

What's in...

The Stacks

June 2022



A Message from PPL Trustee Micah Salkind, PhD

When I began conducting research on queer communities of color in Chicago for the doctoral thesis that became my book project *Do You Remember House?*, I often found myself reading between the lines in institutional archives that had never cared enough about queer people, let alone doubly-marginalized queer Black and Latinx people, to deliberately collect materials that might speak to their complex lived experiences. Realizing that I needed to create my own archive to get the information I wanted, I worked with Columbia College’s Center for Black Music Research as a local host for what is now a globally accessible, digital oral history collection of my nearly 60 interviews with progenitors of Chicago’s queer of color underground social dance and club scenes. This collection not only became the bedrock for my book, but also a launch pad for my ongoing research and community-based archival work with Honey Pot Performance and the Chicago Black Social Culture Map. I hope it will be a seedbed of ongoing study and storytelling for Chicagoans and those interested in the city’s Black social cultures for generations.



My experiences with community-based archives in Chicago shapes my enthusiasm and pride in the work that PPL has been doing with Rhode Island’s queer communities to preserve and share our state’s many rich stories. PPL’s RI LGBTQ+ Community Archive is a space where the physical documents and material culture, as well as recorded oral histories and often hard-to-capture digital ephemera speaking to multifaceted experiences of communal identification in Rhode Island’s LGBTQ+ communities, will be preserved and made widely accessible in perpetuity. But keeping everything safe is only one part of the work. PPL and its collaborators are also creating opportunities for Rhode Island’s queer lifeways to be interpreted and animated by scholars, artists, and community practitioners. One great example of this work is this summer’s fantastic, free LGBTQ+ Film Series, taking place June 7, 14, and 21, in the Library’s spectacular Donald J. Farish Auditorium. While I’m particularly excited to revisit the locally produced cult body horror flick *Death Drop Gorgeous*, *I know that the documentary and home movie programs will be just as exciting.*

I hope you will join me in supporting PPL’s work in preserving LGBTQ+ histories in Rhode Island, and making these histories legible and relevant through dynamic public programs and partnerships! Please contact Alex Rempis at (arempis@provlb.org) or 401.575.6478 if you are interested in how you can help support this essential community archive.



Conservator Society

Did You Know...

The RI LGBTQ+ Community Archive officially launched in 2020. This initiative has since grown to include a number of small donated collections, each filling a gap in the history not otherwise publicly available. We are working on digitizing some materials and we’ve added 32 oral histories of LGBTQ+ people in RI to www.provlbdigital.org.

Upcoming Events...

LGBTQ+ Film Series — Tuesdays, June 7, 14, 21

Donald J. Farish Auditorium, doors open at 5:30, screenings start at 6 pm
All are invited to this free film series with filmmakers and panel discussions on queer history and filmmaking, film archives, and preservation.

PPLGive Day & Book Sale — Tuesday, June 14

Join us all day — on our social media AND in person at PPL! — for our annual Give Day, including our first PPL Friends Book Sale since 2019, 3 - 7 pm in the Seminar Room. Every donation made on the 14th will be matched, dollar-for-dollar, up to \$15,000, so please DO consider helping us make our goal!

Conservator Focus Groups

Please join us on June 16 in person at PPL from 5:30 - 7 pm or virtually on September 21 from 1 - 2 pm. **Contact Alex if you would like to join and have not yet replied.**

August Gathering

We’re planning to gather at a gorgeous home on Poppasquash Point in Bristol for snacks, cocktails, and fun the week of August 23. Final details to come!

ON EXHIBIT — June 1 - August 31

Wanderground Lesbian Archive — A Small Sampling Providence Journal Rhode Island Room

Mev Miller shares her extensive library of nearly 3,000 volumes of lesbian/feminist publications, as well as media, art, and other culturally significant items — collected over 40 years. The materials make up the cornerstone of **Wanderground**, a lesbian archive being developed as a community-based resource for New England.

Fall Gathering

We’re planning to gather at PPL on October 6 to reflect on what we’ve learned from our focus groups and surveys and enjoy each other’s company. Stay tuned...details to come!

Conservator Profile

Meet Adriana Dawson, Conservator Society Co-chair and PPL Trustee

As an avid reader in junior high, I couldn’t wait to get to the Library! What was truly special was that my mother, an immigrant from Colombia, would join me to get books and materials in Spanish. While she was on the first floor, enjoying all the books, magazines, and resources that she could actually understand, I was upstairs in the teen section, diving into pre-teen romance novels and history and also watching movies. It was a really active space. It was a shared experience with my mom and other members of my family, multigenerational, multilingual experiences. So, the Library was doing everything it could to accommodate all the many languages and cultures that our rich, diverse community represents. It was a powerful and formative experience to share that space with my mother, where we were both learning at the same time.



Flash forward to when my daughter was young, we would come to the Library to attend children’s programming. I first came to PPL as a professional in 2014 as an assistant dean at Roger Williams University’s downtown Providence campus. It was my job to build partnerships with area “anchor organizations.” That’s when I met Jack and had my first real introduction to the magic!

I was so inspired by the scope of the PPL’s work and Jack’s vision, including ways to support the justice-involved community and create Spanish-language partnerships. I felt personally motivated to step into that space as a volunteer, supporting GED programs and some computer literacy programs. That evolved with my transition to Verizon as community engagement director. I was thrilled, when in 2019, PPL was ultimately selected to partner with Verizon on its largest-ever grant in Rhode Island history in support of digital literacy. Verizon has continued as an ongoing supporter of PPL, and I am proud to now call myself a PPL Trustee and Conservator. Co-chairing the Conservator Society with the fabulous Laina Crowthers, I am excited to deepen our community of our supporters.

continued

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!

Grace Maffucci: On Volunteering at PPL

As a student at Providence College, my desire to volunteer in the Spanish-speaking community in Providence led me to PPL's Citizenship Class, where I not only became much more comfortable speaking Spanish and helping students practice, but also learned so much about the naturalization process and about the lengths people will go to become U.S. citizens. I have also had the opportunity to lead lessons on my own and to gain teaching experience.



"While students in the Citizenship Class come to learn and be taught I feel, as a volunteer, the students taught me something new every week!"

I've learned a great deal about the immigrant experience and the various countries from which our students come; and I've seen resilience and strength in action, as students start out in the class with little English and knowledge of U.S. history and leave the class as citizens more American than I will ever be! The teacher, Katherine Dantis, is one of the most selfless, patient, and kind people I have ever met. She has a great impact on the success of the students in the class. She's been a great friend and mentor to me and I attribute much of my wonderful experience with PPL over the last two years to her. I thank her for this experience that awakened by interest in English-Spanish education and for her recommendation letter that helped me win a Fulbright award as an English Teaching Assistant in Mexico!

Fundraising Update ...

RI Department of Education and PPL Partner to Offer 1,200 Chromebooks to Adult Learners

We are thrilled to let you know of this recent news as a result of a partnership between PPL, the RI Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, and the Federal Communications Commission's Emergency Connectivity Fund (ECF). More than 1,200 Chromebooks will be distributed directly to eligible adult learners under long-term loan agreements this spring. PPL led the development and submission of the application for more than \$375,500 in ECF funds and is managing the purchase and distribution of the devices.

Savor the Story — An Evening in Provence

We are thrilled to report that our first in-person *Savor the Story* in our newly renovated library raised an amazing \$135,000! Sincere thanks to everyone who came out and to our generous sponsors and partners. Congratulations once again to our esteemed 2022 Enlightenment Award recipient Mary B. Olenn, shown here with fellow past and current board chairs.



Adriana Dawson, continued

My favorite thing about PPL is the people! It's the community. The heartbeat. You can feel the heart. PPL courageously steps into challenging conversations to lift people. The Library is a gateway via its books and its resources. It's a pathway for all community members: young people, displaced adults, elders, people experiencing homelessness, curious folks of all kinds — everyone! PPL is an amazing resource for the entire community to spark curiosity and connection. The Library always continues to build community to help redefine what community can mean.

I wish people knew the entire breadth and depth of all that the Library does and understood just how revolutionary the people and programs are. They need to come see us to fully get it! I want people to know how vibrant and vital PPL is. It is such an anchor and community partner! Part of my work is getting that word out, and I'm working hard to do it. Regular families all across Rhode Island need to know that it exists and is ready to serve them in ways they haven't even imagined. PPL is a true hub and an anchor for the Providence community and Rhode Island as a whole.

PPL Staff Profiles (two recent Team X additions!)

Meet Beka Yang, PPL's Grant Coordinator

Beka Yang joined PPL as a Grants Coordinator this spring and is excited to use her writing powers to help fund some of the Library's most beloved programs. She grew up in Maryland and has been living in Providence since 2016. Beka is passionate about eating abundantly, working with others to end militarized violence in U.S. detention centers and Korea, and both-ering her aging cat named Ginger. These days, she'll tell you her favorite book is *The Rise of Kyoshi* by F.C. Yee.



Meet Jay Ruzicka, PPL's Digital Content Creator

We're happy to introduce Jay Ruzicka, digital content creator, who is new to both PPL and Rhode Island! Originally from New York, Jay relocated to Massachusetts in 2012 and accepted the role as the senior gift processing associate for MIT while simultaneously working as a photographer in the area. Now he finds himself in the Ocean State with his wife, daughter, and another on the way. Jay looks forward to creating digital content for PPL, connecting with the local community through our social media pages, and bringing awareness to the many great programs and services our library offers. In his free time he enjoys baseball, reading, and exploring Rhode Island with his family.



Passages

GAETANO "GUY" LOMBARDO



We are deeply saddened by the passing of Gaetano "Guy" Lombardo in March. He was 82. Guy leaves his children Nicholas and Maryanne and two grandchildren, along with a large extended family. Guy was a long-serving member of the Library's Board of Trustees and a Conservator, but his relationship with PPL dates back to his early childhood growing up in Providence's Federal Hill neighborhood, where he moved with his family from Sicily, Italy. He often recounted his fond memories of many hours over years spent visiting the Library as a student at Holy Ghost School, Classical High, and at Brown University. He earned his doctorate in physics at Cornell University.

Guy was a man of many talents and curiosities. Professionally, he evolved from a physicist to an operations research expert to a corporate executive in car manufacturing to an independent venture capitalist. He travelled the world and read and talked fluidly about science history, the arts, and many other subjects. With an earnest love of learning and value for the opportunities he had to learn, Guy was committed to working to make such opportunities available to others. He remained a devoted member of the Brown community, chairing the Brown Library Advisory Council, as well as serving his beloved Providence Public Library.

MARILYN J. WOLOOHOJIAN

We are also saddened by the passing of Marilyn J. Woloohojian in April. She leaves three children and their spouses, six grandchildren, as well as a brother and his family.



While only recently joining PPL's Conservator Society, Marilyn had a longtime appreciation for libraries and for PPL, as a resident of Providence and Rhode Island for 60 years. She was particularly fond of the Children's Discovery Library. Marilyn was a generous patron of the arts and many charitable organizations in both Rhode Island and Florida. Proud of her heritage, she was a charter member of the Armenian International Women's Association.

PPL's Special Collections was recently pleased to receive a donation of books from Marilyn on Armenian subjects that were not already in the collection, in particular, those written about the Armenian Genocide of 1915 — 1923.

Welcome New Conservators!

Welcome to Thomas & Antonia Bryson, Ned & Christine Capozzi, Erin Chace, Randy D'Antuono & Buck Asprinio, James DeRentis & Brett Smiley, Matthew Guterl & Sandra Latcha, Lise Iwon, Steve Leonard, Heather Picerne, Mark Pompelia & Charles Flora, Eleanor & Richard Seamans, James & Amy Simmons, Julie Smith, and Joe Wilson, Jr.

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