



NOTES

VOLUME 14, NUMBER 3, SUMMER 2007

FROM THE HEAD LIBRARIAN

STAFF AND ANNUAL MEETING NEWS

I am pleased to announce that Laura O'Keefe has been appointed Head of Cataloging and Bibliographic Maintenance. Laura was a librarian at the Carl H. Pforzheimer Collection of Shelley and His Circle in the Humanities and Social Sciences Library of the New York Public Library. Along with setting local policies, directing cataloging and bibliographic maintenance work, and supervising a staff of four, Laura will cover some hours at the reference desk starting in September.

Ingrid Abrams is the new part-time Children's Library Assistant. She will work with Carrie Silberman and Randi Levy to provide Children's Library users with full-time service.

At the 239th Annual Meeting of shareholders and trustees on April 18, Board Chairman Charles G. Berry presented three awards. Citations for length of service were given to Development Assistant Diane Srebnick (10 years) and Assistant Head Librarian Jane Goldstein (35 years). A special commendation was given to Arevig Caprielian for her many contributions to the Library as Rare Books Librarian and Assistant Head of Cataloging. A reception for the trustees, shareholders, and staff followed. Photographs from the Annual Meeting can be seen at www.nysoclib.org/annual/annual2007photos.html.



Laura O'Keefe



Ingrid Abrams

FINDING A GOOD MYSTERY

A member suggested that I include in this column some suggestions for navigating the Library and understanding the online catalog and our collections and services. Since so many members depend on our fine collection of mystery fiction, I wanted to offer some ideas for solving the mystery of which mystery to read next.

Many of our circulation and reference desk staff read a steady diet of mystery fiction, so they are your Scotland Yard for this genre; feel free to ask them for help. Staff can also help you delve into the case files—the many reference books in the lobby and Reference Room devoted to mystery, crime, and spy-fiction reading. Whether you like the classics by Agatha Christie, Arthur Conan Doyle, or G.K. Chesterton, or modern writers like Ruth Rendell, Ian Rankin, or member author Alan Furst, a reference book can help. Four titles in the lobby that are particularly worth reviewing are:

Make Mine a Mystery: A Readers Guide to Mystery by Gary Warren Niebuhr (Ref 016.82 N)

Reference Guide to Mystery and Detective Fiction by Richard Bleirer (Ref 016.8 B)

A Catalog of Crime by (former trustee) Jacques Barzun (Ref 016.82 B)

The Oxford Companion to Crime and Mystery Writing by Rosemary Herbert (Ref 820.3 O).

These mystery reference sources feature author, subject, geographical and character-name indexes, summaries of common mystery themes and styles, and dictionary entries on mystery writers and terminology. More general sources like *Fiction Catalog* (Ref 016.8 F) or *Books in Print* (Ref 015 B, or available electronically from the Library's catalog) can also help. A keyword search in the Library's online catalog ("mystery stories" AND "bibliography") will yield a full list of twenty-two books in the circulating and reference stacks on mystery writing. Since 1999 the Library's staff of catalogers have added Library of Congress Subject Headings to all records for our mystery collection. A subject search for "Police—England—London—Fiction," for instance, retrieves 63 titles in our stacks, including such writers as Deborah Crombie, Anne Perry, and Barry Maitland. And finally, since 1997 genre headings ("mystery fiction" and/or "spy stories") have been added to the records for mystery books and are searchable by subject or keyword.

THANKS AND BEST WISHES

In closing, let me say what a pleasure it is to continue serving as your Head Librarian. I thank the trustees and staff for all their support over the last year. I wish you all a restful and healthy summer with, of course, many hours of reading. I look forward to seeing you at the reference desk or hearing from you by mail or e-mail (mbartlett@nysoclib.org).

Mark Bartlett
Head Librarian

SPRING AWARD CEREMONIES

THE NEW YORK CITY BOOK AWARDS

The twelfth annual New York City Book Awards Ceremony and reception was held on May 3. Mike Wallace, co-author of the award-winning *Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898*, acted as master of ceremonies, and all four winning authors were present to accept their awards. The 2006-2007 winners are Rebecca Zurier for *Picturing the City: Urban Vision and the Ashcan School*, Andrew Dolkart for *Biography of a Tenement House in New York City*, and Jewel Stern and John A. Stuart for *Ely Jacques Kahn, Architect: Beaux-Arts to Modernism in New York*.

Top Row: Host Mike Wallace; winners John A. Stuart and Jewel Stern; Christopher Gray presenting the award for *Ely Jacques Kahn, Architect*.

Bottom Row: Elizabeth Barlow Rogers presenting the award for *Picturing the City*; presenter Jules Cohn and winner Andrew Dolkart; winner Rebecca Zurier.



THE 2007 YOUNG WRITERS AWARDS

The Children's Library committee honored eight young writers at a ceremony and reception on May 10. The winning entries can be viewed on the Library's website at www.nysoclib.org/kids/young_writers.html.

Back: Judges Robert Quackenbush, Dave Johnson, and Carol Weston

In front, left to right: David Mokhtarzadeh, hon. mention for "Riding a Big Apple"; Jonathan Silverman, winner for "Deep in the Heart of a Great Apple"; Billie Fabrikant, winner for "Life"; Theo Naylor, winner for "Daybreak"/hon. mention for "Iandry"; Sydney A. Jennison, winner for "Double Fan"; Lucy Tantum, hon. mention for "Moving to New York City"; Dan Rubins, winner for "A Terrible Case of Hobophobia"; Simone Amar Ouimet, hon. mention for "Revolving."



A GENEROUS GIFT

The Library is pleased to announce a \$500,000 gift from Ada Peluso and Romano I. Peluso in honor of their parents, the late Assunta Sommella Peluso and Ignazio Peluso. Ignazio Peluso was a member of the Library for several years before his death in 1981. His daughter, Ada, has continued the membership in her name since then and frequents the Library often.

Ignazio Peluso joined the Library after his retirement as Chief Chancellor of the Permanent Mission of Italy to the United Nations. He previously was associated with the Italian Embassy in Washington, DC. Mr. Peluso, who lived nearby, joined the Library because of his love of books and reading, and he appreciated the restful haven the Library provided for those pursuits. Having a PhD in International Law and Economics, he particularly enjoyed history and other non-fiction and was also a collector of foreign antique books. Assunta Sommella Peluso earned a PhD in Economics and was also a great reader, with a particular passion for Italian novels. Before her marriage, she was a teacher.

Ada Peluso is Chair of the Department of Mathematics and Statistics at Hunter College, where she has been on the faculty for 40 years. She earned her BA degree there and a PhD in Mathematics from the Courant Institute at New York University. Romano Peluso is a Vice President at JPMorgan Chase Bank and holds a MBA from New York University. An expert on corporate trust matters, he is a frequent author of articles for the American Bankers Association.

The Peluso Family has a distinguished record of philanthropy, having made prior gifts and donations to the Metropolitan Museum of Art and Hunter College.

In recognition of the gift of the Pelusos, the Library is naming the Exhibition Gallery/Hall on the second floor as the "Assunta, Ignazio, Ada and Romano Peluso Exhibition Gallery." A gallery opening and celebration will be held early in 2008.

Board Chair Charles G. Berry commented, "The Peluso Family exemplifies the intellectual accomplishments and love of reading, literature and history that the Library has fostered and enjoyed among its members over its 253-year history. We are extremely grateful to them for this generous gift."



The future Peluso Exhibition Gallery

NEW ONLINE RESOURCES

The New York Review of Books: The Library's growing list of electronic resources now includes the online archive of the *New York Review of Books*. This is a full-text database allowing users to search or browse reviews and articles from the magazine's founding in 1963 through 2007. Results can be printed or e-mailed. Members can access the database in the Library via our website or the online catalog, or from home using their barcode.

The Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature: A mainstay of print reference collections, H.W. Wilson's *Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature* is now available electronically within the Library and remotely via the catalog or website. Coverage includes indexing and abstracting for over 400 publications back to 1983 and the full text of articles from about 200 publications going back to 1994. (Our print version, going back to 1900, is still available.) Patrons can use basic and advanced search templates, browsing capability, and options to e-mail, print, or save your search results. The database is updated daily.

For more information about these and other electronic resources, see our website, www.nysoclib.org; to get your barcode for offsite access, e-mail systems@nysoclib.org.

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Review

Men Without Qualities

By Joyce Carol Oates

The Emperor's Children
by Claire Messud
Knopf, 431 pp., \$25.00

OTHER BOOKS DISCUSSED IN THIS ARTICLE

When the World Was Steady
by Claire Messud
Granta, 270 pp., \$11.95 (paper)

The Last Life
by Claire Messud
Harcourt, 400 pp., \$14.00 (paper)



Claire Messud
(click for larger image)

RARE BOOK NEWS

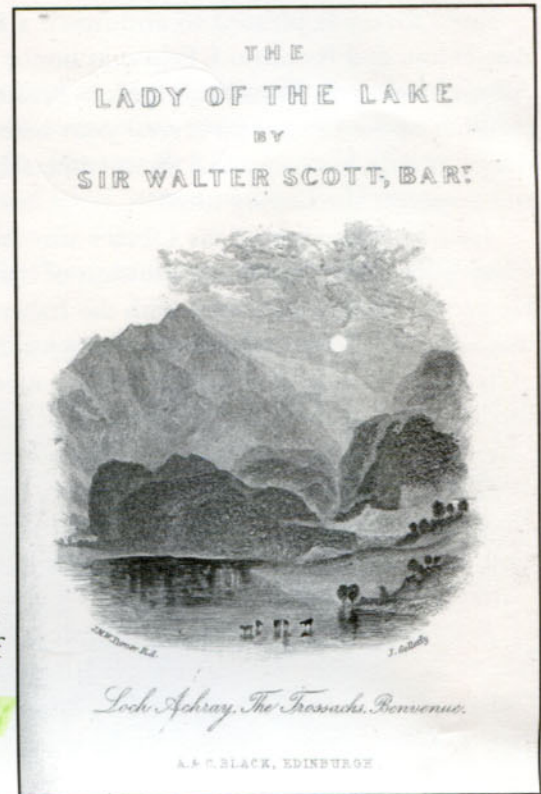
UNUSUAL TARTAN BINDINGS DISCOVERED

Two volumes of a 1870-71 set of Sir Walter Scott's *Poetical Works*, published in Edinburgh by Adam and Charles Black, have handsome lacquered tartan-pattern bindings. The tartan on the third volume is called "Louise"; the book comprises the epic "The Lord of the Isles." The fifth volume includes the "The Lady of the Lake"; its back cover includes the name "Lorne" within a diamond-shaped frame.

Rare Book Librarian Arevig Caprielian followed up on her initial research with David McClay, Curator of the John Murray Archive at the National Library of Scotland. McClay established that the two tartans were created in 1871 to commemorate the marriage between John Douglas Sutherland Campbell (1845-1914), Marquess of Lorne, and Princess Louise (1848-1939), daughter of Queen Victoria. The Marquess was later the Ninth Duke of Argyll and became Canada's youngest-ever Governor-General in 1878. Lake Louise, in the province of Alberta, is named after Princess Louise.

A Mr. Ross of Glasgow created the Volume V tartan, formally called "Lorne District." The other, "Louise Commemorative," was designed by a Mr. M'Kissock of Girvan, incorporating colors of the Clan Campbell tartan. Perhaps the publishers felt that these new but essentially Scottish tartans were ideal for the bindings of the essential Scots writer, Sir Walter Scott.

To see color versions of both tartans, visit the online version of this newsletter at www.nysoclib.org/notes.html.



THE WEBSITE: MAIN PAGE VS. LIBRARY CATALOG

Readers inside and outside the Library make great use of our website, which receives about 1,200 visits per day. In response to recent member remarks about navigating to the Library's main page as opposed to the online catalog, here is a brief explanation of their different uses.

Main Page (www.nysoclib.org): For Library hours, general information, and upcoming events, please visit our main page. There are over 600 informational pages on this site, which has been active since January 1999. The main page includes a quick search function for either the full website or the Library catalog. If you add our site to Favorites or Bookmarks on your web browser, we suggest bookmarking to the main page's address.

Online Catalog (<http://library.nysoclib.org>): For information about books in our collection or your patron record, or for access to our electronic resources, visit the Library catalog site. Because the catalog is linked to the entire system whereby we acquire, organize and circulate books, other information about the Library cannot be added to this site. The catalog has been accessible on the web anywhere in the world since February 2004.

THE NEW YORK SOCIETY LIBRARY
Founded 1754

The New York Society Library, the oldest in the city, was founded in 1754 by the New York Society, a civic-minded group formed in the belief that the availability of books would help the city to prosper. A subscription library, it now contains nearly three hundred thousand volumes -- the result of the tastes of its members over almost the last quarter millennium.

Although this is primarily a library for the general reader, it has considerable potential for research. Holdings may be searched using either the Library's card catalogs or its [online catalog](#). Members may borrow books and have the use of several reading and study rooms on the upper floors; they can also browse in the stacks. Non-members are invited without charge to use the ground floor for reading and reference.

The Library is a not-for-profit corporation supported by its membership fees, by income from its endowment (built largely from bequests), and by [contributions](#), which are tax-deductible.

SEARCH: Author Title Subject Keyword

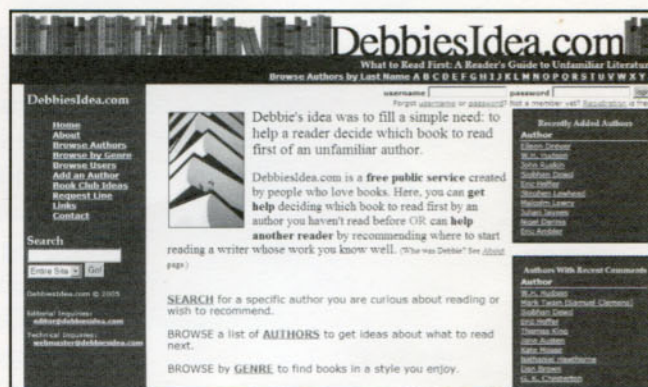
Limit to:

READERS CONNECTING

FUN AND USEFUL BOOK-RELATED WEBSITES

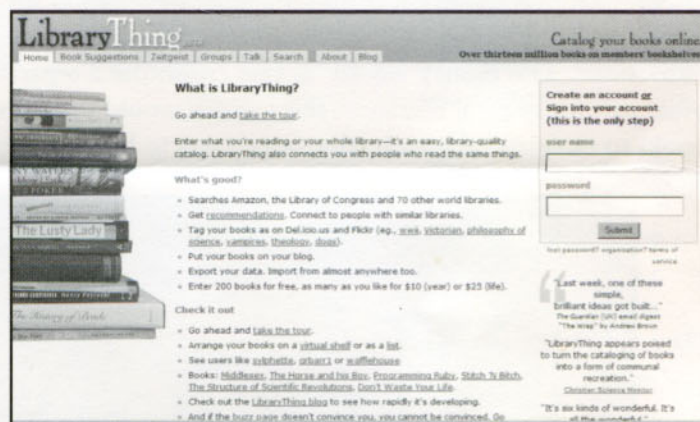
These free sites come in handy for wired readers who want to choose a new book to read, organize the books they already have, or pass on some of those books to other readers.

DEBBIE'S IDEA (www.debbiesidea.com): Founded by Library member Ellen Pall, Debbie's Idea fills the simple need to help a reader approaching an unfamiliar author to decide which book to read first. Anyone can browse recommendations on authors from David Baldacci to Mark Twain; free registration allows you to comment on existing entries or add your own favorite author, with advice on the best order for experiencing their work.



DAILYLIT (www.dailylit.com): For those who spend hours over e-mail but struggle to find the time to read a book, DailyLit suggests an answer. Registered users receive books in five-minute installments via e-mail at a frequency and time they determine. Over 250 classic, public-domain titles are offered, and readers can also discuss their books in forums.

LIBRARYTHING (www.librarything.com): LibraryThing calls itself two sites in one: online software for creating a library-quality catalog of your personal book collection, plus a service to connect readers who share the same kinds of books. Free registration allows you to begin your catalog just by entering a title, author, or ISBN; data is then retrieved from other online sources including the Library of Congress. Users can publish reviews and create profiles to introduce themselves to others with similar interests. Small fees are charged for entering more than 200 titles.



LIBRARY ELF (www.libraryelf.com): Elf is an e-mail tool allowing busy library users to keep track of their activity with one or more libraries. Accounts at participating libraries are checked daily and e-mail notices are sent when items are coming due or when held items are ready to be picked up. Please note that because we have our own notification system, the New York Society Library does not currently participate in Library Elf; however, the New York Public Library is supported.

BOOK CROSSING (www.bookcrossing.com): Because of this award-winning site, the *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* now defines "bookcrossing" as "the practice of leaving a book in a public place to be picked up and read by others, who then do likewise." With a stated goal of making the whole world a library, Book Crossing provides online service and supplies for users to register books and then pass them on, as well as for those who find the books to join the community. As of this writing, the site boasts 554,896 participants in over 120 countries.

LIBRARY NEWS: NEW ZIP CODE

On July 1, the Library will join other Upper East Side addresses in getting a new ZIP code. Since 1963, the Library has had the code 10021, but we will now end our address with 10075. All our publications will reflect this, but please make note of the change if you plan to send us mail. Please let us know if your ZIP code has changed, too, to make sure that it is correct in our records.



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THE LIBRARY AND ITS HISTORY

THE BEST SEAT IN THE HOUSE: A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE GREEN ART ALCOVE

BY CHRISTOPHER GRAY

Architectural historian Christopher Gray is the author of New York Streetscapes: Tales of Manhattan's Significant Buildings and Landmarks (Harry N. Abrams, 2003) and the weekly "Streetscapes" column for the New York Times. He served on the Library's Board from 1998 to 2004 and developed an intimate knowledge of our building and its history.

According to the 2000 membership survey, less than a third of our members have even heard of it, so surely no more than a few hundred compete for the best seat in the house: the Green Art Alcove. But that's enough to place its single chair in mad-deningly constant use. The cognoscenti amble down the aisle toward the strange little quarter-staircase, gently peer around the corner, and nearly always find their hopes dashed—someone else has gotten there first. The competition is a testimony to the enduring charm of the odd little room hidden among the art and architecture books on Stack 12.

This delicious assembly of furniture, paneling, bronze, and portraiture was created as a memorial to John Cleve Green, millionaire China trader and railroad entrepreneur. Green died in 1875 at his Staten Island country house, aged 77 or 78. In 1833 he had gone to Canton and soon amassed a large fortune. His New York Tribune obituary said he was also known for his "sterling integrity." Green's city residence was at 10 Washington Square North, as he had been president of New York University, but the Tribune also noted that his gift to Princeton College was "magnificent"—\$1 million of his \$7 million fortune.

Green neglected to mention the Society Library in his estate, but then-trustee Robert Lenox Kennedy—banker and donor of the Library's precious Hammond Collection—arranged with Green's widow Sarah for a gift of \$50,000, with certain restrictions. The money would "always constitute a separate fund"; half would be used for art and architecture books, the other half for general literature; the Library would establish a separate alcove for the collection; only the Board could allow the books to circulate, although Mrs. Green was to have unlimited access. The Greens funded the books, but Kennedy gave the



Librarian Sanborn Wentworth Butler sitting in the Green Alcove in the 1880s

alcove itself, in the form of \$10,000 for remodeling and furnishing.

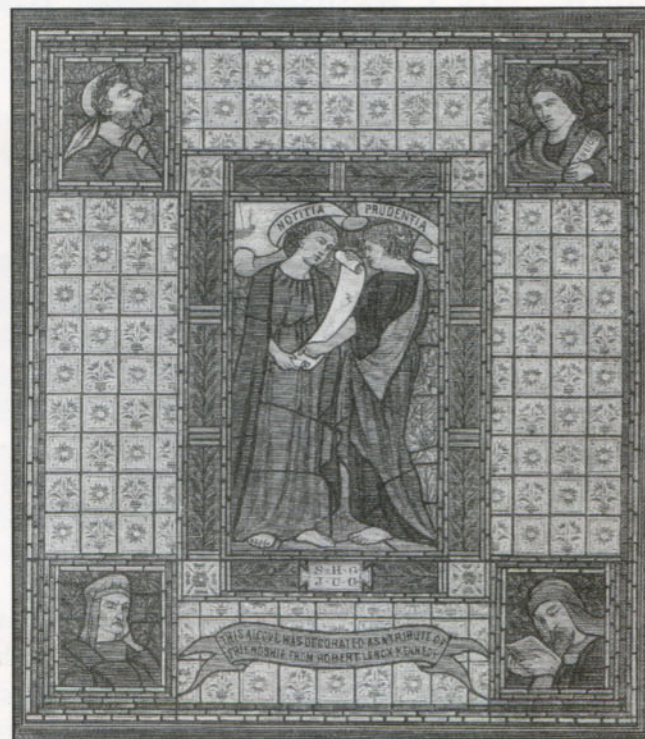
At that time the Society Library, like most libraries, was built on the alcove model, a long triple-height hall flanked by two-level alcoves of books. (Surviving examples include the University Club library or the old Avery Library at Columbia.) These were particularly agreeable spaces, with a table and comfortable chairs, where the visitor could read or even snooze in relative privacy.

The alcove revamped in honor of Mr. Green was finished in 1878. It featured an inset portrait of Green by Don Raimund Madrazo, a Spaniard who studied in Paris and developed a millionaire portraiture practice whose subjects included William H. (“the public be damned”) Vanderbilt. The woodwork was done in the Marcotte studios and designed by the mysterious Sidney V. Stratton. Historian Mosette Broderick says that Kennedy was a mentor to Stratton, who was of a genteel background and trained at the École des Beaux-Arts with Charles McKim. Stratton is now utterly obscure, but for several years the letterhead of McKim, Mead & White listed him along with the three partners. He evidently shared space with the firm and practiced alongside them. Samuel White, great-grandson of Stanford White, an architect and expert on the firm, says of Stratton, “if only some of the interiors credited to Stratton are really his, then he’s one of America’s greatest interior designers.”

To judge from surviving fragments and photographs, Stratton designed a lovely aesthetic-movement room separated from the main hall of the Library by a screen of intricate fretwork. On the west wall of the alcove was the present bronze plaque of gratitude from the trustees plus, below that, the motto *Cuncta Suo Tempore*, an abbreviation of an Ecclesiastes passage translated as “God made all things good in their time.” Period photographs show a sister panel with a central clock faced in what was probably polished marble, with bronze numbering, and two smaller dials which may have been a barometer and an anemometer. Although the entire assembly is now installed in the form of a mantelpiece, it was originally mounted at the top of a sloping reference table. The table would have been used either for the art stored in a set of flat files below or for the folio-sized works shelved to the right and left. It appears that Stratton used several woods: the black detailing may be ebony, and the low-relief floral carving on either side of the portrait, perhaps walnut, is one of my favorite things in the Library. The ceiling bears a series of stenciled floral designs which seem to imitate marquetry, although that is out of character with the artistic background of this work, which emphasized frank naturalism. Writing in the October 1884 issue of *Century Magazine*, critic Mariana Griswold van Rensselaer singled out the Green Art Alcove as “a charming piece of work.”

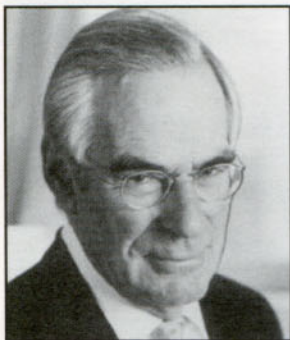
The Library moved into its present quarters in 1937, taking over the John S. Rogers townhouse on 79th Street. By this time the old alcove system had fallen out of use, and the back half of the building was converted into the current warren of book stacks. A comparison with the University Place photographs shows how the Green Art Alcove was adapted to its new space on Stack 12. The present chair and table show in the photographs, but the table was reduced to fit its new quarters—a careful observer can lean over the far side and see evidence of the change to the apron. The shelves, display cases, folio drawers, all but one of the chairs, and the bronze torchères were lost. Also gone is a stained-glass window, perhaps four feet by five feet, on the south side of the room opposite the sliding door. It showed two central figures, Knowledge and Prudence, surrounded by portraits of Homer, Virgil, Dante, and Chaucer.

Despite its reduction in size and furnishing, the Green Art Alcove is still the best place to work in the Library. The Alcove evokes our rich past, like the nineteenth-century card catalog in the Reference Room or the charging ledger showing Melville’s borrowings. This account may only increase competition for this unusual space, earning its author some well-deserved dirty looks—especially if he is sitting there at the time.



The stained-glass window described below

FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD

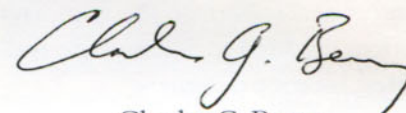


With sadness we note the passing of our valued longtime member David Halberstam. He was a courageous and dedicated war correspondent, journalist and historian. A common theme of his more than 20 books and countless articles was his keen insight into the psychology of power and competition. He was perhaps best known for his Pulitzer Prize-winning classic *The Best and the Brightest* (1972), a resounding indictment of the foreign policy decisions that mired us in the Vietnam War. He was also one of the great sports writers of all time. I particularly enjoyed *The Amateurs*, his account of the intense competitive drive and dedication of a small number of elite American oarsmen aiming for gold at the 1984 Olympics. It is both an illuminating depiction of an arcane sport and a compelling account of athletes' psychological motivation. Halberstam had a similar spirit of dedication and intensity in his own writing, as well as an infectious enthusiasm for a

wide range of sports. It is sadly fitting that when he died in a crash on a California freeway, he was being driven by a University of California at Berkeley student to interview Y.A. Tittle, former champion New York Giants quarterback.

We at the Society Library are particularly grateful to David Halberstam for his delightful testimonial about the Library that first appeared in the *New York Times* in 1997 and can be accessed on our website at www.nysoclib.org/testimonials. He appreciated our "egalitarian" nature, the "sanctuary" we provide for writers and readers, and the "civility and tolerance" with which we are run. Filled with anecdotes about many writers who have graced our stacks and reading rooms, his piece contains one of my favorite quotes about the Library, from poet Karl Kirchwey, who called us "the city's best-kept democratic secret."

The *Times* obituary quoted a recent interview with Halberstam in which he said, "A writer should be like a playwright—putting people on stage, putting ideas on stage, making the reader the audience." His thoughtful article about the Library embodied these principles. We will miss his good humor and intelligence, his dedication to his craft, his love of New York, and his affection and support for our unique institution.



Charles G. Berry
Chairman of the Board

The Library thrives and prospers through the generosity of our members and contributors. To join, renew, or make a contribution in support of our activities, send mail to the address below, visit our website, www.nysoclib.org, or call the Development Office at 212-288-6900 x214.

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