

New York Public Library Retirees Association Newsletter

Fall 2005 - Winter 2006

Issue No. 20

FALL MEETING WITH DIRECTORS

Our President, Becky Koppelman, invited Susan Kent, Director and Chief Executive of the Branch Libraries, and David S. Ferriero, Andrew W. Mellon Director and Chief Executive of the Research Libraries, to speak at our Fall Meeting on Tuesday, October 18. While she did not expect them to speak in tandem, the fact that they did was a visible sign of the Library's new approach: uniting the Branch Libraries and the Research Libraries in a single effort to serve the information needs of the public.

Both Kent and Ferriero began working for the Library on September 1, 2004.

Although Susan Kent found Library School at Columbia dull, she said her work as a trainee at the Grand Concourse Branch inspired her. She found that the public needed and appreciated the work she did. She continued on to a distinguished career, winning a number of national awards, and returned to NYPL from the position of City Librarian for the Los Angeles Public Library.

David Ferriero began his library career shelving books at MIT. As he tells it, he shelved so well that a special title, Junior Library Assistant, was established so he could sort mail or do other jobs. He saw that the people working at the MIT Library enjoyed their work, and he wanted to be part of this. In his thirty-one years at MIT libraries and eight years at Duke University, he came to appreciate the staff, the user

community, and the retired staff, learning a great deal by talking with them.

When Kent and Ferriero arrived, they found a staff demoralized by the rumors generated by the secret McKenzie Report. Although the report was not implemented, it was put up on a web site so staff could comment anonymously. And comment they did. It was evident that there was a need for staff recruitment, retention, and training. So, a systemwide Office of Staff Development was established, a leadership

Speakers David S. Ferrier and Susan Kent



academy for professional and preprofessional staff was begun, and a new performance appraisal model for nonunion staff was implemented. In addition, a new way was sought to reward staff.

A second area of concern was the cost of maintaining — and the confusion caused by — separate automated systems. Ferriero and Kent experienced the confusion personally. Ferriero was astonished that the Research Libraries didn't have many important items, until he found that he was using the Branch Libraries — not the Research Libraries — catalog. Similarly, Kent's husband initially used the wrong catalog for his personal research. They wondered how many members of the public have similar problems. A joint task force was convened to plan for the consolidation of the two systems, which will include establishing a joint approach to cataloging Branch and Research materials.

The Library's web site presented a third area of concern. When a change was considered, it

was found that as many as one hundred sixty-two people had some measure of responsibility for approving changes in the web site. Since the web site is the main entry point to the Library for many users, it must be user-friendly.

A fourth concern is how the Library should best package and deliver information. A planning group, which includes outside experts from publishing and technology, was charged with researching what works best for the public rather than expecting them to use materials "our" way. For example, young people now multitask — writing a paper while searching a database, watching a movie, and checking email. Task force reports are also due on the impact of technology on collection development, the provision of digital products, the preservation and cataloging of backlogs in Research, and the needs of staff.

As a part of the Planning for Results project, measurable service goals have been set for each branch. These include providing accurate and prompt information, providing a welcoming

Top Row: Burt Abelson, Bill Lee, Lois Tenenbaum, Virginia Swift
Bottom Row: Dino Capone, Anne Moy, Leonard Gold



and safe library environment, and meeting the educational and recreational needs of all ages. As a complement to this project, a reader survey is being conducted throughout the Library to evaluate service.

One of the most exciting new experiences, a five-library collaboration, is the Google project to digitize material and make it available to the public. The Library is scanning only public domain material that is in good condition. Scanning is done by a human turning the pages and not by a machine. The Library is committed to digitizing its large collection of material in languages other than English, despite the dismay expressed by the French president who fears that the material will show France from an American point of view.

Questions from the audience:

- Is it possible that we will have fewer choices in health care since other government agencies have been limiting choice? Ms. Kent pointed out that those negotiations are between the city and the union.
- Why are information desks staffed with information assistants or librarians with little knowledge? Ms. Kent said a mentoring program might be established to develop staff skills and added that staff retention is surprisingly good despite low salaries.
- Can librarians feel professional if they don't order or review books? Ms. Kent said that public expectations have changed and that librarians hired by jobbers use our branch profiles to provide library materials. She added that librarians can't say they don't have the information now that the Internet provides access to the whole world.
- Can mentoring and hiring be done from within the Library so staff will not feel undervalued? Mr. Ferriero said identifying and keeping talent is a prime goal.
- Can the Library protect the privacy of the reader and not be influenced by the USA Patriot Act? Mr. Ferriero said that



Angeline Moscott reads two poems

the Library culture is conservative and risk averse. This must be dealt with.

- Will the Library have more videos and fewer books? Mr. Ferriero said he is impressed by how many subway riders are reading books, and he tries to see if the books are from the Library.

Comments from the audience:

- Ordering material and being consulted on issues and decisions is important to staff.
- When a grant is accepted, it must include the staff to support the grant.
- At one time, all the staff of the Library met once a year at Hunter College for a lecture.
- The best training results when staff members train each other.



LILLIAN LOPEZ: A CELEBRATION OF LIFE

“I have no regrets. We had a good life,” Lillian Lopez is reported as saying in May of the year of her death, July 28, 2005.

Over and over again at her memorial, we heard the themes of family, education, heritage, community, the themes of her passionate life. Fellow workers at The New York Public Library, as well as family members and fellow activists, were there at her memorial to celebrate that life. The memorial was held October 19, 2005, at Hunter College and sponsored by her family and El Centro de Estudios Puertorriquenos.

As her nephew Paul Mondesire tells it, Lillian Lopez was born in Salinas, Puerto Rico, raised in Ponce until at age ten, she, her mother Eva Cruz Lopez and her younger sister Elba moved to New York City to join her older sister Evelina Lopez Antonetty. Between graduating from Washington Irving High School in 1944 and graduating from Hunter College in 1959, she worked in private industry to help

support her family and was active in union organizing. Deciding to make a career as a librarian, she got a degree in library science from Columbia University.

There are librarians who remember her as a trainee in the New York Public Library in 1960 and her early career in the Library. Most of us remember her as head of the South Bronx Project, bringing outreach to the Spanish speaking public. She would later become head of the Office of Special Services, providing outreach to all boroughs of the Library, then Bronx Borough Coordinator at the time of her retirement in 1985.

Speaking at the memorial, David Diaz, television reporter, remembers her as part of the activist sister trio, Lillian Lopez, Evelina Lopez Antonetty, and Elba Lopez Cabrera. The importance of strong women to the family and the community was a theme mentioned by a number of speakers. J. J. Gonzalez, former television reporter, spoke of her passion for education, remembering that she said every house should have a dictionary. Author Nicholasa Mohr, spoke of Lillian Lopez’ generosity of spirit in helping her publish her book, in telling her that nothing may be given to her, but she must fight to get what she needs and then give back to the community. Edwin Holmgren told of her contributions to library service and remembered fondly her friendship with his wife and their many nights at the opera. Nelida Perez spoke of being mentored by Lillian Lopez in the South Bronx Project and later, being sponsored as librarian of El Centro de Estudios Puertorriquenos. Edwin Mendez-Santiago, Commissioner of the New York City Department of the Aging, championed her as part of the sister trio, showing the power of the Puerto Rican family, reaching out to all Puerto Ricans in New York to make them part of their family, stressing quality education. Edward Gonzalez, consultant, remembered the enjoyment Lillian Lopez took in his cooking and the encouragement she gave his wife, a pediatrician. Wallace Edgecombe, Director of Hostos Community College Arts Center, spoke of her as the “People’s Librarian.” Family member, Antonio Mondesire said he was



Visiting The Rubin Museum of Art: Becky Koppelman, Joan Jankell, Edna Canozzer, Mary K. Conwell, Jennine Porta, Ed Breheny, Marilyn Iaruso, Burt Abelson, Polly Bookhout, Elaine Thomas, Carol Breheny, Telza Gardner, George Koppelman, Despina Croussouloudis.

taught character by Lillian Lopez, to take calculated risks, to not quit what you start, to be an unconditional giver. Paul Mondesire remembered her fellowship with Ms. Vega of the Caribbean Cultural Center. Also, he spoke of her love of politics, education, and the struggle against ignorance. His Aunt Lily took all her family members to Broadway shows and celebrated each family member's birthday with a check.

Beyond her family, friends and the employees and the former employees of The New York Public Library, she continues to inspire others through her writings, part of the archives of the Puerto Rican diaspora at Centro de Estudios Puertorriquenos.

RETIREEES NEWS

BARBARA ALPER

Edmond Fursa and I had a busy year of travel. We spent two wonderful weeks in Tuscany with my brother and two other couples—four librarians in all! We had a lovely weekend tasting North Fork wines with Ed and Carol Breheny. There was a rainy weekend to see the fall foliage in Vermont and a week on the beach in Cape May.

The library is about to undergo a renovation. I've lost track of how many I've worked/lived through. I'm getting too old for this. I'm looking forward to joining all my friends in productive retirement.

BARBARA BERLINER

I'm currently working two days a week at Telephone Reference and enjoying it tremendously. Also, I do fact-checking for an encyclopedia, so I'm keeping very busy. I'm already planning for my annual trip to Scotland in the summer. I can't wait to go back.

POLLY BOOKHOUT

I have three new activities this year. I baby-sit each week for my niece's daughter, Sophia, born last February. I joined the crew of laundry room librarians of our two building complex. I weed the books, something other people don't like doing. I help with the archives and the press releases of the Metropolitan Victorian Society. I still go to my exercise class, take classes at Hunter, participate in a photo group, and take trips. You can see pictures from my last trip at <http://home.earthlink.net/~pcbookhout/SAmer05.html>.



**Jeannine Porta and Elaine Thomas
on the boat to Kykuit**

HELEN W. CHIN

Savanna Club is still a wonderful senior community. In the last seven years, we have made many friends. I still continue to go out six or seven times a week playing American and Chinese mah jong and cards. On September 12, 2005, I had a mastectomy. I am still healing.

LENORE COWAN

My husband William of fifty-five years died March 30, 2005. I'm busy with volunteer work for breast cancer through the Woman's Club and church.

ESTELLE FRIEDMAN

I'm still volunteering doing Books for the Homebound and co-chairing a Book Discussion Group. I belong to the Gilbert and Sullivan Society, am President of the Local Chapter of Parents of North American Israelis and do my bit of traveling. I'm leaving for Israel for the month of February. Oh yes, also, I have a subscription to the New York Philharmonic and to a chamber music series. It's also wonderful to get together with my retiree friends and colleagues.

During my early years in the Library, I was at the Information Desk at Donnell Records when a man approached me and said, "I know why the Japanese attacked us at Pearl Harbor. It was because of Cio Cio San." I told him I

really didn't think so, but he was firmly convinced that was the reason.

JEANNE FELKER

I am involved in an interesting project at my church where I have inventoried records dating back to 1825. I am reorganizing them and will be selecting the most valuable for microfilming. The church has been awarded a small grant to help defray microfilming costs.

RUTH R. HIGGINS

I am now classified as legally blind. This inability to read has left a void in my life. I am trying to fill it with Talking Books, but it is not the same.

I am still a baseball fan although I can't read box scores any longer. I am home bound due to other medical difficulties. Still looking for the Golden Years.

ARNOLD HYMAN

Son Stefan got married in October. Daughter Elena passed the bar exam and relocated to Rochester, N.Y. She is working as an Attorney/Editor for a large law publisher. Daughter Amy is working on her Ph.D. at Florida International University in Legal Psychology.

Sharon and I have been busy traveling to Miami and Rochester to visit our daughters. Also, we have traveled to Arizona to visit family. We continue to go to many concerts and operas, and get together with good friends. I continue to work on my stamp collection. If there are any other stamp collectors out there who want to trade stamps, please feel free to contact me.

MARILYN IARUSSO

Elaine Thomas and I are going to Indonesia in February with Anne Pellowski to present bookmaking, storytelling, and photography workshops.

KAY R. KEENEY

Just a short note to advise that we retirees on Staten Island meet once a month and go out to a restaurant for lunch. Sometimes we are eight-

een or twenty, other months we are four. We gab and chat and thoroughly enjoy one another. This way we are aware of who's doing what, state of health, etc.

PHYLLIS KING

I haven't been in touch for a while. In early June I found I had lung cancer. In the last few months I have had eight weeks of radiation therapy. I am doing very well; my energy is re-viving. I hope to get to a meeting sometime this year.

MILADA KLATIL

My article, "Six Hundred Years of Czech Literature in the New York Public Library: From Hus to Havel", was published in the Slavic & East European Information Resources, Vol. 6, No. 1, 2005.

JANE KUNSTLER

I am not retired yet, but retirement is looking better and better every day.

WILLIAM LEE

Once at the reference desk, I received a phone call from a patron who asked me the following question.

"How many seasons are there in a year?"

"There are four seasons in a year." I answered.

"Are you sure, because my friends and I are debating this?"

"Yes, I am sure. There are four season in a year. And the four seasons are spring, summer, autumn and winter." I said.

"But what's happened to the fall then?"

RICHARD C. LYNCH

I have been spending a great deal of time, effort and postage stamps to try and keep the Jefferson Market Library from closing any longer than absolutely necessary. Also, I oppose the moving of the reference collection to the second floor. I was surprised to read in the newspapers that the Fordham Library Center is now closed down. They should have had a farewell party for all interested former staff members to say goodbye.

ROSE MESSER

I'm leading a very quiet old ladies' life these days (I will be 90 in April) and don't get out much and am not able now to do the traveling I always liked to do. I keep up my membership because I feel the more members, the more clout.

Bound for Kykuit : Estelle Friedman, Joan Jankell, Ed and Carol Breheny. Jane Kunstler and Henrietta Cohn at the far left.





A French friend, John Howlin, sent us this photo of Emma Cohn

ANGELINE MOSCATT

I am active in my Penn South Co-op. I serve on the Co-op Council and as Secretary on the Advisory Council of the Penn South Program for Seniors. I also volunteer in the Senior Center Library. I enjoy classes at the Center, in particular the Poetry Workshop. In addition, I have joined the Holy Apostles' Community Chorus and serve on the NYPL Retirees Association Board.

DAVID OCKENE

It's hard to believe it's been over one year since I retired. I have joined the Mount Vernon (NY) Police Auxiliary and regularly patrol the streets and attend community events. I have also joined a newly formed foundation to raise money for the Mount Vernon Public Library.

JEAN A. PINCKNEY

I am still working part-time at Trident Technical College in North Charleston. I am doing fewer hours in preparation for full retirement, hopefully next year. I enjoy assisting the students with their research. I am also volunteering some time at the local church in Awendaw

where I train the senior citizens in computer skills.

I went to New York in July for a weekend to my niece's wedding. I am glad I was able to visit my friends at NYPL SIBL.

GUNTHER E. POHL

I continue to add to the New York State Biography and Portrait Index which includes over one million references, all in computer and disk format.

MARIA M. PROCTOR

I live in a lovely retirement community where I enjoy volunteering in our library. In September I went to England on the new Queen Mary and took a course on Jane Austen at Oxford University.

PAULINE RISTUCCIA

Most of this year was quiet and taking it easy due to some illness. But, when possible we were active with the Senior Citizen Club of the community and assisted in anyway my husband and I could at parties. We have a great group.

KAYE COKE WALKER

After more than forty years at NYPL, I retired in 1996. I have cruised the Mediterranean, the Caribbean and Alaska; visited Australia, New Zealand, and Hawaii. This past August, Telza Gardner and I toured the Scandinavian countries and Iceland. To stay fit for these exhausting outings, I work out four days a week: yoga, karate, aerobics, salsa, circuit training and weight lifting. Other days I lunch with friends, attend matinees, see my grands and indulge my love of shopping. I still read and do crossword puzzles whenever I can find time.

Retirement is WONDERFUL when you have and can maintain a healthy body, mind, and spirit.

PHILIP WOLCOFF

Last May my wife and I enjoyed our trip upstate to attend our granddaughter's graduation ceremonies at Syracuse University, held over two days.

This March it will be twelve years since I retired. I still remember fondly my forty-two years with NYPL, starting as a half-time clerk while attending college. I enjoyed working with the public, especially book discussion groups, planning programs, and being involved with NYPL's "Speaking Volumes" radio program, and the Channel 31 (at that time a municipal station) television program. Also, I loved working with a great group of staff members.

JOE ZEVELOFF

I visited Brazil in March 2005 for the fifteenth birthday of my wife's niece.

In August 2005 I went with my wife to visit friends in Puerto Rico. We went to beautiful beaches of Boqueron and southwest Puerto Rico. I also stayed in historic Ponce and visited old San Juan. We had a very enjoyable vacation in Puerto Rico. Every year I go with library friends to the U.S. Open Tennis at the end of August. I also do volunteer work with the Big Apple Greeters.

READ AT THE FALL MEETING

The first poem originally appeared in our March 1999 newsletter. The second is new to our newsletter.

RARE BOOKS

by Phyllis King

Our shelves are crammed,
yet one book lost leaves a gap
we notice as we pass.
We have found this year
the gaps are larger.
Some favorite ones are missing,
familiar words no longer
there to read.

So we must search our memories
and record for others to know
the books we loved so well
but will not see again.

'LEST WE FORGET'

by Angeline Moscatt

If memory is a slate
Who writes upon it?
Who decides what will be remembered?
What should be forgotten?
Who decides when memory will dim?
When time will erase faces
And scenes dear to us.

We try to elude the heavy hand of time
By erecting monuments
By writing memoirs and histories,
Saving letter and photographs,
Knowing in the words of the African proverb,
"A man is not truly dead until he is forgotten."

PASSINGS

We honor the passing of NYPL Retiree Association members and other Library staff as reported in Staff News, and elsewhere.

Richard W. Couper, Frances Edelberg, Lidia Ewstafiadi, Ruth Forchheimer, Ethel Greene, Mollie Kantor, Lillian Lopez, Carole McMillon, Margaret Molloy, Hazel Mond, Frances Morrison, Lillie Prioleau, Vijay Rabeenandan, Steve Sclafani, Mildred Spencer, John D. Stinson, Rogera Vincent, Alise Ziverts

PHOTO CREDITS

You will not be surprised to find that many of your fellow retirees are camera buffs. On our trip to Kykuit there were almost as many cameras as retirees. The photos on the boat to Kykuit were taken by Telza Gardner. The photos at the Fall Meeting and at Kykuit are by Elaine Thomas. The photo at the Rubin Museum of Art was taken using my camera. I have cropped and enhanced the photos in this issue in Adobe Photoshop Elements 3. Because I have a scanner now, I can include printed photos in the newsletter. Telza Gardner's photos were scanner for this issue.



Agnes Babich & Juanita Doares

Ed & Carol Breheny





Despina Croussouloudis & Viola Barrett

Estelle Friedman & Tom Dickinson





Harriet Gottfried & Robert Foy

Mary Anne Corrier & Mary K. Conwell





Jane Kunstler & Stephanie Tolbert

George & Becky Koppelman





Helen Levine & Hisako Yamashita

**Jacob Azeke & Telza Gardner
admiring the view at Kykuit**



THE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

By Angeline Moscatt

The NYPL Retirees Association has an oral history project. Through the recollections of retired staff members, we hope to record stories that give flavor to the branch or unit, public service stories that relate to specific times; such as, World War II, or the budget crisis of the 1970's, anecdotes regarding books or readers.

We would be very pleased if you would consent to be interviewed. If you wish, you may decide whether you want the tape to be open and available to the general public or to be closed and for only the use of the library.

If you are interested, please contact Angeline Moscatt, 212 924-2150.

THANKS

With this issue the newsletter becomes more of a group effort thanks to Mary K. Conwell, who edited articles, Angeline Moscatt and Phyllis King, who provided poems, and Elaine Thomas and Telza Gardner, who provided photos. Do you have an article, poem, or photos you would like to have included in a later issue?

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[http://home.earthlink.net/
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