

Universal Penman

NEWSLETTER OF THE PROVIDENCE ATHENÆUM

MESSAGE FROM DEMING SHERMAN, BOARD PRESIDENT: Recently, I introduced my three-year-old granddaughter to the Athenaeum. As with my children, the Athenaeum was an instant hit – especially the reading nook - and it will be a source of both knowledge and entertainment for years to come. The children’s librarians are a special resource, as are the other staff and the Athenaeum itself. From Pingu to Proust, from children’s movies to Christina’s Salons, the Athenaeum reaches out and welcomes members and guests. Each year we become an increasingly important part of the Providence cultural community, and through our collaborations with local institutions (e.g. RISD and PPS) we enlarge our presence in that community.

The Athenaeum provides for its members of all ages, and the members’ interests, requests, and financial investment drive and sustain the institution. As we near the end of our fiscal year, our sights are set on balancing the budget in a difficult economic environment so that we may keep the institution vibrant and offer another year of books, programs, and events (and food!) to nourish both body and spirit. If you have not renewed your membership, please do so now! If you have not contributed to the Annual Appeal this year and are able to do so, now is the time to do it, because with the commitment of an Athenaeum member and the Board itself, new contributions between now and June 30th will be matched dollar for dollar up to \$5,000. This will help to balance the budget for this year. Alison and her staff are fiscally prudent, so know that your contribution will be well spent! The building itself is much improved through capital expenditures overseen by Dick Congdon and the Building and Grounds Committee. We are fortunate to have received grants for the most significant improvements, so your contributions will support staff, book purchases and programs for all ages, and administrative expenses.

Please visit us during the summer. We now have “wi-fi” so you can use your laptop. Enjoy the collections and the new books that arrive regularly. Good reading!

POWERFUL PROSE, PURE POETRY! Co-presented in March and May with Not About the Buildings (NATB), Micro-Memoir! brought together people of all ages to write short, fast memoirs that made up in power what they lacked in length. The evenings were led by short-short prose champion Karen Donovan, who gave a quick lesson on writing economically, and then each participant received one of four randomly assigned topics for inspiration; during the half-hour assigned to writing, the only sounds heard were pencils scratching paper. As writers then read their works aloud, listeners gasped, groaned, laughed, and cheered – sometimes in the course of just one memoir! Participants included students from the Carriage House, Central High School, the Met School, Hamilton House, and the Brown Graduate Writing Program, as well as NATB fans and followers and Athenaeum members. Evaluations were uniformly euphoric. Said one participant, “That was funny, inspiring, & deeply satisfying,” and another, “I learned to remember how many different voices there are.” Stay tuned for more!

Our 12th Annual Philbrick Poetry Project celebration packed the house in May. Poet judge Marge Piercy presented Kathleen M. Kelley with the Philbrick Poetry Project honor for her manuscript *The Waiting Room*; both poets read from their works with insight and wit. Every member of the avid audience, including students from School One who had spent the afternoon with the poets, remembered why poetry has a pride of place in the Athenaeum’s history, as well as on our shelves and in our hearts. Thank you to everyone who made the evening so celebratory: Marge Piercy and Kathleen Kelley; the Philbrick family; committee members Brett Rutherford, Ben Philbrick, Tina Egnoski, Sandy Markley, and Alison Maxell; and volunteer Cathy Poirier.



Kathleen M. Kelley and Marge Piercy



Micro-Memoir! and the Philbrick Poetry Project were made possible in part by a grant from the RI State Council on the Arts, through an appropriation by the RI General Assembly and a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. Micro-Memoir! was sponsored by Antiques and Interiors. We thank them all!

(L) Karen Donovan and Walker Rumble
and (R) Micro-Memoirists from the Met School

FACING THE FUTURE!

by Mary Anne Golda, Technical Services Librarian

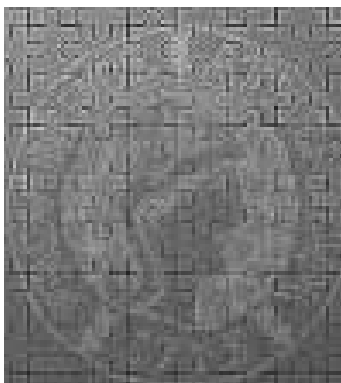
Launched in July of 2009, the Providence Athenaeum's Facebook fan page now has 157 fans, and I thought you might be interested in learning a bit about who these folks are. Not surprisingly, sixty-three of our fans are from Providence; 48% are under the age of 45, 62% are female, and 34% male. We have fans from Canada, France, Japan, Kenya, Poland, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. We hope that one day they'll make more than just a virtual visit!



If you are already on Facebook, don't forget to search for us and add us to your profile. If joining social media is not for you, but you'd still like to keep up with Athenaeum activities, visit our website and click on the Facebook logo on the bottom of the page and choose "wall." There, even if not a member, you can see upcoming events, photos from Salons and from around the Athenaeum, and you can comment. This is another way to connect with us. See you on the web!

FACING OUR FUTURE:

by Alison Maxell, Executive Director



We are making steady progress with the strategic planning efforts initiated earlier this year under the direction of consultant Peggy Latimer. While labor intensive, this process will result in a plan that is at once ambitious, compelling, and realistic. It will clearly articulate where the organization is going over the next year and beyond,

as well as how it will actually get there.

To date we have completed a membership survey and internal assessments of the organization and its building; reviewed drafts of our mission, vision, values, and goals; conducted external assessments; and are now finishing the one-year operations plan. When complete, this document will be invaluable in articulating our plans and priorities to our members, donors, and the larger community - who all have a vested interest and vital role in ensuring the organization's viability for generations to come. Be sure to watch for a detailed report on all these activities in the fall issue of the Penman!

FROM THE REFERENCE DESK

by Carol Tatian, Reference Librarian

On the shelves in front of the Reference desk we exhibit books highlighting areas of the collection that we think will interest you, the membership. For our current exhibit, I had fun picking some of my favorite reference books, and I'll mention three of them here:

- *The Atlas of Human Migration*, 2007. This illustrated book tells the story of how people movements through the ages have shaped the course of history and civilization, from the first journey outside of Africa, through the Vikings and the Pilgrim Fathers, to the return to the Promised Land. It also examines the motivations, influences, and impacts of mass migrations.

- *Encyclopedia of the Underground Railroad*, 2006. Fugitive slaves were reported in the American colonies as early as the 1640s, and escapes escalated with the growth of slavery over the next two hundred years. The Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 criminalized any assistance, active or passive, to a runaway slave - yet it only encouraged the behavior it sought to prevent. By the onset of the Civil War in 1861, the Underground Railroad included members, defined stops, set escape routes, and a code language.

- *Our Changing Planet, the View from Space*, 2007. It has been just over 60 years since the first satellite pictures of earth were recorded, and since that time, the increasing number and sophistication of photographs from space have enabled scientists to see changes in earth's atmosphere, land, and water with greater accuracy. This book covers a wide range of topics, and content is organized in sections treating the atmosphere, land, ocean, ice caps, and human activities.

And, of course, we receive new reference books all the time. This is a listing of some of our interesting new books:

- *The Great Empires of the Ancient World*, 2009. QUARTO R 930 G798. Published by the J. Paul Getty Museum, this book contains many beautiful illustrations, including maps.

- *Historical Atlas of the American West; with original maps*, 2009. FOLIO R 978 H326H. A new perspective on the history of the West.

- *World Heritage Sites; a complete guide to 878 UNESCO world heritage sites*, 2009. R 910.2 W893.

Stop in any time to take a look!

SUMMER HOURS

6/1 through 9/6:

Mon -Thurs 9 to 7; Fri 9 to 5; Sat 9 - 1; Sun closed

Closed Mon 7/5 for July Fourth holiday

Library is closed Mon 8/2 through Mon 8/16;

reopens Tues 8/17.

GALApagos: A Celebration of Exploration!

After years of celebrating elsewhere, this year's annual event came home to the Athenaeum, and as is so often the experience of the traveler returned, we saw our once-familiar home from a fresh perspective. Long a place dedicated to works documenting exploration - of the physical world as well as the worlds of the imagination - that February night the Athenaeum itself became a place to explore. The Circ Desk dispensed bubbly instead of books, celebrants found dusty corners transformed into elegant viewing boxes, and long-shut windows opened to reveal performers of music and poetry. Suddenly we experienced anew the Athenaeum's unique pleasures: our special collections, signature programming, and spectacular building.

The theme of exploration was inspired by Charles Darwin's bicentennial, Athenaeum member Jim Scott's 2009 photographs of the Galapagos Islands that Darwin made famous, and the Athenaeum's own collecting history. Collections Librarian Kate Wodehouse showcased Darwin's life and work in a magnificent exhibit of works from our special collections, along with Jim's photographs and items on gracious loan from Rachel Atlas at the Edna W. Lawrence Nature Lab at RISD, Dr. Holly Snyder at the John Hay Library at Brown, and Lisa Long at the Redwood Athenaeum.



Ann Scott, Jim Scott, Kate Wodehouse

Our friends, Aurea founding members Consuelo Sherba, Charles Sherba, and Nigel Gore, created and performed a haunting work of music, poetry, and prose for the event, *Darwin at Sea*, which brought to life a Darwin few of us knew - young and uncertain, on the brink of a brilliant future that he could not yet see.

Our special guest auctioneer, Dr. T. Tremendanus, came



Dr. T. Tremendanus



Consuelo Sherba and Nigel Gore

to us thanks to Big Nazo, and brought down the house while bringing in the bids. Huge thanks to auction donors Mayor David N. Cicilline, Drs. Ethan H. Kisch and Helene Kisch-Pniewski, Lynn O'Marra, The Providence Children's Museum, The Edna W. Lawrence Nature Lab at RISD and Rachel Atlas, Jim Scott, and The Waterman Grille and Keri Quinn Jaffe.

Our Gala Committee, chaired by Julie Andrews, orchestrated the event in record time. We are enormously grateful for the ideas and efforts of Julie and the members: Alayne Barnicoat, Kate Flanders, Sheila Hughes, Helene Kisch-Pniewski, Ann Scott, Jim Scott, and Meredith Swan. Staff members Christina Bevilacqua, Kathleen Bower, Sandy Markley, Alison Maxell, and Kate Wodehouse assisted. All Athenaeum staff pitched in on the building set-up; special thanks to Smokey Turnbull!



The library is alive with the sound of music!

Blackstone Caterers served festive food, Campus Fine Wines donated delicious drinks, and Allen Kurzweil sourced and donated ostrich eggs and jerky, which he and Lindsay Shaw used to brilliant effect in the main floor exhibit. Matthew Bird of the Curatorium procured the toy Gallapagos tortoises. IO Labs and Variable Data Printing gave us printing donations. We thank them all!

Our generous sponsors made dreams into reality: *Inspired Visionaries* (\$1,000): Edwards & Angell; *Imaginative Explorers* (\$500): Antiques & Interiors, David Berman, Steve and Melanie Coon, Drs. Ethan and Helene Kisch, Peter and Deborah Lipman, M&S Rare Books, Keough Construction, Vintage Pens, William B. Mayer; *Intrepid Naturalists* (\$250): risdworks, Yankee Travel, Elad Inc., Peck Building, Charlie's Playhouse, and Jillian Siqueland of Residential Properties.

It was a magical evening, re-awakening our reasons for loving the Athenaeum, while revealing new reasons to love it as well. As one of Darwin's admirers put it, "The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes." (And yes, that admirer was Marcel Proust!)

ON EXHIBIT, NOW AND LATER

Through September 19th, the Philbrick Rare Book Room features The 12th Annual Philbrick Poetry exhibit, including the Athenaeum-published chapbooks from all the Philbrick Poetry Project honorees along with works by all the poet judges, including this year's honoree Kathleen M. Kelley and poet judge Marge Piercy. Also on view are works by Charles and Stephen Philbrick.



Opening October 1st will be an exhibit in celebration of the bicentennial of writer, editor, philosopher, feminist, and cultural provocateuse Margaret Fuller, focusing on her time as a schoolteacher in Providence, the city in that era, the literary salons she

frequented, and her circle of friends (including Edgar Allan Poe, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Sarah Helen Whitman, and Anne Lynch, among others). The exhibit will open in conjunction with the fall season's inaugural Salon, by Robert O. Jones and Nancy Austin, "Margaret Fuller in Rhode Island," on October 1st, and a walking tour of her haunts on October 2nd.

WE CAN'T THANK THEM ENOUGH – WON'T YOU HELP US?

During this year of belt-tightening and nail-biting, we have gotten by with a lot of help from our friends. We are so grateful to the local businesses and organizations that have sponsored and/or donated to our Salons and programs throughout this fiscal year: Antiques & Interiors; Borders; Campus Fine Wines; The Curatorium; Dr. Jodi Glass, Hearing Health; Green and Cleaner; Kas DeCarvalho Business Law; M&S Rare Books; Providence Preservation Society; risdworks; Studio Hop; and Variable Data Printing. We hope you will make an effort to get to know them and their businesses – and please let them know that you are Athenaeum member, and an appreciative one at that!

Many thanks also to the organizations who partnered with us in presenting programs and Salons this year: Common Cause RI, Community MusicWorks, 5 Traverse Gallery, Not About the Buildings, Providence Preservation Society, and WRNI Public Radio.

Finally, HUGE THANKS to our hardworking Program Support Committee: Grace Farmer (chair), Carl Farmer, Don Harper, Cindy McDonald, Ray Olson, Sophie Philbrick, Cathy Poirier, Merle Poulton, Henry Schwarz, and Cynthia Shattuck; and Pub Quiz organizers: Jonathan Bell and Sarah Zurier. And thanks to Sophie Philbrick and Alayne Barnicoat for assistance with weekly Salon treats!

CIRCULATION BITS & BYTES.....

Jeffrey Metzler, a stalwart member of both our Circulation and Technical Services departments, accepted a librarian position in New Hampshire in late May - farewell and good luck, Jeff!

And on the incoming side: we welcome to the Circulation Desk staff Miranda Nero, a library degree candidate studying at Simmons College. Miranda previously majored in music history and literature at URI and she lives in Providence.

Bookish Types: If you would like recommendations for historical fiction, Circulation staff members Shannon and Amy have compiled a list of suggestions. Just ask at the Circulation Desk if you'd like to consult their list or add your own favorites.



THE OWLET News from The Children's Library JUNE, JULY, AUGUST

DON'T BUG ME! Camp Theo explores the insect world of our own back yards! Mondays at 10:30AM. 6/21 Lady Bugs; 6/28 Bees; 7/5 no session; 7/12 Ants; 7/19 Butterflies; 7/26 Grasshoppers. Creep, crawl, hop, or buzzzzzz your way to the library for stories, insect facts and lore, activities, films, and fun! Ages 4 to 7. \$5 snack and activity fee per session. Limit 10. RSVP essential! Call Lindsay at 421-6970 to reserve a space.

Friday, June 18th at 3:30PM Book Worm Club Opening Day! Eat gummy worms, decorate your reading charts, and take part in a mini scavenger hunt. Who's going to read the most books this summer? YOU! Ages 3 and up: RSVP to Lindsay at 421-6970.

Stamp Club Fridays: June 12th, July 9th, August 21st at 3:30PM.

Infant & Toddlers' Sing Along Story Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays at 10:30AM.

Come to the Brown Street Park for EXTRA SPECIAL Story and Craft hours for children ages 3-6. Wednesdays at 3:30PM followed by chapter book readings for children ages 6 and up, beginning Wednesday, June 16th. In case of stormy weather call 421-6970 to confirm the story hours.

Please Note: Don't forget to stock up on books for our annual closing, August 2nd through August 16th.



A CHALLENGE FOR CHALLENGING TIMES!

Christina Bevilacqua, Director of Member Services, Programs, and Development

ON YOUR MARK... The Athenaeum's 2009-2010 operating budget is \$793,900. Thanks to the generosity of donors who came before us, we have an endowment, from which we can draw \$461,915 this year (the draw is not to exceed 5% of a rolling three-year average). We must raise the remaining \$331,985.

Were we to depend solely on memberships to make up the difference between the operating costs and the draw, we would have to charge over \$350 per membership; without the endowment provided for us by our generous and future-thinking forebears, each annual membership would cost nearly \$850! But thanks to those forebears, we do have an endowment. And in the spirit of the library's founding mission, we are committed to keeping membership

affordable. Membership income, while essential, represents only 17% of our total budget, or \$138,485. That leaves us another \$193,500 to raise through various activities like special events and the Annual Appeal.

We are in tough economic times. Our endowment has been hit hard like every other. As a result of the 2008 loss to endowment value, the value of our allowable draw is diminished as well, and because we spread that loss out over three years, we continue to feel it. The staff has worked hard to cut expenses without noticeable effect on services, but belt-tightening can make up for only a limited amount of that loss. To make up the rest, we must raise more money in other income categories. We are grateful to all who supported our fundraising galas in February and May. Thanks to you, we met our special event income goals. Now, we must also meet our Annual Appeal goal of \$125,000. We're close – but we truly need your help! As of May 20th, members and friends had given \$106,085 toward that goal, leaving us \$18,915 to raise in a few short weeks.

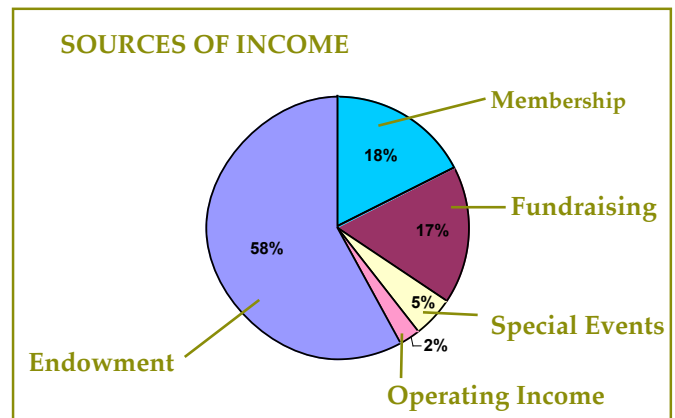
GET SET... To be precise, 232 members and friends have given toward our goal; 33 donors have given more than once; and the gifts have literally ranged from \$10 to \$10,000. We are enormously grateful for each gift. We are thrilled to receive support on any giving schedule, whether in one sum or spread out during the year. Each gift represents a vision for, and investment in, the Athenaeum's future, and helps ensure that the library's future is as meaningful and inspiring as its past.

In these tough times, we understand that not everyone can afford a donation in addition to their membership. But we hope that among the 703 members who have not yet made a gift this year, there might be some who can. In a membership organization the responsibilities are shared - the larger the pool of donors, the smaller the burden on each one. For example, if each member who has yet to make a gift this year were to give just \$26, we would exceed the \$18,915 we still need.

GO! To inspire our members who have not yet made a gift this year, donor Candy Adriance and the members of our board are issuing a challenge: they will match, dollar for dollar, the first \$5,000 of donations from members who have yet to give this year. That \$5,000, matched by the \$5,000 in challenge money, will take care of over half the amount we still need to raise. And if we meet our total fundraising goal of \$125,000, the Athenaeum will receive a Rhode Island Foundation Library Challenge Grant, through a fund established by Herman Rose as an incentive to strengthen libraries and other civic and cultural organizations, and expand their roles as community centers that can stimulate dialogue around critical issues. If you've never given, this is a great time to start. If it's been a while, this is a great time to give anew. Think about the Athenaeum feature you most enjoy - whether the building, books, Circ staff's recommendations, community collaborations, special collections, wi-fi, Children's Library, Proust group, friends met through membership, Salons, or even the sherry - and then make a gift, whatever you can afford, in its honor!

I wish there were more FUN in fundraising. Trust me, I would much rather spend my time creating programs and parties (and Proust events!) for Athenaeum members to enjoy. The sooner we meet this goal, the sooner we can go back to plotting next year's adventures, and the ones after that. We have some great projects with exciting new partners in the works, your support will help make them happen. Thank you for being engaged investors in the Athenaeum's future!

All donors who give \$500 or more by June 30th will be invited to a special Donors' Reception featuring a surprise musical performance - see your invitation for details!



FUR, FEATHERS, FRIENDS & FUN...

Illustration: Ryder Windham



On Sunday, May 2nd, the Hope Club opened its big, heavy doors to the hoots and flutters of many children. Suddenly the elegant courtyard fountain became a splashing pool and the wall surrounding it a balance beam. Generations of Athenaeum families had come together to celebrate former director and Stephen Hopkins Award honoree Sylvia Moubayed, as well as the Children's Library at the Athenaeum, now 31 years young. To bring back the memories, Denis Roche had produced an amazing slide show of photographs from our archives, blending the best from the past and present, and library-loving children waited eagerly to see themselves on the big screen. The Fur, Feathers, Friends, and Fun Gala was now in full swing!



Sylvia Moubayed and son John

After a moving tribute from the Boegehold family, Sylvia was presented with the Stephen Hopkins Medal, and in true Sylvia fashion, engaged the audience through the power of her stories. She paid homage to "enduring relationships" and dedicated the day to our dear friend, the late Paul Langmuir.

Following a lively cookout, puppeteer extraordinaire Dan Butterworth and his magical marionettes gave a spellbinding performance that was met with squeals of wonder and awe. Finally, everyone admired and then delightedly devoured the lavish, lovely, delicious book-shaped cake ingeniously created by Wendy Nilsson.



A book good enough to eat!



Sally Ryan and her marionette

Our plans were blessed with enthusiastic support from the start. Hope Club General Manager Pat Archambault said yes, even to children and picnic food; Ryder Windham drew the delightfully decked-out owls for our invitation, which Nicky Nichtern designed. Committee members Julie Boegehold, Kendall Brown, Kate Flanders, Alison Huff, Wendy Nilsson, Denis Roche, Kathleen Bower, Sandy Markley, Alison Maxell, Lindsay Shaw, and Kate Wodehouse raised funds and spread the word among friends old and new, reconnecting with members who had raised their children in the library a generation ago. In anticipation of Dan Butterworth's show, Wendy Nilsson and Michael Paradiso inspired children and adults with an unforgettable marionette workshop a week before the Gala. Kate Flanders supplied elegant cheese boards from Farmstead. Kendall Brown was our florist. Alison Huff offered thoughtful advice when our ideas threatened to overwhelm our capacities. Staff members on the committee assisted and kept the team on schedule. And the nearly 200 attending friends and members, including 85 rapt children, made the Gala a wonderful tribute to Sylvia and the Children's Library. Thank you to each and every one, and also to our sponsors, contributors, and donors of in-kind goods and services: Beaupre Electric; Judy and Ralph Beckman; Alan and Julie Boegehold; Kathleen and James Bower; Roy and Laura Brady; Butterfield; Cafe Choklad; Cynthia Doyle; Eastside Market Place; East Side Prescription Center; Tina Egnoski and Family; Elad, Inc.; Farmstead; the Flanders-Ryan Family; The Hope Club; the Huff-Callanan Family; Jane and Paul Langmuir; John Markley; Marysia's Custom Tailoring; John and Alison Maxell; Megan McKain; Dr. John Moran; Samir and Susan Moubayed; Mullen, Scorpio and Cerilli; Nicky Nichtern; the Nilsson-Paradiso Family; Dick Olsen; Peck Building; Renee Perron and Family; Prism Painting; the Roche-Mark Family; the Schweich Family; Lindsay Shaw; Whole Foods; Kate Wodehouse and Family; and Ryder Windham.

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Marionette mania!

Photographs by John Markley