

The
New York
Society
Library

Annual Report 2017





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REPORT FROM THE CHAIR (2017) Carol Collins Malone

I am delighted to report that 2017 was a banner year. Our membership levels rose for the first time in five years. Members visited the Library seven days a week to borrow from our collection, while writing spaces became increasingly popular. The Library was busy with classes, writers' workshops, author talks, and performances for all ages. Operations recorded a healthy surplus (before non-cash charges), and funds raised by our Annual Appeal increased by 56% over 2016. None of this would have been possible without the leadership of Carolyn Waters, Head Librarian, her extraordinary staff, and the generosity of our members.

The Board of Trustees welcomed two new members, authors Ella Foshay and Gretchen Rubin. Ella Foshay, a former curator for paintings and sculpture at the New-York Historical Society, acted as board chair at the Chapin School from 2002 to 2009 and serves on the Library's New York City Book Awards Jury. Gretchen Rubin's hugely popular books and podcasts include the bestseller *The Happiness Project*. In June the Board bade farewell to trustee Anthony Knerr after 33 years of service.

In 2017, our handsome Italianate home turned one hundred years old. As such, it continues to serve both as an oasis of calm and as a vibrant center of intellectual discourse. The Board commissioned new studies of the building so that we may begin to prioritize our needs over the next five, ten, and twenty years.

During the past year, the Planning Committee focused on how to maintain membership and attract new members. Initiatives included the provision of easy online registration. This committee continues to analyze and identify priorities for the future as more members join for a place to work as well as to read.

George Frelinghuysen, our treasurer and chair of the Development Committee, steered the Library's finances. Former trustee Shirley Hazzard left a bequest to the Library for her royalties. We are *immeasurably grateful* when members leave the Library royalties from their literary output.

The Lecture and Exhibition Committee produced a rich and diverse selection of lectures. Among the highlights were our fellow trustee Lawrence Bergreen on *Casanova*, a presentation by Min Jin Lee on *Pachinko*, and an evening in conversation with playwright David Ives. Thanks to the generosity of the Cooper family, the Henry S.F. Cooper Jr. Lecture on Early American Literature and History was inaugurated in 2017. Among our Sanger-sponsored events highlighting emerging women artists, a solo show about Mary Shelley was a notable success.

Once again, the Library was proud to serve as the fiscal sponsor of Project Cicero, which distributed 150,000 books to 1,200 teachers.

Finally, the most reliable gauge of the effectiveness of the Board of Trustees is the ability of its members to work as a team. I would like to thank each member for giving time and energy so generously. Furthermore, my greatest pleasure during my first full year as Chair was the opportunity to talk to many members of the Library. I would like to thank them for taking the time to tell me what they are enjoying at the Library and how we can improve upon the services we deliver.

Respectfully submitted on April 24, 2018
Carol Collins Malone, *Chair*

REPORT FROM THE HEAD LIBRARIAN (2017)

Carolyn Waters

I don't think anyone can truly appreciate how difficult it is to write this report every year—when there is so much to talk about, so many people to thank, and not nearly enough space on the page. But it is with a great deal of pride that I read through all the Department Heads' annual reports each year, take stock of all that we've accomplished and how well we have positioned ourselves for the future, and contemplate what a truly unique and welcoming refuge we remain in this city.

I will begin this year's report with heartfelt thanks to our Circulation Department, under the direction of Mia D'Avanza. In these annual reports our focus is often primarily on the programming and innovations and special projects of the last year, without mentioning the daily activities that really sustain us and tie our community together. Without a doubt, the Circulation Department staffers are like the first few pages of a really good book—they welcome you, invite you in, encourage you to stay a while, until at some point you realize that you are totally within their thrall.

Our Circulation Assistants and Circulation Librarians meet and greet every single visitor to the Library—both members and nonmembers—and learn their names, their likes and dislikes, heroically figure out the name of the book a member wants in the face of occasionally dubious clues, anticipate their needs often before the member knows it themselves, and even wrangle that copy machine, which is an extraordinary skill. We welcomed more visitors in 2017 than in prior years, in part, we suspect, due to the more hospitable sign we placed outside our building, a collaborative project of our staff Communications Task Force. As a result, in addition to prepping, shelving, and shifting books, our Circulation Pages gave 777 tours last year, an 8% increase over 2016, fielding all sorts of questions about the building,

the history of the Library, our collection strengths, and our programs and services. And 11% of those visitors joined the Library on the spot.

In 2017 we recognized the first increase in memberships after more than 10 years of steady declines and a flattening out in 2016, and we posted a record number of new members. Nearly 80% of these new members have told us that they're joining for a place to work, so our challenges for the years ahead are clear, and they are the focus of the activities of both our Planning and Building Committees.

We welcome these new members and visitors to become more involved in our community through the daily half-hour teatime that we began in January; an event that is now eagerly anticipated and attended by a group of devotees we have dubbed the tea-timers, whose numbers grow each week.

A significantly important way we responded to member needs, much more difficult to implement than teatime, was the installation of light-n-ing-fast fiber-optic cable throughout the building, improving the speed and reliability of the Internet.

Like the pictures in a great book, our exhibitions entice you to take a closer look beyond the text. Over 740 visitors took in *Broken Beauty: Ruins of the Ancient World* before it closed in August, making way for a tremendously popular short-term show of members' favorite books in the Peluso Family Exhibition Gallery. As curator Harriet Shapiro noted, "The warm reception of *What Stacks Up* underscores the importance of programming that actively connects members to the exhibitions," and the images and text of the *What Stacks Up* exhibition have also found an afterlife as a digital gallery in our City Readers portal. In October, we unveiled *The New York*



World of Willa Cather, which has truly captured member interest and spawned a host of ancillary programming that will continue through its run in 2018.

Our Events Department—remarkably, a staff of only two, Sara Holliday and Katie Fricas—nimble navigate the trustee-led Lecture & Exhibition Committee, the Development department, the Children's Library, a pesky Head Librarian, and an exceedingly crowded Library calendar—to plan, organize, and execute hundreds of events every year that include lectures, performances, receptions, seminars, and workshops.

Highlights of the 2017 events season included Pulitzer Prize-winner Frances FitzGerald on *The Evangelicals*; a conversation between Alexander Sanger and trustee Jeannette Watson Sanger about her memoir *It's My Party*; Wayne Franklin, author of the two-volume biography of James Fenimore Cooper, who was the perfect first lecturer in the new annual Henry S.F. Cooper Jr. Lecture on Early American History and Literature; Nancy Harrow's evocative jazz song cycle based on Willa Cather; and our new collaboration with Library member Sydney LeBlanc and her organization Uptown at Night, bringing evenings of comedic storytelling—and Roz Chast!—to the Upper East Side. And in a new occasional Whitridge Room series going beyond the news headlines, we invited Hofstra Law Professor Lauris Wren to lead a discussion about refugees, immigrants, and asylum seekers. Of course, we can't forget the New York City Book Awards, with the jury selecting four worthy books.

The Children's Library expanded the popular drop-in craft program Creation Station to every Saturday and Sunday, and presented over a

hundred story times, craft programs, and special events, including a very fun bookmaking workshop taught by our conservator Christina Amato, and a new monthly program called the STEAMship Society focusing on Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math. And from nearly 200 entries, a jury selected 7 winners and 5 honorable mentions at the 15th annual Young Writers Awards.

We had another extraordinary year in so many ways, and while we are indeed looking towards the future and what we will mean to the new members who are joining us in ever-greater numbers, it's important to reflect on our overriding mission. We are, and always have been, at our core, a circulating library—and while circulations are declining across libraries in general—our circulations are declining at a much lower rate. And importantly, we also know that more than 50% of new members indicate they are joining for our circulating collection. We recorded nearly 67,000 print book circulations in 2017 and over 4,000 e-book checkouts. While the per-capita circulations across New York State libraries in 2017 was 6.91, here at the NYSL it was more than double that, at 14.6 circulations per person.

So adding quality books to our shelves remains the important work of our Acquisitions and Cataloging Departments and ensures that we shall remain a real reader's and writer's library for both current and future generations.

Thank you to the entire staff, to the Board of Trustees, and to all of our Library members for another wonderful, productive, and thoroughly enjoyable year at the New York Society Library!

Respectfully submitted on April 24, 2018
Carolyn Waters, Head Librarian

REPORT FROM THE TREASURER (2017)

George L.K. Frelinghuysen

For the year ending December 31, 2017, the New York Society Library recorded an operating surplus of \$363,581 before depreciation. The Library's overall financial performance improved markedly over 2016 on the strength of membership donations and reported operating expenses, which came in materially under budget.

On the revenue side, several brief comments are in order. Membership subscriptions increased 4.5% year-over-year, principally due to higher fees, which took effect in February of last year. The number of members grew slightly over the prior year, standing at 2,848 at the end of 2017, against 2,803 the year before. Encouragingly, new memberships rose 20.3% to 451, from 375 in 2016.

Regarding the annual appeal, the Library raised \$824,163 in 2017, which was up 56% from 2016. Several unexpected major gifts totaling nearly \$200,000 accounted for a significant part of the increase. A total of 726 donors gave unrestricted gifts in 2017, slightly above the figure of 717 for 2016. Last year, the Library also received \$221,218 in restricted funds. Within this category, generous gifts were made to the Nancy Ward Berry Memorial Fund, to the creation of several book funds, to the Richard Peck Children's Event Fund, to the upgrade of our website, to the Sanger Events Fund for special performances, and to the Writing Life program.

Finally, I would be remiss if I did not mention that our miscellaneous income in 2017 benefited from \$17,900 in book royalties from the estate of Shirley Hazzard.

Actual operating expenses before depreciation declined 1.1% in 2017 compared to 2016 as the Library continued to run a lean operation. Staff expenses rose 1.6% from the prior year and were lower than expected, as vacancies at several positions during the year led reported salaries to come in below budget. Expenditures for Library Materials declined 11.6% as acquisition of new titles was increasingly underwritten by book funds. In the area of Library programs, total expense was 18.2% below 2016, primarily due to fewer NYC Book Award honorees and to the use of restricted funds for adult and children's events. Building services declined approximately 6% compared to 2016. The Library's decision to change its electricity supplier in March of last year resulted in savings in this category of nearly 50%.

Endowment income provides the largest source of support for the Library's operations. It covers about 54% of our operating expenses. In 2017, all of our endowment managers reported excellent results, with a combined weighted average return of 24.65%, compared to the increase in the S&P 500 index of 21.8%. The different investment styles of the Library's managers will hopefully prove beneficial to the endowment return. From a historical perspective, our endowment, which reached a low point of \$25 million at the end of 2008, has steadily recovered in value and at the end of 2017 was slightly in excess of \$37 million. Our spending policy for the endowment is 4.75% of the fair-market value averaged over twelve quarters. Looked at another way, if we divide our actual allocation for 2017 by the endowment's fair-market value at the end of last year, our draw was 4.1%. By not heavily taxing our endowment, as these numbers show, the Library is guaranteeing its long-term future.

Respectfully submitted on April 24, 2018
George L.K. Frelinghuysen, *Treasurer*

STATEMENT OF REVENUE AND EXPENSES, UNRESTRICTED NET ASSETS

December 31, 2017, with Comparative Totals For 2016

| Revenue | 2017 | 2016 | Expenses | 2017 | 2016 |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--|--------------------|--------------------|
| Membership subscriptions | \$780,091 | \$746,209 | Staff expenses | \$1,793,068 | \$1,762,082 |
| Donations <i>(excluding bequests)</i> | 824,163 | 529,447 | Library materials | 136,807 | 154,688 |
| Lectures and events | 44,738 | 36,385 | Library services | 161,567 | 164,859 |
| Book sales | 4,640 | 3,805 | Library programs | 52,200 | 63,776 |
| Lost books and fines | 11,155 | 11,184 | Fundraising & membership development | 238,493 | 237,488 |
| Postage reimbursements | 1,484 | 1,947 | Building <i>(excluding depreciation)</i> | 410,486 | 436,677 |
| Photocopy fees | 1,013 | 576 | Professional fees | 37,814 | 47,837 |
| Miscellaneous income | 22,788 | 22,297 | Miscellaneous | 45,486 | 42,702 |
| Total Revenue | \$1,690,072 | \$1,351,850 | Total Expenses | \$2,875,921 | \$2,910,109 |

| | 2017 | 2016 |
|---|------------------|----------------|
| Decrease in net assets before allocation of four and three quarter percent (4¾%) from endowment | (1,185,849) | (1,558,259) |
| Allocation of four and three quarter percent (4¾%) from endowment | 1,549,430 | 1,563,461 |
| Increase In Net Assets | \$363,581 | \$5,202 |

Notes: This statement includes unrestricted revenue and expenses only.
All other funds are accounted for separately. Full audited financial statements are available at the Library.
The approximate market value of investments on December 31, 2017 was \$37,394,000.

THE GOODHUE SOCIETY



Sarah Parker Goodhue (1828-1917) gave the bequest that permitted the Library to move into its present building. This charcoal drawing of her by Samuel Worcester Rowse hangs in the circulation hall.

The Goodhue Society is a group of living donors who, during their lifetimes, have included the New York Society Library in their estate plans by stating an intention to leave a bequest to the Library. The following represents the Goodhue Society's members as of December 31, 2017.

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The New York Society Library is extraordinarily grateful for the generous annual support from the following individuals and foundations.

In 2017, gifts were received in memory of Nancy Ward Berry, Lorrie Bodger, Dr. and Mrs. Clarence Bittenwieser, Spencer and Margaret Byard, Willa Cather, Henry S.F. Cooper Jr., Byron Dobell, Charlotte Elias, Christopher Gray, Anne E. Kelly, Matthew Phillips, Fay Rubenstein, William H. Ryan, and Francis Steegmuller, and in honor of Lynn Abraham, Charles Berry, Lucienne Bloch, Lyn Chase, Anne Conover Heller, Nina and Leyla Kornfeld, Carol Collins Malone, Carol Ann Prins, Barbara Hadley Stanton, Linda Gelfond Stein and Stanley Stein, and Carolyn Waters. A special gift was made by members of the Project Cicero Executive Committee in honor of Laureine Greenbaum, to thank her for her many years of commitment and service.

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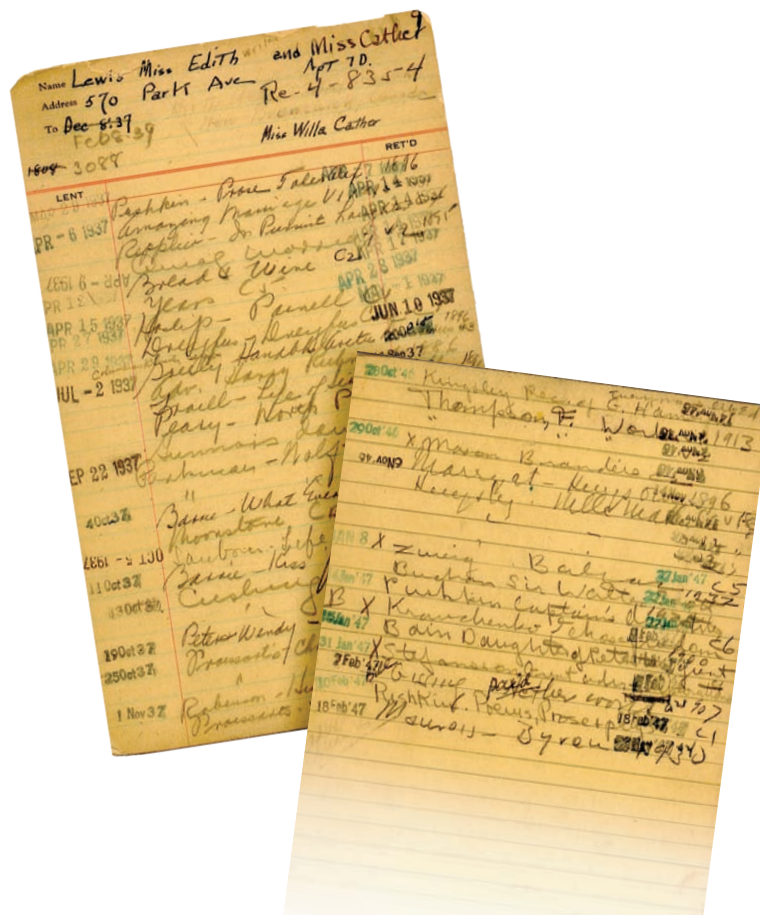
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What Stacks Up

A short-term exhibition of


Favorite Books



Betty MacDonald (1908-1958)
Mrs. Piggle-Wiggle's Farm
Pictures by Maurice Sendak
New York: HarperCollins Publishers: 1982

It's a really good book. I like it because a lot of things happen that can't happen in real life. Mrs. Piggle-Wiggle cures children of bad habits. The book makes me feel happy. She's magical. I love her.

Felicity Strauss, age 7, reads with her mother, Meredith Strauss, at the Library.





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