



# INDEPENDENT SCHOLARS

The Independent Scholar

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**Cosmos Club  
Washington, D.C.**

Site of NCIS 2007  
Board of Directors meeting

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NCIS Board of Directors Meeting 2007

## NCIS OFFICERS

(07)1 = first terms ends in 07



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# NCIS BOARD of DIRECTORS

Adopted by the Board, October 13, 2007  
(07)1 = first terms ends in 2007

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Ellen Gilbert, Janet Wasserman, Kendra Leonard



Sharan Newman, Yosef Wosk



Surprise birthday party for Ellen Gilbert, center



Thomas Snyder, Mahala Yates Stripling

# **NCIS COMMITTEES**

**2007-2008**

(in formation)

## **Executive Committee**

President  
Vice President  
Secretary  
Treasurer

## **Communications & Media Committee**

Tom Snyder, Chair  
David Sonenschein  
Yosef Wosk

## **Membership Services Committee**

Katalin Kádár Lynn, Chair  
Jan Castro  
Mahala Stripling  
David Sonenschein

## **Organizational Expansion Committee**

(To work with Membership Services on recruitment and retention issues)

Janet Wasserman, Chair  
Mahala Yates Stripling  
Tom Snyder  
Yosef Wosk

## **Awards Committee**

Kendra Leonard, Chair  
Karen Offen  
Shana Penn

## **Nominating Committee**

Janet Wasserman  
Charles "Reg" Shrader  
Bill Engel  
Jo Ann Circosta

## **ACLS Liaison**

Kendra Leonard

## **TIS Editorial Board**

Shana Penn  
Kendra Leonard

## **Book Review Editor**

David Sonenschein

## **Affiliates Liaison**

Mahala Yates Stripling

## **Database Manager**

David Sonenschein

## **Program Committee**

(Reconstitutes itself with volunteer members for the NCIS biennial conference)

## **Local Arrangements Committee**

(Reconstitutes itself with volunteer members for the NCIS biennial conference)

# NCIS Board of Directors Reports

## October 2007

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### President's Report

First of all, I must acknowledge that four members of the Board will no longer be with us: Toni Carey and Dick Magat have served three full consecutive terms and now leave with a fine record of service to NCIS. Margaret DeLacy (*ex officio*) and Alicia Galvan have both proffered their resignations prior to the Board meeting and they too have our heartfelt thanks for the time and concern they gave to NCIS. To all of them, our sincerest appreciation for helping to lead NCIS and for their dedication to the cause of independent scholars.

In this overview, I want to provide a glimpse into the state of our organizational health: our structure and functions, our commitment to our mission, our ability to grow and thrive, and the level of member participation.

First: The structure and functions of NCIS are overloaded with restrictions in its constitution, which are divided into the Bylaws and Procedures Manual, both of which need global revision. The organization needs more operational flexibility to allow the Board, officers, committees and members to meet the challenges of rapid demographic and technological changes.

Second: While we have an understanding of our position as independent scholars, we need to articulate a mission statement that embodies our future as well as our present. The draft statement is good as far as it goes but requires a new look as well as a companion vision statement to articulate our path into the future.

Third: NCIS is stagnant in membership numbers and that does not bode well for our continued existence. We need a well-planned membership outreach and recruitment program that must be implemented as soon as we can dedicate the resources.

Fourth: Low member participation added to stagnant growth burdens the relatively few activists among the members, Board, and officers. Lack of participation is an indicator of low morale or interest as well as evidence that the leadership has not done its job.

In order to establish trust between the membership and the leadership, there must be an honest and frank discussion of our situation without dwelling on the past.

The present and the future of NCIS are far more critical to us and they require our best efforts to grow in membership and take a more prominent role as the leading organization of independent scholars.

Based on my attendance in September at a daylong seminar of the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS), and the information and ideas that I drew from my participation, I have revisited my own effort to launch a scholarly journal for NCIS. In my desire to see this initiative begin as soon as possible I now recognize that my effort, though well meaning and from an abundance of enthusiasm, was overhasty. The scholarly journals in the humanities, as evidenced by those recognized by the ACLS, have rigorous standards for submission and peer review among scholars, and those standards should be adhered to by NCIS. To that end, I propose that we put the new journal on hiatus while we reorganize a mission statement for the journal and craft new submission and peer review procedures. Without having such procedures set up in advance of a new launch, we will be unable to achieve the status and recognition as a scholarly journal in the strictest and most widely recognized sense of the term.

In fairness to those who offered their conference papers from last year, I further propose that all 2006 conference papers submitted to the journal be readied for publication in *The Independent Scholar* as soon as the next issue has begun preparation. The authors will, of course, be informed of the change. I also propose that, in future, conference papers be subjected to the journal's peer review procedure to maintain standards of fairness and equity for all contributors.

As I enter the second and final year of my term as president, I wish to thank most gratefully my colleagues Kati Lynn and Tom Snyder without whom I could not have done a fraction of the work. After my SUV accident, they gave me the reassurance of their concern for my health and their promise that we'd be back together working for NCIS. My heartfelt thank you to Kati and Tom. Without Kati and Tom as officer-partners, I would not have had as much fun.

Respectfully submitted,

Janet Wasserman

# NCIS Membership Committee Report

## June 2006-September 2007

Members serving on the 2006-2007 committee are Board members Jan Castro, Mahala Stripling, and David Sonenschein to whom we owe a great deal of thanks for their time and effort devoted to the committee.

### Committee Activities

The committee met via conference call five times since the NCIS June 2006 Board meeting in Princeton, NJ. The meetings were one hour in duration and all aspects of NCIS membership issues were discussed. All committee members also spent considerable additional time on member retention and member recruitment. David Sonenschein deserves special recognition for volunteering to serve as Database Manager in addition to other committee duties and for creating an entirely new membership database, a huge undertaking, which he performed with efficiency, dedication, and humor. Bravo, David.

Our initial program of work for the year was discussed at our August 26, 2006 meeting. The areas included in the program of work were: membership retention; broadcast emails to our membership; NCIS website; member encouragement; and recruitment of new members.

Progress was made in all areas, often in collaboration with other Board members, officers, and committees. We were able to slow, but not halt membership attrition, to a net loss of ten members, through the efforts of the committee members who personally contacted non-renewing members. Through the vehicle of the newly revitalized *The Independent Scholar (TIS)*—thanks to Linda Lucas—we were able to better communicate with our members and encourage member participation. Our President accepted the committee's suggestion to send broadcast emails to our membership on a regular basis. Combined with better communication through *TIS*, our members were not only better informed, but our leadership made themselves available to the membership for questions or concerns. The membership chair was able to negotiate a direct mail agreement with FedEx/Kinko's so that we are able to mail *TIS* first class mail instead of bulk mail as we had done in the past. This enabled NCIS to use *TIS* for time-sensitive communication with our membership. The Communication Committee, headed by Tom Snyder, was encouraged to redesign the NCIS website in order to make it interactive for our members and make it possible for applications and payments for new membership to be submitted online. We are pleased that the new site is in the final stage of development thanks to the hard work of the committee and Dragonfly Communications. Recruitment of new members has proved to be problematic although we tried advertising

(an anonymous donor paid for a series of five ads) and mailing brochures to members to take to conferences. These efforts brought some results, but not in the numbers we received in the past. Until last year, our website brought us the vast majority of our new members, however, in the past fifteen months we have had a great drop of applications generated through our website causing a substantial decline in the overall number of applicants.

It is clear that traditional methods of recruitment are passé, and that our website is our principal recruiting tool between bi-annual conferences. We are hopeful that the newly designed, interactive site will result in an increase in membership applications.

### Membership Issues

The Membership Committee brought two issues to the table at our Board meeting in October. The first issue of primary interest to our membership was the new dues structure implemented as a result of a Board decision in June of 2006. We had strong input both pro and con from our membership about the income-based structure that had been adopted.

However, several realities had to be recognized regardless of whether we retained our new structure or considered returning to a fixed dues structure. The first was that we had not had a dues increase for the past five years, that some categories of membership were actually money losing and that we had a *declining membership for the four years preceding our change in dues structure*. Membership decline clearly was not caused principally by the new dues change as illustrated by membership attrition during the period when the dues were kept at fixed levels. Although the new dues structure did cause several resignations, we were able to slow but not halt membership decline. Our dues revenue increased by \$2100 for 2007 over the prior year. In fact, with our new category of Life Membership and our Premium Membership as well as more members at the \$60, \$80, and \$100 levels we collected \$3645 more than we would have under the old structure.

The new structure also enabled us to offer dues as low as a \$20 membership to our members at lower income levels. One hundred twenty-four members paid less than \$40 in dues this past year. Some members had voiced objection to dues being based on "household income," although they agreed with the income-based dues structure.

All the above issues and other dues-related concerns were debated seriously by the Board using a thorough

analysis of the membership statistics. The Board decision was unanimously made to retain the income-based dues structure that had been instituted, but to change the criteria to "individual income" in place of "household income."

The second issue considered by the Board was membership attrition. The plain fact is that attrition has plagued NCIS for over five years and is not a consequence of the new dues structure. Non-renewals from 2002 to 2006 added up to 312 members of which 61 members left after one year. Clearly, the cost of "churning" (losing existing members and adding new members) must be slowed in order for the organization to survive. The membership committee recommended that NCIS leadership concentrate on strengthening membership benefits as its most important task, concentrating on the following areas:

1. Update the Grants Handbook (2004 edition) and Membership Survey.

2. Seek to provide access to brick and mortar research libraries.
3. Seek to provide access to JSTOR, MUSE and other online databases. This was by far the issue of greatest concern to our membership as indicated by President Wasserman's membership survey.
4. Provide opportunities for publication for our members through *TIS* and the Canadian Academy of Independent Scholars' new scholarly journal.
5. Increase the frequency and amounts provided for awards and honorariums.

The Board agreed that the above items would be top priority for the organization for 2008 and beyond. President Wasserman will soon be making assignments related to taking steps toward accomplishing these goals; the membership committee will work to support the efforts as appropriate.

Submitted by Katalin Kádár Lynn  
Board Secretary & Membership Chair

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## Treasurer's Update

Please note that the Treasurer's Report as prepared for the October Board meeting will be superseded by the complete financial statement for Fiscal Year 2007 after the books are closed on December 31. The Treasurer will generate the spreadsheet of the final accounting and

we will include it in the next issue of *TIS*. We believe it is vital that we share this information with the membership. Please send your inquiries or comments to Tom Snyder, Treasurer, at <tlsnyder@pacbell.net>.

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## ACLS Report

NCIS continues to benefit from its relationship with the American Council of Learned Societies. Although NCIS is an affiliate member of the ACLS (as opposed to a full member), it is increasingly treated with the same consideration and given many of the same benefits as disciplinary societies. Janet Wasserman and I were invited to and attended the ACLS's annual leadership training seminar for society presidents and executive officers in September, and I will be one of several plenary speakers on the topic of "how societies shape humanities scholarship through relations with members" at the upcoming meeting in November in Salt Lake City.

The society delegates and administrative officers with whom I speak at ACLS meetings are very interested in and receptive of the condition of independent scholars in

their disciplines. A number of groups, including the Modern Language Association, now offer awards and/or grants and travel funding specifically for independent scholars, a clear indicator that they are recognizing independent scholars within their areas. I spoke at length with representatives from the National Communication Association, the College Art Association, and others as to how to provide members with information on NCIS and, in return, how to help our members in those fields participate in their national conferences. I am also in frequent contact with society executives, publicizing NCIS events and opportunities for their members.

Respectfully submitted,  
Kendra Leonard  
ACLS representative from NCIS

*Editor's note:* Following is information supplemental to the Board report regarding ACLS.

# Report on the ACLS 2007 Autumn Meeting

By Kendra Leonard

The ACLS met in Salt Lake City from November 1-5, 2007, for its annual fall meeting. As this meeting served as a retreat, much of the activity centered on presentations, breakout groups, and discussion. The keynote address, made by Robert Post on Thursday evening, will be posted to the ACLS website for download; a transcript will also be made available on the site. My presentation, on the topic of how societies shape humanities scholarship with relations with members, is appended to this report and will also appear on <[www.academic-ronin.blogspot.com](http://www.academic-ronin.blogspot.com)> under a Creative Commons license.

Discussions of particular interest to NCIS included a session on the effect of interest groups and affiliates to societies and managing effective peer review for either publication or conference presentations. The discussion of the effect and management of affiliates offered a number of insights into how other organizations manage these relationships. The majority of affiliate and interest groups are given panel time at societies' main conference as well as meeting time and space at those events. Most societies felt that they needed more interaction with their affiliates, since the only contact is often at conferences. Umbrella groups are encouraging affiliates to participate in blogs and discussion forums hosted by the national organizations, and to encourage affiliate members to join national committees. The College Art Association requires an annual budget from its affiliates; the Modern Language Association (MLA) requires an affiliate audit every seven years, with a complete and detailed accounting of the affiliates' membership roster and publications, quality of scholarship, awards and prizes, and all events hosted by the affiliate. Members of MLA affiliates must be members of the MLA in order to present at its national conference; the MLA feels that their participation encourages inclusivity, socialization, and collaboration. (Rosemary Feal, the executive director of the MLA, can send me their documents for affiliate review if we are interested in establishing a similar standard.)

The discussion on peer review established that all societies use a blind system for conferences (as we do not publish a journal I will not discuss that here, but am willing to provide information if requested). The

American Economics Association pays its peer reviewers, believing that this encourages reviewers to take their duties more seriously. At the American Philological Association, peer reviewers are elected and cannot serve on the board during this term. The American Society for Eighteenth Century Studies is highly inter- and multidisciplinary; its members identify themselves by discipline, and thus they require a much larger pool of reviewers to cover all of the areas needed. Against peer review was the American Political Science Association. Its representative cited the method as being unreliable, an obstacle to innovation, inefficient and complex to administer, time intensive, and insular, in that it establishes artificial boundaries of "who is a peer?" His suggestion was to create a more collaborative process and to allow editors and association presidents to have a greater role in evaluation. However, it was pointed out that while some of these negative assessments can be true, peer review remains the most democratic and palatable process for almost all societies.

Acceptance of and interest in independent scholars continues to rise. Both the African Studies Association and the MLA are focusing on promoting research that does not come from the traditional channels of academia, and are making a serious effort to reach members whose work is not traditionally well represented. The executive director of the American Folklore Society estimates that fully half of its members are outside of academia, and that the society offers professional development activities for those who are considering such careers. Other societies, including those representing anthropology, architecture, and art historians are also reaching out to practitioners in their fields.

In all of these instances, I will continue to reach out to societies with information about NCIS and its resources for independent scholarship.

The next meeting of the ACLS will take place in Pittsburgh, PA, May 8-10.

Respectfully submitted,  
Kendra Leonard  
November 6, 2007

# How societies shape humanities scholarship through relations with members

Presented at the ACLS CAO meeting, November 2, 2007

The National Coalition for Independent Scholars helps shape humanities scholarship by making it possible for our members to contribute to the scholarly dialogue at large.

Our members are drawn from a number of areas, making it a truly multidisciplinary society. They include full-time lecturers, adjunct faculty, graduate students, professionals in publishing, policy consultants, academic and public librarians, and more. Our degrees are in Anthropology, English, History, Linguistics, Women's Studies, Comparative Literature, African History, and American Studies, among others. Many of us in NCIS have chosen to be employed outside of academia. Some enjoy teaching high school. Others like working as freelance writers or consultants. At least one writes best-selling novels.

But while we may have removed ourselves from academic employment, we have not removed ourselves from academic inquiry. Overall, our members are highly educated, generally ambitious, and almost universally isolated, to one degree or another. NCIS brings them together virtually, through a listserv, member directory and newsletter; and in person, through biennial conferences. NCIS encourages members to aim for presentations at their disciplinary conferences and publications in disciplinary journals as well as presentations at our own conference as a goal for their research.

Independent scholars can't ask a departmental colleague down the hall to read a draft of an article; in helping our members network with others in their disciplines and specific areas of research interest, NCIS provides access to educated readers for articles in preparation. ISs can't download an article from JSTOR while sitting in our offices; by the end of 2009 NCIS will be able to offer our members full access to online databases like JSTOR and Project MUSE through a special arrangement with Simon Fraser University in British Columbia. ISs can't apply for departmental travel grants to conferences, or to visit an archive; NCIS offers an annual research grant to help unaffiliated scholars go out in the field or go to archives and conduct research. Sometimes ISs have trouble even getting into archives at all. After all, we carry no university ID, have no letters from chairs or deans; NCIS can write recommendation letters for scholars who need them to get into libraries and collections. Younger ISs often don't have unaffiliated mentors to guide them; NCIS helps put together younger and more experienced scholars at our national meeting's Mentor Breakfast, so that the equivalents of junior faculty in the world outside of the ivory tower can have some "senior faculty" to help answer their questions and concerns.

We shape the scholarship of our members by making it possible for them to go out and do that scholarship. Our members' contributions, in turn, contribute to humanities scholarship overall, something they might be less able to do without the support of the society.

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## ***The Independent Scholar*** **Report to the NCIS Board**

From my perspective, the production of *TIS* runs smoothly each quarter. Members are willing to send articles, and the president's letter and other regular features such as Indy Times and book reviews come in regularly and meet deadlines.

The coordination of printing and mailing is timely, and the issues improve with each edition. Using FedEx/Kinko's for that process is an efficient and effective way to print and distribute the newsletter.

Bravo to Kati and Tom for their work each quarter to distribute *TIS*! My part is simple compared to theirs.

I support wholeheartedly the plan to provide *TIS* electronically from the website to members and to casual browsers, as well. In the interim, to facilitate that service I am willing to forward .pdf files to any member who requests an electronic copy.

My goal is to continue improving on the professionalism of *TIS* as it represents NCIS to the membership and the public. I am open to any suggestion that makes *TIS* a better publication.

Respectfully submitted,  
Linda Lucas, Editor

# Affiliate Relations Report

My affiliate relations work began in early 2006 with a comprehensive listing of affiliates and contact information provided by the outgoing president, Georgia Wright. I contacted each personally by letter, phone, or email. We have ten domestic affiliates and one foreign. Four of them regularly submit information through forwarded newsletters and email agendas. Dr. Wosk from the Canadian Academy of Independent Scholars sent in a piece outlining this Vancouver affiliates' impressive accomplishments, activities, and goals.

The Affiliate Liaison's column appears in each *TIS* and began in Vol. XX, number 1, Spring 2006. At that point, I asked the membership for ideas for a new name and several were forthcoming. Using Mabel Macdonald's suggestion, the title became *Indy Times*.

One 2007 column I will highlight was the reportage on San Diego Independent Scholars' (SDIS) 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration that included a photo and quotations from SDIS president Cathy Blecki and NCIS VP Kati Lynn, who attended the celebration in San

Diego. It provided a benchmark for others on what an organization can accomplish.

My email and regular mail address appear in each column so that affiliates and their members can submit information. A few members have contacted me expressing their appreciation for the column or asking questions about it. Each column concludes with an informative or inspiring "IT Tip."

The intent of *Indy Times* is to establish good will by gathering local affiliate information that will support and inspire others and reporting on it at the national (umbrella) level. The goal is to have all affiliates regularly submit items, giving them bragging rights to showcase their members. This will come as the affiliates develop on the local level. Perhaps it is time to contact each affiliate personally again.

Respectfully submitted,  
Mahala Yates Stripling  
Affiliate Liaison

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# Call for papers

The National Coalition of Independent Scholars will hold its 2008 Biennial Conference from October 24-26, 2008, at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California. We welcome participation by all scholars whose research is not supported by employment in an academic or research institution; this includes adjunct faculty and graduate students. Presenters need not be members of NCIS.

The Program Committee invites proposals for individual papers, formal sessions, and short panel discussions for either the practical track, on independent scholarship itself; or the scholarly track, focusing on presenters' individual research and findings.

Proposals should consist of an abstract of not more than 250 words; a brief scholarly biography (50-100 words) including degrees, scholarly fields and no more than two publications; any audio-visual requirements; and full contact information.

Please use your last name as the document title, as in Smith.doc. As in the past, only one submission per author will be considered. If you are interested in serving as a session chair, please indicate this in your submission.

**Proposals must be submitted as an email attachment (Word only) no later than 12:00 a.m., April 1, 2008, to Kendra Leonard, Program Chair, at caennen@gmail.com.**

Individual paper presentations are limited to no more than twenty minutes to allow for ten minutes of discussion following the presentation. Formal sessions of three related papers may be submitted together for consideration as a whole; please submit the proposals for all three papers together in one email along with a rationale explaining the importance of the topic

and the grouping of papers. Proposals for one-hour informal sessions, including discussions on work in progress; consideration of on a particular theme in independent scholarship; or interest group discussions within a particular area or discipline may also be submitted under the guidelines above.

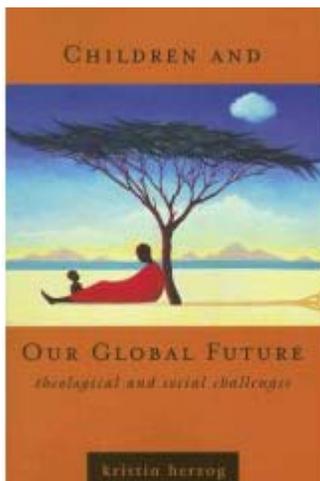
Kendra Preston Leonard

# Book Review

Book Review by John Eastman

## *Children and Our Global Future: Theological and Social Challenges*

By Kristin Herzog. Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2005. Trade paperback, pp. xi, 244.



After reading a little more than one chapter the question arose about the primordial condition of human life marked by original sin according to Augustine and the Buddhist wheel of life as a vicious cycle in a struggle among desire, hate, and ignorance. How does the author address fundamental questions of theology? Does she have the necessary earnestness? I would say she does.

Her use of sources, especially the Old Testament concerns about the value of children, is exemplary. Lutheran and Methodist in terms of upbringing and persuasion and by no means Augustinian, the author recognizes that the relationship of Jesus to children goes beyond theological debate. Although the universal claims of modern theological movements have not taken hold everywhere and many theologians do not fully grasp the significance of children, the author is encouraged by recent developments.

The meaning of being a child is fulfilling one's needs without excess. Using post-1945 theologians, the author is aware of the childlike nature at the center of divine being without stating the ontological fact. Where the Church Fathers and the author would agree is about the state of grace. For Ms. Herzog this means that the child is dependent on grace. Her approach encompasses a great number of world religions and their myths concerning children. While the traditional concept of innocence is discounted, the likeness of the child to God found in ancient wisdom is emphasized. Ancient Israel's view of children is contrasted with the practices of the ancient world, especially infanticide. The author comments on art depicting the childlike nature of existence or the lack thereof and the importance of Philippe Ariès' work on childhood.

As well-informed adults, we know part of the picture about child labor, child combatants, and the lure of the

culture of violence for young people. The author provides context in terms of numbers and places as well as the cultural environment in regions of Africa, Latin America, and southern Asia. Even the United States is cited as an arms merchant and for its questionable recruiting practices.

She also describes alienation from our environment: war, defoliation, and birth defects; the fear of street children; the dangers of virtual reality; and children as slave labor in poor countries and institutional violence in richer ones. The sacredness of creation, an idea revered by great religions and native traditions, can serve as a means to dissolve these negative influences.

Placing a child in a religious community where it can learn and grow and enjoy becoming acquainted with God through the senses in a non-rationalistic way is one means of restoration. The natural inquisitiveness of a child will lead to growth as it is exposed to various religious and cultural communities that live side-by-side in our culture. The eyes of a child mirror the universe.

In reporting on Peruvian Christian initiatives, the author relates her own experiences among Peru's poor children and concludes that it is our mission to listen to their joyful and painful cries in praise of God and to live in solidarity with them without letting theological exchange obscure the cries of those who live on a dollar a day. Neither victims nor saviors, in a communal context children can become agents of change in situations not of their own creation.

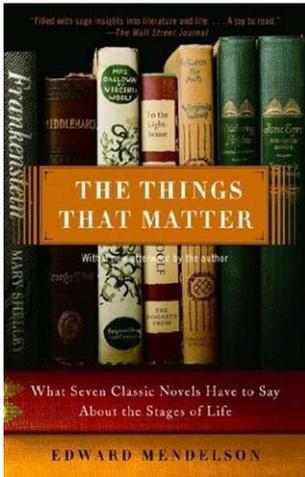
In examining the intercontextuality and interconnectedness of life and the world, the author uses sociology and statistics to bring the problem of children in the present world into focus. A model for life, the child of God is vulnerable, humble, trusting, playful, and reliant on others. Jesus expressed this most succinctly, but all great religious leaders and ethicists knew this: Isaiah, Krishna, Buddha, Confucius, Lao Tzu, and Muhammad.

The author has written this book as a means of informing us about the need to restore the balance in a world that is careening out of control and in which children are being denied their birthright as future custodians of the planet. ☩

# Book Review

Book Review Essay by Jo Ann Circosta

*The Things That Matter: What Seven Classic Novels Have to Say About the Stages of Life*  
By Edward Mendelson. New York: Pantheon Books, 2006. xviii + 260.



For the lay reader, Mendelson's book offers mostly clear, non-specialist language, free of scholarly jargon. For the scholar, the work has substance and insight enough to satisfy. However, while often sensitive and intelligent, Mendelson's latest is hampered in a couple of ways. The first is that his goal of bringing the personal, moral meaning of a novel back to the fore often leads him to overreach into the

personal lives of the authors and make some rather surprising claims, assuming most readers will understand the context and basis for such claims with little or no explanation. The second is the numerous chapter subheadings that have the effect of breaking up the reading.

The book consists of analyses of seven novels written by women in the 19th and 20th centuries, three by Virginia Woolf. Mendelson chose novels by women because women were more "likely to be treated impersonally, to be stereotyped as predictable members of a category, rather than recognized as unique human beings"(xiii). Therefore, women authors were much more motivated to pay attention to the "values of personal life" in order to show their importance and to defend them against the generalizing effects of society. The books discussed by Mendelson are those which he feels most profoundly deal with life's great personal experiences: birth (*Frankenstein* [1818]), childhood (*Wuthering Heights* [1847]), growth into adulthood (*Jane Eyre* [1847]), marriage (*Middlemarch* [1871-72]), personal love (*Mrs. Dalloway* [1925]), parenthood (*To the Lighthouse* [1927]), and life surrendering to the next generation (*Between the Acts* [1941]).

The novels, speaking of a unique individual, about unique experience, cannot be static expressions of ideologies or positions but involve the same "arguments" with ourselves that we partake in as our personalities evolve. Novelists often argue with and write against in later works positions or ideas which they held earlier, much as we do (presumably) in our own lives. Thus, Mary Shelley in *Frankenstein* expresses in one chapter her belief that a person chooses his or her own destiny while in a later chapter she credits the determinative

affects of forces outside the individual. This idea that interesting and meaningful novels emerge from authors' arguments with themselves appears to be the identifying claim in Mendelson's book. Yet, this same claim leads the author to make some far-reaching and striking assertions.

In chapter one, for instance, we find: "Victor Frankenstein's isolating evasions are, among other things, [Shelley's] oblique criticism of her father's evasions" (11). Although Mendelson is familiar with the author's personal life, it is not really clear how he gets from point A (her life) to point B (his rather large assumption about the author's feelings being in the writing). In discussing Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*, he makes the extraordinary leap from an analysis of her questioning the value of trying to deny one's personality to say that it amounts to Woolf's own psychological assessment of her contemporary T. S. Eliot. Simply stating that Woolf's husband Leonard reviewed a pertinent Eliot work in 1920, a few years before Woolf's novel appeared, is hardly proof that she had deduced this about Eliot's psychology and that it entered into her novel.

As the last work analyzed, Woolf's *Between the Acts* is meant to cover the final subject of personal life, death, and the reader rightly expects a close reading of it under that rubric. The chapter begins with the vague thesis that the novel "takes an old person's view of death: the disappearance of a single individual seems less momentous than it might in youth or middle age" (228). For Mendelson, the lesson Woolf offers is more one of resignation. He cites the novel's "indifferent perspective" that Woolf no longer sees the future as "aesthetic, visionary, or moral" but rather made by "primal and archaic impulses" moving toward an unknowable future (238).

However, the reader can just as easily also find in *Between the Acts* a new turn in Woolf's writing away from the refined and visionary aesthetic she had earlier adopted to one more firmly rooted in the actual life-world in which we all exist; an aesthetic that demands a more personal, realist work from the artist and more commitment and interaction from the receiver. Further, the indifferent perspective that Mendelson cites is a hallmark of Woolf's work, something she consciously sought because she believed that the author's ego often intrudes upon and disfigures the literary work. Like so many Woolf critics, Mendelson's reading of *Between the Acts* is heavily colored by her suicide four weeks after

finishing a complete draft of it. For him, it portrays a world of "futility and despair" (238) because that was her own state of mind. Yet, Virginia Woolf always heavily edited and proofread all her writings and counted her husband as her most reliable critic. He disagreed with her negative assessment of *Between the Acts* and they agreed that the deciding vote would be left to Leonard's partner at Hogarth Press, John Lehmann, who felt that the book was indeed worth publishing. She wrote Lehmann that she intended to revise it and have it ready for publication in the fall of 1941 (*Letters*, Vol. 6, pp 482-486). Although she would drown herself within days of this last correspondence, the fact that she was planning revision and possible publication clearly shows an effort to fight back her illness and hold on to the future. One would expect that her troubled state of mind would be at least partly reflected in the book. However, because Mendelson seems to accept uncritically and overwhelmingly this as the overriding influence, he often overlooks the humor and opportunity for a new beginning which are also crucial elements of the novel's moral lessons. Beyond this, his perspective also tends to

diminish the courageous work ethic of one of the twentieth century's most innovative and productive authors whose illness was little understood in her day.

Mendelson is Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University and the literary executor of W. H. Auden's estate. In other words, he is a real luminary in the field of literary criticism. But, I cannot help but think, reading this often insightful work, that the book reflects a certain comfort that comes with such recognition, a "Trust me, I know what I'm talking about," attitude reflective of having achieved such status. At the other end of the spectrum stands a reader such as me, who as an adjunct and independent scholar, still wishes for the same things, basics really, in Professor Mendelson's writing that I try so hard to instill in the writing of college freshman: a clear thesis, clearly defined points held together by transitional words and phrases, and the "evidence" to let me see that the writer does indeed have his facts straight. That is, after all, the hard grind of writing that we all must work through. ☩

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## What we hear from our members...

Opinions expressed by contributors may or may not reflect the opinion of the editor, NCIS, and/or *The Independent Scholar*.

To the Editor:

I was pleased to find my recent book, *Ten Dollars in My Pocket: The American Education of a Holocaust Survivor*, reviewed in the Fall 2007 issue of *The Independent Scholar*. However, I was disappointed that Rhoda Lewin whom I greatly respect chose to give largely an overview of facts, whereas I was hoping for the book to convey the feeling of an epoch. May I therefore be permitted to add two sentences from another review by Walter H. Sokel, University of Virginia?

"This memoir offers a captivating portrait of US society in the early postwar years through the perspective of a sensitive and keenly perceptive young woman survivor of the Holocaust. ... Ample quotations from diaries and letters of that time give the remembered story an extraordinary immediacy."

Elizabeth Welt Trahan  
Amherst, MA

## NCIS welcomes new associate member

**Shauna Lee Lange**

1716 Williamsburg Street, #402  
Alexandria, VA 22314-5844  
shaunalee@charter.net

Shauna is a professional art consultant in Washington, DC. Her main area of interest is art brut (outsider art).

For more information about her other interests and her advisory service, visit her website and blog at [www.shaunalee.com](http://www.shaunalee.com).

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## Moving?



We are happy to post your new address in TIS. Send your updated information to <[linda-lucas@charter.net](mailto:linda-lucas@charter.net)>.

# Independent Scholars + Internet = A Flourishing Field

By Ellen Gilbert

*Editor's note:* Ellen Gilbert is one of our two newest Board members, appointed at the October 2007 Board meeting. Ellen has a D.L.S. from Columbia University and has had a career as a librarian, archivist, and editor in academia and for non-profit educational and professional organizations. She has lectured and written extensively in her fields—the history of the book, American publishing history, and the history of libraries and librarianship. Since 1997, she has been a book reviewer in the social sciences for *Library Journal* and was a proposal consultant for a major scholarly publisher. She has chapters on the University of Toronto Press and Rutgers University Press for the forthcoming *History of University Presses in North America* from Gale. This paper was presented at the NCIS National Conference, “Scholars Without Borders,” in June 2006.

I was recently reading a very good book called *Human Nature* by the distinguished British psychoanalyst D.W. Winnicott. I was working on this paper at the time, and as usual when you are steeped in something, everything else in the world seems to speak

to the project at hand; it is a kind of serendipity to the nth degree. Anyway, Winnicott, a sublimely brilliant but mercifully plainspoken man, was talking about the ways in which pediatricians-in-training might study child development. “There is no need to adopt one method and one method alone for the description of human beings,” he observed. “Rather it is profitable to become familiar with the use of each and every known method of approach.”<sup>1</sup>

This willingness to hear and be enriched by different perspectives resonated for me because my talk today is about how welcoming the talents of a wide variety of scholars and practitioners in the field currently known as “the history of the book” has resulted in a thriving hub of intellectual endeavor. I wondered if this model, which is highlighted by both great interdisciplinarity and the skillful use of the electronic environment, was one from which independent scholars might learn. I want to make clear that I do not believe Winnicott was saying that the students for whom he was writing should all become dilettantes. I think, rather, that he was warning them not to limit themselves to any one point of view, and that an awareness of all the possible approaches to understanding human nature can only be enriching.

“The history of the book” (which many believe began in France as “l’histoire du livre” in the late 1950s) looks at books and anything related to books: binding traditions, writing implements, literacy, reading habits, publishing, modes of transportation, technology (think of eyeglasses!), great collections of books. The field is happily comprised of people – including, by the way, no small number of independent scholars – from all over the world. They have enormously varied backgrounds: among them are historians, conservators, literary critics, biographers, experts in printing, chemists, publishers, librarians, and computer scientists. Independent scholars working in the field regularly appear on the lists of winners of awards from research institutions like the American Antiquarian Society and the Mellon Foundation. Their backgrounds are as varied as any of their “affiliated” counterparts. People identified as

“independent scholars” in The Register of Book History Research, an online website maintained by the University of Birmingham in England, are, for example, authorities on scientific illustration, the bibliography of medicine, copperplate printing, the study of incunabula, the “new historicism” (we IS’s can spew jargon with the best of ‘em), and digital technology.

Independent scholars show up on the rosters of key associations in the field, like the English Book History Postgraduate Network and the Society for the History of Authorship, Reading & Publishing (SHARP). SHARP is a force to be reckoned with in all things related

to the History of the Book. Speakers at the upcoming SHARP conference in The Hague this summer [2006] will be talking about gender and the world of books in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, 17<sup>th</sup> century political pamphlets, censorship throughout history, the use of propaganda, Japanese print culture (“as a lens to understanding Japan-US relations from 1919-1952”), the implications of translations, books in the east, books in the west, textbooks, diaries, incunabula, and artists’ books. Independent scholars will be right up there, contributing to this dazzling program: one from Belgium, for example, will talk about “the international market for Plantin’s

So here’s to a philosophy of inclusion. Surely, the “common good” that Bloom spoke of is to be found among independent scholars. Some of this depends, though, upon our willingness to welcome all serious comers, be they employed, unemployed, laurelled with advanced degrees or blessed with innate genius. Our understanding of the world can only benefit from shared knowledge, and the internet has given us a tool like no other for making such sharing possible.

<sup>1</sup> D.W. Winnicott, *Human Nature*, (New York: Schocken Books), 1988, 7-8.

trend-setting editions with engraved and etched illustrations"; a Dutch independent scholar will discuss "Infamous authors [and] the perspective of the anonymous hack-writer in the 18<sup>th</sup> century," and another will consider "The position of booksellers in the Republic of Letters."

While independent scholars have typically decried their unaffiliated status and the consequent problem of accessing scholarly resources and getting published, these speakers on the SHARP program and numerous other independent researchers have clearly not been too badly hampered in their quest for primary and secondary materials related to their work. SHARP has been exemplary in creating a website that opens many doors for anyone who cares to look, at <[www.sharpweb.org](http://www.sharpweb.org)>. SHARP Web is comprised of hot-linked lists of online research resources, finding aids for archival and manuscript materials, descriptions of ongoing projects, names of scholarly societies, online exhibits, teaching resources, programs in book history, notices of conferences and calls for papers, and selected journals, not to mention directions for how to join SHARP's lively ListServ. How splendid it would be for independent scholars to create similar websites which could cut across disciplines and regions, and share both general and discipline-specific information about our respective interests and accessing scholarly material.

With respect to accessing materials and getting published, a new effort independent scholars should be cheering for is the "Open Access" program run by an organization that literally calls itself "Create Change," at <[www.createchange.org/home.html](http://www.createchange.org/home.html)>. Open Access is cosponsored by some real heavyweights in the world of scholarship: The Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL), the Association of Research Libraries (ARL), and the Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition, or SPARC. I love SPARC's description of itself as "an alliance of academic and research libraries and organizations working to correct market dysfunctions in the scholarly publishing system." Right now, there are over 1,000 peer-reviewed journals in the Directory of Open Access Journals (<[www.doaj.org](http://www.doaj.org)>) with more appearing online every month.

It should also be noted that there is a place where democracy already prevails, and that is in the "special collections" (rare books, archives, and manuscripts) departments of academic and research libraries. We are all on the same footing when using these treasure troves, since everyone is subject to the same restrictions regarding proof of scholarly intent, working in a particular room at specific times of the day and week, using pencils, etc. Ironically, it may be easier for independent scholars to gain access to primary sources in rare book rooms than to secondary sources in the same libraries!

The new online access to many digitized books, of course, also provides limited help in doing our scholarly work away from the libraries.

Before I close, I would like to say a few more words about the question of affiliation. While we independent scholars might miss the greater credibility traditionally accorded to bona fide members of academic departments, we are blessed to be unburdened by the travails of having to "publish or perish" in the name of tenure. Nor do we have to toe the line by teaching and writing about a specific canon or any other traditionally received wisdom in a given area. The literary critic Edward Said once complained that "the university experience more or less officially consecrate[s] a canon of works, a band of initiate instructors, a group of younger affiliates ... [which now] actually exclude more than they include."<sup>2</sup>

Similarly, in *The Closing of the American Mind*, Allan Bloom reverently spoke of universities of the past noting that "the relations among [faculty] and between [faculty] and students were the revelation of a community in which there is a true common good."<sup>3</sup>

So here's to a philosophy of inclusion. Surely, the "common good" that Bloom spoke of is to be found among independent scholars. Some of this depends, though, upon our willingness to welcome all serious comers, be they employed, unemployed, laurelled with advanced degrees or blessed with innate genius. Our understanding of the world can only benefit from shared knowledge, and the Internet has given us a tool like no other for making such sharing possible.

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*Editor's note:*

Other published works of Ms. Gilbert include:

*The House of Holt, A Documentary Volume (Dictionary of Literary Biography Series)*, Gale, 2003.

"Confidentially Speaking: American Libraries and the USA Patriot Act," *Library Philosophy & Practice*, vol. 8, no. 1, Fall 2005.

"What Women Can Do When They Put Their Minds To It": Elaine Showalter and Virago Press, *The Journal of the Rutgers University Library*, vol. 61, 2005.

Contact Ellen at <[edg5@columbia.edu](mailto:edg5@columbia.edu)>

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<sup>2</sup> Edward Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), 1983, 21.

<sup>3</sup> Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind: How Higher Education has Failed Democracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today's Students*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987), 244.

# The Art of Biography, Part 3

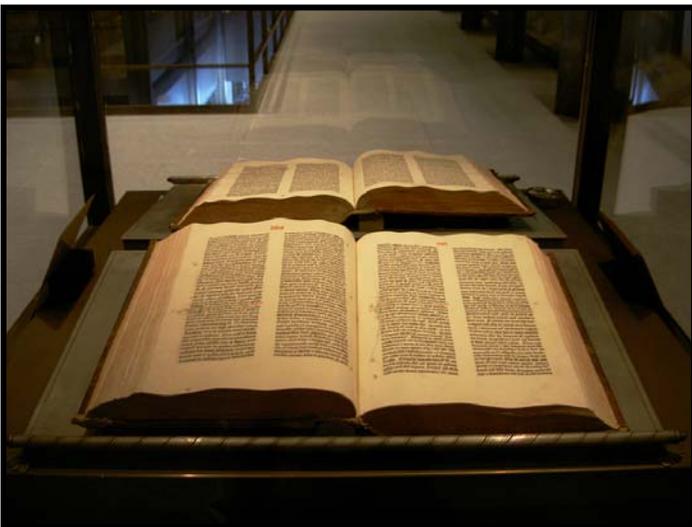
By Mahala Yates Stripling

*Editor's note:* This is the third of a six-part series that derives from Stripling's step-by-step process researching and writing a biography. It concludes with its publication. Send your comments and questions either to the series contributor, Mahala Yates Stripling, at <Dr.Rhetoric@aol.com> or if you wish them to be considered as a Letter to the Editor, to Linda Lucas at <linda-lucas@charter.net>. The following article is excerpted from the forthcoming *Richard Selzer: A Biography (Reinventing His Life)*.

## III. The Interview

In 1993 Professor Betsy Colquitt, my master's degree committee member, said to me, "You have a living subject. Go interview him." That was my first interview with Richard Selzer, Yale surgeon-writer, who is now my biography subject. For our ninth interview, last October, I arrived twenty minutes early for the 10 a.m. meeting at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale and waited on the plaza. Selzer saw me sitting 30 yards away from the main entrance and came out to greet me. As he gave me a hug, I noted his ribs had healed from a January fall on the ice and that his low vision problems did not keep him from coming out to meet me.

Chatting like old friends, we walked up to our meeting place on the mezzanine level, just steps away from the Gutenberg Bible, which is left open in a display case. Selzer confirmed that the librarians turn one page each day.



The 1454 Gutenberg Bible at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.



The Beinecke is a windowless six-story tower that houses priceless old papers that would deteriorate in direct sunlight. So its Danby marble walls transmitted a subdued, ethereal light down upon the large round table Selzer led me to. But there were no chairs.

Almost eighty, Selzer waved off my offer of help, went over to a stack of heavy metal chairs, and brought two back, one at a time. He had been ill and was tired from giving a keynote address in North Carolina. But in this action, I see his habitual courtesy and the former surgeon who maintained a schedule no matter how he felt.

We sat down, but before I could refer to my questions, Selzer softened his eyes and said, "I want to tell you something. I have to tell you that the older I get the more difficult it is for me to write. Lately I'm finding it arduous, but before I would leap to my desk and let it flow out of me." The last time I heard these words was in 1993, and Selzer was still recovering from a 1991 coma caused by Legionnaire's Disease contracted on a book tour. He feared oxygen deprivation to his brain for those three weeks had caused his "image-maker" to fail. But slowly his abilities came back, even if "not to the feverish degree that existed before," he said then.

*Editor's note:* For a great companion article written about Dr. Selzer, go to: <<http://www.courant.com>>, search for "Surgeon Takes a Scalpel to Words," by Kim Martineau, Hartford Courant, 9 Dec. 2007. Author Stripling was interviewed for the article.

“There is a certain word, *ballon*, in ballet, when the dancer makes a leap up. It’s the lift that he or she has and then seems to pause at the apex for a second, seems to hang in the air before descending--and that lift and pause is called *ballon*. Before my illness, I had *ballon*. I could leap and then descend. I probably lost something in that illness. It doesn’t seem to me quite so effortless. It’s as though the ballet dancer has gotten cold and arthritic, and he can’t quite make it up in the air the way he did before. I have that feeling.”

But sixteen years after his coma—and in spite of his self-professed frailties, Selzer is still working. Besides all of his eleven books remaining in print, Yale University Press will publish a book of his letters and a book of his diaries this spring. Then a novel he wrote fifty-four years ago, when he was a 26-year-old second year surgical resident drafted into the army and sent to

Korea, will be next. The novel, retitled *Knife/Song/Korea*, describes his work south of the demilitarized zone, including delivering the babies of natives and amputating legs in a country thick with landmines. He reflects on those times: “I felt inadequate because I had total responsibility, so to keep my sanity I decided to keep a journal of my experience. I wrote every day and just before I returned to the states, I decided to turn it into a novel. There was a good reason for me to change it into fiction; I did not want to offend anyone. For all these years, I completely repressed what had been written because it was such a difficult period in my life. Finding the novel in the archives was a literary incarnation. There’s a lot of curiosity about it. Just the way it resurfaced. Even though I’m not sure it will be to my credit, I’d like it to see the light of day. There are still three new books coming out of this old carcass, which is exciting because I’m 79 years old and still functioning.”

These are the words of a disciplined and resilient man still passionate about his work. Essays, a play, and stories will be collected into a new anthology, his 9<sup>th</sup> book since the coma. I always love to hear the genesis of a new story, and when he recounts it, my ears perk up. One day he was walking across the Green Island Bridge in his homeland, Troy, New York, and saw a half moon in the sky. “I took it as a sign,” he says of his new story, “Half Moon,” about Henry Hudson’s third voyage in search of the direct route to the Indies. “Hudson came up the great river that’s named after him. He went as far as what is now called Troy and couldn’t go any farther.

Then I knew I must write an account of that third voyage.” He told it through the eyes of a sixteen-year-old Dutch boy, a gifted youngster taken from an orphanage by a childless Jewish surgeon who wants to convert him and teach him medicine. “But he could never accept Judaism. He just couldn’t do it. So his mentor sent him away!” The boy went to the docks of Amsterdam where Henry Hudson took him on board as a cabin boy. Selzer

named his hero Kees Nooteboom—after a Dutch author he admires, Cees Nooteboom, “who helped shape me into the kind of writer I am.” Selzer read me a passage from the story, but I will have to wait for the publication of the obviously autobiographical piece to learn of Kees’ fate.

As our two-hour talk wound down, Selzer’s voice was thin but thoughtful: “I’m lucky in a way because I found my calling in surgery and I also found my destiny in writing. I’m very happy to have lived those two lives and to have

succeeded in both beyond my imagination. I never expected that my writing would be read by so many generations of medical students, nurses, and doctors all over the world. It’s amazing to me.” I felt heartened. Although Selzer is an obsessive stylist fearful of not being good enough, he is no longer refuting his merit as a biography subject. In the end, history will determine his stature. As we exited the building to head for lunch, Richard Selzer showed me his sturdy wooden cane stored in the cloak closet. His practical wife, Janet, had triple-tied it with red yarn at its base, so he won’t forget it. It helped Selzer with his balance after his coma and again following last winter’s fall. But this time he left it behind, taking my arm for the short walk down Wall Street to Mory’s.

#### Author notes:

- The Selzer Archive is at UTMB, Moody Medical Library in Galveston, Texas.
- Mory’s, a restaurant at 306 York Street, New Haven, Connecticut, is filled with old Yale memorabilia.
- For interviews, I use a Canon Power Shot A70 camera and a RadioShack CTR-122 audio recorder, with LN 90-min tapes.

#### Expect this next:

In this piece I placed my subject in a particular place and time to get a substantive portrait that includes his interior life. Next will be a discussion of authorial tone.



*In the old days the writers of note died, and then they were taken up. But in this day of ours, when time is compressed, it happens that a writer such as myself is taken up before he is dead. It’s awkward. It seems that it has come out of its time—that I should have died. And then it would be easier for everybody.*

*But then, on the other hand, for a person like you, you have the singular advantage of having looked at me, talked to me, and heard me. The biographers of yore did not have that. But you can feel my personality and record it in your writing.*

— Richard Selzer to author (1998 interview)

Photo courtesy of Yale Medicine/TerryDagradi

# How Research in France Affects My Work as a Poet, Historian, and Editor

By Bette W. Oliver

*Editor's note:* Bette W. Oliver is an independent scholar specializing in late eighteenth-century France. She is the author of *From Royal to National: The Louvre Museum and the Bibliothèque Nationale* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), has written articles and papers on the arts, museums and libraries in eighteenth-century France and published eight volumes of poetry. Her paper was presented at the NCIS National Conference, "Scholars Without Borders," in June 2006.

When I was in high school, I dreamed of becoming a foreign correspondent, preferably in Paris. With that goal in mind, I attended The University of Texas at Austin and earned a bachelor's degree in journalism, followed by a master's degree twelve years later. By that time, married and with three small children, my dream of becoming a foreign correspondent seemed distant indeed. However, while working as a writer and editor in various venues over the years, I continued to pursue my interest in French history and culture, even managing to live for one year in Brittany. Finally, in 1987, I decided to return to The University of Texas to work on two graduate degrees in Modern European History.

Meanwhile, only one year before, I had begun working as the assistant editor of *Libraries & Culture*, a multi-disciplinary scholarly journal published quarterly by The University of Texas Press. At that time, I knew very little about the field of library history and was surprised at the number of articles sent to *Libraries & Culture* for consideration. As my editorial work required that I read all of the articles, essays, and book reviews submitted to the journal, I began to gain a real appreciation of the role of libraries and archives in preserving the cultural record. Reading articles such as "Biography of a Library: The Western European Manuscript Collection of Peter P. Dubrovski in Leningrad" or "Politics and Scholarship in Seventeenth-Century France: The Library of Nicholas Fouquet and the College Royal" increased my interest in libraries as they related to European history.<sup>1</sup> In addition, as part of my doctoral program, I took three courses at the Graduate School of Libraries and Information Science: two on books, libraries and civilization, taught by



The Louvre Museum, Paris

Donald G. Davis, Jr., the editor of *Libraries & Culture*, and one on archival research, taught by David Gracy, the current editor.

By the early 1990s, I had begun making annual trips to Paris to conduct research at the Bibliothèque Nationale, and the Archives Nationales, for my dissertation entitled "Elisabeth Vigée-LeBrun, Jean-Baptiste Pierre LeBrun, and Marguerite Gérard and Their Roles in the French Artistic Legacy, 1775-1825." During this period of research and writing, I became keenly aware of the vast amount of material preserved in the French national library and archives. I also gained a new appreciation of those late eighteenth-century curators and librarians who had worked to protect their valuable national collections in the chaotic period following the French Revolution. This new interest in the preservation of documents and

correspondence led me to conduct further research on Jean-Baptiste Pierre LeBrun, an ambitious, well-connected Parisian art dealer and connoisseur involved with the selection and restoration of paintings confiscated by Napoleon's armies throughout Europe between 1794 and 1815. His work at the Louvre, as it was transformed from a royal to a national institution, is documented in a just-completed manuscript for Lexington Books entitled *From Royal to National: The Louvre Museum and the Bibliothèque Nationale* (published 2007).

After I completed my dissertation in 1997, I began to present papers at the annual conferences of various French history organizations on the topics of the confiscation and preservation of national collections in times of war and revolution, and on the efforts of those responsible for their protection.<sup>2</sup> Research for these papers led me to discover such figures as Jean Roland, and his wife Manon, Sébastien Roch Nicolas Chamfort, Jean-Louis Carra, and Pierre-Louis Ginguené, all of whom were initially involved in preserving and enriching the collections at the Bibliothèque Nationale. It was Roland, serving as the interior minister in 1792-93, who assumed responsibility for the protection of cultural monuments from theft, vandalism, and destruction. Serving under

<sup>1</sup> Patricia Z. Thompson, "Biography of a Library: The Western European Manuscript Collection of Peter P. Dubrovski in Leningrad," *Journal of Library History* 19, no. 4 (Fall 1984): 477-503; E. Stewart Saunders, "Politics and Scholarship in Seventeenth-Century France: The Library of Nicholas Fouquet and the College Royal," *Journal of Library History* 20, no. 1 (Winter 1985): 1-24. Note: The *Journal of Library History* was the title of the journal until 1988, when it became *Libraries & Culture*; in 2006, the title was changed to *Libraries & The Cultural Record*.

<sup>2</sup> Papers have been presented at meetings of the Western Society for French History, the Consortium for Revolutionary Europe, 1750-1850, the Society for French Historical Studies, and the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies.

him as the first co-directors of the Bibliothèque Nationale were the writers Chamfort and Carra, who supervised personnel changes, increased public access, and managed a shrinking budget in their efforts to make the library a visible symbol of republican pride. Ginguené, a literary historian, who served as the

director of the Department of Public Instruction from 1795-98, was in charge of allocating funds for the national library

and museum, as well as for theaters, festivals, and education. He was also responsible for publishing Chamfort's collected works in 1795, thus enduring that his often-quoted aphorisms would continue to delight future generations of readers. Roland and Carra, members of the Girondin faction, and Chamfort, friend to many Girondins, were either executed in October 1793 (Carra and Madame Roland) or took their own lives (Roland and Chamfort). By 1795, only Ginguené remained alive.

That such immense efforts were undertaken to ensure French cultural and intellectual life in the midst of the turbulence of the French Revolution is truly remarkable. In fact, heroic efforts were often necessary to preserve valuable materials, especially those that had belonged to the royal family, or to aristocrats; these were judged "useless" by the revolutionary government. Sometimes, against orders, these tainted items were disguised and stored in unusual places, a number of which were not discovered until the renovation of the Bibliothèque Nationale in the late nineteenth century.

Inspired by my research on those who had contributed greatly to the creation of new public institutions, such as the Louvre Museum and the Bibliothèque Nationale, I wrote two essays about the development of French libraries for *Libraries & Culture*.<sup>3</sup> I also alerted my French history colleagues to book review opportunities at the journal, and looked for appropriate books to order that dealt with the preservation and enrichment of collections. Although not in the sense that I had earlier imagined, I was indeed becoming a foreign correspondent.

<sup>3</sup> Bette Oliver and Hermina Anghelescu, "The History of Libraries in France: Histoire des Bibliothèques Françaises," 4 vols., *Libraries & Culture* 30, no. 4 (Fall 1995): 409-427; Bette Oliver, "Safeguarding the Nation's Past: Chamfort's Brief Career at the Bibliothèque Nationale," *Libraries & Culture* 34, no. 4 (Fall 1999): 373-379.

While my work as editor and pursuer of French history became ever more intertwined, my poetry also came to include those fascinating characters from late eighteenth-century France. The third collection, entitled *Souvenir*, benefited greatly from my research on the artist Elisabeth Vigée-LeBrun, which had included visits

to Versailles, Marly-le-Roi, and Louveciennes, where Vigée-LeBrun is buried. At this



The Bibliothèque Nationale de France, seen from the right bank of the Seine river.

time, the Palais Royal, and its past denizens, also began to figure

prominently in my poetry. Every day, on my way to the Bibliothèque Nationale, I walked through the gardens of the Palais Royal and gradually began to treasure that particular space in the heart of Paris. To paraphrase one of my poems on the topic, I found that "the past is always present at the Palais Royal."<sup>4</sup>

My fourth volume of poetry, *Voyages*, featured poems on eighteenth- and twentieth-century Paris, as well as a section on Italy, where I found the past to be very much

alive. The next volume, *Images*, focused on nineteenth- and twentieth-century Paris, and also included a poem about research and the necessity for accuracy. This poem, entitled "Check Your Sources," recalled advice given in journalism school: "Check your sources/ Then check them again/ . . . And it wouldn't hurt/ he said/ to do it a third time./ It amounts to a cardinal sin/ he warned/ to put false words/ in another's mouth./ And I heard/ and I believed/ what the good professor said."<sup>5</sup>



"...the past is always present at the Palais Royal"

The most recent volumes, *Passages* and *Confluences*, the latter of which includes a section on Russia, feature more poems on today's Paris, but always with the presence of the past noted, as in the poem entitled "Foreign Cities." In this poem, I write of the "sudden awareness/ felt in foreign cities/ whose former inhabitants/ sometimes choose/ to stride along beside us/ and from time to time/ to engage/ in silent conversation/ before they disappear/ to keep their next appointment."<sup>6</sup>

Another poem in *Confluences* concerns my current research topic, or at least one aspect of it. As mentioned earlier, many moderate members of the revolutionary government suffered persecution and death in 1793 and 1794. François Buzot, a deputy in the National Convention from the Department of the

<sup>4</sup> Bette Oliver, "At the Palais Royal," in *Souvenir* (Morgan Printing, 1997): 21-30.

<sup>5</sup> "Check Your Sources," in *Images* (Morgan Printing, 2001): 75-77.

<sup>6</sup> "Foreign Cities," in *Confluences* (Morgan Printing, 2005): 71.

Eure, managed to escape from Paris with a group of his friends. They went first to Caen in Normandy, where they hoped to stir up a rebellion against the government in Paris. They were not successful, but their words did influence a young woman named Charlotte Corday, who decided to take action herself. She left Normandy for Paris, managed to get an appointment to see the radical Marat on the pretext that she was bringing news from the Girondins in Normandy, and proceeded to stab him to death. This event was immortalized in David's painting of Marat dying in his bathtub for which Corday was duly executed.

Buzot and his friends next tried for better luck in the Bordeaux region, where they had friends and relatives. They remained there in hiding until the summer of 1794. With representatives from Robespierre's faction closing in on Buzot and his friends, some of them elected to commit suicide rather than submit to execution. Manon Roland had written in a letter to Buzot, while she was in prison, that he should die as he had lived, as a free man, and

he took her advice. However, before taking his life, he had given his memoirs to a trusted couple for safekeeping; they were later executed for helping the Girondins, but Buzot's memoirs were found and fortunately preserved. They are exceptionally well written and filled with moving images, as well as lucid arguments, on behalf of the moderates with whom he worked. Buzot's ideas on government, the rule of law, the welfare of the people, and the dangers resulting from an ill-informed and gullible public are as true today as when they were written.

Reading the words of Buzot, the beloved of Manon Roland, in the agreeable silence of the Bibliothèque Nationale's Department of Manuscripts, I was transported from 2005 back to 1794, and it was inevitable that a poem should result from this experience.<sup>7</sup> Entitled "The Music of His Words," I believe this poem encapsulates what I have been expressing about the intersections of journalism, historical research, and poetry in my life, and I would like to close with these words on Buzot.

<sup>7</sup> "The Music of His Words," in *Confluences* (Morgan Printing, 2005): 89-92.

## The Music of His Words

Reading the words  
of one long dead  
written in his own hand  
in some certain haste  
on fine grade paper  
still unyellowed  
these two hundred years  
the very ink  
seemed to command  
me to listen –  
to listen to the music  
of those well-chosen words  
that necessary testament  
to what had been  
and to what almost was.

Sitting there  
in the fading winter light  
of the old bibliothèque  
Surrounded by voices  
from the near distant past  
I willingly surrender  
to the insistent melody  
appearing before me  
and time ceases  
to exist.

I find myself,  
instead,  
standing just behind  
looking over the shoulder  
of the one  
who pens these words  
by candlelight –  
listening for footsteps  
sure to come  
before the night was done –  
sharing these words  
of hope and sorrow  
pain and regret  
and occasional anger  
but never words  
of doubt  
nor of remorse.

I can hear him clearly now  
his voice determined to be heard  
can see his slender fingers  
racing across the clean white  
pages  
pausing now and then  
to cross out neatly  
the occasional misspelled word  
for there is not time  
to make a perfect copy now –

There is so much  
he wishes to explain  
before he is finished  
here tonight  
so much to explain  
to trace the tumult  
of these recent months  
so that others  
might begin to understand  
in the days ahead  
still so much to record  
in the little time remaining –  
for he must leave something  
of himself behind  
some living remnant  
that cannot be erased  
that can be recognized  
by another caught in time  
somewhere  
across the ages –

And now  
the music of his words  
lives on  
within this temple  
filled with winter light  
the music of his words  
lives on  
here  
within these still white pages.



# Indy Times: Affiliate Liaison's Corner

By Mahala Yates Stripling

Indy Colleagues,

On my recent trips to New York City and New Haven, CT, I discovered that The New York Public Library and Yale University subscribe to *The Independent Scholar*. So here's a shout out to those readers, in the grand reading room of the NYPL—it's two football fields long—and in the cozy coives of the gothic Sterling Library. Also, to those who are reading this in a comfortable easy chair at home, here's the latest news from our affiliates. Send your affiliate news to: <DrRhetoric@aol.com>.

## Center for Independent Study

<http://www.cistudy.org>



CIS meets in the Hall of Graduate Studies, Yale University

This year the CIS reading group explores the friendship binding Turgenev, Flaubert, and Henry James, by reading *Fathers and Sons*, *A Sentimental Education*, and *The Ambassadors*.

In May, Ruth Schmitt presented "Crossing the Language Barrier," relating the importance of good translations, especially when colloquialisms, local dialects, and slang—indicating class or other distinctions—makes it hard to accurately represent a foreign culture.

## The Northwest Independent Scholar's Association

<http://home.pacifier.com/~mdelacy/nisa>

At the September meeting of NISA, their guest speaker, Joshua Binus, presented "How the West Was One: Extra-high Voltage Electrical Transmission and the Origins of the Western Grid." Binus, a teacher and executive director of Northwest History Network, has worked for the Fort Vancouver National Historic Reserve, Oregon Historical Society, and Pacific Historical Review. He talked about how the modern electrical infrastructure of the American West took shape in the mid-twentieth century, and by the late 1960s, the extra-high voltage transmission system, the Pacific Northwest-Pacific Southwest Intertie, allowed on-demand energy exchanges across many states and parts of Canada. Binus explained the importance of the West's sub-grid integration that links construction and operation of the Columbia River hydro system.

### Today's IT tip:

While still in high school, Stephen King's first editor gave him this advice about removing irrelevancies, "Write with the door closed, rewrite with the door open. Your stuff starts out being just for you, in other words, but then goes out. It belongs to anyone who wants to read it. Or criticize it." (*On Writing*, 57).

## The Institute for Historical Study

<http://www.tihs.org>

In their fall newsletter, President Jules Becker notes the passing of their Founding Director, Frances Richardson Keller, who helped to establish the meritorious concept of independent scholarship at the end of the 1970s.

## Capital Area Independent Scholars

We were pleased to make a new friend, Edith Couturier, at the NCIS Board meeting in Washington, D.C.

N.B. NCIS affiliate websites and contact information is here: <http://www.ncis.org/affiliat.htm>

## San Diego Independent Scholars

<http://www.sdscholars.org>

On Saturday October 13, 2007, seventeen members and friends came together to remember Jane Ford, founder, independent scholar, and generous friend. We shared photographs and memories. We appreciated Dr. Bill Fischer, SUNY-Buffalo, for his thoughts about Jane as a student in his Henry James seminar, and afterwards, as they kept contact through Christmas cards, and finally renewed their friendship in person when he and his wife moved to Oceanside after he retired. Special thanks go to Dr. John Halperin who made the opening and closing remarks, emphasizing the high quality of Jane's work as a scholar. Ariss Treat closed our memorial by reciting a poem from the Greek anthology. Gerry Horwitz organized the "high tea" refreshments. We also thank Joan Casale, the Gartners, Bill Houghton, and all who brought food. The Jane Ford Memorial fund was established to honor this fine scholar and good friend. —Catherine Blecki, SDIS President

Other news from SDIS's *Scholar's Notebook*:

- Tom Samaras, who developed a theory of aging based on the Second Law of Thermodynamics, spoke on his book, *Human Body Size and the Laws of Scaling: Physiological Performance, Growth, Longevity and Ecological Ramifications* (Nova Science Publishers, NY). He applies physics, engineering, and configuration management to body size, health, longevity, and human performance. What is the role of height in chronic disease and longevity?
- Food for political thought: Dr. Samuel L. Popkin says a winner must be adept at the two-step, with success determined by the ability during the nomination and then the general election to move smoothly a little to the left or right—and back again. While keeping the base fired up, the candidate must not abandon the center.
- SDIS formed a new study group, Colloquy Café, indicating their eclectic group and informal style.

# News you can use and member tidbits...

## H-Net

Member **Joanne Lafler** shares the following information:

We always like to know whether independent scholars are included in programs that are announced on H-Net. (For one thing, it alerts program officials that independent scholars exist!) As a follow-up to an announcement I posted concerning the new Institute for Historical Studies at UT Austin, I received this reply:

Dear Ms. Lafler:

We would indeed be happy to consider appropriately qualified independent scholars for Institute fellowships or paper workshops.

Yours sincerely,  
Julie Hardwick  
Associate Professor & Director of the  
Institute for Historical Studies  
Department of History  
University of Texas at Austin  
Austin, TX 78712  
(512) 475-7221  
<http://www.utexas.edu>

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## New York Times online

Check out these links for timely information at  
<http://www.nytimes.com>

**EDUCATION** | November 20, 2007  
**Decline of the Tenure Track  
Raises Concerns**  
By Alan Finder

**SCIENCE** | November 27, 2007  
**Basics: The Dance of Evolution,  
or How Art Got Its Start**  
By Natalie Angier

**TECHNOLOGY** | October 22, 2007  
**Libraries Shun Deals to Place  
Books on Web**  
By Katie Hafner

## World's largest collection of incunabula will be digitized!

Member **Bettina Wagner** <Bettina.Wagner@BSB-MUENCHEN.DE> shares the following information:

The Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München (BSB) holds the largest collection of incunabula world wide, which currently comprises 9708 editions in nearly 20,000 copies. The collection is described in a printed catalogue (BSB-Ink) which is freely accessible online: <http://www.bsb-muenchen.de/lnkunabeln.181.0.html>

It is a great pleasure for me to let you know that the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft has granted funding for a complete digitization of the collection.

Over the coming years, one copy of each 15th-century edition held in the BSB will be digitized. It is intended to start digitization with the ca. 1150 incunabula in German and the ca. 680 editions of which the BSB holds the sole surviving copy in a German library. After that, books printed in the German-speaking countries in the 15th century and books printed abroad will be digitized. Illustrations (mainly woodcuts) will be indexed with an iconographic classification system.

The digital reproductions will be made accessible through the electronic catalogue BSB-Ink and other databases (e.g. OPAC, union catalogues). Currently, BSB-Ink online already provides access to digital reproductions of nearly 700 incunabula, of which ca. 540 are broadsides. A list of digitized incunabula (by shelfmark only) is accessible via the Index Search:

<http://mdzx.bib-bvb.de/bsbink/einzelindex.html>  
Exemplare mit Scans  
mit Anfangsbuchstaben "Alle"  
Anzeigen

Best regards,  
Bettina Wagner  
Abteilung für Handschriften und Alte  
Drucke  
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D-80539 Muenchen  
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Tel. +89 / 28638-2982  
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postbox: D-80328 Muenchen

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## Changing the act of research

Member **James Mackay** recently convened a debate with representatives from Google Books, Wikipedia, Encyclopaedia Britannica, and the British Library about the many ways in which the new research frontier is changing the act of research, and the new tools to do it with. The transcript of the debate has just been published in *Resources for American Studies* (a British journal). It is available to anyone interested in the new developments with Google and Wikis. However, the journal is not an easy source to access, so Mackay is happy to send a copy of the complete transcript to anyone who sends a request to him.

Send your requests directly to:

James Mackay  
King's College, London  
Phone: +357 24648451  
Email:  
[james.mackay@cytanet.com.cy](mailto:james.mackay@cytanet.com.cy)

# NCIS announces renamed Eisenstein- DeLacy article prize for 2008

The biannual Eisenstein Prize was established in April 1993 and was named for Elizabeth Lewisohn Eisenstein, Professor of History at American University (1959-1979) and the University of Michigan (1975-1985), in recognition of her long-standing support of NCIS.

In 2007, the NCIS Board decided to also honor Margaret DeLacy, Elizabeth's daughter and another long-time supporter of NCIS, by renaming the prize, which will now be called the Eisenstein-DeLacy Article Prize.

Margaret was the originator of the prize in honor of her mother, Elizabeth Eisenstein, thus in honoring Margaret we honor two generations in one family who placed an inestimable value on independent scholars and on NCIS. We could not have made the change to an annual award without the generosity of Board member, Dr. Yosef Wosk, whose contribution insures the award for the next five years at which time NCIS will renew the funding.

The prize will now become an annual one and remains an award in recognition of the best published article submitted by an NCIS member. The article must have been published within the prior calendar year. The prize consists of an award certificate and a \$200 honorarium.

The deadline for  
submissions is  
July 15, 2008.

NCIS members wishing to submit a published article for consideration must send one copy of the article and the table of contents of the journal issue in which it appeared in PDF format to Kendra Preston Leonard, Chair of the Awards Committee, at <caennen@gmail.com>.

The deadline for submissions is July 15, 2008. Winners will be notified by September 15, 2008.

# NCIS scholarly journal update

Dear Editors and Contributors:

I have the sad task of informing you that the plans for an NCIS scholarly journal are in abeyance. In light of the already existing 24,000 scholarly journals now being published, whether we have the resources and the mechanisms fully in place to turn this into a reality has become doubtful.

At the October Board meeting, we had a frank and lively discussion about the journal and how best to serve our members and the independent scholar community, and it became apparent that we had to put the idea aside and place the launch on hiatus. The decision was based on hard realities and one that was unanimous.

To the contributors who submitted a conference paper, we offer you the pages of *The Independent Scholar* for publication, and we would be quite happy to publish your paper in *TIS*. You are released from any obligation to publish with NCIS and, in fact, you may decide to seek another publishing venue. We support your decision and do not wish to delay any longer your opportunity to find another publisher. If you do publish your paper elsewhere, please remember to inform Linda Lucas, the editor of *TIS*, so we can get the good news out to the members.

You may recall that our affiliate, the Canadian Academy of Independent Scholars, had a Call For Papers for its new journal, *The International Journal of Independent Scholars (TIS, December 2006)* and I urge you to consider their journal. I do not know the deadlines for the second issue (the first is a themed issue dedicated to Claude Levi-Strauss) but I suggest that you contact <cais\_journal@sfu.ca> for information.

To the members who volunteered to join the editorial board, please accept my thanks for your willingness to work on behalf of NCIS and independent scholars. Your response to this new venture was very gratifying.

I hope that NCIS may revisit the possibility of publishing its own scholarly journal but in all honesty, now is not that time.

With my best wishes to you and my sincerest appreciation for your being with us.

Warm regards,

Janet I. Wasserman, President

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### **Guidelines**

*The Independent Scholar* publishes news, notes, essays,  
articles, reviews, interviews and memoirs, taking first serial  
rights. In most cases, a submission should not be longer than  
1,500 words. Submit manuscripts electronically as a Word.rtf  
or Word.doc. Use as little formatting as possible, i.e., no page  
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<[linda-lucas@charter.net](mailto:linda-lucas@charter.net)>. Submissions to *TIS* are accepted  
from non-members on condition that they become bona fide  
members of NCIS.

### **Deadlines for submitting articles, essays, papers**

February 15  
May 15  
August 15  
November 15

### **Comments and concerns**

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