



# NOTES

VOLUME 16, NUMBER 3, LATE FALL 2009

## FROM THE HEAD LIBRARIAN

I recently returned from the annual Membership Libraries Group meeting in Charleston, South Carolina, where I met with ten directors from the Society Library's peer institutions. Charleston is home to the second-oldest membership/subscription library in the country, the Charleston Library Society (CLS). Founded in 1748 by seventeen young professionals, the CLS is now led by a dynamic new director, Anne Cleveland. It is a vibrant circulating library with a rich and diverse collection, events, exhibitions, and visits from scholars and researchers.

Their building (*above right*) is on busy King Street in central Charleston. I was awed by the two giant ginkgo trees on the lawn, two of the largest in the city. The tree represents memory and long life, and for many years its leaf has served as the CLS's symbol.

Though not the top of the agenda at this year's meeting, the role of electronic books and e-book readers for membership libraries was frequently discussed. Many of our members are reflecting on this technology trend as well. Questions have come to the desk both about the devices and about potential content. Quite a few patrons have an e-book reader loaded up for their daily commute or for a weekend or long trip.

We hear positive comments like, "I bought one and I just love it," "It's changed how often I read," and "It's fabulous how many books it holds." Other members express caution and concern about this new digital horizon. Is it the same as reading a print book? Do we learn and retain as effectively from electronic text? A recent *Boston Globe* column felt the need for a new term for e-reading, for instance, *digeing* (as in "digital"), *screening*, or *screading*—"I wanted to scread *House of Mirth* at the beach." Unsurprisingly, members also remark that they cannot imagine curling up with an e-reader and that they don't want another electronic device in their lives.

Libraries, membership and otherwise, are also concerned about the practical aspects of introducing e-book readers as a service, with the accompanying questions about licensing, planned obsolescence, and relation to a library's mission. Only one membership library, the Boston Athenæum, currently offers e-book services—six e-readers loaded with titles in broad subject areas. I am eager to hear the results from the Athenæum's experiment.

Rather than investing in devices, some libraries license a collection of books for patrons to download. As you may know, a vast collection of e-books is available to anyone with a New York Public Library card—see [ebooks.nypl.org](http://ebooks.nypl.org) for details, or the similar sites for the Brooklyn and Queens Public Libraries. The Society Library is doing preliminary research on this possibility. In the meantime, some relevant questions were discussed at a November technology workshop led by staffer Sara Holliday, whose notes can be found at [www.nysoclib.org/tech/index.html](http://www.nysoclib.org/tech/index.html).

If you have thoughts or comments on this subject, you're welcome to contribute to the discussion at the front desk or by e-mail to [mbartlett@nysoclib.org](mailto:mbartlett@nysoclib.org). We appreciate your feedback about electronic books or any other Library issue.

Finally, big thanks to everyone who has contributed to this year's Annual Appeal. Your support is so important. Enjoy your membership and your December.



Membership library directors/head librarians Alison Maxwell, Debbie Lodge, Anne Cleveland, Vonda Krahn, Albert Pyle, Cheryl Helms, Mark Bartlett, Paula Matthews, Carol Jones, and Erika Torri. Photos by Cheryl Helms.

Mark Bartlett  
Head Librarian

## A VISIT WITH THE ACQUISITIONS DEPARTMENT

The mission of the Acquisitions Department is to acquire a balance of books that are popular with our members, and to add to our collection high-quality titles that will continue to be used for decades to come—books that will educate, entertain, and, we hope, enlighten our patrons through the years. Needless to say, few books satisfy both needs.

To meet our goal, we regularly examine a wide variety of book reviews in U.S. and U.K. periodicals and newspapers: *Booklist*, *Publishers Weekly*, *Library Journal*, *The Times Literary Supplement*, *The Spectator*, *The New York Times Book Review*, *Literary Review*, and many more. Publisher's catalogs and electronic mailing lists keep us abreast of new titles. Although most additions to the collection are published within the year of acquisition, useful titles from the past are found in bibliographies, requests, and references in book reviews.

Members do their part to keep the department on its toes; between fifteen and forty request slips are sent up to our office every week. We also receive an increasing number of requests electronically, since members can now request books via our online catalog by clicking on "Suggest a Purchase" and filling out a form. All member requests are individually evaluated, and while we cannot buy all of them, we are pleased to say that we do purchase the majority of member-requested books.

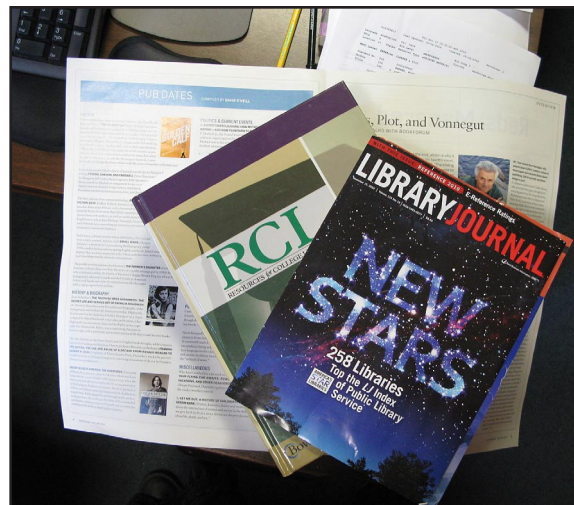
Additional purchases originate with the Library's Book Committee, who recommend books in a variety of subject areas at their monthly meetings.

A set of critical questions is always in mind when staffers are evaluating a title:

- ◆ How many members have requested this title?
- ◆ What does this book's content add to our collection compared with our current holdings on the subject?
- ◆ Is this book appropriate for an educated general audience like ours, or intended by a specialist for other specialists familiar with the latest academic theories and jargon?
- ◆ Is the book relevant to our members and Library tradition?
- ◆ For a work of popular or genre fiction: how did this writer's last three books do with our readers? Are they maintaining their popularity, or has their audience moved on?
- ◆ For a first novel: are the reviews strong enough to justify taking a chance?

To see a sampling of recently acquired books, take a look at the monthly *New Books* list compiled by the Acquisitions Department. Print copies are available throughout the building, and it is posted and archived at [www.nysoclib.org/newbookslist.html](http://www.nysoclib.org/newbookslist.html). And please keep those requests pouring in.

Steven McGuirl, Head of Acquisitions, Carolyn Waters, Acquisitions and Reference Librarian,  
Janet Howard, Acquisitions Assistant/Circulation Assistant, Jules Cohn, Acquisitions Volunteer



### SOME STATISTICS

**275,232:** number of new and revised titles published by traditional production methods in the United States in 2008.

**120,947:** number in the U.K.

**4,500:** net total of titles added to the Library's collections in 2008 (those with a permanent home in our stacks)

**5,212:** total items acquired, including duplicate copies and replacements

**58:** number of audiobooks added to the collection in 2008

**356:** number of Children's Library books added in 2008

**64:** number of titles added to the reference collection in 2008

**984:** number of gift books accessioned in 2008

**19:** percentage of titles added in 2008 that were new fiction, including mysteries and short-story collections

The broad subject areas cataloged the most were history and travel; literature and criticism, poetry, and drama; social sciences; arts; and biography.

## EXPLORING ENCYCLOPEDIAS

In this age of Google and Wikipedia, many people don't consider print reference sources, but the Library has a robust reference collection and continues to acquire and update some terrific resources.

Here is a small sampling of new and updated titles the Library has recently acquired, plus a few noteworthy stalwarts.

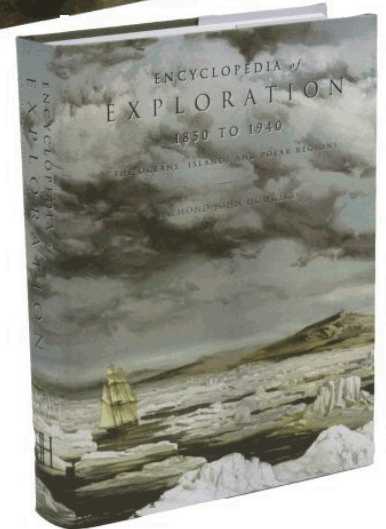
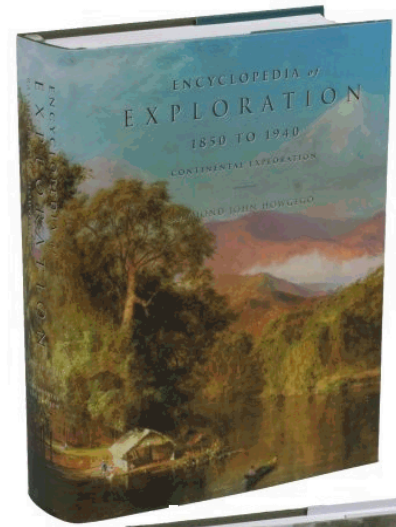
2009 marks the 400th anniversary of Henry Hudson's exploration of the region, and those seeking a refresher should thumb through the *Encyclopedia of Exploration*. This four-volume set includes insightful articles about adventurers and their incredible voyages of discovery.

Travelers beginning their own explorations may turn to *The Statesman's Year-Book 2010*, which includes maps and up-to-date summaries of the social, economic, and political situation in countries around the world. And for armchair travelers, there's *The Traveler's Reading Guide*, which includes recommended lists of fiction and nonfiction organized by location.

Speaking of reading, any reader hoping to refresh their memory about a character's name or a particular plot will find the five-volume *Cyclopedia of Literary Characters* and *Benét's Reader's Encyclopedia* wonderful guides. The new three-volume *Americans on Fiction, 1776-1900* is an exceptional collection of critical reviews and essays of and about American and European fiction that chronicles the evolution of literature in America.

For the science-minded, the mysteries of the scientific world are explained clearly and concisely in *Van Nostrand's Scientific Encyclopedia*, a three-volume work that offers illustrations, maps, and lists of reading and websites for additional information.

To find out about new reference materials in the collection, look for the monthly *New Books* list, or just ask the reference desk librarian.



### BOOKS MENTIONED IN THIS ARTICLE

*Encyclopedia of Exploration* Ref Room—910.9 H

*The Statesman's Year-Book 2010*—Ref Room 305 S

*The Traveler's Reading Guide*—Ref Room 016.9 T

*Cyclopedia of Literary Characters*—Ref Room 803 C

*Americans on Fiction, 1776-1900*—Ref Room 823.09 A

*Benét's Reader's Encyclopedia*—Ref Room 803 B

*Van Nostrand's Scientific Encyclopedia*—Ref Room 500 V

## TAX SAVINGS OPPORTUNITY

Current IRA (Individual Retirement Account) legislation allows you to make gifts to charitable institutions such as the New York Society Library by transferring funds from your IRA without incurring tax consequences. You can accomplish this by contacting your IRA custodian. Since you will not pay income tax on the withdrawal, you will not be able to claim a charitable deduction and you must meet the following guidelines:

- ◆ You are age 70 ½ or older at the time of the gifts.
- ◆ Your gifts total \$100,000 or less in 2009.
- ◆ You transfer funds directly from your IRA.
- ◆ You transfer the gifts outright to one or more qualified public charities, but not supporting organizations, gift annuities, charitable trusts or donor advised funds.
- ◆ You complete your gifts by December 31, 2009.

For more information, please call Joan Zimmett at 212. 288.6900 ext. 207 or email [jzimmett@nysoclib.org](mailto:jzimmett@nysoclib.org). Restrictions apply, so please consult with your advisors to determine the implications on your overall tax and estate planning.

*This year's events and features newsletters are generously underwritten by Ada and Romano Peluso in memory of Assunta Sommella and Ignazio Peluso.*

*Contributors to this newsletter: Mark Bartlett, Sara Holliday, Steven McGuirl, Carolyn Waters, and Joan Zimmett.*

## CELEBRATE THE HOLIDAYS WITH THE LIBRARY

This year, the Library celebrates all the holidays, including Jane Austen's Birthday.

**Affinity Collaborative Theater:** W.H. Auden's *For the Time Being*  
Sunday, December 6 and Monday, December 7 (two separate performances),  
7:00 p.m., Members' Room, \$20/person

**Karen Eterovich:** *Cheer from Chawton: A Jane Austen Family Theatrical*,  
with seasonal refreshments  
Saturday, December 12, 2:00 p.m., Members' Room, \$20/person

**Richard Peck:** *A Season of Gifts*, with seasonal refreshments  
(for adults and students in third grade and above)  
Wednesday, December 16, 5:30 p.m., Members' Room, \$5/person

**To register, see [www.nysoclib.org/events\\_registration.html](http://www.nysoclib.org/events_registration.html) or contact the Events Office at 212-288-6900 x230.**



FOR THE LIBRARY LOVER ON YOUR LIST, we offer a handful of unique gift possibilities, available at the circulation desk.

Gift Memberships: Give the gift of reading. Gift memberships for a year or six months offer the recipient all the privileges you treasure, from books to workshops.

Library Tote Bags (\$15) featuring our handsome logo, adapted from the 1930s bronze by Paul Manship.

America's Membership Libraries (\$36). A beautiful full-color hardcover book introducing sixteen of the nation's membership libraries, including this one.

The President's Wife and the Librarian Exhibition Catalog (\$10). A gracious visit to the world of Edith Kermit Roosevelt, Theodore Roosevelt's First Lady, and the Library of the past.

THE NEW YORK SOCIETY LIBRARY  
53 EAST 79TH STREET  
NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10075

This newsletter is available  
in electronic form  
at [www.nysoclib.org/notes.html](http://www.nysoclib.org/notes.html).