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The Newsletter of the American Library in Paris June 2016



John Irving at the Gala

The celebrated American novelist John Irving, speaking to 225 guests at the Library's annual Gala Dinner on 17 May, explored the reasons his stories dive so consistently into darkness and unexpected tragedy.

"I see endings before I see beginnings," Irving said. "I begin with what *has* happened...and it's never good." But, he added, "Believe it or not, I also try to be funny."

Speaking of his new novel, Irving echoed the same theme: "I hope you enjoy *Avenue of Mysteries*. You'll have some fun along the way — until the fun runs out."

The author of *The World According to Garp* and *A Prayer for Owen Meany* was praised by US Ambassador to France Jane Hartley at the cocktail before the dinner at the Automobile Club de France.

Irving and his wife, Janet Turnbull, who live in Toronto, spent the rest of the week in Paris promoting the book in its French-language version from Editions du Seuil, and found his craggy visage featured on large *affiches* in Metro stations and boulevard kiosks. He enjoys a huge readership outside the United States.

The gala dinner is the Library's biggest fundraiser of the year, and broke recent records with its attendance and patronage this year.

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The chantier on rue du Général Camou

The Library closed its doors on 14 May for three months of renovations that will transform most of the spaces, and create many new ones, inside the Left Bank premises that have been home to the Library since 1964.

Library staff continue to work a limited schedule in the rear offices and online, while programming continues off-site for children, teens, and adults. (See back page.) All of the Library's virtual offerings, including magazines on Zinio and e-books on OverDrive, continue to be available through the summer months.

The Library is scheduled to re-open Tuesday 23 August. Please see the website's Flickr page for a complete photo gallery of the construction as it progresses during the summer, and join us for the grand opening of the new Library on **Sunday 25 September**. Watch for the September *Ex Libris*, and the biweekly *e-Libris*, for details.



Breaking through to the lower level for an elevator shaft.



The future Library Commons

GALA

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The impending reopening of the renovated American Library at the end of the summer was a central theme of remarks from Mary Lee Turner, chairman of the board. She spoke of “the challenges facing all libraries today, no matter their objective or size: the urgent need to protect the past and embrace the future, to treasure content and to make it increasingly accessible, to facilitate dreamers and thinkers and writers quietly, while enriching our lives through discussion and debate. The goal is to unleash the imaginations of people of every age.”

Charles Trueheart, the Library director, added later: “What Mary Lee Turner is typically too modest to say about this renovation project is that it is the fruit of her own vision, and her own encouragement, and her own determination, and then at a crucial moment, of her own generosity and that of her husband. Without the leadership of Ed and Mary Lee Turner, we would surely still be thinking about and talking endlessly about a project instead of carrying it out.”

The Library’s architect for this and two previous renovations, Lia Kiladis, greeted guests and answered questions about the renovation at a display of the renovation plans before and after the gala dinner.



Lia Kiladis is the principal architect of the 2011, 2013, and 2016 Library renovations.



John Irving at the Library signing 200 copies of his new novel for 2016 Gala guests.

Coming this fall...

Jane Smiley presents her latest novel, *Golden Age*... **Luc Sante** and *The Other Paris* ... The **Maya Angelou** documentary *And Still I Rise* ... **Thad Carhart**, author of *The Little Piano Shop on the Left Bank*, with a new memoir of a childhood in Fontainebleau. ... “**Mona Lisa** is Missing,” a documentary film about the 1911 theft ... Doug Dechow and Anna Leahy, Visiting Fellows, on the late, great **Concorde** ... Alice Kaplan goes *Looking for The Stranger* and how Camus came to write it ... Jessica Levine speaks about **Edith Wharton**'s life and its influence on *The Age of Innocence*... **John Morris**, on his 100th birthday, remembers *My Century*.

For the Library, a new chairman of the board

Luis Roth was elected chairman of the American Library in Paris board of trustees on June 15.

He succeeds Mary Lee Turner, chairman since 2012, who will exchange positions with Roth and become vice chairman of the Library’s governing body. She made the announcement of the impending succession at the 2016 Library gala.

The board also elected a new secretary, Forrest Alogna, who became a trustee last year, and welcomed three new members: Leslie de Galbert, a retired Jungian psychoanalyst and co-leader since 2009 of a Library book group on memoirs; Stephanie de La Rochefoucauld, executive director of the International Brain Research Organization, headquartered in Paris; and Sophie-Caroline de Margerie, an author and *conseillère d'état* who has been serving on the Library Advisory Council.

Re-elected to another three-year term on the board were Roth, Turner, Rob Johnson, René de Monseignat, and Nadine Voisin.

Roth, 43, a partner in the Paris office of the international law firm Linklaters LLP, has served on the Library board since 2009. A graduate of Andover, Yale and Columbia Law School, Roth also serves on the vestry, or governing body, of the American Cathedral in Paris. As chairman of the Library board, Roth is also an ex-officio member of the American Library in Paris USA Foundation board of directors.



Luis Roth

De Margerie was appointed to serve out the unexpired term of Susan Kayat.

De Galbert and de La Rochefoucauld were elected to vacancies created by the retirement of trustees Joshua Kaplan and Irina Boulin-Ghica. The departing members of the board were thanked for their service to the Library.

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THE 2016 GALA DINNER



The Library is grateful to the following sponsors of the 2016 Gala Dinner:

Forrest and Sandrine Alogna
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William and Maria Kelly
Ishtar Méjanès
Luis Roth and Jennifer Dalrymple
Sullivan & Cromwell LLP
Edward and Mary Lee Turner
Marshall and Deborah Wais



GALA SCENES

Clockwise from top left: John Irving and US Ambassador Jane Hartley; Library assistant director Ed Aguila with, left to right, Katherine Marsh, Gretel Furner, and Jennifer Dalrymple; left to right, Rebecca DeFraités, Suzanne Justen, Clydette de Groot, and Katherine Converse; Christina Coffin, left, and Mary Duncan; John Irving with author Isabelle Wilkerson; Earl Weiner, left, and Nancy and Richard Asthalter. Photos by KRYSTAL KENNEY

MAY AND JUNE AT THE LIBRARY



Champ de Mars. Quai d'Orsay. Montparnasse.

During late May and June, the Library organized exciting off-site programming and events for children, teens and adults, including story hours on the grass under the Eiffel Tower, the Young Author Fiction Festival at the American Church, and outstanding authors such as Isabel Wilkerson, author of "The Warmth of Other Suns," at Columbia University's Reid Hall.

Celebrating Library volunteers!



The American Library celebrated its tireless corps of active volunteers at a reception in the reading room only hours before the Library closed for summer renovations.

Prizes were awarded to volunteers for exceptional service. Library director Charles Trueheart and board chairman Mary Lee Turner spoke of the robust symbolism of having more than 100 people giving their time and talent to the operation of the Library, from shelving books to reading to children, from leading book groups to serving at evening events. Volunteers also organize major activities such as the annual Young Authors Fiction Festival and Paris Spelling Bee.



At the volunteer party, clockwise from top right: Jacqueline Nafziger, who has been a volunteer for more than 25 years; Kay and Scott Cupp, husband-and-wife book shelvers; volunteer Spelling Bee coordinator Helen Connelly, left, volunteer coordinator of the volunteers Jan Smith, center, and external relations manager Pauline Lemasson; board of trustees chairman Mary Lee Turner fist-pumping the volunteers.