Editorial Meanderings, Maunderings, & Mumblings…

…In which your editor confides, educates, resolves, and generally chats about many interesting and diverse items pertaining to the friendliest bookstores around, the bookstores’ renowned volunteers and esteemed customers, the nuances and services of Berkeley’s beloved public library system, plus…

Again!!
Yikes, the winter holidays are on the horizon! But let’s not think about New Year’s resolutions (they’ll be the same again anyway) and instead concentrate on the gift-giving days of December. If you’ve started your holiday shopping—or when you do—add the Channing Bookstore to your list of places to visit for a perfect gift. The big “sale” table features an impressive assortment of beautiful, often-unusual books in near-new condition. Like the “more expensive” books offered at the Annual Sale, these books are priced from $4-$10. We will be adding books to the selection daily, so plan to make Channing part of your shopping circuit.

More Gift Ideas at Both Bookstores
Consider a Friends of the Library T-shirt—adult and children’s sizes are available, as are various styles and colors. Heavy-duty tote bags, from the Authors Dinner and featuring the Friends “Green Lady” logo, are only $5. And there’s always a David Lance Goines poster—a very tasteful gift idea. Can’t make up your mind? What about a Friends Bookstore gift certificate—good in either store, and the perfect size to slip into a gift card.

Okay…What’s the Green Lady Logo?
Look in the left corner above. The design is based on the sgraffito on the outside of the Central Library. Sgraffito is a form of decoration made by scratching through a lower layer of a contrasting color, typically done in plaster or stucco on walls. Like much of the Library’s interior, the theme is vaguely Mayan, with a very diverse interpretation of that—like the ancient Egyptians with a printing press you’ll find on the building’s north side. Years ago, the Friends adopted the symbol of the lady carrying books (it just seemed appropriate!), and the design appears on all our printed items, including tote bags.

Libros “R” Us! (Livres Aussi)
Several Friendly volunteers have asked that the Channing Bookstore’s international language section get a little promotion in the newsletter. Herewith: Channing has books in French, German, Spanish, and several Asian languages, plus a

Don’t Go Into the Library
By Alberto Alvaro Rios
The library is dangerous— Don’t go in. If you do
You know what will happen. It’s like a pet store or a bakery—
Every single time you’ll come out of there Holding something in your arms.
Those novels with their big eyes. And those no-nonsense, all muscle Greyhounds and Dobermans,
All non-fiction and business,
Cuddly when they’re young, But then the first page is turned.
The doughnut scent of it all, knowledge, The aroma of coffee being made
In all those books, something for everyone, The deli offerings of civilization itself.
The library is the book of books, Its concrete and wood and glass covers
Keeping within them the very big, Very long story of everything.
The library is dangerous, full Of answers. If you go inside, You may not come out
The same person who went in.
Acclamations and Awards

Here's former FOL President Sandy Bails with Councilmember Sophie Hall, at the September 24 Council meeting, with the Mayor's Proclamation honoring Sandy’s “outstanding civic involvement, her humanity and her important contributions to the Berkeley Public Library.” The proclamation also notes—and rightly so—Sandy’s immeasurable patience, leadership, compassion, calm demeanor, and ever-present sense of humor.

Once Again: Our Friendly Holiday Donation Column

Editor’s note: Just like many better-known columnists, I’m once again reprinting the “holiday column.” If you haven’t read it before, now is the time. If you have read it before, now is the time again.

I was talking to a friend recently about how the Friends depend on memberships and donations to provide the bedrock foundation for our organization. I bemoaned the unease of always having our organizational hands out, asking for funds, so we could help the Library. Said friend e-mailed me the following suggestion:

“Perhaps you could present it this way: I know that times are tough and that donating to a good cause might be the furthest thing from your mind right now. I also know that most people dislike mailings, notices, pleas, where someone is asking for money.

“But if for a moment you could put all that aside and instead think of this: Think about how you’ve probably been meaning to do something charitable for a while now. Next think about how you never seem to have the time to do the volunteering that your Berkeley progressive-left-liberal conscience tells you that you should be doing. And then, imagine how it might feel to read just this one paragraph, and donate to just this one local, tangible, and meaningful good cause and then in truth have all that liberal guilt washed away like the dust on your windshield after a heavy rain. Sounds pretty good huh?” Gee, and she didn’t even mention that the end of the tax year is approaching.

If the “clean and clear windshield” theory of charitable gift-giving works for you, please use the enclosed envelope and mail us your kind donation. You can also donate online, with credit card or PayPal, at www.berkeleylibraryfriends.org. Then click on the “Join/Volunteer/Donate” link.

And many thanks.

—Sayre Van Young, Girl Reporter

Love Your Library

BECOME A FRIEND

Supporting the Friends = Supporting the Library

Creating a great public library requires support from many sources. The Berkeley Public Library is fortunate to have many community supporters who firmly believe in the power of libraries. Your individual donations help keep Berkeley’s library system vibrant and responsive.

New Members
Joan Collignon  John Siams
Allison Jones  Larry Simon

In Memory of...
Robert Pack Browning from Linda Maio
Sally Floyd from Regina Minard & Carol Start, and from Sayre Van Young & Diane Davenport
Eleanor Letchaw from Jeannie Rucker
Adelia Lines from Kevin James and from Deirdre Cerkowicz

In Honor of...
Sandy Bails from Lucia Blakeslee Diane Davenport from Audrey & Mike Powers Friday afternoon volunteers at the Channing store from Ellie Goldstein-Erickson

Renewals at $25
Diane Bernbaum  John Jeahnsen
Mary Ann Broder  Terry Raller
Lone Coleman  Betty Schaeferer
Henry Hecht  Johanna Stigter
John Hertzl  Dorothy Walker
Janet Herrnhausen  Margaret Wood & Lucy
Ann Jennings  E. Connelly

Membership renewals ($25) with additional donation up to $200
Rachel Anderson  Andrea Pearstein
Frances Archer  Wendy Polvka & Evan Painter
Peter & Nancy Bickel  Nancy Khoda
Beth & Norman Edelstein  Bettina Roth
Veronika Fukson  Barbara Schirra
Eka Glines  Roslyn & Gene Sehter
Jean Holmes  Neil & Karyn Smith
Sara Jotoku  Andrea Wishburn
JoAnn Lorber  Hildegard Yost
Celeste MacLeod
Barbara MacPhail

Membership renewals ($25) with donations $201 and above
Karen & Warren Bird
Mara Melandry
Heidi Seney Trust
Larry Simon
Friends Don’t Let Friends Miss Good Books

Here are book recommendations (somewhat edited for length and clarity) from the recent All-Volunteer Annual Meeting, with book genre noted plus a capsule review/comment.

American Heiress: The Wild Saga of the kidnapping, Crimes, and Trial of Patty Hearst, by Jeffrey Toobin (biography)
Lucid, funny, insightful, local.

American Nations: A History of the Eleven Regional Cultures of North America, by Colin Woodard (nonfiction)
The author hypothesizes that North America is really composed of 11 nations, each with its own unique roots and it is this that causes the country to have such a challenging time agreeing on basic issues. Written in 2011, it pre-dates the last election, yet provides strong insights into why the election went the way it did.

Beyond the 39 Steps: A Life of John Buchan, by Ursula Buchan (biography)
Buchan was an editor, author, member of Parliament, and Governor General of Canada.

The Far Away Brothers: Two Young Migrants and the Making of an American Life, by Lauren Markham (biography)
The human side of immigration—there are lots of facts and figures, but this is primarily a story of two brothers from El Salvador—why they came, how they got here, and what they did when they got here.

Germinal, by Emile Zola (fiction)
Exposes the inhumane conditions of miners in northern France in the 1860s, especially relevant given the difficulties we face today politically, socially, and economically.

How Wealth Rules the World: Saving Our Communities and Freedoms from the Dictatorship of Property, by Ben G. Price (nonfiction)
It helps to understand why “money” should not be a way of acquiring power.

Last Boat out of Shanghai: The Epic Story of the Chinese Who Fled Mao’s Revolution, by Helen Zia (history)
The human side of immigration—there are lots of facts and figures, but this is primarily a story of two brothers from El Salvador—why they came, how they got here, and what they did when they got here.

The Lewis Trilogy (The Black Horse; The Lewis Man; The Chieftain), all by Peter May (mysteries)
Terrific stories that take place on the Scottish Isle of Lewis; excellent writing, plot, and description of Scotland and the outer islands.

The Library Book, by Susan Orlean (nonfiction)
A fascinating story, especially the history of the Los Angeles library system. She writes almost as if the book was a novel.

Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Book Got Wrong, by James Loewen (nonfiction)
Excellent examination of high school history textbooks; the author demonstrates how students are fed simplistic—and often inaccurate—information.

The author and her husband moved to a small town in Appalachia and opened a used bookstore which eventually became a beloved community center.

Mike Tyson Slept Here, by Chris Huntington (fiction), AND The Road to Ruin, by Donald Westlake (mystery)
Both of these were on the 50¢ truck, and both are light fiction with profound truth buried in humor.

Nobody’s Looking at You, by Lauren Markham (fiction)
A fascinating story, especially the history of the Los Angeles library system. She writes almost as if the book was a novel.

The Pioneers: The Heroic Story of the Settlers Who Brought the American Ideal West, by David McCullough (history)
Very interesting view of mid-western (not West Coast) pioneers, especially Ohio.

Public Libraries: Travel Treasures of the West, by Anna and Marry Rabkin (nonfiction)
Excellent introduction to the range of styles, locations, and stories of public libraries in 14 western states. Written by Berkeley’s own Rabkins, with an introduction by former Library Director Regina Miodunski.

The Race to Save the Lord God Bird, by Phillip Hoose (nonfiction)
This lengthy (196 pages) middle school book depicts the history of the extinction of the huge Ivory-billed woodpecker, while also providing information about those who “studied it, painted it and tried to save it from extinction.”

The Sweet Forever, by George Pelecanos (fiction)
By the author of “The Wire,” this is about crime in Washington, D.C. in the 1980s. Great character development and a great read.

Townie, by Andre Dubus III (memoir)
Remembering how he grew up in a rough part of New York, with his father leaving the home, his siblings, and a working mom. Loved his previous book, House of Sand and Fog, too.

Unaccustomed Earth, by Jhumpa Lahiri (short story collection)
Outstanding author (she also wrote The Namesake); main protagonists are an Indian-American facing family issues.

Waking Lions, by Ayelet Gundar-Goshen (fiction)
Suspenseful, political, and psychologically perceptive, this explores moral issues AND it is a compelling story.

Beauty’s Little Free Libraries Get Visitors!

Over the course of several Friday afternoons, teens walked all over town, seeking books and bookmarks into dozens of Berkeley’s little free libraries, inviting YA book-loving folks to join their crew. Teens got to see new neighborhoods and spread the joy of library goodness, connecting book-loving folks all over town. That’s enthusiastic teens Zoe Nwakuche and Oscar Bolin in the photo.

We don’t know who’s picked up the books, but we do know that many have been taken. Maybe some of the new faces in our Friday afternoon events have come to us from this project. Or maybe it’s visiting teens taking these books back to their home libraries and suggesting that they start a leadership group. Or maybe it’s just YA-loving adults smiling at the ingenuity and passion of teens.

Whatever homes these books have found, we want to thank you sincerely for the books and the enthusiasm we always get from the Friends for whatever ideas and projects the teens want to get up to.
President’s Report from Rosemary Hardy

This year marks the 65th anniversary of the founding of the Friends of the Berkeley Public Library. We’ve had amazing leadership over the years, most recently with Sandy Bails. We all owe an enormous “thanks” to Sandy for her thoughtful, eloquent, and brilliant leadership over the past six years. Fortunately for all of us, Sandy will remain on the Friends Board for the next year, so we will continue to benefit from her guiding wisdom.

As incoming president, I look forward to working with the Friends’ talented, creative, energetic Board in our mission to support the Library and our community. Being a librarian, and having worked at Berkeley Public Library, I value its tremendous importance in our city. The financial support that the Friends provide for Library programming, and for the Library Foundation’s capital projects, is invaluable. I am so impressed by our community of members and volunteers: treasurer, volunteer coordinator, membership committee, publicity committee, scholarship committee, bookstore managers, shift managers, book sorters, our team of Amazon listers and mailers, our team that picks up and delivers boxes and boxes of donations—the list goes on and on.

Like all of us who volunteer in the bookstores, I always feel like a “kid in a candy store.” We all love books, and libraries, and that’s why we’re all in this together. Due to our combined efforts, we provide over $100,000 to fill the Library’s annual funding requests for a wide array of community programs. Sandy’s dedication to fostering young students’ reading skills led to our new collaboration with the Berkeley schools. We now fund the “Summer Slide” program to encourage young readers. We all want to support reading and library programs, and expand upon these efforts. Unfortunately, due to construction and lack of storage space at the Central Library, we cannot have our Annual Book Sale this coming year. This is an enormous change, but we have a dedicated team looking at alternate possibilities to satisfy our community’s desire for a fun and affordable opportunity to buy books.

We are always looking for ways to extend our reach, and for more input from our members. Have an idea for the website, for publicity, for additional creative areas we should look at? Please get in touch if you have a suggestion for the Board to consider. If there are other ways you’d like to get involved, please let us know! Your comments will be greatly appreciated. You can reach the Board at berkeleylibraryfriends@gmail.com.

Thanks so very much to all of the Friends! I look forward to the fun and challenges of chairing our organization in the coming year.

Let’s Try This Again

Editor’s Note: Several new FOL Board members were introduced in the last issue of the Bookmark, but somehow your editor faded a bit toward the end of the alphabet… so newest Board member Rob Walker didn’t make the cut.

But he’s elected, he’s attending meetings, he’s already proved a helpful resource on the Board… so it’s time to introduce him to members.

Rob Walker writes:

I’m delighted to be able to join the Board of the Friends because it feels like I’m contributing, in some small way, to the “family business.” My grandmother was a librarian in Clarksville, Tennessee, and both my parents are teachers and school administrators. Professionally, I’m a business and intellectual property law attorney, and I’ve had the good fortune to be able to work on a variety of artists and library issues in my career. My wife Lisa and I live in Central Berkeley, just down the street from Berkeley High. We’re regular patrons of the Tool Library, and most Saturday mornings you can find me perusing the new arrivals (and “Lucky Day!” items) at the South Branch. In addition to reading, I’m a big fan of obscure films, a kick-ass martial artist, and I like to spend my weekends silently staring at the wall at the Berkeley Zen Center.

Authors Dinner Moves (Temporarily) to the Berkeley City Club

Changes are afoot at the Central Library, and the long-anticipated renovations on the first and second floors will soon begin. Because of the construction, the Berkeley Public Library Foundation Authors Dinner, that glamorous evening when Berkeley readers—eager to read with their favorite local authors, will move for just this year to the beloved Berkeley City Club, designed by Julia Morgan. As they have for the past 18 years, guests will enjoy an elegant dinner as they’re seated with an honored author. And as always, the proceeds will help fund library innovations, literacy projects, technology, and the capital improvements that make our great public library extraordinary.

Michael Lewis, author of The Fifth Risk, Moneyball, The Big Short, and many other bestsellers, will be the honorary chair this year. Joining him for the evening will be hosts Linda Schacht Gage, Vanessa Hua, and T.J. Stiles along with more than 20 other authors (see the list at right).

The mission of the Library Foundation is a perfect complement to the Friends’ mission: The Friends fund the cultural and educational programming that brings families and adults to all five locations, and the Foundation works to fund innovations and building improvements that help make a great library extraordinary. The Foundation always looks forward to the two tables filled with Friends volunteers who attend the dinner as part of the Friends annual sponsorship. Thank you for supporting this, the Foundation’s major fundraiser.

—Joan Collignon, Foundation Board

As of mid-November, authors for the 2020 Authors Dinner will include:

Laura Atkins • R.C. Barnes • Ingrid Rojas Contreras • Janet Delaney • Laurie Ann Doyle • Grant Faulkner • Leah Garcia • Ori Kaufmann • Lauren Markham • Kelly McGọnigal • Mara Melandry • Vijaya Nagarajan • Janet Napolitano • Jenny Odell • Richard Schwartz • Namwali Serpell • Randy Shaw • Julia Flynn Silver • Soane Tanen • Eric Tarloff • David Thomson • James Vlahos

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—Joan Collignon, Foundation Board

Happy Holidays from the Friends of the Library Board. (Seated, L to R) Peggy Kirihata, Roz Handy, Sandy Bails, Terry Gillen, Magi Stromberg. (Standing L to R) Kristin Stromberg, Yvonne Shaver, Rob Walker, Bob Martin, Marilyn Pew, Henry Robertson, Jeri Einsart, Barbara McPhail, Toni Klassen. (Absent) Claudia Berger, Gene Seltzer.

Let’s Try This Again

Editor: Sayre Van Young
Layout/Design: Ann Higgins
Staff Photographer: Yvonne Shaver
The Bookmark appears quarterly; we welcome your letters and your ideas for articles. Contact us at Friends Bookmark, 2/39 Ridgeway, Berkeley 94704, or via e-mail berkeleylibraryfriends@gmail.com
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YES! I want to support Berkeley’s public libraries and the Friends of the Library. Enclosed is my tax deductible contribution: ☐ $25   ☐ $50   ☐ $100   ☐ $250   ☐ other $_____
☐ Dues—New Friends Member   ☐ Donation   ☐ I would like to volunteer at the Friends’ bookstores. Please contact me.
☐ Dues—Renewal   ☐ Donation in honor/memory (circle one) of

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