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Harry Potter comes to the UNM-LA Library

Harry Potter will be spending a lot of time in Los Alamos this summer, with Harry Potter themed exhibits, lectures and classes going on around town. The effort has been organized around a visit to Mesa Public Library July 14-Aug 9 by a traveling exhibit entitled "Harry Potter's World: Renaissance Science, Magic, and Medicine," sponsored by the National Library of Medicine and National Institutes of Health with support from the American Library Association.

The Los Alamos County Library System applied for and is hosting the intriguing traveling exhibit, curated by Elizabeth J. Bland of NLM. Community partners collaborating with the Los Alamos County Library System include UNM-Los Alamos, Fuller Lodge Art Camp, and the Bradbury Science Museum. UNM Albuquerque Campus Assistant Dean of Student Affairs Eliseo "Cheo" Torres will also give a talk on curanderismo or folk healing traditions in Mexico and the Southwest at 7:00 p.m. July 22 at Mesa Public Library. He has written extensively on the topic and photographs of curanderos at work will complement the traveling exhibition at Mesa Public Library.

Harry's first stop will be the UNM-Los Alamos Library, where "Harry Potter's World: An Academic View of Science, Medicine, and Magic during the Renaissance" is currently on display through Aug. 27. In keeping with a university setting, the exhibit concentrates on "a more academic point of view," according to UNM-LA Library Director Dennis Davies-Wilson. Davies-Wilson and UNM-LA Library staff member, Emily Veenstra-Ott curated the exhibit.

"We chose to focus on scientific inventions; medical developments and practices; and philosophies and beliefs surrounding occult subjects such as magic and witchcraft, during the Renaissance," Davies-Wilson said.

If more proof were needed that the Harry Potter books by J. K. Rowling are not just for kids, this exhibit provides it. Although the books are a fantasy about Harry's adventures at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, his world has its roots in Renaissance magic, science, and medicine. The exhibit includes a model of a Renaissance telescope, tarot cards, and other visual adornments that make it beautiful to look at, but this exhibit is not just a pretty face. Artfully

designed information placards impart a cornucopia of facts about how science grew out of myth in the Renaissance.

There's plenty to be learned. Harry Potter fans will be interested to discover, for example, that the fictional wizard Nicolas Flamel and his experiments to create a "Philosopher's Stone," providing users with such gifts as immortal life, are based on the real Nicolas Flamel. The search by Flamel and other alchemists for the Philosopher's Stone may have been fruitless, but their experiments were influential in the creation of modern chemistry.

Many books on the subjects of Renaissance science, magic, and medicine are part of the visual displays. Other books from the library's collection about these subjects as well as books about the Harry Potter stories and of course, the Harry Potter stories themselves, are also on display for browsing and for checkout.

UNM-LA isn't leaving kids out of the Harry Potter adventures this summer. Classes such as Potions 101 (July 30) and Crystals (July 23) will provide the aspiring wizard (and the aspiring scientist) with hands-on learning as well as fun. See all the classes for children and teens www.la.unm.edu or call Community Education at (505) 662-0336.