

KEYWORD

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SILSSA newsletter

*PRATT SCHOOL OF INFORMATION AND LIBRARY SCIENCE
STUDENT ASSOCIATION*

Library for the Performing Arts Internship

by John Calhoun

When I first contemplated pursuing an Information and Library Science degree about two years ago, my thoughts immediately converged on the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts (LPA). Over the years, in my first career writing about film and theatre for magazines, and as a Cinema Studies student at New York

University, I had spent many hours at the Lincoln Center location doing research for articles or papers. I had also frequently used the library as a haven, as a place to read or maybe visit an exhibition. Before enrolling at Pratt, I even called on Kevin Winkler, LPA's head of circulating collections, for words of advice and encouragement.

Naturally, when the time came to embark on an internship, I knew where I wanted to do it. I had taken Kevin's Performing Arts Librarianship class last spring, and at the end of the course spoke to Karen Nickeson, assistant curator of the Billy Rose Theatre Collection, about the possibilities. My main goals were

to gain cataloging experience and to put my knowledge of cinema to some use in the theatre collection, which includes archival research materials on film and television as well as live theatre. Karen outlined several options for me, and I decided to work with the scripts librarian Christine Karatnytsky. Chris has been on staff at LPA for more than 20 years, but she's a relative tyro compared to Dr. Rod Bladell, who celebrated his 40th anniversary with the theatre collection while I was there. People tend to stay in their jobs at the library.

I felt so at home in the theatre collection that they still haven't gotten rid of me.

When I started in May, Chris put me on two major tasks. First was a scripts acquisition project, which involved familiarizing myself with the collection policy and identifying new plays that should be added to the theatre collection, creating a database of title, author, and other vital information, and contacting the playwright or playwright's representative to request a typescript (as opposed to published) copy. Due to declining staff and resources, new script acquisition had not been undertaken in several years, and I



John (l) and his supervisor Christine Karatnytsky (r) in the stacks at LPA. The first curator of the theatre collection, George Freedley, is in the photo.

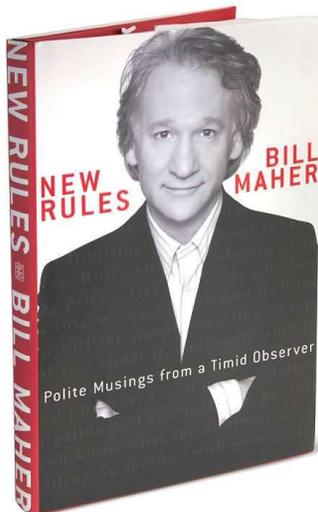
eventually identified more than 400 produced plays over four seasons that should be added to the shelves.

Second, I was turned loose on the extensive backlog of movie and play scripts waiting to be cataloged, completing original work on about 60 manuscripts by the end of the summer using the RLIN interface. The play scripts had primarily come to the collection via the Theatre on Film and Tape Archive (TOFT), which preserves archival copies of select theatrical productions, while the screenplays came from Betty Comden (who receives them as a member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences) and other donors. This project more than met my cataloging goal, and was aided immeasurably by Prof. Rick Block's Advanced Cataloging and Classification course, in which I was serendipitously enrolled at the time.

Part of what made my internship so rewarding was that it was not simply confined to the aforementioned tasks. All of the Billy Rose Theatre Collection librarians have reference desk assignments each day, as do the librarians in LPA's other research divisions, including the Jerome Robbins Dance Division, the Music Division, and the Rodgers and Hammerstein Archives of Recorded Sound. I sat with Chris and the other librarians on numerous shifts, sometimes helping assist patrons and vetting call slips. (The LPA's research collections are exceedingly complex and idiosyncratic, with most older material only searchable in card catalogs, with collection-specific class numbers, so all requests need to be fielded, and determinations made which materials must be sent to the supervised reading room.) I also helped respond to film-related

electronic reference questions, assisted in such tasks as selection of books to go on the open shelves, and attended several staff meetings, which at times could get rather contentious.

Overall, my internship at the Library for the Performing Arts provided me with a more rounded experience than I expected, encompassing cataloging, collection development, reference, and management issues. Working there three days a week for the entire summer – a luxury afforded by my freelance writing work – I far exceeded the 125-hour requirement for the practicum course, logging in close to 300 hours. I felt so at home in the theatre collection that they still haven't gotten rid of me: this fall, I'm going in one or two days a week to process a couple of archival collections. Now if I can only get them to pay me.



an excerpt from **Bill Maher's book *New Rules*** (p168):

Residential Library

NEW RULE

You can throw someone out of the library for how they sound but not for how they smell.

A new law in San Luis Obispo says librarians can evict homeless people for their smell. Hey, lonely librarians – don't think of them as homeless; think of them as single. I know most librarians won't see much of a future with some babbling drunk with a drug habit and a messiah complex, but hey, it worked for Laura Bush.



Photo credit: Dr. Debbie Rabina

An Evening with Robert Kieft

by Jennifer Thiele

Robert Kieft spoke about his work as the editor of the 12th

edition of *Balay's Guide to Reference Books* on Thursday, September 22nd at Pratt.

Robert graduated from the University of California at Berkeley's library school and currently lives in Philadelphia. He has done extensive work in reference collection development, has reviewed books for Choice magazine, has worked as a reference librarian, and claims that he "was once a humanist."

Robert had some insightful and strong opinions about the current state of librarianship. He stated that not since the 19th century has it been this exciting to work in libraries, but stressed the word "work" and added that it wasn't necessarily a good time to be a librarian. He believes that "ready reference" is dead because of Google, but that it is important that knowledge be *organized*, not *scattered* in an

array as it is presented on Google.

He feels that although *Balay* is a venerable publication with a strong tradition that is used to verify the existence of something, it may get more respect than use. It has been and continues to be, however, a major source of income for the publisher, ALA. The title of the new edition of *Balay* has been changed to *Guide to Reference Sources* because in addition to print, it will incorporate online sources. He is also hoping to include a section on learning how to do reference work for library school students, similar to the very first edition. It will have 54 sections with contributions from 74 people who are experts in their field.

The biggest problem Kieft has faced has been finding a database vendor to make the book available online, but he feels that this will be accomplished by 2007.

Upcoming SILSSA General Meetings

Meetings are held in room 610 at Pratt Manhattan from 5:30 - 6:30 pm.

Wed., Nov. 16

Thurs., Dec. 8

Upcoming Events

Tues., Nov. 29 & Sat., Dec. 3

Bibliographic Instruction workshop with Professor Bencivengo

Fri., Dec. 2 - Sat., Dec. 3

Library of Congress trip (tentative)

Fri., Dec. 16

Site visit to The New York Academy of Medicine

For more information on these events, visit our website:

<http://pratt.edu/~silssa/>

Featured Library of the Month: The Upper East Side's New York Society Library

by **Karyn Hinkle,**
SILSSA Treasurer

WHERE

53 East 79th Street, between Madison and Park Avenues. Take the 6 train to 77th St.; the library is open every day of the week beginning at 9 am. (Sundays at 1 pm). It closes at 5 pm Wednesday through Monday and at 7 pm on Tuesdays.

WHY

The New York Society Library claims the privilege of being the oldest in the city—it was founded in 1754. It dates from the era before public libraries, from a time when books were still expensive and rare. Believing New York would prosper and grow if more books were available to its citizens, a civic group called the New York Society founded what would become the New York Society Library. Members of the Society contributed books and membership dues to support the library, and in turn, all the volumes collected there were available for all the members to read.

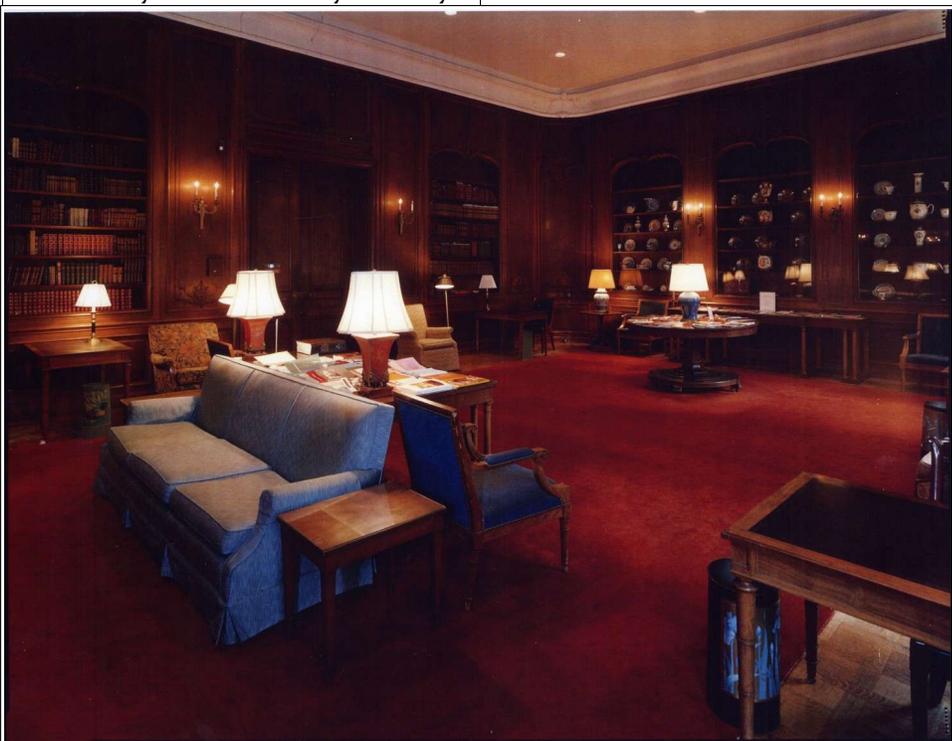
Today, the New York Society Library is still a membership-based library—but don't let that scare you away from visiting. As the library's website explains, "Members may borrow books and have the use of several reading and study rooms on the upper floors; they can also browse in the stacks. Non-members are invited without charge to use the ground floor for reading and reference."

I like visiting the New York Society Library because membership libraries are an unusual alternative to the more well-known public library model, and because this one in particular has a palpable sense of writerly and scholarly history

about it: the library is much loved by writers, and many famous writers from Willa Cather to Robert Caro to Wendy Wasserstein wrote (and read) in its rooms. After a visit to the gorgeous building on E. 79th St., you may want to become a member with borrowing privileges yourself! But even for visitors, the New York Society Library is a fascinating retreat for book lovers in the city.

DON'T MISS

The wonderful testimonials to the library, many written by some very famous members! They're posted on the library's website at www.nysoclib.org/testimonial.html



The members' room at NYSL. Photo: Jim Dow.

Congratulations to Dr. Tula Giannini!

Dr. Giannini has accepted appointment as Dean of Information and Library Science at Pratt.

9 Questions for Dr. Rabina

Interview by
Jennifer Poggiali,
SILSSA Vice President

This year Keyword is beginning a monthly interview column. We thought it was fitting to ask one of the department's newest full-time faculty members, Dr. Debbie Rabina, to be the subject of our first interview. This semester, Rabina is teaching two sections of LIS 652 Information Services and Resources, but as you'll find out, she's knowledgeable in many areas of library and information science. Here is a brief bio she sent at our request, followed by our questions:

I hold a Ph.D. in Library and Information Studies from Rutgers University, and have teaching experience both as faculty member and as visiting lecturer. Courses that I have taught include Introduction to LIS, General Reference, Government Information, Humanities and Social Science Reference, Information Seeking Behavior and

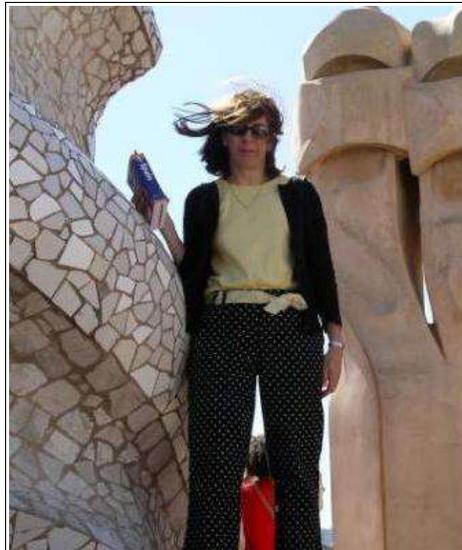
I take particular pride in sending competent professionals out there to the real world.

Information Policy. My areas of specialization include reference resources (general, legal, government), information law and policy, information seeking behavior and international and comparative librarianship.

Q: What are your top 3 favorite reference sources and why?

A: Dictionaries are always fun and a particular favorite is the *Barnhart Dictionary of Etymology*. It is a manageable one volume that can be used both at home and in the library, and I have actually found some words that appear nowhere else but in *Barnhardt*.

A second favorite is *The World Almanac and Book of Facts*. Whenever traveling, I like to take it with me for questions that inevitably come up in foreign places, like what is the population of... and when exactly did Franco rule and so on.



Number three on the list (well, it should probably be number one) is *The New York Times* (to the degree that we consider it a reference source). It includes answers, questions, food for thought, perspective, intelligent argument and sometimes even hope for the future.

Q: What's the oddest reference question you've ever been asked? How did you answer it?

A: Odd, well, I'm not sure what you mean by odd, I can't actually recall any questions I would consider odd, but I have one reference question that in spite of all my efforts, and those of

many others whom I've asked, remains unanswered to this day. Someone wanted to know the history of a bull relief in the Newark train station and we were unable to uncover any significant information about it. I referred this question to many NJ history experts, librarians working in special collections, archivists, history buffs, and nothing. When this question was presented to me, I didn't think it would take more than five minutes to answer. Just goes to show you that you never know with reference.

Q: What do you consider your biggest professional success?

A: As a library educator I take particular pride in sending competent professionals out there to the real world. Whenever students tell me that they found my courses helpful in the new job, I feel I earned my brownie points for the day.

Q: What organizations are you affiliated with?

A: If you are referring to library organizations then: AJL, ALA, ALISE, ASIS, IFLA.

If you mean just any old organization, I am also a member of Amnesty International, ACLU, AMC (Appalachian Mountain Club), 5BBC (5 Borough Bicycle Club) and probably a few more.

Q: What projects are you currently working on?

A: Right now I am preparing a paper for a conference on virtual reference that will be held later this year.

Q: Do you have any hobbies?

A: My hobbies are somewhat antiquated, I'm afraid. I like to read, and I do quite a bit of

needlework, hiking, and biking if the terrain is flat or almost so.

Q: What's your opinion of MLS/MLIS education?

A: There is no short answer to this question.

Q: Do you have any advice for library school students?

A: Lots, more than most of them want to hear. Some of it is available on my website and some of it I dispense in class, but if I had to say just one thing, it's that the most effective learning

occurs when students are relaxed and engaged in what they are doing.

Check it out!

Lost and Found in the Stacks

Micki Watanabe's miniature period rooms housed in book-like sculptures

Oct. 4 - Nov. 27, 2005
Brooklyn Public Library @
Central Library
Grand Army Plaza,
Brooklyn
Balcony Cases, 2nd
floor

Pratt SILS student Micki Watanabe has combined her love of books, design, and period spaces to create an intriguing new exhibition, *Lost and Found in the Stacks*, on display now and through November 27 at Brooklyn Public Library's Grand Army Plaza location.

Four separate works are catalogued by The Brooklyn Public Library and searchable via its online catalogue, including *In the Mixed-Up Files (Volume One: Shaker Room)*, *In the Mixed-Up Files (Volume Two: The Haverhill Room)*, and *Paddington Station*. Some copies are on display in the library's balcony cases, others are

available for reading in the Art and Music division, and some are available "now and forever after," according to Watanabe, to check out. All you need is a Brooklyn Public Library card.

Mixed-up Files (Volume One: Shaker Room) is the artist's companion to E.L. Konigsberg's museum mystery *From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler* and contains a miniature replica of period rooms

project *Lost and Found in the Stacks*, which I designed to help break down barriers like those between rare book rooms and the regular stacks."

Additionally, each sculptural book contains smaller books, written by Watanabe, that reference classic children's books that might not be popular with today's younger crowd, but that are familiar to any children's librarian. For example, one book is about rampion, the edible plant and Rapunzel's namesake.

I haven't had the opportunity to see Watanabe's work up close and in person, but the concept is challenging, refreshing, and interesting. I hope to have the opportunity to see her work before the exhibition closes.

Keyword will give a nice reward to the first reader who e-mails (to gayle@snible.org) a photo of themself with one of

Watanabe's sculptural books, taken in a setting other than the Brooklyn Public Library. That way, you'll be able to check it out, and we'll see Watanabe's work in yet another context. Trust us, we'll make it worth your time!



The Cabin on Walden Pond. Wood, leather, dirt, plastic, grass, fabric. 15" x 15 1/2" x 2 1/2" (closed dimension). Micki Watanabe, 2005.

from the Metropolitan Museum of Art. "Imagine if museums resembled libraries and the public could check out original artifacts," says Watanabe's artist statement. "This thought is the spark behind my current ongoing



Andy in WNYC's Archives. Photo: Gayle Snible.

Pratt SILS Student at Work: Andy Lanset, WNYC Archivist

by Gayle Snible,
SILSSA Secretary

Pratt SILS student Andy Lanset already has the library job that students go to library school for, but that doesn't mean that Andy doesn't see value in getting the degree: he's been attending Pratt part-time for four years while working in a full-time capacity for New York City's public radio station WNYC. Andy was in my Online Database Searching class in spring 2005, and I visited him at WNYC in early summer 2005 for this Keyword feature.

It's no surprise that Andy ended up at WNYC; in his words, he's "been in and out of this station in one capacity or another since the early 80s," first as a journalist

and later while helping out with the station's 75th anniversary. Working in an old building in downtown Manhattan, Andy, who looks like a cross between Albert Einstein and Mark Twain, heads a staff of two in archiving the station's history. Andy works with sound materials 95% of the time; 5% is spent on paper and ephemera. His main clientele are the station's producers, so Andy's frequently working with the various news teams.

WNYC's catalog is on Access, and Andy generates monthly reports directly from the database. His department does a lot of what he calls "triage cataloguing" since barely half of WNYC's sound collections are catalogued. Andy works with old 78s, tapes, cassettes, reels, CDs, DATs, and 16" discs. He's also creating an oral history of the station by interviewing former producers from the 1930s and 1940s. He edits the internally-distributed *WNYC History Notes*, an informative e-mail newsletter that he started to raise in-house

consciousness about the archive, which is currently at 1,300 square feet (he dreams of having 2,500 square feet for the archive). Andy will most likely write about the station's history for publication in the future.

Andy's professional affiliations include the International Association of Sound and Audiovisual Archives (IASA), the Association of Recorded Sound Collections (ARSC), the Society of American Archivists (SAA), and the Archivists Round Table of Metropolitan New York Inc. (ART).

What is your most recent Ebay purchase (note: as of May 2005) for the archive?

Another WNYC E.K.K.O. radio verification stamp from the 1920s. See the WNYC Anniversary timeline (on the website) for details.

(Writer's note: Andy often searched Ebay during our class breaks; this is how I found out

about his job.)

What has been your most valued Ebay find to date?

The most expensive find was a \$1,200 1930s microphone with embossed WNYC letters down the side of it. That blew my acquisitions budget for the year.

What do you consider your greatest achievement at the archives and/or what are you proud of?

I think my biggest success is that I basically started with a bunch of stuffed closets and boxes, and after five years, there is a working, growing archive that's making up for a lot of lost time.

And giving the collection an image. What I mean by this is that film preservation is "sexy" and gets a lot of support because it's easy to show and display. Sound archives are like the poor cousin since their elements can only be heard and not seen. What I've tried to do, in part, is to try to use what written and visual materials we have to help raise consciousness – from staff, management, board members and potential donors – about the collection to raise that support we need to do our job. For this reason, the timeline and the *History Notes* have played an important part for the largely audio collection here.

You're working on your MLIS degree, yet you have the dream job that many other students hope to get, after graduating. What are the pros/cons of this "reverse" path of education and career? What is it like? Can you give one pro and one con, based on your experience?

PRO: Since I come from a preservation background and radio, it's obviously been real helpful to become familiar with the areas I've not spent a lot of time with in terms of cataloging and organization. It's also been very useful in terms of all the computer/web related classes.

CON: It's taking me a while because my job is more than full time and I can only really manage one class a semester.

I basically started with a bunch of stuffed closets and boxes.

What is your biggest challenge on the job?

Maintaining a stable environment for the collection in an old building and old cramped spaces that were never designed for this purpose.

Can you give a couple of "lessons" for others wanting to get into a similar sort of archive?

It helps to be collector. Having a good general 20th century history background helps as well. Don't focus on everything that's not done – otherwise you risk being overwhelmed. Try to map out reasonable annual goals that consider maintaining a good environment for your collection, cataloging, and acquisitions. Prioritize preservation needs based on the best available knowledge regarding format shelf life. Stay in touch with listserv discussions that focus on the latest developments in your area, such as ARSC listserv and the Archives and Archivists listserv.

WNYC's webpage contains fantastic information about Andy and the archive.

This page has additional information about Andy:

http://www.wnyc.org/about/preservation_bio.html

About WNYC's Preservation and Archive Unit:

http://www.wnyc.org/about/preservation_intro.html

Andy created this timeline for WNYC's 80th anniversary:

<http://www.wnyc.org/80/index.html>

Help!

Send *Keyword* submissions to
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