



# EX LIBRIS

The Newsletter of the American Library in Paris  
*September 2007*



*Clockwise from top left: Dana Thomas, Douglas Kennedy, Thirza Vallois and Richard Ford.*

## Taking stock, looking ahead at the 2007 annual meeting

The 2007 annual meeting of the American Library in Paris on June 19 offered members an evening of informational updates, the election of new library trustees, important development news, and the shared experience of a stateside library.

The meeting, organized and moderated by outgoing board chairman **Charmaine Donnelly**, began with a three-minute film capturing the life of the library in a fast-paced collage of imagery and interviews with patrons.

Vice Chairman **Marshall Wais** updated about 50 members on hand about the library's finances, stressing the need to expand revenues from memberships and expanding on other information provided in the 2006 annual report distributed at the meeting. He was followed by **J. Paul Horne** of the Library's USA Foundation board, who reported on the healthy state of an endowment that has nearly doubled in five years to more than \$2.7 million.

Board secretary **Whitney de Courcel** then reviewed membership figures for 2006, which remain stagnant, and the Library's membership revenues, which have climbed in dollar value but fallen in euro value – a challenge to an institution whose expenses are almost entirely in euros.

Library director **Charles Trueheart** spoke about spring and fall programming and plans for outreach to schools and partnerships with other associations in order to raise the Library's profile and build its membership. He invited members and others to attend a special town meeting on Wednesday 3 October to brainstorm about the Library's future with staff and trustees as well as mix informally over refreshments.

The participants heard from guest speaker **Maxine Bleiweis**, director of the Westport Public Library in Connecticut. Known for the dynamism and growth of the library she runs, Bleiweis spoke of issues facing all libraries in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and how Westport is innovating to meet the challenges of the information age. During her visit to Paris, Bleiweis also met individually as an unpaid consultant on library issues with several members of the board and the staff.

Donnelly concluded the program with the exciting news that the Library had received an anonymous gift of €135,000 to finance a membership drive and development campaign in the years ahead. An outside firm to conduct the drive in concert, TWBA, has been identified and begins its initial work this summer.

Following the meeting, those in attendance gathered for wine and light fare at a reception hosted by **Sarah de Lencquesaing** and **Ishtar Méjanès**. After the reception, the newly-constituted board met to elect its officers and conduct other essential business before the summer break. (See article page two.)

## Wednesday evenings at the Library: What's in store

The Library's series of evening programs resumes on **Wednesday 5 September** with a forum on the International Herald Tribune: "Everything you always wanted to know about the IHT... you now have a chance to ask" both Michael Golden, the publisher, and Michael Oreskes, the executive editor. This event is the first in a series of evenings throughout the year featuring IHT and New York Times columnists, reporters and editors.

On **Wednesday 26 September**, Paris writer Dana Thomas discusses her just-published book on the globalization and degradation of the fashion industry, 'Deluxe: How Luxury Lost Its Luster' (Penguin).

On **Wednesday 3 October**, the Library will host the first in an occasional series of members' town meetings – a chance to meet fellow members, ask questions of the staff and the board, make suggestions, brainstorm about this library and libraries in general in

*(continued on page 4)*

# Annual Meeting 2007



**William Torchiana**

## Transitions and new leadership for the board

The 2007 annual meeting in June marked a major transition in the composition of the American Library's board of trustees, with the retirement of **Charmaine Donnelly, Marshall Wais, Whitney de Courcel** and four other longstanding members: **Robert Gogel, Michele Gompel, Berna Huebner, and Nancy Webster**. These seven devoted a total of *148 years* of service to the board!

The new members of the board, elected by acclamation at the meeting, are **Celestine Bohlen, Peter Fellowes, Catherine Lowney, and Nicolas ver Hulst**. With the resignation from the board of **Sheldon Austin**, the newly constituted board now has 17 members, including its U.S.-based member, **Dr. Betty Turock**.

At a subsequent meeting of the newly reconstituted board, the trustees elected the following officers: **William Torchiana**, chairman; **Sarah de Lencquesaing**, vice chairman; **Frances Gendlin**, treasurer; and **Ishtar Méjanès**, secretary. They will constitute the board's new executive committee, along with at-large members **Sally Warren, Jonathan Schur and David Chaffetz**.

The board shortly thereafter announced the makeup of its standing committees on governance, library affairs, collection development, marketing and development, nominations, membership, and finance. That information, as well as copies of the 2005 and 2006 annual reports and audited financial statements, are available on the library's website.



**Sarah de Lencquesaing**



**Frances Gendlin**



**Ishtar Méjanès**



**FACES AT THE MEETING** Above: *Outgoing board chairman Charmaine Donnelly with Dr. Betty Turock (r.). Below: Trustee Sally Warren and newly-elected member Catherine Lowney (r.)*



**WELCOME ABOARD** *The new Library trustees (clockwise from top left): Catherine Lowney, Peter Fellowes, Celestine Bohlen, Nicolas ver Hulst.*

## A salute to interns

Every year the American Library in Paris welcomes a number of interns.

In April **Florence Penelle** was our first high school intern. In June we has three additional high school interns who worked for a week at a time: **Jamie Heron** and **Emeric Bagot** helped shift periodicals from the research center to the basement. **Garrison Charles** worked with our accountant helping with various tasks.

**Charles Hostetter**, from Princeton University, and **Charlotte Hermet**, a library student from Grenoble, compiled dossiers for the CAPES/Aggregation exams for 2007-2008. **Jouda Fahare-Endine** worked in Circulation during June. **Melissa Anderson**, a MLIS student from the University of Washington, worked as a reference librarian in July.

**Alysa Hornick**, from Long Island University Palmer School of Library and Information Science, arranged more materials into the Library's archives. **Hillary George**, an MLIS student from UCLA, worked with Helen Stathopulos in the children's room during July and August. **Glenn Klepic**, a student at Paris VIII, compiled a CAPES/Aggregation dossier on the European Union's relations with the United States, and also worked on various other projects in the library, during July and August.

We always appreciate all the help that these students give to the Library.

*Adele Witt*

### The American Library in Paris

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## When librarians gather

The American Library Association annual conference – a combination convention and trade show with 7,000 exhibitors and 21,000 librarians and others in attendance -- was held in Washington in June. It was a great honor for me to represent the American Library in Paris there.

As a young librarian, I viewed it as a chance to plunge back into the Library Science effervescence that I confronted first in library school and is still fresh in my memory. I started working at the ALP right after I finished school, and like every first job, the beginning of your career is all about applying the theory you've learned to your work reality. Going to the convention in Washington was about relating what I saw in the wider library world to our – very - special and unique little library's needs.

"Little" library? Although the American Library in Paris is medium-sized by American standards, that was the impression I had as I was introduced to librarians from universities, private schools, government institutions and public libraries that are part of networks with numerous branches. Though all those libraries have suffered budget cuts in recent years, they still have greater financial means than we at ALP do. Just for the sake of talking to other professionals - discussing the pros and cons of this or that resource or system, comparing practices and hearing about initiatives - the ALA conference is a must-go.

My ALA experience was that of a dieter in a candy store. The quantity of new things to discover is almost baffling. The various enlightening programs present the latest trends and results, the publishers show their newest products, innovative services are being demonstrated. Being aware of all this is a first step for any library's action plan, even if it does not mean that action will be taken right away.

Book publishers dominated the thousands of exhibitors in the vast convention space. Children's books publishers were especially visible - with a graphic novel/manga pavilion as a new feature. Other kinds of publishers were represented as well: serials, reference - and especially online or electronic reference materials - and audiovisual materials (DVDs, e-books). Also present were library services (moving, staff training, storage, library furniture) and library schools. What struck me is the very small number of library systems (software) providers present.

Two events stand out. One was a seminar called 'Is print reference dead?' This daring presentation affirmed that yes, print reference is dead, and reference librarians should no longer spend their money on paper. Though e-resources are still expensive, librarians were advised to spend – almost - all their budgets on digital titles, even if that means ordering only half as many titles. Among the reasons offered why libraries should have electronic reference collections:

- print reference is hardly consulted,
- users don't know how to use it efficiently,
- the main database (OPAC) doesn't index it properly, so most of the content is hidden,
- and most important, the majority of our users, especially our student users, are "digital natives," and expect libraries to offer resources that are more easily compatible with the way they work – that is, sending articles by e-mail, searching several titles at one time, searching content for words or phrases, using quick links, and the like.

I was very curious about everything upon arriving on the ALA conference, and everything was there for me to explore and learn. To me that's what libraries are about: offering the best information to the public so that the user can learn and take the right decisions.

*Kim Lê Minh*

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# Reading: The staff recommends

**Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood.** Marjane Satrapi. A quick read, this black-and-white comic book for adults is a marvelous work detailing Marji's childhood with Marxist parents in Tehran, spanning the overthrow of the Shah's regime, the Islamic revolution and Iran's war with Iraq. We travel through critical political events with this bright only-child, who seeks facts from the educated adults around her and also spins true tales of prisoners, torture and martyrs into playgroup material, both hilarious and horrible. The graphics are superb – as noted in Cannes. The movie version won the *prix du jury* this spring.

*Emmy Slatni*

**Smoot's Ear: The Measure of Humanity.** Robert Tavernor. For two millennia, brilliant minds have been trying to find a logical system of measuring the world that everyone can agree upon. The stubborn persistence of yards, gallons and pounds in a world that mostly works in meters, liters and grams suggests how deep the disagreement has been. British architect Tavernor offers a brief history of humanity's effort to measure the world by scientific principle, even as science itself has changed our knowledge. The title refers to one Oliver R. Smoot, whose torso was used as a fanciful measure by his MIT fraternity brothers five decades ago.

*Charles Trueheart*

**I Feel Bad About My Neck: And Other Thoughts on Being a Woman.** Nora Ephron. A collection of essays about getting older: body maintenance (you can't do much about your neck), empty nests, loss and life itself. All these topics Ephron (author of 'Heartburn') covers with great wit and wisdom. It's a fun book!

*Adele Witt*

**The Lay of the Land.** Richard Ford. This mesmerizing third novel in the series that began with 'The Sportswriter' and 'Independence Day' establishes Frank Bascombe as a worthy successor to John Updike's generational Everyman, Rabbit Angstrom. In this sprawling narrative set on Thanksgiving week, 1999, Bascombe is in his mid-fifties. The New Jersey real estate

broker confronts two broken marriages, difficult grown children, mortality, drift, the millennial zeitgeist – what he calls the Permanent Condition. A probing, textured and darkly humorous novel.

*Charles Trueheart*

**Little.** David Treuer. If you like Jim Harrison and Toni Morrison, you will be enthralled by Ojibwe author Treuer's depiction of the rural poor, set on a Minnesota reservation. When an 8-year-old boy named Little dies in unusual circumstances, family secrets unfold to reveal what's hidden behind the tragic event. Using different characters' voices to travel back and forth in time, Treuer tells a social story of the Indian American and their plight in modern America. Also look for Treuer's *The Hiawatha*.

*Kim Lê Minh*

**The Invincible Quest: The Life of Richard Milhous Nixon.** Conrad Black. The domineering, recently disgraced media baron is also a capable historian, the author of a well-regarded recent biography of Franklin Roosevelt. His new book on Nixon, at more than 1,100 pages, is a massive achievement of research, reflection and analysis. Nixon emerges in all his Manichaeic complexity: He appears half Quaker, half Soprano -- the compassionate visionary, according to Black, in a lifelong struggle with the cynical thug.

*Charles Trueheart*

**Inside the Red Mansion: On the Trail of China's Most Wanted Man.** Oliver August. This captivating exploration of the Chinese underworld is many kinds of book -- investigation, personal quest, travelogue, mystery and anthropology. The author, a young British newspaper correspondent who followed the trail of one of China's most notorious billionaires of the late 1990s, describes a vast criminal enterprise that wouldn't have thrived without the complicity of high officials and respected pillars of Chinese society. The journey of August's discovery is absorbing in itself.

*Charles Trueheart*

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## Wednesday evenings....

*(continued from page 1)*

the information age, and deepen the sense of community surrounding the library.

A week later, on **Wednesday 10 October**, historian Charles (Carlo) Robertson will discuss his work in progress – the secret history of AMGOT, the elaborate plan developed by the U.S. government to govern France following World War II and never used.

One of the most popular American novelists in France (and two dozen

other countries) – but little known in the United States – is Douglas Kennedy. He'll be speaking on **Wednesday 17 October** in what is likely to be a reservation-only event – but as always, free and open to the public thanks to a grant from the Annenberg Foundation.

On Halloween, **Wednesday 31 October**, join us for an adult evening of literary spookery presented by Paris performance artist/poet/impresario Heather Hartley. Readings, skits, songs and other things with a macabre or terrifying flavor.

Join Paris expert Thirza Vallois on **Wednesday 14 November** for discussion of her popular 'Around and About Paris' travel series and updates on her newest release, 'A Bridge to French Arcadia.'

Mark your calendars for **Wednesday 21 November**, when prize-winning American novelist Richard Ford (see review above) will be on hand to read from 'The Lay of the Land,' his latest novel, and to answer questions about his work.

All programs begin at **19h30**, include light refreshments, and are free and open to the public.

## The gift that keeps on giving....

The American Library in Paris is grateful for the gift of books from its members and friends. These donations are an important supplement to the Library's purchase of books. These books may become part of the permanent collection, and those that do not meet the Library's needs are given to other libraries or sold to ALP patrons. Proceeds help to offset the cost of book purchases.

Among recent donors of books and other materials to the Library are the following individuals, whom we thank for their generosity:

James Kwong Richard Z. Chesnoff  
Marvin Wurzer Barbara Trudeau and  
the American School of Paris Joyce  
Lewis the late Janet McDonald Ezra  
Zilkha Frances Gendlin Herbert R.  
Lottman Olivia de Havilland Dana  
Thomas and Lucie d'Halluin Cheryl  
Caesar Eileen Elsekamp Letitia  
Baldrige Richard Miller Chris Daniels  
Deborah Seward Mary Picone  
Francois Hoden Edgar Rubin Berol  
Robinson Edward Cunha Alan Riding  
Charles Trueheart and Anne Swardson  
David Chaffetz Normand Saucier

### A bicycle built for books

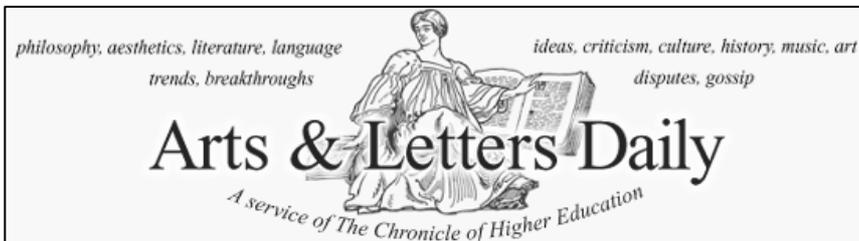
Now there's a new way to get to the American Library — via Velib, the new public bike system in Paris. The Velib station closest to ALP is on avenue Rapp near rue St. Dominique, and there are two others nearby on avenue Bosquet — one at the rue St. Dominique intersection, and one near pont de l'Alma. The Velib bikes have baskets for your books!



### The First Saturday Sale

Don't miss out on this popular event — the best of our duplicates and books bidding farewell to the stacks. Most books are in very good condition at an unbeatable price — one euro for paperbacks, two euros for hardbacks. Proceeds from these sales permit us to buy more new books for our permanent collection.

For the best selection, come early on the first Saturday of the month beginning at 10h00: **1 September, 6 October, 3 November, 1 December**



## In touch with the written word

Members of the American Library in Paris looking to stay current with the world of books, magazines, ideas, opinion — and all the other items listed on the logo above — might do themselves a favor by visiting a wonderful website called Arts & Letters Daily at [www.aldaily.com](http://www.aldaily.com)

Denis Dutton, the editor of this clearinghouse, culls all that's worth reading and knowing about from literary reviews, mainstream newspapers, blogs and websites, scholarly journals, and other purveyors of the written word. The emphasis is on North American and European sources in English.

On a recent day, a visitor would find on the site brief synopses and links to new interviews with Alexander Solzhenitsyn from *Spiegel* and Gunter Grass from *The Washington Post*; essays on Robert Frost from *The New Criterion*, on Vladimir Nabokov from *The Boston Review*, and on Jacques Derrida from the *Chronicle of Higher Education* (this website's parent). V. S. Naipaul praises Derek Walcott in *The Guardian*.

Sci-fi titan Robert A. Heinlein, whose centennial is current, would be 100 this year; homage is paid to him in *Reason*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and the *Space Review*. Virginia Woolf's relationship with her servants, according to a review of her notebooks in the *Daily Telegraph*, was vexed: "It was easier for her to regard her servants as not quite real than to accept the fact of her dependence on others."

In "Is this the end of English literature?" another essay from the *Daily Telegraph*, British critic A. N. Wilson says that if Oscar Wilde, Henry James, Joseph Conrad, Virginia Woolf, T. S. Eliot, W. B. Yeats, Charles Dickens, William Makepeace Thackeray, Evelyn Waugh, Philip Larkin and Kingsley Amis were to come back to life in Gordon Brown's Britain and wanted to go out to their club, or a restaurant or café, they would not be allowed to indulge in a habit which sustained them during the most creative phases of their lives." Smoking tobacco, that is.

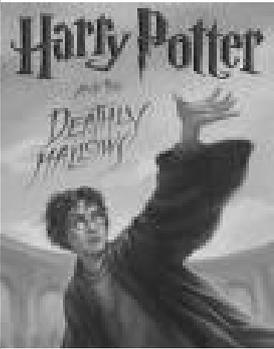
In *European Affairs*, you can read all about a new French book that "shatters a taboo in up-ending the widespread French assumption that in America 'culture' is reserved for a happy few (generally rich) cultivated people while the rest of the country has a steady diet of no culture or cartoonish low-brow pop culture. ... American culture flourishes without ever having to depend on government help and without ever becoming vulnerable to the vagaries and bureaucratic distortions of a state-administered system."

In the *Times Literary Supplement*, reviewer Adrian Tahourdin describes the new French bestseller, *Comment parler des livres que l'on n'a pas lu* and author Pierre Bayard's mischievous view that "the first condition for talking about a book one hasn't read is not to be ashamed of it." Tahourdin concludes that "we could do worse than heed his therapeutic advice when he suggests that 'truth in the eyes of others matters less than being true to ourselves, and this truth is only accessible to those who liberate themselves from the constraining need to appear cultured, which both tyrannizes us and prevents us from being ourselves'."

For your further reading pleasure, pay a call on Arts and Letters Daily, which we're linking to the ALP website in a prominent place. And, of course, pay a call on the Library.

Charles Trueheart

# Kids (and parents)



## HARRY POTTER AND THE DEATHLY LIBRARY QUIZZES!

Have you read any of the Harry Potter books? Have you read ALL of the Harry Potter books? Are you a J. K Rowling fan? Then we've got a library quiz (or two) for you!

Join special guest Jamileh Talebizadeh for a fun Harry Potter book talk, reading and quiz. Jamileh is a Sorbonne professor and an expert from the children's book research center *La Huppe Jeunesse*. Her program is sure to instruct and delight young book lovers. **Saturday 13 October 15h00-16h00 for ages 8-12**

**MOTHER GOOSE LAP-SITS**  
AGES 1-3  
**FIRST & LAST THURSDAYS**  
CHECK THE WEBSITE

## The Saturday Series (for ages 6 to 12)

*Please sign up for all Saturday programs.*

**DROP-IN STORY HOUR**  
AGES 3-5  
**TWICE ON WEDNESDAYS**  
CHECK THE WEBSITE

**DAVID WIESNER** Enjoy bizarre, illustrated universes created by Caldecott award winner David Wiesner. It's visual storytelling at its best. **Saturday 8 September 15h00-16h00**

**AUTUMN IS COMING** A new season is in the air...it's almost fall, so join the children's librarian to contemplate autumn in fact and fiction. Then use your artistic talents to help us decorate the children's room for this new, colorful season. **Saturday 15 September 15h00-16h00**

**STORYTELLING AND EDUCATIONAL GAMES.** Join the storytelling fun, with tales and activities led by Christian LeConte and his daughter, Amandine. **Saturday 22 September 15h00-16h00**

**THE BOOKS OF JAN BRETT** Come share the magic of these classic children's tales, adapted and brought to life through the inimitable illustration of Jan Brett. **Saturday 6 October 15h00-16h00**

## *For teens: Writing down the bones*

**A library tradition  
for young adults 12 and up  
Friday 5 October 19h00-20h30**

*Last October, brave teens wrote furiously during our whirlwind evening workshops, using some of the writing exercises made famous in the classic writers' book,*

### **Writing Down the Bones.**

*Let's start the school year with another intense writers' group. So hush your inner critics, dig deep, and let yourself write...*

Note to teens: Are you looking for internships or volunteer opportunities? Do you want to be added to the teen mailing list? Please email the librarian your ideas, or drop by and chat.

## **A reading club party!**

Summer is over ...but don't be glum! Celebrate your summer reading with all the young folks who participated in the 2007 Summer Reading Program, "Around the world in 80 days". Join us for games, snacks, and tales from around the world. Sign up soon!

**Saturday 29 September 15h00-16h00**

For ages 4 and up

## **Mysteries of the Louvre**

The library is thrilled to welcome Seonaid McArthur to share her knowledge of Louvre treasures with children and their parents. Seonaid is the author of the wonderful interactive book for families, *Discover the Louvre Together*. Rediscover the Louvre with us!

**Saturday 20 October 15h00-16h00**

For ages 7 and up, adults welcome

## **Ghosts, goblins, tricks and treats**

Join us for jack-o-lanterns, costumes and Halloween fun! Come in costume for a chance to win prizes for the best- (or scariest-!) dressed. Spooky stories, crafts, prizes and lots of trick-or-treating are in store. Thrilling! Chilling! A ghoulishly good time.

**Saturday 27 October 15h00-16h30**

All ages, adults welcome, come in costume