"A long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away…" In 1977 this phrase changed a genre and shaped generations of entertainment. I wish technology existed that would blast John Williams's iconic score after you read that phrase - how magical would that be? While time has made *Star Wars* a classic, George Lucas's space opera was never destined to be prolific; in fact, *A New Hope,* the first chapter in the original trilogy, was doomed from the beginning. Starting with the budget that refused to stick within its humble limits, three leads who didn't take the script seriously, and a classically trained, award-winning actor in the form of Sir Alec Guinness who didn't understand the story's premise, the film was bound to be a flop. The technology required to make the movie didn't even exist at the time and had to be invented by George Lucas and his visual effects company, Industrial Light & Magic. Fast forward 46 years, however, and *Star Wars* has become less a flop and more an intergalactic phenomenon!

After the original trilogy ended with *Return of the Jedi* in 1983, the franchise grew to include games, prequel and sequel trilogies, spinoff movies, countless numbers of television shows, novels, comic books, graphic novels, toys, and even theme parks. It's impossible to go even one week without hearing something about *Star Wars*. I bet you can't count the number of times someone has quoted, "May the force be with you" or "Luke, I am your father" in your lifetime (although, for the record, Darth Vader never says the latter, oft-quoted line, and I think there should be prize for those who know the real quote…). Can you finish this famous inspirational line: "Do or do not…"?

Early this month on May 4th, millions of people worldwide celebrated Star Wars Day by rewatching the movies, dressing up in cosplay, and celebrating years of new installments. I'm a little late, but here a few titles that you can borrow from the Kirkland Town Library this month to celebrate the franchise that changed the world:

The most obvious way to immerse yourself in the world of Star Wars is to reconnect with the original trilogy starting with *A New Hope,* followed by emotional turmoil in *The Empire Strikes Back,* and finishing with *The Return of Jedi.* These movies rock and are very nostalgic for millions. Following Luke Skywalker's journey from farm boy to Jedi with the help of his group of oddball friends is epic and inspiring. You might also be so inclined to continue the journey by watching the prequel trilogy starting with *The Phantom Menace* and follow Anakin's equally dramatic, but infinitely more tragic, story.

Not only does the KTL have the movies in its stacks, but it also boasts a wide collection of related novels, graphic novels, and children's books. The collection is vast, but I think the most popular novel on our shelves is Timothy Zahn's *Star Wars: Thrawn* (2017). Zahn's novel follows Grand Admiral Thrawn's rise in ranks from exile to the most ruthless agent of the evil Empire. The author is a wonderful storyteller who is a master at expanding the Star Wars universe.

The main reason Star Wars is such a huge phenomenon is due to the franchise's loyal fans, and those fans often take inspiration from the source to create new stories. Author (and mega fan) Tom Angleberger's *Origami Yoda* series follows Tommy's case file as he investigates a fellow student's newfound ability to tell the future using an origami in the likeness of Yoda.

Starting with *The Strange Case of Origami Yoda* (2010), the six book series only gets wilder and funnier from there. At the end of each book Angleberger provides instructions on how to fold your own origami figure of your favorite characters!

I don't believe George Lucas ever imagined that his weird, low budget sci-fi film would garner such a following and jumpstart a multi-billion dollar franchise. Regardless of how deep your fandom goes, everyone has been affected by that galaxy far, far away. Stop by the front desk of the Kirkland Town Library and ask me about my favorite *Star Wars* memory any time!