

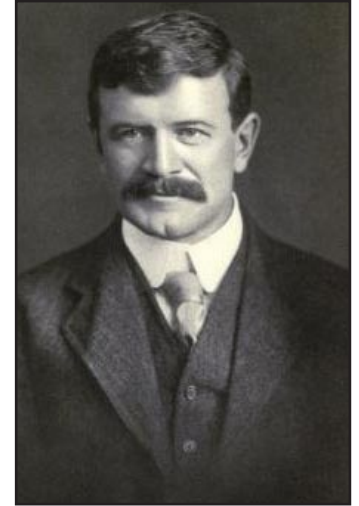


NOTES

VOLUME 16, NUMBER 2, SUMMER 2009

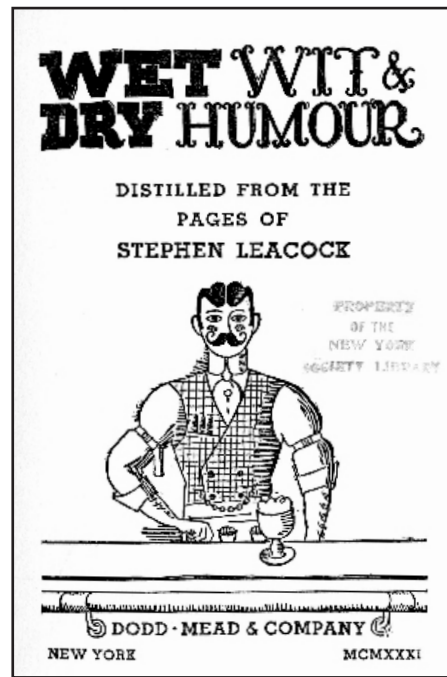
FROM THE HEAD LIBRARIAN

PAST EVENTS, FUTURE EVENTS As summer unfolds, I hope you agree that it has been an energetic year in the Library. This issue of *Library Notes* has follow-up reports—with wonderful photographs by Karen Smul—about the New York City Book Awards, the Young Writers Awards, and our first-ever new members welcome party. Goodwill and enthusiasm were abundant at all these events. Looking ahead, we are now scheduling a variety of exciting events for the fall season, including Cynthia Saltzman on *Old Masters, New World: America's Raid on Europe's Great Pictures 1880-World War I*; James Orbinski, former head of Doctors Without Borders, on *An Imperfect Offering: Humanitarian Action for the Twenty-First Century*, Isabel Gillies on her bestselling memoir *Happens Every Day: An All-Too-True Story*, Alida Brill and Dr. Michael D. Lockshin on *Dancing at the River's Edge: A Patient and Her Doctor Negotiate Life With Chronic Illness*, and Robert B. Strassler on *The Landmark Herodotus* and *The Landmark Xenophon*. In addition, a full season of reading groups, technology workshops, and the “Writing Life” series will start again after the summer months. Our first events newsletter with dates, times, and registration details will be in your mailbox in early September; keep an eye out.



Stephen Leacock in 1913, from *The Year-Book of Canadian Art*

REDISCOVERING LEACOCK: A PERSONAL REFLECTION



At lunch one day I visited a second-hand book shop and was surprised to find a copy of Stephen Leacock's *Winnowed Wisdom: A New Book of Humour* (1926). Leacock (1869-1944) was born in Swanmore, in Hampshire in the UK, but moved to North America at the age of six. As he put it, “my parents migrated to Canada in 1876, and I decided to go with them.” Revered as a humorist, essayist, educator, and economist, Leacock was educated at Upper Canada College, the University of Toronto, and the University of Chicago. He taught at McGill University from 1903 to 1936, where he was head of the Department of Economics and Political Science from 1908 on.

His first and most profitable book was a textbook, *Elements of Political Science* (1906), but he is better known for his numerous books of humor, which include *Literary Lapses* (1910), *Nonsense Novels* (1911), *Arcadian Adventures With the Idle Rich* (1914), *Frenzied Fiction* (1918), and arguably his classic, *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* (1912). Leacock was a great admirer of Charles Dickens and Mark Twain and authored books about both of them, *Mark Twain* in 1932 and *Charles Dickens: His Life and Work* in 1934. He also had an active career as a lecturer in Europe, the United States, and Canada, and he wrote regularly for *The New York Times*, *The Saturday Evening Post*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, and other publications. He once explained that his lecture fee was quite reasonable: “I find out how much money you’ve got, and I never charge a cent more.”

It was a joy this spring to dip back into the work of this delightful writer, whose humor I first read in grade school. The Library has over forty titles by Stephen Leacock, and I have learned enough about the depth of our collection not to be surprised by this. A good place to start is with one of the humor collections listed above, or with *The Bodley Head Leacock* (1957), edited by J.B. Priestley. It features a hilarious story for anyone feeling unsettled around banks these days, “My Financial Career.”

I look forward to seeing you at the Library—perhaps in the humor section on Stack 9, chortling over some Leacock. Have a great summer.

Mark Bartlett
Head Librarian

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

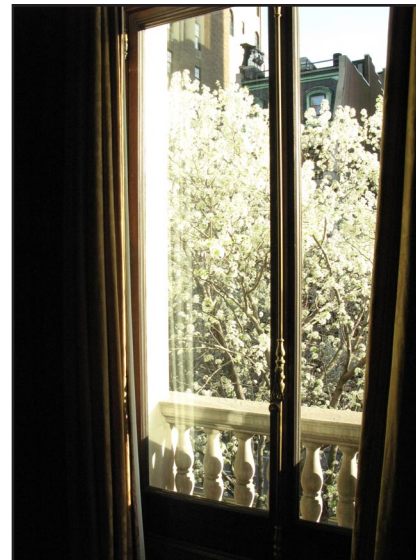
A MAGNIFICENT GIFT FROM MARIAN NAUMBURG

Two checks with simple type-written notes and two gifts in her memory were the only evidence of Marian Naumburg's connection with the New York Society Library until the day an executor informed us that we were among her beneficiaries. We are now proud to announce an extraordinary gift of \$500,000 from the estate of Marian Opton Naumburg. These funds are earmarked in varying amounts for three distinct areas of the Library: improved handicapped access and other building refurbishments; an offsite storage initiative; and expanded events programming. This contribution comes at a particularly opportune time and will have a very significant impact on Library operations over the next few years and beyond.

Mrs. Naumburg lived in New York City her entire life and died at the age of 101 in 2007. She was a great fan of libraries large and small. According to one of the two executors of the estate, Iris Alster, Mrs. Naumburg loved the New York Society Library. She was an avid reader with particular interests in art and architecture. She also supported land conservation. The two women were longtime friends and frequently traveled together especially to Europe and Hong Kong. As the estate was being distributed, Ms. Alster thought, "how very nice that we can do something for the New York Society Library."

Joshua Ginsberg, the co-executor, shed even more light on this woman he knew most of his life. A friend of his grandmother, she remained close to his family until her death. He said she was vigorous until the age of 98 and walked miles every day. She loved shoes (some of hers are in the collections of the Fashion Institute of Technology), collected portrait photographs, and enjoyed dance performances. Joshua told us that she was "not immune to extravagance," noting that Daniel and Jean Georges were her favorite restaurants. Most important, he said, "she was gracious and selfless – like a character from E. M. Forster."

Over the years, many have chosen to memorialize their connection to the Library by making a provision in their wills. Mrs. Naumburg's philanthropy will help us to serve our present members more effectively and also reach out to a wider community. With profound gratitude, the New York Society Library is making plans to permanently commemorate Marian Naumburg's generosity.



BOARD DEPARTURE AND ARRIVAL

At the Annual Meeting on April 15, the Board of Trustees bid farewell to a retiring trustee, Jenny Lawrence, and welcomed a new trustee, Ada Peluso.



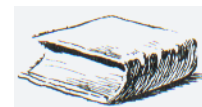
Jenny Lawrence (left) joined the Board in 1994. She founded this newsletter and wrote and designed each issue until 2001. With Henry S.F. Cooper Jr., she wrote our 250th anniversary book, *The New York Society Library: 250 Years*, which involved many hours of research on the city's history and in the Library's archives. These and her many other contributions were applauded by her colleagues on the Board.

Ada Peluso, PhD., (right) has been a Library member since 1981. She and her brother, Romano I. Peluso, endowed and named the Assunta, Ignazio, Ada and Romano Peluso Exhibition Gallery on the second floor in 2007-2008. Dr. Peluso chairs the Department of Mathematics and Statistics at Hunter College and also serves on the Library's Lecture and Exhibition Committee.



BOOKS TO BIND?

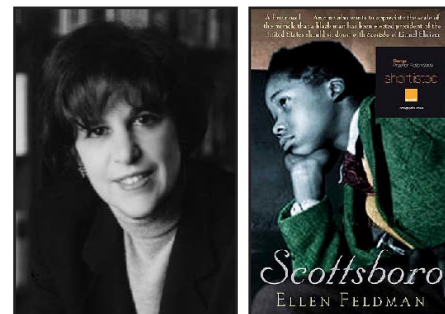
Library Conservator George Muñoz offers his bookbinding services to members owning old or rare volumes in need of repair. For an estimate or to set up an appointment, contact George at 212-288-6900 x249 or bindery@nysoclib.org.



LIBRARY MEMBERS TAKE LITERARY HONORS

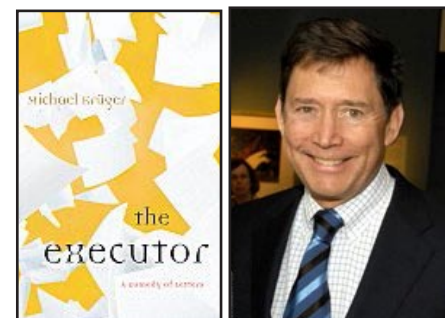
The Library congratulates the following members who have been honored with recent awards and fellowships.

Ellen Feldman is the recipient of a 2009 Guggenheim Fellowship in the Creative Arts Fiction category. Her most recent novel, *Scottsboro*, was shortlisted for the 2009 Orange Prize for Fiction.

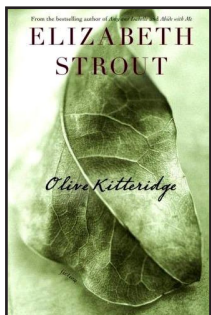


Frances FitzGerald has been awarded a 2009 Guggenheim Fellowship in the Creative Arts General Non-Fiction category. She is an author and journalist who won the 1973 Pulitzer Prize for her history *Fire in the Lake*, an account of the Vietnam war.

John Hargraves has won the Helen and Kurt Wolff Translator's Prize for *The Executor*, his translation of Michael Kruger's *Die Turiner Komodie*.



Elizabeth Strout is the winner of the 2009 Pulitzer Prize for fiction for *Olive Kitteridge*, a novel of interrelated stories about a retired schoolteacher and the people who inhabit her world in Crosby, Maine.



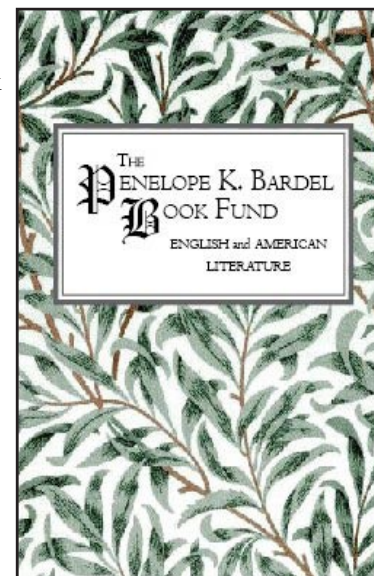
THE PENELOPE K. BARDEL BOOK FUND

FOR ENGLISH AND AMERICAN LITERATURE

Late last year, William Bardel, a member for 36 years, contacted the Library to say that he wished to surprise his wife, Penny, with a special Christmas present: a book fund in her honor. With a very generous contribution of \$25,000, Mr. Bardel created the Penelope K. Bardel Book Fund. On Christmas morning, he presented his wife with the specially designed book plate pictured here. After the holidays, Mr. and Mrs. Bardel visited the Library to discuss the scope of the collection. Mrs. Bardel's choice was English and American literature.

During that visit, we learned that Penny Bardel is an avid reader and loves the Library. She told us that she frequently spent lunch hours here in the 1990s while working at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, first as Associate Counsel, then as Associate Director with director Philippe de Montebello. Subsequently she taught English literature at the Lawrenceville School while Bill served as the school's CFO. These days, they divide their time between the city and Washington, Connecticut.

When we asked Bill what gave him the idea for this special gift, he mentioned familiarity with a book fund created by Penny's mother in a Maine island community, as well as similar funds that had been established at Lawrenceville. He added that creating such a fund at the New York Society Library is particularly gratifying because here it can have a greater impact than at a larger institution. The Bardels hope that their gift will inspire others to do the same either in honor or memory of a friend or family member.



The New York Society Library relies on the generosity of its donors. If you would like information about establishing a book fund, or donations of any kind, please contact Joan Zimmert, Director of Development (212-288-6900 x207 or jzimmert@nysoclib.org). We welcome donations in honor or memory of an individual, as well as planned and matching gifts. Contributions are fully tax-deductible and can be made by check, credit card, or in appreciated securities at any time throughout the year.

SUMMER READING, STAFF STYLE

For most of us, summer spells vacation and for book lovers, it also means time to indulge in hours of uninterrupted reading. Time to finally read that 1,000-page novel, or the one that's been gathering dust for years, or maybe even just to re-read a favorite. If you need some suggestions for your own summer reading list, just stop by the Circulation Desk. Our front desk staff are always happy to discuss or recommend a book that's just right for you. As we kick off the summer, we decided to poll a few staff members for the books they'll be reading this summer.

Mark Bartlett, Head Librarian: A wonderful novel I often recommend to readers is *The Horse's Mouth* by English author Joyce Cary. If you haven't read this and would like to discover early twentieth century treasures, this is one. *The Horse's Mouth* is the second volume of Cary's first trilogy (also including *Herself Surprised* and *To Be A Pilgrim*) and is often called one of the best novels about a painter and the creative process. It is both a touching and hilarious story.

If you like watching a film version after reading the book, I would also recommend the 1958 film directed by Ronald Neame, starring Alec Guinness as Gulley Jimson.

Andrew Corbin, Circulation Assistant: Before the summer humidity causes my brain to short circuit, I'd like to pick my way through *The Afterlife*, Penelope Fitzgerald's collection of essays and criticism. I'm also looking forward to reading Willa Cather's *Shadows On the Rock*.

Sara Holliday, Events Coordinator: Nothing beats the doldrums like a big historical survey when I'm waiting at an airline gate, so I often heft along *Doubt: A History* by Jennifer Michael Hecht, a fast-moving, thought-provoking look at metaphysical skeptics and innovators since the dawn of civilization, in which you'll meet everyone from Epicurus to Einstein.

Steve McGuirl, Head of Acquisitions: Stefan Zweig's *The Post Office Girl* has been enthusiastically recommended to me by trustworthy friends, and I really enjoyed Zweig's *Beware of Pity*, some of his novellas, and his memoir, *World of Yesterday*. I also just acquired a pocket edition of selections from Montaigne's essays that actually fits in my back pocket. It is the perfect thing to have at the ready for stops at park benches when strolling through the city on summer days.

Ingrid Richter, Head of Systems: I'm currently reading *Professor Stewart's Cabinet of Mathematical Curiosities* by Ian Stewart. What it's about: interesting math problems not commonly mentioned in school. Why summer reading? Keeps my brain active, and it's fun solving new problems.

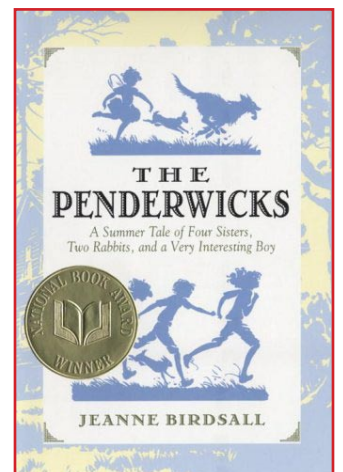
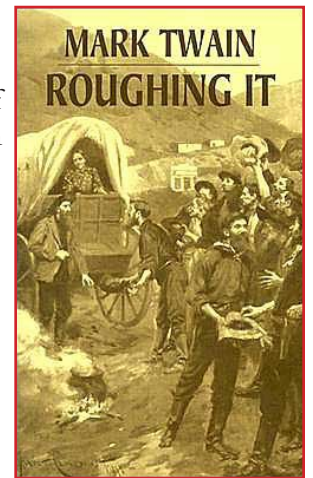
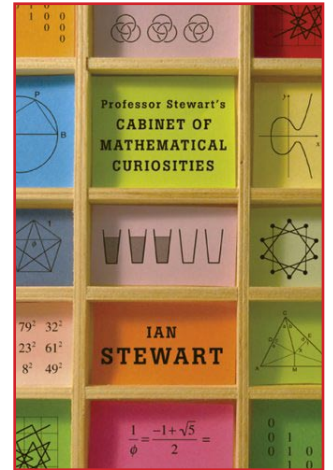
Diane Srebnick, Development Assistant: I love to read "big books" in the summer, when the more leisurely pace of life lends itself to total immersion in another time or place. My favorite multi-volume saga is *Kristin Lavransdatter* by Sigrid Undset. Set in 14th century Norway, this trilogy (*The Bridal Wreath*, *The Mistress of Husaby*, *The Cross*) combines meticulous historic research with romance, adventure, and beautifully realized characters. Undset won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1928.

Carolyn Waters, Reference Librarian: I'm heading west on vacation this summer, so I'm re-reading Mark Twain's *Roughing It*. I love Twain's droll humor as he relates the (somewhat true) tales of his "variegated vagabondizing" on his own trips West, the crazy characters he meets, and the unfortunate mishaps along the way.

And for younger readers:

Heather Paulson, Children's Library Assistant: *A Long Way from Chicago* by Richard Peck. Told with whimsy and adventure, this Newberry winner recounts the story of Joey and his sister Mary Alice—two city-slickers from Chicago—who spend every summer during the Great Depression with their larger-than-life grandmother in her sleepy Illinois town.

Carrie Silberman, Children's Librarian: *The Penderwicks: A Summer Tale of Four Sisters, Two Rabbits, and a Very Interesting Boy* by Jeanne Birdsall. Given free rein by their widowed father, four sisters spend the summer frolicking on an estate in the Berkshires. The girls quickly befriend the lady of the manor's son, much to the dismay of his snobbish mother. With nostalgia and wit, this summer pick is sure to satisfy any young reader.



THE FIRST ANNUAL NEW MEMBERS PARTY

For the first time, the Library welcomed members who joined within the last twelve months at a party on June 2. More than 80 people attended. The evening was highlighted by a welcome from Chairman of the Board Charles G. Berry, followed by remarks by member and award-winning author Tom Wolfe. “The line here is that “Society” [in the Library’s name] has nothing to do with class,” said Mr. Wolfe. “But just look around you. This is an aristocracy—of taste and discernment.” Guests were invited to take self-guided tours of less-known areas of the building and see some treasures from the rare book collection. We look forward to greeting the new members of future years in the same way.

Photos by Karen Smul, left to right: Judith and Tom Smith with Mary Ann Frenzel; Bettina Decker, Stacy Eisenberg, and Molly Jong-Fast; Tom Wolfe; Maureen and Pat Grant; David and Gabrielle Levene; Jill Schoolman and Henry Abelow; Rev. James Boniface Ramsey and Cary Zahaby; Charles G. Berry and Tom Wolfe; Adrienne Ingram and Jasmin B. Cowin; Rare Book Librarian Arevig Caprielian and John Drayton; Conservator George Muñoz shows the bindery to Laura Harrison; Paige Menner, DeJoseph DeRario, and Benita Eisler.



THE 2008-2009 NEW YORK CITY BOOK AWARDS

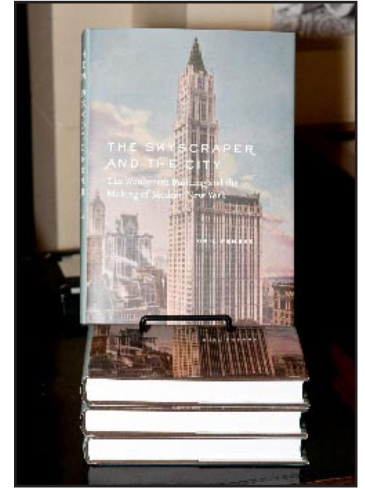
BOOK OF THE YEAR

The Skyscraper and the City: The Woolworth Building and the Making of Modern New York
by Gail Fenske (University of Chicago Press)



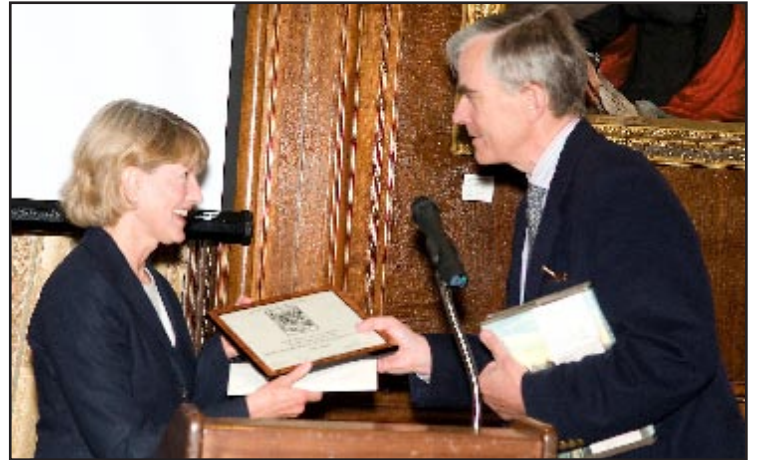
The winning author and publisher were honored at a ceremony and reception on May 6, 2009 at the Library.

The award was presented by former Library trustee, architectural historian and *New York Times* columnist Christopher Gray. About the winning book, he said, “The Woolworth Building is one of the most iconic of New York City structures, and it has no abler chronicler than Gail Fenske. If you think you know everything about this very familiar landmark, then this is the book for you. It is so riveting to see the complex personal interplay between owner and architect—Frank Woolworth and Cass Gilbert. The New York Society Library is very privileged to give this year’s New York City Book Award to Dr. Gail Fenske.”



Dr. Fenske is professor of architecture at Roger Williams University. Her remarks included the following: “It’s an honor to receive this award from an institution as old and distinguished as this one. To me the very idea of the New York Society Library and its collections calls to mind the history of the city itself. I imagine the collections here as a layered record of the city’s culture and history not unlike its layered terrain. I can’t help but hear voices of the people of the past who have invested these layers with depth and meaning. It’s inspiring for me to share even a small part of this marvelous history.

“I wrote this book because I’ve always been interested in skyscrapers. I see them as the most visible signs of human endeavor. I’m intrigued by the stories and in particular by the people, like Woolworth and Gilbert, behind their design and construction. I’ve always been curious about why they were built. But this particular skyscraper especially intrigued me. From the first time I saw it in photographs, I was puzzled by why such a technologically audacious work of construction, built at a time when building technology was at the forefront of things, built in the nation’s chief metropolis on a highly visible site—why this audacious work, nearly 800 feet tall, the tallest in the world, should look like a cathedral. Why does it look like a medieval building when it’s so exciting and new? I was interested in that contradiction: between its ambitious modern construction and the retrospection and romance of its imagery. How do you explain this cathedral of commerce in cultural terms?”



The full recording of the ceremony and Dr. Fenske’s presentation on the book is available at www.nysoclib.org/notes/2009/nyc_book162.html.

Above right: Gail Fenske and Christopher Gray. Below right: jurors Cynthia Saltzman and Meg Wolitzer, with Jenny Lawrence (center).

The New York City Book Awards were generously underwritten by Ellen M. Iseman and Frederick J. Iseman.

THE SEVENTH ANNUAL YOUNG WRITERS AWARDS, 2009

The Young Writers Awards honor good writing in poetry and prose by young members of the Library and community in grades three through twelve. Five winners and five honorable mentions received awards at a ceremony and reception on May 14. Judges Robert Quackenbush, Dave Johnson, Carol Weston, and Edra Ziesk made the presentations and offered remarks about the winning entries and the writing life. The winning entries can be read on the Library's website at www.nysoclib.org/kids/ywa/index.html and are being cataloged as a booklet for the Children's Library.



Left to right: Mary Miller, Carol Weston, Remi Khaghan, Martha Jean Epstein, Katherine Franco, Gabrielle Herzig, Sarah Mei Yeoh-Wang, Robert Quackenbush, Asher Liftin, Dave Johnson, Noah Engelmayer, Edra Ziesk.

WINNERS

Gabrielle Herzig, "Lin Lin's Silk Road Diary"
 Katherine Franco, "I Meet My Sister"
 Noah Engelmayer, "Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives"
 Remi Khaghan, "A Moment I'll Never Forget"
 Sarah Mei Yeoh-Wang, "Strings"
 Martha Jean Epstein, "Alzheimer's"
 Shon ArieH-Lerer, "Poultry Poetry: Polemic"

HONORABLE MENTIONS

Asher Liftin, "The Pomegranate"
 Mary Miller, "Assignment"
 Elissa Watters, "Leda and the Swan"



Children's Library Committee Chair Susan L. Robbins, Jeanette Sarkisian Wagner, and trustees George L.K. Frelinghuysen and Barbara H. Stanton. (All the photos in this spread are by Karen Smul.)

The 2009 Young Writers Awards were generously underwritten by Jeanette Sarkisian Wagner and Paul A. Wagner.

MEET THE STAFF

The Children's Library added two new staff this academic year, under the supervision of Carrie Silberman, Head of the Children's Library. All three Children's Library staff enjoy working with the Library's families and planning programs for young book-lovers.



Rachel Henry, Children's Librarian (*left*).

Rachel is currently acquiring her Masters in Library Science from Queens College. She brings many diverse experiences to the Library, including serving as an AmeriCorps Volunteer/Librarian on the Pine Ridge (SD) Native American Reservation.

Heather Paulson, Children's Assistant (*right*).

Heather is working on dual M.S. and M.A. degrees at Long Island University and NYU. Among other activities, she has served as Volunteer Coordinator for Literacy Partners.



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

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