

BERKELEY BOOKMARK

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NOV 2025

President's Message: *The Grateful Time of Year*

By Cathy Brown

Despite all the world's troubles, I can still find plenty of blessings. Let's start with the Friends of the Berkeley Public Library. What a great group of people, volunteers and supporters. Yes, you might come for the books and for the fun of sorting, shelving, and selling them, but you stay for the people. I am constantly amazed and thankful for the devotion, reliability, sociability, and wicked humor of the Friends I volunteer with. I learn so much from them! I'm also grateful for the members who renew year after year – and often donate in excess of our modest dues. I also look forward to seeing our regular customers in the stores who thank us for the work we do. One of our regulars even came up with a cheer: "Give a shout, give a yell, we all love BPL!"

Speaking of BPL, have you been to your local branch or Central Library recently? If you have attended an author talk, learned how to line dance or sew a bookbinding, brought your grandkids to see the Storytime Band at the Freight, or helped them make an art project with MOCHA, you know that the Friends helps make the programming possible. Your donation at work! I'm amazed at the events and activities that BPL's librarians and staff initiate. They are constantly searching for ways to engage our diverse community. Within the last year, I've heard author talks ranging from the health benefits of drinking water to *Soil: The Story of a Black Mother's Garden*. And if I were inclined to attend a session on improving technology skills or learning how to meditate? I could do that at the Library. If a program includes an outside speaker, presenter, prizes, arts and craft materials, or food (teens are hungry!), it's likely the Friends funded it.

I'd also like to give thanks to the Berkeley Public Library Foundation for their collaborative efforts on behalf of the Library. They are currently providing grant funding for a new Story Room at Central (the Friends also contributed to this project), and refurbishment of the children's area at all BPL branches.

The Library is fortunate to have not one, but two organizations working hard on its behalf. And the Board of Library Trustees – they are tasked with providing leadership, governance and oversight of the Library. The Trustees are Berkeley residents who serve without compensation. BOLT is currently conducting the search for a new Library Director, a responsibility of immense importance.

Last, and not least – I'm super grateful to live in a City that in 2024 voted overwhelmingly to support the Library. Happy Holidays, and I'll see you in the Library.

'Tis the Gift-giving Season

...and you can make it a Friendly one with lovely gift-worthy books and holiday-related books and media, all currently available at both the Channing Way and Central Library bookstores.

Note that Channing will be closed from December 21, reopening January 3. Both stores also have single greeting cards and CDs and LPs of holiday carols sung by everyone from Pavarotti to the Beach Boys. Don't forget these suggestions as well:

- Friends T-shirts in many sizes and colors (adult and children \$15 until December 31)



- David Lance Goines library posters (\$100, very limited quantities at Channing)
- Gift certificates to the Friends Bookstores (any amount)
- Gift memberships to the Friends (still only \$25!)

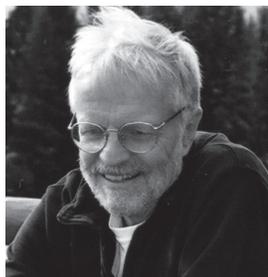
Tribute to Gary Brown

By Sandy Bails

We thought it might not ever happen, that Gary Brown would walk out the back door of the Channing bookstore for a final time. We somehow imagined, foolishly, that he would be there forever, quietly, patiently, sitting at the lefthand computer in the bookstore workroom, unraveling the backstory to whatever book he had in hand.

And who is Gary Brown, you might be asking. Even regular customers at the store might never have laid eyes on him, but all the volunteers knew him, or knew of him. He was our resident expert on vintage books. If you're a faithful reader of *Bookmark* you will have read of his efforts not only to uncover the value of older books that come our way, but to see that books ended up where they belonged, whether it was returning a volume by Freud to the library of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society or walking across the Cal campus to gift a somewhat damaged illustrated Urdu manuscript to the South and Southeast Asian Library.

Gary seemed to feel that figuring out where a book best belonged was not just a challenge, but a responsibility. Whenever Gary was in the workroom, the rest of us seemed to handle books more carefully, more respectfully. His very presence was a reminder of how important books are. As unassuming and quiet as Gary has been during all the years he volunteered countless hours at the store, no one has made a greater contribution, with less fanfare. We miss him. We'll probably always miss him. ❖



Letter from the Editor

Greetings Friends,

Since taking on this job I am always on the lookout for inspiring stories about libraries. One I came across this past summer was about Dan Pelzer of Columbus, Ohio, who died at 92 in July. A longtime Columbus Metropolitan Library (Whitehall Branch, specifically) customer, champion, and avid reader, he kept a list of all the books he'd read starting in 1962. He read 72 in 2023 alone (before his failing eyesight prevented further reading), 3,599 total since 1962 when he first began the list as a Peace Corps volunteer stationed in Nepal. Read the full story here: <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/07/26/books/man-died-book-list-thousands.html?searchResultPosition=1> Or listen to the NPR story here: <https://www.wwno.org/npr-news/2025-08-07/what-dan-read-what-a-reading-list-of-3-599-books-tells-us-about-a-library-superfan>

The other story is more personal. On a recent trip to Morocco, I traveled all over the country with a group of twelve. One of our stops – a highlight for me – was a visit to the Lycee Moulay Rchid in Erfoud where we met with high school students studying English. We had been asked to bring books for them. At our Channing store I had picked up *King of the Wind* by Marguerite Henry, *The Splendid Outcast: African Stories* by Beryl Markham, *I Am Malala* by Malala Yousafzai, and *Bastard of Istanbul* by Elif Shafak. The books were a big hit with the young women I met with who were so eager to learn and hungry for knowledge about life beyond Morocco.

Read on for more inspiration generated by our very own Berkeley Public Library. ❖

– Marion Abbott

Big Sale Big Success



Heartfelt thanks to all who participated. The Annual Big Book Sale September 19-20 was a Big Success thanks to so many of you and all your hard work lugging books, setting up, tidying up, counting, cashiering (complete with all our new technology!), and interacting with all the patrons. As with everything the Friends

accomplishes to help the Library, we couldn't do it without you!

Amazingly, not only did we make more than \$3,000 in the two-day sale, but we sold over 5,000 items! And it went seamlessly, thanks to everyone who showed up

for their shifts and more! For me it was especially delightful to be able to visit with some volunteers that I don't get to see regularly. What a wonderful community we are part of!!! ❖

– Lucia Blakeslee,

Volunteer Coordinator



l to r: Sheila Singleton, Terry Gillen, Sandy Bails, Anne Civitano

BPL Honored to be First Location Featured in Reading Rainbow Series Reboot

Adapted from a BPL press release by Aimee Reeder, Communications Manager

Reading Rainbow, the beloved PBS program starring LeVar Burton, which aired from 1983-2009 and won 26 Emmys, a Peabody Award, and over 200 other broadcast awards, has been rebooted in 2025 with a special Berkeley connection: On Saturday, October 4th, the first episode of the new Reading Rainbow series aired and showcased Berkeley's own West branch.

The reboot series features social media star librarian Mychal Threats who introduces the inaugural episode from West Branch: "Libraries were the first

place where I felt like I could belong... At the library I was surrounded by friends and books and discovered friends in stories, embraced by library workers who celebrated my weirdness and called it a good thing."

Threats asked to film episodes at Berkeley Public

Library, specifically! You can watch and spot scenes from both inside and outside the West branch in the official trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e7es7qdWVnU> and in subsequent episodes: <https://www.youtube.com/@Kidzuko>.

Staff developed a relationship with the TikTok influencer starting back in 2023. Aimee Reeder, Communications Manager, had informally reached out via social media, asking him to be a surprise guest and lecturer at a staff training on social media.

Library Specialist Chinyere Keita met Threats at that training and fostered a relationship with him including collaborating on several community events like Library Afro Revolution Day and the collaborations continue! On Saturday, November 8, Threats



Mychal Threats with BPL staff

was a panelist at the 3rd Annual Comic Con at Central.

Over the last few years Threats has continued to champion the Berkeley Public Library online many times, including promoting the Tool Lending Library.

The library love is quite mutual: BPL now offers a Mychal Threats library card! ❖



Camille Dungy Program Note By Cathy Brown

History, environmental justice, and child-raising in the time of Covid – and a deep dive into the plants and animals native to the area around Fort Collins, Colorado. Poet and scholar Camille Dungy, author of *Soil: The Story of a Black Mother's Garden*, writes about these topics and more. The book was the pick of the all-BPL staff read in 2025, chosen by the Racial Justice Advisory Group.

The Friends funded the purchase of the books and the author event held on July 26, 2025 in the Redwood Grove at the UC Botanical Garden. BPL Library Specialist Chin Keita introduced Camille Dungy. Environmental activists Ashia Ajani and Aniya Butler joined in to conduct a free-wheeling and wide-ranging discussion that kept the audience thinking long after the event ended.



Ephemera II

By Sandy Bails

A great pleasure of volunteering at the Friends' Bookstores is digging into the boxes and bags of books that come to us from the community. It can conjure up that childhood feeling when, surrounded by a mound of presents and full of anxious anticipation—what wonderful thing will be inside?

Of course, once the bow is untied and the paper ripped off, there is the occasional disappointment; think a pair of socks or the third copy of the same book by a well-intentioned but absentminded aunt. Same happens at our bookstores. We're delighted when we find a beautiful copy of *Sense and Sensibility* in a slipcase, an atlas of the Civil War, vintage books from the days when pages were sewn into book spines and the jackets themselves were works of art. We're always happy to have both classic and contemporary books, fiction and non-fiction, hardcover and paperback, in good condition. Not so happy when we open a box that has been sitting in an attic, garage or basement for years, full of mouldering, musty tomes, some heavily underlined from college days. Or a 1960 edition of *World Book Encyclopedia* (actually, any edition of any encyclopedia) or a collection of dated travel guides, or dozens of mass market paperbacks whose pages have yellowed and gone brittle with age.

It turns out the books themselves are not the only treasures we delight in. We're talking ephemera here, the bits and pieces of printed matter that are often left inside books. Some of you may remember an article we published two years ago describing the assortment of ephemera we had collected at the Channing store. Well, it keeps on coming.

Bookmarks. There's always a little pang when we find a bookmark from Cody's, or Shakespeare and Co. or Black Oak Books. Occasionally we find playing cards—maybe they weren't intended as bookmarks but rather strayed from a marathon gin rummy game on

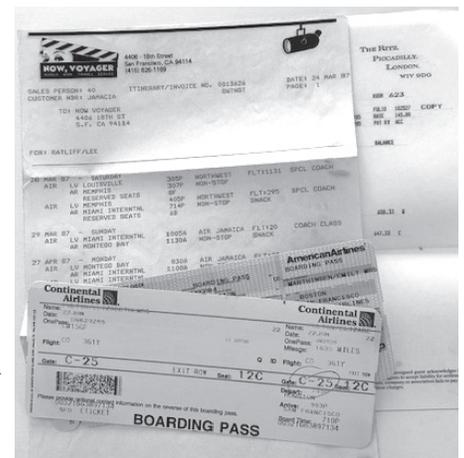
a trans-Atlantic flight? Turns out a paint-chip card with six shades of green makes a good bookmark, as apparently do the little plastic stakes identifying plants. Perhaps our favorite—or at least the most arresting—is cut along the silhouette of a voluptuous and scantily clad woman seemingly awaiting her release from bondage.

We're always hoping to fall upon a \$100 bill, saved in a book "in case of emergency." No luck yet, although we did find some crisp \$2 bills several years ago. We find foreign currency, which can be initially exciting because the denominations are gigantic—300,000 whatever—until we realize that that currency has been withdrawn or devalued. The 50,000 Chilean peso bill won't fund a quick trip to Paris after all.

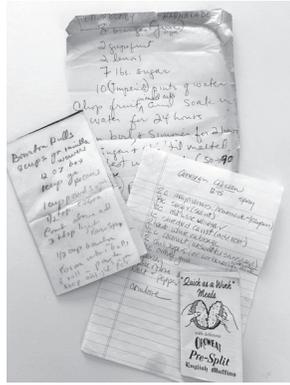
Prayer cards. From an assortment of religions, with the occasional religious tract debunking evolution. Boarding passes galore. Our donors are well-traveled. We have an itinerary with invoice from 1987 that shows flights from Louisville to Memphis, Memphis to Miami, Miami to Montego Bay and back again a month later (a month at Montego Bay!) for the grand total of \$311. Along similar lines, we have the bill for a three-night stay at the Ritz in London in 1985; £647 covered the room, many telephone calls, room service breakfast, lunch and drinks with lunch, afternoon tea. Those were the days. We also have a key card for the Fairmont, but that probably won't do us any good.

Sometimes we come across information we probably shouldn't have, such as someone's financial worth, printed out in detail—assets and liabilities. Things were not looking good for this John Doe in 2002. We have the roster for Royal South Yarra Lawn Tennis Club in Torah, Australia. An internet search suggests this is a pretty fancy place, and they might not want to share their telephone numbers with the likes of us. But then, this dates from 1986, so the information isn't exactly current.

Over the years we've collected a fair number of recipes. Can't say whether these were found in cookbooks or not; volunteers remove whatever they find in books and put it in a small bin in the workroom, so we can't trace the provenance. The mushroom tarts look complicated, but the Caribbean Coleslaw with shredded coconut, chili peppers and lime juice is worth a



try. The first ingredient listed for Bourbon Balls is “3 cups gr. vanilla wafers” so we decided to pass on that. The recipe for Emergency Marmalade requires seven pounds of sugar and “10 (Imperial) pints of water.” Perhaps this comes from a member of the Royal South Yarra Lawn Tennis Club? Do we experience marmalade emergencies in the U.S.? The little booklet that Oroweat English Muffins put out includes ORO-d’oevres:



“Cut Oroweat English Muffin halves crosswise into quarters; toast. Spread each quarter with soft American-type cheese, deviled ham, peanut butter, cream cheese, liverwurst and mayonnaise blend—take your pick. Place under the broiler until the topping has that bubbly melt-in-the-mouth look; serve hot.”

Among our recent findings was a mimeographed page of assignments for English 68a (at Cal?) from Fall 1968. The reading assignments don’t seem arduous, but our donor only achieved 79% on the midterm (a note in the margin). However, plans were apparently afoot to take a make-up exam. We have in hand an 8 ½ x 11” unlined piece of paper covered from top to bottom with handwriting in small black print citing by page number some pretty dense declarations on the nature of language. At the top of the page, in bigger printing, in blue ink, the command “Do Not Write in this book.” Note-to-self or command from a lender who was onto this person’s proclivities? Also, a manifesto of sorts from Lagunitas Middle School: Declaration on Homework. No date, but probably any group of middle schoolers, any year, could come up with 13 bullet points on why homework should be abandoned.

Poems. “Peonies” by Mary Oliver printed on paper with appropriately delicate bits of color down the sides. A couple of lines from “Bird of the Spirit” by Steven Rood, printed on heavy cardstock and distributed by Pegasus and Pendragon Books in 2002 as a “gift of poetry”: “What if Jacob’s Ladder came down right now/And you could disappear from the bad fortune of your life...”

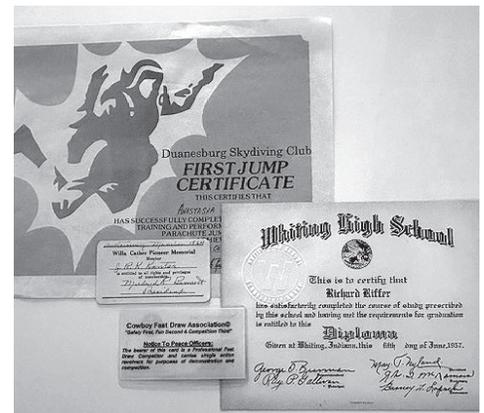
It’s worthwhile to read the entire poem. In 1988 jerkoff press in Berkeley (a Google search on this local enterprise turned up a selection of sites too alarming to pursue) printed 45 copies of Richard Morris’s poem “Hope Is a Thing With Feathers That Perches in the Soul” (sorry, Emily) which ends with these lines: “hoping life would come up/with some kind of free gift, or a surprise ending”

This feels somewhat similar to the sentiments expressed in Mr. Rood’s poem. Did they know each other or maybe attended the same men’s group exploring ways to cope with disappointment? Anyway, we came upon one of the 45 copies, in its own stiff plastic envelope, and now offer it to the highest bidder.

Symbols of life’s achievements find their way to us. Richard Riffer: We have your high school diploma, class of ’57, Whiting High School, Whiting, Indiana. Anastasia: We have your “First Jump” certificate. We’re talking parachutes here. Did your mother know about this? We have a membership card from the Wila Cather Pioneer Memorial, Red Cloud, Nebraska, and one for the Cowboy Fastdraw Association. On the back of this card a notice to Peace Officers reads that the bearer “carries single action revolvers for purposes of demonstration and competition.” This next item doesn’t necessarily represent an achievement—yet!—but maybe it was fully realized and won a Pulitzer and we just weren’t paying attention: Notes on a piece of three-ring binder paper for a “pseudo-Homeric Easter mini epic.” The gods would be represented by marshmallow peeps and jellybeans; the motive for the start of the war is unclear (poor handwriting) but something about defecting to side with vegetables.

Cards: birthday cards, anniversary cards, Valentine cards signed with multiple variations on love. An enclosure card from a florist in Riverside, signed,

“For my perfect carrot. I love you, Tom.” We’d be interested in the backstory. From a clipping that fell out from between pages of a book, we discovered that years before Tinder and Hinge it was possible to find the “ideal



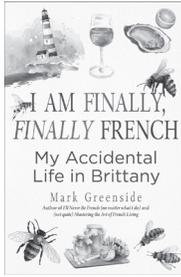
date” through Operation Match, “developed by several mixer-weary Harvard juniors to take the blindness out of blind dates.” Included is a coupon to send for the “free questionnaire and answer sheet,” and then for a mere \$3 one’s dreams could come true.

Photos, so many photos. Little girls at a doll tea-party, a prom—we guess, from the skinny tie, the crew cut on him and “bubble cut” on her—around 1962, a 1975 photo of the first Black Alabama State Troopers (4) being sworn in. Shouldn’t this be in an archive somewhere? A hospital photo of a newborn, who doesn’t look the least bit happy to

(cont’d p. 6)

What We're Reading

I Am Finally, Finally French: My Accidental Life in Brittany by Mark Greenside

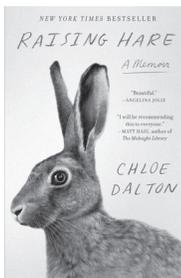


For an unrepentant Francophile, this book is pure *herbe à chat* (catnip). A chronicle of cultural and homeowning adventures (the author's third), the reader is reminded of Larry David crossed with Jacques Tati as Greenside bumbles along in the dailiness of life in a small village. Thirty-plus years of summer residency have

brought him no closer to language proficiency, yet he manages to pay the bills, purchase, operate, and repair the appliances, and forge lasting friendships with neighbors and shopkeepers. Reflections on the passage of time lend the book depth and poignancy.

– Marion Abbott

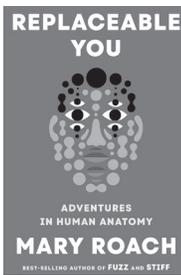
Raising Hare: A Memoir by Chloe Dalton



This book changed my perspective on how we relate to non-human beings, how we prioritize our animal companions in this world and treat them with our needs in mind rather than theirs. Dalton's friendship with a wild hare from when she found it as a leveret—a newborn hare—exposed to predators to bringing it home to care

for until it could live on its own in the wild certainly changed her perspective. A fascinating, heart-warming account of a new reality for political advisor and speechwriter Dalton who spent Covid lockdown away from London in the English countryside. – Vivian Pisano

Replaceable You: Adventures in Human Anatomy by Mary Roach



Creating replaceable body parts can be a complex and serious business, but not in the hands of Mary Roach. Roach has the rare ability of blending classic wit with morbid curiosity as she explores the current state of bodypart development. You'll learn about porcine hearts,

vulvoplasty, joint replacements,

stem-cell hair nurseries, and even 3-D printing. She makes the complicated science understandable and moments of the quest hilarious. Not to be missed!

– Diane Davenport

Time of the Child by Niall Williams

A wonderful book to transport you from these perilous times. Williams takes us to a small Irish village



populated by the usual busybodies, drinkers, the well-loved but increasingly dotty Catholic priest, and the family doctor. Jack Troy's unspoken thoughts of his relationship with his youngest daughter (who stayed home to assist his medical practice) reveal another side of what many regard as a stiff, unemotional man. The story is wrapped in a complex mystery that involves the entire village. Read how everyone reacts in their own manner and life continues as it always has in Faha.

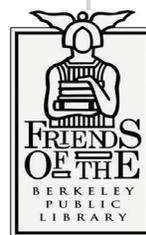
–Andrea Foley

Ephemera II, cont'd

(from p. 5) have made the trip. Not sure if hospitals do this sort of thing, but this particular photo, in a lovely textured paper frame, features a stork apparently delivering a baby hanging in a blanket cradle. So what does the mother think about whitewashing her 17 hours of labor? A quintet of vintage photos, one of which identifies as having been the work of J. Kirk in Newark, New Jersey. He was in business from about 1865-1897. The women wear their hair in severe center parts, as do a trio of men in a different photo taken a couple decades later as evidenced by an auto on the right. These fellows, athletes of some sort, are fitted out with quilted shorts, v-neck sleeveless shirts, long stockings, knee pads and lace-up shoes.

Postcards, too. The blanks we sell at the Channing store. From the postcard sent by The Wayfarers Bookshop in Washington, DC, to Mr. Heath, on March 5, 1931: "We have received from England The Science of Life—Wells—in one volume—first edition, and will hold it for you. Hoping to hear from you soon." Shades of 84 Charing Cross Road. Which brings up the receipt for a book purchased from nearby Foyles, billing itself as The World's Greatest Bookshop. *The Complete Book of Curries* sold for 25 shillings when it was published in 1967.

See what fun we have! A big thank you to all the people who donate wonderful books to the Friends' bookstores, the sales of which enable us to fund a variety of Library needs. And please, don't feel the need to carefully comb through every book you donate. ❖



Editor: Marion Abbott
Layout/Design: Ann Higgins

The *Bookmark* appears quarterly; we welcome your letters & your ideas for articles. Contact us at *Friends Bookmark*, 2031 Bancroft Way, Berkeley, CA 94704, or via email: berkeleylibraryfriends@gmail.com

Supporting the Friends = Supporting the Library

Maintaining a great public library requires support from many sources, particularly at this time of drastic federal cuts. The Berkeley Public Library is fortunate to have many community supporters who firmly believe in the power of libraries. Your individual donations help keep our library system vibrant and responsive. We are so grateful!

If you have renewed/donated in the last three months and do not see your name below, please accept

our apology and help us update our records. The membership has passed from the capable hands of Mara Melandry to a new chair, and she's learning the ropes. Contact us with any aspect of membership at berkeleylibraryfriends@gmail.com. Finally, please add your email address to your renewal – you'll receive an email invitation to the Annual Meeting next year!

Thank you! ❖

Welcome to New Members

Stephanie Bodoff	Kristina Sepetyš
Sally Hughes	Fran Sheppard
Allison Jones	Susan Swan
Deborah Matthews	Leslie Teicholz
Priscilla McNeary	

Renewing at \$25

Bob Banfiel	Wendy Polivka
Rosemary Campos	Anna Presler
Judy Chadwick	Terry Rillera
Heather Hernandez	Harry Robertson
Amy Ione/Diatrope Books	Betty Schinnerer
Nicholas Jones	Herbert Schwartz
Candace Khanna	John Takeuchi
Carolyn Kolka	Judith Thomas
Anne-Marie Miller	

Renewals and/or donations from \$26 up to \$200

Benevity America Online Giving	Ann Jennings Carol Lashof/Bill Newton
Rachel Anderson/ Sally McCoy	Ralda Lee Bob Martin
Dahlia Armon	Andrea Mullarkey
Elizabeth Benjamine	Katherine Pope
Diane Bernbaum	Nancy Rhoda
Michael & Waltraud Buckland	Scott Scheffler and Marian Wolfe
Ellen Feldman	Roslyn & Gene Seltzer
Ellen Felker and Peri Danton	Tedi Siminowsky Sheila Singleton
Hope Friedman	Neil & Karen Smith
Jianne Gimian	John Spitzer
Charlene Harrington	Christine Staples
Irene Hegarty	Sandra Young
Kevin James	

For the Regina Minudri Memorial Scholarship

Carol Starr

Donations in Honor of...

Cathy Brown *from Kathy Huff*

Renewals and/or donations from \$201 up to \$500

Sandy Bails	Marty Ramey
Morris Friedell	Marilyn Willats
Peggy Kiriara	Katinka Wyle
Elizabeth Mayer	Nancy Yep
Daphne McCarley	Ray Yep
Terry Powell	

Renewals and/or donations over \$500

Thomas and Jan Vargo

Donations in Memory of...

Lee Ballance *from Barbara and Carlo Alesandrini*
Mary O'Neill *from Cathy Brown*
Martha Vlahos *from Andrea and Bill Foley*
Betty Crews *from Trish and Tony Hawthorne*
Sally Floyd *from Carole Leita*
Betty Crews *from Jake and Freya Fuchs*
Malcolm Margolin *from Barbara and Carlo Alesandrini*
The Coop Stores of Berkeley *from Hildred Yost*

Save the Date! February 22, 2026 Authors Dinner

Featuring Pulitzer Prize finalists, a pop culture connoisseur, an Emmy-winning journalist, a prolific children's author with two Caldecott Honors, and a San Francisco Chronicle Rising Star Chef — among the 20 honored authors at the Berkeley Public Library Foundation's much-anticipated annual gala. Completing the list are scientists, storytellers, podcasters, artists, and innovators who shape our multi-faceted world. For the list of authors and further information see: <https://bplf.org/authors-dinner/2026/>

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Central Library Bookstore (510) 981-6211 2090 Kittredge St.
Central Library Workroom/Office (510) 981-6152



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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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Checks, made payable to Friends of the Berkeley Public Library, may be mailed to the Friends at 2031 Bancroft Way, Berkeley, CA 94704. Contributions are tax deductible under IRS 501(c)3. Tax ID # 51-0193030

