

THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY RETIREES ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER ISSUE NO. 14 WINTER 2002

Some in snow, some on crags, some in quicksands,
 little by little, much by much, they
are fighting fighting fighting that where
 there was death there may
be life. "When a man is prey to anger,
he is moved by outside things; when he holds
 his ground in patience patience
 patience, that is action or
 beauty," the soldier's defense
 and hardest armor for

the fight. The world's an orphan's home. Shall
 we never have peace without sorrow?
without pleas of the dying for
 help that won't come? O
quiet form upon the dust, I cannot
look and yet I must. If these great patient
 dyings—all these agonies
 and woundbearings and blood shed—
 can teach us how to live, these
 dyings were not wasted.

Hate-hardened heart, O heart of iron,
 iron is iron till it is rust.
There never was a war that was
 not inward; I must
fight till I have conquered in myself what
causes war, but I would not believe it,
 I inwardly did nothing.
 O Iscariotlike crime!
Beauty is everlasting
 and dust is for a time.

*from In Distrust of Merits
Marianne Moore
Hudson Park Branch
The New York Public Library
1921-1925*

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NEW YORK'S VANISHING LIBRARIANS AND THE CITY'S ACTION

In our last issue we printed an editorial that appeared in *The New York Times* on May 5, 2000. It was a plea for the City to increase librarians' salaries. We also printed part of a memo to the staff from Paul LeClerc, President of the Library, dated June 8, 2000, in which he said, "Despite the best efforts of many people, the City's budget for Fiscal year 2001 regrettably did not provide for an increase in librarian salaries. While this is certainly a setback, I can assure you that the case for librarian salaries has been advanced substantially by the process. Many phone calls and meetings between City leaders, union officials, and senior leadership of the Library took place. These efforts, combined with news coverage and the letters written by staff members and patrons and sent to the City on behalf of libraries, have established the issue of librarian salaries as a priority at the top levels of City government." He concluded by saying, "I hope we can expect serious attention to be paid to the matter during DC37's negotiations with the City for a new labor contract."

The negotiations did take place and an agreement was negotiated in which The New York Public Library employees, would get an 8 percent raise on top of the two 4 percent annual increases already negotiated, making a total increase of 16 percent.

In order to stem the loss of new librarians, the contract allows promotion to senior librarian after just nine months on the job, down from the usual two years. That promotion includes a pay raise of 8 percent, on top of the 16 percent.

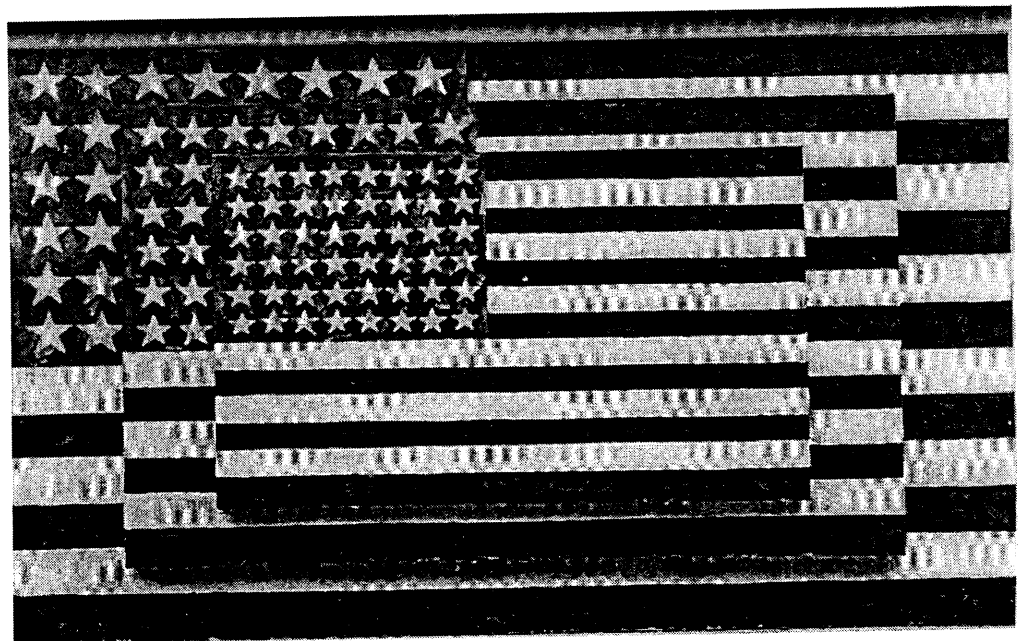
Mayor Giuliani insisted on several concessions intended to increase productivity. The union agreed to give up two days off a year and daily 20 minute breaks. Also relinquished are night-shift differentials, which often came to \$5 a night for librarians who worked until 8 p.m.

The contract also contains another important concession, the freedom for the library to assign a newly promoted senior librarian to whatever unit it wants. In the past, librarians could in effect insist on staying where they worked, a provision that fueled the serious shortage in the Bronx.

This settlement was negotiated after Mayor Giuliani forced the union and the public library to drop a tentative agreement that had been negotiated in the summer of 2000. It had called for a 15 percent pay raise without any productivity increase. To hammer out a new agreement, library officials hired a former deputy mayor, Randy Levine, who is a lawyer with Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Field.

In an article in *The New York Times*, April 17, 2001, Laura Sutherland, Supervising Librarian of the Roosevelt Island Branch, is quoted, "I think this agreement will slow down the exodus. It's not everything we're looking for, but it's a good beginning."

All of this action took place before September 11. Since then the City has imposed a 20% cut across the board for funding throughout the City. This action took place under the Giuliani administration. The cut was reduced for the schools, and negotiations have taken place for a cut of less than 20% for the libraries. As of this writing, we have no further information, but we do know that the cost of the disaster and the additional damage of a recession have placed an immense burden upon the City, and so far there has been no definite guarantee of much help from the Federal government. The future does not look good.



Jasper Johns
Three Flags
1958

WHERE YOUR MONEY GOES AND WHERE IT DOESN'T

Your yearly dues of ten dollars have been a good investment because they helped get increases in your pensions. With the strong help of other retiree organizations, as well as state officers and legislators, our members have worked hard to make legislators and the governor realize that state pensioners were enduring the worst pension plan of all 50 states. As a result, the state government has passed a bill that guarantees a yearly cost of living increment.

It is far from being a perfect bill, but it is a first step toward a fair yearly adjustment. Much work remains to be done.

Volunteers contributed the work and most of the financing for the legislative project. They have personally paid for almost all of the expenses of trips to Albany and to meetings of various lobbying organizations.

The following is a list of those who most deserve our thanks. It could not include the hundreds of members who wrote letters and made telephone calls. You may find unintentional omissions. Nor does it indicate that some members have been able to contribute more work than others. Sadly, some of the people are no longer living (*).

Lucy Eldrich
Agnes Babich
Mary Brady
Theresa Casile*
Henrietta Cohen
Juanita Doares
Morita-Leah Frederick*
Nora Gorchoff
Betty Gubert
Ivy Hicks
Jean Hutson*
Ada Jackson
Mercy Kellogg*
Ruth Kronmiller*
Bill Lee
Anne Moy
Virginia Swift
Herbert Thorne
Virginia Warner
Belle Weinberg*



Walt Whitman inciting the bird of freedom to soar.
Illustration by Max Beerbohm for *The Poets Corner*,
London, Heinemann, 1904

Retirees Today News from the Field

Polly Bookhout, New York, New York. This year I've researched the history of the area around the Coliseum Park Apartments and the life of my great grandfather Bookhout. Even after genealogy classes in Utah and use of the Family History Library there, my great grandfather is still lost in the wilds of late 18th century Erie County, New York. The Coliseum Park Apartments research was more successful. It is now on my website (<http://home.earthlink.net/~pbookhout/cpa.html>) and will eventually be on the Coliseum Park Apartments website. I continue as a Columbus Branch book sale volunteer.

Pauline Cappellini, Mountain Top, Pennsylvania. Current interests and hobbies are painting, sailing, gardening, reading and playing cards—Volunteer activities are work at a food bank, visits to nursing homes, church fairs and fund raisers. Memories of NYPL years are all pleasant.

Helen Chin, Port St. Lucie, Florida. Current interests and hobbies are Mah Jong, dominoes, hand and foot, and bingo. I had an accident in August of 1998 and have not been able to do volunteer work. My happiest NYPL years were at the Eastchester Branch 1978-1981.

Carol Davies-Gross, New York, New York. Current interests are good dining, Broadway shows, and museums. Volunteer Activities: 1996-2001 Help Line Crisis Telephone Service, including three years as an on-line trainer and two years as a shift supervisor; 1982-2001 American Museum of

Natural History, 1996-2001 Teacher Volunteer, Earth and Space Explainer; DC 37 Outreach Program volunteer.

Leonard Gold, New York, New York. He has been attending the Students Art League. Some of his paintings are currently being exhibited at the Broome Street Gallery, February 5-17.

Ruth Gonnello, Colorado Springs, Colorado. She writes to Alar Kruus: I hope you and yours are all right after the tragic event September 11th. For the first time in four years I wanted to be in New York and help. Everyone was so brave, and I was proud to be a former New Yorker. Everyone here was so empathetic and concerned, especially for anyone I might know. Colorado Springs raised over seven hundred thousand dollars as of last week.

James Greene, New York, New York. Just had a skin graft on my leg and am recuperating. Otherwise I'm fine.

Raphaëlle Guiyoule, Bronx, New York. Everything the same as before.

Ruth Higgins, Albuquerque, New Mexico. Current Interests: Reading, e-mail, baseball (especially Atlanta Braves), family (on both coasts). Current Volunteering: I am in a wheelchair whenever I go anywhere so I am not a volunteer. Outstanding memories of NYPL years: Margaret Scoggin in Young Adult Work, Isabel Jackson, Emily Davis and Howard Rickert at Morrisania Branch in 1941 (my first branch).

Evelyn Jones, New York, New York. She is a long time volunteer

at Countee Cullin. In December she assisted in planning a program in which Caroline Kennedy Schlossberg read her mother's favorite poems.

Virginia B. Smith, E. Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania. Current interests are golfing and reading (of course). I belonged to Mt. Manor Golf Club 1982-1999. My volunteer activities included being on the library board of the Hemlock Farms Library, Hawley, PA until 1999 (selected titles for board to vote), when we moved to E. Stroudsburg. Unfortunately I broke my right shoulder on February 28, 2001 and had a three month rehabilitation. Not much golf this year. Next year. Come to the Delaware Water Gap! It is only three miles away from us! Most high views in town give a camera fiend many delights. Outstanding memories of NYPL: Loved Staten Island, had a reader



Illustration by Hugh Thompson for Elizabeth Gaskell, *Cranford*, Macmillan, 1891

who had a large telescope in her home high on a hill. She and her husband knew every ship in the harbor. When I worked at Donnell, I loved to see a TV newspaper man with TV apparatus on his back trying to catch up

on the rest of the news He would leave abruptly on a call. I do not go any more into the City or to where I was born in Kearny, NJ. I'm in my 80th year and my husband is in his 82nd (goes in for a knee replacement tomorrow so he can play golf in the spring of '02). We enjoy living in East Stroudsburg. The E.S. University is nearby, also the hospital, lots of stores, yet we live in a 120 townhome community, well-ponded, landscaped, a delightful spot.

Maria Proctor, Hightstown, New Jersey. I'm moving to a retirement community on December 1. It's not far from New York by train, so I expect to come in often.

Betty Gubert, New York, New York. With Miriam Sawyer and Caroline M. Fannin, she has written the book *Distinguished African Americans in Aviation and Space Science*, published by Oryx Press in 2001. She is also the compiler of *Invisible Wings: An Annotated Bibliography on Blacks in Aviation, 1916-1993* (Greenwood 1994).

Thelma Ruffin Thomas, New York, New York. She is still an active storyteller. This newsletter will reach you too late to catch many of her appearances, but hopefully we will be published by March 14, when she will be at the Penn South Senior Center at 2:30 pm. The appearance will be free. On April 14 she will be at Langston Hughes House from 3:00 pm to 6:00 pm. It will not be free. For information, call Thelma 212 807-1570.

We had said in our previous newsletter that Hanna Friedman's husband had been Chief of the Jewish Division, but it was her brother who had held that position.

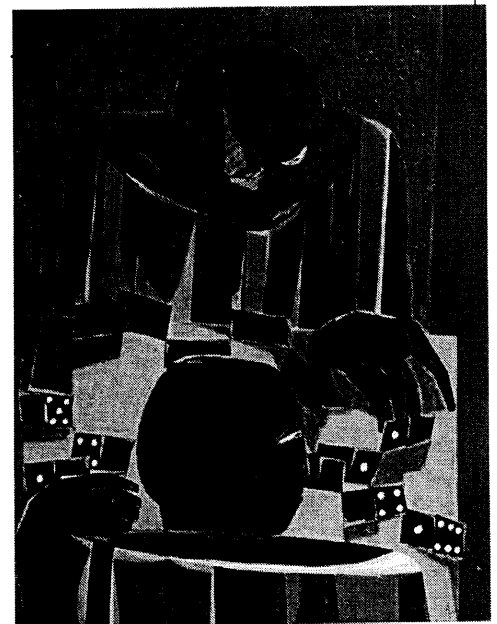
THE LIBRARY HOSTS THE ASSOCIATION

On April 3, 2001, the Library was host for a tour, luncheon, and lecture at the Humanities and Social Sciences Library in the building which most of us remember as the Central Library. William Walker, Senior Vice President and the Andrew Mellon Director of The Research Libraries, was the host, and with Rodney Phillips, Director of the Humanities and Social Sciences Library, he led tours of the building that showed the retirees the new construction and rehabilitation. These tours were an updating of the tours that had been given to us on March 9 of the previous year. The following are some of the changes. The Science Division has moved to what was once the Altman department store, and its space is now the United States History, Local History and Genealogy Division. The Economics Division on the second floor has also moved to the Altman Building, and its space is used by the special studies rooms, including the Wertheim Study, the Allen Room, and the new Center for Scholars and Writers. The microforms have been moved from the Main Reading Room to the first floor in the space formerly occupied by the Preparations Division, once the two story cataloging room for The Branch Libraries before it was double decked. This description does not give any idea of the vast changes that include new lighting, furnishings, and services throughout the building. Nor is it easy to describe the huge changes in the Main Reading Room and elsewhere that turn the building into a dream location for studying. It is all

extremely different from the rather shabby quarters in which many of us once worked. Electronics are everywhere, and they greatly change the library experience. One cannot but think of how pleased former employees would be to see changes that would have been hardly hoped for in the days of the Library's poverty.

After the tours, the Library provided an excellent luncheon in the Trustees Room, followed by a talk by Mr. Walker in which he described additional innovations in the Central Building. The items of most interest were the digitalization of the Prints Collection, and the future addition in the South Court, a building within a building that rises many stories to provide new quarters for offices, a staff lounge, and an auditorium, among other things.

The Association is grateful for this excellent hospitality.



Jacob Lawrence *Dominoes*, 1958, egg tempera on hardboard 14 1/2 x 19 1/4

REGINA ANDREWS AND THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE

by John S. Robotham

The following is the continuation of an article printed in the last issue to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Schomburg Center. The first part described the arrival in New York of Regina Andrews, daughter of a prominent Chicago attorney, who became an important staff member of the 135th Street Library, now the Schomburg Center. The following has been condensed from the original manuscript. The Editor

In about 1924, at the suggestion of the branch librarian, Ernestine Rose, W.E.B. DuBois had established the Krigwa Theatre headquarters in her 135th Street Library. He believed it "should be (1) a theatre about us, (2) a theatre by us, (3) a theatre for us and (4) a theatre near us." The theatre did not last long, but Regina Andrews was inspired by it, and in February 1928 she revived it with the help of Harold Jackman, a library page who would become a teacher, Dorothy Peterson, who was a teacher, and "one or two others." The Harlem experimental Theatre was the result. The novelist Jessie Fauset headed the play-reading committee, the Broadway star, Rose McClendon, did some directing, and the assistant editor of the urban League publication, *Opportunity*, Ira Reid, was one of the actors. Some of the others who participated were W.E.B. DuBois and Alain Locke as well as Theophilus Lewis, who had written drama criticism for the *Messenger* and other publications. Two of the plays produced were *Underground* and *Jacob's Ladder*, both written by Regina Andrews, the latter under the name of Ursula Trelling. *Jacob's Ladder* was a play about a lynching, and she had taken it to DuBois, who suggested it be revised. When he saw it performed he told her it was "thrilling." She had been an actress in the group's first production, *The Duchess Says Her Prayers*. Later, Richard Harrison, who was starring in *The Green Pastures*, came uptown to see one of the group's plays, with the result that two members of the cast, Dorothy Peterson and Inez Wilson, were given parts in that Broadway show. Dorothy Peterson had been

the group's Executive Director, and she was replaced by Regina Andrews.

Regina Andrews' greatest contribution to the Harlem Renaissance was her arrangement to have a room set aside for young writers on the first floor of the library, where Claude McKay and Eric Walrond did much of their writing. At about this time, Ethel Ray Nance moved to New York to become the secretary of Charles S. Johnson, editor of *Opportunity*, the voice of the Urban League. She and Regina Andrews shared a fifth floor apartment at 580 St. Nicholas Avenue, and a friend of Andrews from Columbus Ohio, named Luella Tucker, joined them. They called their apartment "Dream Haven," and it became a magnet for Harlem's young writers as well as its leading intelligentsia.

The most frequent visitor was Countee Cullen, who would stop by on his way home from nearby City College to read them his latest poem. Another was Eric Walrond, who would drop in and talk about his trips downtown, where he had been trying to make contacts with magazine editors. These writers not only visited, they wrote there, Countee in one corner writing a poem, Langston Hughes in another. Jean Toomer would sometimes stop by, and also the Walter Whites. Paul Robeson and his wife occasionally came by, and Eslanda Goode Robeson, Paul Robeson's wife, was helped by Andrews in the writing of her 1930 biography *Paul Robeson, Negro*.

Arna Bontemps, soon after he arrived in New York, was invited to a gathering in the apartment that included Jessie Fauset, the novelist, as well as Eric Walrond, Countee Cullen, Charles S. Johnson, the editor of *Opportunity*, and his wife, Alain Locke. Langston Hughes, just back from Europe, read poems to be included in his first book, *Weary Blues*.

Some aspects of this apartment are described in Carl Van Vechten's 1926 novel, *Nigger Heaven*, in which Mary Love is a librarian character based on Regina Andrews. By this time the importance of Regina Andrews to the Harlem Renaissance was recognized by

the participants, and for a time by the wider world. Boris Pilniak, the Russian novelist and short story writer, on a visit to the United States in 1931 and 1932 was taken to visit here, probably by Joseph Freeman, a Marxist writer.

On March 21, 1924, a dinner was arranged by Charles S. Johnson, which he called a "coming out party" for the younger African-American writers. The literary establishment was paying attention; Horace Liveright, who had published *Cane*, was there, as were Frederick Lewis Allen, Harold Jackman, Regina Andrews, and others. Carl van Doran gave a speech. Arna Bontemps said Andrews and Jackman were "...nowhere later referred to as writers in annuals of the Harlem Renaissance, but their places among the Harlem group were never questioned."

After the first years of the Great Depression, the period of the Harlem Renaissance had ended. The main participants had died or moved, but the poets, such as Langston Hughes, and other artists who had been nourished by this Renaissance, continued producing work, and new ones kept sprouting. Regina Andrews was transferred to the 115th Street Branch Library, of which she was eventually put in charge. She continued to arrange programs, one of which was probably the first performance of George Schuyler's daughter Philippa, who became a nationally known pianist.

NOTES

I met Mrs. Andrews in 1950 and knew her as a colleague for many years thereafter. Most of the material comes from conversations with her when I visited at her house after she retired. She also supplied some bits of information in writing. Elinor Des Verney Sinnette sent me transcripts of interviews she had with Regina Andrews and Ethel Ray Nance. The rest is from easily available sources; a list follows.

Bontemps, Arna. *Arna Bontemps—Langston Hughes Letters, 1925-1967*. N.Y., Dodd, Mead, c1980. Page 445.

Bontemps, Arna. *Harlem Renaissance Remembered. Essays edited with a Memoir by Arna Bontemps.* N.Y., Dodd, Mead, c1972. Pages 12-19.

Freeman, Joseph. *American Testament.* N.Y., Farrar, c1936 (Freeman met Pilniak in N.Y. in 1931. He already knew Claude McKay and Eric Walrond).

Kellner, Bruce, ed. *The Harlem Renaissance; A Historical Dictionary.* Westport, Conn., Greenwood Press, c1984. Passim.

Mitchell, Joseph. "Evening with a Gifted Child." In: *Up in the Old Hotel.* N.Y., Pantheon, 1992. Pages 106-117.

Mitchell, Loftin. *Voices of the Black Theatre.* Clifton, N.J., James T. White and Co., c1975. Page 70 (see also, pages 67-81).

Pilniak, Boris. *O'kei: Amerikanskii Roman.* Moscow, Federatsiaa, 1933. Letchworth, England, 1972 (Information from a letter to the author).

Robeson, Eslanda Goode. *Paul Robeson, Negro.* N.Y., Harper, 1930. (Information from Mrs. Andrews)

Van Vechten, Carl. *Nigger Heaven.* N.Y., Knopf, 1926 Pages 40-43.

THE EDITOR'S NOTES

We have turned to poetry and music in these dreary anxious days, and for that reason we have placed Marianne Moore on our front page. She had an intense interest in libraries, where today everyone can find her books of poetry. The existence of her works and the libraries themselves should not be harmed by the country's concentration on war, retaliation and security. The people who died in the Towers, and the millions who have been harmed, must not be deserted by harming or neglecting a culture that helped nurture them. There can be no better memorial than its preservation

It is sad and frightening that in the first weeks after the disaster, one of the actions of the city government was to cut funds for education and libraries. These cuts have since been reduced, but nevertheless they are still there, and what is most repellent is the attitude that suggested them in the first place. Are education and libraries to be considered merely as frosting that in times of sorrow and suffering can be expendable?

In this issue we celebrate the existence of the Schomburg Library, which is a remarkable example of an institution that has contributed greatly to the people, city, and country that we must protect.

JACOB LAWRENCE AND THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE

The Whitney Museum from November 8, 2001 to February 3, 2002 devoted an entire floor to the work of Jacob Lawrence, the artist who was one of the most important people to come out of the waning days of the Harlem Renaissance. The following is quoted from an essay by Leslie King-Hammond in the exhibition's catalog.

Arthur Schomburg, a black Puerto Rican, noted historian and bibliophile, was passionate in his support of the arts. In 1911 he founded the Negro Society for Historic Research, appointing William E. Braxton art director. Schomburg went on to sponsor numerous exhibitions of contemporary art by African Americans and of traditional African art. By 1921 Schomburg had a new base at the 135th Street branch of the New York Public Library in Harlem (later to become the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture), housing one of the most distinguished collections of literature and artifacts on African and African American culture. Thwarted by lack of access to educational or cultural institutions downtown, Lawrence and numerous black artists found this library to be a natural haven in their quest to reclaim their historical legacy. With the additional resources from the YMCA located across the street, the 135th Street library made an ideal forum for exhibitions, social, cultural and political events. Many photographs of African Americans reading

were published in the black press of the period, stressing the importance of literacy as one of the newly found opportunities of the Great Migration.



FIG. 6 Reading Room at the 135th Street library, ca. 1930. Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT, 2001-2002

President: Juanita Doares
Vice President: Alar Kruus
Secretary: Angeline Moscatt
Treasurer: Agnes Babich
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Lawrence Murphy, Dolores Noyes
Committees:
Legislation: Ada Jackson
Membership: Dolores Noyes
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Despina Coussouloudis
Edna Canozzer
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Bert Abelson
Editor: Lawrence Murphy
Coodinator, Oral History: Angeline Moscatt



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, NY 10016-3528. (lmurphy@nyc.rr.com). Officers of the Association—President: Juanita Doares; Vice-President: Alar Kruus; Secretary: Angeline Moscatt; Treasurer: Agnes Babich; Social Activities Coordinator: Polly Bookhout. To join the NYPL Retirees Association, send annual dues of \$10 to Agnes Babich 3546 79th St., Apt. 3, Jackson Heights, NY 11372. Dues include a subscription to the newsletter. Information and inquiries should be mailed or telephoned to Juanita Doares, NYPL Retirees Association, 401 W. 118th Street, Apt. 3, New York, NY 10027-7216 (telephone: 212 666-5737). Committees of the Association: Health Care: Ann Moye; Legislative: Ada Jackson; Membership: Dolores Noyes; Social: Polly Bookhout (Chair), Despina Coussouloudis, Edna Canozzer, Agnes Babich, Bert Abelson; Oral History Advisory Committee: Angeline Moscatt (Chair), Alar Kruus, Phyllis King, Dolores Noyes, Despina Coussouloudis, Virginia Swift, Carol Davies-Gross, members of the Executive Committee, and Bob Sink (Library Liaison).

THE ASSOCIATION STEPS OUT by Polly Bookhout

By great good fortune our social events this year have had perfect timing. Last June we visited the Museum of Jewish Heritage, walked along the promenade to The World Trade Center checking out lunch possibilities. September 22, when we needed peace and tranquility, we visited the Isamu Noguchi Garden Museum in Long Island City and lunched at S'Agapo Greek Restaurant in Astoria. To escape winter blues, on January 11 we visited sunny Spain by way of the Costa del Sol Restaurant on Ninth Avenue in Manhattan.

ASSOCIATION MEETING by Juanita Doares

On December 10, Mary K. Conwell, Senior Vice President and Director of the Branch Libraries, spoke about her thoughts on the future of The Branch Libraries. She suggested, and we agreed, that the Retirees Association and the Library cooperate in working together on appropriate projects, particularly in the area of legislation and funding for the Library at this crucial time. Funding to keep libraries open has never been more important than in these times after September 11. The Association needs help from its members, and if you can volunteer, please call Ada Jackson or Juanita Doares at 212 666-5737.

Also at this meeting, Lydia LaFleur delighted everyone with her readings and remembrances, for which we thank her very much.

HELP WANTED

The New York City Department for the Aging needs a volunteer retired librarian to help maintain their library. Call Dr. Jackie Berman, Director of the Department for the Aging, 212 442-0972.