics you wouldn't typically explore. Set a goal to read books by authors from different backgrounds or pick up books about topics you know little about. This year could be the year you explore more poetry, history, or even fantasy. The Adults Read On program at your local High Plains District Library, challenges adults to read outside their comfort zone to find new perspectives. Check your local

High Plains library for details on registering for this adult reading challenge or get started here on January 1st: <https://www.mylibrary.us/aro/>

Not sure where to start? Here are a few ideas to inspire your list for 2025:

- The Midnight Library by Matt Haig — a novel about second chances and the paths not taken.
  - Atomic Habits by James Clear — for practical insights into habit-building that can support your other resolutions.
  - Caste by Isabel Wilkerson — a deeply moving exploration of social hierarchies that shape our world.
  - The Song of Achilles by Madeline Miller — a captivating retelling of the Greek myth that will sweep you away.
- A varied reading list keeps your book stack fresh, and discovering new voices can be exhilarating.

### 5. Don't Rush — Enjoy the Journey

In a world where speed often takes precedence over depth, reading invites us to slow down. Rather than rushing through books to "finish" or hit a target, savor the experience. Let the book take you where it wants to go. Take notes. Reread passages that resonate with you. Reflect on how the themes of the book connect with your own life. Reading, when done with intention, can be as much about the experience of the story as the completion of it.

**READ** All Year Long

Challenge yourself to read 12 books in a year with the Adults Read On program and earn prizes along the way! Adults (16+) can participate by picking up a paper log at any branch, by downloading the Beanstack Tracker App and following the instructions, or by visiting [highplains.beanstack.org/reader365](https://highplains.beanstack.org/reader365).

For more details, check out [www.MyLibrary.us/aro](https://www.MyLibrary.us/aro).

**ADULTS READ ON**

Complete 12 books in 12 months. Redeem prizes at your local HPLD location, after you've read

Book No.	Title
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	
9	

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## 6. Share the Journey

Sometimes, sharing what you're reading can help motivate you to stick with your resolution. Start or join a book club or share your thoughts on books with friends or online communities. There's something powerful about knowing you'll be discussing a book with others, and that shared enthusiasm can elevate your reading experience. You might discover books you wouldn't have picked up on your own, and you'll have people to discuss those complex themes and characters with, keeping the reading momentum going throughout the year.

## 7. Remember: Reading is an Act of Self-Care

Ultimately, reading is not just about productivity or

achievement — it's an act of self-care. It's a way to escape every day, recharge your mind, and expand your perspective. If your 2025 resolution includes more "me time," remember that reading can be an essential part of that. The world's books can bring joy, comfort, and even healing when we need it most.

As you step into the new year, make reading a part of your resolution, but do so intending to make it something you truly enjoy. Set yourself up for success by creating a realistic reading routine, embracing books for both personal growth and pleasure, and savoring each chapter as it comes. By the time 2026 rolls around, you'll not only have read a few more books — you'll have enriched your year in ways you didn't expect. So, here's to a year of books, discovery, and the quiet joy of turning the page.

**Did YOU have a great library experience? Like, ever?**

If you're reading HPLD's newsletter, we're betting the answer is "Yes." Or possibly even "YES!"

To let our staff know that they're having an impact in your community, we're proposing a quick letter-writing campaign. Write your favorite HPLD staff member a letter, and if they're up for it, we'll ask them to read it out loud for the first time on video. That way, they can see how much you appreciate them, and you can see how much your words mean to them!



# Interview with Author **Dan Jorgensen**

Dan Jorgensen is a local author who we're bringing in for a VERY special event this spring, and Dan was kind enough to sit down and answer some questions for us.

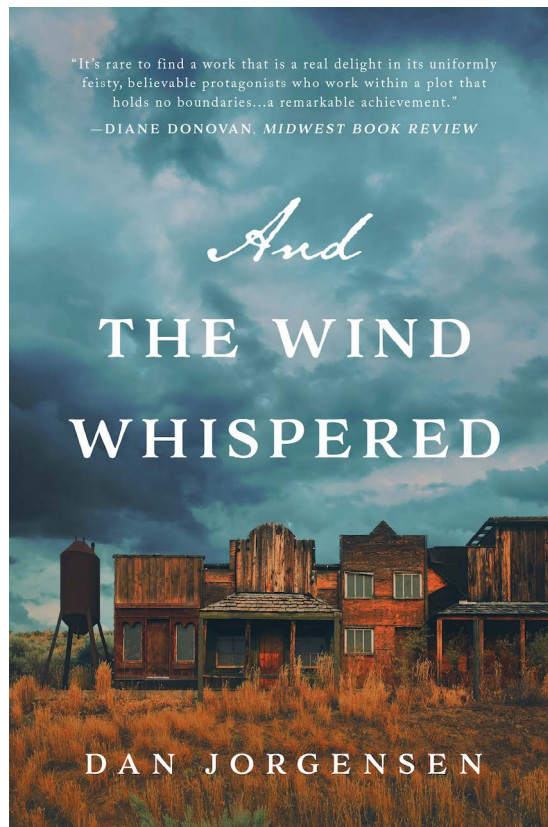
As for the special event, you'll have to read on to find out more...

A little bit about Dan, from his bio:

*A native of Minnesota, Dan Jorgensen grew up on a South Dakota farm, attending a one-room country school and becoming the first member of his family to attend college. After earning both his bachelor's and master's degrees from South Dakota State University, he studied creative writing and film at Colorado State University where he wrote his first book *Killer Blizzard*.*

*In addition to writing many hundreds of news and sports articles and feature stories, both as a journalist and in public relations, he also is the author of 10 books, including the award-winning mystery/adventures *And The Wind Whispered*, *Killer Blizzard*, and *Rainbow Rock*, all set in the Black Hills of South Dakota and their surrounding area. His next mystery-thriller *Devil's Thumb* -- set at Mount Rushmore at the beginning of the mountain's carving in 1925 -- is scheduled for publication in the Spring of 2025.*

*Dan also has written 3 songs and a one-act play, has contributed to 2 anthologies, and writes the blog *A Writer's Moment*. He is a frequent presenter on the topics "Storytelling—From Journalism to Creative Writing" and*



*"The Writing Life."*

*Dan and his wife Susan live in Milliken, Colorado.*

Without further ado, here we go!

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**High Plains Library District:**

Thanks for agreeing to do this interview, and thanks for being one of our guests at this year's ReadCon! First question, just to build some momentum: If we're marketing you as a ReadCon guest, would you like to be an "esteemed" guest, "honored" guest, or is there another descriptor you feel is more fitting (or less embarrassing if you're the bashful type)?

**Dan Jorgensen:** Guest Writer seems fitting since writing has been such an integral part of my life. Being referred to as "Writer"

is something for which I am very grateful.

**HPLD:** I noticed that your last couple titles, *Rainbow Rock* and *And The Wind Whispered*, are set in the 1950s and late 1800s, respectively. What draws you to writing stories set in the past?

**D.J.:** We have such a rich history in this part of the country and if I weren't a writer, I think I would have been a historian. When I was working as a feature writer for newspapers in the Black Hills, I wrote a weekly column called "Yesteryears" focusing on things that had happened in that region from the late 1880s until the 1950s and

early 1960s. It was while doing this that I found many interesting stories about people who had lived there as well as those who had been visitors there. I decided that I would use those stories as the beginning points for my creative writings set in that region, and I actually wrote down time periods – 1890s, early 1900s, 1920s, late 1930s-early 1940s, and 1950s – that I thought would make good time periods for books. Out of that I have now written three books, the two mentioned above and a third in 1925, and have started plotting out two more, one in 1905, another around 1940.

**HPLD:** I noticed something as I've been getting into your book *And The Wind Whispered*. Sometimes a book has this odd feeling, that the world of the book only exists during the moments you're reading it. The world and the characters of *And The Wind Whispered* have a more solid feel to them, as though they existed before the story began, and as though the world of the story will continue to exist after the book is over. What is it about the way you write that makes things feel more real, more tangible, in this way?

**D.J.:** I started my five-book, five-time period series with *And The Wind Whispered* for just that reason, to develop both the "place" and some of the people that I wanted to include in subsequent books. Each of my books stands alone but I am taking some of the characters forward – thus my young protagonist Al Twocrow, a teenager in *And The Wind Whispered*, is a grizzled Deputy U.S. Marshal in Rainbow Rock. In my newest book, *Devil's Thumb* (set in 1925 and scheduled for release this coming Spring) Al is a "seasoned" U.S. Marshal in his mid-40s.

As I was preparing to write *And The Wind Whispered*, I sat down and created a "working backstory" for how I wanted to depict the place and the people leading up to 1894, the year of the book. Throughout the story, there are hints about these things that, I think, makes you feel like you better know the people and the place. Also, at the end of the book, you feel like these characters are going to move forward and continue to do interesting things in any subsequent books. I also base some of the characters on people I've known, thus it is easy to bring them to life on the page.


I think that my training as a feature writer and then my development as a journalistic writer led me to creating characters and scenes that the reader can feel that they are part of, involved with if you may. Writers often say that they feel like their characters become their friends or part of their lives. That's definitely true for me and my characters.

**HPLD:** Another unique thing about *And The Wind Whispered* is that it has a larger cast of characters than I'm used to seeing in a western mystery. I feel like fantasy is a genre that typically has a cast of this size, and seeing it in a western gave your book a refreshing dimension. Did you find that writing a book with a larger character set was more fun, more work, or maybe some of both?


**D.J.:** I'm glad you discovered that and, yes it was definitely more fun and a lot more work. When my wife Susan and I were researching the time and place, we discovered that all of the "real" characters I put into the book to interact with my "created" characters really were in the area at

**RETURNING APRIL 2025**


# READCON



**Erika Krouse**





**Paloma Barraza**



**Dan Jorgensen**

**April 11th • 5:30-8:30pm**

**LINC Library Innovation Center 501 8th Ave, Greeley**



that time. People like Nellie Bly and Bat Masterson and Theodore Roosevelt – even a young Will Rogers – were there and the likelihood that they saw one another and interacted with each other as I have them doing in the book really could have happened – maybe not precisely the way I’ve written it, but in a way that I could make tangible. I started out thinking I would only use a few of them mixed in with a few locals and created characters, but there were just too many good possibilities to leave some out, so I just blended them all together.

In our research, we also found a lot of the real things that these characters said; conversations they had with friends and family that had been written down. That gave me a good idea of how they talked and reacted to things and, thus, I was able to create the conversations they have in the story from that research.

**HPLD:** Your bio says you’ve written 10 books, 3 songs, and a play in addition to hundreds of news stories. Tell me a little bit about your songwriting. Did you find the exercise of songwriting changed the way you write novels?

**D.J.:** When I was in graduate school, I decided that I wanted to learn how to play the guitar – for both relaxation and to use as a way to “mess around”, if you will, with some lyric ideas I had developed when writing poems for one of my English classes. I had always been interested in music, especially singing (I was in the All State Choir my senior year of high school and sang in a Men’s Chorus in my undergraduate collegiate years). But I had never done an instrument and thought the guitar would be good. Once I had learned to play, I started experimenting with writing songs – lede lines to go with my written lines. I don’t know if it helped me with my novels, but just like you need the right notes to help a song “flow” better, you need to pick the right words to help your story flow better. Since I wrote my songs before I wrote my books, I guess they definitely helped in that way.

**HPLD:** I always think song titles are interesting. Would you share one of your song titles with us?

**D.J.:** One of the songs is called “Prairie Home” and another “In America.” I copyrighted both and ultimately recorded them as an “A” and “B” side on a 45 rpm record. For a time, back in the day of jukeboxes in bars, etc., my songs were on jukeboxes (the old “Don’t Play B-17,” like the song goes) and did pretty well. “Prairie Home” was the “A” side record – a sort-of country western type song and probably the best one I wrote.

**HPLD:** I read in your bio that you come from a pretty extensive journalism background. How did your education in journalism and background in newswriting inform the writing you’re doing today?

**D.J.:** I really love the process of interviewing and uncovering things that help “flesh out” a feature story – not only telling a story about the subject but really letting the reader feel like he or she is in the room with the person I’m interviewing; seeing and hearing him or her through my story about them. I feel like I’ve been able to transfer that over into my creative writing as well.

**HPLD:** You’ve written a handful of sports books with teen characters at their center. What is it about writing for that audience that appealed to you, or what’s different about your process when you’re working on a book for a younger crowd?

**D.J.:** I was a girls’ basketball coach for about 10 years – in both the Black Hills and then when I lived and worked in Minnesota. I also played basketball, football and baseball and ran track in high school. I actually was asked to write the first of those books – a story about a girls’ basketball team – by the publisher who had heard about my coaching and writing background. The success of that book led them to ask me to do books about soccer and softball, too. After coaching kids, I knew that there were many stories to share about both their “on the court” or “on the field”

experiences, and also about the interactions of players with other kids in their communities; something I observed with

my players. Those “community” things often carry over into practices and the dynamics of a team and I decided I could tell that story – not just a “sports” book, but a “life” book, I guess.

I also learned as a coach that the players are young adults and have a deep understanding of life and the world around us. I wanted to be sure that my writing about them showed that side; to tell their story. I have had many letters from kids saying how much they identified with one or another of the characters and that’s gratifying to know that I made those characters come to life for the readers.

**HPLD:** Your sports books are books we’d file in the Teen section today, a section that used to be called the Young Adult section, and it looks like you wrote these books in the late 80s and early 90s. That was a bit before libraries all had dedicated sections for teen and young adult literature, which have exploded in the last couple decades. What was it that had you thinking about this audience so long before the larger book market (and even libraries) caught on?

**D.J.:** Just that interaction I had had with young people on teams – and my wife and I also were Sunday School teachers for 8th and 9th graders and had those interactions, too. That, coupled with the impetus to “get going” on a book because a publisher wanted it and was giving me a contract to do it, got me started. Then I heard

# READCON



from young people all around the world how much they liked the first story and I realized I was giving these young readers something they wanted to read. The books are sort-of “historical” now – no cell phones for instant connections, for example – but I think if YA readers today read them in that context, they would find the storyline; the interactions among the players and between teens and adults still pertinent today.

**HPLD:** I browsed your blog, *A Writer’s Moment*, and I noticed a lot of the entries kick off with a quote from a writer, and you follow them up with a short bio or some other info about the writer. It’s a really interesting look at a very broad collection of writers. From outside, it feels like the blog serves multiple purposes: it’s a nice introduction to new writers, brief explorations of the real lives behind some of our favorite books, and maybe a bit of a filing cabinet for you as well. How do you view *A Writer’s Moment*?

**D.J.:** You’ve hit the nail on the head with your last sentence. It’s exactly what I had in mind when I created the blog 10 years ago. I was interested in exploring what writers had done in their lives and things they had said as well as just sharing some of their accomplishments. In the process, it became an inspirational point for me as a writer, too. Almost every day I find something new and interesting about writers – including finding out about writers who ought to be remembered and often are not. It’s a fun process to find the info. and share the results and it also serves as a breakthrough for me on days when I might be facing “writer’s block,” a dreaded malady that sometimes halts the creative process. By the time I’ve written up my 250-300 word blog, any “block” I might have had is long gone.

**HPLD:** You’ve got a new book, *Devil’s Thumb*, due out in April, just in time for ReadCon. Tell us a little bit about it.

**D.J.:** It’s scheduled for the first week of April, but I’ve long since learned that publishers’ deadlines are more fluid than those of their writers. However, I’m hopeful that the very first copies will be in my hands by then.

The book is set in 1925 in the Keystone-Hill City area of the Black Hills with Mount Rushmore in between. That’s the year that Gutzon Borglum started the Mount Rushmore carving project. Thus, the book will come out in the 100th anniversary year of the start of the project. Mount Rushmore is located on U.S. Forest Service land and the site’s approval was contingent on there being no “flies in the ointment,” so to speak. A big such fly was discovery of a dead body just west of Mount Rushmore at the base of a rock formation the locals called “Devil’s Thumb.” So, before Borglum could move forward with his plan – and the clock is ticking on his major dedication ceremony, already planned – the murder has to be resolved.

My protagonist Al Twocrow, now a Deputy U.S. Marshal, is at the heart of solving the crime, aided by Minnie

Thompson, who was one of my “real person” characters in *And The Wind Whispered* and is now an investigative newspaper reporter. Twocrow also is helped by a fearless female biplane pilot named Kallie Sinclair, and Keystone resident Carrie Ingalls. A little known fact is that Carrie, younger sister of Laura Ingalls Wilder, was a newspaperwoman in Keystone at the time. And another special twist is the help of her husband David Swanzey, one of the men who unofficially “named” Mount Rushmore back in the 1880s.

This is another mystery-thriller with lots of twists and turns and a biplane-horseback chase (also based on a real incident from the time) that I think readers will find exciting and memorable.

**HPLD:** We’re really excited to have you at ReadCon this year. For a lot of people, ReadCon will be the first larger-scale, book-based event they’ve attended. Tell us a little bit about what you’ll be doing that day, and if you can, maybe say something to the folks reading this interview who have never been to a reading before.

**D.J.:** I am equally excited to be part of ReadCon and very much looking forward to meeting and talking to everyone. I plan to read from my current book *Rainbow Rock*, a mystery-thriller based on a 1955 murder in the Black Hills; talk a bit about the genesis of *And The Wind Whispered*; and read a passage from *Devil’s Thumb*. I’ll also be answering questions about how I go about developing and writing my books as part of a panel discussion. And, then if people are interested in having autographed copies of any of the books, they will be available – at which time I would be happy to answer any one-on-one questions, too.

**HPLD:** Last question to ease us out: When you meet readers at ReadCon, do you prefer “Mr. Jorgensen,” “Dan,” or some other title?

**D.J.:** Dan.

~

And there you have it, just a little peek at what you can expect from the incredible Dan Jorgensen at this year’s ReadCon!

Yes, Dan Jorgensen is our first featured author for 2025’s ReadCon! After a 10-year coffee break, ReadCon is back in action. We’ll have some more features and a lot more specifics coming up in the next couple months.

If you’d like to read some of Dan’s works to prep for ReadCon, coming this April, you can find them in our catalog here.

And watch this space for more ReadCon details! April is coming faster than you think!

# Cult Movie Vault:

## Hundreds of Beavers & Damming the Stream

Hundreds of Beavers and Damming the Stream

Have you ever wondered, “What if *The Revenant* was a 90-minute Looney Tunes cartoon?”

No, of course you haven’t. Which is fine because an indie filmmaker has already pondered that question FOR you, and the result is a little movie called *Hundreds of Beavers*.

The first thing you’ll notice about *Hundreds of Beavers* is the visual style. It’s...strange. It’s a black and white movie with lots of mixing between real settings, cartoon backdrops inhabited by real characters, puppets, and a whole lot of people dressed up in beaver mascot costumes. The movie has music and the characters grunt, scream, and make “Mmm-hmmm,” noises, but there’s no real dialogue.

It’s strange, it’s unusual, but it’s also pleasant and fun. Our hero, Jean Kayak, is a...guy. I’m not totally sure what his profession or life goals are at the movie’s start. He’s mostly just getting heroically drunk on applejack, which is a brandy-like drink made from apples. Based on my one experience with applejack, it tastes an awful lot like whiskey and makes a person pretty tipsy in short order. If one of the main categories you judge alcohol by is “efficiency,” if drinking is an activity you feel is too athletic in that you have to swallow too many times to get where you want to go, applejack might be something worth looking into.



After Mr. Kayak’s bender concludes, our hero wakes up buried in snow and finds himself needing to survive the harsh North American winter. And he does so by apprenticing with a trapper who teaches him a bit about fishing, hunting, and, of course, trapping, as you’d expect based on his job title.

This plot description sounds pretty dry (in the metaphorical sense, not the non-alcoholic sense), but this is one of those beautiful movies that has a plot only because you have to hang all the jokes on SOMETHING. Think of something like *Dude, Where’s My Car?*, a movie in which the plot is, basically, “A guy loses his car and then has to find it.” Nothing intricate in the narrative, just a scaffolding for gags.

Or *Harold and Kumar Go to White Castle*, a movie in which Harold and Kumar try to get to White Castle.

Or *Half-Baked*, a movie in which...you know, I think I’ve just identified a genre: Movies where a guy parties too hard, creating his own, seemingly simple problem, and then spends about 90 minutes doing a really terrible job of solving it.

Let’s skip plot and talk about the sorts of gags you’ll find in this movie:

In one sequence, our hero sets up a fishing pole and wants to move on to check other traps. So, he builds a snowman

to hold the fishing pole. Efficiency! Unfortunately, the snowman's line gets a bite, and the fish pulls the pole right out of the snowman's stick-like hands, which are stick-like because they are, in fact, sticks.



Now, our trapper friend discovers this when he returns, but, no matter, he's got a solution: He rebuilds the snowman, this time with huge snow-carved biceps and pecs, because while your average snowman might not be strong enough to fight a fish, a Schwarzenegger-snowman should have no problem!

I'm not going to run through any of the other gags, there are too many to count, and I think the fewer you know about going in, the better.

*Hundreds of Beavers* is one of those movies where there's a little something for almost everyone who wants a laugh, especially if you have a fondness for movies like *Airplane!*, *Naked Gun*, and for *Three Stooges* shorts. I'll just say it's one of the most laugh-dense movies I've seen, and it keeps finding new ways to surprise the viewer.

If you like goofy fun, you won't be bored.

I had to tell you about this movie because I don't think it's getting its due, possibly because it's such a niche thing, but ALSO because, I suspect, it can be a little challenging to stream...like the internet has been...dammed up a bit. Do you get it? Beavers? Streams? Dam-related problems? Gosh, sometimes I even amaze myself.

### The Streaming Problem

We're going to get into some technical, true nerd stuff, but hang with me for a minute.

You know how sometimes you're watching a streaming movie, and you see something like this?

You can see, in the shadows here, a weird, pixelated kind of thing going on.

These effects are especially obvious in very dark scenes, and a lot of times you'll see what looks like jagged-edge, square-shaped shadows and lighting effects that really should look more organic.



Surely this isn't how the movie was filmed, right?

No, it absolutely wasn't. How do I know? Because if you watch something on streaming and it looks like this, then get the same movie on a DVD or Blu-Ray, there's almost zero chance you'll see these sorts of "artifacts." On a disc, the night shots will look like night shots instead of looking like digital nightmares.

This ghastly effect is mostly due to something called compression.

I can show you what I mean by compression.

Here's a shot from *Mad Max: Fury Road*



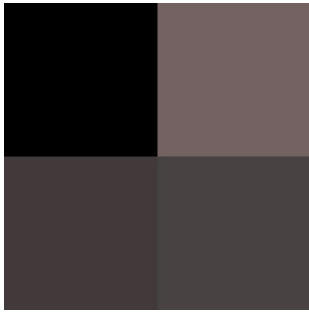
Here's the same shot, HEAVILY compressed:

Looks a little worse, right? Pay attention to the dark clouds in the distance or the look along the horizon line. Check out the ridge along the hill in the distance. Instead



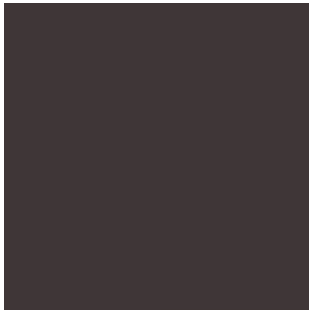
of a smooth blend, it's squared off in places. Look at the taillights on the car. They look blurrier, right? Messier? Artificial. Digitized, in a bad way.

Why does it look like this?



A simpler example:

Pretend this square, divided into 4 sections, is a collection of 4 pixels from a movie still, just a super zoomed in frame from a movie. You can see that while all the colors could be called gray-ish, they're a bit nuanced.



Compressing a movie might make take those 4 pixels, average their colors into one color, and the result is that those same 4 pixels look like this:

With a lot of pixels averaged together, you start to get that unpleasant, digital, um, crappy look.

Why Compress?

The purpose of compression isn't to make me angry, even though that's the RESULT. The purpose is to decrease movie file sizes for streaming.

In the example of 4 Shades of Grey above, when compression takes those 4 different colors and blends them into one, it reduces the amount of information contained in those 4 pixels. Compression would do this to every set of 4 pixels in every frame of the movie, meaning there was a lot less information in the entire movie file. Less information means the movie's file is, overall, much smaller.

We are lucky to have high-speed internet today, but even today's speeds are not always high enough to deliver the performance of physical media like DVD and Blu-Ray.

It's not really anyone's fault. We could blame the streaming companies, but they have to manage large files and deliver them to folks who might not have the download speeds necessary. We could say it's the internet service providers, companies I'm not super apt to defend, but I don't know that they have the ability to manage this entirely on their end, either.

We could blame ourselves, I suppose. You'd be surprised at how many ways I can find to blame myself for things that have nothing to do with me...

What can you do about compression?

I tried watching *Hundreds of Beavers* on a streaming service, and it was unwatchable. Without the crisp visuals,

the movie suffers TERRIBLY. It's not only no fun to watch, it's kind of painful. Everything looks like a garbled mess, like it was shot on a shoulder-perched VHS camera that someone's dad had in 1993 and constantly insisted wasn't a toy, even though a video camera is, obviously, definitely, a toy.

And I hate to think anyone out there tried watching *Hundreds of Beavers* and was turned off by the look of it in a highly-compressed form.

There are some things worth trying if you're getting really bad compression from your streaming services. Your mileage will vary. But if you're watching something that's unbearably ugly, and you don't usually have problems, here are some tips:

Your first steps are going to be the standard troubleshooting stuff: Reset your router, reset/restart your streaming device, make sure your streaming device is updated, blah, blah, blah.

Sometimes this works, if you're watching something that normally looks good and today looks terrible, this might be the culprit. And you should know devices like a streaming stick that plugs into your TV never really turn all the way off, so a full restart every so often actually does help.

If you're watching on a laptop or other device, sometimes downloading the streaming service's app will make this better, especially if the app lets you download movies for offline viewing. When you download the movie, you don't have to stream it, per se, so it can improve the appearance.

It could also be that you have too many things competing on your wifi. It can actually help your speeds out if you turn things off when they don't need to be on the network. Putting your phones in airplane mode, shutting down any tablets, turning your Nintendo Switch all the way off—all this stuff can help, especially if you're like a lot of households that have a dozen things on their network, things like doorbell cameras, every single light bulb connected over the network, and a refrigerator that is basically a big iPad that's cold inside.

You could also consider hard-wiring your streaming device to your router so that it's not operating over wifi. But if you didn't already think of that, I'd say it's a tactic that's more on the advanced side and could wind up with you stapling a cord all along the upper walls of your house. Hey, I'm all for watching *Demolition Man* the way it was meant to be seen, but I don't live alone, and my partner isn't into what I call "A Techno Modernism Aesthetic," a look she calls "Yellow Wires Running Along the Ceilings."

Even moving your router to be closer to your streaming device, your "home theater" if you're one of them fancy boys with a fold-up seats kind of theater in your basement, can help. Wifi is magic, but it's magic that is weakened by walls. Even the paper thin walls of every apartment I've lived in. I hear that music you're playing, neighbor. It's not good.

You might also check the settings on your TV. Some TVs have settings that are...weird. The rumor I've heard is that TVs have default settings made to look their best in a very bright showroom in a Best Buy, and those settings don't look so hot in your living room. Unless you live in a room designed to replicate the experience of being in a Best Buy. Which is a choice, for sure, and I applaud your commitment to doing a thing.

If your TV has motion smoothing, I REALLY recommend turning that off. If everything on your TV kind of looks like a soap opera, motion smoothing might be the culprit. What's the number-one, most foolproof way to watch a movie without worrying about the evil specter of compression?

Watch movies on disc.

Seriously, I know it sounds archaic and backwards, but, trust me, borrowing the disc from the library is WAY less painful than spending a half hour troubleshooting technology when all you want to do is watch a guy fistfight cartoonish beavers.

Now, I admit, the one thing the library does fall short on is that you'll quite often find a library DVD is dirty and or scratched.

We're on the topic right now, so here we go: Who is checking out DVDs and putting their fingerprints all over them? Seriously, you know how a disc works, right? I kind of expected this when I rented an animated Spider-Man movie, there's a good chance this disc was handled by a child who was eating a glizzy, which he called a glizzy, and that child might not have understood how hot dog grease fingerprints affect electronic media.

But I checked out season 5 of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, and, you guys, it was in terrible shape! Trekkies should know better! You're 100% a middle-aged nerd if you're watching that show! I say this with love because you and I, we're the same, except that I would NEVER touch the bottom side of a disc!

How are we ever supposed to reach the TNG utopia Picard is always talking about if we can't even keep DVDs in good shape?

Sigh.

When you get a disc that has smudges on it, the easiest thing is to use a very small amount of water and a screen cleaning cloth to wipe it off. I don't really recommend any chemicals, they can have bad interactions with the coatings on some discs. Just get a very small amount of water on the cloth and then wipe the disc, starting from the donut hole at the center and moving out to the edge. Don't wipe it in a circular pattern. That's what we're all tempted to do, but that can make the damage worse.

Wipe until the disc is 100% dry, then give it another spin in your player.

Sometimes, a cleaning will even help with a scratched disc. But that's not always the case.

When you get a disc that's too damaged to watch, I know it's inconvenient, but if you can, let us know. Put another copy on hold, and return yours. You can either bring it up to the desk and let us know, or you can just put a note into the plastic, outer sleeve of the DVD letting us know the disc is badly scratched.

We're not going to think you did it, by the way. We know. We've been there. Again, I don't know who last checked out that TNG season that I just had, but you, sir, reminded me that monsters are real and live among us.

The big advantage of a damaged disc over horrible-quality streaming is that you can at least look at the disc before you leave the library and know what you're getting into. And I recommend you do. If it looks really bad, I might just bring it up to the desk and get something else instead.

I'm not the biggest cinephile, I honestly don't think I could tell the difference between a DVD and a Blu-Ray unless you played them side-by-side, I was wearing my glasses, was well-rested, and didn't have a huge bowl of popcorn to distract me. Which, if I don't have a huge bowl of popcorn, good luck getting me to sit in front of a screen for more than the length of a TikTok.

I'm not here to tell you that you SIMPLY MUST SEE MOVIES ON THE ORIGINAL 35 MM FILM or whatever. I mean, come on, it's not like most people can tell the difference between paper types in print books, and you don't see me shaming THEM! Even though the delicious foldability of a nice short grain paper is a tactile experience that your standard issue Hammermill is never going to touch.

I just wanted to give a shoutout to physical media and talk a bit about why physical media might be a better option here and there. We all watch some movies where the visuals are more about getting the general idea than they are a sumptuous, delicious frame-to-frame feast for the senses. I mean, if you've seen 1997's *Batman and Robin* lately, you're probably better off NOT being able to see how wobbly and plastic-y all the "icicles" are. A little bit of a smudgy picture might improve the experience.

But if you're watching a movie where the visual style is a big component, something the filmmaker really worked on, consider watching it on disc.

Jean Kayak will thank you.

# LOCATIONS

## LIBRARIES Visit [www.MyLibrary.us/locations-and-hours](http://www.MyLibrary.us/locations-and-hours) for library hours

### Administration & Support Services

2650 West 29th Street  
Greeley, CO 80631  
1-888-861-READ(7323)

### Carbon Valley Regional Library

7 Park Avenue  
Firestone, CO 80504  
1-888-861-READ(7323)

### Centennial Park Library

2227 23rd Avenue  
Greeley, CO 80634  
1-888-861-READ(7323)

### Eaton Public Library

132 Maple Avenue  
Eaton, CO 80615  
(970) 454-2189

### Erie Community Library

400 Powers Street  
Erie, CO 80516  
1-888-861-READ(7323)

### Farr Regional Library

1939 61st Avenue  
Greeley, CO 80634  
1-888-861-READ(7323)

### Fort Lupton Public & School Library

370 S. Rollie Avenue  
Fort Lupton, CO 80621  
(303) 339-4089

### Glenn A. Jones, M.D. Memorial Library

400 S. Parish Avenue  
Johnstown, CO 80534  
(970) 587-2459

### Grover Library

402 Chatoga Avenue  
Grover, CO 80729  
1-888-861-READ(7323)

### Milliken Location of the Glenn A. Jones, M.D. Memorial Library

1109 Broad Street  
Milliken, CO 80543  
(970) 660-5039

### Hudson Public Library

100 S. Beech Street  
Hudson, CO 80642  
(303) 536-4550

### Kersey Library

332 3rd Street  
Kersey, CO 80644  
1-888-861-READ(7323)

### LINC Library Innovation Center

501 8th Avenue  
Greeley, CO 80631  
1-888-861-READ(7323)

### Nantes Library

703 Birch Street  
Gilcrest, CO 80623  
(970) 737-1035

### Northern Plains Public Library

216 2nd Street  
Ault, CO 80610  
(970) 834-1259

### Outreach

2650 W. 29th Street  
Greeley, CO 80631  
1-888-861-READ(7323)

### Platteville Public Library

504 Marion Avenue  
Platteville, CO 80651  
(970) 785-2231

### Riverside Library & Cultural Center

3700 Golden Street  
Evans, CO 80620  
1-888-861-READ(7323)

## AFFILIATED LOCATIONS

### Hazel E. Johnson Research Center at the City of Greeley Museum

714 8th Street, Greeley, CO 80631  
(970) 350-9220

### Poudre Learning Center

8313 West F Street, Greeley, CO 80631  
(970) 352-1267

## PUBLIC COMPUTER CENTERS

### Briggsdale Community Library

210 Main Street, Briggsdale, CO 80611

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