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PRESERVING INSTITUTIONAL MEMORY: A SHARED GOAL OF LPA'S DANCE DIVISION AND THE NYPL RETIREES ASSOCIATION



Photo ©Jack Mitchell

Story on Page 3

Dance Collection staff members Roy Fentress, Jacqueline Maskey, Miriam Gross, Genevieve Oswald, 1965.

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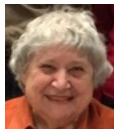
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PRESERVING INSTITUTIONAL MEMORY: A SHARED GOAL OF LPA'S DANCE DIVISION AND THE NYPL RETIREES ASSOCIATION

By Alan Pally

“The most important asset of any library goes home at night.”

-- Dr. Timothy Healy, President, The New York Public Library (1989-1992)

The By-Laws of The New York Public Library Retirees Association include the phrase “preserve institutional memory” as part of the Association’s mission. The mission of the Association’s Oral History Committee is to “interview, record, collect, transcribe, and edit the remembrances of former NYPL staff members in order to honor the contributions of the staff to the rich history of the Library and save information that would otherwise be lost.” Those values are important to those of us who are members of the Association and who have enjoyed long careers at NYPL. We hope that the Association’s oral histories, which have been carefully recorded and transcribed, will one day become part of NYPL’s collections. And so, I—and others—were particularly moved that, in marking the 75th anniversary of the Jerome Robbins Dance Division, Linda Murray, the Dance Division’s relatively new curator, ensured that the contributions of former staff and retirees to her Division’s history were celebrated in a myriad of ways.

Before I began working as a page in 1967, my NYPL experience consisted mostly of borrowing books and LPs (thank you, Irwin Kraus) from Bronx branches, with occasional visits to the new Performing Arts Library at Lincoln Center (LPA), which opened in 1965. I never dreamt that I would work in that Manhattan temple, spending 42 years with NYPL, 37 of which would be at Lincoln Center. When I was hired, I was told that I would be joining a continuum of dedicated and talented public servants, each of whom contributes something special, in his or her own way, to the institution and the public. In my early days with NYPL, I worked side-by-side with venerable colleagues, a few of whom had joined NYPL in the 1920s. Throughout my career, just as I celebrated the history of the performing arts in many of the public programs I produced, I also took

pleasure in honoring and acknowledging the contributions of staff who came before, who contributed so much to the greatness of the institution. At LPA, that group included, but was not limited to, Robert Henderson, Joan Canale, Thor Wood, Dick Buck, Frank Campbell, George Louis Mayer, Jean Bowen, Suki Sommer, David Hall, Paul Myers, Dorothy Swerdlove, Don Fowle, Don Vlack, Bob Greenlaw, Betty Corwin, and Genevieve Oswald. (I never tire of reminding people that LPA’s theater space enjoys the distinguished name of Bruno Walter Auditorium, and the modest endowment and archival material that came with it, because my then boss, Dr. Robert M. Henderson, approached the Bruno Walter Foundation when the Development Office told him not to waste his time.)

Unique among that distinguished group were two extraordinary women: Genevieve Oswald (Gegi) and Betty Corwin, each of whom created, through their vision, drive, and commitment, two of NYPL’s world-



Genevieve Oswald, Los Angeles, 2017

class divisions: the Jerome Robbins Dance Division (Gegi, in 1944); and the Theatre on Film and Tape Archive (Betty, in 1971). Both women left us in 2019, Gegi aged 97, Betty aged 98. Betty had retired in 2000. Her successor, with whom she had worked for many years, is the talented Patrick Hoffman, who tirelessly and creatively continues Betty's mission "to capture the crackle of live theater." Gegi retired in 1987. Her most recent successor, Linda Murray, was appointed Curator of the Jerome Robbins Dance Division in 2015.

During my career as head of public programs at LPA, I produced hundreds of performances, lectures, panels, and screenings in the field of dance. When I retired, I felt honored that, moved by the special respect for history that exists in the dance world, the Dance Critics Association invited me to write an article for their quarterly about the history of dance programming at LPA; and a writer for *Nartanam*, a dance journal published in Hyderabad, interviewed me about my work presenting the dances of India. The truth is, I always found it a bit daunting when I worked on dance programs, because, in an institution with so many world-class collections, the Dance Division is unique. Originally a small part of the Music Division, in 1944 a young librarian named Genevieve Oswald argued that dance materials didn't fit well in the Music or Theatre archives and should be collected differently. And so she created the Dance Collection, which grew to establish the gold standard and is now the world's largest and most comprehensive archive devoted to the documentation of dance. And, although many divisions over the years have been encouraged, increasingly, to reach out to their communities, that was Gegi's mission from the start: to embrace the dance world, make it part of the NYPL family, and provide a home for everyone in the field. Gegi's spirit informed the work of two of her successors: Madeleine Nichols and Jan Schmidt, both of whom enjoyed careers with NYPL before they became Dance Curator.

A native of Dublin, Ireland, Linda Murray is the fifth curator of the Dance Division. She holds an undergraduate degree in French and Russian from Trinity College Dublin and postgraduate degrees in performance and library science. Her previous positions include a stint at the Library of Congress. The fact that Linda was hired 28 years after Gegi's retirement did not lessen her reverence for the



Linda Murray

Founding Curator, whom she visited in California, and with whom she bonded. There were three curators in the intervening period between Gegi's retirement and Linda's appointment, yet the brightness of the torch that was passed was not dimmed.

One of Linda's major assignments in the early years of her custodianship of the Dance Division was to begin preparations for the celebration of the Dance Division's 75th anniversary. She decided that a major focus of the festivities would be *Archive in Motion: 75 Years of the Jerome Robbins Dance Division*, an exhibition charting the Division's history and the establishment of international dance archival practices through the display of significant materials from the collections. Curating the exhibition, in conjunction with her extraordinary staff, gave Linda the opportunity to engage former staff members and retirees, whom she felt were clearly an integral part of the history.

Archive in Motion engaged former Dance Division staff members in many ways. In 1965, Jack Mitchell, one of the leading dance photographers of the 20th century, photographed Genevieve Oswald with three of her staff members in the Division's reading room. That photo came to symbolize, for me, the respect that was being accorded to former staff. The photo was used on posters, in brochures, in press materials, and even atop the Library's Lincoln Center Plaza entrance, where on dark nights it was lit up and beamed across

Lincoln Center Plaza. The Dance Division's commitment to highlight the staff was transmitted via the publicity as well. A review of the exhibition on the *BroadwayWorld* website echoes the information from the press release: "The exhibition will not only show the many gems in the Division's holdings, but also tell the story of the Division itself through images and the testimony of the various generations of staff who devoted their working lives to preserving dance history."

In order to provide first-hand testimony to the Dance Division's history, many former staff members were interviewed. The audio interviews, coordinated by the Division's Oral History Archivist Cassie Mey and conducted by current staff, were an integral part of *Archive in Motion*. In a couple of cases, current staff had the pleasure of interviewing the retirees who had hired them. Dorothy Lourdou, who supervised the creation of the Dance Division's pioneering Automated Book Catalog, was interviewed by Phil Karg, whom she hired. Phil also interviewed Ruth Carr. Jan Schmidt was interviewed by Tanisha Jones, whom she hired. Miriam Gross, who served as Gegi's First Assistant in the 1960s, was interviewed by Arlene Yu. Other former staff who were interviewed specifically for this project included Lesley Farlow, Susan Kraft, Karen Nickeson, and Charles Perrier. Current staff were also represented in the oral histories, providing context as well as reflecting on their own service. They included Tanisha Jones, Phil Karg, Cassie Mey, Daisy Pommer, and Alice Standin. Excerpts from the oral histories may be heard on the NYPL Soundcloud page. As a continuing testimony to the importance of the preservation of institutional memory, former staff were asked to sign releases, so that their oral histories could be catalogued and become part of the permanent collection of the Jerome Robbins Dance Division, alongside the oral histories of Genevieve Oswald, Madeleine Nichols, Frederick Ashton, George Balanchine, Martha Graham, Alicia Markova, Leonid Massine, and many others.

Genevieve Oswald was planning to attend many of the events celebrating the 75th anniversary of the Division that she founded. Sadly, she died, aged 97, on March 19, 2019, at her home in Santa Clarita, California. Two weeks earlier, the Dance Division presented "An Eternal Footprint: The Dance Division at 75," a program inaugurating the 75th anniversary celebrations. A panel featured the other four Dance

Division curators, who gathered in the Bruno Walter Auditorium to pay tribute to Gegi and to offer anecdotes about their own experiences working in the Division. As part of the event, Evan Leslie (one of my successors in public programming) put together a beautiful multi-media tribute about Gegi, weaving together audio from her oral history, film, newspaper clippings, and photographs from the Dance Division's collections to create a mini-biography of her time as curator. The full house in the Bruno Walter Auditorium featured multiple generations of staff, friends of the Dance Division, and the general public.

In June 2019, the Jerome Robbins Dance Division announced the selection of its new class of Dance Research Fellows. Selected from a record number of applicants from around the world, the researchers and performers were engaged to help the Dance Division celebrate its 75th anniversary by focusing on topics selected by each of the five curators who had overseen the collection during its history. A sixth topic was selected by members of the Dance Division's expert staff. The Fellows had six months to complete their work and would showcase the outcome of their research in a presentation or performance at a day-long symposium to be held on January 24, 2020.

When I saw the list of Fellows and their subjects, it underscored for me that the celebration of the anniversary was clearly involving former staff in the planning of events. I was delighted that the Genevieve Oswald Fellow—Triwi Harjito—would focus on the Claire Holt Collection. Throughout my long career as head of public programs at LPA, I had wanted to produce a festival celebrating the Claire Holt collection of Indonesian dance materials, and finally, a month before I retired, I presented, in December 2009, "The Allure of Refinement: Music and Dance of Indonesia," a six-part series in the Bruno Walter Auditorium. The festival was extremely popular: I remember that we played to packed houses and had to sneak the Indonesian Consul into the full Bruno Walter Auditorium via a side door. And so, I looked forward to attending Ms. Harjito's presentation at the symposium. I also looked forward to the presentation of the Madeleine Nichols Fellow—Jack Ferwer and Jeremy Jacob—who focused on The AIDS Legacy Project. Madeleine oversaw the Division as the AIDS crisis ravaged the dance field, and with staff member Lesley Farlow, initiated the AIDS Oral History Project, to safeguard the life stories of artists who

were lost too soon. We will never forget our LPA colleagues, including one in the Dance Division, who left us during that horrific period.

A few weeks before the symposium, Ruth Carr, who had worked in the Dance Collection from 1968 to 1981, contacted me saying that a number of old Dance Collection friends were planning to attend the symposium, and asked me to suggest a place for lunch. Since I live in the Lincoln Center neighborhood, and since it would have been difficult to sort out a lunch for eight people in one of the local restaurants, I said that I would be happy to host lunch in my apartment. (Thank goodness I kept my dinner service for eight when I moved from a large flat in Long Island City to a studio in Lincoln Towers.) My guests included former Dance Division staff Ruth Carr, Miriam Gross (who is in the Jack Mitchell photo), Dorothy Lourdou, Elizabeth Miller, and Rita Waldron, in addition to Gegi's daughter Anne Johnston and her husband Mark, who had flown in from California. We had a lovely lunch (mostly from Zabar's) and then walked over to LPA to see a few of the symposium presentations and to attend the reception which followed. That symposium day represented a bright light in the rather dim period that



Genevieve Oswald, Ruth Carr, Dorothy Lourdou, Los Angeles, 2015

descended upon us late the following month: the Age of Covid.

Before she retired in 2015, Jan Schmidt, who came to the Dance Division in 1986 and was Linda's predecessor as Curator, wrote about the talent, knowledge, and generosity of spirit of the Dance staff, who made her job a joy. "Their willingness to try new things," Jan wrote, "from new technologies to innovative public programs, their knowledge of dance, the collections, the Library resources, and their patience and skill in locating items for patron requests, or to help patrons understand how to find things themselves, are the elements that make our staff members exceptional. They have the heart and awareness to be able to serve the needs of the

materials, the Library, and the public. Our ability to work together as a team created an atmosphere of trust and faith." Jan's words could apply to so many of NYPL's branches and research divisions, where we spent our careers.

As it moves beyond its 75th year, the Jerome Robbins Dance Division continues to reach new heights. In 2020, the Division announced the acquisition of the collections of Martha Graham, Trisha Brown, and many others. (I had the great pleasure to work with Trisha on our *Orpheus with His Lute* series of public programs in 2005.) In 2020 and 2021, the Division nimbly pivoted to the challenges of the pandemic with an impressive array of online exhibitions and programs. Outreach and work with schools and students have become a higher priority than ever, thanks to the creation, in 2016, of the position of Education Coordinator, ably held by Kathleen Leary.



Rita Waldron, Dorothy Lourdou

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.

DC37 Death Benefit Unit
(212) 815-1373 or (212) 815-1374

New York State and Local Retirement System (866) 805-0990, toll-free, for pension questions and to inform NYSLRS 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.

The NYSLRS 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.

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Newsletter Editor: Emily Cohen
Technical Assistant: Allen Cohen
Copy Editor: Jane Kunstler



Elizabeth Miller McCue, hired in the 1970s to coordinate the acquisition of Asian dance materials

When I told Linda Murray how moved many of us were by her respect for the retirees, and for the history, I gleaned some sense as to her motivations. In addition to sheer humanity, there was a sense that, as a native of Ireland, under colonial rule for so long, the preservation of history holds particular significance for her. That, coupled with the importance of history to the world of dance, and with the fact that she's a professional librarian, informed the respectful way in which she approached the preparations for the 75th anniversary. The feeling I had from her was that learning about and connecting with former staff makes her better at her job, and that there is a bond of institutional stewardship that binds together all the generations who were lucky enough to be part of the history of one of the world's great cultural institutions.

“To those with ears to hear, libraries are really very noisy places. On their shelves we hear the captured voices of the centuries-old conversation that makes up our civilization.”

– Dr. Timothy Healy

The captured voices of more than 100 years of staff who built the collections and served the public in so many ways, will always be part of that centuries-old conversation. We are deeply grateful to the Curator of the Jerome Robbins Dance Division and her staff for recognizing and amplifying the contributions of generations of their colleagues.

I LIFT MY LAMP: THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVES IMMIGRANTS



Yiddish Mothers Club performance ca 1931

Photo courtesy of the Seward Park Local History File, NYPL

By Harriet Gottfried

In the first half of the 20th century, waves of non-English-speaking immigrants and migrants came to the U.S. mainland and dramatically altered the population of New York City. From 1910 onward, men, women and children from Eastern and Southern Europe fleeing tyranny and poverty made new homes in this major port of entry. Significant migration by Puerto Ricans, in search of better economic conditions, began at the close of World War I and remained steady. In the 1930s and 1940s, horrific conditions in Europe again brought a flood of refugees, many of whom also settled in New York City.

The influence of nineteenth-century moralistic philosophies imbued wealthy New Yorkers with a desire to aid in the self-education of the poor. Since 41 percent of the population of New York City in

1910 was immigrants, there was a strong feeling that this self-education must be extended to them. This mission was accompanied by a belief that immigrants must quickly become assimilated Americans. The administration of the New York Public Library (NYPL) regarded themselves as important agents in this process of self-education. New branches were built in the areas most populated by immigrants, and librarians were encouraged to build collections of books in other languages. The circulation department publicized these collections in advertisements and booklists printed in many languages that were distributed to settlement houses, churches, and schools. The library also hired “foreign assistants” who were fluent in other languages to work in branch libraries. The outstanding work of these staff members launched a golden age of library service to immigrants in the first fifty years of the twentieth century that remains an inspiration and a model.

Although English and citizenship classes as well as easy reading materials were available in library branches, the work of the library staff with non-English speakers was soon driven by a sensitivity to the language and background of those from other countries. Librarians and foreign assistants became committed to a philosophy of cultural pluralism that was exemplified by an astonishing array of special programs designed to reinforce rather than weaken the immigrant's cultural ties. Speaking to neighborhood people in their own languages, foreign assistants invited newcomers into the library where the joys of music, theater, lectures, and free access to works of literature awaited them. From the early 1900s to the 1950s, a wide variety of Hebrew, Russian, Polish, Czechoslovakian, Italian, German, French, Hungarian, Swedish, Yiddish, Bohemian, Spanish, and Chinese evenings were held at many branches in Manhattan and the Bronx. At these evenings, concerts and exhibits featuring international music and art were held. Lectures, theatrical productions, and readings of works by established immigrant writers, poets, and novelists were conducted in many languages. A reception followed, featuring food from the culture that was being celebrated.

In addition to programming, staff training in working with non-English speakers was ongoing. In 1907, staff attended a meeting at the Tompkins Square Branch where a lecture entitled "Yiddish Popular Street Literature" was given. That same year, a staff meeting at the Webster Branch had Bohemian literature and music as its topic. Training that concentrated on working effectively with the "foreign-born" continued for decades.

As a result of this impetus, neighborhood branches evolved into vibrant community centers. When immigrants entered the library, they were greeted by a staff member who spoke their language and were encouraged to attend events highlighting their country of origin. A full description of this rich programming heritage would fill several volumes, but the focus here will be on three of these initiatives..

The Mothers' Club at Seward Park

Mothers' Clubs originated in the settlement houses and spread to library branches. In 1916, a Miss Lifshitz, the foreign assistant at Seward Park on the Lower East Side, established a Yiddish Mothers'

Club. From conversations with children who came into the branch, she was aware that neighborhood women lived in unheated cold-water tenement rooms and were overburdened by housework and the struggle to make ends meet. Miss Lifshitz was eager to keep their culture alive and to make them feel at home. The first NYPL Mothers' Club had its inaugural meeting on a cold Saturday afternoon with seven women in attendance. Sixteen women came to the second meeting and thereafter attendance grew to a high of eighty members. Meetings, conducted solely in Yiddish, were held on a weekly basis. Activities included discussions of current events and stories that were read aloud. Speakers came from the *Daily Forward* and the Jewish Theological Seminary. Yiddish poets, novelists, and playwrights came to read their works.

There were Hanukkah and Purim parties. Several husbands objected to the time their wives spent at the library, particularly since club members agreed to leave their children at home. This did not discourage Miss Lipshitz, who began taking the women on field trips to The Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Museum of Natural History and to see Molly Picon perform. After Miss Lipshitz' death, the club still continued to meet and was led by Fanny Wlodawsky, a Yiddish-speaking librarian. She obtained tickets to Yiddish plays at reduced rates and took club members and their families to the theater. In 1941, the club held its 25th anniversary, an event that many of the original members attended. Staff shortages, population shifts and the death of Fanny Wlodawsky finally led to the club's demise in the 1950s. Commenting on Miss Wlodawsky's death in her 1954 annual report, the Branch Librarian noted, "With her passing goes most of the Old Seward Park Library."

Outreach to Puerto Rican Children at 115th Street

Pura Belpré, who would become a well-known children's author, was the first Puerto Rican librarian to be hired by NYPL. In 1929, she was assigned to the 115th Street Branch in a predominantly Puerto Rican neighborhood in Upper Manhattan. Ms. Belpré was immediately concerned with bringing the Spanish-speaking community into the library. "One thought was foremost in my mind. How to reach these people...when to some of them the library was a new factor in their lives."

She began a series of imaginative programs to attract children. Committed to preserving Puerto Rican folklore, she conducted story hours in Spanish, recounting folktales she had listened to as a child. Energetic and enthusiastic, Ms. Belpré visited community organizations to publicize her programs. She used puppetry in her storytelling and later founded a theater cub of children who performed for library and community audiences. Her outreach efforts inspired other staff to encourage Spanish-speaking adults to come to the library by offering programs that featured Hispanic poets, artists, and musicians. Ms. Belpré began an annual branch celebration of “El día de los reyes” (Feast of the Three Kings). For this event she organized stories, music and dance performances for the community. Largely due to Pura Belpré’s leadership, 115th Street became a cultural center for the Spanish-speaking community during the 1930s.

The Metropolitan Opera Concerts at Ottendorfer

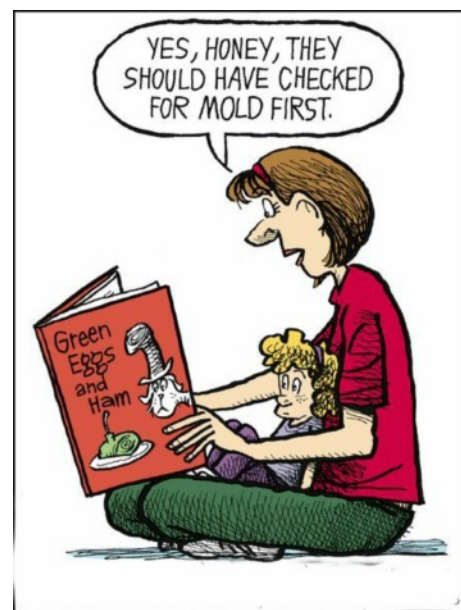
Endowed in 1884 by Oswald Ottendorfer, a political refugee from Germany, this branch on Second Avenue and Eighth Street housed an excellent German language collection. Charlotte Hubach, the branch librarian for many years, was a leader in the field of German letters. In 1933, Nazism was sweeping across Europe, and throngs of German-speaking refugees were brought to New York by the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society and the International Rescue and Relief Committee. Large numbers of these new immigrants were writers, musicians, and artists who were predominantly Jewish, but also included politically active Catholics and Protestants. Having left their material possessions, including books, behind, they came to Ottendorfer where they could read for free.

One rainy Saturday in 1937, Katherine Meyer, a library staff member, observed a group of refugees huddled outside the door of a nearby music store where the weekly Metropolitan Opera concert was being broadcast. The following week, Ms. Meyer brought her own radio and invited the group into the library to listen. When Charlotte Hubach observed how the music transported these refugees, whom she knew were consumed with worry for family members still in Europe, she sprang into action. First she convinced one of her more affluent readers to purchase a radio for the library. Then she contacted the Metropolitan Opera, explained about the program and

talked the Met into donating free programs, librettos, and posters of performing artists to the branch. The audience of refugees, seeking comfort in familiar music, continued to build and was a weekly event for years. During the intermission, listeners would exchange anecdotes about the Berlin, Vienna, and Prague Opera Houses where they had gone to hear concerts. In 1945, Ms. Hubach commented to a reporter: “They love good music. . .some of them never miss, rain or shine. It is such a small thing to do for them, but a great pleasure. I never intrude on their privacy. We never press them in any way. They are our guests.”

Underpaid and overworked, these pioneering librarians and foreign assistants of the past nonetheless found the energy to reach out with dedication, vision and empathy to strangers in a strange land. To the Yiddish women who met together at Seward Park, the Puerto Rican children who attended story hours at 115th Street, and the refugees who listened to the radio concerts at Ottendorfer, they held out a lifeline that connected newcomers to America with the language and culture they had left behind.

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HEARD IN THE LIBRARY

“I want the book that has every trick in it.”
 “This book is like a long text message.”

FAMOUS PEOPLE SERVED IN THE LIBRARY

RESPONSE FROM DAVID BEASLEY

The NYPL Retirees' Newsletter, always ready for interesting news, asked its members for anecdotes relating to famous people whom librarians may have served. I worked in the Economics and Public Affairs Division of the Research Library for many years and was chairman of the union organizing committee and its first president. "Famous" is an odd appellation. I related in my second volume of *Episodes and Vignettes, an Autobiography*, my encounters—and often friendships—with well-known authors who used the Library, sometimes in the Allen Room or in the Wertheim area. It is in Chapter Twenty-three, "Literary Lions and Starveling Mice."

- Ferdinand (Frank) Lundberg who wrote notable books such as *The Rich and Superrich* often visited the Division; I knew him very well.
- Walter Karp who wrote political books and used the records in the Division—during a hot summer when we had no air-conditioning—to write his controversial *Liberty under Siege*, was a good friend.
- Art Shields, "America's Labor Reporter," was a close friend, and, inspired by my biography of Canada's first novelist, wrote two great autobiographies, affording a look at the country which was real and unknown by most Americans.
- I corresponded with Betty Comden (of Comden and Green musical comedy fame—"New York, New York, what a wonderful town!"), who was honorary chairperson and dedicated to the welfare of the Library.
- I also corresponded with Barbara Tuchman for years after the rally we held in 1969 with scholars, actors, et al. It was emceed by Tony Randall to keep the Library open on Saturdays.
- Later I helped Ms Tuchman find a document for her latest book, and I believe she helped me (anonymously) get a book published. She became a trustee. Her niece was married to Budd Schulberg, and after I met them at a PEN reception in the Canadian consulate, they invited me to a reception at the Library held in honor of Guenter Grass's *The Flounder*. I think that Schulberg was an occasional user of the Library, not constant as the Allen Room denizens whom I knew and met sometimes on lunch breaks in our cafeteria.
- The historical novelist, Thomas Costain, used the Library frequently. I knew him since meeting him as a teen-ager in my hometown.
- Walter Abish, an avant-garde writer, would come by the Division, and we would have lunch.
- Other writers I mention were not "famous" but well known in their disciplines—Larry Lader, John Demaray, Gerry Zilg, and Bill Reuben, whom I knew outside the Library as well.
- A friend whom I knew well and who taught me in a class in economics was Michael Hudson. At the time, he was known amongst some economists on the left but was rather hard-up. I helped him find materials, and we had conversations on economics, politics and so on. Some thirty-five years later, I see on the internet that he is regarded by scholars as the world's best economist. He teaches at several American and Chinese universities and advises governments. He now might be called "famous" but not by the mainstream neo-classical types.
- I met Mayor Koch, who used the Library to promote his political career, though I don't know if he used it other than to read newspapers in the Periodical Division.
- George Kennan, of Russian containment fame, used the Economics Division about 1980. He used squares of paper about a quarter of a page in size to take notes on and had a pile about six inches high on his desk.
- Anne Moody, famous for her *Coming of Age in Mississippi*, I knew well. She used the Wertheim room to research.

- I taught Emily Prager in grade school and noticed that she was inducted as a Library Lion, but her books are no longer read, like those of most writers of sudden fame. Ah, the fleeting glance of the fickle public can reduce Charles Dickens to a has-been, unrecognized by readers of Nora Roberts.

RESPONSE FROM HARRIET SHALAT

It was a quiet weekday afternoon in the early '80s. I was at the Science desk in Mid-Manhattan when I heard a commotion near the entrance to the floor. At that time, MM-SCI was in the Fifth Avenue and 40th Street corner of the building, and the entrance was farther down on 40th Street. Then I saw Brooke Shields coming toward me. (I don't remember whether she was wearing her Calvin Klein jeans.) She told me she had to write an essay about a rare genetic condition called progeria and needed help finding and making some copies of periodical articles. She was a perfect teenage patron, and we quickly found what she needed. The most fun for me was watching all the male pages in the building who found out she was there, peeking around the stacks to get glimpses of her. Fortunately, she was oblivious.

EXCERPT FROM JUDD HIRSCH INTERVIEW

In an interview in the Washington Post on March 29, 1987, the actor Judd Hirsch said "I always found an injustice somewhere and blurted it out. I worked for the New York Public Library. They fired me. I worked for the New York Public Library twice. They fired me twice."

Editor's Note: Rumor has it that he worked at Donnell and that he was a clerk there. Can any of you readers verify this? If you have memories of having worked with Judd Hirsch at NYPL, please let me know, and I will have your response printed in our next Newsletter

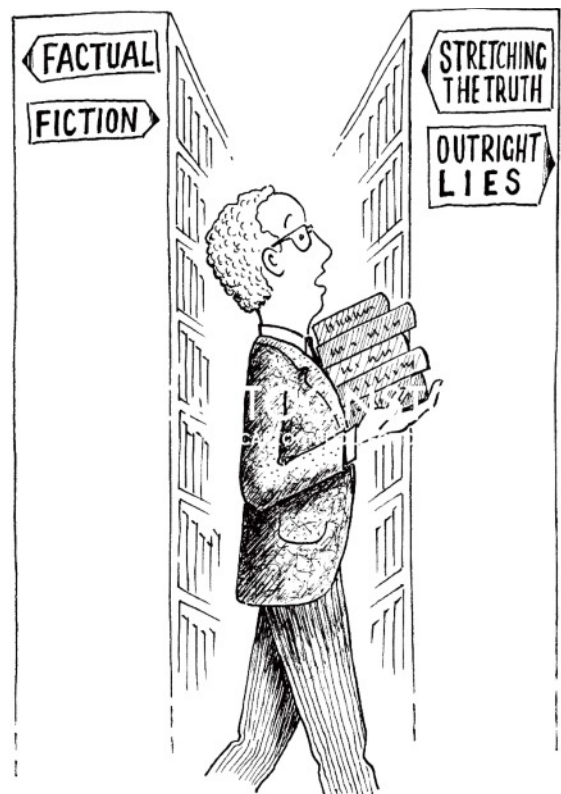
RESPONSE FROM DAVID HOFFMAN

I don't remember helping any famous people at NYPL, though once when they were having that big fashion show in Bryant Park, one of the models came for help looking for a new career. She was sick of the whole modeling thing. When she came up to the desk, I was absolutely dazzled. I took her to the shelves, and I just couldn't help myself. I said "I hope you are not offended, and I know I'm not supposed to say this, but

you are the most beautiful woman I have ever seen. Don't worry, though, I'm gay." She replied: "Coming from you, it means so much more to me."



"I'm getting married and I need something borrowed."



THREE RETIREES BAKE PLUM CAKES

Prune-plums, or Italian plums, in season from late summer to early fall, inspired three of our NYPLRA members to make plum cakes using several recipes.

Jane Kunstler used an heirloom recipe called Open Plum Kuchen, passed along to her by her mother. When she read the asked-for recipe, Emily Cohen thought it would be delicious and just right to serve at a special family dinner she had planned. It was indeed well-received by the dinner guests.

When Alan Pally learned about these plum cakes being baked, he mentioned that he bakes plum cakes, too! Photos depict the Milk Street and the Marian Burros/ NYT recipes he uses. Don't they look yummy?

As for Jane's and Emily's cakes? All eaten up before photos could be taken. So here is the recipe:

Open Plum Kuchen

Crust Filling

- 1 ½ cups flour
- ¼ cup sugar
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ cup butter or margarine
- 1 egg yolk
- 2 tablespoons milk
- ¼ cup cracker or cereal crumbs



Above: Milk Street Plum Cake

Bottom Left: Marian Burros / NYT Plum Cake

Filling

- 4 cups, halved, pitted plums
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- ½ cup sugar
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 tablespoon butter

Combine unsifted flour, sugar, and salt in bowl; cut in butter or margarine.

Beat egg yolk and milk lightly; blend into flour mixture.

Press onto bottom and sides of 8" square pan (or pie dish)

Sprinkle crumbs over dough.

Toss plums with lemon juice; press into dough, cut side down.

Sprinkle with sugar and cinnamon mixture; dot with butter.

Bake at 375° about 45 minutes, until crust browns and fruit is tender.

Cool before serving.

Makes twelve servings.

OUR TOURS OF THE STAVROS NIARCHOS FOUNDATION LIBRARY



The Mid-Manhattan Library has been totally renovated, and two groups of about a dozen each had the pleasure of going on guided tours of it in October. Our Program Chair Estelle Friedman organized this event. Our tour guide was the knowledgeable and pleasant Billy Parrott.

We rode the sleek, modern elevators to the various levels where we learned about programs offered free to the public, such as “Reel to Read Movies,” which encourages adults to read related books after viewing a movie at the library. There are intermediate and advanced English Conversation classes. An online author talk is another program offered. There are also book discussions.

Children’s programs from Baby Laptime to Family Storytime are offered. There are program rooms on almost every floor of the building.

A social work intern is available to connect patrons with such services as housing and healthcare.

There is a cross-sectional map of the Library on a first floor wall, as well as a convenient printed directory of the library building, available as a handout. It points

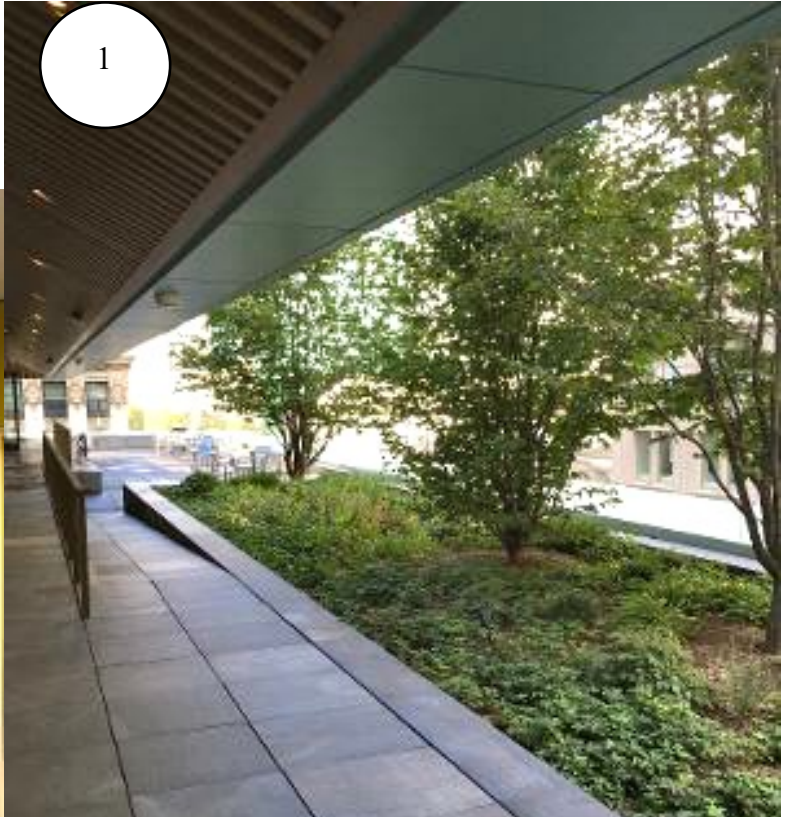
out such things on the different floors as the Thomas Yoseloff Business Center on 5, which deals with small business research, personal finance and investing; it also has Bloomberg terminals and advisory and program rooms. On level 6 is the Pascualano Learning Center with career services, English language and literacy, media and technology training as well as computer classrooms, a multimax studio, and advisory and program rooms. The Marron Family Circulating Collections are on levels 1, 2, 2M, 3, and 3M.

On the lower level, C, once occupied by Technical Services, are the children’s and young adult collections. There is a teen recording studio and media lab and teen study rooms. Level 7 contains the rooftop terrace, event center, and library café.

As you can tell from this brief description, it’s nothing like the old Mid-Manhattan.

Interestingly, as of 1910, five NYPL branches featured rooftop reading rooms. They were Rivington Street (the first, having opened its roof in 1905), St. Gabriel’s Park, Hamilton Fish Park, Columbus, and Seward Park.

- 1) Rooftop Terrace
- 2) Children's Room
- 3) The Building
- 4) You Can Look Down



SOME MEMBER'S IMPRESSIONS OF SNFL

POLLY BOOKHOUT

I liked the airy, open feel of the adult floors of the renovated library. I didn't like the low-ceilinged basement children's and teen space. When I told this to a friend, she reminded me that children are shorter so wouldn't feel claustrophobic.

Most of the adult library users I saw were bent over their laptops. The renovated library may have replaced WeWork.

ESTELLE FRIEDMAN

The place is very different from our previous library memories. Frankly, it was hard to envision where our former offices actually were. The new Stavros Niarchos building is really an eye-opener and should continue to be as exciting as was Mid-Manhattan.

JANE KUNTLER

As much as I hate the name Stavros Niarchos Foundation Library, I loved the tour. Billy Parrott did an excellent job of linking the new with the old. I was impressed with the design of the building—though I don't like the fake copper crown on the top—the original artwork, the amazing technology, the terrace and café, the light and airy feeling. This feeling did not reach down to the YA area in the basement, however; it was dark and dreary to my eye. My old office was in the farthest corner of the room, and I'll admit it does look better now. The children's room was much more attractive, but it lacked the imagination I've seen in other libraries—no castles, no trees, no bridges, no storybook characters, none of the warmth of any of the previous Central Children's Rooms. All in all, though, SNFL is worthy of being our central circulating library.

PHYLLIS MACK

I was pleasantly surprised to see the newly renovated SNFL. The rooftop terrace was breath-taking and a welcome addition. Bright and airy, floors one through four had their own significance. Near the stacks, the ability to see through to the next floor was spectacular. The lower level for children and young adults was appealing with interesting furniture

choices. It was difficult for me to envision the old Mid-Manhattan Library layout.

MARCIA PURCELL

I so enjoyed the very comprehensive SNFL tour, as I worked at MM in the late '60s and early '90s and could not have imagined this total transformation.

The organization of the floors and the collections seems well-thought-out. Work areas are spacious, well-lit, comfortable. The biggest surprise was two sound-proof recording rooms available for public booking for teens and adults. The rooftop open space is quite welcoming, and the space available for private party rental is sure to provide a steady source of income.

The only disappointment is that while there are a number of meeting rooms, all are small, the largest with a capacity of forty! I anticipate a future reconfiguration due to demand.

CAROL REISNER

Both The New York Public Library and the City of New York should be pleased by the new Mid-Manhattan Library. It is light, clean, welcoming, well-thought-out, and a fitting central library. And the terrace was a brilliant idea. Most important to me is that it has physical books all around. It will be interesting to see how it functions when the public actually comes back.

KARLAN SICK

The seventh floor terrace is a wonderful addition. The building is bright and sunny except for the children's room and the teen section in the basement.

MA' LIS WENDT

I found the tour fascinating. I had visited SNFL a number of times this fall, but having Billy Parrot explain some of the new features was very helpful. I was glad to see a good number of people using all the floors of the library—with some classes underway.

RETIREE NEWS

EMILY COHEN

This is actually old news, but since none of you NYPLRA members have heard about it and might find it interesting, here it is.

Years ago, when my husband's longtime family physician Dr. Barth died, his widow offered to sell us an antique oil painting of a handsome man holding a book. She sold it to us for a pittance—\$50, even including the brass lamp that illuminated the portrait—because she knew how much Allen had admired it. She and Dr. Barth had bought it while on a vacation in England years before. Dr. Barth had always jokingly referred to the man in the portrait as “Lord Barth,” his ancestor.

There was a small area in the painting that needed restoring. As we prepared to take it to a restorer, we were surprised to find a yellowed piece of paper tucked into the frame behind the painting. It read “Henry Colburn, Publisher.”

Knowing that information on famous British people of that era could be found in the Dictionary of National Biography, I hastened to my local NYPL branch, the Great Kills Branch on Staten Island, to see if I could find out about this Henry Colburn. Since it is a small branch, Great Kills owned the Concise Dictionary of National Biography, not the full Dictionary of National Biography. Still, I was excited to find that there was some information, and I took notes. Henry Colburn (died 1855) was a publisher in London, England. He started a number of magazines there. From 1814-1829, he kept a circulating library. In 1816, he began to publish a library of modern standard novelists. From 1835-1841, his publications included Evelyn's and Pepys' diaries.

The restorer gave us a value for the painting, but we don't know how much

it is worth today. He also told us that this portrait might have been done by a limner, an artist who would have much of a portrait painted in advance. Then, when someone wanted to have a portrait painted, the particular features of the person would be added.

After writing this article, I looked up “Henry Colburn Publisher” on the computer and found that there are several lengthy articles about him there. Henry Colburn was a colorful character, and now we know much more about him. One of the articles included a note that some of the information included was taken from the Dictionary of National Biography. If you are intrigued and have use of a computer, you might even want to look him up.



DONALD LAUB

Youngju has been living and working in the U.S. for two years as a pediatric RN at a rehab facility in Westchester County. She is one of the most pleasant and likable individuals you could ever meet, and I am fortunate to have her in my life—my wife, too!



Donald Laub, his wife Anna, left, and step-daughter, Youngju, center.

PHYLLIS G. MACK

I attended an HBCU* college (West Virginia State College, now University) along with my siblings. There were four of us in college at the same time, two sets of fraternal twins. I was able to obtain a position as a student assistant in the college library cataloguing office. The Library Director and the reference librarian, both African-American males, encouraged me to become a librarian. My twin sister and I were education majors, my younger brother and sister were business majors. After my student teaching experience in a high school, I knew that I did not wish to teach. Following graduation, I moved to NYC and gained employment at the NYPL. Shortly afterward, I was accepted at Pratt Institute and acquired my MLS. The rest is history, thirty-nine years of service at NYPL. I loved being a librarian and my various public library experiences.

*Historically Black Colleges and Universities

KAREN PHELAN



I retired from NYPL on May 31, 2020. I had worked for the library for twenty-seven years, and for almost twenty-three years, I was at the Spuyten Dyvil Branch Library in the Bronx. Since retiring from the library, I have lived in Southbury, Connecticut; I currently live at the Geer Lodge and Village in

Canaan. I am living at the Lodge in an independent-living apartment with many amenities. I am enjoying my retirement life, but I do miss my life as a children's librarian. In retirement, I enjoy reading, word searches, travel, music, adult coloring pages, movies, theater performances, bingo, and Scrabble. I also enjoy time with my friends and family members. I hope to visit the Bronx soon to see my former co-workers at Spuyten Dyvil.

I retired during the pandemic, and I would love to hear from my former co-workers and colleagues who are now retired. I really would like to correspond with those who worked with or knew of me. My address is 77 South Canaan Road, Apt 205, Canaan, CT 06018. My phone numbers are 860-824-2808 (home) and 203-313-1652 (cell).

JEAN PINCKNEY

Hello, everyone. I hope you are all staying safe. We here in South Carolina had some diehards who refused to wear masks even though the cases were rising. But their disobedience soon came to a halt when our mayors placed a fine on them for not doing so. So we are now trying to get back to normal. In the meantime, I have learned to sew cloth masks. I have made quite a few and have given them freely to family and friends, who thought they were great, surprisingly to me. Besides this, we have been holding church services, bible studies, and meetings online; I enjoy these as a new experience. We finally got the younger ones to use some of their technology skills. We are waiting patiently for orders to return to business-as-usual. In the meantime, we shall obey Isaiah 40:31, as it is all in God's hands. Keep safe and wear your masks.

WARREN PLATT

I have kept busy in retirement with research on the Episcopal Church; several articles by me have appeared in *Anglican and Episcopal History*, the scholarly journal in that field. The pandemic kept me largely in my apartment, thereby permitting me to write a book on the history of the Episcopal Church of the Transfiguration, also known as the Little Church around the Corner. It is one hundred eighty pages long and was just published by the church. I deposited a copy with the Research Libraries in early August.

ETHEL CHEN WU



I am Ethel Chen Wu, retired supervising librarian from NYPL. I have two wonderful granddaughters on Long Island. They are both writers. Anjelica (14) and Sabrina (8) are seen in the August 2019 photo above with me.

During lockdown 2020, my granddaughter, Anjelica Wu, wrote a book about her adventure fostering rescued kittens on Long Island. She used the challenging time of lockdown to help an animal rescue organization and took in a total of twenty-four kittens, including many shy, feral kittens that needed help socializing with humans. Fifteen-year-old Anjelica took her experience and adorable photos to write a 164-page, 15,000-word book. The book is self-



published on Amazon, 8.5x8.5, printed on sixty-pound paper stock, and on Kindle and Kindle Unlimited.

She is hoping to inspire other people to contribute to the animal rescue community and is donating all profits to help raise money for the local animal rescue organization, the Give Me Shelter Project. Libraries across Long Island have bought Anjelica's book, and she has done a few author visits.



Sabrina wrote her first books when she was eight. During lockdown, she was nine and wrote two more. Now, she is about to self-publish on Amazon the fifth book of her Evelyn Protector series, a pentalogy about a multi-generational matrilineage protecting the essence of life. Her personal ambition is to become a great writer. From the age of eight, she started diligently writing at least a page a day, every day, creating fantastic novels of 8,000-12,000 words each.

She draws inspiration from J.K. Rowling, Marissa Meyer, and many others. Chloe Zhao, Oscar-winning director of *Nomadland* and director of Marvel's *Eternals*, even wrote her an encouraging letter of praise.



A Sabrina cuddle

I took my grandkids, Anjelica and Sabrina, to City Island to show them around the neighborhood where I worked in the early 1970s as head librarian with NYPL. I had been telling them how amazing the lobster is there, and it was wonderful to get out again.



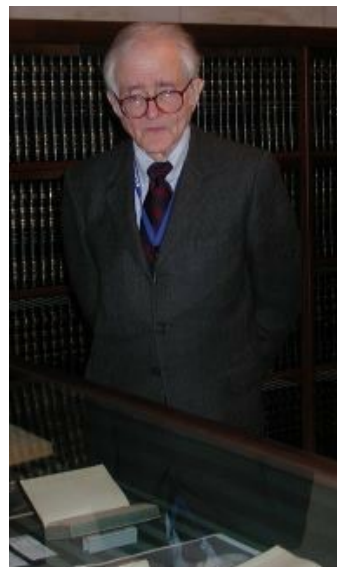
Janis Krēsliņš, Sr. (1924-2021)

His many former colleagues at the NYPL and wide circle of admirers were deeply saddened to learn of the death of Mr. Krēsliņš on February 17, 2021. Krēsliņš was born and received his early education in Mālpils (German: Lemburg), Latvia. With the end of World War II, he fled to Austria and then to West Germany, where he studied history, art, and library science at the University of Tübingen, Germany. He completed his graduate studies in library science at Columbia University. Mr. Krēsliņš served as Bibliographer and Reference Librarian for the Council on Foreign Relations, New York (1955-1992), and as the erudite Consultant for Baltic (Latvian and Lithuanian) History and Publications, The New York Public Library, Slavic and Baltic Division (1985-2008). In 1994, Mr. Krēsliņš facilitated The NYPL's acquisition of the house collection of Helmārs Rudzītis (1903-2001), the well-known and successful publisher of Grāmatu Draugs [Friend of Books]. He was also instrumental in the creation of the first Latvian Book Fund at NYPL.

Beginning in 1970, Mr. Krēsliņš reviewed books and articles on the history of the Baltic states for the Association for the Advancement of Baltic Studies Newsletter. He was elected a Foreign Member of the Latvian Academy of Sciences, Division of Social Sciences and Humanities, in recognition of his many publications on the history and literatures of the Baltic region and his collections of poetry.

His son Dr. Jānis Krēsliņš Jr. is Senior Academic Librarian for Research Affairs at the

National Library of Sweden (Swedish: Kungliga biblioteket).



Krēsliņš and his display on Empress Dowager Maria Fedorovna II (born Dagmar of Denmark) in honor of the visit to the Slavic and Baltic Division of HRH Crown Prince Frederik of Denmark. © H-G Yoo

Written by Edward Kasinec and others.

CARTER'S CAMP FOR CUTIES: A DOG SITTING SERVICE

By Pat Pardo

Vesa Nelson and I have a volunteer dog-sitting service. We have been sitters for the shih tzu, Killer Foo Foo Eng-Perez, for almost three years. Prior to this, we sat for Abbie Mae, a small French Poodle. As a sitter, one must be very time-flexible due to erratic scheduling and must love their dog unconditionally. Remember, it's your dog while you are sitting. Foo Foo is a star in his own right, having his own YouTube program, being interviewed by various TV stations, modeling, winning pet contests, and being the Ambassador and therapy dog for Riverdale Senior Services, Inc.

A typical sitting-day begins about 8:00am and continues until Foo Foo is picked up anytime after 4:30. The day starts with one of two or three walks. He may meet up with dog friends, stubbornly sit in the middle of the street holding up traffic, try to dig up someone's lawn, or demand to be carried at least one-third of the way back after running Vesa double-time. Afterwards, there is always a treat for agreeing to come back.

Other activities include chasing our cat Carter up and down the hall while riding on flying carpets, buffet lunches with Carter, snacks, being groomed, a short movie matinee while sitting with me, and naps and activities such as simple crafts. If it's an overnight, besides his day-sitting activities, he takes more walks, sleeps with me—mostly trying to push me off the bed—gets a cleanse under his eyes, a few nightly “Ding Ding, Night Night, Foo Foo” songs, and eats three meals a day. Each meal is a little buffet of fresh vegetables with plain yogurt, dog food, and a small treat for dessert.

Obviously, being a little star, he has a large wardrobe. How many people can claim having nine coats and outdoor jackets, a multitude of costumes, and red boots? He dislikes putting on his outdoor vest and clothes, lying on his back while kicking his legs.

Forget the boots! On his “parents” last vacation, they brought three tote bags for his week's stay. The contents included a coat, raincoat, medicine, food, blanket, toys, the all-important medical permission slip to the animal hospitals, and other odds and ends. Happily, “Mommy” didn't pack his crate and bed. While they were away, Foo Foo e-mailed his daily activities. “Mommy” sent photos so he could see her and “Daddy.” Killer Foo Foo in Chinese means “killer lion.” And that's exactly what he looks like when he growls at his treat box. We are looking forward to many more happy dog-sitting days—after all, Foo Foo is Carter's best friend.



HELPING AN ASPIRING AUTHOR

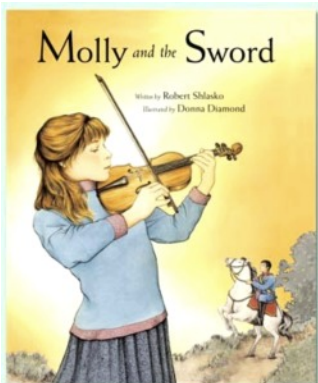
By Emily Cohen

One quiet morning, I was seated at my desk in the Kips Bay Branch Children's Room doing computer work when a tall, gray-haired gentleman came in. He introduced himself as Bob Shlasko and said that he'd been referred to me as an experienced children's librarian in a quiet branch, who would have the time to give him the extensive advice he wanted. He explained that he had an idea for a picture book and wanted to discuss possible illustrators or styles of illustration. From what he told me, his idea was going to become a fairytale picture book, so I selected for his consideration a few books from that section with illustrations in several styles.

Bob said that he did not aim for commercial printing because his idea was to read his book to children directly, as soon as possible, as a touring guest author in schools, and, he chuckled, he was not getting any younger. He knew that if his book were chosen for publication in the highly competitive market, it would be years before it would go on sale.

It was a pleasure for me to give Bob advice since his book had a strong theme, and he found an excellent illustrator.

The book asks "Must enemies always remain enemies? And how does bravery really show itself? Molly and a young horseman find the answers." Because Molly is a violinist, Bob was able to get his book, which he had printed in China, into the gift shops of New York's Metropolitan Opera, Boston's Symphony Hall, and other such places. He also has it for sale by retailers and wholesalers. He named his publishing company Jane & Street Publishers Ltd. He did succeed in his goal of becoming a popular visiting children's book author.



I am proud that he inscribed in my copy of the beautiful book, "To Emily Cohen, in appreciation for your encouragement and assistance when this was still a work-in-progress. Bob Shlasko"

DEAR NYPLRA MEMBERS,

It's time to hold an election! Well, in truth, it's way past time. So we are asking you, our members, to nominate candidates and even think about becoming one yourself.

Candidates are needed for the following offices:

President (Becky Koppelman will become President Emerita and will assist with training and transition)
Vice President (Polly Bookhout left this position in 2019)

Also on the slate will be:

Jennine Porta, who is running to maintain her position as Secretary,
Larry Petterson, who has been our appointed interim Treasurer and will be running for that position.

There will be plenty of support for the new President and Vice President, not only from Becky, Jennine, and Larry, but also from our experienced committee chairs:

Bob Bellinger - Obituaries
Polly Bookhout - Website
Emily Cohen - Newsletter
Mary K. Conwell - Oral History
Estelle Friedman - Programming
Jane Kunstler - Membership
Joe Zeveloff - Political Action

Because we are now able to hold meetings via Zoom, New York residency is not required. But willingness to work with Zoom and other conferencing technologies is a must.

You have received pleas to step up before, but we are now down to the wire. Without strong leadership at the top, the Association can't survive, grow, and flourish.

Please email Larry Petterson (larry.petterson@icloud.com), Ad Hoc Nominating Committee chair by June 30th with a nomination or to express your own interest.

Thank you!
NYPLRA Board and Committee Chairs

YOU CAN APPARENTLY CHECK OUT BAKING PANS FROM THE LIBRARY, AND IT'S AMAZING

Editor's note: When Pat Pardo sent me pictures of cake pans available for borrowing at the Madison Library, I didn't realize how widespread this was. Doing my research I discovered the following articles and pictures. Some libraries also have some more unusual items available for borrowing.

Having fun isn't hard when you've got a library card!

By KRISTIN SALAKY
AUG 27, 2019

Libraries are pretty amazing. Nowhere else can you just walk in, take something for free, and then walk out without getting tackled by someone. And though you might be thinking that's limited to books, CDs, and DVDs (if those are still your jam!), you can apparently add baking pans to the list at some libraries.

Journalist Annemarie Dooling posted a glorious photo on Twitter showing the Ludington Library, in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania's baking pan section, where you can check out specialty baking pans for your own home use. It's such a smart concept: In the photo there

are fun-shaped pans that I've definitely been guilty of buying in a hurry to make a cake for someone once, only to have it collect dust forever...or end up in the donation pile. But with this system, you can use the pan, clean it (well), and bring it right back for someone else to use.

This isn't limited only to one library, though. As replies to the tweet and a quick Google search pointed out, this is a fairly common thing. Tons of libraries—like the Akron-Summit Library in Ohio and the Brown County Library in Wisconsin—offer this service. And a quick skim of their online listings tells me that you could have a lot fun checking some of these out (dibs on the "party pony" cake pan!).

When interviewed about the cake pan collection she started at the Brookline County Library in Massachusetts, Sara Slymon, library director, told the International Housewares Association, that she believes the concept of a cake pan stock at the library makes total sense: It allows people to access quality items that they may not be able to afford, or want to, buy on their own. Many of the cake pans in that collection came from her own personal collection or from the donation of others.



Dooling's tweet also prompted some to point out there is a lot you may be able find at your local library that you had no idea about, like bicycles, a cheese warmer, and a donut maker, according to a CNN Money article shared on the thread. Of course, this isn't every library, so talk to your librarian and ask (nicely!) what wonders you can uncover at your local library.

NEED A SPECIAL CAKE PAN; CHECK ONE OUT AT THE LIBRARY



that single use, you can just check it out from the library,” she said.

The service is already popular with some cake pans reserved several times over. Cardholders can check out up to three pans for a week at a time. They include instructions for the patron to clean them before and after each use.

The pans are kept in large plastic bags at the main branch and interested cardholders can peruse a catalogue to see what shapes are available.

By Matthew Crane August 11, 2016

New offerings at the Jasper Public and Contractual Libraries include cake pans. Helping people bake fun-shaped cakes is now among all the helpful things the Jasper Public Library does for free.

No, they didn't get some new books on baking, although that could help also.

No, patrons with a need to make a cake in the shape of a popular character or image, can now find those special cake pans at the Jasper Public Library and the contractual locations in Dubois, Birdseye and Ferdinand.

The library has added 25 cake pans in popular shapes like a graduation cap or heart as well as popular characters like Thomas the Train and Hello Kitty. Director Christine Golden brought the idea to the library after hearing about the idea at a conference.

For Golden, it's about providing another service for the library patrons. "Instead of someone buying a number one shaped cake pan for a birthday which will likely only see

These pans are from the Madison Library.

