

What's in ...

The Stacks

March 2023



The Future Is Now!

A Message from Rob & Catherine Taylor

On January 2, 2023, we climbed the staircase to Providence Public Library where we joined the throngs of state and local officials, citizens of Providence, and members of the PPL family in attending the swearing-in ceremony for the incoming mayor of Providence, Brett Smiley.

We stood in the grandeur of the renovated Great Hall, befitting of such an august occasion, which the incoming mayor described as an emblem of the city's prosperous past, a great center for gathering, learning, and idea-sharing. But he chose PPL as the location for his inauguration, he explained, because of its recent journey of renovating and reinventing itself to “meet the new needs of residents, engage people it could not reach before, and serve as a center of innovation for our city.”

PPL's intentional and ongoing work to reinvent itself to meet the future is the model for how the new mayor intends to lead his city. “That,” he said, “is what I will do for Providence.”

It was a proud moment for PPL, but all of us who have supported PPL's reinvention know such a task is not easy. It requires open dialog; community involvement; a vision for the future; and determination. It requires a caring and committed staff with deep knowledge of how libraries serve their communities and aspirations to expand those services to meet the needs of everyone. It requires a leadership that leads, but that also listens and adjusts. And it requires being honest about things that must be improved.

We can see and touch some parts of PPL's reinvention. We have the Senator Jack Reed Info Commons and Workshop, with technology and equipment to excite, engage, and teach learners of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds, and to help bring new goals and achievements within reach. We have the Donald J. Farish Auditorium, a reimagined gathering and performance space, that mixes high quality audio/visual systems and quirky warmth. We have new teen and children's spaces, designed to welcome young people in and bring them back to PPL over and over again. And, many other areas of the Library that were long underutilized have been reactivated for a new generation of users.

Other aspects of PPL's reinvention are less tangible, but equally real. PPL is committed to being a partner with organizations and systems across the state and to being known for its collaborative culture. PPL is committed to removing barriers to information and service access and to creating spaces that are open to all, with a focus on those who traditional systems have failed to reach. Each day, PPL works on making new, creative, and inclusive programs and resources accessible to anyone who visits us in person or online.

Reinventing a library like PPL is not easy, but it is happening. Of Providence, Mayor Smiley said, “Our best days are ahead.” For PPL as well, our best days are ahead — but they are also here. The future is now! We thank you for your continued support for PPL on this exciting journey.

Conservator Society

Did You Know...

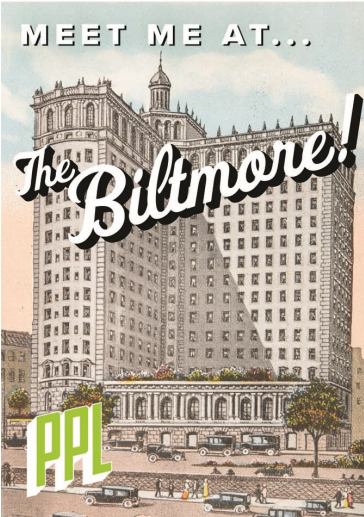
... PPL's cooking collection numbers almost 4,000 books and includes recipes, food histories, and specialty diets, from all regions of the world. Are you old-school? We have that. Looking for keto, vegan, or gluten-free? We have that too! Plus many how-to books from baking to making cocktails.

Upcoming Events . . .

Meet Me At The Biltmore Reading and Q & A with author Amanda Quay Blount

Wednesday, March 29
PPL Seminar Room, 3rd Floor
5:30 pm Reception; 6:30 pm Program

We're looking forward to an evening with Amanda Quay Blount, author of *Meet Me at the Biltmore: 100 Years at Providence's Most Storied Hotel*. The story of the Biltmore is a sensational drama of scandal, secrets, and high society. With characters ranging from crooked politicians and mobsters, to bootleggers and Hollywood stars, the Biltmore has provided the backdrop for some of the highest highs and lowest lows of Providence in the last century.



Blount researched *Meet Me at the Biltmore* over the course of two years and with the help of dozens of people interested in the historic and social relevance of the hotel. She compiled thousands of primary source articles and interviews to write this book, including archives from the hotel itself. It is the only comprehensive history of the Providence Biltmore ever written.

Savor the Story — The Future is NOW!

Friday, May 5; 6:00 - 10:00 pm

By now, you should have received our official *The Future is Now!* Save the date for our upcoming annual gala on May 5. We're looking forward to celebrating the future of food and wine and honoring Library visionary Rob Taylor, our 2023 Enlightenment Award recipient. Visit prov.pub/sts-sponsor-2023 for sponsorship information. Tickets are going quickly, so please plan to get yours soon at prov.pub/sts-tickets-2023!



LOOKING AHEAD ...

We're planning an event for mid- to late August. Stay tuned!

Exhibition Updates

Picturing the Pandemic: Images from the Pandemic Journaling Project and the Rhode Island COVID-19 Archive

Opening Event: Wednesday, March 22 | 5:00 - 7:00 pm
PPL's Joan T. Boghossian Gallery, 3rd Floor

450-Million-Year Timeline Complete!

For most of last year, many modern humans have helped create something exciting with artist Eli Nixon, the author and illustrator of *BLOODTIDE: A New Holiday in Homage to Horse-shoe Crabs*. We've had many building workshops towards installing a 450-million-year timeline in PPL's staircase and we're celebrating the result ... pictured here — the whale finally made its appearance! **Mark April 15 on your calendar** for a celebration of one of our oldest ancestors. More news to come! Thanks to the Providence Dept. of Art, Culture + Tourism for project funds and all who contributed time and care to this ever-evolving effort.



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!***

Jeffrey Merle: The Best 10 Years of My Life

Usually, people remember with great nostalgia their childhood or youth years. It has become widespread to say “everything before was better.” However, my experience is the opposite; I think the last 10 years have been the best of my life.

Today, I have a bachelor’s degree in History, a master’s degree in library sciences and information, and two postgraduate degrees in library administration and document and archives administration. I am a librarian at the Naval War College in Middletown. While challenging at times, my journey to this point has been filled with many learning opportunities.



My story begins in 2008 when my plan to finish college and return to active military duty got derailed by a motorcycle accident due to drunk driver. I broke both my legs and the emergency doctors at Puerto Rico’s largest and busiest medical center were not able to attend to me for eight days.

After the operation I was sent home. Not able to move my legs, I stayed in the smallest room of the house. After two weeks, I woke up one morning with sharp chest pains. I was diagnosed with a pulmonary embolism and returned once again to Rio Piedras Medical Center – where I stayed for almost a month. All my physical, mental, and emotional health deteriorated dramatically.

“Something I learned in these 10 years is that all changes are learning opportunities.”

It took me almost a year to leave the wheelchair. The doctors said I had permanent damage and would use a cane for the rest of my life.

However, during my months in bed, I was determined to learn about my physical condition. Upon reading several clinical cases, it was clear that the delay in my initial care as well as lack

of physical therapy right away were to blame. I decided not to go back to the doctors and made my own physical therapy and training plan. I started going to the gym, sometimes three times a day. I added Krav Maga, kickboxing, and Muay Thai classes. Finally, at long last, I saw some improvement and became more motivated. I ultimately regained much of the strength and balance in my legs and became very encouraged.

Months later, I ran the famous 10k of Teodoro Moscoso. After my recovery, I decided to finish college and then work on my master’s degree. I quit collecting Social Security and started two jobs again. The university hired me, and I helped my brother open a food business. I dedicated myself to caring for my son 24/7 since my wife had decided to join the Army. I also dedicated myself to learning about masonry, plumbing, and electricity and repairing computers and electrical appliances. I improved my skills as a mechanic as well as in agriculture.

Because my wife was busy with her job as a teacher and the Army, I became a handyman who knew how to cook, wash, iron, fix things, and at the same time do research and write essays and monographs. My son became a swimmer, and I volunteered as a coach. In the last 10 years, I learned things I did not imagine ever doing. My son became one of the best swimmers in Puerto Rico, and my wife was able to achieve many accomplishments, including becoming the first female chief warrant officer of engineering in Puerto Rico.

Now, living in Rhode Island, I have been attending the Library’s RIFLI Advanced English writing classes with Jon Lavieri. He is a great educator and person. He gives his students a great deal of confidence, and I have personally come to understand the needs of people from different cultures. Every class has been a great

learning opportunity. Next, I plan to attend classes at the Rhode Island Community College. I believe PPL’s classes are an excellent service to the community and new citizens who want to be productive in the country.

In my profession as a librarian, I have been fortunate to work in different types of libraries. I completed two additional post degrees and currently work at the U.S. Naval War College library. I view this work as my second chance to serve in the military.

Something I learned in these 10 years is that all changes are learning opportunities. I enjoy being wrong (which is not very popular, especially among Puerto Ricans who think they know everything), because it is a chance to start over and learn. I like to wake up as a student and go to bed as a teacher, and start over again the next day. I always dream of my retirement working every day. And the day I die I want to do it with my boots on.

Staff Profile

Meet Sam Simas, Head of Information Services

In his role as PPL’s Head of Information Services, Sam Simas (he/him) has helped establish new programs and services at PPL like the Play Discussion Series (a partnership with the GAMM Theatre), free notary services, an outreach program to local retirement facilities, and a Basic Human Needs pantry (a Rhode Island Foundation-sponsored grant). With his vibrant team of librarians and specialists, Sam has undertaken an inventory of the Library collection – a task which hasn’t taken place in more than 30 years. He also takes credit for many of the hijinx that happen at PPL!



Sam grew up in Rhode Island and earned his MLIS and MA in English from the University of Rhode Island. In his free time, he writes and translates fiction, teaches writing at local universities, and is the fiction editor for the *Ocean State Review*.

Passage

JOSEPH R. MILLER



We are saddened by the recent passing of Joseph R. Miller on February 6. He was 64. Joe leaves his wife of 28 years, Maria J.R. Goncalves, his son Carsten James Miller, his daughter Alexandra Zuri Miller, his sisters June (Miller) Raposa and Rosemary (Miller) Silva, and brother-in-law David A. Silva of Barrington.

Joe went to George Washington University and George Washington School of Law and was admitted to practice in Rhode Island in 1987. He was a partner at Miller and Caine, LLP. He worked in banking law and corporate immigration for 35 years. In addition to his support of PPL, Joe was a member of multiple professional organizations and member of numerous clubs and charities. He was a wonderful and dedicated husband and father who will be remembered for his sense of humor and generosity. He loved the *New York Times* crossword puzzle, reading, and traveling.

Joe and Maria have been donors to PPL since 2003 and Conservators for almost a decade. In addition, they were donors to PPL’s recent THINK AGAIN capital campaign. Maria also has served on PPL’s Board of Trustees.

Welcome New Conservators!

Welcome to Claude Michelle Aubourg, Carolyn Castro, Ramiro Encizo, Daniel Kamil & Emily Steffian, Doug & Kathy O’Brien, Kenneth F. Payne, Claudine Pépin & Rolie Wesen, Martha Stone, Chiara Trabucchi, Michelle Walker, and Don & Indira Zambarano.

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