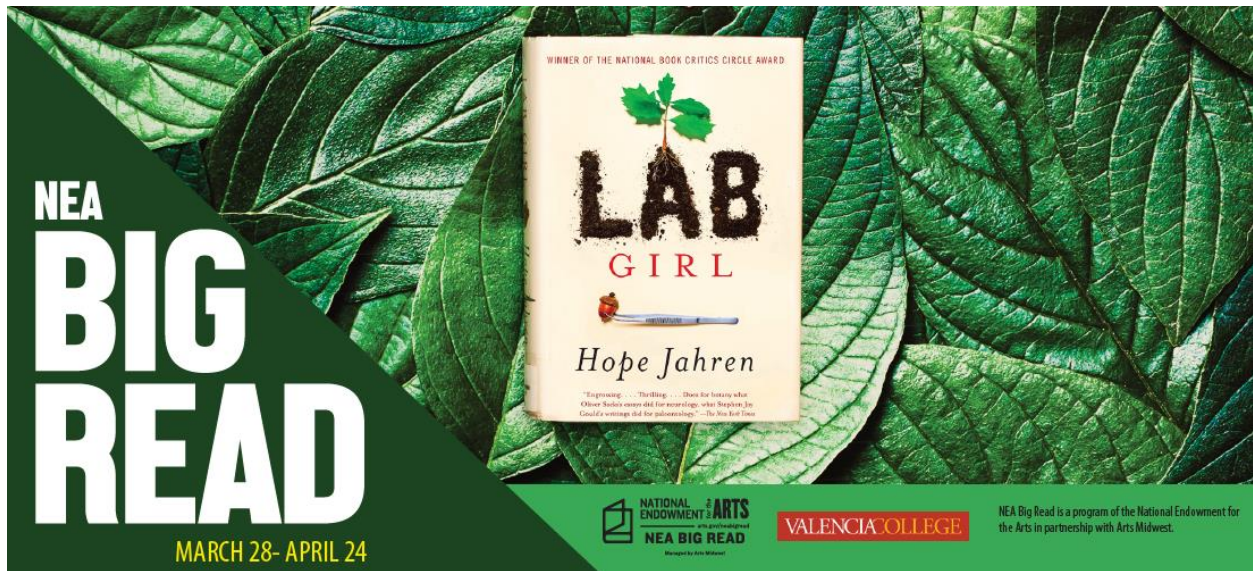




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Inspire discovery during the NEA Big Read at the Orange County Library System

ORLANDO, Fla. (March 11, 2021) – Orange County Library System is proud to collaborate once again with the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and Valencia College to present the NEA Big Read from March 28 through April 24. Big Read is a program funded by the NEA grants program, managed by Arts Midwest, which supports influential community reading programs. The goal is to introduce and promote books to new audiences, inspiring discussion and creativity. The library has selected award-winning memoir *Lab Girl* by Hope Jahren for this year’s Big Read, and both the library and Valencia will host virtual events and presentations inspired by the book.

Hope Jahren is an award-winning scientist who has pursued independent research in paleobiology since 1996. She completed her PhD at University of California Berkeley and began teaching and researching at the Georgia Institute of Technology, then at Johns Hopkins University. Jahren is the recipient of three Fulbright Awards and is one of four scientists, and the only woman, to have been awarded both of the

Young Investigator Medals given within the Earth Sciences. She taught at the University of Hawaii in Honolulu from 2008 to 2016, where she built the Isotope Geobiology Laboratories. Currently, she teaches at the University of Oslo in Norway.

Readers of all ages are invited to participate in virtual events and activities that honor the themes of *Lab Girl*. The campaign kicks off with a virtual discussion on March 28, called [The Power of Curiosity with Emily Graslie](#), presented by former Chief Curiosity Correspondent for the Chicago Field Museum and creator of *The Brain Scoop* YouTube channel. Through April 24, library staff will host book discussions and offer free copies of *Lab Girl*. Parents with early learners are invited to take a stroll along a StoryWalk, an educational opportunity that invites families to share a book posted along a popular walking path in the community. Kids will find take-and-make craft kits at library locations and may attend virtual events on a wide range of subjects, including conservation with [Green Thumbs, Dirty Feet](#), physics with [Roller Coaster Physics](#), botany with [Powerful Pollinators](#), and the power of mindfulness with [A World of Pausabilities](#). Teens are invited to attend the [Women in STEM Panel](#), which will bring women from across the spectrum of science, technology, engineering and math to share what inspired them, what they are doing now and how they got there. Adults will find events on the topics of composting, Florida habitats and more, which will take place throughout the series.

Lab Girl author Hope Jahren will offer [a virtual keynote](#) from Oslo, Norway, on April 17, to discuss her work as an author and scientist. This free event will be available to watch live on the library's YouTube channel. The NEA Big Read concludes with a Gardening Festival on April 24 filled with virtual workshops and events from local organizations.

The NEA Big Read is a program of the National Endowment for the Arts, designed to broaden our understanding of our world, our communities and ourselves through the joy of sharing a good book. Showcasing a diverse range of contemporary titles that reflect many different voices and perspectives, the NEA Big Read aims to inspire conversation and discovery. Orange County Library System, in partnership with Valencia College, is one of 84 not-for-profit organizations to receive a grant to host an NEA Big Read campaign for 2020–2021.

For a complete list of events and to register for the NEA Big Read Kickoff featuring Hope Jahren, visit ocls.info/bigread.

For more information about the National Endowment for the Arts, visit www.arts.gov.

LEARN. GROW. CONNECT.

This project was funded under the provisions of the DLIS Florida CARES act from the Institute of Museum and Library Services. Florida's DLIS Florida CARES Act program is administered by the Department of State's Division of Library and Information Services, www.ims.gov

For FY2020-21 37.2% of the total cost for OCLS equipment, accessories, and services for virtual programs, events, and classes, as well as PPE and STEM Learning Kits (\$64,689), is supported by federal money; 62.8% of this project (\$109,311) is supported by local money. The total budget for this project is \$174,000.

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