

FROM THE HEAD LIBRARIAN

It gives me great pleasure to announce new appointments in the Library staff, both new employees and familiar faces. First, Jane Goldstein is retiring this December, after a long and successful career as a Circulation Assistant, Head of Circulation, and, for the last five years, Assistant Head Librarian. Jane assures me she is looking forward to catching up on her reading, traveling with her husband, Ken, and visiting family and friends around the country. We will certainly miss Jane's steady presence in the Library, but I am happy to report that Carolyn Waters will step into her shoes as Assistant Head Librarian. Since 2008, Carolyn has been devoted to writers' and reference services at the desk and organized our diverse Writing Life events and writers' groups. Andrew Corbin, previously our Renovation Projects Librarian and Circulation Assistant, is coming back full-time in December and will join Steve McGuirl and Janet Howard in the Acquisitions Department as Acquisitions and Reference Librarian. Finally, Jennifer Hanley-Leonard is the new Children's Librarian and is working part-time with Carrie Silberman and Ana Chiu in the very active Children's Library. Congratulations to Jane, Carolyn, Andrew, and Jennifer!

The Society Library hosted this year's meeting of directors and librarians of the Membership Libraries Group October 21-23. I was proud to introduce my great staff and show off the gorgeous skylight and the improved and renovated fifth floor to the twenty-two representatives and guests from our cousin institutions. We welcomed first-time attendees Patricia Larrabee from the Maine Charitable Mechanic Association (established 1815); William C. Baker from the Institute Library of New Haven (1826), and Malena Rogers and Angelo Vigorito from the General Society of Mechanics and Tradesmen of New York (1820). On Friday night, directors, spouses, trustees, and staff attended a festive reception in the Members' Room, and over the weekend they enjoyed tours of both the wonderful Thomas J. Watson Library of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, hosted by Chief Librarian Kenneth Soehner, and the Morgan Library and Museum.



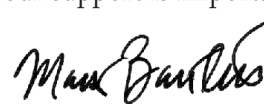
Visiting the Thomas J. Watson Library on October 22. Back row: Albert Pyle, Mercantile Library, Cincinnati; Tom Hardiman, Portsmouth Athenaeum; Mark Bartlett, The New York Society Library; William C. Baker, Institute Library of New Haven; Patricia Larrabee, Maine Charitable Mechanic Association; Angelo Vigorito, Library of the General Society of Mechanics and Tradesmen; Kenneth Soehner, Thomas J. Watson Library at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Middle row: Brenda Wegener, Center for Fiction; Noreen Tomassi, Center for Fiction; Jean Marie Prociuous, Salem Athenaeum; Erika Torri, Athenaeum Music and Arts Library, La Jolla; Anne Cleveland, Charleston Library Society; Christina Bevilacqua, Providence Athenaeum. Front row: Sandra L. Tatman, Athenaeum of Philadelphia, Alison Maxell, Providence Athenaeum.

The cornerstone of the weekend was the tour of our building on Saturday morning, followed by an all-day directors' session with discussion of urgent topics and initiatives that are common to many of the institutions. This year the Saturday conversations were lively and fruitful. We covered the place of electronic book collections and e-readers in our institutions, cross-promotions among membership libraries, historic collections in an electronic age, fundraising in challenging times, and membership retention. I came away with much food for thought and some good ideas for our Library. Let me add special thanks to Sara Holliday for her masterful planning of the Membership Libraries Group weekend, and to trustee Carol Collins Malone for arranging the Thomas J. Watson Library visit.

Each year the directors and librarians receive a gift bag from the host institution. I was very proud to present each attendee with a copy of our handsome New York Society Library canvas bag and a copy of our new exhibition-related book. Elizabeth Barlow Rogers's *Writing the Garden: A Literary Conversation Across Two Centuries* is now on sale at the front desk for \$28. We have limited copies on hand, so get yours now. All proceeds from copies sold in the building will benefit the Library, especially our future exhibitions and related events. I am pleased to have the book available during the final three months of the *Writing the Garden* exhibition, now extended through February 15, 2012 in the Peluso Family Exhibition Gallery. Response to the book has been positive, with many members stopping to tell me that it will make a great holiday gift for friends and family. Video of the November 1 book launch and lecture can be streamed on our website. Finally, I extend many thanks to Deborah S. Pease for underwriting the exhibition and the book, to Jerry Kelly for the excellent book design, and to our publishing partners, the Foundation for Landscape Studies and David R. Godine.

Being an occasional fan of science fiction—I am particularly fond of the early short stories of Henry Kuttner, Theodore Sturgeon, and Harlan Ellison—I am thrilled to read Brandi Tambasco's "Off the Shelf" column in this issue. Former staffer Matthew Haugen (now working as a rare book librarian at Columbia University) was a member of the Library's charging ledgers project team. Matt's column here on the Library's early printed catalogs reminds me of the exhaustive labors of previous librarians to describe and list the Library's holdings. Although we have come a long way from our last printed catalog (1850), these volumes are an important part of our history and vital tools for bibliographic analysis and provenance research in our Special Collections.

In closing, I must thank everyone who has contributed to this year's Annual Appeal. Your support is important. Do enjoy the privileges of your membership. I look forward to seeing you at the reference desk.



Mark Bartlett
Head Librarian



Introducer Paula Deitz, Henriette Subr, and Elizabeth Barlow Rogers at Ms. Rogers's lecture on *Writing the Garden: A Literary Conversation Across Two Centuries*, November 1

HONOR FRIENDS AND FAMILY WITH A LIBRARY GIFT

The Library has been the fortunate recipient of a number of gifts this year in honor or in memory of loved ones. They provide a wonderful way to celebrate or remember a special person while supporting the Library.

When we receive a tribute or memorial gift, staff promptly notify the person or family indicated, without revealing the amount. All such gifts are listed in a special section of the Library's Annual Report. If the donor wishes to remain anonymous, we are happy to oblige. Each contribution is tax-deductible.

If you would like to learn more about tribute and memorial gifts, please contact Director of Development Joan Zimmert at 212-288-6900 x207 or jzimmert@nysoclib.org.

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

WRITING GROUPS THRIVE AT THE LIBRARY

by Carolyn Waters, Writer Services Librarian

Writers have used the Library since its earliest days, and it continues to serve as a haven and a source of inspiration to many. In recent years, our vibrant and diverse community of member writers has asked for opportunities to connect on professional and personal levels. The Library responded by developing unique programming and providing dedicated support to this sector of the membership.

As an experiment, the Library launched a fiction writing group for member writers in late 2009. After an enthusiastic response from the fiction writers, we expanded into monthly groups for general nonfiction, memoir, poetry, and children's/young adult writers. Each NYSL writing group is self-governed, developing ongoing meeting procedures and electing a leader to keep the group running smoothly. Despite slight differences among the groups' methods, in general each one selects several members each month to submit their work for critique. All group members are expected to participate and to provide thoughtful, constructive, and supportive input on their peers' work.

Due to the extreme popularity and interest in the writing groups over the past year, we have recently instituted some new rules for participation. Although prior publication is not a requirement, groups are not intended for novices or beginning writers, so all interested members must now submit writing samples in the genre prior to being accepted into a group. Each group has designated readers to consider these submissions. Once accepted into a group, participants must commit to attending at least six of the nine regularly scheduled meetings between September and May. (Groups may meet during the summer if they choose, but attendance is not required.) Finally, the number of members in each group has been capped based on the genre and the group's individual working procedures.

As of this writing, all the Library's writing groups are at capacity, but other member writers may submit samples to be added to a waitlist. If possible, new groups will be formed to accommodate interest. For questions or for details on submitting samples, please contact Carolyn Waters at cwaters@nysoclib.org.

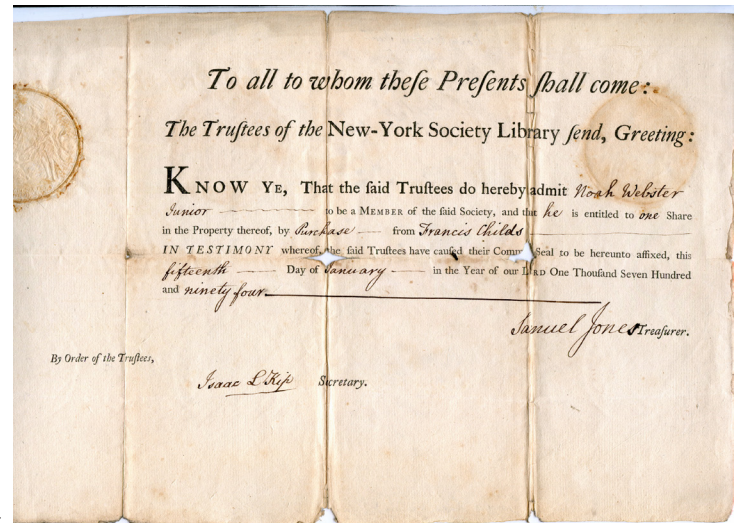
FORGOTTEN FOUNDING FATHER, LIBRARY MEMBER

This fall we welcomed Joshua Kendall lecturing on his book *The Forgotten Founding Father: Noah Webster's Obsession and the Creation of an American Culture*. Around that time, Library staff discovered many interesting items in our Webster holdings. The Library's Webster titles include

- the original edition of *An American Dictionary of the English Language* (in two volumes, New York, 1828);
- *An American Selection of Lessons in Reading and Speaking, Calculated to Improve the Minds and Refine the Taste of Youth: and also, to Instruct Them in the Geography, History, and Politics of the United States, to which is Prefixed Rules of Elocution...Being the Third Part of a Grammatical Institute of the English Language* (Philadelphia, 1787);
- *Dissertations on the English Language: with Notes, Historical and Critical: to Which is Added, by Way of Appendix, an Essay on a Reformed Mode of Spelling, with Dr. Franklin's Arguments on That Subject* (Boston, 1789).
This was a gift from Webster and includes his presentation inscription.

We also still own Webster's Library share, which he eventually transferred to Ebenezer Beldin. Although we can claim Webster as a member, unfortunately no borrowing activity of his is found in the Second Charging Ledger (1799-1805).

Along with our rich general collections, the Library holds over 10,000 treasures in our special collections. We are glad to be able to profile them occasionally in *Library Notes*.



For Value received to do hereby transfer assign and set over all my right title and Interest of and to the within mentioned share to Mr. Ebenezer Beldin witness my hand this 26th Day of May 1790

Noah Webster Jun^r

OFF THE SHELF: A READER'S REVIEW

SCIENCE FICTION: SPANNING SPACE, TIME, AND GENRE

by Brandi Tambasco, Circulation Assistant

Hugo Gernsback coined the term “science fiction” in 1929 to describe pulp magazine stories of spacemen and time travel. Since then, the genre has exceeded its roots and flourished in the hands of authors who are often as extraordinary as the tales they tell. Here is a brief reader’s history of the often neglected, surprising, and amazing field of science fiction.

THE GOLDEN AGE (1930S-1950S)

Between the 1930s and late 1950s, science fiction grew out of its cheap magazine beginnings and entered the general public’s awareness. At the forefront of the movement toward serious sci-fi was John W. Campbell Jr., editor of the story magazine *Astounding Science Fiction*. It survives today as *Analog Science Fiction and Fact*. Among the writers featured back in 1939 was Isaac Asimov (1920-1992), whose seven-novel *Foundation* series chronicles a group of mathematical sociologists seeking to form an empire that spans the entire Milky Way. In addition to that series, readers should also consider Asimov’s short stories, particularly the *I, Robot* collection detailing his seminal Three Laws of Robotics.

Ray Bradbury’s (b. 1920) classic dystopian novel *Fahrenheit 451* began as a shorter piece entitled “The Fireman,” also in one of the Fifties’ many science fiction magazines. This is the tale of Guy Montag, a fireman responsible for burning books rather than extinguishing blazes, in a future totalitarian United States that prohibits reading.

Readers preferring mystery and action over galaxy-spanning empires would be wise to consider the two classics by Alfred Bester (1913-1987). *The Stars, My Destination*, strongly influenced by Dumas’s *The Count of Monte Cristo* and considered a precursor of the cyberpunk novels of the 1980s, relates the journeys of nonentity Gully Foyle in a universe where teleportation—“jaunting”—is possible. *The Demolished Man* is a detective novel set in a world where a powerful businessman is murdered despite the near-eradication of violent crime through telepathy. The book is notable for Bester’s use of unique typography to record telepathic conversations.



Ray Bradbury

Further Reading

Clarke, Arthur C. *Childhood’s End*

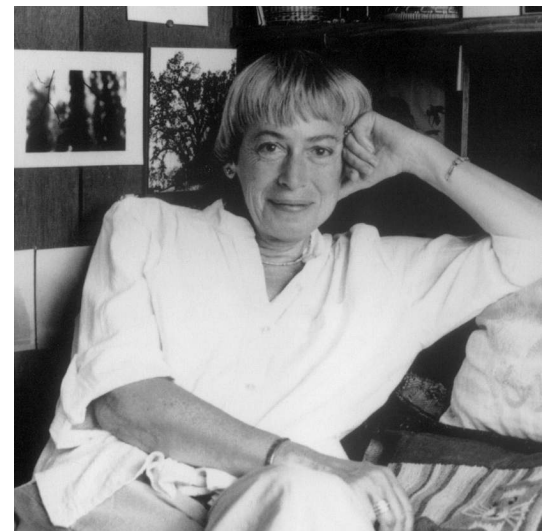
Heinlein, Robert A. *Have Spacesuit—Will Travel*

Miller, Walter M. *A Canticle for Leibowitz*

NEW WAVE (1960S-1970S)

New Wave stories are marked by experiments in form and content as well as a transition away from “hard” science, such as physics and engineering, to “soft” science like psychology and anthropology. Perhaps the author best epitomizing this movement is Philip K. Dick (1928-1982). Dick’s *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, on which Ridley Scott’s classic film *Bladerunner* is based, follows two characters in a post-apocalyptic future: Rick Deckard, a bounty hunter of androids, and J.R. Isidore, a simple man who drives for an android animal-repair shop. Especially intriguing are scenes in which reality breaks down and the interpretation of events is left up to the reader. Another of Dick’s most recognized novels is the alternate-history thriller *The Man in the High Castle*, in which the Axis powers triumphed in World War II and have divided up the United States. A particularly noteworthy plot device introduces a novel-within-a-novel about winning Allied forces in yet another alternate history.

Another popular New Wave author is Ursula K. LeGuin (b. 1929), who focuses on the more sociological aspects of science fiction. LeGuin’s short story collection *Changing Planes* tells stories of several different planets and the societies that inhabit them. In one, people share dreams and a collective unconscious mind. On the cusp of the New Wave transition is Madeleine L’Engle’s *A Wrinkle in Time*, which deserves consideration as the best children’s science fiction book ever written. The story



Ursula K. LeGuin

concerns the travel of Meg Murry, her five-year-old genius brother Charles Wallace, and their potentially telepathic friend Calvin through time and space in search of the Murrys' scientist father. L'Engle (1918-2007) continued the story of the Murrys in four additional novels to comprise the *Time Fantasy*.

No science fiction list would be complete without Frank Herbert's (1920-1986) masterpiece *Dune*. Inspiring not only David Lynch's 1984 cult hit film but also a more faithful Sci-Fi Channel miniseries, *Dune* is a rich, complex tale in which political alliances and manipulation, religious zealotry, ecology, science, human emotion, and evolution are interwoven. This space epic follows the maturation of the young Paul Atreides as he seeks in turn to fulfill and avoid his destiny. The saga continues in five sequel novels written by Frank Herbert, as well as a series of sequels and prequels by his son Brian with Kevin J. Anderson.

Further Reading

Butler, Octavia. *Kindred*

Heinlein, Robert A. *Stranger in a Strange Land*

LeGuin, Ursula K. *The Left Hand of Darkness*

Niven, Larry. *Ringworld*

Vonnegut, Kurt. *Slaughterhouse-Five*

CONTEMPORARY (1980S-TODAY)

In the 1980s, science fiction transitioned away from the New Wave, and books were more influenced by factors such as the Cold War, the expanding availability of information, and environmental concerns. The *Ender* series by Orson Scott Card (b. 1951) is a prime example of contemporary science-fiction, describing a universe in which humankind is fighting for survival against an enemy with whom it is impossible to communicate. In the first book, *Ender's Game*, hope for survival depends on the children of the Battle School, including the boy Ender, who are taken from their parents and groomed to play integral roles in the war for the future of humanity. The story of Ender continues for four additional novels. Also of note is the *Shadow* companion series of six novels (two are forthcoming), telling the parallel story of Bean, a supporting character from *Ender's Game*.

Not to be overlooked among the high-stakes stories is Douglas Adams's (1952-2001) *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, "a trilogy in five parts." This lively comic sci-fi series follows hapless Arthur Dent on his travels through the universe after Earth is demolished to make way for an intergalactic highway.



Douglas Adams

Along with the dramatic changes in computer technology, contemporary science fiction has been strongly influenced by the incredible discoveries in genetics and medicine. *The Passage* by Justin Cronin (b. 1962) is influenced by the former, telling the story of an immunity-boosting drug that mutates into a virus and drastically changes human civilization. This first installment of a planned trilogy blends science fiction and horror to describe its apocalypse and resulting post-apocalyptic world. Robert J. Sawyer's (b. 1960) *Frameshift* takes off from genetic discoveries with its story of Pierre Tardivel, a geneticist working on the Human Genome Project. What develops is a complex mystery involving evolution, genetics, murder, and Nazi war crimes. Both genetics and technological advancement play an important role in Sawyer's *Rollback*, which follows 87-year-old Sarah and her husband of sixty years as they undergo a medical procedure to revert the body to the mid-twenties while leaving their mental capacity and memories intact.

Connie Willis's (b. 1945) *Doomsday Book* and *To Say Nothing of the Dog* are award-winning companion novels that revolve around a team using time travel for historical research. In *Doomsday Book*, a young historian specializing in medieval history becomes accidentally stranded in an England ravaged by the Black Plague. The lighter *To Say Nothing of the Dog* tracks the mishaps of a young historian as he looks for artifacts in Victorian England while trying not to interfere with the time continuum.

The Hunger Games trilogy by Susan Collins was inspired by her channel-surfing. Seeing the juxtaposition of reality TV contests and coverage of the Iraq War, she conceived of a post-apocalyptic world where the government forces children to fight to the death in an annual televised event. The engrossing, thrilling tale of sixteen-year-old Katniss's involvement in the Hunger Games is now being adapted into a series of feature films, with the first one due for release in 2012.

Further Reading

Gibson, William. *Neuromancer*

Haldeman, Joe. *The Accidental Time Machine*

Stephenson, Neal. *The Diamond Age*

THE MANY CATALOGS OF THE NEW YORK SOCIETY LIBRARY

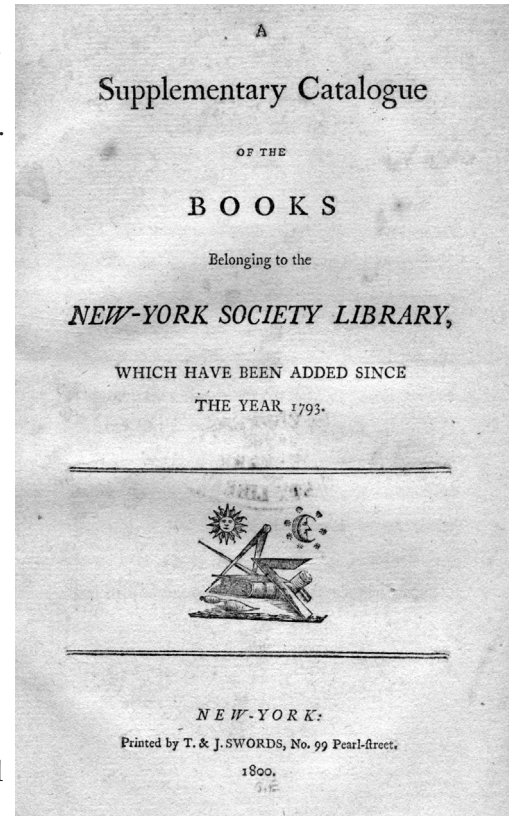
by Matthew Haugen, Rare Book Cataloger, Columbia University

Though the Library now uses an online catalog, many of us fondly remember flipping through drawer after drawer of typed catalog cards in the Reference Room on the first floor. But cards were not always the method of cataloging this or any library's collection. For the first century of its history, the Library issued its catalog as a printed book. This format was portable and accessible outside the Library, which was especially useful in these early years when hours of operation and access to the stacks were limited, and before transportation and communication technology made visiting the Library easier. However, because of the fixed form and the time it took to compile and print, it was impossible to update the catalog when the collection grew without printing an entirely new volume. To compensate, frequent supplements were issued, sometimes bound together with earlier issues. Many surviving copies bear heavy annotation from librarians and other users, noting corrections, additions, and lost books. Some copies were specially bound with extra blank pages between each printed page for this purpose. Editing, compiling, and distributing the catalog became increasingly difficult as the collection and the membership grew, eventually leading to the adoption of the card system in the nineteenth century.

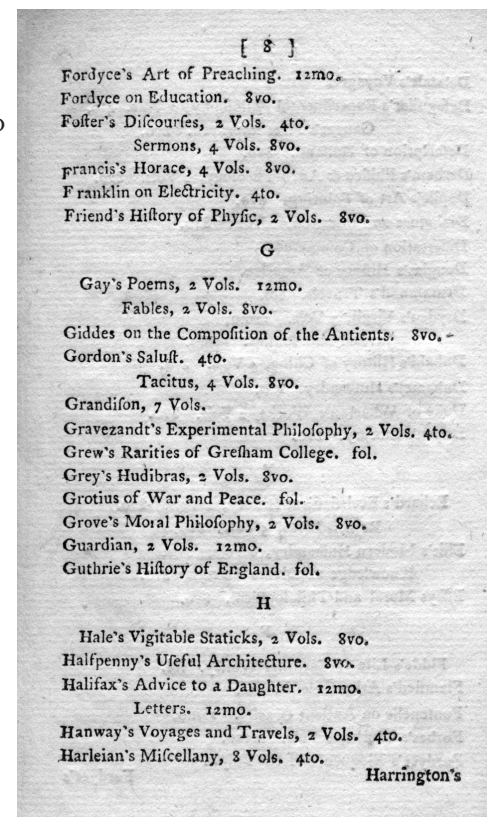
The Library's earliest printed catalog was printed shortly after the 1754 founding by Hugh Gaine (1726-1807), a prominent New York printer and Library trustee. Gaine advertised the catalog in his newspaper *The Mercury* on October 21 of that year, for the price of four coppers. Unfortunately, no surviving copies are known. The trustees ordered another printing from Gaine in March 1758 and furnished each member with a copy. This small 24-page book contained a list of titles arranged in rough alphabetical order and grouped by book size, along with a summary of Library rules and an alphabetical roster of the 118 members. Another catalog was printed in August 1761, and another in 1773, also by Hugh Gaine. A 1766 supplement was advertised, but no known copies survive. Hugh Gaine's receipts show he was paid £10, 8s in New York currency for a run of 500 copies of the 1773 catalog.

These early catalogs demonstrate the growth of the Library's collection and membership over its first decades. Reportedly, the first catalog contained about 700 titles, with that number increasing to 859 titles in the 1758 catalog, and 1018 in the 1761. According to Library lore, parts of the collection were hidden in the belfry of St. Paul's church during the War for Independence, while others were destroyed, dispersed, or used by British soldiers to stuff their muskets, start fires, or barter for alcohol. Some titles were recovered following the occupation of New York, while others were repurchased or donated. The Library reorganized relatively quickly after the war, and Hugh Gaine was able to print a new catalog in 1789 showing about 3,100 volumes, along with the charter, bylaws, and a list of 239 members.

Supplements to the 1789 catalog were printed in 1791 and 1792, with page numbers in each continuing where the previous one left off. The 1791 supplement contains an additional 700 titles and an additional 66 members, while the 1792 supplement adds an additional 816 titles, this time omitting the size grouping, and 188 new members. The 1791 supplement names no publisher, but the 1792 was printed by Thomas and James Swords, who also printed a new comprehensive catalog in 1793 and a supplement in 1800. Thomas Swords (1764-1843) was also a Library member during these years. The 1793 catalog is one hundred pages long and is the only one to include call numbers for the books. Its preface states that the collection then comprised about 5,000 volumes. It also includes bylaws, charter, and a list of Trustees and members, by now totaling 892. From 1800 on, the catalogs also included place and date of publication for most titles, more like modern bibliographies. The Swords's press printed five hundred copies of the 1800 supplement, selling for 18 cents each. By this time, the Library's collection had reached nearly 6,000 volumes.



Title page of 1800 supplement to the 1793 catalog, published by the New York firm T. and J. Swords



A page of the 1761 catalog, including "Franklin on Electricity."

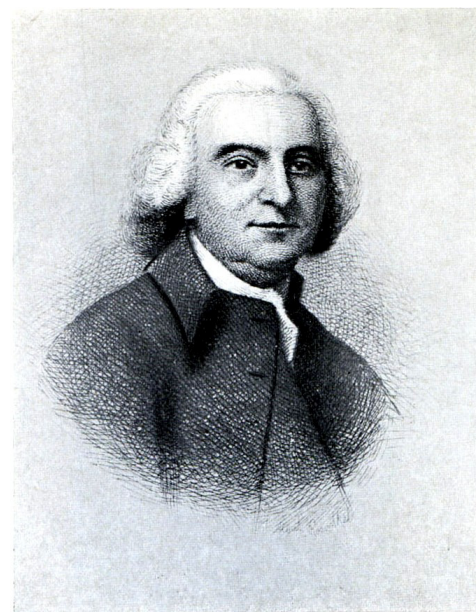
In 1813, C.S. Van Winkle printed a new catalog, as well as a supplement in 1825. The 1813 catalog contains the charter, bylaws, and lists of trustees and members, and is the first to use a subject arrangement rather than an alphabetical arrangement. The 1838 catalog, published by James Van Norden, contains a historical notice referring to the 1813 as the first one “of any consequence,” showing 13,000 volumes, and mentions the 1825 as adding an additional 3,000. Norden’s 1838 catalog contained both an analytical subject catalog as well as an alphabetical listing of about 25,000 volumes, as did the supplement he published in 1841. The last printed catalog to be produced by the Library was printed in 1850 by R. Craighead. It also included an alphabetical and analytical listing, and was the largest at 621 pages.

In anticipation of another printed catalog, the librarians maintained detailed manuscript annotations in each catalog, along with a system of handwritten lists or slips arranged by author. Throughout the Library’s history, these lists and slips were either pasted into scrapbooks or bound together with ribbon or in loose-leaf volumes, allowing for insertions and removals, and some of these lists still survive in our archives. By the end of the 19th century, a subject classification was being prepared. However, the trustees never ordered another catalog printed. Instead, in 1896, trustee F. Augustus Schermerhorn paid the cost of creating the card catalog, totalling \$15,000 for a set of cabinets and cards, and for the services of eight trained catalogers to catalog the collection according to the new Charles A. Cutter “dictionary” method, with a simple subject system devised by the librarians. The process took nearly 3 years to complete, and the card catalog was adopted in 1898. After this time, cataloger Jacob Ermoloff, whose annual salary was \$760, wrote the cards by hand until 1908, when an Underwood typewriter was purchased for \$100. Staff member Marion Morrison (King) lamented the loss of his elegant penmanship.

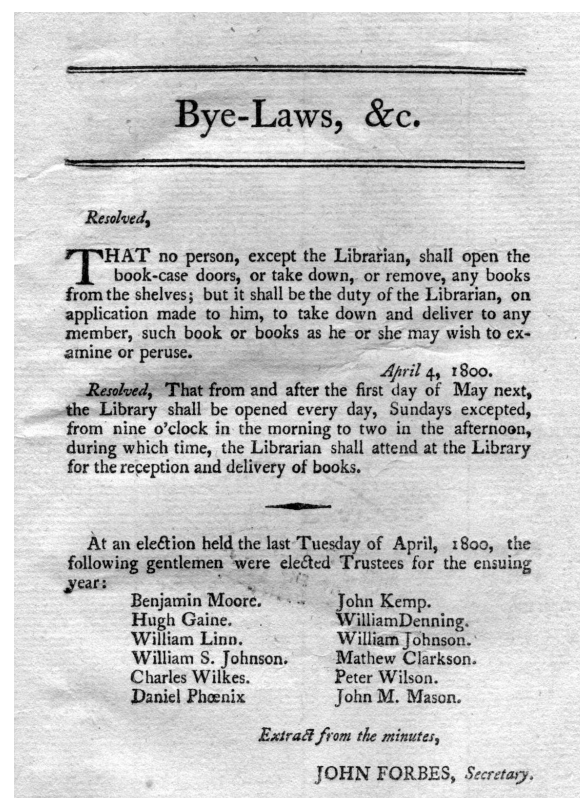
Shortly after the Library moved to its current location in 1937, the trustees decided the books should be re-cataloged according to the Dewey Decimal system. For this project, Polly Fenton, teacher of cataloging at the New Jersey College for Women, was hired along with several temporary assistants, whose work resulted in the card catalog still situated in the Reference Room.

Later in the 20th century, the typewriters were replaced by computers, and after a lengthy conversion process of the existing catalog cards, a public electronic catalog was finally unveiled to the membership on computer terminals in the Reference Room in May 1998, and for a brief time, the electronic catalog and the card catalog were both maintained by the cataloging staff. The card catalog remains in the Reference Room, but it is only current to March 1989. However, some older parts of the collection never made it into the computer, so it remains useful for finding these titles. The computer catalog was later made available outside the Library via the Internet. In addition, many of the earliest printed catalogs have recently been digitized and can be viewed on the Library’s website.

As keepers of the written word, libraries have changed, enlarged, and matured alongside the cultures that nurtured them. The Society Library has an almost unique history running parallel to the development of our country, and the creation, expansion, reorganization, and digitization of its catalog can be seen as a microcosm of that history.



Hugh Gaine, the printer and trustee who created and advertised the early catalogs and supplements.



The bylaws in the 1793 supplement reveal both the expansion of the Library’s hours and one of its operational issues.

MATCHING GIFTS MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Many companies match an employee’s charitable contribution, which means that your donation to the Library could be doubled or even, in some cases, tripled. To find out if your company has a matching gift program, please talk to your Human Resources department. The process is very easy, and the impact can be great.

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

The New York Society Library

Notes Vol. 18 #4, Fall 2011

FALL EVENTS

Clockwise from top: Getchie Argetsinger shares Slightly Spooky Stories at the Children's Library's Halloween celebration; Sheila Jordan and Cameron Brown perform a jazz evening with voice and bass in September; Brenna Sage, Sara Holliday and Michael Lasser present "Alexander's Ragtime Band" and other songs of its era in October.

