

CAPITAL LIBRARIAN



Volume 1 Issue 7/8

March-April 2008

District of Columbia Library Association

Established in 1894

*Serving Washington, DC
Area Libraries and
Librarians for 114 years*

DCLA is a chapter of ALA

Contact Us

<http://www.dcla.org>
202-872-1112 (messages only)

Capital Librarian

Back issues are on our website.

*DCLA's Archives
Are located in the
Washingtoniana Division
of the
Martin Luther King, Jr.
Library*

May June Issue
Deadline: May 31st

Send electronic submissions
to:
Barbara Conaty
bcon9876@gmail.com

President's Column

New Leaders for a New Time

By Barbara Folensbee-Moore

It is already May and rapidly reaching the end of my year as President of DCLA. The year has been challenging – getting people motivated and finding out what the membership is interested in learning about in programs has taken a lot of energy.

Do you feel like you are contributing to your professional organization? Communication with members seems to drop off in times when the economic situation becomes more difficult. A lot of changes have occurred in our local community this year and very frequently I have heard members say they just don't have enough time to be involved.

During the next few months your incoming president, MJ Oboroceanu, and I will be putting our heads together to plan the next year's activities. Make your voice heard and let us know what we can provide you in the way of programs or informational events. We will be asking for volunteers to take over various interest group committee positions – we have already heard from some of you who are willing to join us in working for the chapter. Renew your membership AND bring a colleague to the chapter. We have some great new leaders on the Board and they are ready and willing to make this chapter work for you. I look forward to seeing you at meetings and hearing from you during the year.

I hope that you are all involved in DCLA's closing banquet. It is always be a fun evening and a chance to network with colleagues, hear a dynamic speaker, and honor those members who not only have been active on your behalf this year but for many years.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve as president and I look forward to working with the new Board in my ex-president role.

Librarians Engage with Pros and Cons of KM at Spring Workshop

By Barbara Conaty

“Knowledge management: what is the librarian’s role?” was the topic of the moment at the 2008 Joint Spring Workshop held at the Library of Congress on April 29, 2008. Under the able leadership of DC/SLA’s Anne Linton, the organizing committee spotlighted Knowledge Management (KM) in its latest manifestation as an approach to capturing, organizing, and retrieving the formal and informal knowledge stored in the heads of an organization’s employees.

Keynote speaker Susan Fifer Canby, vice president of the National Geographic Society (NGS) and responsible for directing the Society’s libraries and information services, homed right in on the key factor that makes KM work at the NGS. “It’s not about the technology, it’s about the relationships”, she said.



Workshop panelists during Q&A session.

Early efforts to implement KM often failed due to “poor systems that delivered a lot of irrelevant information”, she said. Today, successful adoption of KM strategies needs change management, new attitudes towards sharing information on the job, and a willingness to commit to continuous improvement.

At NGS libraries, the 26-person staff proves repeatedly they they are the best “knowledge navigators” at the Society. Indeed, NGS has its own 10-minute rule: “After 10 minutes of Googling and not finding what you need, call the library reference desk”. Because of strong technical skills and an appetite to try out new things, the library staff are “the ones that make it happen at NGS”, said Canby.

Canby sketched out several fundamental elements of KM. First, identify and aggregate knowledge through traditional tools like bibliographies, forms, and policies. Keep a central calendar of all conferences attended by staff and re-use what they learned there with brown bag sessions for all. Capture jargon used in various divisions and provide a glossary so all employees can recognize that meeting “under the stars” means “I’ll see you in the cafeteria”. At NGS, the library offers *TrendWatch*, an internal analysis showing what’s new, and about 100 staffers attend every briefing. The library has also taken the lead in sharing purchased research that used to be buried in desk drawers and has also taken the lead in advocating RSS feeds as a way to surface fresh information quickly to staffers. The library keeps on its website all kinds of information accessible via BlackBerry so there is a constant effort to “gather the answers together and share them”, said Canby.

The second element is to manage information through online catalogs and indexes. E-Docs used to be orphans and documents were being archived in staffers' email accounts so now a document management system is in place though its implementation phase was very problematic. The Library offers *AskGeo*, a directory service offering answers to all queries from light bulbs to legal. Harmonizing taxonomies is the next project because different formats evolved with their own taxonomies so now maps, books, films will be harmonized in a single topical environment.

Sharing is the third fundamental element. Through lively intranets, collaborative wikis, the library's own website, in-house research guides, and a unified calendar, information can be shared widely without regard to time or distance. Mash-ups are especially attractive at NGS as it plays to the Society's strength by using maps to demonstrate all kinds of relationships in the data.

Creating new content is the fourth characteristic of effective KM. The Library is pro-active and publishes a daily business update that reviews 1200 articles a day to identify the day's best picks. Because "organizations love to read about themselves", Canby said the library offers *NGS in the News* that features bad news as well as good news. *Earth Current*, *Environmental News*, and *Special Reports* are just three of the many examples Canby featured to demonstrate the creation component of KM.

The final component in KM at the NGS is "apply KM to influence", summed up Canby. The library runs learning activities and has transformed periodical shelves into a classroom because face-to-face learning is the most effective. The library sponsors a think tank because the library is the one place where "new ideas that have no owner yet can bubble up", said Canby. The library also administers a trend analysis group that reports yearly and helps NGS stay on top of its field.

Canby said that her staff "feels the pain of being ahead of the curve" but it also has learned to answer the "so what question". Used properly, KM is evolutionary and requires constant looking ahead to keep up with the pace of the new while making time for the best of the traditional library work as well.

Canby's presentation was followed by short presentations by other KM practitioners in the metro area. Denise Bedford, Ph.D., senior information officer at the World Bank and KM teacher at several universities, stressed that changing the work environment is crucial to making KM work. She urged librarians to do a better job of illustrating how the intellectual capital of librarianship contributes to the success of organizations. One dramatic way to promote the sharing required for KM is to incorporate knowledge-sharing into performance evaluations so that contributing your knowledge beyond your own immediate circle becomes a valued behavior.

Julie Bozell, librarian at the law firm of Hogan & Hartson, said that KM effectiveness has become one of the standards that clients expect from their law firms. In her experience, it could take 7-15 years to bring about the kind of changes in a law firm needed for KM implementation. Librarians in law firms are victims of the stereotype and so it is important to meet with counterparts in related groups at the firm to build a robust profile for your library staff.

Jay Leibowitz, Ph.D., professor at Johns Hopkins University, is a noted author on KM topics and has a new book on knowledge retention strategies. He said that an organization could use the capability maturity model to test readiness for KM. Recent studies have shown, he said, that profit enhancements and cost savings can both be results of effective KM. The chief reason for KM's failure is misalignment between an organization's goals and the implementation plan.

Peter Hobby, senior program officer with the Academy for Educational Development, brought his ex-

perience as a social anthropologist to the KM arena and remarked that KM's history has been cyclical and it is now on the rise again. He noted that egos and personalities count for a lot but on the other hand, people love to tell their stories. "Libraries are like Switzerland", he said, "they are safe and neutral places so ideas can be shared there".

Michael J. Novak, senior business operations specialist with the Internal Revenue Service, noted that KM is a management discipline akin to financial management and personnel management. Just now, KM is very important because the brain drain of the baby boomer generation means that organizations have been losing their intellectual capital as retirees take their experience and knowledge with them. "If you do everything right", he said, "it takes 5-7 years to build a sharing culture at work". Novak donated two of his favorite KM books for a raffle for workshop participants.

In addition to Chair Ann Linton, the organizing committee included: Carla Evans, Treasurer, Proskauer Rose LLP; David Pachter, FLICC, Library of Congress; Irene Hoffman, OCLC Eastern; Ana Echerman, Morgan Lewis, and Bockius LLP; Cameron Gowan, Groom Law Group, Chartered; Terrie R. Wheeler, Walter Reed Army Institute of Research.

The event was hosted by the Library of Congress and the Federal Library and Information Center Committee/FEDLINK (FLICC). Sponsoring organizations are DC/Special Libraries Association (DC/SLA), Law Librarians Society of Washington DC, District of Columbia Library Association, FLICC, and OCLC Eastern. This year, DC/SLA was the lead planning organization for the Joint Spring Workshop.

NEH Grants for Local Projects

Folger Shakespeare Library \$157,200 Project Director: Gail Paster Project Title: *Long-Term Residential Fellowships at the Folger Shakespeare Library* Description: Three twelve-month fellowships for one year.

American Councils for International Education \$132,000 Project Director: Jeanette Owen Project Title: *National Endowment for the Humanities Collaborative Research Fellowship/FPIRI* Description: The equivalent of two and a half fellowships for one year.

Folger Shakespeare Library \$68,845 Project Director: Michael LoMonico Project Title: *2008 Tour of Teaching Shakespeare Institutes*.

National Trust for Historic Preservation \$30,000 Project Director: Jill Sanderson Project Title: *Abraham Lincoln and Presidential Power*.

Catholic University of America \$6,000 each to Project Director: Sarah Ferrario Project Title: *Athens the Great? The Ascendancy of the Individual in Classical Greek Historical Thought*; and to Project Director: Adnan Morshed Project Title: *The Architecture of Ascension: Aviation and the Avant-garde Imagination of the Future City*

Librarian Embeds as Amateur Journalist in Iraq

Librarian Shelby Monroe persuaded the 101st Airborne Division to let her be an embedded war correspondent and blogger. In articles and accompanying photographs, she tries to capture the ordinary lives of American soldiers and Iraqis. To go to Iraq, she quit three part-time jobs—in the Chappaqua (N.Y.) Library, the Field Library in Peekskill (where she worked as adult services reference librarian), and in the Village Bookstore in Pleasantville. <http://headsdownspiritsup.blogspot.com/>

Libraries Work as Engines in Communities

In April, ALA issued a new report, *2008 State of America's Libraries*, showing that libraries of all kinds continue to be engines of learning, literacy, and economic development in communities nationwide. Americans believe that school library media centers help to deliver education that prepares the next generation to succeed in a global society. Public libraries are redoubling their efforts to serve linguistically isolated communities.

These are among the findings detailed in the report, released each year as part of National Library Week. Americans check out more than 2 billion items each year from their public libraries, according to the report. The average user takes out more than seven books a year, but patrons also go to their libraries to borrow DVDs, learn new computer skills, conduct job searches and participate in the activities of local community organizations. Average bill to the taxpayer for this remarkable range of public services: \$31 a year, about the cost of one hardcover book.

New studies provide solid evidence that the nation's public libraries are engines of economic growth, contributing to local development through programming in early literacy, employment services, and small-business development. Other studies show that libraries provide an excellent return on investment, have a measurable positive impact on the local economy, and contribute to the stability, safety and quality of life of their neighborhoods.

School library media centers are increasingly in the public eye, but even as their value is ever more widely acknowledged, funding for them continues to lag. In Washington state, a year-long grassroots campaign by three determined Spokane mothers culminated in an all-day summit conference and rally in February that helped produce a bill in the legislature to institute state funding for local school libraries.

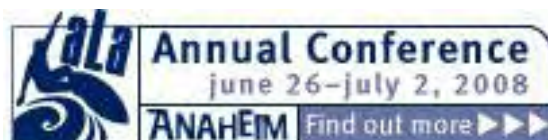
Teenagers are also regular users of public library services. Almost all the nation's public libraries now offer programs tailored to the needs and interests of young adults, and more than half employ at least one full-time staff equivalent in this area, a sharp increase in the past decade.

Other findings in the 2008 State of America's Libraries report:

- Ebooks continued to emerge as a regular feature of libraries of all types.
- Library supporters won an important victory in 2007 when the Environmental Protection Agency was ordered to re-open many of the libraries it had closed in the past year.
- College and research libraries continue to find innovative new ways to meet the rapidly evolving needs of the academy.
- Libraries and librarians of all stripes continue to stand up for the First Amendment rights of all Americans, responding in public discourse and in court to unconstitutional snooping and aspiring book-banners. The right to read — freely and in private — remains a core value of the profession.

The full text of the 2008 State of America's Libraries is available at www.ala.org/2008State.

Remember to Register!



Library of Congress Opens Main Reading Room to Ages 16 and Older

The Library of Congress announced recently that the minimum age for use of the Main Reading Room to access the Library's physical collections for research purposes has been lowered to 16. The previous requirement was that researchers be above high school age. "The Library of Congress is always looking for ways to create new lifelong learners, to expand access to knowledge and to spark the creativity of future generations," said Librarian of Congress James H. Billington.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, there are more than 8 million 16- and 17-year-olds living in the United States. Public users of Library of Congress reading rooms are required to have a reader identification card issued by the Library. The cards are free and can be obtained by presenting a government-issued picture identification card, such as a driver's license, passport or other valid ID. Researchers must register in person at the Reader Registration Station, located in room 140 of the James Madison Building, 101 Independence Ave. S.E., Washington, D.C. The Library cannot accept registrations via mail, telephone or the Internet.

Inspiration Across the Nation Deadline is May 31, 2008 – Act Now!

LC welcomes creative submissions for its *Inspiration Across the Nation*, <http://www.loc.gov/experience/inspire/>, now through May 31, 2008. You must be at least 13 years of age to participate. Each participant is fully responsible for everything submitted and all agree to send no infringing, defamatory, obscene or slanderous content. Upon submitting, participants release all ownership rights to content, which is then released into the public domain.

At LC's discretion, the submission may become part of the online mosaic featured on this Web site and be included in the site's online glossary. If selected, the person's first name, last name, city, state, and local library branch—along with the actual submission—will be displayed. The Library of Congress reserves the right to post or remove content for any reason whatsoever, without consent, and has no obligation to post or retain submissions on its Web site.

LC Features Series for Digital Natives in May and June

A spirited defense of the digital generation will be presented at LC by Steven Berlin Johnson, who will discuss "Everything Bad Is Good for You" at 4 p.m. on Monday, May 12. Sponsored by the John W. Kluge Center, the event is free and open to the public; no tickets or reservations are required. This is the second lecture in a series titled "Digital Natives," the generation that has been raised with the computer as a natural part of their lives, with emphasis on the young people currently in schools and colleges today. The series seeks to understand the practices and culture of the digital natives, the cultural implications of the phenomenon and the implications for education -- schools, universities and libraries.

In his talk, based on his 2005 best-selling book, "Everything Bad is Good for You," Johnson will discuss the response to his argument that popular culture is growing more complex and cognitively challenging, and is not racing downward towards a lowest common denominator. He will also talk about the future of books in this digital age.

Future lectures in the series are:

Monday, June 23: "The Anthropology of YouTube" by Michael Wesch, assistant professor of cultural anthropology at Kansas State University.

Monday, June 30: "Open Source Reality" by Douglas Rushkoff, author of "ScreenAgers: Lessons in Chaos from Digital Kids."

How Many Bloggers Do You Know?

The art of blogging is not only for the college student with too much to say or the unemployed, self-proclaimed “computer-nerd,” according to a recent study by BIGresearch. Bloggers are younger and better educated but earn less than the general U.S. adult (18+) population—and they are more likely to be single, male and actively engaged in new media.

Of those who blog occasionally or regularly (26 percent of the population):

- 53.7 percent are male.
- Nearly half (44.7 percent) are married.
- One in 10 (10.4 percent) are students.
- 28.4 percent hold a professional or managerial position.

Bloggers have a lower average income than most adults (\$55,819 vs. \$56,811) and are better educated (14.3 years of education vs. 14.2). They also tend to be younger, with an average age of 37.6, compared with 44.8 for the U.S. adult population.

Although bloggers are more likely to use new media, the analysis finds that more conventional forms of media trigger their Internet searches. Magazines, at 51.6 percent, rank highest, followed by reading an article (48.8 percent), broadcast TV (46.1 percent), cable TV (44.5 percent), face-to-face communication (42.5 percent) and the newspaper (39.7 percent).

IRS Commends Libraries for Their Business Acumen

Recently, ALA received a letter from the Internal Revenue Service congratulating the Association on the 50th anniversary of National Library Week and thanking libraries for their continued excellent service to the public. Stated the letter from Kathy Petronchak of the Small Business/Self-Employed Division,

“In honor of the 50th anniversary of National Library Week, I would like to offer my personal congratulations and heartfelt thanks for your public service. The relationship between America’s libraries and the Internal Revenue Service is long and storied. We have come from a day when a patron visited his local library to pick up a tax form to today when a new small business owner stops by to learn about his federal tax responsibilities and order the 2008 Small Business Resource Guide online.

We appreciate the important role libraries play in meeting individual needs for tax help and information. A recent example is the excellent assistance librarians provided to taxpayers entitled to Economic Stimulus payments. We are now strengthening our partnership with libraries in a new area, meeting the unique needs of small business tax filers...

The electronic age has changed us all, but libraries remain the heartbeat of their communities.”

A Glimpse into Libraries of Central Africa By Barbara Conaty

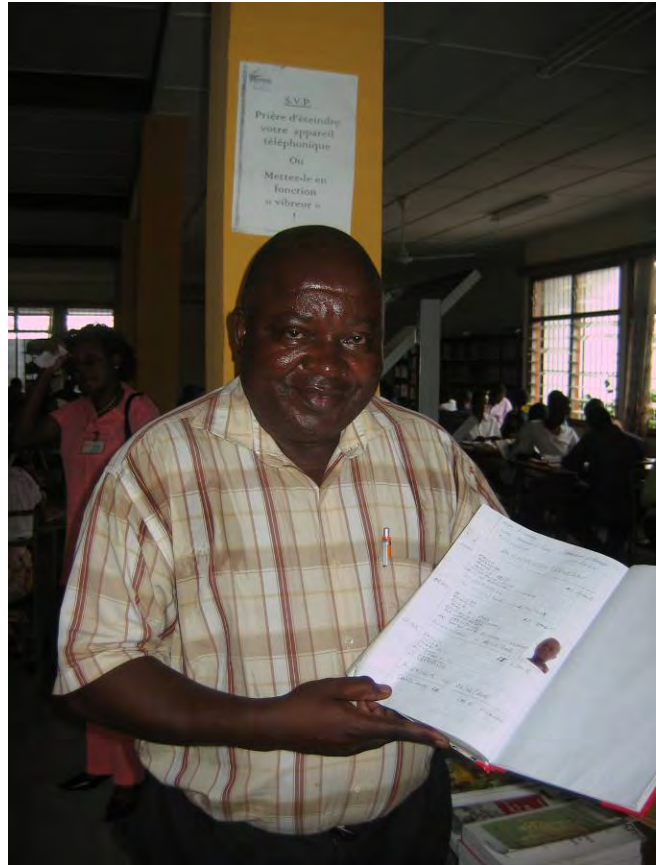
Focus on Kinshasa Municipal Library, Democratic Republic of the Congo

In a city where nine million people make their home, there is just one public library, the municipal library of the Funa district. Headed by Professor Tete who also teaches cataloguing at the University of Kinshasa, (UNIKIN) this library was established with the assistance of the French government in the late 90's as an early bid for normalcy after the civil strife of Mobutu's overthrow.

The library keeps track of its patrons in a big register and in March recorded its 12,000th member. Yearly memberships cost \$10 while a single drop-in visit costs about \$1. There are lower rates for students and membership can be monthly or quarterly. While the municipality absorbs the cost of staff salaries, Prof. Tete relies entirely on membership fees for new acquisitions for the collection.

Till July, 2007, the French sponsor absorbed some of the costs of running the library but the original arrangement expired. The library is seeking other support.

One profit center is the "Cyber Espace", a large room where up-to-date equipment allows scanning, printing, and general computer operations. About 50 people a day use this service to burn CDs, scan documents, and work on the Internet. Rates are comparable to commercial rates. Kinshasa is commonly afflicted by power failures and it is not unusual for the library to be without power for several days. The library does not have plumbing and water must be supplied from outside.



Professor Tete displays patrons register.
Over 12,000 library patrons have registered.

Nevertheless, the reading room of 200 seats is full of patrons. Books are arranged by decimal class number and the stacks are open. One of the stars of the library is the Congo Collection. Books published in or about Congo have been preserved and there is not a comparable collection in the country. One of the features is material collected by Mobutu's personal bibliographer. The ex-president, though not known to be a reader, was a bibliophile so the bibliographer had carte blanche to buy books and have them bound in handsome leather covers. Often, the bibliographer bought second copies for his own collection and occasionally now donates a volume to the library. Though elderly, he is still active. For example, there is Stanley's own account of his five years in the Congo in a Belgian edition with many illustrations and fine binding. Mobutu's library, sadly, was pillaged in the violent overthrow of his regime and his books were lost and probably destroyed.

There is a small children's collection of several hundred titles as well as periodicals. The collection is in French, the official language of the DR Congo. The American Embassy periodically donates an assortment of American titles translated into French and sold commercially by Nouveaux Horizons. For example, Barack Obama's autobiography is on this library's shelves. The library also offers training for library professionals. There is a large lecture hall where training and other events are held. UNIKIN includes a department of library science but enrolment is quite low as librarianship is not an attractive career path. Alain Mesa, director of the American embassy's special library in the Public Affairs Section, makes a point of visiting many libraries in Kinshasa and estimates there are about 600 libraries serving NGO's, government ministries, corporations, churches, and other special groups.

A large generator is being installed at the library and will kick in when the city's power supply fails. It will be shared by a project personally sponsored by Kinshasa's mayor. The library will need to buy 400 liters of diesel fuel periodically to keep the generator going. The library building is also home to AMADAN, the Congolese association for archivist, documentalists, museum workers, and librarians. The groups now publishes a journal whose first issue went out in April 2007. The group meets annually and

Focus on Angola

History shows that this country on the Atlantic side of the sub-Saharan part of Africa has experienced colonial and post-colonial traumas that

have had long and deep consequences for modern Angolans. Since 2002, this country of some 12 million has seen mighty strides in the stabilization of the country. Parliamentary elections last year and imminent presidential elections have seen large parts of the population registered to vote. Angola is rich with petroleum resources and supplies the USA with about a quarter of its oil. The National Library of Angola has begun a major project to modernize the country's library services with a new building and fresh initiatives in acquisitions and services. The director who received her professional librarianship degree in Cuba has a seat on IFLA's standing committee for Africa. There are said to be about 60 libraries in the capital housed in government agen-



Library staff and visitors in Lubango Public Library.

cies, universities, corporations, and non-governmental organizations. A fledgling Angolan library association has applied for an official charter. Educational institutions such as the Catholic University and the Agostino Neto University have small but well-organized libraries. There are also two good libraries in Huila Province where the main city of Lubango was spared most of the ravages of internal warfare.

Focus on Democratic Republic of the Congo

The capital, Kinshasa, is home to some 11 million inhabitants. DR Congo is the size of Texas and is rich in natural resources such as ores, timber, gold. The country has been at war with its neighbors for decades and has also been riven by internal conflicts. The United Nations administers an 8,000-man

protective force in Kinshasa. The Protestant University which also teaches law and is about to open a faculty of medicine is home to a well-equipped library. The University of Lubumbashi in the Eastern Province where mining is a major economic activity also houses a library for its 12,000 students.

Focus on Malawi

This small country of some three million is often described as the poorest nation of sub-Saharan Africa. On the shores of Lake Malawi, revered for its colorful cichlids and natural beauty, this country has invested greatly in education. Malawi National Library Services strives to provide reading materials and promotes reading through initiatives like a village-based reading program for moms and kids. While the universities and their provincial branches maintain libraries, there is a long-standing shortage of materials due to the high cost of acquisitions and problems with collection security.



Organizations such as Books for Africa are attempting to ship books for use in schools. Professional librarians get their training in Malawi and abroad. A master's degree program is now available and completely filled with candidates seeking to sharpen their professional credentials.

Focus on Zambia



Children at the Community Center in Lusaka celebrate books!

Zambia, a landlocked, copper-rich country, is home to about 12 million people. There is a network of public libraries sometimes staffed by trained librarians but severely undersupplied with books. Computers and Internet access are available at the University of Zambia where interest in library careers is so strong that a master's level program is to be added imminently. Zambia is hosting the 18th biannual meeting of the Standing Committee of South, Central, and East African Libraries in July, 2008 and some 500 participants are expected. A shining model for children's services is the Lubuto Library Project headed by Jane Kinney Meyers and headquartered in the DC metro area. In late 2007, Lubuto

opened its first new library for the vulnerable children orphaned by HIV/AIDS assault on Zambia in recent years. Visit this extraordinary project at its online site at www.lubuto.org.

some library leaders attend IFLA every year.



Local Leader Named DCLA Life Member

Former DCLA President Elaine Cline presented the lifetime membership award to Fran Buckley at a reception held by the School of Information at the University of Michigan at the ALA Mid-Winter meeting in Philadelphia on January 12, 2008.

Who Loves a Good Laugh When Reading?

In a recent issue of *Booklist Online*, columnist David Wright ripped loose with some guidelines about men's humor and reading. Wright is a reader services librarian in Seattle and irreverent is about the mildest of the epithets that can be applied to his April 1, 2008 column.

If your readerly instincts are tickled, sign up for the Booklist's Read Alert at http://www.booklistonline.com/default.aspx?page=general_info&id=64

The Alphabet of Manliness. By Maddox. 2006. Kensington, \$15.95 (9780806527208).

Happy Endings. By Jim Norton. 2007. Simon & Schuster, \$23.95 (9781416950226).

I Hope They Serve Beer in Hell. By Tucker Max. 2006. Citadel, \$12.95 (9780806527284)

Look at My Striped Shirt. By the Phat Phree. 2006. Broadway, paper, \$12.95 (9780767924184).

Should You Be Laughing at This? By Huggleikur Dagsson. 2007. HarperCollins, paper, \$14.95 (9780061284892).

The Truth about Chuck Norris. By Ian Spector. 2007. Gotham, paper, \$12 (9781592403448).

Booklist Announces Top 10 for Historical Novels

Brad Hooper issued the 2008 list in the April 15, 2008 issue of the Booklist, just in time for summer reading.

Christ the Lord: The Road to Cana. By Anne Rice. Knopf, \$25.95 (9781400043521). The second volume in this author's fictionalized biography of Jesus sees the Son of God at a major turning point in the preordained path of his ministry on earth; excellent historical fiction with sensitive, humanizing religious interpretation.

Come with Me to Babylon. By Paul M. Levitt. Univ. of New Mexico, \$24.95 (9780826341785). This stirring novel of Jewish immigration from a Russian shtetl to early-twentieth-century New York challenges the clichés of the golden promised land. It shows the grim reality not only of the daring struggle to survive but also of how the dream of success often led to corruption and heartbreak.

Consequences. By Penelope Lively. Viking, \$24.95 (9780670038565). The historical event around which this beautifully crafted family saga revolves is the chaotic Battle of Crete, in 1944, which resulted in an Allied defeat and, in Lively's sensitive rendering, the death of her artist hero.

Fellow Travelers. By Thomas Mallon. Pantheon, \$25 (0-375-42348-6). The McCarthy Subcommittee on Un-American Activities rages against suspected Communists and homosexuals within the federal government and the military, with personal consequences felt by a young senatorial aide and his lover, an older State Department official.

Foreigners. By Caryl Phillips. Knopf, \$24.95 (1-4000-4397-2). In this elegiac trio of stories, the author reclaims the lives of three black men in England—in Samuel Johnson’s day, in 1951, and in the 1960s—and deciphers the toxic social chemistry that first gave each man hope and then destroyed him.

Johnny One-Eye. By Jerome Charyn. Norton, \$25.95 (9780393064971). Never before has the American Revolution been so glorious or tawdry as it is in Charyn’s picaresque adventure of spies, harlots, and Founding Fathers; wartime Manhattan provides the backdrop for a tale of a young double (at least) agent and his infatuation with a sharp-tongued octoroon.

People of the Book. By Geraldine Brooks. Viking, \$15.95 (9780670018215). Brooks fictionalizes the history of an actual book, the Hebrew codex known as the Sarajevo Haggadah, an extremely precious illuminated manuscript originally from medieval Spain; the author traces, in greatly imaginative scenes, where the book has been, ranging from 1894 Vienna to 1940 German-occupied Yugoslavia.

The Reavers. By George MacDonald Fraser. Knopf, \$24 (9780307268105). In the late Fraser’s rollicking Elizabethan-era swan song, hero Archie Noble and friends stumble upon a fiendish Spanish plot to install an impostor on the throne.

Redemption Falls. By Joseph O’Connor. Free Press, \$25 (1-4165-5316-9). In this enthralling saga, O’Connor illuminates a slice of the Civil War and Reconstruction; the stories of Eliza Mooney and her younger brother, Jeremiah, are intertwined with those of General James O’Keefe and his wealthy wife in a vibrant literary collage of letters, personal accounts, transcripts, and newspaper articles.

The Seventh Well. By Fred Wonder. Norton, \$23.95 (9780393065381). In this slim, overwhelmingly powerful novel, it is as if the narrator, imprisoned in Buchenwald, is turning the pages of a photo album, pausing at each turning of the page to remember, for a brief time, the individuals with whom he became familiar during his long, cruel months of incarceration.