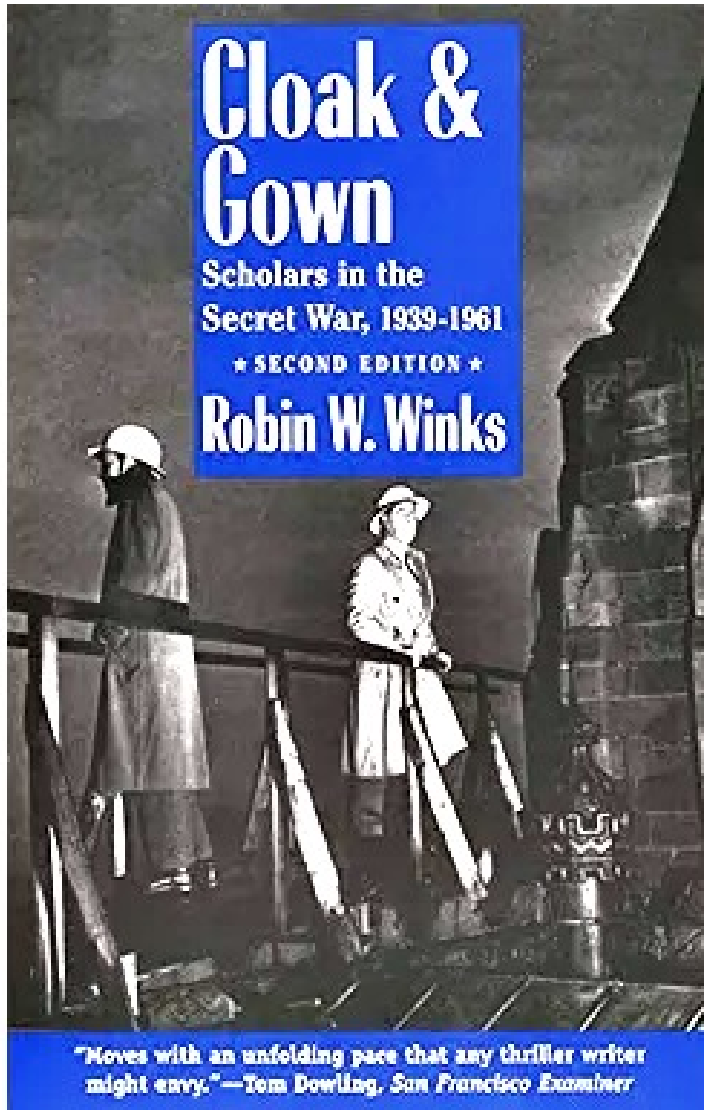


NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY RETIREES ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

Spring/Summer 2023

Issue 50

THE SURPRISING SECRET ROLE OF LIBRARIANS IN WWII



FROM A RECOLLECTION TO RESEARCHING AN NYPL PIONEER

In 1963, when Louis Becker was hired as a page at NYPL and assigned to Photographic Services, Ralph H. Carruthers was in charge of that unit. Louis, in his oral history, recorded in 2014, recalls:

“Some of the things I know now about the Photo Service, I didn’t know then. For instance, Ralph Carruthers, god bless him, I didn’t know anything about him. I just found out the other day that he was born in 1903, and he died in 1997, so I think I figured it out: he was ninety-four years old. His office was in the middle of the room in the back. I didn’t realize that he had established that photographic unit. From what I understand, back in 1938 he helped to set up the microfilming operations at NYPL. Microfilming was rather new back in the 1930s, and for preserving material it was a great medium. From what I understand, during the war he served in the military and his expertise in microfilming was put to use by the government. I was told by Tom Bourke, who headed the Microform Unit, that there’s a book called *Cloak and Gown* by Robin Winks. There’s a picture of Mr. Carruthers in liberated Paris sitting at a table with a young Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.”

This recollection led Ruth Ann Carr, a member of the Oral History Project Committee, to do some research on Ralph H. Carruthers. Here’s what she found:

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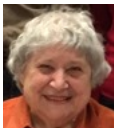
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www.nyplretirees.org

We are proud of our website, which is administered by Polly Bookhout. If you have not yet looked at it, why not take a look now?

Two of the most popular features you will find there are "People" and "Newsletters." When you select "People," you will see a list in alphabetical order by surname of all of the people who have been written about in our association's newsletters. Included are the issues and page numbers where they appear. By clicking on the link, you will be taken to that issue and can then go to the page on which to read about the person you have chosen.

The "Newsletters" feature brings you a list of past newsletters all the way back to issue #1, which was published in 1993, the year our association came into being. You can select any of these and will then be able to read the entire issue as it appeared.

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WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

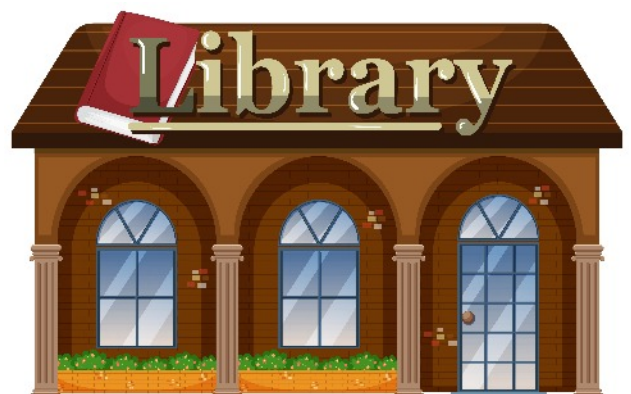
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RALPH H. CARRUTHERS

Ralph Herbert Carruthers was born in Thornhill, Manitoba, Canada, on September 2, 1903. He received his BA (with Honors) from Queens University, Kingston, Ontario, Canada, in 1926. While a student, he became a member of the Canadian Institute of Chemistry, a background that informed his eventual career. Carruthers crossed the border into Ogdensburg, New York, on May 7, 1926, giving his occupation as "Chemist Librarian." He was to enter the Columbia University School of Library Service, obtaining his BS in 1927.

Carruthers began his NYPL career immediately upon graduation from Columbia. He was placed in the Science Division in the 42nd Street building but within a year was made head of the Photostat Desk, part of the Main Reading Room. Other than a brief period in the 1930s when he was a reference librarian on the Information Desk in Room 315, he devoted his entire NYPL career to the development of copy services. Some of us will remember when the Library's Photographic Service provided photostats as a less expensive alternative to photographs; this service was not phased out until 1985. Authors would sometimes order them to copy images to present to their publishers for final selection prior to ordering a photograph since the quality of a photostat was not quite good enough for reproduction in a book or article. But in the days before xerography or quick copies or photocopies, photostats were used by researchers to copy documents, to reproduce entire volumes for purchase by individuals or institutions, and also for preservation purposes when the original was in poor condition. In the latter case, the resulting product might actually take up more precious shelf space than the original. And the process for photostatic reproduction of an entire volume was extremely time-consuming.

In 1937, Carruthers co-authored with Harry B. Weiss a volume that for many years became a standard source in the field of preservation, *Insect Enemies of Books* ([full text](#) available via HathiTrust Digital Library). Published by NYPL, it was a reprint of a series from the *Bulletin* (September-December 1936). It included an extensive annotated bibliography and illustrations of the very insects that put books in peril,

such as roaches, silverfish, termites, and various types of beetles.

With his science background, experience at the Photostat Desk, and interest in preservation of library materials, it was perhaps inevitable that Carruthers would become a pioneer in the development of microfilm in libraries. The American Library Association in 1937 awarded Carruthers a fellowship for advanced study at Columbia University, the topic being a survey of photographic issues in libraries. And also in 1937, after several years of using microfilm experimentally to copy newspapers, NYPL initiated a ramped-up microfilm program. In recognition of its growing importance, the Library renamed the Photostat Desk the Photographic Service the following year. Carruthers and the NYPL worked with manufacturers of cameras and machines for reading microfilm to improve the process which at the beginning literally employed a jury-rigged Leica camera lens and a cigar box. That same year, ALA began to publish the *Journal of Documentary Reproduction*, under the supervision of the Committee on Photographic Reproduction of Library Materials. Carruthers soon became Chair of the Committee and Associate Editor of the *Journal*. As development of microfilm in libraries was moving along, events were taking place in the world that would have a major impact on the use and development of microform. In late 1939, mindful of the perilous situation in Europe and concerned about library collections threatened by war, the American Council of Learned Societies held a conference to plan "for preserving the records of civilization." Carruthers attended the conference as a microfilm specialist. It was soon too late for cameras to get to Europe, but a microfilming project was started in the British Museum and the Public Record Office of Great Britain. This effort was about preserving knowledge for posterity, but once the United States entered the War, there was an additional intelligence gathering imperative and one that microfilm could assist with. President Franklin Roosevelt authorized the creation of the Interdepartmental Committee for the Acquisition of Foreign Publications (IDC).

Offices were set up in three neutral countries: Switzerland, Sweden, and Portugal, and staff also operated in Istanbul, Cairo, and Chungking (Chongqing). The Stockholm and Lisbon offices were the best places to acquire AXIS publications. Ralph

Carruthers took a leave of absence from NYPL and was posted to head the Lisbon office. For the next two years, Carruthers and his team placed periodical subscriptions and visited bookstores that sold German publications, always careful not to be obvious about what they were doing and to avoid suspicion by German publishers and the Portuguese authorities. Carruthers had arrangements with news agents and members of resistance groups who supplied their own clandestine newspapers and magazines. Among the types of documents Carruthers microfilmed were enemy newspapers, railroad directories and timetables, maps, and pre-war Baedeker guide books. Especially prized were German scientific publications. At the War's end, the IDC claimed credit for such intelligence as:

- Details of the reorganization of the German arms and munitions industry in late 1942.
- Existence of dry docks in Varna, Bulgaria, a bombing target.
- Number and structure of Waffen SS units in Hungary, Slovakia, and Romania.
- Identification of Russian volunteer units in the German army.
- Conversion of Russian trains to run on German tracks.
- More accurate AXIS casualty figures gleaned from death notices in the pages of local newspapers.
- Detailed descriptions of German atomic fission experiments that were essential to the success of the Manhattan Project.

Although the IDC was obviously a useful intelligence tool, and William Donovan, head of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), was amenable to placing it within his department, there was another more prosaic reason for its being part of the spy agency. As an independent agency, it would be responsible to the Bureau of the Budget, which demanded a paper trail for orders and payments. To be paid by official U.S. government funds would tip off the true nature of the reason for those subscriptions to foreign publications. In other cases, the IDC purchased materials from sources

who, for their own protection, did not want to be paid by funds traceable to the U.S. Government. The OSS, due to the nature of its work, was “unvouchered” and thus could simply provide cash.

Of course, all of these paper documents added up to a lot of tonnage, and this is where microfilming played its part. Upon receipt, the newspapers, periodicals, and books were microfilmed, much reducing the size and weight of the shipments (by air) to government agencies in the U.S. As the tide of war shifted in 1944 and AXIS publications decreased due to the effectiveness of Allied bombing, Carruthers left Lisbon to take over the London office of the IDC. He met with IDC agents for the last time in Paris in July 1945, and this is the photograph that appeared in Winks and was referenced in Louis Becker's oral history.



Office of Strategic Services, 79 Champs-Élysées, Paris. Seated: Lt. (Jg) Vernon Munroe; Mr. Ross Finney; Lt. Commander Dwight C. Baker; Pvt. Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr.; Mr. Ralph Carruthers; Ensign Lawrence Stevens; Mr. Harold C. Deutsch; Lt. William Koren; Lt. (Jg) Just Lunning. Standing: Cpl. Chat Paterson; Lt. Fred Foster; Cpl. Robert I. Kull.

Staff News, November 1, 1945, printed the following notice:

Photographic Service: Mr. Ralph H. Carruthers will return to the Library from his leave of absence on November 1, 1945. With his coming the Photographic Service section will

become a division with Mr. Carruthers as chief. This Division will comprise the order desk, the microfilm reading room in 316, and the laboratory in Room 68A.

The *Staff News* announcement of his return contrasts with his departure in 1942 when there was no mention of it. Throughout the war years, *Staff News* ran regular notices of staff members departing for military service. Those who served ran the gamut from Pages to Clerks to Librarians to Division Chiefs. Sadly, there also appear mentions of casualties, MIAs, and POWs. But Ralph Carruthers wasn't technically gone for military service, and his role in the war had been a clandestine one.

Post-war, as Chief of Photographic Service, Carruthers continued to be active in his field as a member of professional committees and by publishing articles. In 1958, he married Winifred Gambrill (1905-1993), who was Branch Librarian at the Fort Washington Regional Library. They had known each other since library school and began their NYPL careers the same year. Carruthers retired February 26, 1965, twenty years after his return from the War, leaving a division which had grown to a staff of 70. He said he looked forward to having time to bird watch, garden, read, and, not surprisingly, take photographs. He had a deservedly long retirement, and died September 16, 1997. He and Winifred are interred together in Bowmanville Cemetery, Ontario, Canada.

When contacted for further thoughts about Carruthers for the purpose of this brief biographical sketch, Louis Becker expanded on the remarks in his oral history:

[Carruthers] would leave his office and help the readers to fill out the forms required for quick copies (xeroxing of material) and count the pages to figure out the cost. And in those summer months when the room became very warm. he would leave his jacket in his office. I thought at the time that here is a person, a Division Chief, who doesn't think he is too important to do some work on a clerical level. That did impress me.

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Answer to "Holiday Party" photo in last issue:

Hara Seltzer says "one of the people in the photo was Mercy Kellogg".

REMEMBERING AUGUSTA BAKER



From Wikipedia

Augusta Braxton Baker was born on April 1, 1911, in Baltimore, Maryland. Both of her parents were schoolteachers, who instilled in her a love of reading. During the day while her parents worked, her grandmother, Augusta Fax (from whom she received her name) cared for her and told her stories. Baker delighted in these stories, carrying her love for them throughout her life. She learned to read before starting elementary school, later enrolling in the racially segregated Black high school where her father taught, and graduating at the age of 16. Baker then entered the University of Pittsburgh, where she both met and married James Baker by the end of her sophomore year.

Relocating with her husband to New York, Baker sought to transfer to Albany Teacher's College (now the State University of New York at Albany), only to be met with racial opposition from the college. Eleanor Roosevelt, the wife of Franklin Roosevelt (who was then the Governor of New York), was on the board of the Albany Interracial Council (now the Albany Urban League). Mrs. Roosevelt heavily advocated for Baker's transfer. Though the college did

not want to admit Black people, they also did not want to oppose the governor's wife, and Baker was admitted. While there, she aimed toward a different career and wrote, "I discovered I loved books, but I didn't love teaching." She completed her education there, earning a B.A. degree in education in 1933 and a B.S. in library science in 1934. She became the first African-American to earn a master's degree in librarianship from the college. After graduation, Baker taught for a few years, until she was hired in 1937 as the children's librarian at the New York Public Library's 135th Street Branch (now the Countee Cullen Regional Branch) in Harlem. Baker applied three times before the head of children's services, Anne Carroll Moore, took a personal interest in her application. Moore later berated the director of the library for not passing along the application, as she was interested in anyone who showed an affinity for children's work.

In 1939, the branch began an effort to find and collect children's literature that portrayed Black people as something other than "servile buffoons," speaking in a rude dialect, and other such stereotypes. This collection, founded by Baker as the James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection of Children's Books, led to the publication of the first of a number of bibliographies of books for and about black children. Baker furthered this project by encouraging authors, illustrators, and publishers to produce, as well as libraries to acquire, books depicting Black people in a favorable light.

In 1953, she was appointed Storytelling Specialist and Assistant Coordinator of Children's Services. She became Coordinator of Children's Services in 1961, becoming the first African-American librarian in an administrative position in the New York Public Library (NYPL). In this role, she oversaw children's programs in the entire NYPL system and set policies for them. During this time, Baker also figured prominently in the American Library Association's Children's Services Division (now the Association for Library Service to Children), having served as its president. Additionally, she chaired the committee that awarded the Newbery Medal and the Caldecott Medal. Furthermore, Baker influenced many children's authors and illustrators—such as Maurice Sendak, Madeleine L'Engle, Ezra Jack Keats, and

John Steptoe—while in this position. She also worked as a consultant for the then newly created children's television series *Sesame Street*.

In 1946, she published an extensive bibliography of titles relating to the Black experience titled Books about Negro Life for Children. In a 1943 article, Baker stated her criteria for selection. The books included should be ones "that give an unbiased, accurate, well rounded picture of Negro life in all parts of the world." The lists and the standards were freely distributed from 135th Street Branch in Harlem. Many librarians, editors, and authors of the time used the lists in conjunction with their own work. In 1971, it was retitled The Black Experience in Children's Books, and its criteria played an important part in bringing awareness about harmful stereotypes in Helen Bannerman's The Story of Little Black Sambo.

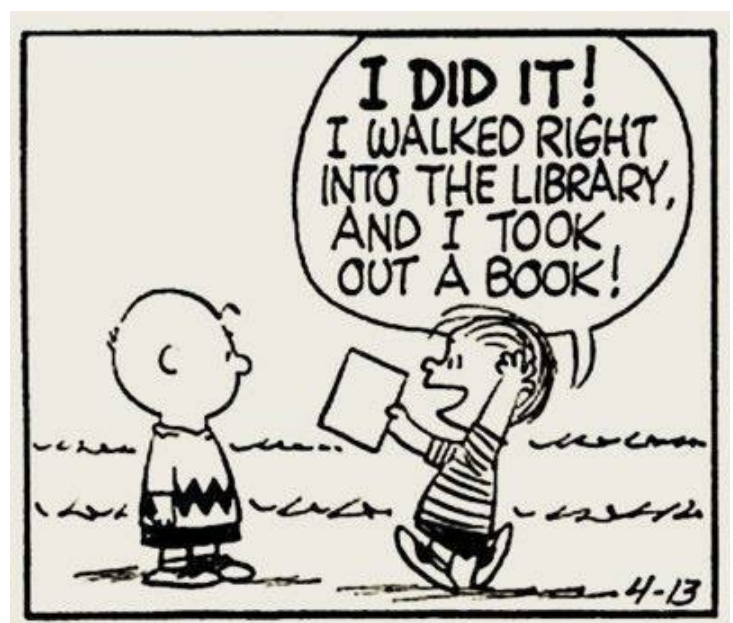
In 1974, Baker retired from the New York Public Library. However, in 1980, she returned to librarianship to assume the newly created Storyteller-in-Residence position at the University of South Carolina; this was also the first such position in any American university at the time. She remained there until her second retirement in 1994. During her time there, Baker cowrote a book entitled *Storytelling: Art and Technique* with colleague Ellin Green, which was published in 1987.

After a long illness, Baker died at the age of 86 on February 23, 1998. Her legacy has remained even

today, particularly through the annual "Baker's Dozen: A Celebration of Stories" storytelling festival. Sponsored by the University of South Carolina College of Information and Communications and the Richland County Public Library, this festival originated in 1987 during Baker's time at the University and is celebrated still to this day. The College of Information and Communications also created an endowed chair bearing Baker's name in 2011. In 2019, Dr. Nicole A. Cooke was appointed the Augusta Baker Endowment Chair.

When asked: "What do you tell your students when you conduct your workshops?" Baker stated: "I tell them what I've always said. Let the story tell itself, and if it is a good story and you have prepared it well, you do not need all the extras—the costumes, the histrionics, the high drama. Children of all ages do want to hear stories. Select well, prepare well, and then go forth, stand tall, and just tell."

Her legacy also continues through the Augusta Baker Collection of Children's Literature and Folklore at the University of South Carolina. The collection, donated by her son, James H. Baker III, contains over 1,600 children's books, including materials from her personal and working library, as well as papers, illustrations, and anthologies of folktales Baker used during her career.



THROUGH PAPHLAGONIA WITH A DONKEY; AN ADVENTURE IN THE TURKISH ISFENDIYARS



By DAVID RICHARD BEASLEY

DAVID BEASLEY

I have re-issued *Through Paphlagonia with a Donkey; an Adventure in the Turkish Isfendiyars* (with addendum), \$25 plus \$10 postage. Send cheque made out to David Beasley to David Beasley, 7-190 Argyle St, Simcoe, ON N3Y 0C1, Canada. I launched it on Saturday, May 27, in Simcoe. Many of my colleagues enjoyed it when it came out in 1983. I looked through my account book from that time, and the names of purchasers are like a roster of people who spring visually to mind, many of whom I have not thought of for years, and many, I suppose, who have passed away. I have two entries for M.L. Frederick [Moritia-Leah Frederick], one for her and one for her nephew. I recall that she reviewed it for the Union Newsletter and said she was in her fifth reading. I know she loved it. I think she had lived some time in Turkey. The book has been out of print for decades, but I issued it again because I think it is timeless, and those who had copies may have lost them or found they broke apart as the paperback was not bound well. I attach a copy of the front cover.

I am issuing “Operations of the Army under General Wolfe,” an essay written in 1844 that is a full description of the action around Quebec in 1759. It is unknown. I reprinted with it Major Richardson’s “A Canadian Campaign,” his essay on the North American Indians, and his “Recollections of the West Indies” (from when he was a British officer in Barbados and Grenada in 1817-1818—illuminating about a slave society). Also issued is my essay on retracing the route through the Cantabrica mountains in Spain taken by the British Auxiliary Force in 1836 and recorded by Richardson. It was arduous for an army but easy for me in a car. I recorded the changes and the sameness from 1836 to 1984.

I have also finished several long essays to be published as *Canadian Authors You Should Know*; some have been published in periodicals. I await notice whether established publishers will issue it.

I was in Paris, France, in February to check for documents in the Archives Nationales; I found the document numbers, but the documents were missing! I spent time in Pau near the Pyrenees—interesting but cold. Paris is not the same, but who could expect it to be when over-run by immigration and terrorist attacks. French cooking is no longer cordon bleu, at least what I encountered. Maybe I should have stayed at the Ritz!

BETTY GUBERT

From the Fall/Winter 2022/2023 Newsletter, I learned that Jane Kunstler has a collection in her name located at a Kansas university. Kudos to Jane! That reminded me of my own collection, housed at the Vivian G. Harsh Research Collection of Afro-American History and Literature in the Carter G. Woodson Regional Library of the Chicago Public Library. It is called the Betty Gubert Collection of African Americans in Aviation, with dates ranging from 1927-2002. It consists of fourteen archival boxes (twelve linear feet).

Donated in 2010, it is my personal research collection that I constructed while authoring, co-authoring, editing, and compiling *Invisible Wings: An Annotated Bibliography on Blacks in Aviation 1916-1993* (1994) and *Distinguished African Americans in Aviation and Space Science* (2002). About 40 monographs are

included, many signed or inscribed. The arrangement of the papers is in four series: Research Notes, Subject Research Files, Photographs, and Memorabilia. The Subject Research Files are the main part of the collection, as they consist of 143 folders on individual pilots and scientists. Included in the collection are newspaper clippings (often from rare or hard-to-find sources), pamphlets, aviation publications, letters, funeral programs, magazines, audiovisuals, and memorabilia.

I absolutely loved doing this research and amassing this material. I did it while I was working and when I retired. Besides the exciting facts and stories that kept turning up, I was privileged to meet in person some of the pilots and their families, as well as a host of others interested in the history of African Americans in aviation. I am happy to say the field seems to have expanded manyfold, if Facebook is to be believed. I often see articles about new Black pilots.

ALAN PALLY

In 2022-2023, I curated a couple of programs for HB Studio, the acting school where I'm on the Board of Directors. In October, I curated "Cultural Icons of Greenwich Village," a program of readings and commentary focusing on the life and work of Susan Glaspell, Djuna Barnes, Lorraine Hansberry, and Maria Irene Fornes. In April 2023, I curated "Noël Coward's *Design for Living* at 90: 'This Disgusting Three-Sided Erotic Hotch-Potch,'" which featured my commentary as well as actors reading scenes from the play. I'm currently working on curating a digital exhibition for the Al Hirschfeld Foundation in conjunction with the Noël Coward Foundation, where I'm also on the Board. The title of the exhibition, which will be presented as part of *Noël Coward 125*, is "Men About Town: Al Hirschfeld Draws Noël Coward."

HARRIET SHALAT

I've been involved with the NYC Organization of Public Service Retirees since 2021 when the City announced it was eliminating the premium-free healthcare we had been told would be covered for us until we died (in compensation for lower wages and years of no raises, etc.) We were told that unless we joined an (inferior) Medicare Advantage Plan, we'd

have to pay \$191 per person, per month for our Medicare Part B. The Organization, headed by President Marianne Pizzitola (an FDNY First Responder who had to retire due to injuries suffered on 9/11 and its aftermath), filed a lawsuit and won. The City appealed. The Organization won again. The City imposed \$15 copays in 2022. The Organization won in court again. Later that year, the City urged the City Council to repeal Section 12-126 of the Administrative Code guaranteeing City workers free healthcare for life, which it had been doing for over fifty years and which was the basis of our court win. The City Council refused to do so. The City and the Municipal Labor Committee then unleashed the Nuclear Option—eliminating all retiree health plans except for a new MAP, which would force retirees to accept the plan or keep Traditional Medicare and purchase a costly Medigap plan on our own. A new lawsuit was filed on May 31, 2023.

From the beginning, NYPL retirees Carol Anshien, Dana Simon, several others, and I have been providing to NYPLRA news updates and helpful info about the various plans. Since stressed-out retirees have been sending healthcare questions to the NYPLRA lately, Carol and I have been answering these questions. We also held a Zoom (with telephone access) on June 9th, before the deadline for waiving our City healthcare on July 10th.

KARLAN SICK

Literacy for Incarcerated Teens continues to provide books, magazines, and programs to detained teens in New York State. Fortunately, donors send money so that LIT is able to enrich the lives of these young people. We have no staff, and volunteer retirees do necessary work. LIT is able to pay some programmers who conduct writing workshops and book discussions. Maybe you would like to join us? Take a look at the LIT website:

<https://www.literacyforincarceratedteens.org>.

BOSILJKA STEVANOVIC

I am Bosiljka Stevanovic; I worked at Donnell as the head of the World Languages Collection. I have two objects from Donnell that I was given to keep until the new library opened in the new building located in the same place. I never got to do that, but I am eager to

find a home for them again at whatever branch of the NYPL that wants them—or perhaps a person from the staff might like them and want them. One is a ceramic dish made by a staff member a very long time



ago. The other is a Middle Eastern type of thing to carry water in, copper, I think. That one, full of dried flowers, graced the return desk for years and years. The day before the dismantling crew was to come in, someone said to me: "Take them, or else they will be thrown out tonight." I hope someone will want them.

JOSEPHINE CHAN YUNG

Making Music in the Pandemic

I retired in 2004 as a Librarian III (Supervising Music Librarian) from the Library for the Performing Arts. From approximately 2002 to 2016, I regularly played flute and piano recitals with flutist Norman Dee at the Bruno Walter Auditorium of the Library for the Performing Arts and at the former Donnell Library, as well as at other venues such as the old Steinway Hall and the Yamaha Piano Salon. I am forever grateful to our Program Directors, Alan Pally and Cheryl Raymond, for giving us the opportunities to perform. My husband Karl and I moved from Westchester to Queens in 2017, and Karl passed away in the midst of the Pandemic (not from COVID). All of a sudden, I was struggling to sign up on Instacart for food delivery or getting up at the crack of dawn to



take advantage of "senior hours" in the supermarket. My daily routine consisted of watching COVID updates by the former Governor Cuomo on TV. My only companion was my piano. As we were confined more to our building, I began to interact more with neighbors. A kind young couple offered to do food shopping and run some errands for me. Instead of receiving complaints about my noisy piano practicing, I was told by a couple on the same floor that they sometimes stood in front of my apartment to listen to my playing. They are an artist and an NYU Professor. They encouraged me to play a program. One day I was presented with a painting of me playing the piano. It was done by the artist, unbeknownst to me.

I tested the water by learning a short piano piece, "Night Winds," by Charles T. Griffes, an American composer based in Tarrytown, New York. He died during the Spanish Flu. I recorded a crude version of it on my iPhone. It seems I can still learn something new in my old age! Then I remembered that Beethoven's "Spring Sonata" for Violin and Piano was the last piece that my friend and colleague Kris Shuman played before she stopped playing the violin. So I learned the sonata, hoping that she would pick up her violin again someday. I realize the violin is a difficult instrument to resume playing. As the vaccine became available, I contacted my longtime music partner, flutist Norman Dee, and we decided to play mini-concerts, about half an hour long, in the spring and fall for our friends and neighbors in my apartment. We limited the audience to twelve to seventeen people, masks optional. So far, we have presented five mini-concerts, playing:

Beethoven's Spring Sonata
(violin part played by flutist)
Mozart sonata for violin and piano, K. 304 in e minor
Prokofiev sonata No. 2 for flute and piano
(1st movement)
Chaminade Concertino. Op. 107 for flute and piano
J. S. Bach Sonata for violin and keyboard in E major
BWV 1016
Robert Schumann Sonata No. 1 Op. 105 for violin and
piano

Norman has joined a newly formed Woodwind Quintet. I always rely on him for his musicianship, discipline, and can-do spirit. Incidentally, his wife, Camille Dee, is an NYPL retiree also, a Librarian II in

the Theatre Collection of LPA. Recently, my brother Albert and his family from Canada attended our concerts. Albert is an Electrical Engineer, an amateur pianist, and a piano technician. It was great to have him around to tune my piano (a Steinway L) and to turn pages for me! I always dreaded having to face an unknown piano every time I performed. Now I get to play my own piano in the comfort of my home.

I hope you will share your musical experience with us here, and better still, join us to play some chamber music together.

My email address is:

josephinechanyung1@gmail.com

JACKIE GOLD ZUKOWSKY

My husband and I moved to a continuing care retirement community in March 2022 because of my mobility problems caused by spinal stenosis, so we have been here for a little over one year.

We think we made the right decision. The name of the residence is The Harborside, and it is in Port Washington, which is the nearest such place to our family and friends in Queens and Brooklyn. The facility offers many resources besides meals, such as daily physical fitness classes, including core flex fitness and conditioning, yoga, and aquacise in the pool. Entertainment includes current events discussions led by a former political science professor, musical events, card games, trivia, bridge, knitting club, and language groups that include Italian, Yiddish, and French. We also have weekly housekeeping service. There was an article in *New York Magazine*, the April 10-23, 2023, issue, about screenwriter, Paul Schrader, who is married to the actress Mary Beth Hurt; she was diagnosed with Alzheimer's eight years ago. He said they stayed in their longtime residence for years and eventually found it wasn't sustainable. His health was taking a downturn, and he still wanted to work. They moved into Coterie, the Hudson Yards senior living facility, similar to Harborside, which has a memory unit in the same building, like here, so he could be close to his wife. Coterie is much more expensive and luxurious than here.

LEONA ADAMS
THE UNSUNG ADVOCATE HEROINE OF THE WEST FARMS BRANCH LIBRARY

The West Farms community is in the Bronx. Its history dates back to the time of Jonas Bronck in the late 1600s when the area was part of Westchester. Farming had been the traditional occupation up until the late 1890s when a great number of immigrants began to arrive from such European countries as Austria-Hungary and Germany. These men and women brought with them craft and trade skills that led to a shift from rural farms to a vibrant urban community of commerce, trade, manufacturing, cultural institutions, and many Houses of Worship. The manufacturing companies varied from home workshops to massive buildings like the Bronx Wool and Leather Company and the Northern Gas Company Plant along the Bronx River.

By the 1920s, the residents had an increasing number of entertainment venues, including, the Rudolph Schildkraut and Prospect Yiddish theatres. There were also parks, the Bronx Zoo, restaurants, and many stores. But something was missing—a public library that was free and accessible to all. So The New York Public Library decided to open a sub-station in 1929.

The library was compact, to say the least. By the late 1940s and early 1950s, the sub-station was just too small. To the rescue came Leona Adams, mother of three and the head designer and supervisor of the Clothing Patterns Division of McCall's. Shocked, Leona was not going to hear of another incidence of children, including her own, being turned away for lack of chairs and tables. At this time, going to any library to do what was called “copy book homework” from non-circulating encyclopedias was the standard practice. Leona decided something must be done and quickly. She organized the “Leona Army.” The “Army” consisted of a vocal group of mothers who, with Leona’s assistance, mobilized themselves into a formidable advocacy group. As Leona canvassed the West Farms area for sponsors and more supporters, her “Army” wrote and collected letters from anyone of any age who was willing to write to politicians, local newspapers, and the NYPL Administration and Board of Trustees. Petitions were passed among the community.

But those efforts weren't enough. Leona decided to lead “Mothers’ Rallies.” Carrying signs and with their children accompanying them, mothers marched and orated in front of the sub-station after school, during

the day, and on Saturdays. According to Leona, after two years NYPL finally decided to find land and build a “real branch.” As the construction began, Leona and the “Army” kept an almost daily watch over the building's progress. Leona never hesitated to ask questions of the construction crew and any NYPL staff member who may have been on the site. The branch was her mission. She had a powerful sense of conviction that the West Farms Branch would provide more seating, more books, and more programs. She was determined that no child would ever again be denied seeing a program or completing a homework assignment. Finally in 1954, Leona's dream came true. The new West Farms Branch opened with space for all!

The West Farms Branch population during the first half of the 20th century was predominately Jewish middle class. The branch offered newspapers and a small revolving book collection in Yiddish and Hebrew. During the second half of the the 20th century, a dramatic shift in the community's population occurred, the result of an influx of Latinx and African immigrants. In the 21st Century, the staff continues to be committed to the ever-evolving diverse West Farms community and offers print and non-print materials in several languages, ESOL classes, school visits, and online and in-library programs like children's Story Hour. The staff also partners with community-based organizations such as VIP Services, Community Board 6, Cardinal McCloskey Daycare Center, and Phipps Neighborhoods Center. West Farms Branch is located 2085 Honeywell Avenue, between E.179th and E.180th Streets and three blocks from the zoo.

Leona would be so proud. Her mission continues!!!



REMEMBERING THE RECORD COLLECTION

By Estelle Friedman

Last year, I read that Brooklyn Public Library's central library is starting a record collection and will circulate four hundred records. I started to reminisce about the time I first began working for NYPL. My first appointment was at the Donnell Record Library at 20 West 53rd Street. At first, we were the only branch that circulated records. We had thousands—both a special listening collection and a circulating collection. Believe it or not, very few records were vandalized. In fact, most of the records we discarded were used until they were all worn out.

Our collection included everything from jazz to classical, from folk and pop to chamber music, opera, and vocals. Our spoken collection was second to none; it included Shakespeare as well as Broadway plays.

I remember that one day a man came up to me at the desk and told me that he knew why the Japanese had attacked us at Pearl Harbor during World War II: "It was because of Cio Cio San (from *Madame*

Butterfly). I told him I really didn't think so, but he was convinced he was right.

CBS was located just down the block. One day I received a call that the actor Edward Everett Horton had died and did we have a record of his voice. We were happy to oblige. Several times young people would come in looking for the proper music to play at their weddings. Our spoken collection also included poetry readings as well as languages to learn—not only the most popular ones but also languages such as Flemish, Hindi, and Turkish.

Our public not only borrowed but also constantly used our special listening collection. The collection attracted all kinds of people of all ages and nationalities. We were able to help school children with assignments; for example, there was a teenager who had an assignment on the weather and atmosphere—what better way to help than to give him Tom Lehrer's song "Pollution!"

Margaret Greenhall was my first supervisor, and she showed me all the wonderful ins and outs not only of the building but of NYPL itself. It was a wonderful introduction for me.

NAME THAT RETIREE

(A quiz brought to you by the Oral History Project Committee)

1. After leaving her position in the Personnel Office, who worked for the architect I.M. Pei?
2. Who grew up in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, which was established in 1942 as a production site for the Manhattan Project?
3. Who spent a year and a half playing "I Will Survive" with the Gloria Gaynor World Tour band?
4. Who worked at the Illinois Pavilion of the 1964 New York World's Fair and got to meet Walt Disney, who visited the Fair before the exhibit opened?
5. Who is the person in this photograph with Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg?



Michael R. Bloomberg

Answers on page 16

EMPIRE STATE CENTER FOR THE BOOK ZOOM TALK BY ROCCO STAINO

On Tuesday, March 21, around two dozen current and future retirees attended a Zoom talk by Rocco Staino. Those who listened to the talk live in places that range from New York and New Jersey all the way to Hawaii.

The speaker, Rocco Staino, is a retired school librarian and a past president of the New York Library Association. He is the Director of the Empire State Center for the Book, the New York State affiliate of the Library of Congress' Center for the Book, and is active on state and national levels. Rocco stated that the Center for the Book has no steady funding and receives no money from LC. He is a volunteer and would welcome more volunteers; he especially needs someone to run the website. Many non-profits folded during Covid, but the Center for the Book survived. It is housed at the New York Library Association, but NYLA wants the Center to find a new home. Possible new homes are the NY State Writers Institute and Literary New York.

The Center for the book established the New York State Writers Hall of Fame in 2010. The definition of writer includes authors of both fiction and non-fiction as well as journalists and lyricists. Robert Caro and Mary Gordon were the first living inductees. People have campaigned to have someone inducted into the Writers Hall of Fame. It is possible to attend the ceremony online. In 2022, the writers inducted were

Irving Berlin, lyricist; Min Jin Lee, author; James McBride, author; and Audre Lourde, poet. For 2023, Walter Moseley is being considered; his current book is *Every Man a King*. Also being considered is Bernard Waber of *Lyle, Lyle, Crocodile* fame. Interestingly, Bob Dylan and Gloria Steinem both declined to be inducted.

The Center for the Book presents various programs and has also established Literary Landmarks, plaques placed in locations around New York State. They range from the Algonquin Hotel to a branch of the Brooklyn Public Library frequented by Betty Smith. There is a plaque honoring Erich Maria Remarque, author of *All Quiet on the Western Front*, at his city home on East 57th Street. His novel *Shadows in Paradise* is set in the building. The United for Libraries website (a division of ALA), shows Literary Landmarks by state.

Rocco also represents New York at the National Book Festival. Every year, each state chooses titles. *Harlem Shuffle* by Colson Whitehead was New York's choice one year. Children's books have often been chosen. Rocco can be reached at rocco.staino@gmail.com or (914) 475-3857.

<https://www.nyla.org/4dcgi/cftb.html?MenuKey=CFTB>

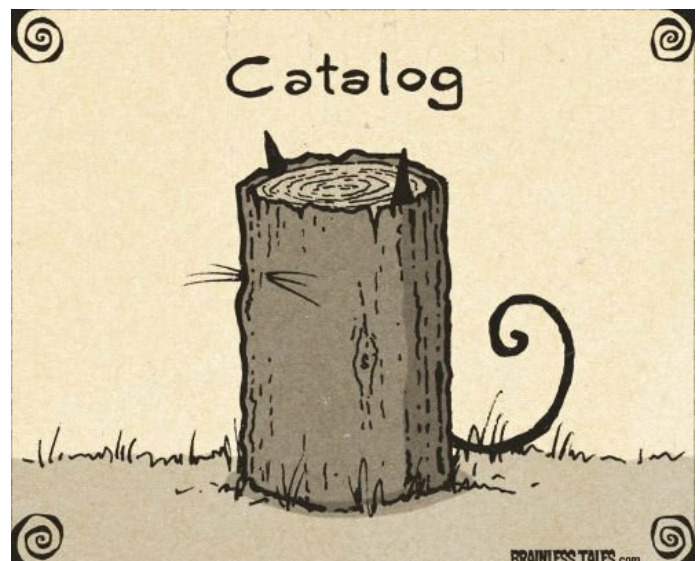
FICTION ABOUT LIBRARIES

The Invisible Library by Genevieve Cogman

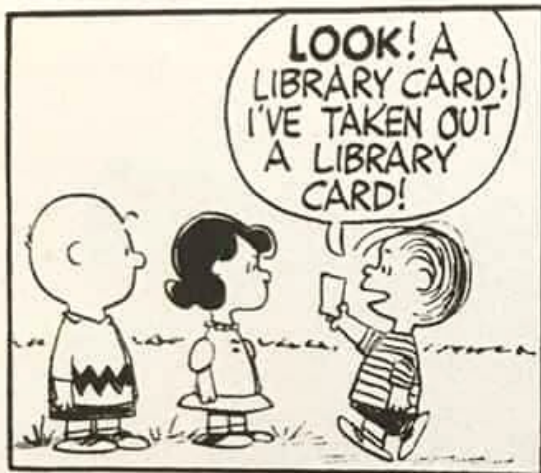
The Library of the Unwritten by A.J. Hackwith

The Strange Library by Haruki Murakami

The Dark Library by Cyrille Martinez

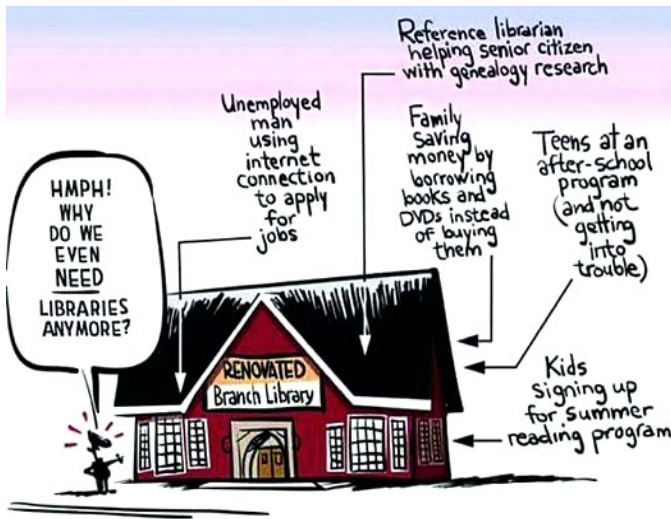


LIBRARY HUMOR



QUIZ ANSWERS

1. Agnes Babich, who retired in 1984 as Manager of Staff Benefits.
2. Alice Hudson, who retired in 2009 as Chief of the Map Division.
3. Glenn Mills, who retired in 2009 as Senior Librarian at Jefferson Market.
4. Harriet Shalat, who retired in 2009 as Supervising Librarian of Ask NYPL.
5. Ismael Alicea, who retired in 2009 as Assistant Director of Adult & Outreach Services.



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>

IDIOMS ABOUT BOOKS

Book smart - have a lot of knowledge acquired from books but little practical experience or social skills

Bring someone to book - punish someone or make them account for doing something wrong

A closed book - someone or something difficult to know

An open book - someone who shows easily what he or she is thinking or feeling

Do something by the book - do something by strictly following the rules

Hit the books - a determined effort to study seriously, especially before an exam

Be on the same page - share the same understanding or knowledge about something

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facebook.com/search/top?q=nypl%20retirees

The NYPL Retirees website can be reached at
www.nyplretirees.org