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The American Library in Paris

LITERATURE | LEARNING | CULTURE | COMMUNITY

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[**Susan Orlean: Centennial Gala Speaker**](#)

We are delighted to announce that acclaimed author Susan Orlean will be our 2020 Gala Speaker on Thursday 28 May at the Automobile Club de France, 6, place de la Concorde.

Orlean is the author of eight books, including *The Orchid Thief* (1999), which was made into the Academy Award-winning film *Adaptation*, starring Nicolas Cage and Meryl Streep. In 2018 she published *The Library Book* about the arson fire at the Los Angeles Public Library. It won the California Book Award and the Marfield Prize, was nominated for the Andrew Carnegie Medal, and was a *New York Times* bestseller and Notable Book of 2018. Orlean is currently adapting *The Library Book* for television. She has been a staff writer for *The New Yorker* since 1992 and has also contributed to *Vogue*, *Rolling Stone*, *Outside*, *Esquire*, and *The New York Times Magazine*.

Each spring, the American Library in Paris hosts a gala dinner featuring a prominent speaker. This event is a major source of support to the Library through individual participation and corporate sponsorships. Recent Gala speakers have included Martin Amis, Salman Rushdie, Stacy Schiff, John Irving, Michael Chabon and Ayelet Waldman, Antony Beevor, Joyce Carol Oates, Sebastian Faulks, Scott Turow, and Christopher Buckley.

Centennial Gala invitations will be mailed in April 2020, but tables and seats may be reserved in advance. Contact Advancement Manager Morgan Wurzburger for more information:

gala@americanlibraryinparis.org.



Evenings with an Author

Lindsay Sarah Krasnoff on the NBA's French connections

Tuesday 21 January @ 19h30

A Public Panel on the "Bookstagram" Phenomenon with Four Local Bookstagrammers

Wednesday 22 January @ 19h30

Featuring [@apireading](#), [@thebookwormofnotredame](#), [@sparkyjordy](#), and [@romiewedeserve](#)

Angie Thomas, author of *The Hate U Give* and *On the Come Up*

Thursday 23 January @ 19h30

[Author Dina Nayeri in conversation with journalist Stuart Reid on her book *The Ungrateful Refugee*](#)

Tuesday 28 January @ 19h30

[Physicist Emlyn Hughes presents "More Radioactive than Chernobyl"](#)

Wednesday 29 January @ 19h30

Apply to be a Visiting Fellow at the American Library in Paris.

Visiting Fellowship

Writers submit by Feb 15

APPLY NOW



Selected Children's Events

[Saturday Series: Poetry for Burns Night](#) (ages 6-12)

Saturday 25 January @ 15h-16h

In Scotland, 25 January is a day for celebrating Scottish poet Robert Burns. Together, we'll learn about Burns and recite a few works together. No sign-up required.

[An Afternoon of Stories with Sylvie Mombo](#) (ages 6-12)

Saturday 1 February @ 15h-16h

Professional storyteller Sylvie brings her unique mix of mime, dance, and comedy to the Library. She will share two stories with us, then talk about her process of hunting down great stories and preparing them to share. No sign-up required.

Story Structures: A Writing Workshop (ages 9-12)

Sunday 9 February @ 14h-15h30

Join us for a workshop dedicated to the craft of writing a short story. In time for the Young Authors Fiction Festival, we'll look at how to build a story and the important things every great story needs. RSVP required, click [here](#) to sign up.

Selected Teens' Events

Locked in the Library (ages 12-18)

Friday 24 January @ 19h-21h

Try your hand at puzzles and challenges set up just for you. RSVP required, click [here](#) to sign up.

YA Fantasy Book Club (ages 12-adult)

First session on Saturday 25 January @ 17h-18h30

RSVP required, click [here](#) to sign up.

Teens Explore Literature: "The Lagoon" by Joseph Conrad (ages 12-18)

Saturday 25 January @ 14h-15h30

RSVP required, click [here](#) to sign up

Teen Night: Flash Fiction with Jane Mobile (ages 12-18)

Friday 31 January @ 19h-21h

RSVP required, click [here](#) to sign up.

Teens Explore Literature: "The Other Two" by Edith Wharton (ages 12-18)

Saturday 1 February @ 14h-15h30

RSVP required, click [here](#) to sign up.



"What Can I Do to Help?": WWI and the origin story of the American Library in Paris

In August 1917, five months after the United States entered World War I, the American Library

Association (ALA) sent out the first edition of its [Library War Bulletin](#) to U.S. libraries:

"No questions were oftener asked at the Louisville meeting of the A.L.A. than 'What war service can my library render?' 'What can I do?' This statement aims to answer these questions for the smallest library and the youngest assistant.

The A.L.A. has been asked by the War Department to undertake the collection, distribution, and circulation of reading matter in the thirty-two principle [sic] army camps. For this purpose it expects to have its own building at each camp. For this work every library in the land is to be a collection center, not only to gather material, but to take the lead in presenting this appeal and in representing this work throughout the country, and especially to correlate and unify at the library all similar efforts. Every library should give the widest publicity to this campaign of book collection, through the press, through slips put in books circulated, through the churches, the movies, and through other agencies cooperating in the same work."

-J.I. Wyer, Jr., Chairman, A.L.A. War Service Committee

The ALA had been working with the YMCA and other groups to collect book donations, but it wasn't meeting demand; soldiers wanted to read, and the American library community mobilized to help. All librarians were asked to give a dollar a month to support the efforts (nearly \$22 today) and a nationwide fundraising effort and book drive commenced. By spring 1918 the ALA had raised \$1,700,000 for the Library War Fund, bought 300,000 books, received 1,349,000 donated books, sent 109,403 books overseas, and distributed 5 million magazines. One hundred seventeen librarians were stationed in the field at 464 military installations, including hospitals. (This was only the first wave of funding—by 1920 donations grew to \$5 million and between 7 and 10 million books and periodicals were distributed.)

In 1918 the ALA established a library in central Paris at 10, rue de L'Elysée. The collection included 25,000 books and 115 magazines, all courtesy of the Library War Service. By 1920, two years after the end of the Great War, the ALA was winding down operations in Europe, and this Parisian library, now open to civilians as well as servicemen, was slated to close. In an eleventh-hour fundraising and media campaign, 150,000 francs were raised to transform the library into an independent institution. The American Library in Paris was officially incorporated on 20 May 1920, and leadership passed to a small group of American expatriates, with donations and membership fees covering operations.

The American Library in Paris also introduced a new motto in 1920: *Atrum post bellum, ex libris lux: After the darkness of war, the light of books.* You can still find this motto on the bookplates of each book in the American Library in Paris's collection.

To find out more about the Library War Service, visit the [website of the American Library Association](#) and the [American Library in Paris's timeline and detailed history](#).

Consider a gift and support the Library's past, present, and future

The American Library in Paris was established in 1920 under the auspices of the American Library Association, with a core collection of books and periodicals donated by American libraries to United States armed forces personnel serving their allies in World War I. The Library has grown since then into the largest English-language lending library on the European continent. If you're interested in learning more about our history, visit the [interactive timeline](#) on our website.

We have many exciting projects planned for our centennial year and beyond. Your generosity allows us to preserve and renew our print collection; offer nearly three hundred children's and teens' programs annually; curate an important historical periodical archive; host over seventy free public programs and panels with leading journalists, writers, and thinkers; provide access to over 22,000 e-books and four thousand electronic periodicals; organize the largest English-language creative writing contest for youth in Paris; and serve as a quiet, comfortable haven for those seeking knowledge in myriad ways. Please continue to give generously so that we in turn may continue to grow and thrive.

DONATE

The American Library in Paris is an independent, non-profit institution that receives no regular government funding. Your generosity is essential in keeping the Library vibrant and creative.

All contributions are tax-deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law.

BECOME A LIBRARY MEMBER

www.americanlibraryinparis.org



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