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NEWSLETTER OF THE PROVIDENCE ATHENÆUM

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



As the summer sun wanes, the days shorten, and our schedules become more structured, I hope you return to your daily routines restored and ready to embrace the new season. For me, the summer hiatus brought an opportunity to refuel, to “refresh the page,” if you will. It was a welcomed reprieve after this past year, with many of us recovering from battered budgets and spirits both.

The recession may linger, but we return from summer re-energized. And that is “soul-ly” because of you, a vibrant community of people who love and care about the Athenaeum. With the combined efforts of the board, staff, members, and donors, we not only ended the year in the black, but met our goal of keeping our endowment draw below five percent of the three-year rolling average! We are grateful for the long tradition of stewardship at the Athenaeum, and I am reminded of a passage in *Inquire Within* where one member recalled that during the Great Depression, a family cut their sugar allowance - so that they could keep their Athenaeum share! In a similar spirit this year, members Sarah Gleason and Anna Browder donated their stimulus rebates so that the library could advance its mission in the community. Such generosity brings to mind a quote from an unknown author, “Love is to the heart what the summer is to the farmer’s year—it brings to harvest all the loveliest flowers of the soul”. We are so grateful for you, our members.

This September we welcome incoming Board President Deming Sherman, whose leadership and presence in the Providence community hold great promise and open new possibilities for the Athenaeum as we work to strengthen our role in the cultural community at large. We are also grateful for the expertise of our two new Board Members, Danielle Kemsley, Development Associate at Trinity Repertory Company, and novelist Allen Kurzweil.

Our resources remain stretched this year, but we continue to be creatively resourceful, striving to provide you with a thoughtful, well-rounded program of services that will enlist, engage, and enlighten your hearts and minds.

Summer is the time when one sheds one’s tensions with one’s clothes, and the right kind of day is jeweled balm for the battered spirit. A few of those days and you can become drunk with the belief that all’s right with the world.

~Ada Louise Huxtable

MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT

Greetings! I am delighted to begin my service as President of the Athenaeum. At the outset, I wish to thank our outgoing President, Alayne Barnicoat, for her inspired and dedicated leadership for three years. Fortunately, Alayne will continue on the Board as Secretary.

What is my vision? Very simple. The Athenaeum should be a vibrant part of the arts and cultural scene in Providence, not just a staid repository of dusty books. Our future success will depend in large part on the connections that we make with other arts and cultural institutions in the community as well as with the community at large. We remain a treasure that many have not discovered. To draw more people into the Athenaeum we will continue to reach out to various segments of the community. This is the importance of the Salons and special events, including children’s events. I have spent a great deal of time working with cultural organizations in Providence, and my strong belief is that the more that these institutions interact and collaborate, the better off all of them will be.

As you all know, the economy has had an adverse impact all nonprofits, especially those (like us) who rely on endowments to provide funds for operations. Last fall, we took the essential steps to tighten our belt and adopt a reduced budget. We also asked our donors to step up and make additional contributions. I can report that as a result of these efforts, among others, we have ended our fiscal year on target with our revised budget. We are especially grateful to our hard-working and knowledgeable staff for agreeing to financial concessions. Going forward, we have adopted a conservative budget that maintains our essential services but again counts on the continued generosity of our donors. I have no doubt that we will succeed in our efforts to stabilize the Athenaeum’s finances and assure its continued prominence in the community.

Thank you for your support of the Athenaeum. I encourage you to interest new members, and I look forward to seeing you at our events.





THE OWLET AUTUMN IN THE CHILDREN'S LIBRARY by Lindsay Shaw

AUTUMN WISH

How can the summer be over?
 It seems like it's just begun!
 We won't let the summer be over
 While we're still having so much fun!
 We'll ignore the days growing shorter.
 We'll laugh at the leaves turning gold.
 The sun in our hearts will burn brighter
 Keeping summer when autumn turns cold.

Anonymous

What a delightful summer we had in the Children's Library! Now we're ready for school, apple and pumpkin picking, leaves turning red and orange and gold, and all the bounty of this season - including new titles to explore, plus activities and events to entertain, educate, and kindle our imaginations! Nancy Whitcomb and I look forward to sharing good books and good times with everyone!



Bill Shuey and grandson Avery John Picchione enjoy a good read.

CHECK OUR ON-LINE CALENDAR OF EVENTS FOR SPECIFIC DATES, OR STOP BY THE CHILDREN'S LIBRARY FOR A PRINT-OUT!

BE ON THE LOOKOUT FOR: Storyteller extraordinaire Mark Binder; very special guest, the Athenaeum's own Allen Kurzweil with *Potato Chip Science*; spooky Halloween fun; opera with Brown University; pizza and movie nights; visits from the Audubon Society of RI; celebrating author and artist's birthdays by creating art with Nancy; game days - and lots of surprises, too!

WEEKLY STORY HOURS AND ACTIVITIES

BEAR CUBS - TUESDAY AT 10:30 AM

Songs, rhymes, and clapping games for the very young. Infants to age 2. No sign-up necessary.

READER'S THEATER - TUESDAYS AT 4 PM (beginning September 22)

Children read aloud from scripted stories for readers ages 8 to 10. Limit 8. Sign-up a must! Call Lindsay at 421-6970.

CHIPMUNKS - THURSDAY AT 10:30 AM

Songs, rhymes, clapping games, and stories for the very young. Infants to age 2. No sign-up necessary.

FAWNS - THURSDAY AT 4 PM

Stories and craft activities for children ages 3 - 6. Sign-up a must! Call Lindsay at 421-6970.

SATURDAY MORNING MOVIES

Showing story-themed film shorts from November 14 to March 27. Show time 10:30 AM, for children ages 2 and up. Check on-line for movie listings.

Fall Library Hours

(starting September 8)

Monday-Thursday 9am to 7pm
 Friday & Saturday 9am to 5pm
 Sunday 1pm to 5pm

Holiday Closings

Labor Day: Sunday 9/6 & Monday 9/7
 Columbus Day: Sunday 10/11 & Monday 10/12
 Veterans Day: Wednesday, 11/11
 Thanksgiving Day: Thursday, 11/26

SAVE THE DATE!

Our Annual Gala this year is Saturday, January 30, 2010.

We are planning a very special evening at the Athenaeum, stay tuned for details!

BEGIN PROUST THIS FALL!

Our long-planned Proust reading group will start in November. Learn details and sign up at our website or call Christina Bevilacqua at 421-6970 x 28.



RI FOUNDATION FUNDS STRATEGIC PLAN

With a generous grant of \$7,000 from the RI Foundation, the Athenaeum will begin a year-long strategic planning process to provide us with a solid plan of action for the next five years, an undertaking made all the more critical by the current financial climate. Results of board and staff-level brainstorming sessions held this year will now be integrated into a compelling vision for our future. Consultant Peggy Latimer is coordinating the process, with will be overseen by an ad-hoc committee of board and staff members. Peggy has had more than three decades of experience in cultural planning and administration, and has assisted us in securing important grants for our collections, programs, and building.

During the past year, the Athenaeum participated with other key institutions as well as individuals in developing the new Creative Providence cultural plan, an effort led by the city of Providence's Office of Arts, Culture and Tourism. We are firmly committed to its goals, and our strategic planning process will enable us to participate more actively and effectively in the "cultural ecosystem" of Providence.

We now look to our members and community partners for their insights, perspectives, advice, and inspiration. We will soon send you a brief questionnaire in order to update us on how you use the library and what services you value. But we want to know more as well. Based on your feedback, we have expanded our collaborations with other organizations, bringing together people of many backgrounds and interests to stimulate conversation and community engagement. So - how are we doing? Please use the survey to let us know. Your participation will help ensure the Athenaeum's vibrant future!

MAKE A VIRTUAL VISIT TO OUR REDESIGNED WEBSITE AND BRAND NEW BLOG!

Three cheers for Circulation/Technical Service Assistant Jeff Metzler, who with vision and persistence created the new design of our website, now up at www.providenceathenaeum.org! Jeff updated our information, gave it a whole new look, and added many useful features. You can start or renew your membership, support the Annual Appeal, find out about new books, movies, and music, find staff picks, see photographs of the Athenaeum throughout its history, check program schedules for children and adults, and much more. Take a look!

And while you're there, click on the link to our new blog, *Raven-ous*. A paean to Poe's poem, the name also celebrates the condition of being insatiable for learning and knowledge, which we think describes the typical Athenaeum member (except of course that there is no "typical" Athenaeum member!).

Visit *Raven-ous* for frequent updates on libraries, literature, history, program planning, interesting events happening here, there, and everywhere - in short, a range of subjects as varied as the holdings of the Athenaeum itself! Many thanks to Mary Anne Golda, Head of Technical Services, for teaching the 19th century library to take advantage of 21st century technology.



PRAISE FOR OUR PARTNERS! As always, we are so grateful to the small businesses and organizations that support our programs through sponsorships and donations. During these belt-tightening times, their continued generosity is especially appreciated! Our thanks to Antiques & Interiors; Borders; Campus Fine Wines; The Curatorium; Dr. Jodi Glass, Audiologist; Green and Cleaner; Providence Preservation Society; Studio Hop; and Variable Data Printing for their support. Please think of them first when looking for goods and services - and be sure to thank them for what they make possible!

"SO, WHAT'S THE STORY?" How do we order our experience of the world around us? Which facts, events, and observations do we connect in creating something we can define and describe? The desire to tell and hear stories has never been stronger than today, when technology gives us new media by which to share our stories with more and more people, at the same time that its ability to speak to and for the masses makes us long in compensation for the singular voice.

After three years, we've come to feel that our most memorable Salons are those focused not solely on the subject of the presentation, but also on the presenter's story of how that subject became the object of fascination in the first place. So this year's theme connecting Salons and programs will be based less on shared subject matter and more on the shared perspective from which varied subjects will be described. Every good conversation starts with a question; we plan to start a good one every Friday with "So, what's the story?" Attendees will come away not just knowing facts about contemporary art, the African-American songbook, 19th century landscapes, Edgar Allan Poe, village life in Kenya, Edvard Munch, and antique mirrors, but having been given a glimpse of the sparks that ignited when presenters met subjects, and an appreciation of how those presenters' passions have continued to burn. Fittingly, our first Salon features Phil Goldman of Perishable Theatre's Live Bait storytelling series, on the art of crafting spoken narrative; he'll be assisted by storytellers from the series. Salon attendees are invited to join in, and those who are inspired can meet up later that night for the scheduled Live Bait event at Perishable.

In addition to the evening with Perishable, other collaborations in our fall lineup include events with 5 Traverse Gallery, Providence Preservation Society, Trinity Rep, the Mwea Fund, Not About the Buildings, and WRNI public radio. In spring we will begin programs with Common Cause of RI. We are committed to this collaborative model and continue to embrace the role of providing a space for cultural cross-pollination and civic-minded conversation in the Providence community. We look forward to seeing and hearing from you and your friends at the Athenaeum this fall!

SPECIAL COLLECTIONS AND ARCHIVES STORAGE PROJECT: COMPLETED!

In 1913 the library's president described the Athenaeum as "invaded" for nearly ten months "by the rough and ready operations of the mason and the carpenter," while "the student and the scholar have had to make way for the men with the trowel and the hammer." We can relate, having endured similar disruption since commencing critical restoration work to the building in 2005!



What a difference a summer doth make! Kate Wodehouse and Alison Maxell in the Special Collections room in June, and Lise Lavigne and George Tamas, tourists from Quebec, visiting in late August. Lise is a librarian at the Municipal Library in Quebec and she and her husband dropped in on their way to Newport.

FROM THE REFERENCE DESK

By Carol Tatian, Reference Librarian

Recently, new members Lisa and Alexander Duffy walked into the Reference area so Alexander could ask me a question, "How many times did George Washington visit Rhode Island, and what places did he visit when he was here?" Alexander is five years old.

In the course of answering, I found a gem of a book, *George Washington and Rhode Island* (Reference 974.5 W37G), written by John Williams Haley, Director of the Rhode Island George Washington Bicentennial Commission, in 1932. The exact answers to Alexander's questions are here along with a map showing Washington's journeys through Rhode Island in 1756, 1776, and 1781 as President; and accompanied by Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson in 1790. Many of the buildings where Washington was entertained are listed and still in existence, including the Stephen Hopkins House, Old State House, University Hall of Brown University, and John Brown House in Providence; and the Old State House, Vernon House, and Tuoro Synagogue in Newport.

There are many interesting anecdotes throughout the book, but an internet search revealed one glaring omission. During his 1790 visit, Washington was invited by the warden of the Hebrew Congregation of Newport, Moses Seixas, to visit their synagogue. During that visit, Warden Seixas expressed hope that "the new national government, and particularly the enlightened President of the United States, would remove the last barriers to religious liberty and civil equality confronting American Jewry." The resulting letter that Washington wrote to the Jews of Newport is considered "a foundation stone of American religious liberty and the principle of separation between church and state." Each year the Touro Synagogue congregation re-reads Washington's letter in a public ceremony. It contains this famous phrase, originally written by Warden Seixas: "...to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance..." (quotes from www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org)

A copy of this letter and accompanying information is now kept in the book. Thank you, Alexander, for a most stimulating question.

