

From Kisses to Microfiche(s)

A Message from
Amanda Quay Blount

I would like to start with a confession. When I was 13, I received my first kiss behind the hedgerow in front of my town’s public library. After the kiss, I snuck around the hedgerow, eyes darting across the parking lot to make sure no one saw me, and ran into the library to study for my algebra test. While there is no moral to this story, I like to think that when the first great libraries were constructed over 5,000 years ago, perhaps a few people had life-altering experiences like mine at the library.



All joking aside, libraries *are* life-altering. They are the cornerstones of civilization, providing not just a place of intellect and gathering, but a tangible exhibit of the splendors of the human mind. Even still, we all know that libraries are not just collections of knowledge or creative talent. When I was a kid, I spent a tremendous amount of time at the library (yes, *in it*, not just behind the hedgerow). My parents worked multiple jobs and my afternoons were often spent doing homework and reading novels at the library. It was a second home. In college, when I was too shy to ask a question during lecture, I fled to the library after class. After all, wasn’t it Albert Einstein who said, “The only thing that you absolutely have to know is the location of the library?” When I became a social worker, I learned quickly the importance of the library for those less fortunate than myself.

Libraries are the great community centers of their towns. They are places of refuge for those who seek help not just from books, but from the caring and dedicated individuals who devote their lives to working at these vital organizations. Libraries are one of the last beacons of hope in an increasingly divided, expensive, and exclusive world.

I am proud to introduce myself as a member of PPL’s Conservator Society, and deeply honored to join the ranks of those who breathe life into this important public institution. I recently had the pleasure of meeting many of you at a talk about my new book, *Meet Me at the Biltmore*, the story of the Providence Biltmore Hotel. When I am not writing, I run a nonprofit called The Literacy Center in Attleboro. I am also a mom who loves reading to her toddler. For these reasons, I thank you, dear Conservators, for everything you do to keep this vital institution thriving. There is no value you can place on an such an invaluable institution and I believe it is our charge to ensure PPL stays vibrant for generations to come.

In the Stacks

UPCOMING EVENTS

#PPLGIVE
DAY

join us: june 13, 2023

Please plan to join us for this year’s #PPLGive Day, our annual celebration of all things PPL!

We’ll have in-person activities — a morning dance party with DJ Exec-Direc Jack Martin; Workshop Open Studio hours; and our PPL Friends Book Sale — as well as virtual activities like our fundraising challenges, including our annual bouncy ball drop, Grants Manager Beth Ricci on piano, and the return of the #DancingDevelopmentDirector with Erica Busillo Adams!

Our goal this year is \$15,000, AND, if we reach it, we’ll receive our full \$15,000 Give Day dollar-for-dollar match! This means we could raise a total of \$30,000 for PPL’s free cultural, educational, and workforce development programs and services. We’ll also once again be holding POWER-ful Community Power Hours highlighting and donating to three local nonprofits!

Don’t want to wait to show your support? Make a gift of any amount at www.provlib.org/support-us/make-a-donation-to-ppl/ and it will be counted towards our #PPLGive Day totals!

Conservator Picturing the Pandemic Gallery Talk

We invite you to a special #PPLGiveDay *Picturing the Pandemic* Gallery Talk just for Conservators with Programs & Exhibitions Director Christina Bevilacqua and Community Partnership Facilitator Sophia Ellis, 5:30 - 7 pm in PPL’s Joan T. Boghossian Gallery.

Conservator Summer Get-Together August 17

Stay tuned for more information about our annual summer gathering. We’re planning for an event on Thursday, August 17, at the gorgeous St. Mary’s Church in Portsmouth!

A Magical Savor the Story!

Many thanks to all of you who sponsored and attended. You all helped us to host our most successful Savor The Story to date! We raised a **record-setting \$138,000+** and we are still hearing from folks about the fabulous time they had. We wish we could include more images here, but all are invited to check out the photo album from the event at ellevignettebusiness.pixieset.com/savorthestory/. To download images, enter PIN 3326.



Top Left: Enlightenment Awardee Rob Taylor (center) and Catherine Taylor are joined (l-r) by PPL Executive Director Jack Martin, PPL Board Chair Elizabeth Debs, Sen. Jack Reed, and RI Lt. Governor Sabina Matos; Kaetjens Nunez and Ana Martins. Above (l-r): PPL Trustee Rob and Marilyn Edwards; Terry and Lauri Lee; Kelly Clifton and Aaron Castillo.

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!

Ogalis Hernandez: Learning English Key for Her Family

I remember when I decided to register my kids in an English class in the Dominican Republic. Speaking the language would open up so many doors for them, as athletes and professionals. Also, it is better learning as a child. I wish I had that opportunity during my school years. Bilingual schools in my country are too expensive and we couldn't afford it for the three kids, so they had to go to an English institute.

The oldest and the middle one were 14 and 11 years old. They were baseball players, and focused on going into Major League Baseball (MLB). I always hoped that they would be good students and get scholarships as athletes. I heard that only 1 percent of the players get into the MLB, but if they went to college, at least they would have a good education and better opportunities.



The truth is, according to a Dominican newspaper, between 2004 and 2012, 3,911 Dominican players signed with different teams. Only 213 got to the MLB, representing just 5.4 percent. I've seen so many players struggling because they weren't so lucky. They placed their hope in the sport and didn't study or prepare to be successful with another career. I wanted something different for my kids.

Almost at age five, the little one started saying that he wanted to be a veterinarian like The Amazing Dr. Pol on TV. He wanted to study in Texas too. When he was 10, he started English class to be ready to go to college in the USA and chase his dream. For all the kids, I had to convince their father to let them study English. He thought adding another responsibility to them wasn't a good idea. We weren't sure how we would get the money for the classes.

When my eldest turned 18, he decided to quit English classes. He also stopped baseball practice and registered at a university in the Dominican Republic to study law.

The middle one continued practicing baseball, finished all his English classes, and got scholarships to colleges in Oklahoma, Texas, and Iowa. The youngest also finished the English program and is now a senior in high school, here in Cranston. He will go to veterinary school next year, maybe in Colorado. When people ask them where they learned English – because it is pretty good – their answer is: “We learned in Dominican Republic and we must thank our mom because she pushed us to do it.”

As parents, we need to have a vision of the future. Motivating our kids, supporting them in their desires, doing whatever is possible to help them to reach their goals. Time flies and what you think is far away, will become a reality sooner than you think.

Editor's Note: Ogalis is currently taking Advanced Writing & Reading classes in PPL's Rhode Island Family Literacy Initiative (RIFLI). Ogalis says this about her own experience here...

I'm from Sabana de la Mar, Dominican Republic. I started at the Cranston Public Library Sockanosset site in the English Conversation group, then continued online in the same class. I joined Transitions to College in the summer after taking the test to

measure my improvement. I also enrolled in the Spring MOS certification with Betty and Sen. Now I'm practicing in order to take the certification exam. I'm waiting for my job permit to start working, and continue Advanced Writing & Reading classes to get a better job opportunity.

I feel more confident talking in English. I have gone to medical appointments on my own. I prepared my adjustment of status forms and my son's, attended my consular fingerprint and physical exam without a translator. I have written several essays for a blog that launched in the RIFLI class and I wrote and recorded one for Mosaic Community Essays on The Public's Radio.

Since the first day, the English classes have been a great experience. Anna, Mary, and Jon are excellent teachers and so are the people that I have the honor to share time with. The English class became an important part of my immigration process.

I became a promoter of the class, sending many people because I believe that this is excellent support for those who are trying to learn and don't know that the Library offers this amazing service for free. I feel so thankful and this is a way of giving it back.

Ogalis' story was first published on The Public's Radio's community essay series as part of its Mosaic podcast on immigration. View Ogalis' Alum video at youtu.be/vZauVNE7t8A.

STAFF PROFILE

Nancy Ponte: Chief of Staff

Most of you know Nancy Ponte, the Library's exceptionally coiffed and well dressed and accessorized Chief of Staff, but we thought we'd give you the “rest of the story”... or actually the story behind the making of PPL's boss lady! Nancy is quick to correct — “I'm not PPL's Chief of Staff! I serve Jack and the Board.”



In fact, Nancy is — shall we say one of PPL's more tenured employees — logging in at 41 years of service. She began her journey at PPL in 1983 at the tender age of 15 working through the CETA summer job training program. The Library saw a star in the making and snapped her up to work evenings until she graduated high school. She officially began as a full-time clerk in the Circulation department in 1985. “I've worked in just about every department here, from ordering, processing, and shelving books, to making signs in PPL's in-house print shop, to shared resources, to spending time in all the separate reference departments, including typing cards for the still used RI Index,” says Nancy, who credits her first boss, Florence Hindle, with the opportunity to experience all aspects of the Library.

She ultimately worked her way into the Development department, where she spent many years involved in helping plan the Library's numerous magnificent events, involving everything from notable authors, chefs, and performers to a sea of motorcycles, to too many balloons to count, to livestock on our terrace.

“I consider PPL my home, I grew up here and everyone here is like my second family. I'm so proud to tell people where I work and I love hearing so many say how awesome the Library is,” she says. Perhaps it's fitting that PPL is where she met her husband John when he worked here during the 1990s and her best friend of 30+ years Tish Conca, a long-serving PPL human resources manager. “People are sometimes shocked to hear how long I've been here, but I feel very blessed to have been able work at a place I love for all these years.”

NEW CONSERVATORS

Welcome to Amanda Blount and Dane Klinger, Jon and Jenn Romano, and Jane Sharp and Charley Rardin.

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