

# New York Public Library Retirees Association Newsletter

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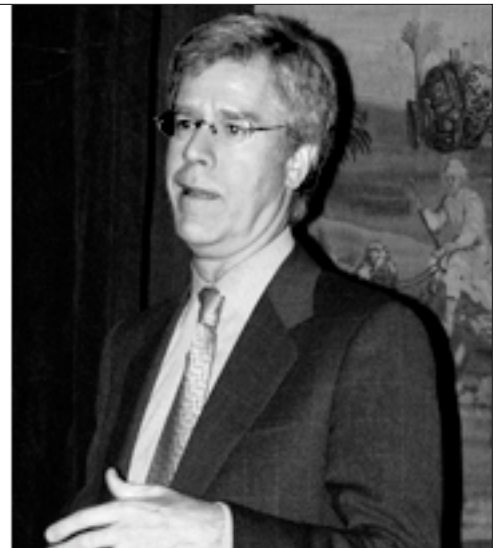
## A CHANGING LIBRARY: THE PLAN

At our general meeting in December, David Ferriero, Andrew W. Mellon Director of The New York Public Libraries, and David Offensend, NYPL's Chief Operating Officer, told us of their plans for changing the Library.

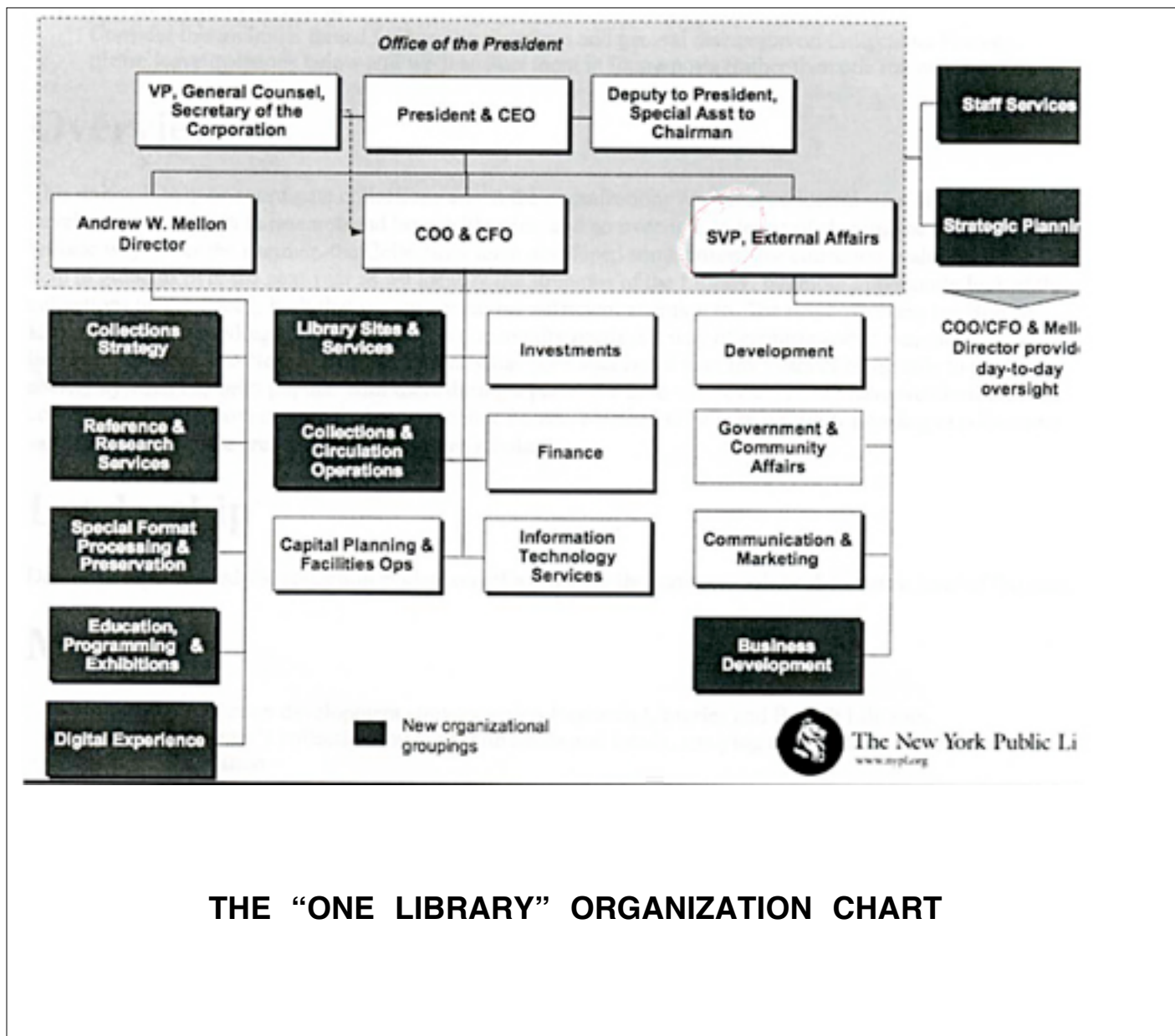
Many of us assumed major changes would be coming when David Ferriero and Susan Kent became the new heads of the Research Libraries and the Branch Libraries in September 2004. They spoke in tandem at our October 2005 meeting about the Library's plan to, as they put it, unite the Branch Libraries and the Research Libraries into a single entity to serve the information needs of the public.



**David Ferriero**



**David Offensend**



**THE “ONE LIBRARY” ORGANIZATION CHART**

## THE EARLY CHANGES

The New York Public Library has been going through a period of upheaval and change equal to, and probably exceeding, the changes brought about by the 1975 New York City fiscal crisis. Unlike the changes during the fiscal crisis, the current ones are affecting the management staff and other nonunion staff, as well as the city-paid union staff. They are affecting the privately funded reference units of the library, as well as the publicly funded branches.

Since 2004, there have been at least two different management studies, one by McKinsey and one by Booz Allen. Presumably, the result of these studies are reflected in the new plan for a changed Library.

After Susan Kent’s resignation last year, David Ferriero became head of both the Research Libraries and the Branch Libraries. Top level employees began announcing their retirement plans or leaving the Library for other positions. As Staff News shows, many positions, including Branch Librarian posi-

tions, have remained unfilled. Librarians in the Branch Libraries no longer order books for their branches. Instead, books are ordered centrally from branch profiles that describe each neighborhood branch and its diverse public.

The Donnell Library Center building has been sold. When the hotel chain that bought it rebuilds, there will be fewer floors of public service. Only one floor will be above ground.

## THE PLAN

According to David Ferriero and David Offensend, the Library must evolve to meet a changing environment in which would-be library users now get their books at low cost from bookstores or on Amazon, and get their information from the internet. To meet the challenges of this changing environment, the Library must first identify its strengths and then build on them. The collections and the staff have been found to be the Library's greatest assets.

## STAFF

The Library faces challenges in how to best preserve pride in the organization, use staff talents, motivate staff, and provide a unified focus on serving users. The Library has a bureaucracy that can't decide anything quickly. To provide new decisiveness and accountability, the bureaucracy must be leveled.

Better ways to measure the user experience must be found. The whole Library, not just individual units, must be held accountable for providing service. This is not just a matter of numbers; quality is important. Resources must be found to provide quality service.

A new Staff Services Office will combine human resources, staff development, and em-

ployee health and wellness divisions. The wellness program will be modeled on that of Goldman, Sachs, and will provide "an integrated suite of services designed to support your personal health and well-being and to help you manage your personal and family responsibilities." See <http://www2.goldmansachs.com/careers/your-career/reward/index.html>.

Improvements are needed in staff communications and in the ethnic and gender diversity of staff. That diversity is present on the front line but not in the upper levels of the Library.

## COLLECTIONS

Collections must not be thought of as separate entities but as part of a librarywide collection. Our users and potential users must be identified. The Library must not try to be all things for all people. The Library must focus on known strengths of the collection. For example, the Science, Industry, and Business Library has not been able to support the very expensive materials on the pure sciences. The scientists working in the pure sciences are in labs, not out visiting public libraries. Instead of providing science information to scientist, the Library should focus on providing science information to students from kindergarten through college, and to the general public. Another example is the lack of twentieth century popular material. The Library collected popular novels, pamphlets, and other materials from the nineteenth century, but not the twentieth and the twenty-first centuries. Where will researchers fifty or one hundred years from now find twentieth century material? The Library must improve its reference services throughout the Library including interlibrary loan, virtual material, e-mail, and telephone reference.

Processing and preservation of materials for the whole Library will be in one place in Long Island City. Harvard, Rutgers, and other large libraries have taken similar steps to locate these operations at less costly locations away from the main library.

## PROVIDING SERVICES TO THE PUBLIC

Education, programming and exhibitions must be centrally coordinated. When donations of original materials (manuscripts, paintings, photographs, etc.) are made to the Library, digital rights to these materials should be secured. As a service for the digital user, for example, material on Paddy Chayefsky is now linked to the Paddy Chayefsky site on Wikipedia.

Instead of a Branch Librarian, each branch will have a site manager, one person who will be held accountable for scheduling, handling the building problems, and assuring that users are satisfied. Branch or Site Managers will not have to have an MLS degree. A clerical staff member might meet the requirements of the position.

Profit making operations in the Library will be under one office, Business Development. This will include Library shops, rental space, photo permissions and finding new profit making opportunities.

There will be one online catalog for the entire Library. The Branch Libraries' online catalog, Leo, and the Research Libraries' online catalog, Catnip, will be combined.

Librarians will not order books for their own branches. Instead, books and other materials will be ordered at a central location. The librarians at the central location will use branch profiles developed by each branch describing the neighborhood and the needs of the local

users. There will be children's librarians in all neighborhood branches, though other librarian specialists may not be present.

Developing a leaner library that is more responsive to its users is a high priority. As part of a special pilot project in the Bronx, staff members were quizzed on how they spent their time. A lot of time was spent processing books and other material in the branch. In the future all material processing will be done centrally and the materials will arrive shelf-ready at the branch. Programming, which takes a lot of a branch librarian's time, will be provided centrally. This will give more time for public service.

Circulation and Information Desks will be consolidated so fewer staff members are needed to serve the public. This will mean more funds available to provide more days open and longer hours of service. Now branches are open 54 hours a week, while 39 hours was the standard in the recent past. The Bronx Library Center is open 12 hours a day, 7 days a week. Accessibility, including days and hours a unit is open, is a concern for our users and potential users. Staff will not be working harder because they will be relieved of some responsibilities.

As part of promoting staff initiative, a team of forty staff members worked over the summer to provide the Library's plan for the future. The hope is to change staff culture and to have a staff receptive to experimentation. "Launch and learn" is David Ferreiro's expression for this. Staff members will be encouraged to suggest a plan for change. So long as a plan is thought through, a staff member who initiates it should not be blamed if it is not successful.

## QUESTIONS

*What services will the new Donnell provide?*

When Donnell reopens, it will have space for a general library but not a special children's, young adult, or world language collection.

*Will the Library continue to provide outreach programs, such as classes for English as a Second Language and outreach to prisons?*

The Library will. In the past, these programs were often paid for with grant money. Outreach staff spent a lot of time applying for grants just to keep the programs afloat. The Library should pay for these programs.

*How will you use unused space at the 42nd Street building?* This is still in the planning stage. The Library is trying to find funders for the new uses of this space.

*What are the qualifications for Branch Managers?* Management skills, leadership skills, communications and people skills

*How will the Library provide safety and security with a smaller staff?* We will have to look at the needs of each individual unit. When the city provided funds for longer hours, it provided funds for security.

*Since the unionized security staff of the Central Libraries is superior to the contract guards in neighborhood branches, is there any plan to make all guards unionized?* No, because unionized security staff costs about twice as much as contract guards. The Library couldn't provide as many hours of service if the guards were all unionized.

*What about the sale of Donnell?* The proceeds from the sale of Donnell will go into the budget of the Branch Libraries.

*Why wasn't the Annex chosen for Technical Services?* It is less expensive to upgrade the Long Island City building than to upgrade the Annex.



**In the Trustees Room**

*What is the Library doing about the internal loss of material?* With centralized processing in one location it will be easier to put in controls to prevent loss. Shipping is still a concern.

*What is the ladder of advancement for librarians now?* The Library needs advancement possibilities for all staff, not just librarians. In studying the Library's needs there was a surprising finding: more librarians are needed, not more clerks.

*What will happen to the Specialty Offices: Children's, Adult, Young Adult?* This hasn't been decided.

*Why aren't there more women in the upper part of top management? There are women in the bottom part of top management, but only two are in the upper part of top management.* Working toward diversity in management must include women as well as racial and ethnic diversity.

*What about the backlog in cataloging research materials?* The Library is trying to get funding for this through its capital campaign. Now there is hard data on the extent of the problem.

*Could all databases be available in all locations in the Library?* Our vendors are presently unhappy with the large number of users with access to their databases. Extending availability would be difficult.

*Could the library do more about increasing the size of its user base?* The Library spent more on marketing last year than it has ever spent, for example for the campaign to provide six-day service in all branch libraries. The Library has extended its marketing to Bronx media for the extended hours and days of the Bronx Library Center. There is an ef-

fort to raise money specifically for marketing.

*How frequently are the Library's digitized texts and graphics accessed?* The digital gallery has been very popular and has received millions of hits. Photo reproductions, particularly botanical reproductions, are an important source of revenue. Google has made a number of books accessible in two ways: 40,000 books are linked to the Library's catalog; others may be located through the Digital Collections. The digitized books include children's books, genealogy books, local history, and, in the future, cookbooks.

*Staff morale is low at Lincoln Center. The staff is overloaded with work. For example, there is only one part-time librarian to do the large job of ordering books for both the theater and the dance collections. What can be done about this?* Some of the problem may be people's inability to deal with change.

*What is the union's position on the plan to change job titles?* This will have to be negotiated. Staff members such as catalogers may do the same job but have different titles in the Branch and Research Libraries. This should change.

*Will ROAR, the employment program for retired workers, continue?* Yes. To provide maximum staffing of longer hours, part-time workers fit best. ROAR workers would fit very well in this setting.

*Will the Borough Offices continue?* This is being examined. The plan currently in design is for a Hub Manager to supervise twelve units.

*Why have three recent Branch Librarian meetings been canceled?* The Library is concentrating on meetings with all the staff instead of Branch Librarians in particular. LAIR, the

staff web site, has a blog for staff to communicate with management. It has become a way for staff members to communicate with each other, sometimes heatedly.

*Can retirees have access to LAIR and have e-mail addresses?* It might be possible for retirees who get Staff News by e-mail to have access to LAIR.

*How do Hubs work?* One example is the Bronx Library Center with its twelve neighborhood branches. The Center provides programming support for the branches. Access to transportation will be considered when planning a Hub and its satellites.

*We remember the turmoil of layoffs in 1975. Does the Library have contingency plans for a loss of funding from the city?* This year the city has mandated a 2% cut, with a 5% cut next year. Because of conservative hiring and retaining vacancies, the Library hopes to avoid layoffs.

*Will the Library continue to buy foreign publications?* Publications in languages that are expensive and rarely used and expensive won't be bought. Instead there will be collections in neighborhood branches and at a central location in languages for which there is a user base.

*Since natural light and air quality are important considerations, why does the replacement for Donnell Library include only one floor above ground and two below ground?* Zoning limits the building on the Donnell Library site to eleven floors. The Library got 59 million dollars for the sale. Insisting on having all floors above ground would have resulted in much less for the sale. The new Mulberry Street Library has the same configuration. This new library has won many architectural awards.

*Isn't having books available free to users, part of democracy? Shouldn't books have more of the budget than databases?* Books grow more expensive. A careful selection process is necessary to provide the books people will read.



**So much to talk about!**

The branch profiles need updating, selectors must use the profiles, and the proportion of adult to children's books must be properly chosen.

*Will positions in the lower portion of top management be chosen from the Branch Libraries or Research?* All present appointments are on a temporary basis and involve both sides of the Library. Some librarians from the Branch Libraries think the Reference side is taking over; some librarians from the Reference side think the Branch Libraries side is taking over

*The air conditioning isn't working at Mid Manhattan. Why can't the Library get the city to provide funding to fix the air conditioning?* A survey of the Library's ninety-one buildings showed that there is an enormous backlog of problems with air conditioning, roofs, fire alarms, and other building services. It would cost 470 million dollars to fix them all. The Library was able to get 23 million to provide adequate fire alarms by pointing out to the city that if a fire occurred, it would be an embarrassment for the city.

*Will there be fundraising for the Branch Libraries?* Yes.

If you have questions, you can e-mail David Ferreiro at [David@nypl.org](mailto:David@nypl.org) or David Offensend at [doffensend@nypl.org](mailto:doffensend@nypl.org).



## NOTES FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Greetings to All,

Spring is here. Or so our calendars have told us. Even though it is here officially, many of us know we still have plenty of unpleasant weather to go through before we can really enjoy spring-like weather, just look at the Weather Channel or out your window. Fortunately, here in NYC we have missed all the big snowstorms this winter, but with all of the really bad weather that many of you are still experiencing, you have our sympathy.

But on to other matters, the biggest news here is the dramatic change taking place within The New York Public Library system. Most of the retirees living in the metropolitan area have been anxious and curious about all the rumors that were flying around. But now the news is out. The Library issued a press release, and an article appeared in The NY Times on

Tuesday, March 11th, 2008, telling of the grand plans and the transformation that will take place. There is a \$1 billion plan of expansion underway within the library system, and \$100 million has been guaranteed to "jump start" this project. Very briefly, the central building at Fifth Avenue and 42nd Street, which will still house the Research Libraries, will be renovated, and certain parts of the building will combine a lending library for the public that will include a children's room, a young adult room, many computer work stations, etc. President Paul LeClerc has said that they want this "main branch" to be easily accessible to everyone, and to meet the needs of children, teenagers, and adult patrons. For the branches, there will be refurbishing, more materials, more internet services, and newer technology, as well as two new "hub libraries" to serve all who live in the city. My article, however, is just a very brief outline of the many, and significant, changes that will be taking place within our library. If you haven't read these articles yet, you must. The information can be found on the websites of the NYPL and the NY Times. If you are unable access those sites, please let me know; I will be happy to send you these two articles. You may be surprised at these "grand plans."

Related to this, our editor has written and included an excellent article relevant to more changes being made by the Library in order to unite the Branch Libraries and the Research Libraries into a single entity. It was written after our general meeting in December 2007, with David Ferriero, Director of NYPL, and David Offensend, Chief Operating Officer.

Meanwhile, in January we retirees in the area enjoyed our Annual Holiday Dinner at the Ukrainian East Village Restaurant, and the food was delicious. In March we had a fascinating tour of The Eldridge Street Synagogue,

which was built in 1887 in lower Manhattan and recently renovated and restored to its magnificent original splendor. Beforehand we really enjoyed eating lunch at Katz's Delicatessen on the Lower East Side, another well known landmark. Yes, it is still there and yes, the pastrami was very good, as were many of their offerings.

We had another general meeting in March. Brigid Cahallan, Outreach Librarian from Mid-Manhattan, gave a talk entitled, "The Good News about the Aging Brain," and discussed what seniors are doing that is right for our brains. Brigid is interested in providing new programs within the Library that will be of interest to seniors.

And save the date: On thursday, May 1st at 1:30 pm, we meet at the Sea Lion Pool at the Central Park Zoo for a fun tour of flora and fauna, with guide and fellow retiree Mary Anne Corrier. Let me know if you'd like to join us. And bring your camera; great photo opportunities are included.

Thank you all for voting in our election. The new officers are as follows: Becky E. Koppelman - President, Polly C. Bookhout – Vice President, Angeline A. Moscatt -Vice President, Elaine E. Thomas – Treasurer, Jennine Porta – Secretary. Each term is for two years beginning this January 2008. Inadvertently we did not include the names of our Members-at-Large on the slate. As they were left off, we will be e-mailing an election slate for those of you with e-mail, or we will mail you an election slate in the very near future. We do apologize to you, and we apologize especially to our hard working Members-at-Large.

In closing, on behalf of the Executive Committee and the Members-at-Large, we want to wish you all a wonderful spring and

summer. It would be so nice if those of you who lived across the miles could join us for all our meetings and outings, just by stepping out your door. But since that is impossible, please do keep in touch by sending in your newssheet for our wonderful Newsletter; even a few sentences will do. Remember, everyone loves to hear from you.

My very best to you all!  
Becky Eakins Koppelman

## RETIREE NEWS

### CHARLES BENSON

Union Bluff is a great place to stay or just eat in York Beach, Maine. I loved working with the disabled at the library.

### MARY ANNE CORRIER

During ALA midwinter, Wendy Caldiero and I went to Philadelphia, not to participate in the convention but to see old friends and explore old Philadelphia. We had drinks with Dudley Brown Carlson, former Supervising Children's Librarian in the Fordham Children's Room, who is living in Portola Valley, California. She now serves as a consultant to public libraries in the area.

Wendy and I spent two days walking through the old city, visiting historic burial grounds and colonial churches. The sexton of Christ Church opened the church's burial ground especially for ALA visitors so we were able to visit Ben Franklin's grave. Of the religious institutions, of most interest was Old St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church built in 1733 for mostly Irish and German domestics and laborers. Since Pennsylvania was an English colony, Roman Catholics were forbidden to hold public worship. Services were permitted

in Philadelphia, though discretion was necessary. The church is built off the street through a carriage way. The interior contains no statues and closely resembles its neighboring Protestant institutions. As we wandered we also had to visit second hand book stores. Wendy was looking for Civil War diaries and memoirs while I looked for authentic recipes for shrimp and grits.

I spend several weeks at a time in New Orleans. The city is as you read in the news. The tourist areas have rebounded completely. Neighborhoods east of the French Quarter are still ninety percent derelict. These are the areas benefiting from celebrity involvement; Winton Marsalis, Harry Connick, Jr., Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie all have raised and donated funds. They've cut through the bureaucracy; houses have been built and others are going up. One of my family members, a resident of New Orleans East, has been negotiating with FEMA for two years. Fortunately, this family has finances enough to move forward in spite of FEMA. There is hope the new governor, Bobby Jindal, will be able to affect noticeable change.

I continue to volunteer as a guide at the Central Park Zoo. I enjoy meeting visitors from around the world and talking with them about the animal collection. Spending hours outdoors is a pleasant change after so many years of indoor work.

### JEANNE FELKER

I spent an enjoyable three weeks last September in London and at various locations in England and The Netherlands associated with the Mayflower Pilgrims.

### ESTELLE FRIEDMAN

Life is very busy but I still enjoy meeting and traveling with my library friends. I traveled to Australia, New Zealand and Alaska with Telza



**Margaret Hetley & Telza Gardner  
at the Holiday Dinner**

Gardner and Kaye Walker. I am now off to Israel to see my son, daughter-in-law and grand kids who live there. Every year, in the winter, a lecture is given in Jerusalem in my husband's name. The general title is "Young Heroes," and each year there is a talk about a young person who did extraordinary things. All of this is to honor my husband who did extraordinary things when he fought and helped to establish the State of Israel.

Now that NYPL has changed in such an enormous degree, I can only look back and say that we were a family. This was brought home to me at Fran Rabinowitz's retirement party. We used to get together at meetings and seminars; we worked in each others branches; and we helped each other. It doesn't look as if the future will have the same meaning for incoming staff.

#### ARLEEN GELLER

Currently my hobbies are jewelry making and beading, and also, reading, mainly genre fiction. I currently run a book recommendation group for genre fiction at the Kingsbridge Library.

#### PATRICK HARDISH

*Sonorific Duo*, composed in 2007, was premiered on May 7 that year on my Composers Concordance series at the Greenwich House Music School by the flute and percussion duo Due East. The composition was given a second performance by Due East on Aug. 13, 2007, at the Universidade Estadual Paulistana, Sao Paulo, Brazil. Presently I am composing a work for drum set to be premiered on my series this coming May 2, 2008, at the Greenwich House Music School in Manhattan. It is being written for the percussionist Peter Jarvis. Another recent composition of mine, *Sonorites VII* (2005) for solo clarinet is to be

released by Capstone Records in an all solo clarinet CD of works by contemporary composers. The clarinetist is Dr. Esther Lamneck.

Compositions of mine to be published this year include *Sonorities VIII* for 4 timpani (2006) and *Jazz Sonorities* for clarinet and drum set (2002). Both are to be published by Calabrese Bros. Publications.

Besides my activities as a composer I am a co-director and co-founder of the Composers Concordance, a concert series devoted to contemporary concert music. See [www.composersconcordance.org](http://www.composersconcordance.org). I am also on the Editorial Board of the New Music Connoisseur, a magazine devoted to the contemporary concert music scene. See [www.newmusicon.org](http://www.newmusicon.org).

I enjoyed attending several of the annual conferences of the Music Library Association across the country. These trips were on company time and paid for, in full or in part, by The New York Public Library. I was proud to represent the NYPL on these trips. I also enjoyed being on the Nonprint Committee. Most of all, my Retirement Luncheon held at Mid-Manhattan Library Cataloging Department last October 30 will bring back the most wonderful and cherished memories. Every staff member from my office (CD) attended as well as several staff member from other NYPL offices and libraries and also several friends and family members from outside the NYPL. It was all quite overwhelming. Many photos were taken to help bring back these memories.

#### MARSHA HOWARD

As most people probably know, I've been working, since "retiring," 3/4 time at Poets House. We're currently closed but will reopen in Fall '08 at 2 River Terrace in Battery Park City. We continue to have wonderful programs in Lower Manhattan in the

interim—some at the Mulberry Street Library. All of my current programs are off site—in Westchester and around the U.S. See [www.poetshouse.org](http://www.poetshouse.org) and join us for some stimulating evenings.

#### ARNOLD HYMAN

My hobbies remain the same—stamp collecting, reading, concert going, and traveling. My daughter Amy will be getting married in November.

#### JOAN JANKELL

My last trip was to Budapest and Prague, my first to that part of the world. It was enjoyable except for a trip to Terazin, which was harrowing but I felt I had to do it. Grandchild number 4 is due in April.

#### ZENON P. KUROWYCKY

I enjoy visiting family and friends, going upstate, walking, following sports, and reading. Also, I enjoyed making many friends at the Library and meeting people again at the reunions in May, reminiscing about patrons who visited our division.

#### LYDIA LA FLEUR

I traveled to Japan in June to attend my granddaughter's high school graduation. I continue to enjoy the many cultural activities in New York City. Aren't we lucky.

I remember with much pleasure going to junior and senior high schools to give book talks and information about The New York Public Library, but I wonder how I ever managed carrying all those Young Adult books on the subway and up and down the schools' stairs from one floor to another.

#### STEPHAN LIKOSKY

My hobbies include collecting antique postcards. I'm completing a study of the image of the African in early postcards. I enjoy travel,



**Hisako Yamashita, George Gross & Carol Davies-Gross  
at the Holiday Dinner**

with my last trip to Tunisia. My volunteer work includes developing panel discussions and programs at the Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/ & Transgender Community Center of New York City.

#### **RICHARD C. LYNCH**

The Jefferson Market Garden News reports that “the long awaited exterior restoration of the library will commence in 2009.” Some of us thought the scaffolding would be there forever! But oh, Jefferson Market-Greenwich Village-those were heady days. I was there for seven years and loved the eclectic public, the interesting programs that came our way, the caliber of both the staff and the collections. Although I live close by, I rarely go back inside. The staff is all changed, the computers have taken over, but the basic floor plan has not changed.

Some staff members may recall Peter Hoggett, an exchange librarian who worked at Fordham, Francis Martin, and Lincoln Center during 1965-1966. Peter had many NYPL staff member friends who visited him in London until his death in March of 2007 after a long illness.

#### **EDITH OSTROWSKY**

I am a participating member of the Gallery on the Hudson in Schuylerville, New York. Currently, from Thanksgiving to late Spring, I’m participating in a group show, with nine paintings in acrylic. I’m also a student at the Vincent School of Art. This is a wonderful way to enjoy retirement, in spite of sixteen inches of snow and a few day of minus 13 degrees temperatures. I love my snowplow man, who digs me out as needed.

#### JEAN PINCKNEY

Alas, I thought I was finally going to retire from the library world. After retiring from Trident Technical College here in South Carolina last December, they have called me back to catalog their books, CD's, DVD's and tapes part-time. So I am back working two mornings per week. South Carolina has grown so much, especially here in Mount Pleasant. We now have an additional three primary schools, one high school, a Super Walmart; also, more banks and drug stores than when I first came here in 2002. We are due to have another hospital, too. It seems everyone wants to be here, but you cannot blame them; it is lovely here and the weather has been great so far.

This year I hope to travel more. My husband and I will be going to Georgia for my oldest sister's eightieth birthday. Next we plan to go to New York and California where our youngest is practicing medicine. We hope to see our friends when we come to New York.

#### MARION PORROVECCHI

"Marion has been an invalid for several years and is unable to interact with any of her former colleagues," writes her sister, Lila Kabow.

#### EMIL RAMIL

Because I like to sing (I was a professional singer of River Plate South American songs: tango, milanga, waltzes, zambas, etc.) I continue every two months singing in many places. At the same time, I continue to be a good collector of classical and popular music on cassettes, CD's, LP's, 45's, discs, etc. Anyone who needs information about that can write to me at any time. Yes, I had many good experiences working in the Library and just a few which were bad. But, I keep always, many of love in my heart.

#### HARA SELTZER

I am working part-time at Mid Manhattan in the Art Section, and selling some cards and small paintings through Gotham Gardens at Amsterdam and 75th Street. I'm very happy to be mostly retired.

#### ZAHAVA STESSEL

When one hears of the passing of a friend or a coworker, sights from the past start to come up in memory. This happened to me when Mr. Jacob Dienstag, the husband of my colleague Claire Dienstag in the Jewish Division, died in January 2008. Mr. Dienstag used to come to visit and pick up his wife often after work. He was a writer and researcher.

While we were close at work, we haven't met the last fifteen years. I have remembered Mr. Dienstag as a person short of time but with limitless energy. He took upon himself to discover and recover and record even the smallest footnote concerning the life and work of Maimonides, Moses ben Maimon, the greatest medieval Jewish scholar and physician.

I could never picture Mr. Dienstag at ninety-five, as he was at the time of his death. It may be preferred that way.

#### VIRGINIA L. SWIFT

I'm still taking my watercolor class at the Art Students League. Though I'll never create a masterpiece, the class is a delight.

#### ELAINE THOMAS

I didn't travel anywhere in 2007 because of six months in a wheelchair with a broken foot. But, I plan to make up for it as I'm finally getting back into shape. My first college roommate, Judy, and I plan an Alaska cruise in September with extra time in Vancouver and Seattle. I've been to California before, but Judy has lived on the West Coast for years. (We met at Orlando Junior College in

1964!) Anne Pellowski has just told me that her bookmaking workshop has been moved from the end of this year to 2009. (That's how Marilyn Iarusso and I got to South Africa and Indonesia.) In 2009, I will be ready for Laos and Cambodia! Meanwhile, I still volunteer at the library for the American Folk Art Museum, take photographs, and attend classes when I can at Alliance Francais. Someday I'll get to France.

#### THELMA THOMAS

"Thelma sent us a list of her 2008 storytelling calendar. You can visit her web site, [www.africanfolkheritagecircle.org](http://www.africanfolkheritagecircle.org).

#### SALLY L. THOMPSON

I have just moved to an assisted living home because I am prone to falling. My cousin and his family are very supportive. We all live in a suburb of

Minneapolis. They have taken me to the Guthrie Theatre, Walker Art Museum and on scenic drives. Ann Alexander took me to the Minneapolis Art Institute for a Georgia O'Keefe exhibit. She also visits me regularly. I still enjoy TV and reading the newspaper.

#### STEPHANIE TOLBERT

Well, it is five years since retirement. All is well. As of last August I started working two days a week. I went through an organization called Reserve, Inc. that finds jobs for seniors. So far I'm enjoying it. I travel to Virginia to



**Bridie Race & Polly Bookhout  
at the Holiday Dinner**

visit the grandsons. I'm still having a wonderful time.

#### PHILIP WOLCOFF

My wife and I were walking in our Flushing neighborhood recently, when Adele Lerner, a former patron of mine in the Parkchester Branch from the late 1970's to 1994, met us and we had a nice chat with her and her granddaughter. I felt really good when she said to her granddaughter, pointing to me, "He was my librarian." I should say that she was one of my most interesting patrons. She exhibited art work there, and was an avid reader, and a member of our book discussion groups, which I co-led with Renee Kotler. It's

been a year since I mentioned Mrs. Lerner. She just had her 101st birthday.

JOE ZEVELOFF

I will be in Brazil with my wife from January 2008 to the end of March 2008 for Carnival. My wife is from Rio de Janeiro. We go there when it's winter in New York. Maybe some of you will come to Brazil and we can get together.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Not all the newsheets sent with 2008 renewals and new memberships are printed here. Some will appear in the next newsletter.

## **A PROFIT MAKING GHI and HIP: A BREAD AND BUTTER ISSUE FOR US?**

What we have available in health services and what we pay for these services may hinge on the outcome of state approval of a for-profit GHI/HIP. This may even effect those in other plans if a low-cost, nonprofit is not there to compete with the for-profits.

It all began last April when New York State legislation, allowed GHI and HIP, merged under a new organization Emblem Health, to propose becoming a for-profit company. The merged umbrella company wants to expand, have access to the financial markets, and be free of restrictions imposed by the New York State legislature. To make this change GHI/HIP needs the approval of the State of New York Insurance Department. An overflowing crowd attended the Department-sponsored GHI/HIP hearing on January 29. It was not surprising that many of those attending were GHI or HIP subscribers and union members. The list of speakers included representa-

tives of only two unions, Local 101 of National Grid (formerly Keyspan) and the Professional Employees International Union. The UFT and DC 37 were not on the speakers list.

After officers of Emblem Health, the new corporation which combines GHI and HIP, made their presentation, the first speaker was Ed Skyler, Deputy Mayor of New York City. New York City is against allowing GHI/HIP to become a for-profit organization. As Mr. Skyler pointed out, the city is the largest payer to GHI/HIP and will have to pay the higher prices a for-profit will charge.

Rates will go up. The closest competitor that GHI/HIP has has rates 24% higher than GHI/HIP. When Empire Blue Cross converted to a private organization the rates went up. The higher rates will have to be paid by higher taxes at a time when revenues are decreasing. (A Socialist Party of New York City web site states that "1% increase in the premium by Emblem Health would cost New York City \$27.5 million. This means that a single mega-corporation would have the potential to drive the city into a budgetary crisis. Such a squeeze could then filter down into reductions in vital public services including education, transportation and public housing.")

New York City is suing Emblem Health. The argument is that before the merger GHI and HIP were competitors. By combining the two into Emblem Health, competition decreases. See the press release, "New York City Sues HIP and GHI, Seeking To Enjoin The Two Health Insurance Companies From Merging," at <http://ci.nyc.ny.us/html/law/downloads/pdf/pr111306.pdf>.



**Jennine Porta & Mark McCluskey  
at the Holiday Dinner**

New York State will benefit from owning stock in a for-profit GHI/HIP. Even though HIP and GHI were created in New York City, the city will not profit from the for-profit GHI/HIP. (The state will get 90% of the assets of GHI/HIP to spend as they wish.)

The next speaker, Mark Scherzer of New Yorkers for Accessible Health Coverage said Empire Blue Cross made many of the same arguments in their bid to become a for-profit as Emblem Health is making. Empire Blue Cross did not remain regional, they did not make money for the state, and they were acquired by a national firm. The fifteen percent cap on administrative costs (marketing, administration and executive salaries and bene-

fits) would end if GHI/HIP is for-profit. GHI/HIP could cherry pick its subscribers, choosing those who are young and healthy and do not have preexisting conditions. Services could be denied to certain subscribers.

The representatives of New York City and New Yorkers for Accessible Health Coverage urged that if the Insurance Department does agree to allow GHI/HIP to become for-profit that the Department mandate caps on rates and mandate community input.

Robert Goldberg of the Medical Society of the State of New York pointed out that when insurance companies consider paying doctors they call it “medical loss ratio.” The point of

a for-profit is to deny medical service and to make money for stockholders.

A Consumer Union representative urged the Department to have another hearing. There had been too little time to consider the effects of a change which will be irreversible. An independent valuation of HIP/GHI's fair market value and the effects of a conversion to non-profit status is needed. If GHI/HIP prices go up, the price of their competitors may go higher.

The representative of Partnership for New York City said that GHI/HIP once provided local employment. The representative of Professional Employees International Union said HIP has moved jobs out of New York City to Long Island. The Health People representative wants more attention paid to preventive health for health problems such as diabetes.

Polly Bookhout, speaking for the NYPL Retirees Association, said that our members are on fixed incomes and cannot easily pay increased rates for health care.

As of the writing of this article, the Insurance Department has not come to a decision.

## **NEW MEMBERS**

### **Welcome!**

Wendy Caldiero  
William Cwalenski  
Edmond Fursa  
Patrick Hardish  
Marsha Howard  
Arleen Geller  
Wol Sue Lee  
Stephan Likosky  
Lily Solmssen Moureaux  
Marie Nesthus  
Frances Rabinowitz  
Alison Ryley

## **PASSINGS**

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

Rita Avila  
Elizabeth F. Beder  
Rogelio Bill  
Cheryl Cox  
Dorothy Fridie  
Helen Kriegel  
Elizabeth Lachner  
Frances Lewis  
Florence Levy  
Eugene McIntosh  
Harry Persaud  
Helen Prussin  
Cynthia Rollins  
Eugene Thomas Smith  
Susan T. Sommer

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## **PHOTO CREDITS**

Elaine Thomas took the photographs at the December meeting. Polly Bookhout took the photographs at the Holiday Dinner. Polly Bookhout cropped and enhanced all photos.