

What's in....

The Stacks

May 2021

A Message from Elizabeth Debs, PPL Board Chair

Spring is here, and we are seeing signs of moving forward and a tentative blossoming after a long, long hard year.

Recently, a colleague suggested in an offhand way that hope is “those potentials that await us.” Emerging from a period of uncertainty it is easy to forget the positive invocation of hope, not only as a specific outcome, but as an aspirational attitude.

In our traditional mode, made especially visible during the pandemic, PPL is successful because it is a place full of hope. There are some in our community who hope that a small, basic need — a specific book or referral to a service — may be met. Others may hope without a clear plan or specific item in mind, open to the possibility that PPL will offer something magnificent or transformative that was previously unimagined.

PPL is not simply a building, or repository of books, or very special collections, or skills training — although it is all that and more. More important, even in dark times, it is a platform that allows us to learn from our past explorations, while moving into the future with curiosity, aspiration, and hope.

Hope is a singularly human endeavor and critical in good leadership. We can have hope now because of the inspired, persistent, and steady guidance of our outgoing chair Rob Edwards. His three-year tenure saw the radical transformation of the building, organizing the necessary funding, and navigating the challenges of the pandemic. There are not enough words to thank him.

As we reopen, reimagine, and consider the extraordinary, innovative practices that evolved in the past year, let's journey together with hope as our guide.

P.S. — We HOPE that with the end of the fiscal year coming on June 30, you will consider making an additional gift to PPL in this historically challenging year to help us sustain and expand our essential, hope-inspiring work.

Conservator Society

Did You Know...

The RI LGBTQ+ Archive at PPL, established last year, is the first public community archives initiative to collect and provide access to stories, and social, cultural and political history of LGBTQ+ people in Rhode Island. Look for more exciting news during this year's Pride Month.

Upcoming Events...

#PPLGiveDay 2021 — Wednesday, June 9

Mark your calendar for our third annual PPL Give Day. It will be a day full of virtual activities and fun, as well as some in-person surprises! — right in the middle of our first-ever PPL Spirit Week! Stay tuned ...

An Evening in the Secret Garden

Thursday, June 10 | 5:30 - 7:30 pm

Join us for our first in-person gathering in more than a year in the beautiful gardens of Dr. Philip & Mrs. Niamh Maddock! As a special treat, we'll hear from James Hall, president and CEO of the Garden Conservancy. RSVP at arempis@provlib.org by June 4.

Thursday, July 15 | 6 pm

SAVE THE DATE — for a virtual pet event! Details coming soon...stay tuned.

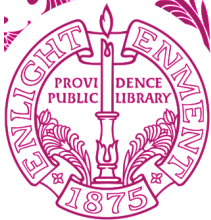
If you've been asleep . . . fear not! There's still time to catch up with our virtual exhibition...visit **prov.pub/sleepmode**, where you'll find all Angela DiVeglia's audio essays and Curator's Conversations.



Passages



J. RENN OLENN — We are deeply saddened by the passing of devoted friend and PPL Conservator J. Renn Olenn on February 21. In addition to his loving wife Mary, a fellow Conservator and long-time PPL Trustee and former Board Chair, Renn leaves two sons — Adam and Tim — and their families, including five grandchildren. Renn was a lawyer admired for his wise counsel, compassion, and formidable courtroom presence, among other attributes. Shortly after graduating from Boston University School of Law, he and Joseph Penza, Jr., who would become a lifelong friend and business partner, teamed up to form Olenn & Penza, LLP in 1975. Renn was known not only for being honest, but methodical and meticulous. Whether tirelessly advocating for his clients or mentoring and ensuring opportunities for future practitioners, Renn is remembered by all for his devotion to those people and pursuits he held dear.



PPL Alum Spotlight

Because of YOUR generosity, individuals from all walks of life have transformative experiences at PPL. We're thrilled to share these stories of success and achievement with you to demonstrate the incredible impact you are making when you support the Library. You REALLY do make these alum stories possible!

Edmon Shahoud: On a Path to a New Life

I'm from Syria and for years I worked there as a financial manager and a tax consultant in major commercial companies.

I had dreams of living in America since childhood, and was finally granted US residency in 2008. But I soon discovered a huge barrier in my new country: landing a suitable job. This problem became serious, and I had to return to Syria for a while. When I came back, I had work, but I didn't feel like I had a future or a way to move forward.

This all changed when I joined RIFLI classes to improve my English. I started at the beginner level and worked my way up to advanced classes, thanks to Jon, Doug, and



Margaret – not just my teachers, but mentors and advisors also. At the same time, I was preparing to interview for US citizenship, so I joined a citizenship class with Mary and David, who both helped me tremendously.

The next big leap happened when I enrolled in Data Navigators and Tableau courses, where I gained new knowledge of the work requirements of US companies. Next I joined the Microsoft Office Specialist program, a partnership with Roger Williams University. The academic level of this course helped me break through a barrier that I had been nervous about. Chris encouraged me to consider further advanced studies. With his support, I submitted my Syrian credentials to the Center for Educational Documentation and received a degree equivalency. Now I hold the equivalent of a BA in Business Administration from the US!

With help from RIFLI and the Institute for Labor Studies & Research (ILSR), my wife Eva and I were also able to take a multitude of additional courses leading to certificates.

PPL's role has been not just to teach us English, but to give us a compass for life in America. The free courses Eva and I have taken have introduced us to many aspects of work and life in the US – culture, health care, the legal system. These programs will help me obtain temporary work until I've earned the qualifications to work in my field of expertise.

I can say with confidence that PPL has changed my life; I give them tremendous credit for guiding and helping me.

Meet Tien Tran, PPL's Head of Information Services

Tien Tran joined PPL in 2017 as Head of Information Services. In this capacity, he manages adult circulating collections and reference and borrower services. He has fond memories of visiting his hometown's library as an immigrant child in rural Georgia, where the freedom to look for books and other materials in a well-appointed and air-conditioned space that was free to everyone seemed like a miracle. Tien is passionate about libraries as open-access community centers.



His favorite art forms are poetry and horror movies. You can recommend a horror movie or read a poem to him anytime! In his free time, he's an amateur musician and avid gardener who loves to share and talk about plants. Ask Tien if you're looking to start an eco-beneficial, pollinator friendly garden! Reach him at ttran@provlib.org.

Passages, cont.

SIMONE JOYAUX — *Philanthropy is my life's work. I fell into it by mistake, and found my existential purpose.*

We are very sad to share the passing of Simone Joyaux on May 2. Simone was a fundraiser, author, mentor, and activist internationally recognized as one of the leading voices for ethical philanthropy. Her career began in 1975 as director of a small Lansing, Mich., nonprofit and then as chief development officer for Trinity Rep. She founded two organizations: Rhode Island's first statewide arts advocacy organization and the Women's Fund of RI. She spent 34 years as a consultant specializing in fund development, strategic planning, and governance, recently leading PPL through a rigorous reworking of our governance and bylaws. She was energetic and positive, definitely a force. Simone and her husband, Tom Ahern — also an internationally known fundraising expert — were passionate donors to PPL. She will be missed.

Welcome New Conservators!

Welcome to Dr. Laina Crowthers, Nick Debs, Louis Goldman, Mark Kelley, Amy Migdal, Gerard & Mary Ann O'Halloran, Kinnari & Jaymin Patel, Eric Taylor, Nate & Emily Taylor, Lisa Tortolani, Jacqueline Wilson & Jonathan Keattch, Bill & Donna Templeton, and Marilyn Woloochojan.

We'd love to have email addresses and birthdays for all our Conservators. Please call Alex at 401-575-6478 or email arempis@provlib.org to help us stay in better touch!