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Inquiring Minds Need to Know... A Visit with the Library Director

Editor's note: I sat down—virtually—with Library Director Tess Mayer to get answers to some of the questions I've been asked by Friends and the public (working in the Central Library Bookstore means lots of queries from store patrons). Plus it never hurts to check in on good restaurants.

Q. Is all the external stucco work done on the Central Library? Will there be additional painting?

Tess: The stucco work is almost done! There is a minor adjustment remaining involving the building's vertical cold joints. The team has completed the additional painting associated with the stucco replacement. Many staff have remarked that it looks good!

Note that the building in general needs a paint refresh, which is on the list of the Library's scheduled maintenance but is not associated with the stucco replacement project.

Q. What's that broken pile of concrete at the top of the front steps at the Central Library?

Tess: In order to identify the cause of recurring water intrusion into the Central Library building, the City of Berkeley's Public Works Department needed to open up the sidewalk to be able to investigate and run some tests. Through this process, they uncovered the location of where the rainwater was draining into the Central Library building through the sidewalk. A vendor in contract with Public Works has been identified to fill this sink hole with con-

crete, install a new drain from the building to the curb, and repave the sidewalk. This work is scheduled to begin soon. [*Editor's note:* In fact, the work began the day after Tess wrote this.]

Q. When will the Library's meeting rooms be

open to community groups and for library programs?

Tess: The Library meeting rooms will reopen on a phased basis. We are starting with opening them for Library-sponsored programs and events, and for Library-affiliated organizations like



Photo: Pete Rosos

the Friends and Foundation to begin meeting. We will reopen them for the use of community groups as determined by staff that continue to develop reopening plans. Our phased-in strategies throughout the pandemic, both for outdoor pick-up and indoor services, allowed us to offer services sooner to the community than if we did one open date; it meant that as soon as a location was ready in terms of staffing and materials, we could implement it!

Q. When do you envision the 5th floor (Art & Music) re-opening?

Tess: This summer we will finally be able to welcome back patrons in-person to this beloved floor. Although we have continued to make the collections accessible, paging materials from there at patron request, we are all looking forward to the 5th floor reopening.

(cont'd page 4)

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.

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Candidates for the Board of Directors
of the Friends of the Library

The following is the slate of candidates that the Nominating Committee is presenting to the membership of the Friends of the Berkeley Public Library. Please see nearby alert about the voting process.
The term of office is June 2022 to June 2023.

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Volunteer Coordinator—Lucia Blakeslee
Scholarship Committee—Judith Justice
Membership—Mara Melandry (ex officio)
Bookmark Editor—Sayre Van Young

Voting Alert

To all members of the Friends of the Berkeley Public Library

Please review the proposed slate of candidates for the 2022-2023 Friends of the Library Board of Directors. Since we cannot hold our Annual Meeting this year, we're asking members to vote by e-mail OR by calling the number below. Vote either way, but only once!!

- You can vote yes (I approve the slate of candidates),
- or no (I don't approve the slate),
- or you can abstain

If we don't hear from you, we will count that as an abstention.

Responses are needed by June 15, 2022.

email: BPLfriendsboard@gmail.com

phone: 510-981-6152 [answering machine]

Thank you so very much for your support and for your membership in the Friends of the Berkeley Public Library!
—Roz Hardy, President, Friends of the Library

Friends Helping Friends by Cathy Brown

Most public and academic libraries have Friends groups dedicated to supporting their programs and augmenting their budgets. Prison libraries are not as fortunate, yet the need is great. Here's how one Berkeley Friend has addressed that disparity.

Kristi Kenney, Saturday morning co-manager of the Channing bookstore and FOL Board member, became aware of the reading needs of inmates when volunteering with various grassroots projects that sent free books to prison inmates. Then, when Kristi started library school, she focused on incarcerated people as her information community for a course in serving special populations. To understand the perspective of a correctional librarian, she reached out to San



Quentin Librarian Gabriel Loiederman. At some point they wondered, why don't prison libraries have Friends groups?

The San Quentin Library serves a population of almost 3,000 inmates. The library's budget is limited, and they get only one order of books a year through the state. Due to a lack of funds for prison libraries, current books and highly sought-after titles are scarce. Kristi and Gabriel Loiederman worked to launch a website and social media accounts to build publicity for the Friends of San Quentin Library. They've already started an online book drive, working with Copperfield's, a Marin County bookstore. You can support the book drive by visiting www.copperfieldsbooks.com/wishlist/1182.

And take a moment to check out the website of the San Quentin Friends:

www.friendsofthesanquentinprisonlibrary.com/

The mission of the San Quentin Library Friends is to support the needs of prison libraries to better serve their incarcerated patrons. The long-term goal is to help other California state prisons, especially those that are in isolated areas, by using the name recognition and locale of San Quentin to access resources.

Sounds like real friends, and how glad we are that Kristi has been able to leverage her experience with our Friends to make new Friends. ♦

Inquiring Minds, cont'd

(from page 1) The Library is in the process of hiring new librarians and will be onboarding a number of new staff soon that will make it possible to reopen the 5th floor. As we have approached each stage of reopening, the staff will engage in a process to determine when precisely that will be and then we will communicate it, promptly.

Q. How many new employees are expected? at Central? At the branches?

Tess: We anticipate an ongoing influx of new staff in the next few months. However, the Library will be participating in ongoing recruitment efforts over the next several years. Remember that whenever we recruit for most positions, new vacancies are created when internal employees promote to new positions. This is a good thing, but it also means that the recruitment work is never really "done."

Q. Is a "No Masks Needed" time in sight? Who determines the policy for the Library?

Tess: The City of Berkeley determines the requirements and guidelines for face coverings in City of Berkeley buildings. Because our libraries are City buildings, we must follow their guidance.

Q. You've been here over a year. What do you like best about Berkeley? What least?

Tess: It's exciting and heartening to be in a place where people are invested and engaged in local politics and seem to look out for one another. That said, having lived in a different city with strong progressive values for many years, sometimes I think there's a need to take different perspectives at multiple levels, both looking inward and expanding outward.

Also, it's wonderful to be in such a biking-friendly city. I often run into staff and patrons as I bike around town!

Q. Found a favorite restaurant yet?

Tess: Discovering restaurants has been a fun aspect of getting to know the area! Cafe Réveille and Bartavelle are great for brunch food, and Iyasare is lovely for a special celebration. Best takeout: Imm Thai Street Food. Where is the best Italian? Next mission...

Yet another Editor's note: Thanks Tess! Friends, we hope to hear regularly from the Library Director—if you have questions, please pass them along to us, and we'll see they get asked in the next "interview." ♦

Editorial Maunderings, Meanderings, and Muted Murmurings...

...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 plus much more...

First a Correction: In the last issue, we misspelled the name of one of the Friends Scholarship winners—It's Chinyere Keita. Apologies.

Book Festival: By the time this issue snuggles into your mailbox or darts through your mail slot, the 8th Annual Bay Area Book Festival will be history. Once again, Friendly stalwarts staffed a busy book-selling booth at the event, raising money to support the Library and generally spreading bibliographical cheer.

Special thanks to booth co-manager Cathy Brown, and to willing volunteers Sandy Bails, Claudia Berger, Lucia Blakeslee, Ed Cullen, Judith Justice, Kristi Kenney, Barbara McPhail, Marilyn Pew, Donna Rabin, Harry Robertson, Carole Schloz, John Takeuchi, and Emily Warden.

Authors Dinner: Speaking of history, the Library Foundation celebrates its 25th anniversary this year, and the Annual Authors Dinner was the place to celebrate. Or will be. The celebration is scheduled to take place May 18th, yet another local event totally oblivious to our reporting schedule. In a complete switch from previous years, guests will be (or were) feted at the Claremont Hotel (outside), not in the Central Library. As always, the Friends provided free tickets as thanks to six Friendly volunteers (and their guests). This year's Friendly attendees: Judy Barmack, Sam Greyson, Dennis Shambaugh, Claudia Berger, Virginia Warheit, and Sheila Singleton.

Quarantining: Hope you enjoy the library quiz later in this issue. The last question, about quarantining, has a little backstory. Aimee Reeder, library Communications Analyst, sent along this info about the process: "We ended quarantining on May 18, 2021, nearly a year after we started the process. "Quarantining meant all returned library materials were set aside for 72 hours. That meant big bins, managing all the storage space, explaining to patrons why

holds took longer to be processed, etc. So many library teams had to work together, from front line staff to facilities to communications to IT to make it happen... And note we did this in accordance with the recommendations from the State Library and always choose the most conservative metric to use to do everything to keep staff and patrons safe while keeping physical books in the hands of our patrons. (We know the library and its collections were a lifeline to many in Berkeley during the first year of the pandemic). Thank you to all the Circulation and Branch Staff for coordinating the quarantine of all returned library material during the early days of the pandemics."

And may we add our own Friendly Thanks to all the staff, branches, divisions, departments, etc. that accomplished so much for the library during the pandemic.

Book Buyers Alert (Upcoming Sales): The Channing Bookstore regularly features monthly Super Sales, covering their lovely vintage oak table with dozens of specially selected tomes. For May, memoirs and bibliographies will be available for \$1; in June, childrens books will be featured. Do drop by.

Furniture News: Besides the large sale table, several other bibliographic furnishings at the Channing store are delightfully old-fashioned. They came our way at the turn of the century, when the Central Library closed for rebuilding, repair, enlargement... On your next bookstore visit, note the round oak table in the children's area, the large oblong sale table, and especially the beautiful counter, all original furniture, which served the library well from 1931 to 1999.

Hmmm, when I get to writing about furniture, it's probably time for me to meander away. See you next issue! ♦



Editor: Sayre Van Young
Layout/Design: Ann Higgins

The *Bookmark* appears quarterly; we welcome your letters & your ideas for articles. Contact us at *Friends Bookmark*, 2090 Kittredge, Berkeley 94704, or via e-mail: berkeleylibraryfriends@gmail.com

Friends Don't Let Friends Miss Good Books

Read a good book lately? Every issue we feature brief comments from Friends about their latest bibliographical finds. If you have enjoyed a book, fiction or nonfiction, bestseller, or hidden treasure, for adults or children, please let us know (preferably in 75 words or less!).

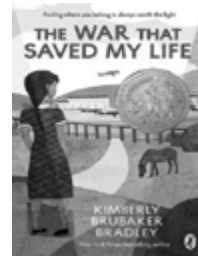
But first, we highlight suggestions from two younger readers.



Here's a review (unedited!) of an entire series of books (and a recommendation for your children or grandchildren) from young reader Arden Stewart-Van Young, who suggests *Wings of Fire*, a 15-volume series by Tui. T. Sutherland.

"Do you like to read? If you do, then I think you will like *Wings*

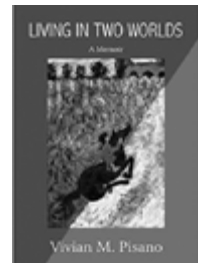
of Fire. My first reason is that it never stays in one place for a long time. My second reason is that the characters are both confusing and interesting. My third and last reason is that *Wings of Fire* is a lot better than other book series like *Harry Potter* and *Keepers of the Lost City*. In each book you're in a different dragon's mind and you hear their thoughts and feelings, and you get to see things through their eyes and see their perspective of the story...I hope you get to Read *Wings of Fire* and I hope you like it a lot!"



Young reader Molly Branstetter reviews *The War That Saved My Life* by Kimberly Brubaker Bradley, a historical-fiction book that takes place in the 1930s. "I liked it because it's dramatic and breathtaking. The main character, Ada, experiences feelings like anger, joy,

and frustration due to not fitting in. She feels like she doesn't fit in because she has a clubfoot and people don't feel comfortable with her. I recommend this book to people who are interested in history, drama, and emotional books."

And now, on to the adult reads:



Alan Bern recommends *Living in Two Worlds: A Memoir* by Berkeley resident Vivian Pisano. That name may sound familiar. "Pisano is a former Deputy Director of the Berkeley Public Library; she tells us much about our country and

Chile through her moving, beautifully written family stories. "Fitting in" can always be problematic: for Pisano it has been a lifelong journey filled with pain, sorrow, regret, and, ultimately, much love and satisfaction."



Lucia Blakeslee suggests *Munich* by Robert Harris. "This novel dramatizes the events of September 1938 when Neville Chamberlain went to Munich to appease Hitler in what was a futile attempt to create peace. Harris stays true to the facts of this historical period but brilliantly

adds two fictional main characters. He is a master storyteller and I found myself on the edge of my chair throughout the novel even though I knew what was going to happen. It's a great read."



Cathy Brown enjoyed *Tightrope, Americans Reaching for Hope* by Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn. "Need more insight into America's rural and political divide? There is hope among the sorrow. The authors put a personal face on the country's 'deaths of despair' with the stories of

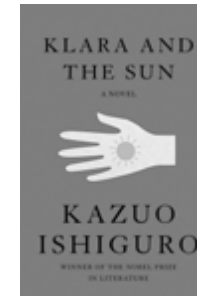
Kristof's childhood friends in Yamhill, Oregon. For every child who succumbs to the generational poverty, domestic and drug abuse, and educational failures, there are children who are saved by teachers, social workers, friends and neighbors. The authors do not excuse bad choices on the part of individuals but point out that the consequences are worse for those at the bottom of the ladder. Knowing that a majority of Yamhill County voted for Trump, in both the 2016 and 2020 elections, this book provides a splash of cold context."



Andrea Foley enjoyed *Lady Bird Johnson—Hiding in Plain Sight* by Julia Sweig. "When the book club selection arrived, my initial reaction was LADY BIRD?! I read the opening pages and learned that the book is based on her recorded diary from November 23, 1963 through August 1968—turbulent

years in U.S. history. A tempestuous husband, a smoldering war in Vietnam, civil unrest in Wash-

ington D.C. and elsewhere created a volatile society unlike any she had known. 'Beautification' was a synonym for the First Lady, much to her disgust. The expansion of opportunities for poorer, neglected neighborhoods through careful urban planning and design was her mission. The diaries explain the many obstacles and disappointments she faced."



Hope Friedman highly recommends *Klara and the Sun* by Kazuo Ishiguro. "This novel might be described as dystopian, the genre as science fiction, but neither category actually fits. The story is narrated by an Artificial Friend (robot) about her role in a family during a vaguely described

dark future. But as it unfolds we see it is about what makes humans human, and the importance of the connections between us. This is a beautifully written and thought-provoking book."



Pat Mullan notes "Black debut author Nicole Jocelyn Johnson presents fresh perspectives in her short stories and a novella, *My Monticello*. The title piece, set in the near future, situates Jefferson's estate as a temporary refuge for neighbors fleeing white vigilantes. Johnson's characters, including

direct descendants of Sally Hemings, are caring and tender, even while escaping their ravaged homes and subsisting on Monticello gift shop snacks. *My Monticello* is a powerful book that digs down to deep truth."



Andrea Mullarkey enthusiastically recommends *Ain't Burned all the Bright* (by Jason Reynolds and illustrator Jason Griffin). "It's a book that defies categorization: three long sentences written by a poet stretch out over nearly 400 pages of stunning illustrations that

elucidate without trying to explain life in 2021. The pandemic, police shootings, wildfires are all in this story, but so are families and food and the beauty of life. The central theme is 'breath' and this book took mine away—then gave it back to me. This is unquestionably the best thing I've read in ages." ♦

Time for a Quiz about the Pandemic & the Library

1. How many library collections debuted during the pandemic?

- a. One b. Two c. Four

Answer: b! Both the lending of Chromebooks (computers) and the culinary collection at Tarea Hall Pittman South Branch started in the last two years... guess what's the most popular item from the Culinary Collection? Give up? It was the air-fryer.

2. How many virtual (online) programs were offered during the pandemic by library staff?

- a. 150 b. 384 c. 1,238

Answer: b! 384 virtual programs were offered.

3. How many people attended those virtual programs (like storytelling for kids, language practice, etc.):

- a. 559 b. 2,150 c. 8,533

Answer: c! 8,533 attended the virtual programs; while most attendees were from the Bay Area, some programs—like the English Language Conversational program—drew participants from around the world.

4. During the pandemic, how many new patrons received physical library cards.

- a. 878 b. 3,549 c. 8,021

Answer: c! 8,021 During the long months of the pandemic, 8,021 new patrons got a library card.

5. What roles did library workers play as disaster service workers at the onset of the pandemic:

- a. skate park monitor (when parks weren't open)
b. shower support (for the unhoused)
c. City of Berkeley e-mail Covid help center
d. all of the above and many more!

The answer is, of course, d!

6. Starting in Spring 2020, returned Library materials were quarantined for 72 hours. How long did that practice last?

- a. Over a year b. Over 6 months c. Exactly 3 months

Answer: a! And for more info on the quarantine, see the Editorial Meandering column earlier in this issue.

Thanks to all those who helped compile this info, selected the best questions, and special thanks to all the staff, branches, divisions, departments, etc. that accomplished so much for the library during the pandemic. ♦

Friends of the Berkeley Public Library
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