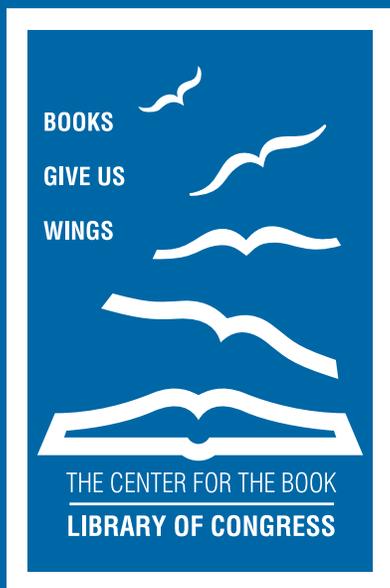


September - December 2009



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, libraries 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 two in-person Idea Exchange meetings, held this year in March and May at the Library of Congress.

Please send your submissions to glam@loc.gov.

LIBRARY OPENS CENTER FOR YOUNG READERS

By Kimberly Rieken

The Library of Congress, for the first time in its history, has a space devoted to the reading interests of children and teens in its historic Thomas Jefferson Building. On Oct. 23, Librarian of Congress James H. Billington welcomed a group of young people, parents and others to the new Young Readers Center, in Room LJ G-31, ground floor of the Thomas Jefferson Building. "We want you and other young readers to have a place where you can gain an introduction to the wonders of your nation's library," Billington told the children gathered in the center. The Librarian, with the help of Mrs. Billington, introduced the book "Moomin Troll" by Tove Jansson, from which the Billingtons read to the children.

Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz, D-Fla., and her children and Rep. Robert Aderholt, R-Ala., and his son helped open the new center. A mother of three, the congresswoman said she was honored to be at the opening. "There's nothing like an event in Washington with children," she said. Stressing the importance of the Library for readers of all ages, she said, "We need to be able to inspire the next generation of readers in the greatest library in the world." Children gathered around and listened intently as the congresswoman and her children read one of their favorite books, "Pinkalicious" by Elizabeth Kann and Victoria Kann.

M.T. Anderson, who writes books for both children and teens, was the special guest author. He has written such acclaimed and popular books as "The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing" Volumes I and II (Candlewick Press), and "Me, All Alone, at the End of the World" (Random House). Anderson appeared at the Library's 2007 National Book Festival. Anderson recalled that as a child he understood that he was part of "a lineage of American readers" when he saw on library-book check-out cards the names of others who had come before him. He also talked about how libraries can transport readers of all ages to different times and places. "Libraries are time portals," he said. They can take us back to the past and into the future. They can take us to different worlds, worlds we wouldn't know, people we might not understand."

Dr. Billington said he hopes the new Young Readers Center will serve the same purpose. "We've got a lot of books to open a lot of windows that will let you use your imaginations," he said.

About the Young Readers Center

Visitors to the Young Readers Center may choose to read a book from an up-to-date collection of noncirculating titles; they may browse the web's kid-friendly sites; or they may attend programs especially designed for young readers. The center's media room provides an opportunity for visitors to view webcasts of National Book Festival authors talking about reading, writing and books for young adults and children. The center is a special space in the Library for adults and children to enjoy together.

The Young Readers Center is one aspect of the Center for the Book's outreach to the nation's youth. The Center for the Book also oversees a program in which the National Ambassador for Young People's Literature (story continues on page 2)

(Young Readers Center from page 1)

(www.childrensbookambassador.com) is named as a spokesperson for the importance of reading in young people's lives. The program is a collaborative effort with the Children's Book Council (www.cbcbooks.org). The first ambassador is Jon Scieszka, whose two-year term will end in December 2009; a new ambassador will be named in January 2010.

The Center for the Book also oversees the new website at www.Read.gov, which provides reading resources especially for kids and teens (as well as adults, educators and parents). A highlight of the site is the exclusive episodic story called "The Exquisite Corpse Adventure," a joint project with the National Children's Book and Literacy Alliance (www.thencbla.org). Every two weeks a new episode and illustration will appear. Some of the nation's best authors and illustrators for young people are each writing a chapter or providing an illustration for the yearlong story.

Kimberly Rieken is an operations assistant in the Public Affairs Office. 



Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz and writer M.T. Anderson enjoyed a conversation during the official opening of the Young Readers Center.
Credit: Barry Wheeler

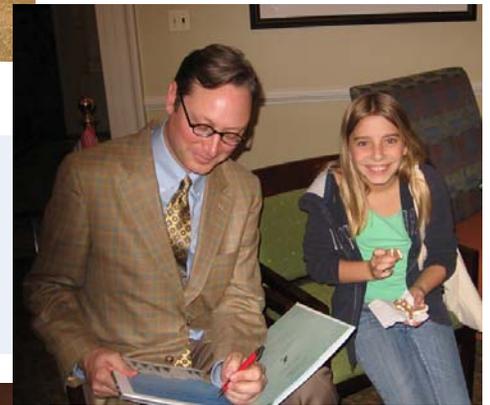


Dr. and Mrs. Billington read from "Moomin Troll," a Finnish fairy tale, to the children and parents who came to the celebration, including Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz (seated, left) and her three children and Rep. Robert Aderholt, who came with his son.
Credit: Barry Wheeler



Rep. Aderholt met Britney Sistare and her mother, Center for the Book staff member Stacey Sistare-Anderson, during the reception that followed the opening program.
Credit: John Y. Cole

Writer M.T. Anderson was a special guest during the event; he signed one of his books for a fan.
Credit: John Y. Cole



In the corridor opposite the Young Readers Center is a diorama devoted to the Center for the Book's National Ambassador for Young People's Literature program.
Credit: John Y. Cole



Center for the Book Authors' Program Draws Big Names to National Book Festival

By Guy Lamolinara

Writers with such star power as John Grisham, Judy Blume, Gwen Ifill, Junot Diaz, James Patterson and Ken Burns are not usually seen in the same venue. But such was the case at the 2009 National Book Festival. The Center for the Book's role in coordinating the author presentations for the Sept. 26 event resulted in more than 70 noteworthy writers, illustrators and poets appearing at the festival – many for the first time.

Librarian of Congress James H. Billington opened the festival in the Fiction & Fantasy Pavilion by giving John Grisham a special award. This was the first presentation of the National Book Festival Creative Achievement Award. The previous day, Grisham had been honored during a luncheon at the Hay-Adams. In making the award presentation, Billington praised Grisham for his “legendary” literary success as well as his charitable work, such as raising millions of dollars for victims of Hurricane Katrina.

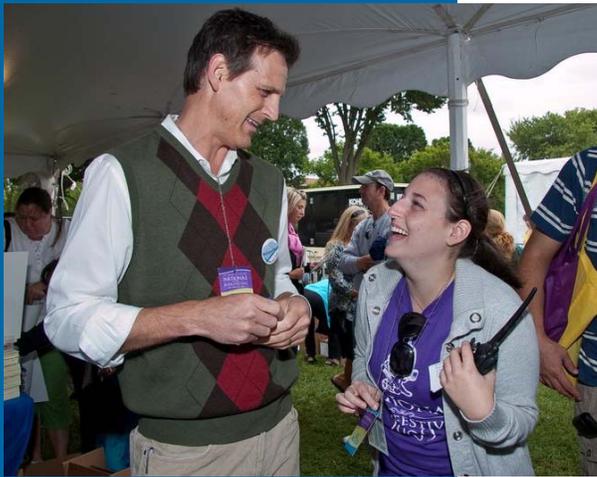
While Billington was opening the Fiction & Fantasy Pavilion, John Y. Cole, director of the Center for the Book (www.loc.gov/cfbook) and book festival author coordinator, was emceeding the opening program in the Children's Pavilion, which featured six of the authors of the “Exquisite Corpse Adventure,” a serialized episodic story written exclusively for the new website at www.Read.gov. Cole was joined by Mary Brigid Barrett, president and executive director of the National Children's Book and Literacy Alliance (www.thencbla.org), which is the Center for the Book's co-sponsor on the “Exquisite Corpse” project.

As it has since 2002, the second year of the National Book Festival, the Center for the Book also organized and managed the popular Pavilion of the States, where festival goers could learn about Center for the Book reading and literacy promotion projects as well as the literary traditions of the 50 states, the District of Columbia and the U.S. territories. Representatives from throughout the nation provided information and answered questions about their state's writers,

libraries, book festivals, book awards and reading promotion activities. In addition, several festival authors and illustrators made scheduled visits to their state's table to greet fans and sign autographs.

A popular pavilion feature, especially among young readers and their families, was “Discover Great Places Through Reading” -- a free map of the United States that attendees could present at each table for an appropriate state sticker or stamp. The map included “52 Great Reads About Great Places,” which is a reading list of books for young people compiled with a recommendation from each state.

The 14th edition of “The Congressional Club Cookbook” was sold in the pavilion. The cookbook offers recipes from around the world and includes inaugural ball (story continues on page 4)



Patrick Carman spoke with a fan at the Washington state table in the Pavilion of the States
Credit: Patricia Fisher



David Baldacci, at the Virginia table, was greeted by (from left) Mary Chute of the Institute of Museum and Library Services, Gayle Haglund and Susan Coleman of the Virginia Center for the Book. IMLS is the sponsor of the Pavilion of the States.
Credit: Patricia Fisher



Carmen Agra Deedy and Wilson Kimeli Naiyomah visited the Georgia table. Deedy's book "14 Cows" tells the story of Naiyomah, a Masai warrior. Credit: Patricia Fisher

portraits of presidents and first ladies, as well as photos of historic sites around Washington. Revenue generated from cookbook sales helps support contributions made by the Congressional Club to a variety of local charities.

Center for the Book reading promotion partners (www.read.gov/cfb/partners) play an important role at the National Book Festival. The Pavilion of the States' major sponsor is the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). The National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) provides additional funding and sponsors participation of the nine State Centers for the Book that are hosted by state humanities councils. Both IMLS and NEH have separate tables in the pavilion, as do two other partners, the American Library Association and the Junior League of Washington, which provides more than 400 volunteers for

the festival and sent volunteers to the Pavilion of the States to help staff tables. The National Endowment for the Arts, another partner, sponsored the Poetry & Prose Pavilion.

Many authors delighted their fans by making appearances in the Pavilion at their home states' tables: David Baldacci, a frequent book festival participant, visited Virginia's table; Patrick Carman was at the Washington state table, Margaret Coel met fans and was photographed at the Colorado table; Carmen Agra Deedy and Wilson Kimeli Naiyomah



The Virgin Islands Center for the Book was established this year and is the 52nd affiliate of the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress.

Ingrid Bough (right), territorial director of libraries, archives and museums for the U.S. Virgin Islands, was accompanied by Symra Chinnery. Credit: Patricia Fisher

Mary Woodward of the State Library of New York and Martha Lofton got into the spirit of the Empire State by showing off their literary map. Credit: Patricia Fisher

went to the Georgia table. Others who visited the pavilion were Shannon Hale (Utah), Craig Johnson (Wyoming), Sue Monk Kidd and Ann Kidd Taylor (South Carolina), Lois Lowry (Massachusetts), Valerie Martinez (New Mexico), George Pelecanos (Washington, D.C.) and Jerry Pinkney (New York).

Dr. Billington also stopped by the pavilion and made a special visit to the table where "The Congressional Club Cookbook" was being sold.

Cathy Gourley, the coordinator for Letters About Literature (www.lettersaboutliterature.org), a Center for the Book program sponsored by Target (which is also the National Book Festival's distinguished benefactor), came to promote the program that draws more than 50,000 students to write to a favorite author on how their



(National Book Festival Authors from page 4)

Jackie Spritzer and Pat Morris represented the New Jersey Center for the Book along with Joshua Tiprigan, who was a Letters About Literature National Award winner, and Eric Frilemyrin. Morris is the state's LAL coordinator.



Center for the Book Director John Y. Cole explains to a young reader how the "Discover Great Places Through Reading" map also has a reading list of books about the 50 states, the District of Columbia and the U.S. territories.

books influenced them. Gourley was joined by assistant Sarah Post. Target also had a presence in one of the Let's Read America pavilions, where festival goers could pose with Bullseye, the Target dog and color in the Bullseye Book of Activities.

The Washington Post, which has been a festival sponsor since its inception in 2001, featured "Book World" staff and Marie Arana, former editor of "Book World," who is on the festival's organizing committee. AT&T invited attendees to join Dipper, the AT&T Cares star. The Library of Congress Federal Credit Union served up author Sam Renick and his favorite bunny friend, Sammy the Saver, to demonstrate how the importance of saving can be learned through reading. Penguin Group (USA) publishers, Scholastic publishers and US Airways also made repeat visits to the festival. The Library welcomed ReadAloud.org as a new sponsor. The Digital Bookmobile powered by OverDrive offered free e-book, audiobook and video downloads. In the PBS Kids Raising Readers Pavilion children and their parents could explore the world of learning through PBS' many programs that encourage reading and literacy.

Webcasts of all author presentations are available at www.loc.gov/bookfest/2009/authors/

Guy Lamolinara is communications officer for the Center for the Book and assistant author coordinator for the National Book Festival.

WRITERS CONNECT WITH 130,000 READERS AT FESTIVAL

By Gail Fineberg

Torrents of words washed over them and into them—the tens of thousands of book lovers, swelling into seas of humanity beneath the white-crested pavilions, thirsting for the personal stories, funny one-liners and serious thoughts of their favorite authors, who fed on the delights of their readers. "This is not just a festival. This is a feast," said David Wroblewski, celebrated for the haunting beauty of his first book, "The Story of Edgar Sawtelle." He was speaking at his first National Book Festival, which drew more than 70 beloved writers and 130,000 fans to the National Mall on Saturday, Sept. 26. Legal-suspense novelist Lisa Scottoline told her audience: "The reason for writing is connecting with readers. That's what reading is all about, making connections. That's why I love the National Book Festival." "When we read, no one is alone. No one is alien," said Julia Alvarez, a Middlebury College professor whose books have helped millions bridge gaps in cultural understanding between Latino emigres and their new neighbors in America. "When we read, we enter deeply into the lives of others."

That mutual love of words and sharing of ideas brought writers and readers face-to-face at the Library's ninth national celebration of the book. The first wave of readers and autograph-seekers arrived long before the festival opened. They collected their purple programs and matching C-SPAN-2 BookTV bags, settled (story continues on page 6)

(Writers Connect to Readers from page 5)

into book-signing lines early for popular authors (8 a.m. for John Grisham), gleaned reading-and-literacy materials from the Pavilion of the States, and waited on folding seats in author pavilions for the crowds to gather and the fun to begin.

The people holding chairs in the first few rows in the History & Biography pavilion for some 45 minutes before the action began were regulars. "I've been here since the first book festival. The history authors are my celebrities. If you come next year, we'll all be here. We're history groupies," said Christian M. McBurney, a tax lawyer from Kensington, Md. "I put the book festival on my calendar a year in advance. I consider this my favorite day of the year. I park myself in the History & Biography pavilion and I don't budge, all day," said Len Lefkowitz of Bethesda, Md. Said Mary Ellen, a retired community health nurse from Charles County, Md., "I've been coming since 2002. It's like the movie 'Same Time Next Year.' Every year we see the same people."

Streaming onto the festival grounds from the Smithsonian Metro stop, as if from some swollen underground river, festival crowds filled not only all the pavilions for authors, book vendors, literacy promoters and festival supporters, but also all of the walkways. "We've got the biggest crowd I've ever seen in the history of the book festival," announced Jonathan Yardley, chief book critic for The Washington Post, a festival sponsor since the Library of Congress began the tradition in 2001. That was at 10 a.m., and the festival had only just begun. Yardley was introducing John Grisham, with 235 million books in print worldwide and a huge loyal following—all of them, seemingly, attempting to jam into the Fiction & Fantasy Pavilion to hear him.

Other big draws at the festival opening were zany Jon Scieszka, cutting capers with his team of kids' authors for the launch of Read.gov in the Children's Pavilion; (story continues on page 7)

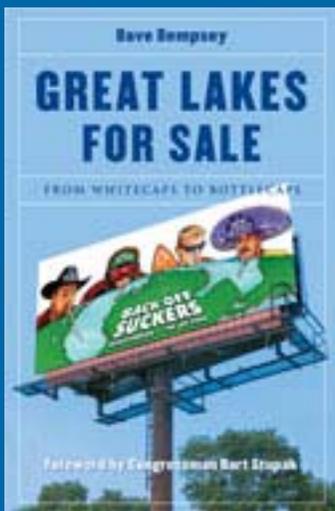
News from the Michigan Center for the Book

Author Award Announced

The Michigan Center for the Book has announced that Dave Dempsey -- author of award-winning books on conservation and environmental issues critical to Michigan -- is the winner of the 2009 Michigan Author Award. Sponsored jointly by the Michigan Center for the Book (a program of the Library of Michigan), Sleeping Bear Press and the Michigan Library Association, this annual award honors a Michigan writer for his or her contributions to literature based on an outstanding published body of work.

"It's both humbling and exciting to receive this award, since Michigan is my home and the source of my writing inspiration. Its land, water, wildlife and people are an amazing tableau," said Dempsey. "In both the writing I've done and the writing I hope to do, I want to tell stories about people who made a difference and the places that shaped them. The Library of Michigan is a remarkable public asset that has made such research possible."

For 25 years Dempsey's writings have helped shape conservation and Great Lakes policy, issues that are an integral part of Michigan's history and character. His newest book is "Great Lakes for Sale: From Whitecaps to Bottlecaps." This book poses and answers important questions about the export and diversion of Great Lakes water.





AMERICAS AWARD

Yuyi Morales (shown) and Margarita Engle received the 2008 Americas Award for Children's and Young Adult Literature during an Oct. 17 event at the Library of Congress. Here Morales speaks about her award-winning book, "Just in Case: A Trickster's Tale and Spanish Alphabet Book." Engle was honored for her novel, "The Surrender Tree." 

(Writers Connect to Readers from page 6)

James Patterson, the best-selling author of both adult fiction and children's chapter books, in the Teens & Children Pavilion; Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist Julia Glass in the Poetry & Prose Pavilion; Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and new-book author Kirstin Downey in the History & Biography Pavilion; and Edgar award-winning mystery writer Michael Connelly in the Mysteries & Thrillers Pavilion. By noon, author-signing lines for John Irving, Jodi Picoult and Judy Blume had surged all the way to Seventh Street at the eastern edge of the festival grounds and snaked four deep on a patch of grass between the sidewalk and the curb. Disappointment turned to joy when a purple-shirted event staffer announced to late-comers that Picoult would sign for an extra hour. John Grisham's line running in the opposite direction was so long that the "End of Line" sign bobbed in cross-currents of fans angling for positions that might, if they were lucky, carry them eventually to the author's pen.

Ebbing and flowing faster than the Smithsonian Metro Station could accommodate them, crowds trying to enter the station from the Mall later in the afternoon were directed by someone with a bullhorn to use the Metro access across the street, on the south side of Independence Avenue. "That's never happened before," said a Junior League volunteer. Droning late-afternoon rain put no damper on the enthusiasm of young readers listening to newbie author Jeff Kinney in the Teens & Children Pavilion. A young Maryland writer whose "Diary of a Wimpy Kid" series has captured the devotion of thousands in just two years, Kinney told his book-waving audience he would return to the book-signing area and autograph more books, even though he had already signed earlier, before his 4:25 p.m. appearance. The big pavilion erupted with a swarm of squealing kids who trailed Kinney through the downpour to the nearly empty, water-soaked author-signing area.

In their wake, a wall of Judy Blume fans—pre-teens and teens who are discovering her, and their moms and dads who recall that she was the first to write frankly about emotions that roil during puberty—pushed one another into the pavilion, filling chairs, squeezing into every square inch of standing space and crushing as close to the stage as physically possible. Straining to hear her, people surrounded the pavilion, forming a colorful circle of unfurled, overlapping umbrellas shedding sheets of rain. "Come on, Son," exclaimed one father, pointing his umbrella in the direction of the subway at the close of her appearance and the festival. "But Dad, she's still in there," said the boy, pulling the man back through

(story continues on page 8)

(Writers Connect to Readers from page 7)

a muddy lake toward the stage, where, by then, the Librarian of Congress, James H. Billington, was making his final appearance of the day, thanking the crowds for coming and his staff and supporters for making it all happen. "I've never seen so many smiling faces, so many umbrellas, and so many readers at a National Book Festival," he said, beaming. "This festival tops them all," he said a few moments later, tired but jubilant, marveling at the record-setting crowd and its exuberance. "I think we've hit our stride. I think we've found our momentum."

Gail Fineberg is editor of the Gazette, the Library's staff newsletter. 

Enter Laughing: Carl Reiner Visits the Library

By Audrey Fischer



Carl Reiner and manager George Shapiro.

Credit: Erin Allen

How did I get here was the question veteran comedy writer Carl Reiner posed to a packed crowd in the Library's Montpelier Room on Oct. 26, who were treated to a synopsis of his 70-year career. A boost from some government-supported programs, good timing and "a bit of talent" were the ingredients Reiner cited as his personal recipe for success. "That's my premise," said Reiner, who still marvels at "the synchronicity of life."

The journey, which began in an apartment on 174th Street in the Bronx, has taken Reiner to Broadway, Hollywood and the nation's capital, where he spoke about his career and his latest publications as part of the Center for the Book's Books & Beyond author series. "In my whole life, I've never been introduced by a more distinguished fellow," Reiner said, referring to Librarian of Congress James H. Billington. The comedian chided the fellow octogenarian for having more information in his brain—"because he's smart and knows extra stuff"—than the average person, making it increasingly difficult to summon up a name or other fact.

"The brain is like a computer," said Reiner. "It takes a few minutes for an answer to come up on the screen. So the answer takes a while to bubble up from our brain." That said, Reiner recited Queen Gertrude's speech from "Hamlet" that he learned seven decades ago in Mrs. Whitmore's acting workshop. The class, which was suggested to him by his brother Charlie, was offered through the government-funded Works Progress Administration.

"I became an actor because of the government," he said. "Never let anyone tell you that the government shouldn't help you. The government should help you. That's why they're the government." Reiner also took advantage of the NYA Radio workshop, another WPA program, to train young people for the broadcast industry.

Early in his career, Reiner appeared at the old Gilmore Theater in Manhattan, earning barely enough money to cover his transportation to work. So his boss gave him \$1 more a week to keep him. Reiner claims that a visit to the restroom in that theater changed the course of his career. There he met a man who offered him a job at the Rochester Summer Theater, where he honed his craft for two summers, earning only room and board. "Talent is one thing, but you have to be in the right place at the right time. Because I peed in the right place, I got that job," joked Reiner.

This opportunity was followed by a role in the Shakespeare Touring Company. While his talent for imitating a British accent helped his classical acting career, (story continues on page 9)

(Carl Reiner from page 8)

his failure to remember his lines one night began to reveal his comic genius. “I recited Shakespearean double-talk and got applause,” he explained. “When I recited the correct lines the next night, no one clapped. So I guess my words were better than Shakespeare’s.”

It would be another decade before Reiner would discover he could write. After a stint in the Army during World War II, serving as an entertainer in the Pacific, he joined the comedy team on “Your Show of Shows” starring Sid Caesar, another master of double-talk. The variety show, which ran from 1950 to 1954, was the inspiration for “The Dick Van Dyke Show” (1961-1966). Much like Reiner’s own life, the show was about a comedy writer living in New Rochelle, N. Y., and working on a comedy show in Manhattan.

Reiner revealed that the original pilot, titled “Head of the Family,” featured him in the lead. The network did not like Reiner in the role and decided not to develop the pilot. He was devastated, having given it his best shot with a subject closest to his own heart. But he had a second chance when the pilot was reworked with Dick Van Dyke in the lead. “It’s not going to fail,” said Reiner, imitating the pioneer television producer Sheldon Leonard. “We’ll just get a better actor to play you.”

Reiner was thrilled to read in Barack Obama’s book “The Audacity of Hope,” that first lady Michelle Obama was a big fan of the show and still enjoys watching old episodes. Reiner held up his cell phone, revealing a photo of President Obama. “I’ve had his photo on here since before the election,” he beamed.

Following the six-year run of the “The Dick Van Dyke Show,” Reiner wrote the screenplay for an adaptation of Joseph Stein’s play “Enter Laughing,” which was based on Reiner’s semiautobiographical novel of the same title, written in 1958.

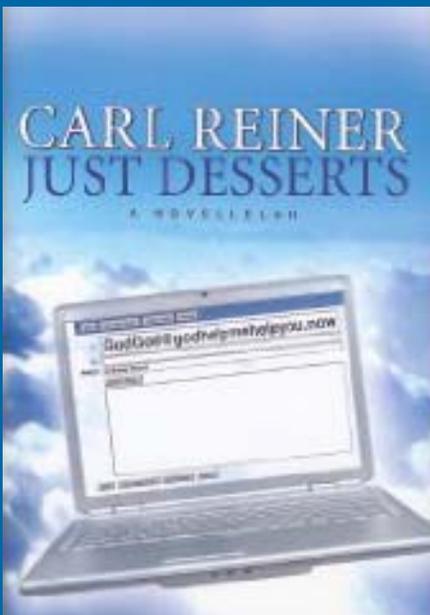
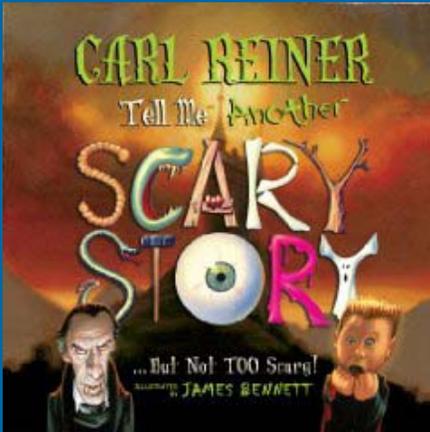
He wrote other successful screenplays for films like “The Thrill of It All,” starring Doris Day, and four films starring comedian Steve Martin (“The Jerk,” “Dead Men Don’t Wear Plaid,” “The Man with Two Brains” and “All of Me”). And he has continued to act, most recently playing con man Saul Bloom in “Ocean’s Eleven” and its two sequels.

His foray into the field of writing for children began several years ago with a title inspired by a plea from his grandson — “Tell Me a Scary Story but Not Too Scary.” It was followed by a sequel (“Tell Me Another Scary Story”) and an upcoming title, “Tell Me a Silly Story.” “It’s a giggly thing. That’s what kids really love.”

Reiner, who jokes that he’s written more books than he’s read, has a new title out this fall. In “Just Desserts: A Novellalah,” the main character, like Reiner, is a novelist and a “nonbeliever.” Nonetheless, he decides to e-mail God with a list of suggestions, which include instant punishment for wrongdoers, rather than in the afterlife. Reiner uses the book as an opportunity to discuss his own thoughts on the subject. “Men needed God. We invented God to explain how the human brain could come up with great ideas like $E=mc^2$ and vaccines,” said the co-creator (with Mel Brooks) of “The 2000 Year Old Man” comedy routine. “We each have God in us. That’s my premise.”

To see the Reiner webcast, go to <http://tinyurl.com/yj5nmry>.

Audrey Fischer is editor of the Library of Congress Information Bulletin.



Amy Tan Opens ‘National Book Festival Week’

By Guy Lamolinara

“National Book Festival Week” began for the Library of Congress with a special visit from writer Amy Tan, who held a program in the Library’s Coolidge Auditorium for area schoolchildren. Part of the PEN/Faulkner Foundation’s Writers in Schools program, the Sept. 22 event, was co-sponsored by the Center for the Book. The foundation is among the approximately 80 Center for the Book reading promotion partners.

Center for the Book Director John Y. Cole opened the program by telling the students how the Library grew into the world’s largest from the seed of Thomas Jefferson’s personal library, which he sold to the U.S. Congress after the British burned the original Library in 1814, when it was housed in the U.S. Capitol.

He then introduced Jessica Neely, executive director of the PEN/Faulkner Foundation. “We are thrilled to have Amy Tan participating in our Writers in Schools program,” she said. Last year, Stephen King participated with his family in a similar program at the Library of Congress. (www.read.gov/webcasts/king.html)

Tan began by talking about how her imagination informs nearly everything she sees. She said that when she thought about coming to the Library of Congress, she thought about the Bill of Rights and the Declaration of Independence, “and that somewhere they would be close by.... We all have images in our head when we anticipate something, and so that is what was in my head. ... This imagination extends itself into everything I observe in the world. ... When I look at a document such as the Bill of Rights, I don’t just see the document. ... I imagine the people who are signing at the time ... who is looking at what they are going to sign, what the room is. ... And if you are interested in becoming a writer, it’s a wonderful exercise you can do.”

Because the students had read the author’s “The Joy Luck Club,” Tan talked about why she had written the book. “You [may] have to write these essays about ‘this is what the writer meant.’ ... I have read a number of papers, talked to a number of people about what ‘The Joy Luck Club’ is about and it is often praised for depictions of Asian culture, or generations, or about mothers and daughters. And that’s all wonderful praise to me as a writer. ... But I often have to tell people ‘that’s not the reason why I wrote that.’ ... I was trying to represent, for myself, what my life had been, what my questions were, what I had not been able to talk about ... what the secrets ... in my family had been about.

“It’s not to say that what they have put down is wrong, because what I really believe is ... that the book you have in your hand is one thing for the writer and it’s one thing for the reader. Because when you read a book, you’re putting your own history, your own consciousness, your own ideas ... into the book as well.”

(story continues on page 11)



Amy Tan met some of her fans during the Writers in Schools program held in the Coolidge Auditorium.
Credit: Kristy Dyson

(Amy Tan from page 10)

Tan also noted that “an important part of being a writer is reading.”

What did the students want to know about Tan? Was it hard to write from the point of view of eight characters? No. Why are there so many negative images of men in her books? Because there have been so many of those images in her life, although she doesn’t think all men are bad. “You cannot represent all types people in a work of fiction.”

Does Tan ever dream her stories? No, but she wears headphones when she writes, and the peacefulness is “kind of like a dream.”

She also spoke about how hard it is to be a writer. Tan said that she often has to “stop myself from laughing” when students come up to her and tell her they can never be a writer because they have revised their work once and it still is not good. Tan says she revises her work “hundreds of times.”

At the beginning of her talk, Tan mentioned that her “dog in training” was by her side. The dog wasn’t visible to the audience because Tan was seated at a skirted table. An observer would have wondered whether the dog would go unnoticed during the program. However, the dog was so silent through the nearly hourlong discussion that by the time it was over, many had forgotten he was even present. So Tan lifted Bobbo, a Yorkshire terrier, onto the table. He still remained quiet.

A webcast of the Amy Tan program is available at Read.gov/webcasts. 

INTERNATIONAL LITERACY DAY

John Y. Cole (standing, from left), Center for the Book director; William B. Harvey, executive director of the International Reading Association; Patricia Edwards, IRA president elect; Victoria Risko, IRA vice president; Kathryn Au (seated, left), IRA president; and Alma Powell, chair of America’s Promise Alliance, were among the featured speakers at the International Literacy Day celebration held in the Jefferson Building.

Center Hosts National and International Literacy Events

“This event is an important celebration of achievement, not only in literacy but also in education and the promotion of books and reading in our culture,” said John Y. Cole, director of the Center for the Book, which co-hosted the Sept. 9 International Literacy Day celebration at the Library reception with the International Reading Association, one of the Center’s 80 reading promotion partners.

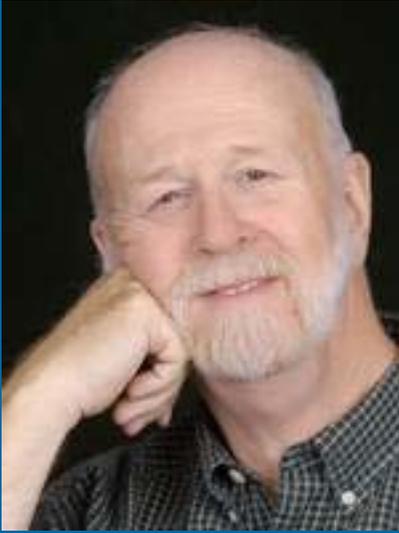
“Literacy: Schools and Communities Working Together” was the theme of the day, whose master of ceremonies was Bill Harvey, the new IRA executive director. The participation of visiting students from Nigeria and Ghana greatly enhanced the program.

Alma Powell, the chair of America’s Promise Alliance, spoke about improving lives and “changing outcomes” for young people. America’s Promise Alliance is a cross-sector partnership of more than 300 corporations, nonprofits, faith-based organizations and advocacy groups. A top priority is to ensure that all young people graduate from high school ready for college, work and life.

On Sept. 16. with the National Coalition for Literacy, the center co-hosted the coalition’s Literacy Leadership Awards ceremony and reception. Four members of Congress attended the event, which included a special tribute to Sen. Edward Kennedy. They were: Reps. Raul Grijalva of Arizona, who received one of the awards; Patrick Kennedy of Rhode Island, and Zach Wamp and Marsha Blackburn of Tennessee. 



Tom Trusky, Former Director of Idaho Center for the Book, Dies



Tom Trusky, former director of the Idaho Center for the Book at Boise State University, has died at the age of 65. *The Idaho Statesman* reported Trusky's death on December 2.

"Tom was a wonderful and unique person and personality," said John Y. Cole, director of the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress. "He had headed the Idaho Center for the Book with great dedication since its establishment in 1993."

Trusky recently turned over direction of the Idaho center to Stephanie Bacon, who assumed the position in July. Bacon is associate professor of art at Boise State.

During his nearly 40 years at Boise State, Trusky founded several publications for the creative writing community. He was editor of the *Modern and Contemporary Poetry of the West* series, director of the Hemingway Western Studies Center and head of the Idaho Film Collection. He was a professor in the Department of English since 1970 and was named Idaho's professor of the year three times by the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education in 1990, 1991 and 1993.

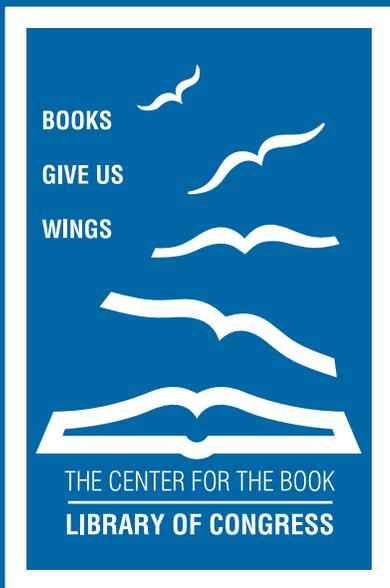
"Wisconsin is saddened to hear of the loss of Tom Trusky," said Mary (Casey) Martin, president of the Wisconsin Center for the Book. "His work with books and words will be a wonderful legacy. Recently, while I sifted through Idea Exchange materials, I ran across the Idaho 'Typewriter' book exhibit. I always enjoyed seeing his impressive handouts and materials and I'm glad I was able to tell him that at the May meeting."

"Tom was my poetry teacher in college and a force in the Idaho literary community. His expertise and humor will be deeply missed," said Josephine Jones, director of programs at Colorado Humanities, which hosts the Colorado Center for the Book.

Jay Lamar, longtime director of the Alabama Center for the Book, remembered that "Tom was one of the first people I met at my first Idea Exchange, and he was charming, warm, funny then and always. What a loss."

Sharon Shaloo, executive director of the Massachusetts Center for the Book, echoed Lamar: "What a loss. Tom and I had just had a lovely e-mail exchange about a week ago when, once again, he came across something terrific to share with the other listserv on which we participated, SHARP-L.

"In memoriam to a light in the world of book (art)s and reading, here's the last place Tom sent me: <http://savethewords.org/>. Think about Tom as you noodle around. I am going to miss him." 



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 2010:

FEBRUARY 3 (Wednesday) noon, Pickford Theater, Madison Building
Books & Beyond program. Michael Kranish will discuss and sign his new book, *Flight from Monticello: Thomas Jefferson at War* (Oxford University Press, 2010).

FEBRUARY 23 (Tuesday), noon, West Dining Room, Madison Building
Books & Beyond program. Kathryn Jacob will discuss and sign her new book, *King of the Lobby: The Life and Times of Sam Ward, Man About Washington in the Gilded Age* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009).

MARCH 10 (Wednesday), 8:45 a.m.-1 p.m., Mumford Room, Madison Building
Reading Promotion Partners Idea Exchange meeting. (Lunch, 1-2 p.m.), West Dining Room.

MARCH 16 (Tuesday), noon, Mumford Room, Madison Building
Books & Beyond program. Abby Sallenger will discuss and sign his new book, *Island in the Storm: A Rising Sea, a Vanishing Coast and a Nineteenth-Century Disaster That Warns of a Warmer World* (Public Affairs, 2009). Co-sponsored with the Geography and Map Division.

MARCH 18 (Thursday), 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m., Montpelier Room, Madison Building
National Newspaper Association Foundation Congressional Luncheon.

MARCH 24 (Wednesday), noon, West Dining Room, Madison Building
Books & Beyond program. Richard F. Grimmett will discuss and sign his new book, *St. John's Church, Lafayette Square: The History and Heritage of the Church of the Presidents, Washington, D.C.* (Mill City Press, 2009).

APRIL 15 (Thursday), noon, Pickford Theater, Madison Building
Books & Beyond program. A. Roger Ekirch will discuss and sign his new book, *Birthright: The True Story that Inspired Kidnapped* (W.W. Norton & Co., 2010).

APRIL 22 (Thursday), noon, Dining Room A, Madison Building
Books & Beyond program. Anita Silvey will discuss and sign her new book, *Everything I Need to Know I Learned from a Children's Book: Life Lessons from Notable People from All Walks of Life* (Roaring Brook Press, 2009).

(Calendar from page 13)

MAY 7 (Friday), 10 a.m.-5 p.m., Mumford Room, Madison Building

Symposium marking the publication by Penn State University Press of *The First White House Library: A History and Annotated Catalog*. Co-sponsored with the Rare Book and Special Collections Division, the National First Ladies Library, Penn State University Press and the Bibliographical Society of America.

Jefferson Tours (optional) by John Y. Cole and Mark Dimunation, 9-10 a.m.

JUNE 28 (Monday), 8:45 a.m.-5 p.m., Mumford Room, Dining Room C, Madison Building

State Center Idea Exchange meeting.

JUNE 28 (Monday), 5-6:30 p.m., Center for the Book Library Legislative Day reception, Montpelier Room

JUNE 29 (Tuesday), 9 a.m.-noon, Dining Room A, Madison Building

State Center project meetings.

JUNE 30 (Wednesday), 10 a.m.-noon, Room 119, Jefferson Building

River of Words awards ceremony for winners and finalists of the 2009-2010 environmental art and poetry contest for young people. Hosted by Robert Hass, U.S. Poet Laureate, 1995-1997. 

