

# New York Public Library Retirees Association Newsletter

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## REMARKABLE LIBRARIANS: NYPL BRANCH LIBRARIANS IN THE FIRST 50 YEARS

After retiring twice, first from the NYPL where he created the NYPL Archives, and then from The Center for Jewish History, Bob Sink is pursuing a new project -compiling a history of the lives of the 155 remarkable librarians who headed neighborhood branch libraries during the first 50 years of the Circulation Department. At our October membership meeting, he shared his research experiences with us.

Sink began by compiling basic demographic, biographical, and professional information on these librarians. Along the way he uncovered many extraordinary stories. From newspaper clippings he learned that Helen Wark Grannis served as a courier for the American Red Cross during World War I. She carried dispatches from one post to another over mountain roads infested by bandits while she traveled by horse and donkey cart and by walking with only her loyal dog for companionship and help. Gladys Young Leslie left the NYPL to become the founding director of the Bennington College library. Helen Wessels worked for sixteen years for NYPL before she left to become editor of Library Journal. Esther Johnston was the first woman to head the Circulation Department and, at that time, the highest ranking female librarian in the country. In 1944, Margarethe Kortenbeutel testified before congress

and used her budget to show how difficult it was to survive on her salary at NYPL.

Sink's quantitative research revealed that these librarians were overwhelmingly female,



**Robert Sink**

overwhelmingly white, solidly single, not representative of the communities they served, and very different from the population of New York City. Though some were born in Europe, most were born in the United States; forty percent were born in New York State, the rest in twenty-eight states evenly spread across the country. Sink could not find the religious affiliation for one third of the librarians. The religious affiliation of fifty-five percent of the librarians was Protestant. There were few Catholic or Jewish librarians.

Sink was surprised to find that thirty-seven percent of the Protestants were Episcopalian. Could social status and economic issues be the cause? Episcopalian women had the financial resources for a college education. They could take the six months or longer training courses in librarianship. An historian studying Episcopal women told Sink that Episcopal women were encouraged to make themselves useful, and both teaching and librarianship were seen as respectable professions. A reverence and respect for books carried over from the Episcopalians' focus on their Book of Common Prayer and their experience with books their families could afford to buy for their homes.

During the fifty-year period Sink studied, an overwhelming number of branch librarians were women. In only eight of the fifty years was a man head of a branch library. Male branch librarians were present in three distinct periods.

From 1904 to 1905, the NYPL absorbed the Webster Free Library and, with it, its librarian, Edwin White Gaillard. This ended when, in 1905, he was put in charge of school work in the NYPL. After he clashed with the formidable Anne Carroll Moore, head of work with children, he became the first Special Investigator for NYPL. The oddest part of this appointment was that he had been arrested for breaking and entering when he prowled rooftops of the West 80s as a youthful prank.

A change occurred from 1913 to 1917 when Edwin White Anderson, who had been Director of the New York State Library School and Assistant Director of NYPL, became its director. Anderson believed there should be men in librarianship. He hired three men who rapidly became branch librarians, then as rapidly left. A memoir by an administration physician called them "a failed experiment," but didn't say why they failed. Archives showed that two of the three peppered the director with ideas for new ventures or projects, such as developing a service to help business men around the city. It is possible that they expected administrative positions rather than service positions. They may have had less community interest than female librarians did.

Between 1917 and 1948, there were no professional male librarians in the branches, but there were two men working in the branches. One was Arthur Schomburg, who sold his collection to the NYPL and became the collection's curator. The other one was a Puerto Rican, Eduardo Pagan Tomay, who was assigned to the 115th Street Branch to work with the Spanish speaking population.

In the late 1930s, the NYPL began hiring men at the entry level. By 1948, three were promoted to branch librarian. By contrast, the Board of Trustees, the Director of NYPL, the Director of the Research Libraries, and the Director of the Circulation Department were all male. One exception came about when Francis St. John, the Director of the Circulation Department, enlisted in the Navy in World War II. Esther Johnston became Acting Director in his place. When St. John returned from the Navy, he was again Director but left in one year. Then Esther Johnson became permanent Director, the first female in this position. The NYPL continued to have an overwhelmingly female work force and an overwhelmingly male leadership.

Marital status was clear in 1901: there was not a single married librarian. In 1913, the Archives show,

## Listening to Bob Sink



the administration was annoyed when a librarian who planned to get married, and her advocates, sent memos asking if she would be fired when she married. There is no evidence that she was fired. It was said that if you were a children's librarian under Anne Carroll Moore and you got married, you were expected to leave. In the early period, Sink identified two children's librarians who were married. By 1950, one third of branch librarians were married. This was probably not an NYPL phenomenon but true for the profession as a whole. The depression gave librarians an incentive to get married and an incentive to keep working. There are reports in the library press that married women were the first to be laid off or fired in bad economic times. It was assumed that there was a male breadwinner.

In the first half of the twentieth century, there were several ways to train to become a librarian. One could go to a summer institute, attend training classes at the library (NYPL had its own in-house training

school), or get a BA in Library Science at a college with the fourth year devoted to librarianship. The NYPL library school began in 1911 and closed in 1926. Most in-house training was in the circulating libraries, although there was some in the research libraries. Eighty percent of librarians had some formal training. In the early years that was largely at summer institutes. Seventy percent of the librarians had some library school training, but many didn't get a degree. Fifteen percent of the librarians had a combination of different kinds of training.

Sink observed library students when he taught, first at Columbia, then at Queens College, and finally at St. John's College. The students had already decided whether they would work in public libraries or academic libraries. They expected that work in public libraries would not be as valued as work in an academic library. The early years at the NYPL did not have this sharp distinction. About a quarter of the librarians in Sink's study had worked in an academic

library at some point in their careers, either before or after working in NYPL. Rae Stockham was director of Drake College Library in Iowa before coming to NYPL. Ruth Wellman took a leave of absence in the 1930s to create the New School Library before returning to NYPL. Loda Mae Hopkins, retired as Coordinator at Donnell to become Assistant Director, and then Director, of Libraries, at Simmons College.

Up until the 1930's, branch librarians had lots of autonomy and very little interference from the administration. Since many of the librarians had moved to New York from out of state, they may have been an independent breed. There was no personnel department until 1948. In 1914, some personnel work was done by the Supervisor of Branch Libraries who was second in command to the Director of the Circulation Department. Largely though, the branch librarians decided who was hired and who was promoted. Applicants had to pass a test that would seem rigorous by today's standards. They had to work in three different branches before a branch librarian evaluated their work. A branch librarian prepared a written report showing whether their work qualified them for hire and whether they would fit into the culture of the institution. Most of the time, after a negative report, the applicant was not hired. Maybe male applicants were discouraged by this process. The first step for promotion was a written test. Then the applicant served in an acting capacity at three branches at the wished-for grade level. The applicant had real authority and real responsibility. Then there was a written evaluation.

Another reason for the autonomy of branch librarians was that the administration was very busy building new branches. In 1901, there were eleven circulating branches. Andrew Carnegie gave \$5.2 million to build branches with the proviso that the city would run these branches and pay for their book budgets. Administrators were involved in the building of 43 branches. They didn't have time to deal with personnel issues. They couldn't pay attention to the

day-to-day operation of the branches. Also, there was a strong library ethic that each community was different and that librarians should exercise their judgment in how to meet the needs of each community.

Sink's favorite example of autonomy was that of Isabel de Treville, who came from South Carolina in 1891 to work in the New York Free Circulating Library, which later became the George Bruce Branch. She was still head of the branch in 1929 when she died. A 1941 memo states that Miss de Treville violated the contract between New York City and the NYPL by not stamping "The Property of the City of New York" on each book. Franklin Hopper, Director of the Circulation Department, wrote back in reply, "I'm not surprised." Miss de Treville was noted for her independent spirit and did everything possible for her branch to operate independently from the rest of the system. The Director knew this, and he let it happen.

Over time, branch librarians lost their autonomy for several reasons. The Carnegie branches were now built and the administration could pay attention to how the branches were run. Another reason was the advent of the Great Depression. When the city cut the library's budget, efficiency became a matter of frequent discussion, and committees looked at ways to systematize and centralize processing, which had been a local obligation.

Other outside factors entered into the change from autonomy. In 1923, the Williamson report on library education argued that library schools should not be in libraries but in colleges with their own faculties. The Columbia School of Library Services was formed by a combination of the New York State school in Albany and the NYPL library school. After 1926, NYPL no longer had a library school. Now branch librarians wouldn't be the instructors in the library school, just occasional lecturers at colleges. The

## Reception Before the Meeting



branch librarians would not have the opportunity to inculcate a certain culture.

A law requiring state certification for librarians starting in 1931 also affected branch librarian autonomy. The certification established rules for hiring and promoting. Except on the matter of entry level, the NYPL's procedures for tests, experience, and review met the state law. According to the new law you did not have to be a college graduate but instead would need two years of college and nine months of library training. At NYPL in 1931, the minimum requirement for entering the system was a high school degree. By practice, NYPL preferred a college degree. A library school degree became the de facto credential very quickly. A branch librarian couldn't say that a Columbia Library School graduate was not qualified.

New York Public Library employees never had civil service status. The city, which paid for the librarians, wanted the librarians under city control. The Library and the branch librarians did not want to lose their

autonomy. In 1917, the Library Employees Union was formed, headed by Maud Malone, who had Tammany Hall ties. Sick's reading of the archives is that she was "flaky." The city argued that librarians should not get a salary increase unless they got civil service status. At forums, there were presentations for and against civil service status. At one point the NYPL staff association, which all employees could join, had a membership vote. The result was 502 against having civil service status and one for. That one was Maud Malone.

Another problem for librarians was pensions. None of the three New York City library systems had pensions. Realizing there was a problem, John Shaw Billings began, as early as 1906, looking into some way to create a pension system for NYPL librarians. In later years, the administration consulted actuaries of the Carnegie Corporation and the predecessor of TIAA CREF. Most of the plans considered were of the insurance or annuity type. There were well established city and state pension systems by the 1920s, but there were two barriers to NYPL

employees joining the city pension system. First of all, NYPL employees were not city employees. Even if the city were willing to pay the 7% of all salaries needed to include NYPL employees, it would not include employees in the Research Department. The NYPL administration was not willing to pay the 7% independently for the research staff. Throughout the 1920s, the New York State legislature passed bills to include employees of New York City public libraries in the New York City pension system. In a reverse of the political climate of today, New York City could veto bills passed by New York State that solely applied to New York City. New York City mayors vetoed bills which would allow NYPL librarians to join the city pension system.

Every couple of years one finds wrenching descriptions of the plight of librarians. Hattie Estelle Olmsted was described as stooped and shriveled and hardly able to get about. But she was running a branch. Another branch librarian was nearly blind. Another one could not walk to the second floor of the branch she was running. All this was happening during the Depression. The librarians had been poorly paid throughout their careers; they were single without children to support them; they couldn't afford to quit their job; and they couldn't afford to retire. In addition, it also meant that the first assistants had little chance of promotion.

This changed through a combination of efforts. Citizen's committees, formed to improve the status of librarians, agitated for salary increases and pensions. Fiorello LaGuardia, with a soft spot for the downtrodden, finally allowed the public library staffs to join the New York State pension system. This included providing funding with prior credit for the staff. There were mass retirements in 1937. Our pensions today are thanks to the branch librarians who kept agitating, going to Albany, and fighting the city administration.

Though not part of his original study, Sink was also developing material on the racial integration of the library staff. The first milestone came when Ernestine Rose hired Catherine Lattimore as the first African-American librarian. Early in her career, Rose, as branch librarian of Seward Park, had organized that community's largely Jewish and Eastern European public in support of the library. In 1921, Rose left the NYPL to teach at the Carnegie Library School. She returned to the NYPL as branch librarian of the 135th Street Branch. She saw the area around the branch change in the 1910s and 1920s from overwhelmingly white to majority black. She hired Pura Belpre in 1922, the first Puerto Rican librarian in the NYPL. Nella Larsen, a novelist in the Harlem Renaissance, was hired and integrated the NYPL library school. Three other African-American librarians, Regina Andrews, Jean Blackwell Hutson, and Dorothy Robinson Homer were pioneers in heading branch libraries in the first fifty years of the NYPL.

Part of the impetus to hire African-Americans came from the personal commitment of Franklin Hopper, Chief of the Circulation Department. As a member of the national Urban League, he had connections to the African-American community. Because of his personal commitment to serve the African-American community and to have an integrated staff at the 135th Street Branch, he was made a trustee at Fisk, an historically Black college in Tennessee. During World War I, Ernestine Rose worked with "colored troupes" as part of war work for the American Library Association. She argued within ALA against racial segregation of libraries.

Another part of the impetus to hire African-Americans came from a strong ethos in the Circulation Department that the branch librarian should reach out to the branch's community and meet its needs. One of Ernestine Rose's mandates was to hire African-Americans, almost all of them without library training, and then to train them. There are almost no records of who these early hires were.

## Before the Meeting



Working against an integrated staff was a de facto quota system. Initially Regina Andrews was not hired, not because she was unqualified – she had worked for the Chicago Public Library – but because there were no “Negro slots.” The same thing happened to Jean Blackwell in 1938.

Another factor working against an integrated staff was branch librarian autonomy. If you were prejudiced, no one would force you to take an African-American. As Blackwell tells in her oral histories, first assistants under Ernestine Rose could not get the experience they needed for promotion if other branch librarians would not accept them as first assistants. The administration forced a branch librarian at 125th Street to give Blackwell the experience she needed. The branch librarian was not consulted, was opposed to having Blackwell on her staff, and did not speak to Blackwell the entire time she was at the branch.

A final negative factor was neighborhood resistance. What should the administration do with communities that did not want to see African-American librarians serving them? Did serving a community include consideration of its racist feelings? African-American librarians had to begin at 135th Street, gradually 115th Street was possible, and eventually other branches. Sink thinks Jean Blackwell Hutson, a very determined woman, was the Jackie Robinson of the Branch Libraries. Not a pleasant process position for her!

There were no African-American librarians in the Research Libraries until 1945, twenty-five years behind the branches, when one African-American librarian was hired. The new library union of the 1930s and 1940s agitated for integration of the Research Libraries, but there was resistance at the director level.

One of the problems Sink has had doing his research is getting personal archival materials, such as

correspondence and diaries. Sink hopes that his blog with the names of early branch librarians will lead family members doing Google searches to find his blog and help his research. For example, a woman in Florida contacted Sink to rave about her aunt, Gertrude Foster Hamilton.

Several of Sink's blog posts have been popular. One concerned the effect of the Milton Berle show on libraries. Another was one on diseased books. John Shaw Billings, the first director, invented a box to disinfect library books. In the 1920s people thought TB and diphtheria could be spread by books.

Sink heard suggestions from the audience on how to contact Sludock, Carruthers, Esther Johnson, and others. Suggestions included checking reports in the branches, checking alumni records of library schools, and contacting contemporaries of librarians. If personal papers can be found, research may include lesbians in the library. Sink's database gives addresses, and so, tangentially, roommates. Large urban centers provided cover for lesbians living together, but the reason for living together could be economics. Sink may look into the influence of the significant number of librarians from the south on integration of NYPL. Lively comments from the audience show that branch librarians and "the dress code" is another area for research.

Sink continues to seek contact with several librarians who may still be living, and the audience gave him several useful suggestions. Areas of further research, especially if personal papers can be found, may include whether female staff living together might have been lesbians and how integration of NYPL might have been influenced by the significant number of librarians migrating from the South. In the applicant served in an acting capacity at three branches at the wished-for grade level. The applicant had real authority and real responsibility. Then there was a written evaluation.

## NOTES FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Greetings to all!

Spring is here, the trees and flowers are already out and blooming. And I sit writing and remembering all of the pleasurable outings we retirees in the NY area have been involved in since our last Newsletter. We have been busy!

In November 2011, our Staten Island representative, Emily Cohen, planned a tour of the Staten Island Museum at Snug Harbor Cultural Center. It was a lovely, crisp fall day. The sun was shining; the skies were blue. We took the Ferry. A wonderful ride!

On arriving at the SI terminal, we caught the bus to Adobe Blues Mexican Restaurant where we met Emily and a group of Staten Island retirees. After much talking and a great lunch we walked to the museum for a tour and a power point lecture by Archivist/Historical Lecturer, Patricia Salmon. Her excellent talk was filled with history, anecdotes, and artifacts of SI. It also included, just for us, historical images and postcards of the libraries dotting the SI landscape.

On a cold December day, we visited The Museum of Chinese in America at 215 Centre Street in Chinatown. The museum, founded in 1980, has a new building designed by Maya Lin, designer of the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, DC. The museum is "the national home for precious narratives of diverse Chinese American communities..." It preserves the history, heritage, and cultures of those of Chinese descent throughout the US. The museum has informative tours, programs, festivals, workshops, and more. It is well worth a visit.

On January 13, we celebrated the New Year with our Annual Holiday Luncheon, this year held at Benoit French Bistro at 60 West 55th Street in Manhattan. We enjoyed a deliciously prepared three-course



French meal, topped off with a yummy Pear Bourdaloue Tart for dessert. Sixty-two retirees and guests attended the party.

Also in January, we went to the Jewish Museum where retiree Joan Jankell, our docent, took us through the wonderful Ezra Jack Keats Exhibit. It began with his images, paintings, and illustrations of childhood memories, which he used in all of his books. There was a great deal about his most famous picture books, “The Snowy Day” and “Whistle for Willie.”

We just recently went to The Metropolitan Opera House for a fabulous backstage tour, “Inside the Met.” Our guide’s first words were, “You are in the largest opera house in the world!” The huge auditorium accommodates 4000 people, including standing room in the tiers. The backstage crew numbers 2000 workers, not including performers, musicians, administrators, or other workers.

From our first look at the large orchestra pit, we were taken right up onto the amazing stage where two long lines of stage hands were rolling up a gigantic scrim. From there we went through narrow, winding corridors where all kinds of work was being done to prepare for the opera. We passed rooms filled with costumes, the wig and makeup departments, rehearsal spaces, and more. It was a long, multi-faceted tour, and stamina was needed...but we all loved it! The Met is truly impressive!

Our regular outings, except for our summer baseball games, are almost over. However, we have two upcoming visits to the Schwarzman Building. On May 24, we will be looking for our ancestors during a Genealogy class and tour. Also, during the last week of June, we will see the latest major exhibit entitled “Lunch.” Maybe some of you will be joining us for these. Information will follow soon.



## Becky Koppelman

We are delighted to announce that our Oral History Project is in full swing. Look further in this Newsletter for the latest information about it.

Perhaps we will see many of you at the Spring Reunion. It is sponsored by the Senior Management Team and is being held on Wednesday, May 30, from 3-5 p.m. at Celeste Bartos Forum in the Stephen A. Schwarzman Building at 5th Ave. and 42nd St.

For now, The Executive Committee, Committee Chairs, and Members at-large, wish you all an enjoyable spring and summer. Please keep in touch: email or mail in your News Sheet contributions. Our website is [www.nyplra.com](http://www.nyplra.com) where you can reach us with questions, comments, or just see what we are doing. No email? Give me a call at 212-874-6199. I

love to talk. And remember, everyone loves to hear from YOU! Enjoy your Newsletter!

Becky Eakins Koppelman

## ABOUT THE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

*The mission of the New York Public Library Retirees Association Oral History Project is to collect and preserve unique and valuable information about The New York Public Library that exists only in the memories of those who worked for the Library. Through taped interviews and their transcriptions, as well as written reminiscences, we seek to supplement, with information that would otherwise be lost, what is already known of the Library's rich history and to honor the contributions of the staff to that history.*

The New York Public Library Association Oral History Project was conceived by the original Board of the Association. Those particularly involved with the project over the years include Juanita Doares, Angeline Moscatt, Despina Coussouloudis, Virginia Swift, Donna Abbaticchio, and Bob Sink. Their foresight and past efforts set the stage for others to carry the effort forward.

A new project committee was formed and met for the first time on 11/16/11. Attending were committee chair Mary K. Conwell and members Jane Kunstler and Harriet Gottfried. Becky Koppelman and Polly Bookhout from the Association Board also attended. Ma'lis Wendt subsequently joined the committee.

Following that meeting, several documents were developed or redesigned to assist both interviewers and interviewees, or narrators, who agree to participate in the Oral History Project. The

documents, which will be available on the Association's website, include:

- A general fact sheet
- The retirees work history form, which is meant to be filled out in advance by the narrator
- A list of possible questions and areas to be covered, also to be reviewed in advance and added to by the narrator
- A release form
- An index to the Retirees Newsletters highlighting oral history transcripts, obituaries, and articles with reminiscences of experiences at NYPL

Committee members met with the head of NYPL's Manuscripts and Archives Division to discuss the best way to make, store, and track the interviews. We were assured that the Division is very interested in preserving and making accessible not only the recorded interviews but also the transcriptions.

Because the Archives Division is able to make digital versions of the recorded histories, inexpensive, easy-to-operate cassette tape recorders are being used for the project. Several are available for distribution to interviewers. The committee is currently researching the technology needed to turn the tapes into digital copies for our own use. We are also seeking the means to turn the spoken word into print as a way to assist our transcribers.

Retirees who were interviewed in the past include Henrietta Cohen, Angeline Moscatt, Naomi Noyes, and Aileen O'Brien Murphy. Those interviewed more recently are Agnes Babich, Osman Bayazid, Angela Calderella, Stephan Likosky, Lydia LaFleur, B. MacDonald, Ray Markey, and Dolores Vogliano. If you are interested in becoming involved with the Oral History Project in any capacity, please contact Mary K. Conwell (212-749-8221 or [mkconwell@yahoo.com](mailto:mkconwell@yahoo.com)).

Updates on the work of the committee will appear periodically on the website and in the Newsletter.

## FROM TOTAL BENEFITS OFFICE

### Prescription Solutions Update

Retirees with Prescription Solutions/Innoviant prescription drug coverage may have received notification that the company name is being changed to OptumRx. The name branding change is occurring in phases, and by the summer you will begin to receive member communications with the OptumRx logo. This change does not impact your prescription drug coverage or the information found on your current Prescription Solutions/Innoviant ID card. To keep updated with the ongoing changes, view and refill prescriptions, learn about medications and more, you can register on the portal at [www.prescriptionsolutions.com](http://www.prescriptionsolutions.com). In addition, Customer Service Advocates can be reached at 1.800.788.4863 for all of your inquiries.

### Health Advocate

The Health Advocate service is available to retirees who are enrolled in a health plan through NYPL. Personal Health Advocates can assist members with finding the right providers & hospitals, resolving medical bill issues, locating eldercare & support services, securing second opinions, navigating insurance plans, and explaining conditions & treatments. The service is provided by NYPL at no cost to the retiree. Find out more by calling Health Advocate Toll-Free at 1 866-695-8622, or visiting their website at [www.healthadvocate.com](http://www.healthadvocate.com).



Chinatown Visit

### Retiree & Long Service Staff Reception - Spring Reunion

The Spring Reunion will take place on Wednesday May 30th from 3pm to 5pm in the Celeste Bartos Forum of the Stephen A. Schwarzman Building. Invitations have been sent.

### Medicare Part B Reimbursement

Each year DC37 & NYPL must decide whether it is fiscally prudent to reimburse Medicare Part B premiums for Retirees. Letters and forms regarding reimbursement for 2011 will be going out within the next few weeks to retirees who were over age 65 as of 12/31/2011. Eligible retirees should notify the HR Service Center at (212) 621-0500 of any change in address which would delay the receipt of the letter. Union Retirees with inquiries about their forms and reimbursements should contact DC37 directly at (212) 815-1234.

## IN THE MEDIA

The NYPL and our NY State pensions have been in the news lately. The Library's Central Library Plan came under attack in a November 30, 2011 Nation article, "Upheaval at the New York Public Library," <http://www.thenation.com/article/164881/upheaval-new-york-public-library>. This was followed by news media elsewhere, including an interview of President Marx on WNYC, .

<http://www.wnyc.org/shows/lopate/2012/mar/12/controversy-new-york-public-library/> Forty-five reader comments follow the episode.

For updates on the controversy see Caleb Crain. A Chronology of Press Clippings About The NYPL's Central Library Plan:

<https://www.google.com/search?client=gmail&rls=gm&q=caleb%20crain%20website>

The media has reported on attempts in the New York State legislature to change our pension system. Our pensions are secured by Article 5, Section 7 of the New York State Constitution: "membership in any pension or retirement system of the state or of a civil division thereof shall be a contractual relationship, the benefits of which shall not be diminished or impaired." A revised constitution could be a threat to our pensions. Those in favor of changing the above Section have a statement at

[www.unshackleupstate.com/assets/news/letnyworkagenda.pdf](http://www.unshackleupstate.com/assets/news/letnyworkagenda.pdf). The New York State Retired Teachers' Association has a statement against changing the section, <http://www.nysrta.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/York-State.pdf>

## RETIREE NEWS

LUIS ALCALA

"I am sorry to report that Luis Alcala passed away on June 23, 2011. I am his friend and personal representative. Luis died of esophageal cancer after a brief illness."

DAVID BEASLEY

In the Spring, I may issue *Overworld/Underworld*, featuring NYPL detective Rudyard Mack and Library Union leader Arbuthnot Vane, a sequel to *The Jenny* and *The Grand Conspiracy*. Both protagonists are retired and return to solve a cold case -- murder in the stacks, involving big bankers, Secret Services, drug and arms smuggling, and money-laundering. Watch for it on my website: [www.davuspublishing.com](http://www.davuspublishing.com).

First, Michelle and I cruised from Lima to Buenos Aires to give me time to reconsider. Recently I added TV interviews on my books, the latest being on *Violet's Flight* and *From Bloody Beginnings*. I issued John Richardson's A Canadian Campaign for our celebrations of the War of 1812. Richardson, Canada's first and most colorful novelist, published his graphic description as a boy soldier fighting in the Detroit area and his imprisonment in Kentucky. I added his rare *Recollections of the West Indies* from 1817-18, a unique and insightful picture of the planter society on Barbados and Grenada. From *Bloody Beginnings* narrates the 1812-14 battles in the Niagara region. The book might shock, certainly enlighten, American readers.

CAROL V. BREHENY

I am currently managing two libraries, well, five bookcases. Four in my co-op library and one at the UFT Retiree Center. At the Center, I also teach digital photography, and I attend watercolor, acrylic, and drawing classes.

ANGELA CALDERELLA

August 19, 2011, was my birthday and my second anniversary as a retiree! Vinny's second anniversary was November 1, 2011. What a great time we have had these past two years! Never in my wildest dreams could I have imagined how wonderful and busy retirement would be. First of all, we are available for my Mom and Vinny's Dad for their doctor appointments, shopping, etc. We're truly grateful for that.

Less than two weeks after my last day at NYPL, Vinny and I were vacationing in Disney World. We took a cruise to Canada in September 2010, and we are planning a Hawaiian cruise in April 2012. While we were still working, Vinny and I were very active in Catholic Engaged Encounter, a marriage preparation weekend for couples planning to be married in the Catholic Church. Once word got out that we were retired, we received a call from one of the District Leaders. "You're retired? Great! Now you can be Unit Leaders!" We said yes to that leadership position, and we love every minute it. We went to Seattle in September 2010 to attend CEE's Annual Conference. (Their ALA!) What a blast! The Conference and the city were fabulous!

We've done projects around our home, started an exercise regime, and signed up for dance lessons. We joined the Westchester Italian Cultural Club in Tuckahoe, NY, and have enjoyed numerous trips, lectures, and exhibits. We have joined the 50 Plus Club in our Church and have enjoyed many trips with that group. As members of the Rye Storytellers Guild, which meets one Tuesday per month, we tell and listen to stories. We've attended numerous classic car shows in New York and Pennsylvania. This past summer, our '63 Ford Falcon won three trophies!

I hope I haven't left anything out!

Several people were horrified when I told them I was retiring. "You're too young!" they said. "You'll be bored!" I can honestly say we haven't been bored one



## Staten Island Lunch

day! We've been happily busy the whole time. People can't believe it when we tell them how busy we are. Vinny told his cousin, "I'm going back to work so I can rest." We were at a family gathering this August, and all my teacher cousins were talking about when they were going back to work. "When do you go back?" one of the teachers asked me. "I go back tomorrow," I said. "When you're retired, you don't get a day off!" Vinny and I feel so blessed to be retired together. We are looking forward to a new year with new adventures!

MIRIAM CASTLE

I am in my fourth year of tutoring at the Bronx Library Center CRW. It has been a most gratifying and enjoyable experience.

EMILY COHEN

A short play that I wrote, *Triumph of a Sculptor*, was performed as part of Clicks and Bricks, a program of staged readings by Around the Block at the Grand Central Branch Library on Saturday, December 10, 2011. The actors and director did an excellent job and the capacity crowd in the audience seemed to enjoy it.

We have formed a family band called Auntie Em's Favorites and are entered in the Bluegrass Band

Competition to be held in Maryland on February 24, 2012, at the D.C. Bluegrass Union. Bluegrass Festival members of the band are my husband Allen on bass and dobro; our “honorary” cousin Arnie Fleischer on banjo; our niece and nephew Ellen and Pete Vigour on guitar, mandolin, and fiddle; and their daughter Rachel on bass. I’ll play guitar and sing lead and Allen will sing harmony. I’ll let you know how we do in the competition!

EDWARD M. DANA

We enjoy watching the wildlife in our twelve acre backyard.

YOLANDE ELYSEÉ

I am enjoying my retirement for the pleasure to freely manage my time and daily life. Three years at the Conservatory of Music in Queens after I retired have brought me back to my longtime hobby: playing the piano.

Moreover, the family’s duties, of course primordial, didn’t prevent me from starting acting classes last year at Queens College. Such a joy. Two plays: *Brighton Beach Memoirs* by Neil Simon and *Long Day’s Journey into the Night* by Eugene O’Neil were in the program. I had chosen the poem *Mother* from Maya Angelou as a lyric, a section not the entire poem.

MARIE FERRIGNO

After two years of ownership, a great joy is to continue downloading books into my Kindle.

My swan song for Donnell: In 1955, behind closed doors, I, and others, helped put up books on the shelf. From the first floor, I moved to the second floor to set up the Foreign Language Department. Two others also helped. When we finally opened the doors to the public, we were all so happy. The Big Question was, “Who is Donnell?” That joy is now gone.

ABRAHAM FOX

Abe Fox, approaching the 25th anniversary of his retirement from NYPL, solicits your attention. His first novel, *Carpenter’s Holiday*, a laid-back thriller, has just appeared in print; but stay: the publisher is Xlibris Corp., a member of the new community of internet publishers. My book consequently is accessible only on the computer, address is Xlibriscorp.combookshop. For the rest, long deferred greetings to all my fraternal colleagues, known and unknown. May good fortune attend you always.

PATRICK HARDISH

My music composition *Sonorities IX* for organ was premiered at St. Augustine Catholic Church in Brooklyn, N.Y., on November, 18 2011, and my *Sonorific Duo* for flute and percussion was performed in concert at William Paterson University, Wayne, N.J., on February 6, 2012. The latter piece was just published by Calabrese Bros. Music. I continue to serve as a Eucharistic Minister at my local church in Perth Amboy, N.J.

DOROTHY HENDERSON

I’m happy to continue my career as a published author. So far I have written three articles which were published in *An Canach*, the newsletter of the Clan Henderson Society. They are on genealogy, of course. It has been my hobby for a number of years.

JAMES HUFFMAN

I had the opportunity to participate in the Library’s Petting Zoo Project this past Fall/Winter. I was joined by fellow retirees Phyllis Mack and Sara Velez. We had a wonderful time visiting a number of NYPL branches and senior centers demonstrating how to request digital library materials through the use of e-readers and tablets such as the Kindle and iPad.

JESSIE LEE JOHNSON

Warm weather: bike riding in Central Park, visiting the Bronx Botanical Garden, Wave Hill, and the Bronx Zoo. Cold weather: playing piano, attending



## Staten Island Lunch

operas, recitals, concerts, visiting museums, especially the Met, my “second home.” Highlights of the year: a ten day visit to Florence visiting gardens, palaces and other “hidden” attractions not found in guidebooks, as well as revisiting the major art destinations seen on two previous trips.

### RENEE KOTLER

I spent a wonderful week in Barcelona last May. I’m doing volunteer work in my synagogue library. There is enough work there to keep me busy for the rest of my life. I am still spending three days a week with my grandchildren, Emily 7 1/2 and Eli 4 3/4, as he says.

### ZENON KUROWYCKY

On August 15, 2011, our daughter Eva and son-in-law Kevin had a daughter, Charlotte Rose. She is our first grandchild.

### LYDIA LA FLEUR

I’m still upright and walking and enjoying life: yoga, a writing workshop, two book clubs and occasionally going to movies, New York City Ballet, theater, and opera. I’m too old to still act, but I’m serving on the board of our community theater company which is

performing *A Raisin in the Sun* in May. My son and family came from Tokyo in January to help me celebrate my 85th birthday.

I look back on my career in the NYPL as a very happy time. I feel as if I lived during its golden era. I love reading about other retirees in the Newsletter and want to thank those members who make it possible.

### STEPHAN LIKOSKY

In the last year I have begun exploring digital photography as a hobby. For sources I have been using my own travel photography, but also images from the vintage postcards I collect. In January, two of my works appeared in a gallery show titled: “Floating in the Absence of Reason Revisited” in Manhattan.

I now volunteer as an art cataloger at the Leslie-Lohman Museum of Gay Art in Soho. It’s opened a whole new world to me of how galleries operate and given me the chance to meet some of the artists themselves.

Recent travel has included a trip to Germany and Belgium, England, and Los Angeles. I continue to spend lots of my time reading, meeting friends for lunch, the gym and exploring the city. Also I was lucky to find a group of like-minded persons at a neighborhood café in East Harlem, where we meet two-three times a week for discussion.

#### MARCIA LOYD

I have been busy still at ReServe two days a week as well as school one day. I also serve on the Board of Directors of the Coop where I live; as well as a lector of my parish church. I'm really enjoying retirement. Every day is a blessing.

Editor's note: Marcia published a "Tribute to Whitney Houston" in The Wave Newspaper, which can be read on the website, [http://www.rockawave.com/news/2012-02-24/Letters/How\\_Many\\_Times\\_Will\\_We\\_Cry.html](http://www.rockawave.com/news/2012-02-24/Letters/How_Many_Times_Will_We_Cry.html)

#### DAN MC GRATH

I will always have good memories of the Stacks, the Main Reading Room, the Information Desk, fellow employees and most of the readers at the 42nd Street Library.

As to the prosaic, I have been connecting new electronic equipment, plowing through biographies (Elia Kazan, Doc Pomus, John Ford, Ed Sanders), revisiting fiction (Rex Stout, Robert Heinlein, William Lindsay Gresham) and enjoying cinema history of 1930's-1950's Hollywood. Hey, it might not be white-water rafting but, in the words of Brian Wilson, "It's fun, fun, fun."

#### PHYLLIS MACK

I thoroughly enjoyed working with the Upper Manhattan/Bronx "E-reader Petting Zoo." Our team of four included three NYPL retirees. We visited NYPL branches and senior centers demonstrating E-readers: Kindles, Nooks, Sony E-readers and the Apple iPad2. What a wonderful experience through the ReServe program, October-December 2011.

#### RAYMOND MARKEY

Retirement in Hawaii continues to be a joy. The big decision every day is what T-shirt and shorts to wear. A two year old grandson and a baby girl due in June gives us a good excuse to regularly visit Portland, Oregon.

#### CAROL REISNER

My husband and I were fortunate in 2011 to visit both Israel and Petra on a two week tour and Savannah, Georgia, in October. We got together with former NYPLer Jutte Zaplinski who recently resettled in Savannah.

I continue to enjoy my volunteer work at the New-York Historical Society, visits with my grandsons, the cultural opportunities of New York City, and time with friends.

#### KARLAN SICK

Literacy for Incarcerated Teens continues to expand. We offer books and programs to youth in detention centers. Fundraising efforts are successful and ongoing. Our website has details for those who would like to help.

We spent five weeks in Italy in the fall where Gary gave a series of lectures in Bologna and Venice then went on to Cairo for an exciting week. It was fun to visit our daughter and her family when we went to Rome.

#### VIRGINIA TAFFURELLI

I have joined a sports club and enjoy aqua aerobics three times a week in an effort to stay fit. I also enjoy babysitting three of my five grandkids. What better way to spend retirement!

#### JULIA VAN HAAFTEN

I co-curated *Berenice Abbott, Photography & Science: an Essential Unity* for the MIT Museum, opening May 3, 2012, through December 30, 2012.





## Before the Annual Holiday Lunch

### LEONARD VIGGIANO

Ellen and I welcomed our second grand-daughter in 2011. We both continue to work part-time at the local community college. The training we received at NYPL, the wealth of experience, and the diversity of staff have yet to be matched.

### KAYE COKE WALKER

Telza Gardner and I went to South America in 2010, visiting Brazil, Argentina, and Chile. We had a great time and have wonderful memories. Now, if only things would settle down in Egypt. I'd like to see the pyramids while I'm still healthy in mind and body.

In February 2011, my youngest son welcomed his firstborn, Nova, a girl! My oldest son has two children, Christina, 16, and Johnathan, 14. Some of you may remember Christina, at age 15 months, walking around in her red Mary Jane shoes at my retirement party in 1996.

I keep busy by going to the gym, dining out with friends, enjoying my grandkids, scrapbooking, doing Sudoku puzzles, and reading my mysteries, especially by my favorite author, James Patterson.

### VIRGINIA WARNER

My daughter, Clare Marie, and son-in-law, Vinny, have taken such good care of me since I left the nursing home that I am ready for a cruise. In fact, I leave next Sunday, February 18. We are all keeping our fingers crossed and medications up-to-date. I am also starting to volunteer. There are so many opportunities on Staten Island, and I only have the strength right now to do one a week, so I am choosing carefully!

### VIRGINIA WILHELM

I'm looking forward to the Jane Austen Society of North America (JASNA) Annual General Meeting in Brooklyn, October 5-7, 2012.

### JACKIE GOLD ZUKOWSKY

This past November, my husband, a childhood friend, and I took a Road Scholar (formerly known as Elderhostel) tour of Asheville, North Carolina to visit the Biltmore Estate. There were lectures on the history of Asheville, the Biltmore Estate, and the Vanderbilt family. The group of twenty people were from a variety of states and one half were retired teachers, and there was there was one retired university librarian. It was a very nice and friendly group. The Biltmore Estate is fabulous. I would recommend it to everyone who has not seen it yet.

## NEW MEMBERS

Nancy Avrin  
Margaret Borders  
Nathaniel Crossland  
Mark McCluski  
Annette Marotta  
Hishi Velardo  
George Louis Mayer  
Rita Waldron

## REMEMBERING OUR COLLEAGUES

We honor the memories of the following retirees who passed away between June 2011 and March 2012.

Luis Alcala  
James D. Allen  
Donald W. Allyn  
Beatrice Baxter  
Anna M. Bianchini  
Wladislaw Brzosko  
Richard M. Buck  
Peter C. Camacho  
Joseph Canzoneri  
Frederick Claussen  
Edward Di Roma  
Leslie Fass Ederer  
Jeanne Felker  
James T. Greene  
Gretchen Haseltine  
Arnold S. Hyman  
Michael Johnson  
Eugene Michael  
Maxine Paduani  
Pauline Ristuccia  
Wilfredo Santiago  
Dorothy Wait  
Deborah Walker  
Janina Wojtas  
Evelyn Wright

## DONALD ALLYN

Kay Cassell

Don was a wonderful colleague. I especially remember that one of his tasks when he worked in OBL (the Office of the Branch Libraries) was to draft responses to letters from the public, officials, etc. After all this time, I think it is safe to say that he never broke a confidence. But in the manner of anyone dealing, perhaps, with complaints more than plaudits, he could be wry, witty, and professional when describing, in general terms, the correspondence he handled. Don was always friendly and always greeted you as though you were just the person he was hoping to see at that moment. A rare gift.

Bonnie Williams

I worked with Don until his retirement. He was my resource in OBL. Don knew everything about grants and had templates for all those difficult letters. He had a wonderful sense of humor and was always helpful, even when I should have been able to answer my own questions. I really missed him when he retired. Such a wonderful colleague. He will be missed.

Diane Riordan

I knew of Don Allyn for many years as a stalwart Library staff member before I worked with him at the Office of the Branch Libraries. Don was quiet, reserved, and private - a gentleman in the best sense of the word. Always willing to listen, Don provided a sea of calm in a sometimes turbulent world. He never put himself forward, but worked with loyalty and dependability. He enjoyed his work and said he would not retire until "it stopped being fun" - and one day it did. Until the day he retired, he was in the office before 7 am - reading The New York Times - first in hard copy and then easily making the



## Annual Holiday Lunch

transition to online. Don was a very bright and multidimensional man - he was steeped in classical music, but, at the same time, he was a huge Yanni fan. He was a great theatre-goer and saw just about every new movie very early in its run. He was a very special person who made life at OBL richer.

God bless you, Don!

Hara Seltzer

I met Don Allyn at Donnell, it must have been around 1981. I don't know what his job was at the library at that time, but I do remember he was a very nice man - kind, considerate, thoughtful.

After he retired, he turned up at Tompkins Square Library one day; I was the "site manager" at that time. I think he went to all the branches where he knew people to look around the branches and to say goodbye.

## ANNA BIANCHINI

Tony (Anthony) Bianchini, husband

Anna Bianchini, a Senior Librarian in The Donnell Library Center Adult Department on her retirement, died on January 7, 2012.

Ann came to the library as a second career, but it was a perfect match for her avid interest in reading, language, and helping people. She was hired in 1994 and spent most of her career at Donnell, giving outstanding customer service by sharing her broad knowledge of authors, books and materials. Ann was outgoing, and she loved working at the Library. She bonded with other second career colleagues at Donnell, who affectionately called themselves "The Golden Girls." Ann led a loyal, large adult book discussion group for many years. She continued this activity after her retirement in 2004. When Donnell closed, since participants were interested in continuing, the group moved to space in SIBL, and Ann remained as a volunteer leader. With her knowledge of Italian, she reviewed and annotated Italian books for the American Library Association's Booklist. After her retirement in 2004, she worked

part time in the ROAR program. She was assigned to the sixth floor of MM (Mid-Manhattan) where she worked in COS (Community Outreach Services) until 2009, arranging multi-cultural programs for branches system-wide. Ann was energetic, enthusiastic, dedicated, and a pleasure to work with. She will be missed by her many colleagues and friends.

## EDWARD DI ROMA

The Journal News, Lower Hudson Valley

Edward Di Roma of Garnerville, a longtime library administrator and educator, died January 18, 2012, of natural causes at the age of 92. From 1944 until 1985, Mr. Di Roma was employed by the Research Libraries of The New York Public Library, where he served as reference librarian, executive assistant, and, finally, as Chief of the Economics and Public Affairs Division. He was also on the Board of Trustees of the Public Affairs Information Service, a leading computerized index of international literature in the economic, political, and social sciences. A strong believer in the importance of education, Mr. Di Roma often held second jobs teaching. In the 1950s, he was a substitute teacher of English and social studies in the New York City high schools. In the 1960s, he was an adjunct instructor in reference and bibliography at the Graduate School of Communication, Information, and Library Studies at Rutgers University. Mr. Di Roma's first job after college was reporter and copy editor for two years in the Education Department of the New York Sun, a daily newspaper. After his retirement from The New York Public Library, Mr. Di Roma taught English and business communications at Dominican College in Blauvelt for seven years. He also worked part time as a reference librarian in the New City Library and at the Finkelstein Memorial Library in Spring Valley from 1985 until his retirement. Mr. Di Roma received a BA from the City College of New York, where he was elected to Phi Beta Kappa. In 1946, he received a master's degree in

library science from Columbia University and, in 1957, a second master's in economics from the New School, NY, NY. Edward was a member of the Haverstraw Seniors. Surviving are his wife, Dorothy, his daughter, Ellen Apatov of Chevy Chase, MD, and two granddaughters, Emily and Erica. He also leaves two brothers, Richard of the Bronx and Dante of Yorktown Heights.

## JAMES GREENE

Valorie Bowers

I was the senior clerk at Epiphany Branch during Mr. Greene's tenure as branch librarian. I feel privileged to have known and worked with him. Many "Epiphanettes" and others have nicely expressed the qualities that made Mr. Greene a special person. As you know he traveled to Europe every year, especially England and Italy. One year, my sister and I met Mr. Greene and Ms. Rawstron in Venice for lunch at the famous Cipriani Restaurant. It was one of the highlights of our vacation. I will always have fond memories of that time.

Harriet Gottfried

That is so sad. Marsha Howard and I both worked with Mr. Greene in the early to mid-1980's. I was the children's librarian; Marsha was his First Assistant. He retired when I was still there, and we both attended his party. I remember how popular he was with the public. If Marsha or I were covering the adult desk because he was out to lunch or it was his day off, the reader would say, "Well, I'll wait until Mr. Greene comes back." He was a combination of an extremely liberal man and a true southern gentleman. He used to deliver books to elderly readers, if they were ill, on his lunch hour. He was truly a librarian's librarian. He absolutely loved New York City. I'm glad I got the chance to work with him.

Marsha Howard

Harriet said it in a nutshell. I think he retired in 1983. He was the consummate book lover. He hated to weed because he always wanted to have something available for his public. As a result, the fiction section was filled with books you couldn't find anywhere else – including many important minor classics. He kept a mini-reserve collection in the basement of Epiphany, and it included multiple copies of hardcovers because he felt it a poor use of funds to weed them and then have to buy paperbacks of the same title! I had worked for Helen Rawstron and Ed Orff, and they had recommended me to Jim Greene. I learned a lot from him, not the least to remember, "Smile, Marsha!" – his constant refrain if I had my head down over schedules, brow knitted. Not sure this belongs in his obit but it's what I remember.

## **ARNOLD HYMAN**

Estelle Friedman

Arnie had many interests. In addition to his family and friends, he had 3 very strong loves: books, music, and his stamp collection. His love of books was brought out in his many years as a book discussion leader at Kingsbridge, from where he retired as Principal Librarian in December 2002. He was always conscious of improving the lot of his fellow workers by working for many years with our union, local 1930. Arnie's love of music was manifested by his and his wife Sharon's subscription to the NY Philharmonic, as well as attending their many open rehearsals. Of course, his stamp collection resulted in his worldwide correspondence with other stamp enthusiasts, as well as attending stamp shows. Arnie loved his new granddaughter and would constantly watch videos of her. He was always concerned about family and friends and would often



**Jim Greene, April 1981  
Epiphany and Kips Bay staff  
celebrate his birthday with  
a homemade cake**

**Ruth Graves, Mary Mendez, & Gladis  
Rice are standing behind him**

call just to make sure everything and everyone was all right. We shall miss him.

From The Riverdale Press, March 21, 2012

Andrea Lipinski, a colleague of Mr. Hyman's at the Kingsbridge Library, said on Monday that he was someone who others looked up to. He would draw on his years of experience, she said, to put the minor crises of today into perspective. He often reminded younger librarians of a much more difficult time for their profession and for New York City, the 1970s.

Ms. Lipinski described Mr. Hyman as a "valuable ally" for young librarians, "stubborn, but in the best way possible." And when it came to the invaluable skills of research acquired through years of navigating the Dewey Decimal System, Ms. Lipinski said there was no one better. "There's just a lot of information that a good librarian has in his head, that you can't look up," Ms. Lipinski said.

Having spent so many years as a librarian who trained and instructed other librarians, Mr. Hyman was a popular figure throughout New York City's library system, Ms. Lipinski said. "His being gone is the end of an era for the New York Public Library," she added.

"Kids who are lucky to have a librarian like him never forget. He was a librarian who knew his customers, could help them find the perfect book for a school report or one to curl up with on a snowy wintery afternoon," Rabbi [Barry Dov] Katz said.

## **ALAR KRUUS**

Susan Harman, wife

Alar Ivo Kruus was born on December 28, 1937, in Narva, Estonia. His father, Hermann J. Kruus, was the Chief of Police of Narva Prefecture. His mother, Olga Kroon Kruus, was a pharmacist. After the Soviet

Army invaded Estonia, his father was arrested by the NKVD (the secret police organization of the Soviet Union) on April 29, 1941, and executed soon afterwards. His family was not certain of his fate for some fifty years. Life was difficult for Alar and his mother during the Soviet occupation.

When the German Army invaded in the fall of 1941, Olga began working for their medical corps. Alar spent most of the next few years with his grandparents on their farm in southern Estonia near Valga.

When the Soviet Army reoccupied Estonia in 1944, Alar and his mother had to make a desperate escape. Alar remembered vividly driving away from his grandparents' farm with Soviet artillery shells bursting overhead. Family legend has it they were on the last German ship leaving Tallinn for Hamburg. Alar and his mother lived in several German villages during the rest of the war, and Alar always maintained the German people were very kind to them. They ended the war in the British sector occupied by the 30th Infantry Regiment, the "Wild Boars." Alar and his mother lived in the Gosler am Harz Displaced Persons Camp and hoped they would eventually immigrate to Britain or Canada.

When the US passed the Displaced Persons Act of 1948, Alar and his mother were allowed to immigrate to the United States under the sponsorship of the Lutheran World Federation. Their ship arrived in Boston in 1949, and they took a train to New York City.

Alar had learned German mostly on his own and he quickly learned English the same way. He graduated from Benjamin Franklin High School with honors in 1956 and became a naturalized American citizen in the same year. He liked to tell the story that the judge asked him where Abraham Lincoln was born. Because he knew it was Kentucky rather than Illinois



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and the judge was from Kentucky, that was the only question asked.

Alar received a bachelor's degree in history from The City College of New York in 1961 and a master's in library science from the Pratt Institute in 1963. Most of his career was spent at The New York Public Library, beginning as a part time clerk in 1960. His many positions included branch librarian at several branches, Supervising Adult Specialist, Regional Librarian for the Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, and Chief of the Materials Acquisitions Office for the NYPL system. Some of Alar's achievements were education programs for junior staff, re-focusing collections in branches where population demographics had changed, automating several departments, and procuring numerous grants. He talked about the many times he could hardly wait to get back to work on Mondays.

In 1983, Alar was asked to take a position at METRO, a multi-type library organization covering New York City and Westchester County. As Coordinator of Policies and Programs and Associate Director, he helped METRO through a period of tremendous growth and change. He retired in 1995. Soon after, he

was asked to accept a "temporary" part-time position at the Mid-Manhattan Branch of the NYPL. He was well known among local librarians and vendors as a dedicated worker, expert planner, patient negotiator, team player, and morale booster. He was often assigned difficult problems and rancorous staff.

Alar was active in many library organizations, including the Special Libraries Association, and MARAC (Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives Conference). After his retirement he joined the NYPL Retirees Association and served as its treasurer.

Alar was very dedicated to his mother and cared for her until she died at age 95. He felt she had saved his life by getting him away from Soviet control and to freedom in the United States. In 2004, Alar married Susan Harman, a librarian from Baltimore he met at a library conference. In 2005, he moved to Baltimore. He enjoyed the city's cultural activities and historic sites, as well as the more rural area of western Maryland where Susan's family lived.



When he was 60, Alar was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease and immediately began his fight against it. He was always optimistic, even as his health deteriorated in the last several years. Alar died at Keswick Multi-Care Center on February 1, 2012.

Alar is survived by his wife, Susan Harman, his daughters Laura Reissman and Karen Casbay, his first wife Carol Petras, grandchildren Mac, Dean, Charlotte, Trinity, and Aidan Casbay, as well as many other family, friends, and colleagues. The nurses caring for him remarked about his sparkle, that even when he could no longer speak clearly, he still made each person feel special. Those who knew him will remember his kindness, integrity, strength, and intelligence.

Agnes Babich

Alar was a wonderful person. He took care of his mother (who was very alert until her death) with great and loving care. What I remember especially about Alar was his kindness toward women.

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# MOSTLY MORE PHOTOS FROM THE ANNUAL HOLIDAY LUNCH

