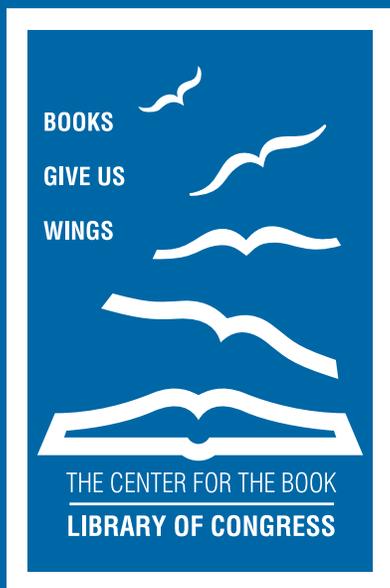


May - June 2009



Center for the Book Newsletter

The Center for the Book's networks of state centers and reading promotion partners extend the reach of the national center far beyond the programs it sponsors in the Washington area. The national center in the Library of Congress has established this newsletter to serve as a forum for all Center for the Book activities. We want to tell you what we are doing in Washington and around the country to support our mission of promoting books, reading and literacy.

And we want to hear about all the innovative ways you call attention to the importance of reading. Your updates can serve as year-round "idea exchanges" that augment our annual in-person Idea Exchange meeting, which this year was held May 11-12 at the Library of Congress.

Please send your submissions to glam@loc.gov.

Virgin Islands Center for the Book to Be Established

By John Y. Cole

The Library of Congress and the government of the Virgin Islands have announced the creation of the first Center for the Book affiliate in the U.S. territories: the Virgin Islands Center for the Book. A preliminary announcement was made on April 16 by Virgin Islands Gov. John P. deJongh Jr. during a National Library Week reception honoring Center for the Book Director John Y. Cole at Government House in St. Croix.

"This exciting development presents the Center for the Book with new reading-promotion opportunities and perspectives," said Cole. "The Virgin Islands has a rich historical tradition that includes French, Dutch, Danish and—since 1917—U.S. influences. The center will become part of a national network that includes affiliates in every state and the District of Columbia."

The principal organizer of the new center, Ingrid Bough, territorial director of Libraries, Archives & Museums, said that one of the first projects presented to the planning committee for the Virgin Islands Center for the Book will be for a Virgin Islands Book Festival. The stimulus is the National Book Festival in Washington, D.C., where for the past four years she has coordinated the representation of the U.S. territories in the Pavilion of the States. In response to a question about the projected festival, she said she hoped it would "become an annual event hosted by the center in rotating years on St. Thomas, St. Croix and St. John."

Bough elaborated on the governor's statement that the Virgin Islands center would someday have its own building, one located in the historic area in Frederiksted, St. Croix. "It will be built on the site of the Farrelly Family House, the birthplace (story continues on page 2)

"Soul of a People": An Exploration Of the Federal Writers' Project

By Guy Lamolinara

The New Deal arts projects of the Great Depression have provided a seemingly inexhaustible font from which writers and film producers continue to draw on for inspiration. More than 70 years later, the output of the Federal Writers' Project (1935-1939) is still being mined for stories of the hard times and broken dreams that have a particular resonance today.

According to John Y. Cole, director of the Center for the Book, "The Library of Congress is a major repository of the New Deal projects. One of the reasons we are so rich in these collections is that a Librarian of Congress, Archibald MacLeish, was a New-Dealer who realized the value of these collections that would no longer have a home, and he volunteered the Library" to house the Work Projects Administration collections.

Thus it was only natural that the Center for the Book and the American Folklife Center co-hosted "Soul of a People: The WPA Writers' Project Uncovers (story continues on page 3)

(Virgin Islands story from page 1)

of Alexander A. Farrelly, the fourth elected governor of the Virgin Islands [1987-1995] and a revered figure in the history of our territory. However, until the construction is completed, the Florence Williams Public Library in Christiansted will serve as its host institution.”

Two days before the reception and announcement, on April 14 at Government House in St. Thomas, John Cole and Center for the Book Program Specialist Anne Boni met with Bough, deJongh and Robert S. Mathese, the commissioner of planning and natural resources, to discuss the new center for the book initiative.

Early on April 15, they joined Bough and deJongh at the Bureau of Corrections Golden Grove facility in the middle of St. Croix to launch the new “Beyond the Walls Thru a Bookmobile” pilot program. The bookmobile program, administered by the Division of Libraries, Archives & Museums, introduces inmate participants to library resources to promote reading, literacy, self-help and lifelong learning. Inmates received library cards and a bookmobile orientation, and they were able to check out books. Bough and Cole joined the governor and Bureau of Corrections officials in introducing the program.

Next, with Donald G. Cole, assistant director of the division, and library consultant Caudette Lewis, they took the ferry to St. John to visit the Elaine L. Sprauve Public Library, which is undergoing renovation. There they met with branch librarian Carol McGuiness, who had been one of the representatives at the Virgin Islands table in the Pavilion of the States at the 2008 National Book Festival. On their return to St. Thomas, they

Bough and Julius Wilson, director of the Bureau of Corrections, brought the St. Croix bookmobile to the island’s prison.

visited the construction site of the new public library and records center, a \$15 million project expected to be completed by July 2010. The day ended with a seaplane flight to St. Croix and a visit to the Florence Williams Public Library in Christiansted.

On April 16, with Ingrid Bough, they drove to Frederiksted to visit the site of the Farrelly Family House, the future home of the Virgin Islands Center for the Book, and the Athalie McFarlane Peterson Public Library. On the way back to Christiansted, they met with staff members at the Virgin Islands Regional Library for the Blind and Handicapped, an affiliate of the Library of Congress’s National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped. Just prior to the concluding reception at Government House, they visited Point Udall, the easternmost piece of land owned by the United States. Named for Stuart Udall, former U.S. representative (1955-1961) and secretary of the interior (1961-1969), this last visit was an appropriate reminder of the strong ties between the Virgin Islands and the United States that will be enhanced by the Virgin Islands Center for the Book.



The new home of the Virgin Islands Center for the Book will be at the main library in St. Croix. John Y. Cole, director of the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress, is at the top of the stairs of the Enid M. Baa Library in St. Thomas, joined by Ingrid Bough, territorial director of libraries, archives and museums for the Virgin Islands; Anne Boni, program specialist for the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress; and Donald Cole, deputy director to Bough.



Boni and Cole donned hard hats for a tour of the construction site of the new library in St. Thomas.



("Soul of a People" story from page 1)

Depression America," a multimedia program that included a discussion of the book (published by Wiley) and a screening of excerpts of the documentary film (Smithsonian Channel) of the same name. The Center for the Book and the American Folklife Center have sponsored many WPA-related programs over the years, including "Amassing American 'Stuff,'" a 1994 conference that brought together veterans and observers of the New Deal arts projects (see LC Information Bulletin, Feb. 6, 1995, pp. 50-55), and "Art Culture and Government: The New Deal at 75" (see LC Information Bulletin, April 2008, pp. 51-56, 66).

Andrea Kalin, the film's director and co-producer, noted that the April 28 program was being held on the eve of the 100th day of the Obama administration, when

Americans would be wondering about the effects of the multibillion-dollar economic stimulus package. "While people are evaluating what the stimulus will do, they are again turning their attention to the WPA."

She then introduced the film excerpt. A section called "Hard Times" began with historian Douglas Brinkley noting that "somebody once said that the great oxygen of the United States is optimism. Well if that's the case, what happens when the oxygen gets depleted?"

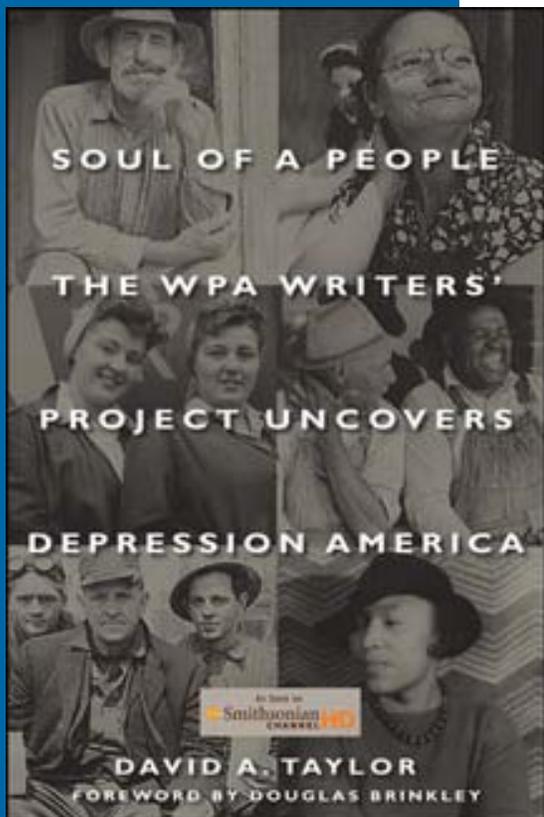
Narrator and actress Patricia Clarkson said over the film's striking images of despair and hope, "In the 1930s, the United States sat down with pen in hand and began to write, giving voice to its hopes and fears. Its subject was what made 'America' America. ... Generations would see [the New Deal's] legacy in roads and bridges, but less obvious was another program, one that would become the largest cultural experiment in the nation's history: The Federal Writers' Project." The point was also made that the egalitarian ethos of the FWP moved African-American writers such as Ralph Ellison, Zora Neale Hurston and Richard Wright from the "fringes" to the heart of American literature.

Most of the work of the FWP eventually produced an impressive array of state and city guidebooks. No one expected these books to amount to anything important, much less controversial, according to the film. Yet controversial the guidebooks were. Some of the writers were accused of being communists, of writing subversive texts. And some of the guidebooks, such as the one for Washington, D.C., which weighed 5 1/2 pounds, received raves. The California guide became a Book-of-the-Month Club selection.

But some people didn't understand why the federal government was funding such a project, and why it was paying people to write stories that documented the wretchedness of American life for those most affected by the Depression. When opponents began spreading stories that the guidebooks were in fact subversive, officials took action. The funding for the Wisconsin volume, for example, was cut off and a newspaper wrote that the guide contained writing that was "juvenile, inaccurate and loaded with socialist propaganda."

"The irony is that the Federal Writers' Project gets attacked as being un-American when in truth it was an orgy of Americanism," says Brinkley in the film. By May 1939, the editor of the guides, Henry Alsberg, was defeated by the forces allied against him and was fired. The project continued nonetheless and the remaining guides were eventually published.

(story continues on page 4)



("Soul of a People" from page 3)

Following the film clip, Kalin joined David A. Taylor, the author of the book and co-producer of the film; Peggy Bulger, director of the American Folklife Center; and David Royle, Smithsonian Channel vice president for programming, in a panel discussion. Bulger noted that the Library's WPA collections were key resources in the production of the film and book. Taylor told how "excited" he was to be able to draw on more than 400,000 WPA items in the Library's Manuscript Division. Royle explained why the project grabbed his attention: "When I first came to America as a young student, it was to North Carolina, and that was the first time I encountered [the gathering of] folklife and folklore and oral history. ... I think of it as a peculiarly American trait. ... It is so democratic, going across America and getting people's stories."

A member of the audience wanted to know how the writers were selected. Taylor replied that "nine-tenths of the writers had to be on relief; you had to prove you had no income. ... One-tenth were recruited from working writers." Kalin added that only 1 percent of all the New Deal project funds went to the Federal Writers' Project, "so the controversy was not over money being spent but over the kind of story the [writers] were telling. The question was whether [Americans] were ready to hear that." Bulger said that these unvarnished stories of people living on the edge were so revolutionary for the time that they (like the guidebooks themselves) were considered controversial.

"Writers like John Cheever cut their eye teeth on the Federal Writers' Project," she continued. "It was a great way to get training."

The collections of the Library of Congress are especially rich in documentation and artifacts from the New Deal projects of the 1920s, '30s and '40s. Many of these collections are available online in the American Memory website at www.loc.gov/memory/. These include photographs from Farm Security Administration-Office of War Information, American Life Histories of the Federal Writers' Project and slave narratives conducted during this period. A web-based research guide, "New Deal Programs: Selected Library of Congress Resources," is online at www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/newdeal/. The Library has also made many of its Depression-era photographs more widely available through the photo-sharing website Flickr (www.loc.gov/rr/print/flickr_pilot.html). 

--Guy Lamolinara is the communications officer for the Center for the Book.

State Centers Well-Represented at Idea Exchange

By Guy Lamolinara

The principle that the whole is always greater than the sum of its parts is put into practice annually when the Center for the Book holds its Idea Exchange Day.

This year, on May 11-12, about 40 representatives of the State Centers for the Book gathered at the Library to discuss successes as well as difficulties during the past year. Participants came from as close as the District of Columbia to as far as Alaska.

(story continues on page 5)

(Idea Exchange story from page 4)

John Y. Cole, Center for the Book director, welcomed everyone and gave each attendee an opportunity to talk briefly about current projects. Many of the attendees had just held award ceremonies for their Letters About Literature (www.lettersaboutliterature.org) winners, as these had been recently announced. Others wanted to show off their websites and the literary resources they offer to residents of their states.

Production of literary maps is a project for many centers. Pennsylvania, for example, has produced an interactive literary map (www.pabook.libraries.psu.edu/palitmap/index.html) showcasing the state's authors. John Cole noted that five of the state centers had hosted the "Library of Congress at Your Fingertips" program, in which the Center in Washington D.C., brought representatives from the Library of Congress to highlight local resources available on the Library's website and offer teacher workshops on using these resources in the classroom.

David Kipen of the National Endowment for the Arts spoke about his agency's Big Read (www.neabigread.org/) program, in which everyone from, say, a town or state is encouraged to read and discuss the same book. NEA provides author information and readers guides for the books on its list. Kipen encouraged more State Centers to participate. Some participants asked that the selection of books that NEA promotes be more multicultural and Kipen agreed to expand the list to include more ethnic authors.

The afternoon session included a discussion of Letters About Literature and River of Words – two programs co-sponsored by the Center for the Book. Cathy Gourley of LAL said that Target had agreed to fund the program once again with the same number of awards and amount of prize money. Pamela Michael of River of Words (which was to hold its East Coast awards ceremony at the Library on May 13) invited attendees to attend her workshop on May 12, following Gourley's LAL workshop.

Prior to the meeting, State Centers were asked to submit summaries of the past year's activities. That information was distributed during the meeting. If you would like to receive an electronic copy of the handout, send an e-mail to the writer of this article at glam@loc.gov. 



David Kipen of the National Endowment for the Arts spoke about his agency's Big Read program.



John Cole with Boorstin Award winners (from left) Mary Casey Martin of the Wisconsin state center and Drew Griffis of the Indiana center, who attended the meeting with Indiana State Librarian Roberta Brooker. The Boorstin Award is given to acknowledge innovative projects in honor of Daniel J. Boorstin, Librarian of Congress (1975-1987) and founder of the Center for the Book, and his wife, Ruth.

President, Mrs. Obama to Be Honorary Chairs of National Book Festival

President Barack Obama and first lady Michelle Obama will serve as honorary chairs of the 2009 National Book Festival, organized and sponsored by the Library of Congress. Now in its ninth year, this popular event celebrating the joys of reading and lifelong literacy will be held on **Saturday, Sept. 26, 2009**, on the National Mall in Washington between 7th and 14th Streets from **10 a.m. to 5 p.m.** (rain or shine). The event is free and open to the public.

"We are delighted that the president and Mrs. Obama are committed to bringing this inspirational event to people of all ages nationwide," said Librarian of Congress James H. Billington. "The National Book Festival has become a true American institution. It is a joyous and very popular celebration of books and reading in the Washington, D.C., area."

The 2009 National Book Festival will feature about 70 award-winning authors, poets and illustrators in pavilions dedicated to book subjects ranging from history and biography to mysteries, thrillers, poetry and prose, and books for families and young people. Festival-goers can meet and hear firsthand from their favorite authors, get books signed, have photos taken with PBS storybook characters and participate in a variety of learning activities.

The Pavilion of the States, organized by the Center for the Book, will represent reading- and library-promotion programs and literary events in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and the U.S. trusts and territories. The popular Let's Read America pavilion will offer reading activities that are fun for the whole family. In addition to overseeing the Pavilion of the States, the Center for the Book organizes the program of authors and illustrators who appear in the various tents.

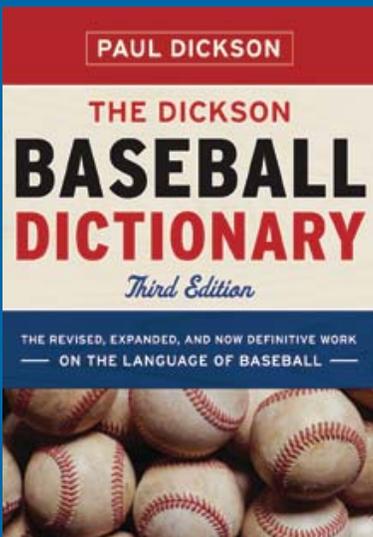
The 2009 National Book Festival will be made possible through the support of Distinguished Benefactor Target and many other generous supporters. 



Baseball Dictionary Author Webcast Now Available

The Webcast of Paul Dickson discussing his fascinating "Dickson Baseball Dictionary," during a Books & Beyond program at the Library of Congress on April 15 is now available at www.loc.gov/today/cyberlc/. Type Paul Dickson in the search box on the upper right of the page.

Another Center for the Book program, which is detailed in this newsletter, "Soul of a People," will soon be available for viewing. Please link to these Webcasts from your Web site. 



Center for the Book Attends Letters About Literature Awards Ceremony in Alabama

The teachers, librarians and students at Highlands School in Birmingham, Ala., were especially proud this year that two winners in the Letters About Literature program came from their school. Cori Anne Mazer won a National Award in the Level 2 category (grades 7-8) for her persuasive letter about the role of government that she wrote to Lois Lowry, author of “The Giver.” Mazer chose her school library to receive the \$10,000 grant from Target, which co-sponsors LAL with the Center for the Book. The program asks students to write letters to authors telling them how their book influenced the students’ lives or outlook on the world.



Center for the Book Communications Officer Guy Lamolinara presents a National Award in Level 2 (grades 7-8) to Cori Anne Mazer of Highlands School in Birmingham, Ala. Mazer wrote to Lois Lowry, author of “The Giver.”

Lamolinara with Cori Anne Mazer, Dakotah Murphree and Betsy Panhorst.

The other Highlands winner was Dakotah Murphree in Level 1 (grades 4-6), who also wrote to Lowry. Mazer and Lowry received their awards on May 8 at the school in a ceremony that included the entire Highlands student body, teachers and librarians as well as relatives and friends of the winners.

Guy Lamolinara, Center for the Book communications officer, presented the awards to the students, following their reading of their letters. He was joined by Highlands teachers, librarians and staff as well as Betsy Panhorst, of the Caroline Marshall Draughon Center for the Arts &

Humanities at Auburn University, which hosted the Alabama Center for the Book before its planned move to the Alabama Writers’ Forum in the summer of 2009.

Following are the National and Honorable Mention winners in this year’s Letters About Literature:

National Winners

Level 1:

Caroline Hoskins, Collierville, Tenn. (grade 6). Book: “Rules” by Cynthia Lord

Taaja Draughn, Robersonville, N.C. (grade 6). Book: “Forged by Fire” by Sharon Draper

Level 2:

Corie Anne Mazer, Birmingham, Ala. (grade 7). Book: “The Giver” by Lois Lowry

Kailey McCoy, Temecula, Calif. (grade 8). Book: “ADHD & Me” by Blake E.S. Taylor

(Literature Awards continue on page 8)

(Literature Awards from page 7)

Level 3:

Josh Tiprigan, Northvale, N.J. (grade 11). Poem: “If”
by Rudyard Kipling

Amelia Leuer, St. Michael, Minn. (grade 12). Poem: “Caroline”
by Linda Pastan

National Honorable Mention

Level 1:

Clare Arlington Boyle, Newtown, Conn. (grade 5). “Anne of Green
Gables” by L.M. Montgomery

Carolyn Propst, Atlanta, Ga. (grade 6). Book: “The Clique”
by Lisi Harrison

Reigner Kane, Sulphur, La. (grade 4). Book: “Redwall”
by Brian Jacques

Cameron Fitzgerald, Severna Park, Md. (grade 4). Book: “White Fang”
by Jack London

Level 2:

Eliza Dach, Bentonville, Ark. (grade 8). Book: “Three Cups of Tea”
by Greg Mortenson

Jared Dauman, Bedford, N.Y. (grade 7). Speech: Address to the 2004
Democratic National Convention by Barack Obama

Abby Tillotson, Bismarck, N.D. (grade 7). “Stargirl”
by Jerry Spinelli

Erikka Potts, Portland, Ore. (grade 8). Book: “A Child Called It”
by Dave Pelzer

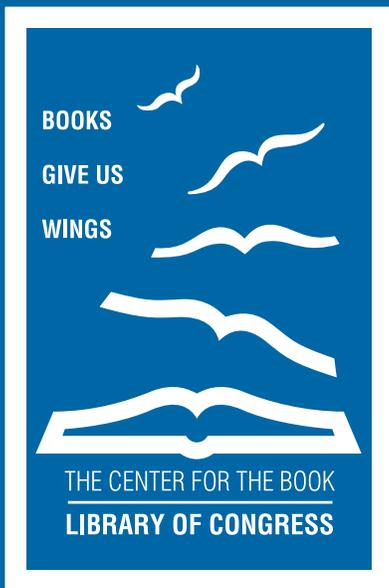
Level 3:

Xinyue Ye, Plano, Texas (grade 11). Book: “The Great Gatsby”
by F. Scott Fitzgerald

Nilesh Raval, Saginaw, Mich. (grade 11). Book: “The Namesake”
by Jhumpa Lahiri

Y Thien Hoang, Portland, Ore. (grade 12). Book: “Across the Plains
in 1844” by Catherine Sager Pringle

Xio Torres, Reading, Pa. (grade 10). Book: “Does My Head Look Big
in This?” by Randa Abdel-Fattah



Calendar of Events

Throughout the year, the Center for the Book sponsors myriad programs on a wide range of topics. Most of the Center for the Book's programs are filmed for later Webcasting. We invite you to share this information with libraries, so they may tell their users. Webcasts are available at www.loc.gov/loc/cfbook/cyber-cfb.html.

Following is the current Center for the Book calendar for 2009:

SEPTEMBER 9 (Wednesday), 10 a.m., LJ 119, Jefferson Building
International Literacy Day program.

SEPTEMBER 10 (Thursday), 11:30 a.m., LJ 119, Jefferson Building
Jane Goodall will discuss and sign her new book, *Hope for Animals and Their World: How Endangered Species Are Being Rescued from the Brink* (Grand Central Publishing, 2009). Co-sponsored with the Science, Technology and Business Division.

SEPTEMBER 16 (Wednesday), 5:30-7:30 p.m., Montpelier Room, Madison Building
Literacy Leadership Awards program.

SEPTEMBER 26 (Saturday), 10 a.m.-5 p.m., National Mall
National Book Festival.

OCTOBER 17 (Saturday), 10 a.m. Mumford Room, Madison Building
Americas Award for Children's and Young Adult Literature. Co-sponsored by the Hispanic Division and the Consortium of Latin American Studies Programs.

OCTOBER 20 (Tuesday), noon, Mumford Room, Madison Building
Books & Beyond program. Leonard Marcus will discuss and sign his new book, *Don't Make Me Laugh: Conversations with Writers of Comedy* (Candlewick Press, 2009). National Ambassador for Young People's Literature Jon Scieszka will be a special guest.

OCTOBER 22 (Thursday), noon, Pickford Theater, Madison Building
Books & Beyond program. Phyllis Ross will discuss and sign her new book, *Modern Design for Modern Living* (Yale University Press, 2009).

OCTOBER 29 (Thursday), noon, Dining Room A, Madison Building
Books & Beyond program. Patricia Fanning will discuss and sign her new book, *Through an Uncommon Lens: The Life and Photography of F. Holland Day* (Massachusetts University Press, 2009).

NOVEMBER 5 (Thursday), noon, Pickford Theater, Madison Building
Books & Beyond program. Toby Lester will discuss and sign his new book, *The Fourth Part of the World: The Race to the Ends of the Earth and the Epic Story of the Map That Gave America Its Name* (Free Press, 2009). Co-sponsored with the Geography and Map Division.

NOVEMBER 17 (Tuesday), noon, Dining Room A, Madison Building
Books & Beyond program. Noralee Frankel will discuss and sign her new book, *Stripping Gypsy: The Life of Gypsy Rose Lee* (Oxford University Press, 2009).

