

New York Public Library Retirees Association Newsletter

Spring 2021

Issue 46

NYPL CLERKS' REMINISCENCES



Former NYPL clerks Mary Ann Gallick (left) and Rose Marie O'Leary (right) talk about their years of service. Their stories are on pages 3 and 5.

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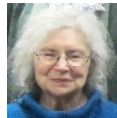
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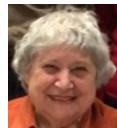
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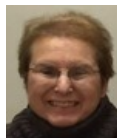
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PRESIDENT'S NOTES

Greetings, All!

I hope this Spring 2021 Newsletter finds you in good spirits and that you've all had your COVID-19 vaccinations. When we walk outside, many folks are still wearing masks and practicing social distancing. The best thing to do now is to settle down with your newsletter and READ it!

ENJOY!!

Best wishes to you all!

Becky Koppelman

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AN NYPL CLERK'S REMINISCENCES

Hi, my name is Mary Ann Gallick, a former senior clerk in the NYPL. Although you may not remember me, with Emily's information I did go to your NYPLRA site and look at previous editions of the newsletter and was so pleased to see some familiar faces and the names of many of the staff I worked with. Mary Kay Conwell asked me to write, from a clerical perspective, about some of the memories I have from working at the NYPL. I agreed, and for the last few weeks have been trying to jog my memory about those years and what they meant to me; it is a lot.

My experiences began in December 1962 when I was hired as a page at the Francis Martin Branch (FX). I was only fourteen years old and because of my age could work only three hours a day and not past six p.m. The rate was \$1.00 per hour, and we were paid once a month. My first paycheck—I kept the stub—was for \$45.00. As I became older, I worked more hours, and the hourly rate increased. I was contacted by postcard—we did not have a phone yet—to come in for an interview by Grace (VanTylan) Farrow. Eleanor Horton was the Principal Librarian. FX was large and busy as a regional branch, especially with the former NYU campus across the street.

In those days, the atmosphere was very formal. All staff were addressed by his or her title and surname. In addition to the usual page duties of shelving, edging the books, and reading the shelves for filing accuracy, there was the weekly changing of the blotters and filling up of the inkwell on Mrs. Horton's desk. There was a skill involved in doing this properly. Apparently, I was not paying attention one day. I heard a shout coming from her office, and I was called in. I had not put the inkwell stopper in correctly, and ink was flowing out all over the desk—something I have not forgotten.

After high school graduation in 1965, I worked a few months part-time at Sedgwick until a full-time clerk position opened at Kingsbridge under Miss Riols and Mrs. Stone (senior clerk). In 1968, I returned to Francis Martin as a full-time clerk under Miss Ijima and Mrs. Cohen (senior clerk) and eventually applied for the Senior Clerk Seminar. Upon my successful completion, the senior clerk position at FX was open; I applied for it and was appointed. At the time, I was

told I was the youngest senior clerk ever appointed. I remained at FX until 1976 when I moved to Spuyten Duyvil under Ms. Feeke. It was there that I decided to attend Iona College night school, earning my B.S. in 1979. With lots of help from the staff, I completed night school in five years and was encouraged by them to go out into the “business world” and get a career. I did that in 1980.

When putting this article together, I did a lot of reflection on why my time with the NYPL means so much to me. Basically, I grew up in the library. Coming from a narrow, essentially sheltered world, I was immediately exposed to an assortment of people having different socio-economic backgrounds, people of diverse religions, colors, and points-of-view. Both the staff and public were different from my exposure up until that point in time, and it was fascinating.

As a clerk and senior clerk, I think one of the most enjoyable aspects of working was the lunchroom. Since FX was not near a central business district, almost all the staff took their lunch and/or dinner in it. We also had scheduled breaks to maintain desk coverage, and these were often a time of lively discussions. And all staff parties were held there. At Kingsbridge, Miss Riols still held a “formal” tea once a month. A different staff person was assigned to supply the goodies, and Miss Riols poured the tea.

These discussions, whether during lunch or break, covered so many topics: travel, politics and government, and religion. Sometimes discussions became heated, but all were informative to me. After hearing about some wonderful trips, I finally was able to start taking some myself. I did not realize how lucky we were as staff to have such generous annual leave time, making a trip of a lifetime worth doing. During my subsequent work years in the business world, the most generous time off was three weeks with only two weeks being able to be taken together.

Another benefit of the lunchroom was the camaraderie that developed among the staff. Wonderful friendships developed, and I am happy to say I still maintain friendships with three former colleagues: Kathy Rowan, Cheryl Weiss (first information assistant at FX), and Shelley Marcus (clerk at FX). Unfortunately, some I had long term relationships with have passed: D. Faye Reiter, Grace K. Ijima, and my three Jewish mothers: Barbara Kaplan (FX),

Lillian Alabaster & Helen Prussin (DY). I miss them all.

I could write more, but for now I think this is a good stopping point. Mary Kay asked if I could include a few photos. They were taken before digital cameras so be kind, and if I misspelled someone's name, please forgive me; it has been a long time!



1976 – Barbara Kaplan, Grace Farrow, Mary Ann Gallick



1980 – Pat Smith, Lillian Lopez, Estelle Friedman, Willa Feeke



1980 – Jean Paul Michaud, Anne Hofmann



1980 – Me, Margaret McGrory, Grace Iijima, Eileen Riols



1977 – Gallick, Helen Prussin, Lillian Alabaster, Kathleen Rowan



1977 - Helen Prussin, Henrietta Cohen

MORE GALLICK PHOTOS



1976? – Cora Wilmot, Florence Aitto, Agnes Martin, D. Faye Reiter



1976? Left to right David Ockene [rear], Barbara Kaplan, Margaret Kirby, Kathy Rowan, Beth Hayman, Joan Kelly, D. Faye Reiter, Mary Ann Gallick, Grace K. Iijima



1979 – Gallick, Agnes Martin, Mary Kay Conwell

THEN AND NOW

By Rose Marie O'Leary

In 1958, I was working in the display department of Lord & Taylor. In those days, women were not allowed to work past a certain time in the evening, and so I was automatically excluded from working at night when the interesting installations were done. I did enjoy my lunch hours, which were often spent discovering the delights of the main library. One day a sign appeared in the main reading room. It said, "If you enjoy using the library, perhaps you would enjoy working here. See Claire Rogers in Room..." I immediately went to that room and made an appointment to be interviewed on another day.

After some tests and a conversation with Miss Rogers, she said I could start in a clerical position at the Saint Agnes branch. I lived in the southwest Village. It was an easy trip on the C train from the Spring Street station to 81st Street and Central Park West. I emerged from the subway at the foot of the glorious Beresford building and walked west across the then not-so-glorious Columbus Avenue. The Upper West Side was a dodgy place then, and West 84th Street was known as the most dangerous block in New York. The construction of Lincoln Center completely changed the face of the West Side. St. Agnes is located on Amsterdam Avenue near the corner of 81st Street. I was greeted by Miss Dorothy Cobb, the branch librarian, and introduced to the staff. When you joined the library, full names were never used, and you soon forgot you ever had one. Miss Cobb ran a tight ship, but she thought I might be trusted to check returned books for reserves. When readers reserved a book, they filled in a post card with their name and address and the title and author of the book. The cards were then filed in a tray, and every returned book was then checked against this file—a time-consuming procedure, especially in a branch with a large circulation.

At three o'clock, a buzzer rang in the workroom, and Miss Cobb said it was tea time. We went up the stairs to the top floor; off the children's room was the staff room. Imagine my surprise to see a table nicely set with candles and flowers and a staff member presiding over a teapot and a plate of cookies. I thought it was a special occasion, but, no, it was a daily routine. We contributed fifty cents a month to cover the cost of

tea. Every day a different staff member was the host and was responsible for providing the cake or cookies, making the tea, and washing up afterwards. There were two shifts between 3 and 4 o'clock. It was an opportunity to talk and to get to know each other. The next day, I was introduced to the circulating desk and the mysteries of the Recordak machine. It was basically a large camera. When a reader presented a book, the book pocket, the reader's card, and the numbered date card were lined up in its maw, and a button was pushed to record the transaction on film. There was much consternation when the film ran out on a busy afternoon and had to be changed, as readers became impatient at the delay.

When books were returned, the date card was pulled from the book and roughly sorted by the due date. When the overdue date approached, the cards were then arranged in strict numerical order; the missing numbers indicated overdue books.

This was a mindless and time-intensive chore. In the workroom, staff members seemed to be engaged in an endless game of patience. Key punched cards had been invented in 1758 and were used in the textile industry in France to produce Jacquard patterns on fabrics; but here we were two centuries later, arranging cards by hand. Duplicate cards of the missing ones had to be made so the cards could be used again. Lists were typed of the missing card numbers and sent to a central office. There the corresponding film was read on a screen, and overdue notices were typed in triplicate and sent back to the branch where the notices were sent out. I mention this in dull detail to show how many clerical hours were spent in only one aspect of library work. As I sat sorting cards, I wondered if the cost of this operation had ever been calculated. In spite of the monotony, I loved the idea of the library—a place where people could come and, with nothing more than proof of their address, have access to the world between the covers of a book.

At that time we did not contribute to Social Security, and when the opportunity to join came, it was met with resistance from staff members who thought our pension would be enough for retirement. Luckily enough, we were convinced, and we are now able to enjoy those monthly checks.

I liked working at St. Agnes, but two things prompted me to ask for a transfer. The workroom was frigid in

winter. Each fall, a crew from Building and Maintenance would appear, and after some tinkering in the basement, would assure us that we would have heat. Then we would spend another winter wearing our coats while we typed or sorted cards. There was no union to appeal to if it was too hot or cold. Miss Cobb was impervious to temperature and wore the same gabardine suits winter and summer and had no sympathy for those of us who were only human.

I wanted to apply for the Senior Clerk Seminar. To take this course, one needed a recommendation from the branch librarian and experience in another branch. I was sent to the new Hamilton Fish Park branch on Houston Street and Avenue D. The beautiful old Carnegie building had been torn down to make way for public housing. The new library was built into the first floor of a public school. It is a one-floor branch with the Children's Room and Adult department on either side of a common circulation desk. The branch librarian was Gertrude Finkle, a gentle lady and a scholar. Everyone enjoyed the calm and companionable atmosphere she engendered. Hamilton Fish was in a changing neighborhood, so while much of the Yiddish Collection languished on the shelves, the Children's Room was very busy. A little after three o'clock, there were many empty shelves. We had to set up a separate registration desk for children, manned by three people, to handle the crowds of children applying for cards.

Mrs. Finkle took a week of annual leave to prepare with her mother and sister the food for the first anniversary of the new branch. The party was held at Mrs. Finkle's spacious apartment with a large terrace overlooking the East River. Her brother-in-law, dressed in a snappy red jacket, served as bartender. The food was delicious, and the wine flowed freely. It was a Friday evening, and a few staff members found it hard to show up for our Saturday morning opening.

I took the Senior Clerk Seminar and passed the written test and class work. The Staff News soon listed an opening for a Senior Clerk at the Hudson Park Branch. I was thrilled. It was my neighborhood branch and the one that I used as a child, as had my mother before me. There were quite a number of applicants. Its location on lovely, leafy LeRoy Street made it very appealing. I was interviewed by Alice Vielehr and after a short time was informed the job was mine. I think what clinched it was my display experience. Hudson Park has a display window on

Seventh Avenue South. It was created in about 1918 when Seventh Avenue was extended from 14th Street to Varick Street, thus creating Seventh Avenue South. An addition was built onto the branch, creating another entrance and the display window. The window hangs suspended from the basement of the extension and to gain access to it one has to climb a tall ladder and crawl into the small space of the window. I was young and agile and able to do this. Needless to say, this requirement has never appeared in any job description for Senior Clerk. The window was changed once a month and I enjoyed choosing a theme, collecting the associated books, and creating a few props to pull it together. Another thing unique to Hudson Park was its gallery, but more of that later. The staff at Hudson Park consisted of Alice Vielehr; Robert Bolstad, her assistant; Gertrude Robertson, the children's librarian; two half-time clerks, four full-time clerks, and myself. All the clerks were men. The two half-time clerks were post-graduate students at NYU, and the four others were either writers or artists.

Imagine my surprise and delight when Valentine's Day came around to be presented with a card made by the men. It was a heart shaped collage made from the



Top: Valentine closed
Bottom: Valentine opened

cards, notices, memos and other paper items printed by the library. I am the least sentimental of people, but I treasure this tribute to this day. William Wiser was one of the clerks who wrote a number of books, both fiction and nonfiction. He married a French woman and lived near Grasse for many years. He did not live to complete the history of France during the occupation he was working on when he died in 2020. Mrs. Vielehr was not involved in the day-to-day running of the branch. A lot of her time was spent in finding new artists for the monthly shows in our gallery. There were not many venues for photographs then. Hudson Park was one of the very few galleries to show them. Of course there were exhibitions of paintings as well. Clerks addressed over 300 invitations to the opening night party, at which a woman dressed in black silk with a frilly white cap and apron served small sandwiches, petite fours, and a fruit punch for refreshments.

On the evening of the vernissage, Mrs. Vielehr, who lived nearby, would go home about six o'clock and change into a long dress. If she didn't receive a dinner invitation, Mr. Bolstad would escort her to her apartment afterwards. Mr. Bolstad and I became fast friends, and I was with him when he died at the age of 93 in Calvary Hospital during Hurricane Sandy. Another thing that set Hudson Park apart was our puppet shows. Our staff tore through clerical chores to have more time for creative work. Miss Robertson had training in puppetry, and so we put on a show as often as we could. The shows were always based on a book. We then made the appropriate puppets and scenery. One of my favorite characters was a dragon. His body was made of papier-mache covered with gleaming green sequins. His mouth and flaring nostrils were painted scarlet. The audience was thunderstruck when one of us would blow cigarette smoke through his nostrils when he was enraged.

When I first got to the branch, it did not have a Recordak machine. We charged books out the old-fashioned way with a little date stamp clamped to the end of a pencil. When a book was brought to the desk, we stamped the book pocket and the book card with the due date and wrote the reader's number on the book card and filed it according to the due date. The cards were color coded to make sorting easier. When a book became overdue, the cards were sent to the office where the usual overdue notices were typed. How primitive that seems now.

On May 23, 1961, the main building celebrated its 50th anniversary. All the branches were closed until one o'clock, and the entire staff went to a hotel for a gala breakfast. We were each given a bronze commemorative medal designed by Leonard Baskin, a truly memorable day.



Things were changing at Hudson Park. Mrs. Viehler retired, and Mr. Bolstad was appointed head librarian at Ottendorfer.

The first air conditioner in the branches was installed at Hudson Park because of the noise generated from the swimming pool next door. District Council 37 asked the library to join its union, and after some initial resistance, the majority of the staff voted to join. One of our readers volunteered to organize a series of talks called Village Writers Meet Their Neighbors. This was a very popular event and with so many writers living in the Village, it continued for quite a long time. In the early 1970s, the city experienced hard financial times, and library staffs were severely cut. Puppet shows and afternoon teas were a thing of the past. Juliette Woodbury, who was then branch librarian, decided that in order to continue service, we should move the children's room to the gallery. The collection had to be greatly reduced, and with the help of Naomi Noyes, we did that. The bulk of the collection went to the Central Children's Room. After shelving had been installed in the gallery, we moved the books down, an enormous undertaking that

generated a great deal of clerical work. It was all accomplished in good time, and we were able to increase the hours the Children's Room was open. The financial situation did not improve and branches were closed on some days. Staffs were forced to "cluster." That meant working in other branches when your branch was closed.

CETA, The Comprehensive Employment and Training Act, a sort of extension of the WPA (Works Progress Administration) of the Great Depression, supplied additional clerical and professional staff. It was an interesting time.

I retired in 1984 at age 55, the age I had chosen so many years ago when I had joined the library. Miss Woodbury had a computer in her office, but they were not in general use throughout the system. How they have simplified, and in many cases eliminated, clerical jobs.

I have a neighbor who works at the library now and keeps me up to date with some of the changes. Clerks are being eliminated through attrition, and even pages must either be attending college or have finished their degree. The person in charge is known as Branch Manager and may or may not have an M.L.S. I suppose it's all much more efficient, and with the arrival of the computer, the system was bound to change, but the last time I looked, the window at Hudson Park hadn't been changed for a number of years.

I was saddened to read of Dr. Gregorian's death in *The New York Times* of April 17th. While he was a man of great long-range vision, his eye was also on the sparrow. On my retirement, he invited me to his office to discuss my future plans over a glass of sherry.



A CONVERSATION WITH MARIE ARANA

By Estelle Friedman

Marie Arana is the Literary Director of the Library of Congress. On May 18th, we were privileged to host an interview with her to discuss her recent book *Silver, Sword, and Stone*. When I contacted her and mentioned that I represented the New York Public Library Retirees Association, she was delighted and said she would be happy to talk about her book. She said she loved NYPL and had spent many hours there.

The book deals with the indigenous people of Latin America (the Incas, Mayans, Aztecs, etc.) from the Columbian era up until the present time--their love of jewelry, their way of life, and their violent culture. The rulers believed in an afterlife similar to that of the Egyptians and built pyramids to that end. We were treated to an exciting and wonderful discussion of these people and how they were conquered by the Spanish conquistadors who came with their own violent but different culture. In addition to their interest in gold and silver, they also brought a priest with them to convert the populace. It was Queen Isabella who convinced the Pope that it was necessary to bring religion to "these heathens." In this way, she got the Pope's blessing and his financial aid.

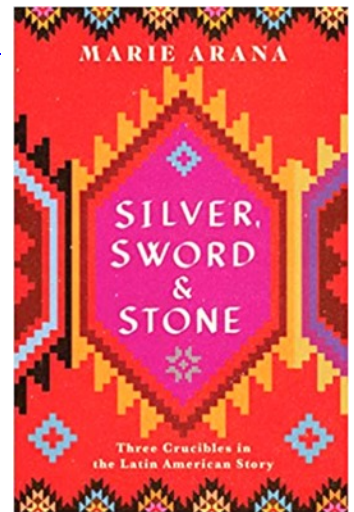
The discussion was lively and interesting, and we were sorry it had to end. I asked Marie Arana what her new research was going to cover. She said she had been asked to do research on the many and varied Latin communities in the United State because they were anything but a unified group.

We ended our discussion with the hope that when her next book is finished, we would be privileged enough to present another interview with this remarkable woman.

The entire interview was recorded and may be accessed by clicking the link below.

https://us02web.zoom.us/jc/share/L2HNVdFIYlcPEAmqVNWQJnDPvAfRhAbJibJULsIgUyDxke8sWCGAbKnbu_onvajX.58et6gpeHre5P6TE?startTime=1605723064000

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Hara Seltzer used the photo on page 7 of the last issue as the basis of this watercolor.



FROM THE SMOLNY IN ST. PETERSBURG TO NYPL IN HARLEM: THE JOURNEYS OF NATALIA F. LIPSKY RERBERG

By Edward Kasinec

The Russian Revolution of 1917 and the ensuing Civil War brought in their wake many tragic consequences, not the least of which was the displacement of millions of former citizens of the vast Empire. By 1921, many cities of the world (Paris, Berlin, Constantinople, Shanghai) suddenly found themselves with significant Russophone populations seeking to accommodate themselves to the realities of life in “Russia Abroad.” For some in these émigré communities, the Russian book, art, and the traditions of the Orthodox Church provided both balm for the soul and links to the culture of the homelands left behind.

Some of these larger historical events and processes were, of course, reflected in the lives of countless Slavic and Russian speaking exiles who settled in New York, many thousands of whom became readers (and some even staff) in the circulating branches and reference units (principally the Slavonic Division founded 1899) of the NYPL.

Natalia F. Lipsky Rerberg’s (1893-1957) life journey offers a brilliant example of the librarian’s critical role as a mediator between cultures. Rerberg was born one of six children and received her formal education at the prestigious Smolny School for Young Women in St. Petersburg. After a tortuous escape from Russia through several countries with her first husband, George I. Lebedeff-Boukreef (d. 1930), a civil engineer, Rerberg arrived in New York City in 1923. A second marriage to Dmitrii I. Rerberg (d.1955), also a civil engineer, followed two years later. In the late twenties, after completing Library training courses (only later receiving a B.S.) co-sponsored by NYPL and Columbia University, Rerberg joined the staff of the Slavonic (later renamed Slavic and Baltic) Division, then headed by the scholar-librarian Avrahm Yarmolinsky (Curator, 1918-55).

In 1928/29, she became the founding librarian of a Russian Collection at the historic Harlem Circulating Branch of the NYPL on 124th Street, near Christ the Savior Russian Orthodox Church and in the heart of an ever-growing African-American and Russophone community in Harlem.



Rerberg at her Harlem desk

Her initial salary of \$1,740 per year was later supplemented by ownership, with her husband, of a poultry and dairy farm in Cassville, New Jersey!



On the Cassville Farm

The department opened with 3,000 volumes in Russian. By the early fifties, the size of the collection came to rival that of the legendary “Czech Division” housed at the Webster Branch on East 78th Street and

York Avenue. Ever responsive to the changing demographics and needs in neighborhood communities, Rerberg and her collection were, in December 1937, moved farther north to the Hamilton Grange Branch on 145th Street, the “left bank” of the Harlem River.



**Russian Department at Hamilton Grange
(Note Alexander Pushkin portrait on upper right)**

By 1955 and the time of its integration into the Foreign Languages Department of the newly created Donnell Library Center, the Russian collection had grown three-fold to more than 10,000 volumes of belle-lettres, art, and children’s books. By this point, Rerberg had served twenty-eight years with the NYPL. Already in failing health and a widow now for the second time, Natalia Fedorovna moved to Manhattan to live with a sister. On the occasion of her passing in 1957, Rerberg’s grateful Harlem readers placed the following farewell tribute in the Russian daily *Novoe Russkoe Slovo*:

Instead of a Wreath on the Grave of N. F. Rerberg

Russian readers will always remember the unforgettable and sympathetic Natalia Fedorovna Rerberg. Especially valuable was her touching and warm relation to readers. She always greeted everybody warmly and tried to help everyone in every way. She had an incredible memory, and she knew perfectly both Russian and foreign literature and with

her kind advice helped readers find the material they needed and would find interesting for their work.

A group of grateful readers of the Russian department of the New York Public Library. (NRS, September 11, 1957, p.3)

I cannot help but speculate whether some of the Russophile cultural leaders of the Harlem Renaissance might also be numbered among her “grateful readers.”

For the sources of this article and acknowledgements please contact Emily Cohen at ecohennypl@aol.com.

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Edward Kasinec, Visiting Fellow, Hoover Institution, served as Curator, Slavic and Baltic Division, NYPL, 1984-2009 (retired 2/2009) and Staff Advisor, Exhibitions and Public Programming Department, NYPL, 2009-11. His first publication appeared in the *Bulletin of the NYPL* in November, 1969.

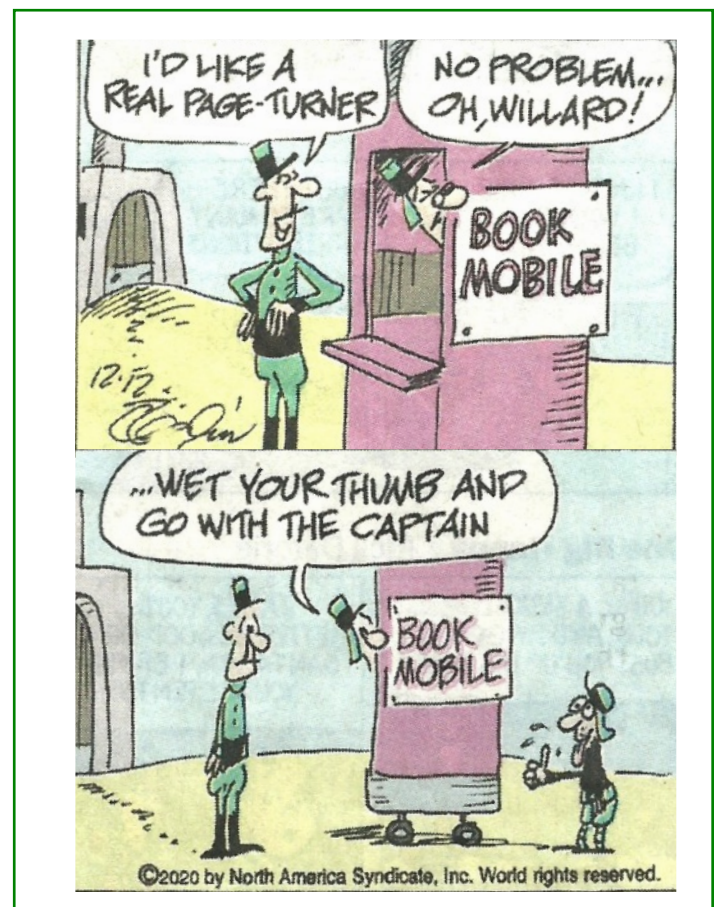




Photo by John Bartelstone

On June 1, 2021, The New York Public Library officially opened its completely renovated central circulating library, the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Library (SNFL). The \$200 million renovation includes eight floors of important amenities serving all ages. Using creativity and ingenuity to preserve and breathe new life into a historic New York City building, the design team behind the transformation was dedicated to creating a beautiful, light-filled, inspiring central circulating library with a classic, timeless, functional design, as well as elements that speak to the building's history and complementary relationship to the historic Stephen A. Schwarzman Building.



Work has restarted on the Charleston Library, in Staten Island following a pause in construction.. (See below)



Top photo at left is a drawing of the finished building which is to be a LEED energy saving building.

Bottom photo at left is the building as it looks currently. From looking at the framework, the design appears to have to have been modified.

WAITING

The table is waiting for its guests,
the litter of papers to be cleared away,
replaced with cloth, plates, cups
and pastries.

A few will not come back,
age and illness having taken them:
Lillian, Angela, Shirley,
names from an earlier girlhood
belied by the poets,
athletes, singers, story-tellers,
robust women they became.

The table, the rooms,
the days themselves
wait in a state of suspension
for the spell to break, movement,
nearness, the common coin
of conversation
find its voice again.

The table is waiting for its guests,
other names, new stories,
varied notes of laughter. To you,
Ellen, Sarah, Valerie, Sunnie, Ruth,
I herewith issue my invitation:
Please come. I think of
E.F. Benson's penciled note,
from Miss Bracey to Lucia
to "be silly for an hour or two...
No need to reply."

Silly or philosophical,
profound or phosphorescent,
lightning quick, considered,
however our voices meet and blend,
absence and all its synonyms
will be banished from the feast

Marjorie Mir

ANSWERS TO THE LIBRARIAN QUIZ IN THE LAST ISSUE

As a unit supervisor, answer each of the following by writing the name of the most appropriate office or unit in the New York Public Library to which the described cases should be referred.

1. Office of the Chief of Circulation Department
2. Personnel Office
3. Office of Young Adult Services
4. Public Relations Office
5. Staff Nurse
6. Municipal Reference Library
7. Accounting Office
8. Business Manager
9. Office of Adult Services
10. Office of the Chief of Circulation Department
11. Office of the Borough Coordinator
12. Staff Nurse
13. Personnel Office
14. Prints Division
15. Office of Chief of Building Maintenance and Operation
16. Fordham Library Center
17. Personnel Office
18. Donnell Foreign Language Collection
19. Purchasing Office
20. Director of the Library

RETIREE NEWS

DAVID RICHARD BEASLEY

News from Ontario, Canada, is not good. The third wave of Covid has been devastating, and the Ontario Conservative government has acted irrationally, thus getting much criticism especially from the medical class. We had a Pfizer shot in early March but must wait a long time before we can get the second. The Conservative federal governments of Mulroney and Harper closed down Canada's world-admired vaccine producing laboratories as short-sighted efforts to save money because Conservatives hate to pay taxes. It has come to light that the Conservative government of Doug Ford in Ontario wanted to cut back on health services prior to the pandemic, but societies and institutions fought back and made the government retreat, thank heavens. Canada, under Trudeau, is rebuilding its facilities to counteract pandemics in the future. The country has to depend on India and South Korea for vaccines. Never again.

Personally, I have two literary articles appearing in Canadian magazines; these may interest Americans if they are curious about authors. In the present issue of *Prairie History*, my article

"Frederick Grove: Prairie Novelist (1879-1948)," is handsomely printed and illustrated. Grove had a mysterious and somewhat devious past. He was a German translator of works from other languages who faked suicide to escape problems and arrived in North America in 1910. His first published work in English was *In Search of America* (1927) —great reading for its insight into life in the United States. He spent his last years in Simcoe, where I landed after leaving NYPL. The second article, "The Search for John Richardson's Unknown Writings" will appear in the fall issue of *Ontario History*. Richardson was Canada's first novelist. Some of my colleagues, if still alive, will remember reading *The Canadian Don Quixote*, my biography of the adventurer when it was first issued in 1977. The article proves that three anonymous works were by him. I was led to two of them by a note in the *Morning Star* of New York City, which the Research Library staff kindly copied and sent to me despite the pandemic.

Richardson's *Wacousta* (1832), about Pontiac's siege of Fort Detroit in 1763, made his name internationally. He caused quite a sensation among

American authors when he left Montreal in 1849 for New York City, where his writings, especially about the American Indian, were declared superior to those of James Fenimore Cooper. He died of starvation in 1852, lacking a Writers' Union to save him from avaricious publishers

POLLY BOOKHOUT



My friend Ellen and I went to the Angelika on Friday, March 5th, the day the theater reopened to see *Nomadland*. We were photographed and appear on page fifty-one of the print edition of *New York Magazine*. Ours is one of nineteen photos taken at the Angelika. This photo is from the online edition. My friend said it was our last bit of glory. Certainly it must be our last chance for fifteen minutes of fame! A bit of silly fun.

KAY CASSELL

I just finished a new textbook, *Public Libraries and Their Communities*, published by Rowman and Littlefield in April.

MARY ANN GALICK

I have been a member, since 2014, of LIRIC [Learning in Retirement at Iona College], which is a member of Road Scholar's Lifelong Learning Institute Resource Network. Classes run from September to August—fall/spring semesters—with January and July intersession classes. Before COVID, we also had several yearly special events, two or three luncheons, and several day trips.

DOROTHY HENDERSON

I have just finished another book, *Home*, which gives some background on growing up in the Bronx, working at the Army Map Service, and volunteering at the Stage Door Canteen. There are not too many people alive who have firsthand information on these subjects.

EDWARD KASINEC

Edward Kasinec is Visiting Fellow, Hoover Institute, Stanford University and Research Associate, Harriman Institute, Columbia University.

He is also the principal appraiser of REE&E, LLC, a rare books and art appraisal consultancy.

Edward serves as the Chair, Archives Committee, Resident's Council, Kendal on Hudson, a not-for-profit retirement community, north of New York City.

His hobbies are, travel, work, volunteering, etc

STEPHEN KLEIN

I retired in November, 2015. Since that time, I have enjoyed travel, reading, taking classes for seniors through Cal State University Long Beach, meeting up for coffee most mornings with a group of geezers at our neighborhood non-Starbucks coffee house, and having a hot meal waiting for my husband when he gets home from work, as it is written in our ketubah (marriage contract).

DEAN SHEEHAN

Current News

I left NYPL in 1994 to move with my late partner Don to our home in Connecticut. That was twenty-seven years ago, and I don't think there is a week that's gone by that I don't think about my time at NYPL. I've kept in touch with Mary Kay Conwell over the years and thank her for the link to the retirees' newsletter. In Connecticut, I worked as a reference librarian at the Simsbury Public Library for several years and then received the proverbial offer that was too good to refuse, to work in administration of a small non-profit behavioral healthcare agency in Torrington. Today finds me Director of Operations at The McCall Center for Behavioral Health, in charge of facilities, Human Resources, and grant-writing, as well as fixing the copy machine, salting icy sidewalks when needed, and whatever else comes my way. Working toward retirement in two years. Sold the home I built with Don in the little village of Riverton and bought a house that was built in 1822, just a mile down the road.

Past News

So many memories to choose from. Riding the ferry with Sandra Payne and Mary Anne Corrier when I worked at Port Richmond with Monica Dennison and later at St. George with Betsy Mullan. Working as Bonnie Williams' first assistant at Muhlenburg, running the Columbia Branch when it was still in the basement of Butler Library, working under Robert Foy when I was at Webster, and, lastly, working under Telza Gardner when I was at Riverside and moving the branch to the Rose Building. So many of my NY-PL memories begin and end with Miss Gardner, the prime mentor of so many mentors and friends I was fortunate to have.

JULIA VAN HAAFTEN

Last year, bidding *adieu* to my preoccupying subject, American photographer Berenice Abbott, I coauthored an essay about her archives, published in December for the MIT Press (<https://mitpress.mit.edu/books/documentary-dispute>). I'm currently arranging details for transfer of my

Abbott-related research archive, part of Marie-Kondo-ing my apartment of half a century!

I've also begun a memoir of my 1970s+ adventure with NYPL's photographic treasures at 42nd Street, based on a talk I gave at Cornell University in March 2019 (<https://www.cornell.edu/video/images-objects-archives-part-2-julia-van-haafte>). Vartan Gregorian, who died in April, was a generous and passionate booster of all staff entrepreneurship. His recognition and enthusiasm were invaluable; his spirit is to be emulated.

After retiring, finally, from the Museum of the City of New York, I joined the *Women Writing Women's Lives* Biography Seminar (<https://womenwritingwomenslives.org>). The pandemic forced us to cancel our regular monthly in-person seminar for April, but for May, I co-organized our first session on Zoom! It was on the influenza chapter of Katherine Anne Porter's *Pale Horse, Pale Rider*. We've convened on Zoom ever since, allowing many members, now far-flung from New York, to participate, including in October's 30th Anniversary conference, *Nevertheless, She Persisted*.

Current News: Hobbies, travel, work, volunteering, etc.

JUTTA ZAPLINSKI

Jutta Zaplinski

After fifty plus years as a librarian, I decided to become a businesswoman. Living in Savannah, the host (and ghost) city of the USA, I discovered my love for hosting, first family and friends, then Airbnb guests, too. Sadly, when COVID-19 hit, I closed my enjoyable small business for good. Now I can't wait to continue my new hobby, hosting family and friends from both sides of the Atlantic.

I am honored to be part of the Oral History Project. I never wanted to leave our "bookish" library, and, as it turned out, I didn't have to.

On top of my wishful travel list for 2021 is Europe, including Germany, Prague, Venice, and Madrid, preferably by train.

I've been hosting our book club for five years now, first in my home and then in the Zoom meeting room. In March, when every member had received her second vaccination, we continued our meetings outdoors, either in the shade of Savannah's gorgeous old trees or in a private backyard.

Memories of the Past

Two years ago, I visited Jefferson Market for the first time since my retirement in 2009. I was happy and relieved to find the library almost exactly as it was when I worked there.

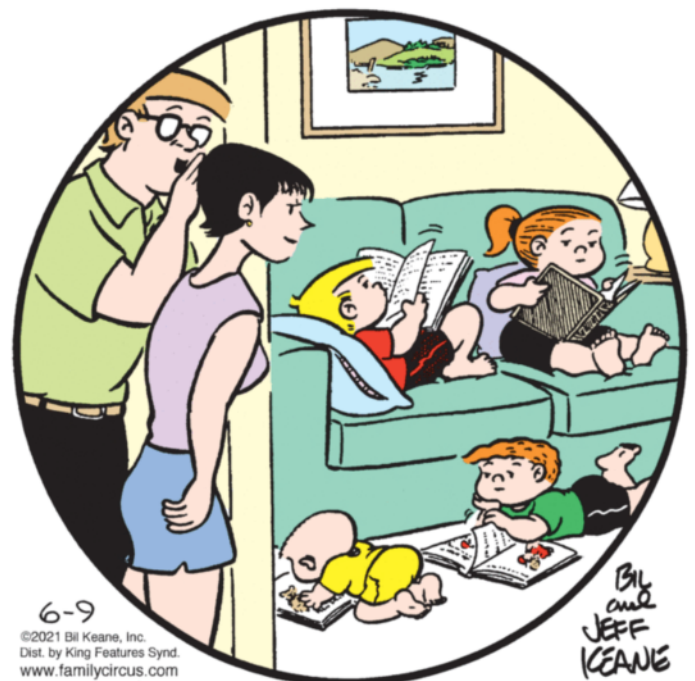
One of my most cherished memories was of Burt Abelson and me going to our favorite coffee place and splitting the tiniest piece of cake we could find. After a short time, we didn't even have to ask for a second fork! What an accomplishment.

Burt was not only a wonderful friend and colleague, but he was also my experienced mentor when it came to reference books. I wish I could tell him today how much he means to me. Thank you, Burt

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Wow, I just finished reading the latest NYPL newsletter. Thanks for keeping it going, it's the best, and sometimes only way to keep in touch with people

Thanks, Julie Cummins



"It's the sound I love to hear —
pages turning."

A DAY IN THE LIFE AT FORT WASHINGTON

By Estelle Friedman

These events happened on May 3, 1991, at Fort Washington. I am not including names, but I have them!

- 1) At 9:00 am, a woman came in looking for her granddaughter, who had never come home from the library the previous night: “She’s a good girl, never missed school,” etc. We called 911. The police searched the building from top to bottom but did not find her.
- 2) A woman who teaches homebound students complained to the Borough Office about how rude Fort Washington staff was and never let her use the bathroom. It was the **WRONG BRANCH**, not FW.
- 3) A woman from the League of Women voters came to FW for meeting—on the wrong day!
- 4) The copying machine had not been working for several days; there was a broken part.
- 5) At 11:45 am, we got a call from Inwood for staffing help. The branch librarian was on annual leave, the first assistant was ill, the librarian was on jury duty, and the children’s librarian was at Symposium in the morning and on annual leave in the afternoon. FW sent one librarian, leaving FW with three for three floors. In addition, we had to prepare for a TV crew that was coming to tape a Channel 5 newsman making spot announcements. And, of course, FW was open the whole time.
- 6). A reader came in for a book after she had complained to Borough Office that the branch librarian was hiding it for a friend.
- 7) At 6:15 pm, our page, who had escaped with his family from a civil war in Lebanon, was shot at 185th Street and St. Nicholas Avenue while going home from FW. He was one block from home and was caught in crossfire. He wound up in intensive care at Harlem Hospital.

WORDS, WORDS, WORDS

by
Julie Cummins, who likes to play with words.

What would we do without words to express ourselves, whether in print, vocally, or with our hands? Dictionaries add and delete words, responding to usage, both current and archaic.

Our culture reflects our language, especially in today’s technology. In the following list of words are examples of how meanings have evolved from previous days to present days.

WEB	a snare woven by a spider
MOUSE	undesirable rodent
LINKS	sausage
WINDOWS	panes of glass
AMAZON	a river in South America
FILES	implements used for manicures
ZOOM	going fast in a vehicle
THUNDERBIRD	a fast car, often red
BYTES	when someone uses their teeth
INTERFACING	iron-on fabric stiffener
QUICKBOOKS	ones you could read in an hour
PASSWORDS	something spies used
DIGITAL	giving someone the finger
ACROBAT	trapeze performer
SPAM	mystery meat in a tin can

To wrap this up here are a few thoughts on words.
“Apt words have the power to suage the tumors of a troubled mind.” Milton
“Good words are worth much, and cost little.” George Herbert
“A word to the wise is enough, and many words won’t fill a bushel.” Benjamin Franklin

EDWIN NEWMAN

I am astonished to know that the Fort Washington Branch of the New York Public Library is 75 years old, but when I reflect on how old I am -- it is a matter of public record -- I realize that astonishment is not in order. Gratitude is, for what it meant to me and what it has meant ever those 75 years to countless others.

When I was a boy, it was taken for granted in my family that you went to "the library" often, for pleasure and to help you in your school work. It was part of a ritual of sorts -- the "walk." Going for a walk was something you did regularly, and it made sense to head off in the direction of the library. You started young, borrowing books on your parents' cards, and on your own card as soon as you were eligible to have one. It was hard to believe that all of those books were there for you, without charge (unless they became "overdue"), but they were.

For me, a great day dawned when I became aware that it was possible for people to be funny in print. I have in mind, among others, P.G. Wodehouse and Ring Lardner, and H.C. Witwer, now forgotten but the authors, if memory serves, of a book called "The Classics in Chains." For someone who hoped to write himself, they were an inspiration and they were models.

Of course, it went far beyond that. There were infinite riches at the library, and librarians eager to help and who actually enjoyed seeing young people interested in books. The library was an indispensable part of our lives. I am truly thankful.

Edwin Newman
A Service of
The New York Public Library

THREE LETTERS OF INTEREST

These three letters, by William Gibson, Edwin Newman, and Henry Kissinger, in praise of the Fort Washington Branch were found among her mementos by Estelle Friedman.

HENRY A. KISSINGER

March 1, 1989

Dear Ms. Friedman and Mr. Isaac:

Thank you for your kind note announcing the Seventy-Fifth Anniversary of the Fort Washington Branch of the New York Public Library. As a boy I lived in the neighborhood and was a frequent visitor to the Library, which provided me with a valued and important source of both knowledge and information.

With felicitations and

Warm regards,

Henry A. Kissinger
Henry A. Kissinger

Estelle Friedman, Branch
Librarian
Bob Isaac, Co-Chairman,
Fort Washington Branch Support Group
Fort Washington Branch
New York Public Library
535 West 179th Street
New York, New York 10033

Dear Ms. Friedman -

I did indeed use the 179th Street library off St. Nicholas, if that's where you still are, in which I discovered Sherlock Holmes; that would have been around 1926-7, and how you know it after sixty years I can't imagine. Alas, in April I'll be out of the country, and unable to attend. I wish I could.

With best wishes,

William Gibson

WORDS ON PICTURES

Anthony Troncale, former photography librarian from the Wallach Art, Prints and Photographs Division, presented a Zoom talk for the association on March 16th. It was entitled “Words on Pictures,” also the title of his book, and detailed the story of NYPL’s Picture Collection and Romana Javitz, its head from 1929 to 1968.

Javitz was recruited to work at NYPL when she graduated from what is now Hunter High School. The Library needed people to work in children’s rooms since there was such an influx of immigrants and their children using its branches. She first worked at 67th Street Branch and went on to the Central Building, teaching children to look at pictures in picture books. It was probably there that she became interested in the Picture Collection.

The Picture Collection was started in 1914, using the collections of the Print, Art, and Children’s divisions. At that time, items were organized by artist, not subject, and could not be checked out. When it became apparent that those collections were experiencing too much wear and tear from excessive use, the Cataloging Department began cutting pictures out of discarded books. In 1916, the Picture Collection became a lending library.

In 1928, upon the retirement of the head of the Picture Collection, Javitz became the supervisor; she was only twenty-five. Under her, subject headings and source cards were created; the collections of renowned photographers including Dorothea Lange, Walker Evans, Berenice Abbott, and Lewis Hine were obtained or donated, and open stacks were introduced. She actively sought collections, especially those dealing with Americana. Roy Stryker, the director of the Farm Security Administration, would send photos from the field directly to Javitz; she was also able to request that specific topics be photographed.

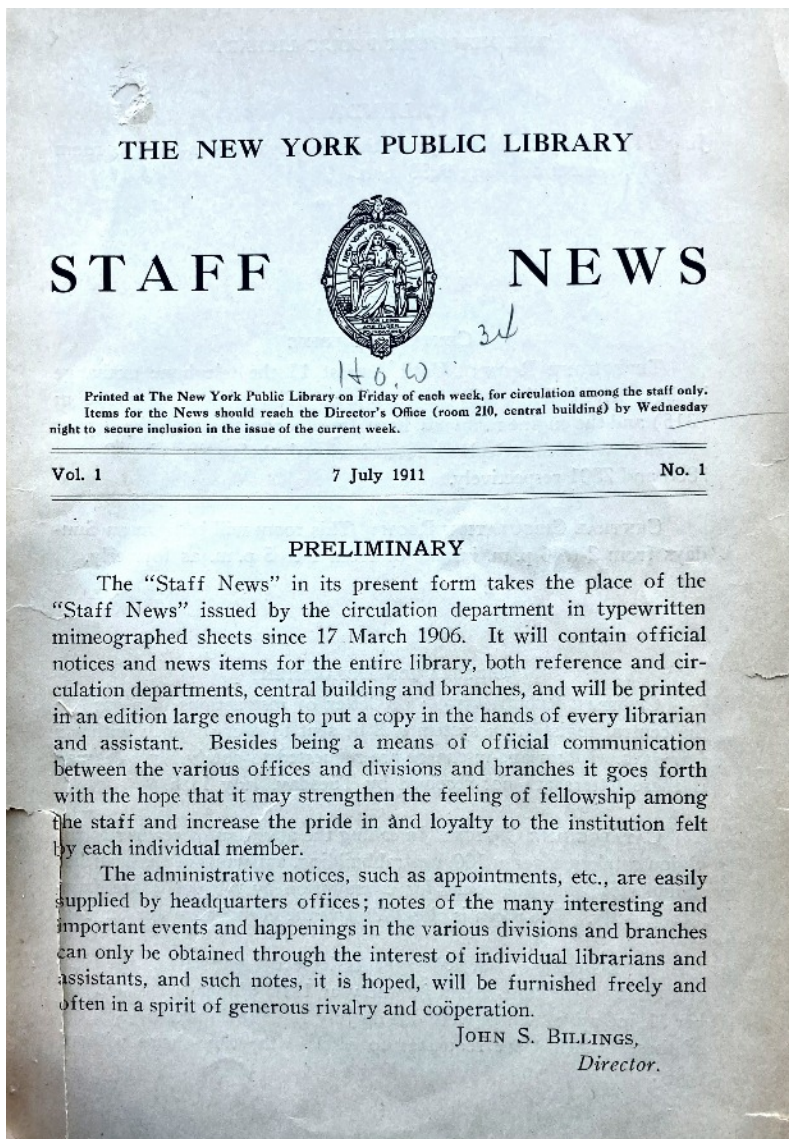
The Picture Collection continues to this day to be used by theater people, advertisers, publishers, clothing designers, and the general public. Javitz was largely responsible for making it the useful collection it is today.

If you would like to hear the entire talk, it is available online at :

https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/play/C5dmmTFDZqsy9MoLg2Rd5rSwWV2FYjPY0NNYkSvJCcAuCrOS2uyN9SyfEWAqDCAMedY20_iaZIDT--zt.RPpLjg-oZVHaHuiX?continueMode=true

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The Staff News shown at left was the first issue of the publication which was printed, not mimeographed.

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New York State Retirement System (866) 805-0990, toll-free, for pension questions and to inform NYSRS of the person's death date. A death certificate will be required as proof of death. Callers will need to listen to several prompts and choose the option that best suits their needs.

IN CASE OF A RETIREES DEATH

In the event of a retiree's death, it is important that the following be contacted by the next of kin.

NYPL Human Resources Service Center (212) 621-0500, prompt 4, for general NYPL questions.

The NYSRS website is:
<http://www.osc.state.ny.us/retire/retirees/index.php>

The New York Public Library Retirees Association would also like to be contacted so that we may inform the deceased's former colleagues. This may be done by emailing or calling President Becky Koppelman at blekopp@gmail.com or 212-874-6199.