

Books & People

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A Share of History:

Piecing Together the Story of Share #2458

by Morgan Aronson and Kathleen Fox

Piecing together the Library's extensive shareholder history is an exciting, if frustrating, endeavor. It begins with the New York Society Library's Articles of Subscription, the precursor to our Royal Charter, which outlines the objectives of the Library, the duties of its trustees, the terms of subscription, and the rights and privileges of its members as shareholders. To become a member of the Library in 1754, one had to purchase a share, a certificate of ownership, at a cost of 5 pounds and then pay dues to maintain one's borrowing privileges at a cost of 10 shillings annually. The profits from such payments were used to hire a librarian, purchase books, and secure the Library's first home at Federal Hall. Shareholders since have reserved the right to "bequeath, inherit, or alienate" their share as well as vote in the annual election of trustees.



A share certificate once thought to be lost

The 3M Cloud Library



The Library is pleased to announce that we are partnering with the 3M Cloud Library to bring more e-books to members beginning sometime in April. At the Library or at home, you will be able to check out e-books from a growing collection of fiction, nonfiction, and children's books curated by Library staff. An intuitive interface will allow easy browsing and searching.

E-books will circulate for two-week loan periods, and can be read on your desktop, laptop, tablet, and many handheld devices. 3M apps make the checkout and browsing process easy and fast. The 3M Cloud Library automatically syncs to any device with the app, so you can start reading on your iPad and continue later on your phone—right where you left off. You can also take notes while reading or bookmark a spot in the text.

The 3M Cloud Library is compatible with the following devices: iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch, all Android devices, NOOK Tablets and eReaders, the Kobo eReader, and all Kindle Fire devices.

Fear not, book lovers! The Library will always remain fully committed to our print collection. E-books will simply enhance access to reading material.

Keep your eyes on the website for further announcements about the 3M Cloud Library.

A Share of History continued



Joseph Alsop (1910-1989)



Over the course of the next century, the cost of a share and the annual subscription increased to support rising operating costs and to allow for a greater book fund. Many shares were forfeited due to lack of payment by May 1st of any given year, the time designated by the Charter. Shares could however be reclaimed upon payment. By 1865, the number of forfeitures became overwhelming and the income from shares was alarmingly inconsistent. It appears that during this time period, given the rise of free public libraries, the trustees implemented annual subscriptions without the purchase of a share in order to increase revenue. Though the issuance of new shares ceased in 1937 to all but new members of the Board of Trustees, shares continue to be transferred and inherited to this day.

In a fit of madness, we decided to take on the history of a specific share now owned by Elizabeth Winthrop (*above left*), an award-winning author whose ancestors include past presidents and society activists. In 1952, researchers abandoned their efforts to trace her share back to its original holder, as the project was deemed too costly and complex. With new resources available through the Internet and the digitization of the archives, we decided it was time to try again. What follows is the life of a Library share from its current holder to its original purchaser.

Already a Library member for some years, Elizabeth inherited her share from her uncle, Joseph Alsop, in 1989. A well-known writer himself, Joseph (*middle left*) wanted his young niece to take advantage of the Library as he was able to do. Years before his death he wrote to the Library requesting access for her, but the rules of the Library applied then as they do now and his request was politely but firmly denied. Alsop, along with Elizabeth's father, Stewart, wrote the "Matter of Fact" column for the *New York Herald*. They were the main subjects of Elizabeth's short e-book memoir *Don't Knock Unless You're Bleeding: Growing*

On the Web



www.nysoclib.org

Check our website for updated events announcements and other resources including

- ◆ **Event Recordings.** Most adult Members' Room events are audio- and videorecorded and available to stream online.
- ◆ **Technology Workshop Manuals.** Recent past technology workshops' handouts are online, offering introductions and guides on topics from Google Docs to social media.
- ◆ **Blog.** Learn more about NYC literary history, get book-repair tips, and join the discussion about marginalia and the *Readers Make Their Mark* exhibition.
- ◆ **Book Recommendations.** Let Library staff guide you to your next great read. Recommendation lists include biographies, oral histories, music books, and many more.

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Up in Cold War Washington. Elizabeth's mother is the focus of her next book, a memoir tentatively entitled *A Fragment of What You Felt: Decoding My Mother.*

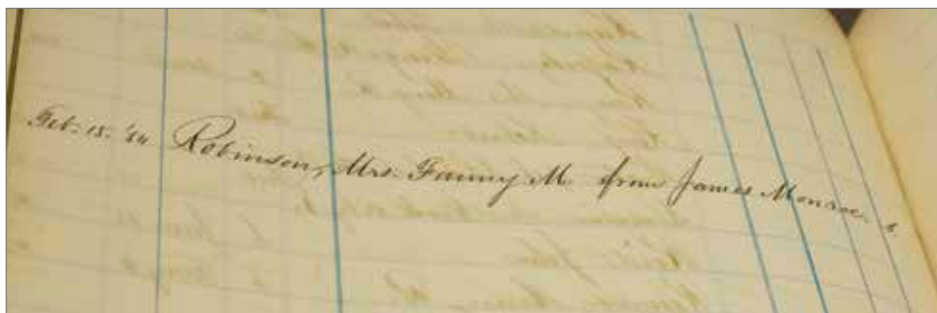
Joseph Alsop inherited his share from his mother, Corinne Robinson Alsop (*below left*) on December 8, 1964. Corinne Robinson Alsop was the maternal niece of President Theodore Roosevelt and gave an address at the 1936 Republican National Convention. A frequent guest of Franklin Delano Roosevelt at the White House and close friend of cousin Eleanor Roosevelt, she used the Library "off and on" for 20 years.



Corinne Robinson Alsop (1912-1997)



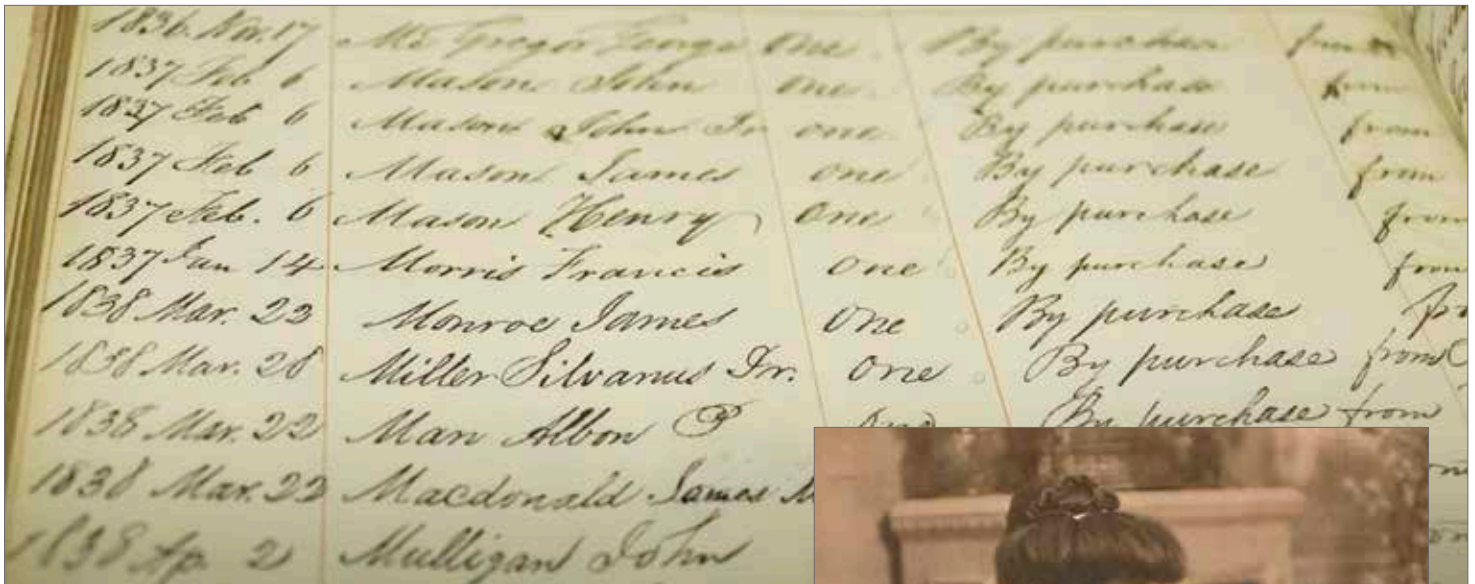
Fanny Monroe Robinson (1824-1906)



The share transfer from James Monroe to Fanny Robinson

According to documents in the Library archive, Corinne Robinson Alsop's share was not transferred to her until 1952, years after all other parties involved had died. Her mother, Corinne Roosevelt Robinson, (*following page, with the infant Joseph Alsop on her right*) is listed as having been a member for a number of years. Sister to Theodore Roosevelt (who was also a shareholder), Corinne Robinson Alsop speculated that her mother may have received her share from the Roosevelt branch of the family, but thought it more likely came from the family of Douglas Robinson, her father.

Douglas Robinson's mother, Fanny Monroe Robinson, (*above right*) was the daughter of Elizabeth (Betsy Mary) and James Monroe (1799-1870), nephew to President James Monroe. Initially we believed Fanny received her share from her mother's side, as Betsy Mary's father, George Douglas Jr., was a member of the Library as early as 1790. After many hours delving into Douglas family history,



The original share purchase by James Monroe, 1838

this line of inquiry came to an abrupt halt. One small notation in the Library ledger of 1864 reads: “Feb. 15. '64 Robinson, Mrs. Fanny M. from James Monroe.” James Monroe outlived his wife, Betsy Mary, by a number of years. Still convinced the share began with George Douglas Jr., we presumed that Betsy Mary had transferred her share to her husband James. Yet again, the records proved us wrong.

While we had yet to find hard evidence concerning the origins of the Monroe share, it was becoming increasingly plausible that the share originated with, not a Douglas, but a Monroe. James Monroe’s uncle, President James Monroe, was the aide-de-camp to Library founder William Alexander, aka Lord Stirling, during the late 18th century. Alexander, the great revolutionary, had already helped found the Library at this time as an alternative to King’s College, seen as an instrument of royal power. It takes no great stretch of the imagination to place the future President Monroe in the Library stacks with his employer.

To further support the Monroe claim on Elizabeth’s share, President Monroe and his nephew enjoyed close relations. A graduate of West Point, survivor of 18 duels, and a member of the House of Representatives from 1839 to 1841, Colonel Monroe’s professional and political interests mirrored his uncle’s. The younger Monroe often visited his uncle at the White House and accompanied the President on his travels. Their close relationship allows for a scenario in which the share was passed from the President to his nephew, who lived in New York City.

Once again, the records redirected our attention. In a registry of shares from 1838 to 1839, we came upon a note indicating that on March 22, 1838, James Monroe purchased



Corinne Roosevelt Robinson (1861-1933)

a share directly from the Library. So it was not James the President who first purchased Elizabeth’s share, but James the nephew. When this piece of the puzzle fell into place, our search was complete. We had been able to trace the history of one Library share through almost two centuries and six generations.

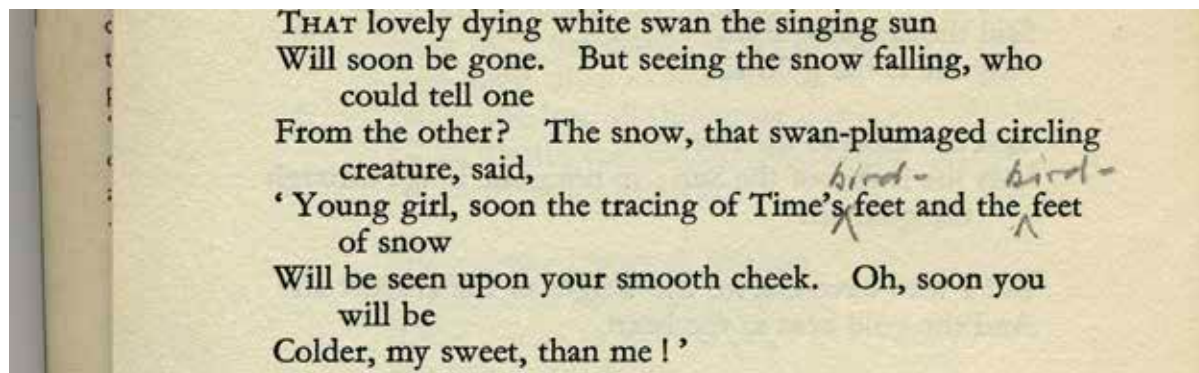
With three possible origins involving three presidents of the United States, the quest to find the true beginning of the Winthrop share reveals the rich and varied stories waiting to be uncovered in the Library’s archives. Within the year the Library will unveil the new interactive Digital Collections Portal, which will allow users to research the history of family connections as well as the reading habits of our members, many of whom influenced the history of our city and nation. In educating us about our Library forebears, this digital project will help members bridge the gulf between truth and speculation.

MANY THANKS TO ELIZABETH WINTHROP FOR HER ASSISTANCE WITH THIS PROJECT.

PHOTOS OF THE LIBRARY’S COLLECTIONS BY SIMEN KOT.

Annotated Books in the Library's Special Collections

by Erin Schreiner, Special Collections Librarian



Mai-mai Sze (1909-1992) corrected a misprinting of Edith Sitwell's poem in her copy of *The Outcasts* (1962).

The Library's current exhibition, *Readers Make Their Mark: Annotated Books at the New York Society Library*, traces individual reading habits through the notes left behind in books from our collections. Drawing almost exclusively on material found in the Library's rare books stacks, this exhibition highlights many of our lesser known collections. Beginning in the early 19th century, the Library acquired several libraries built by individuals and their families. These personal collections document the literary tastes and personal interests of those who built them, often demonstrating a wide range in each. They also contain personalized copies of books, like the ones on display in *Readers Make Their Mark*. Annotations, presentation inscriptions, bookplates, and other evidence of reading and literary community bring these collections to life, showing how collectors thought about what they read, and how they built their collections as part of a community of readers, writers, thinkers, and doers in New York City.

These brief descriptions highlight some of the smaller collections featured in the Peluso Family Exhibition Gallery and aim to contextualize *Readers Make Their Mark* as a reflection of all the Library's Special Collections.

The Goodhue Collection

The front of the 16th-century German edition of Virgil's *Eclogues*, annotated by a contemporary student, bears the signatures of Henry and Charles Goodhue. The Goodhue Collection—books and art, plus the letters and records making up the family's archive—was donated to the Library by Sarah Parker Goodhue, along with the funds to

purchase our 79th Street building. Sarah's brother-in-law, Henry Clarkson Goodhue (1824-1847), is one of my favorite characters traced in the Library's collections. A bright young scholar, Henry enrolled at Columbia in 1840 but transferred to Harvard after two years, as he wrote in a letter to his brother, because Columbia was full of "rowdy types." He kept busy at Harvard, where he attended six lectures each day in as many languages (Latin, modern and ancient Greek, German, Spanish, and English). Half of the 45 titles traced to Mrs. Goodhue in our catalog were once Henry's, many of them obscure texts in classical languages. We know that he purchased these as a very young man because he signed and dated many of his books, which he obviously treasured. The sickly Henry died tragically young on a convalescence trip to Rio de Janeiro with his brother Charles, the husband of our benefactor, who inherited Henry's books and signed his name below his brother's.

The Goodhue Collection comprises a wide range of books, archival documents, and objets d'art. The family's archive is rich in letters dating back to the 17th century. William Goodhue (c. 1613-1700) was an early settler in Massachusetts, and his descendants went on to hold important positions in politics and finance in the 18th and 19th centuries. Today, the Goodhue Collection is an important record of an American family's engagement with a wide spectrum of elite cultural, political, and business affairs in America from the 17th through the 19th centuries. It remains a rich and untapped vein for research in the Library's Special Collections. This collection will be the focus of the Library's next exhibition, curated by Head of Exhibitions Harriet Shapiro.



John Romeyn Brodhead (1814-1873)



Mai-mai Sze (1909-1992), portrait by Dorothy Norman

The Brodhead Collection

John Romeyn Brodhead (1814-1873) was a historian of New York State and a Trustee of the Society Library from 1858 to 1871. An obituary in *Scribner's Monthly* from February 1877 describes the young Brodhead as a "constant reader and collector of books." In the early 1840s, Brodhead traveled to Europe as an appointed official to locate and transcribe documents about the founding of the American colonies from royal European archives in the Netherlands, England, and France. Returning to New York in 1844, he published an account of his findings a year later. He hoped the book would help him secure the funding to write the first history of New York State, but, as co-curator Madeline McMahon describes in her blog post for the *Journal of the History of Ideas*, this was not to be. Brodhead was a Democrat, and the Whig-controlled legislature appointed a sympathetic team of researchers to the task.

Just two years before his 1873 death, he published the second of his two-volume *History of the State of New York*, his life's work. His widow, Eugenia Bloodgood Brodhead, donated his book collection to the Library, including books and his manuscripts from his trip to Europe. As the *Scribner's* obituary states, "He was a worthy member of that school of historical writers who subordinate all matters to exact truth, who always ascend to the sources if possible, and who cultivate the impartiality of the judicial ermine in determining controverted points." This characterization is brought to life in his books on display in *Readers Make Their Mark*, where he corrects printed texts and disputes facts with other writers.

The Sharaff/Sze Collection

In 1989, the Library's current Chair of the Board, Barbara Hadley Stanton, helped to arrange a gift of nearly a thousand books to the Library. The books were owned by two women, neither of whom was a Library member: Mai-mai Sze and Irene Sharaff. Sze (1909-1992) was a writer, painter, and translator, and her partner Irene Sharaff (1910-1993) was a successful Hollywood costume designer. (She designed Elizabeth Taylor's costumes and 26,000 more pieces for the entire company of *Cleopatra*.) Viewed as a whole, the Sharaff/Sze Collection represents two women's interests in the arts, literature, religion, and philosophy. While Sze and Sharaff likely met when they lived in the same building on Madison Avenue in the 1930s (the Catalan architect, Josep Lluís Sert lived there, too), they also studied esoteric philosophy and symbology together with the ballerina-turned-costume-and-set-designer-turned-Egyptologist Natacha Rambova (1897-1966), who hosted small groups for lectures and study in her home throughout the 30s and 40s.

The lives of both women fascinate because of their connections with a half-century of affluent and highly cultivated artistic types in New York, Los Angeles, London, and Paris, but my interest in Mai-mai Sze in particular was born out of her private practice as a reader. Sze was a dedicated scholar who was determined to prove her intellect and knowledge of East Asian history, philosophy, and aesthetics through constant and almost compulsive studies of primary and secondary sources. My knowledge of her life was cobbled together from newspaper articles, a handful of letters, brief mentions in others' memoirs, and interviews with Mrs.

Stanton and Sze's nieces. But her annotated books vividly show the depth of her engagement with her subjects and the lengths to which she went to fully apprehend not only the texts at hand but the sources that inform them. It is hard to contextualize her scholastic devotion because she never published a scholarly book after *The Tao of Painting*, but I think she fits in well here at the Library. As many of us know, devoted reading and study is not exclusively the task of academics, but rather a means of enriching one's life through the pursuit of knowledge. As you can see through her books on display in the Peluso Family Exhibition Gallery, this was something that Sze took very seriously.

The Society Library's Special Collections are a remarkably rich record of books, readers, and writers in New York City and New England from the colonial period to the present day. To see some of the books themselves, we hope you'll visit *Readers Make Their Mark*, or search for the names that spark your interest in our online catalog.

Collection of the Museum of the City of New York



Mary Cadwalader Jones (1850-1935)

The Mary Cadwalader Jones Collection

In *Books and People*, Marion King reports that Mary Cadwalader Jones (1850-1935) was a frequent visitor to the Library at University Place. Her home was nearby, on 11th Street, and it was there that she hosted weekly lunches with the cultural elite of New York, including Henry James, Edith Wharton (her sister-in-law; Jones also worked occasionally

as her literary agent), and John La Farge. Her daughter, the landscape architect Beatrix Farrand (1872-1959), donated her mother's collection to the Library after her death in 1936, the same year that the Library's Board of Trustees bought this building with the funds from Mrs. Goodhue's bequest. Jones' collection of over two hundred titles was a rich library of fiction, belles lettres, and memoirs. Many of these are association copies—that is, books that once belonged to or were annotated by their authors. In the exhibited copy of Willa Cather's *April Twilights and Other Poems*, Jones recorded memories of conversations with the author, her friend and fellow Library member. Much of the collection has been dispersed throughout the stacks without tracings in our online catalog, and we are now working to reassemble it. Keep an eye out for "Gift of Mrs. Cadwalader Jones Est." penciled neatly in the gutter of late 19th- and early 20th-century books in the stacks!

The Winthrop Collection

In 1812, Francis B. Winthrop (1754-1817) presented the Society Library with a collection of 269 books. What is now known as the Winthrop Collection was once part of the library assembled in England by Francis B. Winthrop's great-great-great grandfather, Adam Winthrop (1548-1623). After his death, Adam's collection was shipped to the new world and built up by his children and grandchildren, John Winthrop (1577/8-1649), John Winthrop Jr. (1606-1676), and Wait Still Winthrop (1642-1717). The Winthrop collection has for years been well known in scholarly circles for the richness of its alchemical holdings—Francis Winthrop also gave parts of the Winthrop library to Yale and the New York Academy of Medicine—and its association with John "City on a Hill" Winthrop. Still, *Readers Make Their Mark* brings the collection to life in new ways. The Winthrops were prodigious annotators, especially Adam and John Jr. As co-curator Frederic Clark has recently described in two posts to the blog of the *Journal of the History of Ideas*, annotated books in the Winthrop Collection support new scholarly arguments about how people read in the old world and the new. In the early modern period, we see reader-writers using their books to record their experiences of knowledge and discovery through texts in time and space. This "bio-bibliographic obsessiveness" helps us to understand just how important books were to readers like the Winthrops, not only for their contents but also in terms of their physical locations. Especially for people in the new world, books (particularly books with the esoteric information that the Winthrops collected) were hard to come by, and tracking down copies helped to orient a reader within the world of available knowledge. Three generations' worth of annotations in books from the Winthrop Collection demonstrate this dance with knowledge beautifully.

Honoring Richard Peck

A special reception was held on December 10th to thank author Richard Peck for a very generous contribution to the Library. Guests included Mr. Peck's family, friends, Library members, and staff. Head Librarian Mark Bartlett expressed deep appreciation for Mr. Peck's support for Children's Library events and programming; for the creation of a new Children's Library book fund; and for the 2014 Annual Fund.

Richard Peck is the author of more than thirty books for children, young adults, and adults, including the Newbery Medal-winner *A Year Down Yonder*, the Newbery Honor book *A Long Way from Chicago*, and, most recently, *The Mouse with the Question Mark Tail*. He is the first children's author to have received a National Humanities Medal. Mr. Peck's 2014 remarks about this Library can be found in the summer 2014 *Books&People*, available on our website.



To date, three February programs have been underwritten by Mr. Peck. They were a Young Writers' Workshop with Dave Roman on graphic novels, Yona Zeldis McDonough speaking on her book *Little Author in the Big Woods: A Biography of Laura Ingalls Wilder*, and a visit from storyteller Bob 'Bobaloo' Basey.

Mr. Peck's generosity will have a significant impact on the Children's Library for many years.



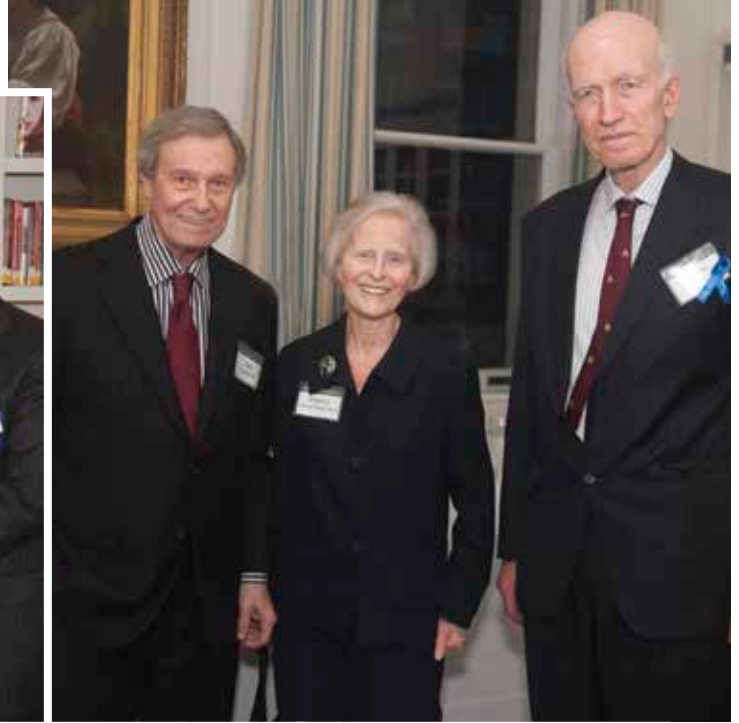
Above left: New York Society Library children's authors Richard Peck, Trish Marx, Maryann Macdonald, Carol Weston, Elizabeth Winthrop, and Robert Quackenbush. Above right: New York Society Library Children's Librarians Susan Vincent Molinaro, Carrie Silberman, and Randi Levy. Left: Mr. Peck with Head Librarian Mark Bartlett, Tony Travostino and Carl Pritzkat. Above: Mr. Peck with Library trustee Betty Kelly Sargent.

Photos by Karen Smul

The Goodhue Society

The Library hosted its annual celebration for members of the bequest society named for one of our most generous benefactors, Sarah Parker Goodhue. A special reception preceded Neil L. Rudenstine's lecture on February 23 lecture on *Ideas of Order: A Close Reading of Shakespeare's Sonnets*.

To learn more about the Goodhue Society, contact Joan Zimmitt at 212.288.6900 x207 or jzimmitt@nysoclib.org.



Photos by Karen Smul



Clockwise from top left: Marilyn M. Saltus with Goodhue Society chair William J. Dean and Charles G. Berry; the Rudenstines with Mr. Dean; C.S. Hanson; Arlyne Krum with Head Librarian Mark Bartlett; Mr. Dean and Elizabeth Winthrop.

Exhibition Opening



The Library's new exhibition *Readers Make Their Mark: Annotated Books at the New York Society Library* opened in the Assunta, Ignazio, Ada and Romano Peluso Exhibition Gallery on February 4. Attendees enjoyed a welcome from Head Librarian Mark Bartlett and remarks by co-curators Erin Schreiner (the Library's Special Collections Librarian), Frederic Clark, and Madeline McMahon.

Readers Make Their Mark explores the practice of reading through the many handwritten notes left in the margins of books from the New York Society Library's Special Collections. As modern-day readers of annotated books, we peer over the shoulders of readers past and watch them work to comprehend, analyze, or even correct printed texts. The Society Library's Special Collections contain a rich variety of marked-up books, their blank pages and margins are rife with notes from readers known and unknown over five centuries. Highlights include two books annotated by one of Queen Elizabeth's advisers, the 16th-century alchemist John Dee; an unidentified contemporary reader's responses to the first American edition of *Emma* in one of three known copies worldwide; and George Bernard Shaw's handwritten corrections to a proof copy of his surreal comedy *Too True to Be Good*.

The exhibition is open to both members and nonmembers during the Library's open hours through August 15, 2015. For complete information, see www.nysoclib.org/events/annotated-books.

THIS EXHIBITION IS FUNDED IN PART BY THE H.W. WILSON FOUNDATION, AS WELL AS BY TOBIAS ABELOFF, COHEN & TALIAFERRO, LLC, JAMES CUMMINS BOOKSELLER, MARTAYAN LAN, INC., AND NEW YORK BOUND BOOKS.





Page 10, from upper left: The exhibition's co-curators: Frederic Clark, Special Collections Librarian Erin Schreiner, and Madeline McMahon. Alice Cooney Frelinghuysen, Trustee George L.K. Frelinghuysen, and member Roger Pasquier in the Peluso Family Exhibition Gallery. Library members Jenny Lawrence (left) and Gayle Feldman (right) with Karla Neilsen, Curator of Literature at Columbia University's Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Page 11, Professor Anthony Grafton and Mrs. Grafton at the reception. Professor Grafton is the author of *Worlds Made by Words: Scholarship and Community in the Modern West*, among other books on the history of books and readers. Trustee Carol Collins Malone, Chair of the Library's Lecture & Exhibition Committee, with members William Niederkorn and Yolanda Hawkins.



The
New York
Society
Library

53 East 79th Street
New York, NY 10075
www.nysoclib.org

T. 212.288.6900
F. 212.744.5832

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One More Picture



A new play by Adrienne Campbell-Holt (*far right*) and Emily Conbere, *Cecilia and the Universe*, had a wonderful dramatic reading in the Members' Room on February 9. It tells the story of Harvard astronomer Cecilia Payne from the 1910s through the 1970s. This event was generously underwritten by Alexander Sanger in honor of Jeannette Watson Sanger.