

Dewey Readmore Books of Spencer Library, Iowa (2006)

(page checked January 2026)

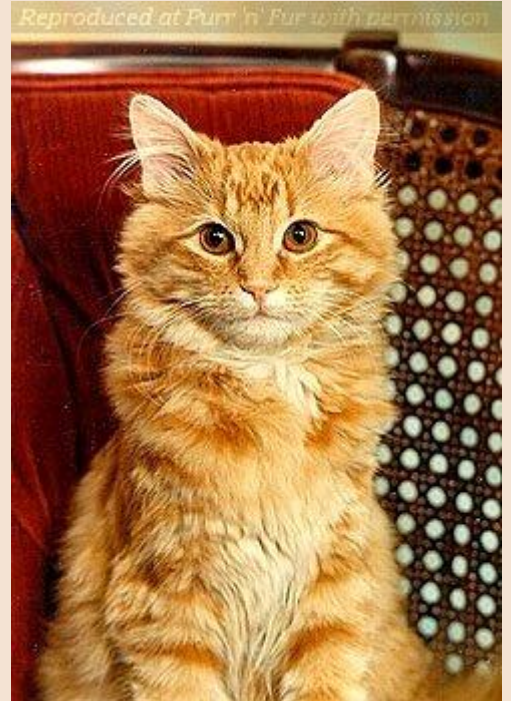
Dewey's unusual arrival

[Spencer](#) is a town with a population of about 11,000 in the American Midwest state of Iowa. For nearly 20 years it was home to the best-known of American library cats — **Dewey**, or to give him his full title, **Dewey Readmore Books**. He arrived on a freezing cold January night in 1988, via the book-return chute. Library staff, finding him next morning after hearing his whimpering, and having warmed him up while he purred the whole time, decided they would like to adopt him as library cat. The idea was approved by the board of trustees and the city council, so he was neutered and vaccinated and became the new resident. He quickly made friends among the library staff and patrons, and also the wider public, some from a long way off, as they learned of his story. Donations were made for his food, and he received 'city employee discount' from a local veterinarian when medical attention was needed.

Life at the library

Dewey blossomed into a magnificent cat, as can be seen from his 'official' portrait (*right*), taken when he was about 2 years old. Over the years he provided Spencer Library with plenty of publicity via the local newspaper, national magazines, in books, on postcards and on Sioux City TV. He was also the star of a video about library cats, *Puss in Books: Adventures of a Library Cat* (1997), and his fame spread throughout America and beyond, especially after he was chosen as 'January cat' on a nationwide calendar. The [bio page](#) for Dewey that the library used to maintain can now be seen at the Internet Archive, but it has not captured a slideshow of images that was also available at one time. (See more Dewey links below to his website, videos and various news articles.)

Throughout his long life Dewey loved 'his public'. He greeted patrons at the front desk, regularly attended every library meeting, and even enjoyed functions such as summer family-fun evenings in the presence of 250 people or more. He hated it when the library was closed, and would welcome Vicki Myron, library director and his principal carer, with a 'wave' in the mornings when she arrived. Staff kept a camera handy to record his antics and adventures over the years.



In the final year or so of his life his age began to take its toll, Vicki said. He became very thin, had arthritis in his hips and back, and of course slept more than he used to; he was diagnosed also as having

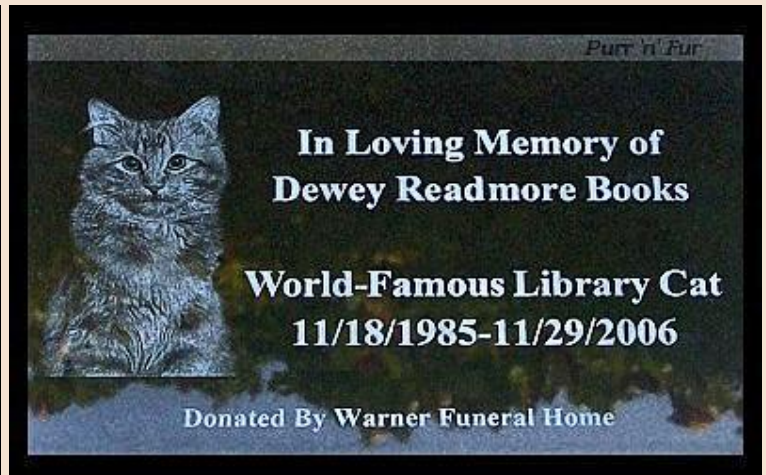
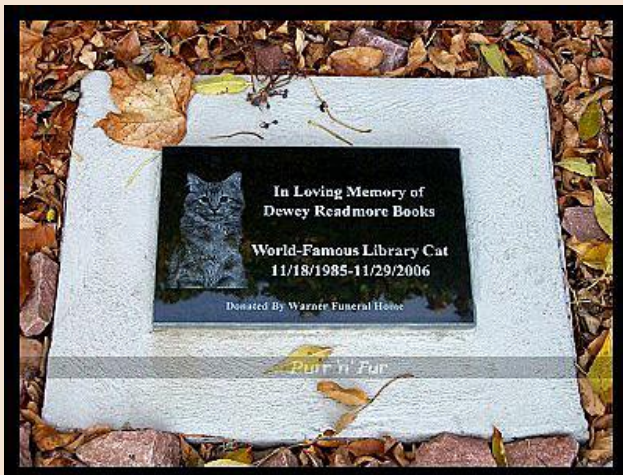
hypothyroidism, which added to his frailty. People were asked to pet him only on the head and shoulders, and not to pick him up; however, he still carried out all his duties and was as friendly as ever. Curiously, with old age came a taste for non-cat food, especially cheeseburgers and roast-beef sandwiches!

A passing – and a tribute

The library and its patrons were hoping that Dewey, their cat with the huge personality, might be around for a bit longer and perhaps reach the age of 20, but it was not to be. He had his 'official' nineteenth birthday — a grand age for a cat — on 18 November 2006; but shortly afterwards started behaving in an uncharacteristic way by hiding away. An X-ray showed that he had a stomach tumour. Added to his other ailments and bearing in mind that his quality of life seemed much diminished and he was likely to be in pain, it was felt kinder to let him go. It fell to his greatest pal, Vicki, to make that last sad journey to the vet's with him on 29 November 2006. 'It was heart-wrenching,' Myron remembers. 'I called all the staff and they came out to say goodbye; it was one of the most difficult things I have ever done, but I knew I had to do it because he was suffering and I'd never let him be in pain.' His obituary appeared in hundreds of newspapers, including of course the local *Sioux City Journal*.



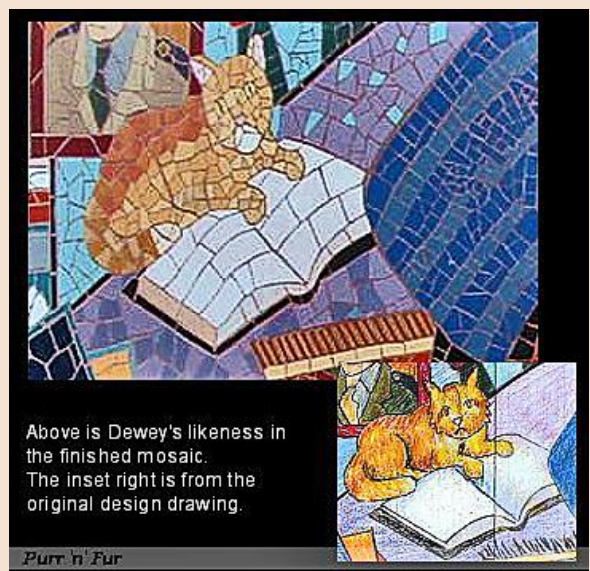
Dewey was cremated, and his ashes were buried in front of the library. A granite memorial stone (below) marks the spot and commemorates his life, with the inscription, *In Loving Memory of Dewey Readmore Books: World-Famous Library Cat*. (But his birth date is incorrect and should be 1987.) Meanwhile a bronze sculpture of Dewey, by Heather Beary, was created for Spencer Library (next page).





The Gathering monument

Several years before his passing, an image of Dewey featured on a remarkable monument to the past, present and future of the town of Spencer to be found in the town's East Leach Park (*below left*). It was created as a mosaic of broken tiles and is named *The Gathering: Of Time, of Land, of Many Hands*. Designed by Nina Smoot-Cain and John Pitman Weber, it was begun as a millennium project and completed in about 2 years. Some 100 people worked on assembling it, ranging in age from young children to citizens in their nineties, and many others were associated with it. There was a set of fascinating and colourful pages all about the project at Surf Iowa, which is no longer online, but they can still be seen at the Internet Archive. At [this page](#) covering the design and structure of the mosaic, under the heading 'West Wall' about halfway down, the image of Dewey can be seen, and an enlargement is shown here (*below right*); and at [this page](#) the completed structure is shown. The monument is reputed to be the 'second favourite attraction' in Spencer — but we don't know what the first is.



Books and a proposed movie

Dewey's life story, interwoven with that of Vicki Myron and aspects of life in small-town Iowa, was published on 24 September 2008 in the USA. *Dewey: The Small Town Library Cat who Touched the World*, written by Vicki with Bret Witter, was published by Grand Central Publishing of New York. It received enthusiastic reviews: a couple of them and more about the book are at the following links:

USA Today: [Dewey the library cat is back on the shelves](#) (*archived copy*)

Library Journal: [LJ Talks to Dewey Author Vicki Myron](#) (*archived copy*)

Purr 'n' Fur's own review can be found in the [Feline Folios](#) section of the site.

The book was also published in the UK and some 30 other countries, having been translated into various languages. (Referring to messages she received, Vicki said, 'Sometimes I can't read a word, or even recognise the language!'). It topped the *New York Times* best-sellers list for several weeks and remained on the list for a total of nearly nine months. By June 2009 almost a million copies had been sold.

Vicki Myron and Bret Witter have cooperated on several other books. The first, called *Dewey ... There's a Cat in the Library!*, is a children's book and was launched with a signing at Clay County Fair in Iowa on 12 September 2009, before going on sale throughout the US. The book was promoted by Toys 'R Us and others, as well as being available through all the usual bookstores and websites. Then there was a middle-grade version of Dewey's story, aimed at children of 8 to 12 years and called *Dewey the Library Cat*, published in May 2010. Two further books were released in October 2010: *Dewey's Nine Lives*, a book for adults that has a selection of real-life stories about cats, including some previously untold tales of Dewey's life; and a high-quality children's picture book called *Dewey's Christmas at the Library*. Vicki continued touring to promote these books and do signings, but not on the same scale as for the first one.

A movie about Dewey was on the books to go ahead, with Meryl Streep due to play the part of Vicki Myron, but everything took much longer than originally planned. A scriptwriter visited Spencer for a week in May 2009 and at that time it was hoped to have the film finished by Christmas 2010. It's understood that Vicki rejected the initial script and a year later it was still not complete; until that happened there could be no further progress. According to Vicki, the contract expired on 31 December 2010, but the movie company took another 16-month option on the film. She said she was happy the movie didn't come out in its original proposed form, as it was a huge disappointment and ruined the book and Dewey. See the article links below, but there seem to have been no further developments.

(There were indeed no further developments, and the film was never made.)

The visitors kept coming

While Dewey became famous in his lifetime and many people visited Spencer to go and meet him, it seems that visitor numbers actually increased greatly after his death and the publication of the books about him. In July 2010 it was reported by the *Sioux City Journal* that people made pilgrimages from all over the place to see where Dewey worked; see the [full article](#) (July 2010 – *archived copy*),

By mid-2010 it was reported that visitors had come from all 50 of the United States, and from nearly 20 other countries. Had the film about him finally come to fruition, no doubt numbers would have increased still further.

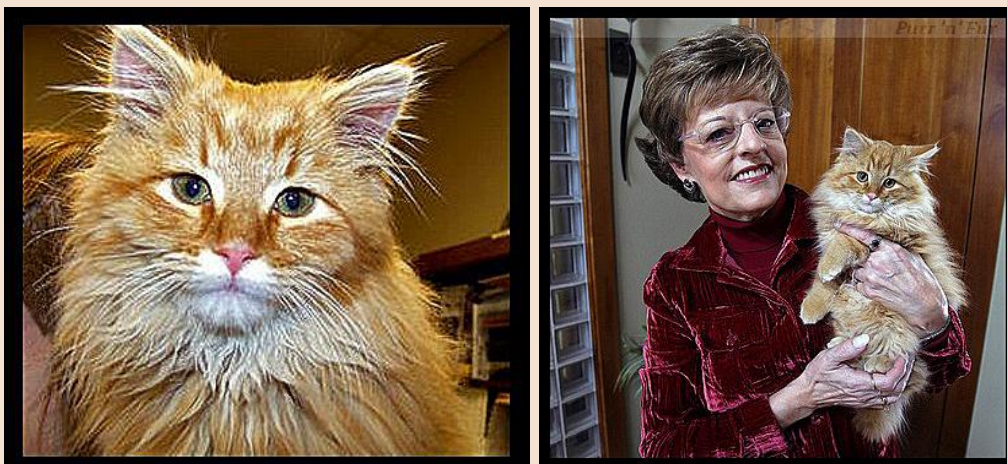


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Vicki acquired another cat: the little orange-and-white kitten was found on a snow-covered road near Spencer not long before Christmas 2008 and, although Vicki had intended to wait longer before taking on another pet, 'I fell in love instantly,' she said. The kitten was named **Page Turner** and thrived. Page has been to visit Spencer Library, but was never intended to take Dewey's place as library cat – in fact in 2011 the library Board voted to prohibit any further cats, so as to accommodate patrons with allergies. At 7 months old he already weighed nearly 15 pounds (about 6 kg). When Vicki's away touring he stays at a friend's house, 'so he thinks it's normal to have two homes', she says.

In October 2010 Page was 2 years old, and a big cat. He was said to be great fun, keeping everyone entertained, but gained the nickname 'CC' (for 'Chicken Cat'), because he was scared by strangers, doorbells, loud noises and — inexplicably — banana skins!



On the book's site in early 2011 Vicki remarked, 'Page weighs 12 pounds and looks like Dewey's twin. However, he is not Dewey — he is our very sweet "special needs baby". Lots of cute, but not much going on upstairs. He makes us laugh all the time.'

Photos: Charlie Niebergall/AP (left), *Spencer Daily Reporter* (right).
Further links about Page are unfortunately no longer available.

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Further links and reading

[Dewey's website](#) (*archived copy*)

This was a comprehensive site for Dewey, Vicki and her books, with a good deal to see and read, including wonderful **video clips** of Dewey at work and play, but unfortunately the archived copy doesn't allow many of the features to be reached. The last activity appears to have been in April 2011, when Vicki posted a Dewey update:

I haven't written for a while due to health and schedule. Glenn, Page Turner and I are doing well and still touring on a local level. ... I am still deluged with mail. I read all of it but have no time to respond. Please know that I appreciate every line and picture you send. ... I will keep you up to date on any new info. ...'

At YouTube there's also another lovely video made by Iowa Public Television in 1998 called [Lion Kings](#), featuring Dewey and another Iowa cat — Tom, of the hardware store in the town of Conrad (about whom there's also a short article at [Working/Shop & Store Cats #2](#)).

Also see:

Facebook: [DeweyTheBook](#) and [Vicki Myron](#) – although neither page has been updated since 2010/2011 (but see note included for the Dewey website above).

[Flickr](#) (*use Edge*)

[Wikipedia](#)

New York Times 2007: [Iowa Library's Cat Has a Rich Second Life as a Biography](#) (*archived copy*)

From the *Spencer Daily Reporter*: *(These links are all to archived copies.)*

- ❖ Dec 2007: [Myron readying to bid adieu to librarianship](#)
- ❖ Nov 2008: ['Dewey' hits No. 1 on NY Times list](#)
- ❖ Feb 2009: [Spencer native donates Dewey sculpture to library](#)
- ❖ May 2009: [Dewey movie on fast track](#)
- ❖ Jun 2009: [Worth traveling for](#)
- ❖ Jan 2010: [Spencer: The 'one place to get all things Dewey'](#) - included film news
- ❖ Feb 2011: [What's new with the Dewey legacy?](#) - film and other news
- ❖ Jan 2012: [Movie version of his story has stalled](#)

From the *Sioux City Journal*: *(These links are also to archived copies.)*

- ❖ May 2005: [The book on Dewey: He's one cool cat](#)
- ❖ Aug 2009: [Spencer woman to pen second Dewey book](#)

NB: Dewey also left us his [Job Description and Rules for Running a Library](#).

(links checked January 2026)

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