

# New York Public Library Retirees Association — Newsletter June 1998 Number 11

## YOUR PENSION THE BAD NEWS

**Retirement Fund Assets  
now over \$90 Billion**

**Grows 19.27% Yearly**

**But Benefits Go Only to  
State and Employers**

**Not To Retirees**

**Average State  
Pension only \$9,700**

### **THE COMMON RETIREMENT FUND**

The pension money received by Library retirees comes from the New York State Common Retirement Fund. Like many other government pension funds, this one is completely separated from government funds. You can compare it to a separate bag of money. The State Comptroller holds this bag and distributes the money within it to the pensioners. The amount he distributes is controlled by acts of the legislature signed by the governor. The Comptroller must add to the contents of the bag by collecting money from the employers who belong to the Retirement System. The Comptroller is also responsible for investing the

money in the bag so that it grows larger year by year. In New York State the Comptrollers have been very successful in this investing. Carl McCall, the present Comptroller, has been so successful that the Common Retirement Funds, the money in the bag, earned 19.27% for the year ending June 30, 1997.

### **DISTRIBUTION TO PENSIONERS**

As the bag grows larger one might expect the amount distributed to pensioners also to grow larger. But this is not what happens. Instead of a distribution, the increase is used to help finance the state government and also to reduce the employer contribution rates. The reduction has become so great that the employer contribution rate is now 1.7% of the payroll for the Employees' Retirement System. This amount is the lowest of all 50 states.

### **SIZE OF THE PENSION**

But what about the pensioners? In his report to the members and pensioners of the New York State Employees' Retirement System (ERS), October 1997, Carl McCall says that "every day I hear from retirees who are struggling. The average annual benefit in ERS is \$9,700." An av-

erage of course means that half of the pensioners in the Retirement Systems receive *less* than \$9,700. Even when supplemented by Social Security, this means that at least half of the pensioners are living considerably below the poverty line. And what about the people above that average line? One would have to receive considerably more than \$9,700 to get out of the poverty barrel.

### **COLA AND THE SUPPLEMENT**

Add another dismaying fact. Our pensions have no cost of living increases built into them. The basic amount we receive when we retire remains the same for the rest of our lives regardless of the

amount of inflation. The legislature does from time to time grudgingly vote a temporary "supplement," which never even remotely equals the amount of depreciation caused by inflation. It is more or less like bread crumbs thrown to the poor to keep them quiet. Furthermore, the supplement is not automatic. It must be renewed every two years, at which time it can be voted upon or killed at the whim of the legislature and the governor. The supplement so far has not been available to recent retirees; one usually must wait approximately ten years, if one lives that long. The supplement is usually graded so that the longer one has been retired, the greater the supplement, and the amount some receive is so small that it is hardly noticed in the pension check.

These facts are horribly ironic, for there is now more than enough money in our Retirement Fund to provide *every* retiree with a reasonable increase to compensate for the damaging effects of inflation during past years.

### **THE LIBRARY'S RETIREES**

What is the financial condition of the Library's retirees? We do not know exactly but can make good guesses. All Library retiree information, such as addresses, tele-

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LETTER RECEIVED FROM A NYPL RETIREE

phone numbers, and amount of pension, is confidential, as it is in most institutions and businesses. Also confidential are the records of the New York State Employees Retirement System. Again, something that is not unusual. We know, however, that when the State Comptroller says the average annual benefit

is \$9,700, he does have access to all the records, and

the Library's pensioners are a part of those records. We also know from the letters we receive, and from our own experiences, that the Library has pensioners who are hurting. Those people who retired when salaries were much lower than today are especially in need of help.

### THE IRA PLANS

The Library has been aware of the inadequacy of its pension plan and has therefore warned that personal savings would be needed for the retirement years. Many retirees can be thankful for the IRA plans made available to us through the Library. But unfortunately, many people retired before any IRA plan existed. And of those who participated, not all could invest the maximum amount allowed. To live on a Library salary in New York City has taken ingenuity, and not much money has been left over for savings

When I retired my pension was large enough so that I could save a little from each check. Now \$8,000 a year is not enough to live on.

RETIREE AT A MEETING OF THIS ASSOCIATION

pensioners have themselves, either directly or indirectly, contributed through taxes and other ways to the money they are now receiving. How seldom do we read of the huge pension funds that benefit not the pensioner but the taxpayers and employers.

The most desperately needed change in the Library pensions is a provision for a yearly cost of living increase. After years of work one should not be gradually forced down into poverty. This increase must be made automatic and must not be distributed at the whim of each yearly legislature and the unpredictable pen of a governor. We also need to publicize the fact that the State pension system is wealthy. It is not taking much tax money from citizens, and it is returning money to the State instead of adequately benefiting the pensioners for whom it was established.

**FOOTNOTE:** People often ask why the Library, which is not part of any government, belongs to a government retirement system. The answer reveals a long and troubled history going back to the year 1900 when an attempt to obtain pensions was begun by the Library's Board of Trustees. Contrary

to rumors, the Library has never been a wealthy institution, although many wealthy people have contributed large amounts of money to it and have donated their time on boards and committees that oversee its finances. From the beginning, private pension funds were evidently too expensive for the institution, and City pension plans were not available because the Library is a private institution. State pension plans were likewise not available to a private organization. Not until 1935, after many years of work by both the Library and its employees, the State legislature finally passed an act that permitted public libraries to join the New York State Retirement System.

Retirement is playtime for some. For others it is a time of worry over dwindling income, fear of medical bills, and shock that the world does not see that inside I am just as young as ever.

RETIREE AT A MEETING OF THIS ASSOCIATION

### THE FUTURE

What happens next? There is a need to publicize the bad pension system, the worst of any of the 50 states. To do so, people must contact our state legislatures and the governor. People other than pensioners must be aware of the facts. Pensioners must not be dismissed as just another group wanting more money, which is the way we are often described in the almost uniformly misinformed media. How often we pick up a newspaper and read about what a burden we are? The average amount of a pension is rarely mentioned. And how seldom is it told that

But the Library, not a government agency, was not included. After further work a special act was introduced in the legislature during 1937, and when it was passed, the Library was at last permitted to join the state's retirement system. Most of this maneuvering took place during the depression years, a fact that is now almost forgotten, and in 1937 there was rejoicing that the Library, hard pressed for money, at last had a pension plan. But at that time there was no inflation. No one seemed to notice that a fixed income for retirees could be disastrous. And no one could foresee that the State's plan would become one of the worst government plans in the country, as far as the benefits to pensioners are concerned. For the employers, however, because of the continual decrease in the amount needed to finance the plan, it has not been such a bad deal.

*At press time we hear that the COLA bill did not pass the legislature. A temporary supplemental bill did pass and has gone to the governor. It extends the present bill for two years. In the first year, those who retired from 1990 through 1992 will receive the supplement. During its second year those who retired during 1993 will also be included. Anyone who retired in 1994 and after will not receive a supplement.*

### NEW YORK CITY FUNDING GAME

Again the Library has had a letter-writing campaign to ward off library cuts. It began when Mayor Giuliani released an executive budget that included a \$2 billion surplus but at the same time called for about \$16 million in cuts to the city's public libraries. To cut money is bad enough, but the mayor said the Library merely needs to replace the cut funds by soliciting private money.

He evidently does not realize the financial complexity of his advice. Gifts are usually made for special uses rather than the general operating expenses that have traditionally been the responsibility of the government. Donors usually balk at paying utility bills. He also seems unaware of the time, work

and expenses involved in raising private money, all of which are deducted from the purpose of the institution. And it is especially tragic to realize that the harder one works to raise money, the quicker the government withdraws its share. Fund raisers thus become workers who are aiding the government rather than the institution.

This is the first time the city has asked the Library to raise money for basic operating expenses. The funding strategy since Carnegie's time has been for the local government to pay basic operating expenses, a concept he required in writing before he would give a library building to a community. Private donors have been free to attach their names to buildings or to finance memorable programs or special institutions like The Research Libraries.

The mayor also does not realize that the Library's branches in the poorer and less glamorous regions are especially dependent on the city, and the cuts thus become another example of cheating the poor. One also wonders if politicians realize that as government agencies have cut their contributions to institutions, many private sources have recently done likewise, even though the private economy, like the mayor's public budget, is prosperous.

And so again the Library resorted to a letter-writing campaign. Perhaps it did some good, for the City Council restored the mayor's cuts, and when the budget came to the mayor, he did not veto it. Nevertheless, the situation is scary because the mayor's idea of funding may become even more of a threat in the future.

*This article is based on an editorial in The New York Times, May 20, 1998.*



## ANNALS OF TIME PAST

PHILIP MILLER, MUSICOLOGIST

BUILT ONE OF THE WORLD'S FINEST COLLECTIONS

Philip Lieson Miller was for many years a distinctive presence on the New York cultural scene. When he retired as chief of the Music Division of the Library in 1966, he had become an institution in the music world. He was instrumental in building the Library's music collections into one of the world's finest and largest repositories of recordings and music lore, second in this country only to that of the Library of Congress. Under his guidance the archives grew to some 70,000 recordings, ranging from wax cylinders of Metropolitan Opera performances, vintage 1901 to 1903, to the best of the latest LP's. He wrote extensively on music and was ubiquitous as a commentator, arranger or presenter at library concerts and music exhibitions. At countless events and on many radio programs he presented rare recordings of opera stars.

Among his many achievements at the Library he oversaw the complicated move of the music collections from their extremely cramped quarters in the Central Building to the new Library and Museum of the Performing Arts at Lincoln Center, a move completed in the spring of 1965.

The new location permitted great improvements and new services for which the Central Library lacked the space. Among them was the establishment of the Rodgers and Hammerstein Archives of Recorded Sound and the Toscanini Memorial Archives.

Mr. Miller was extremely active in music associations. He served as president of both the Music Library Association and the Association for Recorded Sound Collections.

When Mr. Miller retired in 1966, Harold Schonberg, the music critic of The New York Times, spoke for the many who thought he had been around forever. "The point is," Mr. Schonberg wrote in a farewell, "that as long as

anybody seems to remember, Phil Miller has been a necessary adjunct of the Music Division, and if he had not been there it would have been necessary, as the saying goes, to invent him."

Joining the musicologists, musicians, librarians and well-wishers, Mr. Schonberg recalled Mr. Miller's learned grasp and sharp wit, tempered with enough informality and charm to ease one's researches.

Philip Miller was born in Woodland, N.Y., and studied at the Choristers

School in Rhinebeck, N.Y., and at the choir school of the Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine. He attended the Neighborhood School of Music (now the Manhattan School of Music), and the Institute of Musical Art (now Juilliard School of Music), where he studied voice.

His association with the Library began in 1927. He started as a reference assistant, became assistant chief of the Music Division in 1946 and chief in 1959. An expert in recorded music, he encouraged the Library to collect sound recordings even though there were no facilities for individual listening; later this collection formed the basis for the Rodgers and Hammerstein Archives of Recorded Sound. While the Music Division was in the Central Library, Mr. Miller devised a way to make available the then inaccessible collection of recordings. He established a series of popular summer lunchtime concerts in Bryant Park emanating from the southwest corner of the Central Building.

The first one was an experiment before a partly resentful audience of people who regarded the park as theirs. Mr. Miller persisted, emphasizing that as there was not enough room in the library, there was no choice but to take the music outside.

Within a couple of years, the series was a great draw for office workers and

*continued on page six*



## AT HOME IN THE LIBRARY

**Renovation of the Main Reading Room, Central Building:** The moves out of the Main Reading Room and Room 315 were successfully completed, and the renovation at this time is ahead of schedule. The dumbwaiter core has been demolished and is being replaced with a vertical conveyor mechanism. New ceiling murals have been installed. All windows have been replaced with new glass laminated with Ultra Violet protection and with Low-E, which helps keep heat out in summer and cold in winter. Table tops will be wired for computer workstations and network access. Microforms, formerly in the North Hall, will be relocated to Room 100 near the Periodical room. Reopening is scheduled for November 16, 1988. The Gottesman Exhibition Hall (location of the old Personnel Division, Public Relations Office, and Business Office) is now temporarily the main reading room. Updated pictures of the restoration can be found at [www.nypl.org/research/chss/admin/reno6may.html](http://www.nypl.org/research/chss/admin/reno6may.html).

**Center for Scholars and Writers, Central Building:** The Center will bring together approximately 12 to 15 participants. According to an announcement in *The New York Review of Books*, May 18, 1998, the fellowships will be \$50,000 plus a housing allowance. Room 225 will be renovated to hold offices, a common lounge, and a reference area. Room 227 will be renovated to seat 100-125 people for lectures, readings, seminars and other public presentations by the writers and scholars. The Center was created by a gift of \$10 million made in honor of Brooke Russell Astor, the latest gift to the Library from Dorothy and Lewis Cullman. The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation has contributed a grant of \$400,000 for the planning and initial implementation phase. Five of the scholarships will be awarded in conjunction with the American Council of Learned Societies. Peter Gary, Sterling Professor of History Emeritus at Yale University, has been appointed Director of the Center.

**Catalog of The Research Libraries:** The present online catalog of The Research Libraries contains only records of books cataloged or recataloged after 1971. Earlier records are in the 800 volume printed catalog, and they will now be put into the Library's computerized catalog during a five-year project. Its preliminary phase has been funded by a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and a gift from Robert W. Wilson. The catalog will then be available to users around the world via the World Wide Web. The Branch Libraries' catalog is already available on Internet.

**Map Division, The Research Libraries:** One of the major additions to the research collections has been the donation of Lawrence Slaughter's private collection to the Map Division. It focuses on England's colonizing efforts in North America, and contains some 600 maps, 100 atlases, and 50 books, primarily printed in England in the 17th and 18th centuries, complemented by related French, Dutch, and Spanish materials

**Morrisania Branch:** The building has been restored with the help of the Adopt-A-Branch program, which pairs city funding with private gifts. Councilman Reverend Wendell Foster helped secure city funds and the private gift was given by Mrs. Royal H. Durst. The reading rooms have been enlarged, the furniture and shelving are new, the book collection is expanded, and a multipurpose community room has been added. The building now has an elevator, a wheelchair-access ramp, air conditioning, and technology that gives access to the Library's electronic resources and to the Internet. Six branches have been renovated and reopened during the last ten years, four of them through the Library's Adopt-A-Branch program established in 1994. Next branches to be renovated are George Bruce, Inwood, Stapleton, and Mott Haven. Urgently needing rehabilitation are Chatham Square, Muhlenberg, Ottendorfer, and Seward Park.

**Books for Branches:** For the last

eight or nine years, The Branch Libraries have had a difficult problem trying to meet the growing demand for books at a time when books prices are rising and funds for books are declining. The problem was compounded when the city appropriated money to keep branches open six days. This gratuity was a cause for celebration, but with it came soaring attendance and requests for books, requests that could not be filled. Mrs. Vincent Astor, the Library's benefactor and Honorary Chairman, has committed \$5 million from the Vincent Astor Foundation to

establish the Vincent Astor Foundation Book Endowment, which will generate income to purchase approxi-

mately 13,000 books of fiction and poetry each year. The Endowment creates a stable financial base, protecting a significant portion of the acquisitions budget from the vagaries of year-to-year funding. Mrs. Astor's gift was a double blessing, for it was matched by city funds allocated by Mayor Giuliani, Speaker Vallone and the City Council for fiscal year 1998 in the amount of \$5.3 million: \$4.1 million for books and \$1.2 million to expand the Connecting Libraries and Schools Project (CLASP), a program developed by the Library to encourage children to read. The project has been funded by the city in three school districts since 1994. This further infusion of funds takes CLASP into three more school districts, reaching an additional 77,000 students and enriching the book collections in 21 more branch libraries.

**The Fred T. Gee Turtle Collection, Central Children's Room:** Fred Gee, a Library retiree and the former treasurer of this association, was a collector of reproductions of turtles. He began in 1959 when his sister gave him a turtle made of soap stone, and the collection grew to nearly 1,000 turtles from throughout the world, gathered by himself and his friends on their travels. Upon his death in 1966, the collection was given in his memory to the Central Children's Room. Some of them have recently been displayed in an exhibition.





## News from the Field

*Most of the items have been compiled from membership applications and renewals. Although editing has been done, entries have been kept as much as possible in the words of the writer. We beg your forgiveness for possible errors in our reading of handwriting.—The Editor*

*Lenore Cowan, East Palatka, Florida:* Activities: Palatka Yacht club secretary, continuing education classes at Flagler College, Women's Club of Palatka, newsletter editor. Volunteer Work: Breast cancer support group and Reach to Recovery Woman's Club of Palatka, volunteer for "Bread of Life" (the Palatka food kitchen). Memories of the Library: Room 73 in the Fifth Avenue Building Picture Collection, "the way things were," 1957-1980.

*Charles G. Benson, New York, New York:* Activities: Reading, lectures, television, getting to know Internet. ROAR 1991 (Library for the Blind, Donnell, Mid-Manhattan and Branches). Memories of the Library: Loved working with the public and had great times with co-workers.

*Lucy Eldridge, Toms River, New Jersey:* Activities: A few months ago I was asked to write an article for our community paper, and the topic was use of local libraries and how to expand our views via the library. Now each month I have written some of my thoughts. Thanks to my computer it makes things much easier to do so. No "E" Mail yet! Now everyone is long distance, so I do try to write. *This is quoted from her New Year's letter sent to Mary Brady.*

*Herbert W. Thorne, New York, New York:* Activities: In the summer I volunteer in a hospital (upstate), reading for and to (elderly) patients. I am on the board of a senior citizen center and of a cooperative community group. Interests and Hobbies: Sculpturing in clay (not pot-making), singing in two senior citizen center chorus groups, tennis, acting in community theatre (and senior center), dancing, writing poetry (but not stories), classes in various subjects, managing occasionally to get to NYPLRA meetings and excursions,

travel (often via Elderhostel) in USA and overseas, theatre, concerts, and museums. Memories of the Library: I did not become a librarian (public) until I was in my early 40's and found that this was the most well-being and natural and kindest making-a-living occupation in the world for me. — Even though it appears that I am a pretty active person, I must tell you that I am not an A-type person, but rather B-minus. I love lying down, a lot; am an expert procrastinator, hate being obligated or making reports or being executive. I love being retired and tell everyone (almost): "Retire from the 'rat race' as soon as it is financially feasible to do so—for the foreseeable future." You will then have the time, the wherewithal (hopefully), and the disposition to discover or rediscover in yourself talents, creativity, wants that you may have had to set aside during your "career" years. Trust yourself—don't say or think I can't do this or that. Do it for yourself; you're not doing your thing(s) to make money at it, you're not selling. Try, do, triumph.

*Philip Wolcuff, Flushing, New York:* Activities: My wife and I watch our grandchildren three days a week, when our daughter goes to work. Our grandson is four and slightly autistic. He needs a good deal of attention. Our granddaughters is fourteen and an excellent student. In my spare time I enjoy reading (mainly nonfiction, newspapers and magazines), television, films (mostly on video), and theatre, occasionally. Memories of the Library: 42 years! Working with wonderful people, serving a great variety of patrons. The variety of Branch experiences, e.g., the old Gun Hill (one-librarian) Branch to one of the busiest, Parkchester. Helping to close Gun Hill, open Castle Hill, move Parkchester. Leading and co-leading book discussion groups. Participating on a number of "speaking volumes," Library programs on WNYC radio, and the Library's television programs on the city-owned channel 31, with Bernice MacDonald moderating. Using Mrs. Mlott's idea to start a successful homebound delivery service at

Parkchester. I loved selecting books and videos. I loved passing on my recommendations to patrons.

*Evelyn Jones, New York, NY:* I have enjoyed traveling all through Europe, China and Hong Kong, South America, northern Africa and to many islands. I am a member of Countee Cullen Support Group, NAACP, Crown and Scepter Club and 700 Club. Spend time enjoying my grandchildren, reading to them and their friends. Often I take groups to luncheon, theaters and Atlantic City. I do food shopping for my neighbors who are incapacitated and visit the homebound, hospitals and nursing homes. Try to keep in touch with ex-NYPLers in this area who are not well. Like the theater, movies, reading, traveling, dancing, boating and having fun. Memories of the Library: The beginning of my career at NYPL began at Countee Cullen children's room. I had an opportunity to work with staff from different parts of the country and meet interesting people. Authors, illustrators, educators, scholars and parents came often to consult with specialized staff and borrow books from the special collection of books by and about African Americans. But most of all were the children, so eager to get a library card and take home a book, or hear a story, or hear a picture-book being read. Reading a picture-book to the children in the library or at St. Benedict's Nursery, Hope Day Nursery, Utopia House, Mt. Calvary Day Car Center, and even Pediatrics Clinic at Harlem Hospital and being called the "Picture Book Lady" was so special and rewarding to me. Later having the opportunity to work with the administrative staff brought my knowledge of NYPL full circle. It was a learning and also an exciting and interesting journey.

*Molly Wamp, New York, NY:* Have spent seven months in western New York State enjoying the wonderful scenery. Have shoveled snow from our sidewalk, raked leaves, cut grass, observed and slapped bees, spiders, flies, moths, mosquitoes and insects I don't know. My arms and legs are covered with insect bites (none dangerous). I have walked Andrew, our golden re-

triever, three or four times a day and night... It is like going out to repark, pay parking fares for a car....Memories of the Library: Had such a variety of interesting and nice people at St. Agnes Branch...[I was written up] in *The New Yorker*, "Talk of the Town," February 18, 1991, pp21-22....Coming from Naples, N.Y. (pop 1200) it was enchanting for me...I'm a dog lover. When dogs were allowed I petted them all. When forbidden, one person tied one outside on a leash. It was stolen. Heart breaking for me.



*continued from page three*  
visitors who inquired about schedules weeks ahead of time. The crowds became so great that it was usually impossible to get a seat near the four large speakers. The gathering was almost like a hallowed religious service. High points of the summer were the Caruso memorial concerts in August that Mr. Miller arranged for the anniversaries of the tenor's death in 1921. Thousands of devotees listened to the famous voice interspersed with the biographical commentary by Mr. Miller, presenter and master of ceremonies.

He also started a series of public evening concerts in early 1948, drawing from his own collection of recordings as well as the library's.

Mr. Miller published "The Ring of Words: An Anthology of Song Texts" (Doubleday, 1963) for which he selected and translated art songs from seven countries. Another book was "Vocal Music: The Guide to Long Playing Records" (Knopf, 1959) whose subjects range from Verdi's Requiem to a Schubert song.

Mr. Miller, a music critic from early in his career, continued to contribute in later years to High Fidelity, Musical Quarterly, The New York Times and other publications. For many years he reviewed recordings for the American Library Association publications.

Mr. Miller was married to Catharine Keyes Miller (d. 1966), herself a distinguished NYPL figure, who was head

## A FOUNDING: THE NEW YORK CITY CHAPTER OF THE RETIRED PUBLIC EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION (RPEA)

The New York City Chapter had its first formal meeting on Monday, April 27th at which RPEA President Cynthia Wilson and Executive Director Stanley Winter presented its charter. The new unit will represent the interests of more than 15,000 pensioners and beneficiaries in the New York City Area, including the retirees of The New York Public Library. One of the founders is the President of The New York Public Library Retirees Association, Juanita Doares, now also the Co-Chair of the new RPEA chapter. For more information please call her at 1-212 666-5737.

Many members of the NYPL Retirees Association are members of RPEA. Membership is only \$15.00 per year, and you automatically will become a member of the local chapter. It is an important organization for all public retirees in New York State, and it has been instrumental in getting pension supplements through the legislature as well as improved health benefits for public retirees. Call RPEA at 1-800 726-7732 for an application.



MOZART: Sketch for a Fugato (1782-1783)

of the East 58th Street Branch of the Library, which was the Library's circulating music library that moved to Lincoln Center at the same time as the Research Libraries' Music Division.

Mr. Miller died on November 23, 1996 at the age of 90.

*Some this article uses the obituary by Wolfgang Saxon in The New York Times, November 29, 1996.*

## RETIREES ASSOCIATION BEGINS ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

by Alar Kruus

The New York Public Library Retirees Association has launched its program of taped interviews with retired (and many non-retired) Library staff. The program, in planning since last spring, is designed to capture and preserve the history of the Library through the memories and stories of its people. The Retirees Association is administering the program in cooperation with NYPL and will deposit the master tapes in the Library's archives for permanent repository. Access will be provided under NYPL's access policies. Juanita Doares, president of the Association, has impaneled an advisory council to coordinate and guide this endeavor.

The first training seminars were held on November 17th and 24th, at which ten prospective interviewers, members of the advisory council, were trained by Robert Sink, NYPL's archivist and records manager. Recording equipment has been purchased and an initial list of 30 potential interviewees has been developed. Thus the first round of setting interview appointments and actually holding the interviews is now underway.

The advisory council is continuing to identify and compile the list of people to be approached, and it needs your help. Please volunteer to be interviewed (and don't be shy, you have important stories to tell) and nominate others who have shared the New York Public Library experience. Send us the names of people you think should be invited to be interviewed and asked to talk about themselves, people they knew, and the times that shaped the Library. Help us also with your comments and suggestions and join us in our efforts to preserve the rich heritage of our common alma mater.

Please call or write to me with your nominations and/or suggestions

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## THE ASSOCIATION STEPS OUT

*Agnes Babich is the hardworking and ingenious Association member who directs the Association's outings, one of the most successful and enjoyable of the Associations activities. Here she reports on the outings.*

### *NYPLRA Members Visit Staten Island*

Retirees continued their exploration of cultural institutions and neighborhoods in New York City and ferried to Staten Island on June 2, 1997. The first stop was a visit to the most unusual and unique collections at the Jacques Marchais Museum of Tibetan Art, as well as the beautiful gardens. Several Staten Island retirees then joined the group for a leisurely lunch at Bennett's Cafe at Historic Richmond Town. A guided tour of the Restoration concluded a trip which all agreed was a huge success!

### *Fall Outing to Cooper-Hewitt and International Center of Photography a Big Success*

On November 13th retirees assembled for an early lunch at Sarabeth's Kitchen on the upper east side. (We are most grateful to Sarabeth's hostess who made sure the group had adjoining tables in this busy restaurant.)

The tour of Cooper-Hewitt's exhibit, "Design for Life: A Centennial Celebration," covered various roles of design past and present, and was most enjoyable. A few blocks away, the International Center of Photography featured "Brett Weston in New York," a selection of photographs from 1943 to 1945, places many could identify from New York's past. The work of sports photographer John Huet, highlighting street basketball players in action, was both fascinating and exciting to view.

### *Annual Holiday Dinner*

NYPL retirees celebrated the holiday season on December 12 with dinner at the Peking Park Restaurant. In spite of heavy traffic, which delayed some attendees, the group had a merry time sharing dishes from a "Lazy Susan."

## EDITOR'S NOTES

We have begun this issue with another discouraging report on pensions. We realize that publication of such information in a small newsletter with a very limited audience is like friends gathering to weep together. It therefore becomes a duty to tell our problems to politicians, administrators, and the media. Again we remind you that your membership dues help finance this association's attempt to secure urgently needed pension improvements. We especially plead for your help in securing the passage of new legislation for a permanent and automatic cost of living adjustment.

In this issue we again tell of the Library's important past by printing another short biography of one of the many people, some famous and others unknown, who have helped make it a remarkable institution. These brief sketches emphasize the need for more complete records which we hope to acquire with our oral history program. By recording our history, however, we do not mean to imply that the past was perfect. It was not. Nor do we nourish ourselves exclusively on memories, for many of the Library's retirees are still active in libraries throughout the world. And as to the future, retirees continue to ask the Newsletter for news of the Library's plans. Remember that we belonged to a library that pushed into the future by being one of the first, sometimes the very first, in developing library services.

—Lawrence Murphy, Editor

## LIBRARY FUNDING UPDATE, STATE AND FEDERAL

*by Juanita Doares*

### *STATE UPDATE 1997-98:*

The New York State government provided a \$1.3 million increase in library aid and the legislature maintained the \$2 million for the Electronic Doorway Library (EDL) that was won in 1996. Unfortunately the governor vetoed all of the EDL funding. The increase in regular library aid put the total amount at \$82.6 million, about 93 percent of the funding level mandated by state law in 1990.

The renewal of the EDL funding voted by the legislature was to have maintained the program at last year's (1996) funding levels, although library advocates had been seeking \$11.4 million for electronic resources and services. Now there EDL has nothing.

The New York Public Library did not receive the \$1.5 million it had requested to support operations at the Science, Industry and Business Library, but the Library did receive a small amount of additional money through the Omnibus Library Bill (Chapter 917) as well as a number of items for the Branches and the Schomburg Center. We are grateful to the legislative members who made moneys available.

### *FEDERAL UPDATE 1997*

The Senate funded the National Endowment for the Arts and the National endowment for the Humanities at \$110 million each.

The House proposed only funding NEA at \$10 million, which would have virtually shut it down. However, reason prevailed and the House joined the Senate in funding each agency, and NEA received only minor reduction in funding.

### *FEDERAL UPDATE 1998:*

The Senate Commerce Committee approved the Internet School Filtering Act on March 12. The act would require libraries and schools to certify they have installed Internet filtering software in order to receive universal service funds. The purpose is to protect children. Another Senate Commerce Committee action was the approval of a bill that prohibits commercial distribution on the World Wide Web of material that is harmful to persons under the age of 17. The Senate Rules and Administration Committee held a hearing March 4 on legislation that would make available Congressional Research Service (CRS) information that is currently only accessible by Congress.



## REPORT ON PROGRAM MEETINGS

by Juanita Doares

At the first program meeting of 1998, Matt Shehar, Assistant to Comptroller Carl McCall was the guest speaker. He spoke about Comptroller McCall's bill which would give a permanent cost of living adjustment to members of the New York State Retirement Systems based on the investment performance of the retirement systems' Common Fund. He urged us all to support Comptroller McCall in his effort by writing and visiting our state legislators and urging them to support and cosponsor the Comptroller's bill. The substance of his talk can be found on page one of this newsletter.

In addition, Jean Marie Burke, the Library's Staff Benefits manager answered questions about the Library's health plans, as did representatives from Oxford Health Plans who accompanied her. Jean Marie Burke urged all retirees to call her office (212 592-7334) for help whenever they have questions about health issues, claims or problems. Her assistant, Jennifer Levesque (212 592-7333) accompanied her.

At this meeting, NYPL Retiree in Action Lydia LaFleur, spoke of her work with Eldershare Arts, and she also read from her writing and poetry, some of which we would like to publish in future issues of the Newsletter so that more people can enjoy them.

At the April meeting the speaker was Myriam Miedzian, author of *A Century of Women Speak about their Lives*. See the report in our next newsletter.



The Newsletter is published at irregular intervals by The New York Public Library Retirees Association, an independent association. Information for the newsletter should be sent to Lawrence Murphy, Editor, The NYPL Retirees Association Newsletter, 137 East 36 Street, Apt. 16-B, New York, New York 10016-3528. Officers of the Association are—President: Juanita S. Doares; Vice President: Mary Brady; Treasurer and Membership Coordinator: William C. Lee; Executive Board: Lawrence Murphy, Alar Kruus and the Association's officers. To join the NYPL Retirees Association, send annual dues of \$10 to: William C. Lee, Treasurer, NYPL Retirees Association, 21 Soren Street, Staten Island, New York 10314-5037. This price includes the newsletter. All other information and inquires: Juanita Doares, NYPL Retirees Association, 401 W. 118th St., Apt. 3, New York, NY 10027 (telephone: 212 666-5737).

Committees of the Association: Health Care—Ann Moy; Legislative—Theresa Casile, Chair, Lucy Eldridge, Nora Gorchoff, Ruth Kronmiller; Oral History Advisory Committee—Angeline Moscat, chair, Alar Kruus, Phyllis King, Kay Casile, Dolores Noyes, Betty Gubert, Virginia Swift, members of the Executive Committee and Bob Sink, Library Liason; Social Activities Coordinator—Agnes Babich. If you would like to serve on a committee, contact Juanita Doares, 212 666-5737.

## NEW MEMBERS SINCE SEPTEMBER 1997

Jacob Azeke  
Nunzia Bongiorno  
Edna Canozzer  
David Combs  
Despina Croussouloudis  
Dorothy Eosefow  
Sibylle Fraser  
Norman Gechlik  
Ruth Harper  
John Hawker  
Betty Holmes  
Elizabeth Mullan  
Jane Pan  
Emil Ramil  
Alice Roach  
Tsung Su  
Robert Thomas  
Lilian Zwyns

## Belle Weinberg leaves her positions in the Association

Belle Weinberg, a longtime board member and chair of the legislative committee, has had to resign because of health reasons. She has contributed to the Association since its beginnings, and we thank her for her help and wish her well.

**NOTE:** A new directory of members of the Association will be issued later this year. If you do not want your address or telephone number listed, please write to the editor. Those already unlisted need not write.

## MEETINGS AND EVENTS

All program meetings have been transferred from Mid-Manhattan's first floor conference room to Conference Rooms A and B, 6th floor. Mid-Manhattan elevators are not keyed for the 6th floor. Show your staff card to the Mid-Manhattan staff member on the mezzanine to gain access to the mezzanine elevator.

Monday, September 14, 5 pm., Conference Room B, Mid-Manhattan Library. *Quest*, a New York City life-long-learning community will present a true drama based on a series of moving letters that appeared in *The New York Times Magazine*. The correspondence, presented by *Times* writer Michael Winerip reveal an eight-year effort to save a distinguished German-Jewish scientist and his family in Nazi Germany. The letters were adapted for dramatization by Deborah Goodwin. The letter writers will be enacted by Ed Bell, Shirley Myers and Al Schwartz, with Deborah Goodwin as narrator.

Wednesday, December 9, 3 pm. Conference Room A, Mid-Manhattan Library, Program Meeting

Friday, January 8, 1999, 6:30 pm. Place to be announced. Holiday/New Years Social. The Executive Committee decided to change the date because of the difficulty of finding a restaurant to accommodate the Association during the holiday party season in December.

## VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

The NYPL Retirees Association needs volunteers. If you can help, please call Juanita Doares 212 666-5737.