

Volunteer

World War II — First Hand

WORLD WAR II has recaptured the nation's attention, and an outpouring of films, books, photographs, and TV productions has covered the conflict from all perspectives. NYPL desk volunteer Len Lebson experienced the struggle—first hand. His recently published memoir, *Surrounded by Heroes*, details his harrowing years in six campaigns of the war.

In 1942 Len was inducted into the United States Army, and to his astonishment, found himself in the G3 (operational section, nerve center) of the 82nd Airborne Division, where his skills as a typist and draftsman were urgently needed. The 82nd Airborne Division, with about fifteen thousand men, was trained to drop behind enemy lines to entrap the hostile forces. It was a tough and disciplined fighting force.

In his book, Len tells the story of his six campaigns with the 82nd Airborne from his highly stressful position within the division's operational headquarters. The division fought in the invasions of North Africa, Sicily, Normandy, and Holland as well as the Battle of the Bulge, and the drive to Berlin.

His skill as a draftsman placed him in the center of all campaign activities as he plotted battle positions on maps. Every night, troop information was

delivered by courier to headquarters. This material was mapped and recorded by candlelight under the tensions of nerve-wracking enemy fire. The division headquarters was positioned as close as possible to the front lines so information could be conveyed very quickly. Len kept a written record of every order that passed through the command center. He had the opportunity to observe Generals Eisenhower, Patton, Bradley, Ridgway, Montgomery, and many other top military personnel.

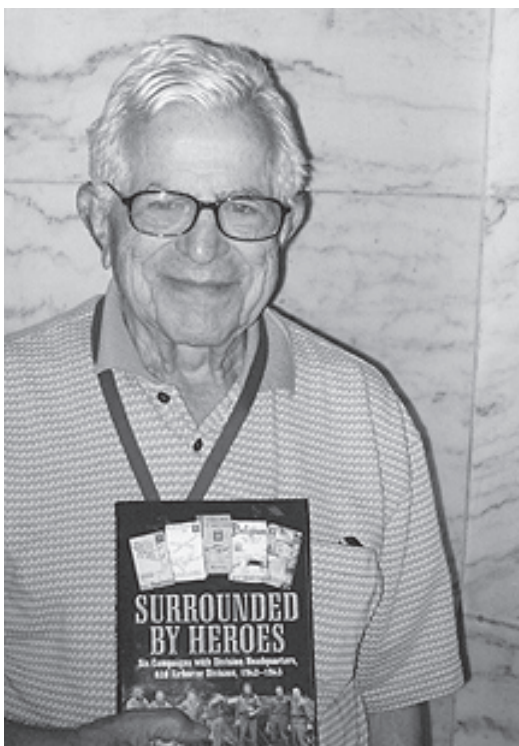
Len took parachute and glider training and his rifle was a constant companion. He arrived at battle sites, along with others in his group, by ship, plane, glider, parachute, and jeep. He ended the war as a master sergeant honored with a Bronze Star with Oakleaf Cluster and the Croix de Guerre from Belgium.

After presenting some of his wartime experiences to veterans' groups, he decided to put the material into book form, not for publication, but as a record for his children. A literary agent saw his work and told him he could get it published. Thus, *Surrounded by Heroes* became a soldier's chronicle for all.

Len became a Library volunteer five years ago. A friend had suggested he give a deposition about his World War II experiences when the Library was collecting oral histories from veterans. Afterward he volunteered to work at the Library's information desks.

Len Lebson, a young man with little military training, through personal skill and courage overcame the challenges and privations of war and became an outstanding soldier. His book tells a true and impressive story.

—Blanche Siegal



Len Lebson, NYPL volunteer and WW II veteran, tells his story in a new book.

PHOTO: ELISABETH WATTS

On The Road On Display

“Beautiful Soul: Jack Kerouac on the Road,” an exhibition of the diaries, manuscripts, snapshots, and personal items of the author whose pioneering work helped establish the Beat movement in the United States, will be on view in Gottesman Hall November 9, 2007 through March 16, 2008.

The exhibition coincides with the 50th anniversary of Kerouac’s landmark novel, *On the Road*, which has captured the imagination of several generations and established its author as a major figure in American literature. Items on view will be drawn almost exclusively from the Berg Collection’s Jack Kerouac Archive, and many unpublished Kerouac materials as well as drafts of *On the Road* will be displayed.

Exhibition highlights include Kerouac’s minutely detailed fantasy baseball and horse racing materials, which he created as a boy and played with throughout his life. There will also be photographs of Kerouac, his family and friends, as well as treasured objects, such as the crutches he used following a football injury, and items memorably described in his writings, such as his harmonicas, his Buddhist bells, and his railroad track lantern.

Visitors will also be able to view the famous scroll typescript, of which the first 60 feet will be unrolled in a specially designed set of interlocking display cases. The scroll will be on display only through February 22, 2008.

A companion volume to the exhibition, written by curator Isaac Gewirtz, will look at Kerouac’s life and works through the lens of the journals, diaries, and other materials in the Kerouac Archive, much of which has not previously been available to scholars.

—Herb Katz

Volunteers Rise To the Challenge

The restoration of six-day service at all libraries (seven days at HSSL, Donnell, Bronx Library Center and St. George Library Center, Staten Island), following years of effort and a highly successful letter-writing campaign last spring, plus strong support from City Council Speaker Christine Quinn, brought cheers and elation to library buffs around the city.

It also posed a bit of a challenge! Fourteen extra volunteer spots at HSSL had to be filled on short notice in order to cover our three information desks and conduct docent tours on Mondays. Previously HSSL had been closed on Mondays.

According to Carole Edlin of the Volunteer Office staff, “with a lot of tenacity and some scrambling, we were able to entice our highly qualified volunteers to be even more generous with their time. We are very grateful for their speedy and magnanimous response.”

Edlin noted that these volunteers undergo specialized training as they must be extremely knowledgeable in order to field questions on all aspects of the Library’s services.

—Trudi Coakley

Volunteers Only

Save the Date

January 9, 2008 — 10:00 A.M.

Tour “Beautiful Soul: Jack Kerouac on the Road”

**Sign up with Marilyn
starting December 15**

*What Made You Decide
To Become a NYPL Volunteer?*

Marie Lunn Schomburg 7 years

After a career in health care, I was looking for activities completely different from my past experiences. A friend told me about the Schomburg volunteers. I signed on and have found my volunteering experiences far better than I could have ever imagined.

Joe Jiggits Schomburg 20 years

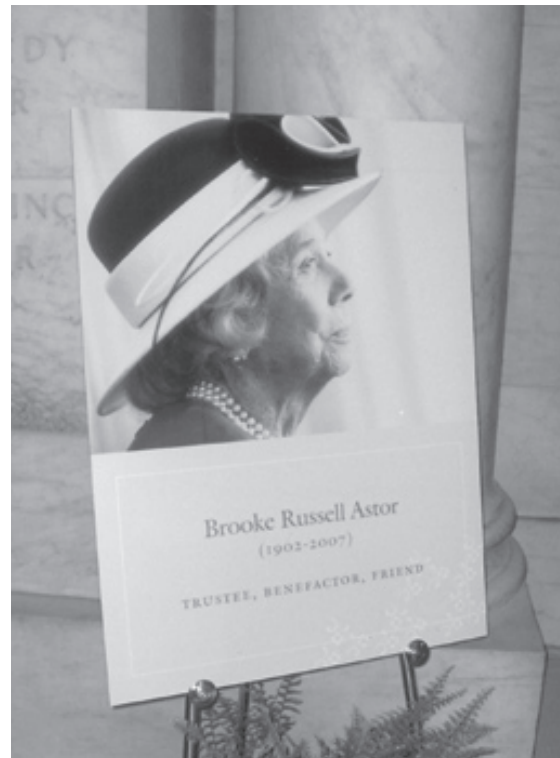
I was teaching at City College, and I brought my students to the Schomburg frequently. I saw a need for dedicated volunteers and joined them. Black institutions need community support, and I am proud to be a part of that support.

Elysee Sinclair Schomburg 6 years

I am interested in African American organizations. I decided to give my time, learn more about the organization, and meet people.

Pat Grant HSSL 10 years

I had recently retired and was bored and casting around for new challenges. A friend who was working as a freelancer for the Library told me it seemed to be a fun place with interesting opportunities for volunteers, and I should check it out. I did. She was right. For ten years I have enjoyed working on a variety of volunteer projects and making new friends. After we had worked together for several weeks, one of my colleagues was telling me about an incident years ago at her high school. It turned out that we had gone to the same school in Queens but had never met. It took the Library to introduce us!



Brooke Astor Remembered

During August and September a striking portrait of Brooke Astor was on display in Astor Hall, flanked by bouquets of lilies and greenery. A book was provided for comments by visitors, and we noticed the following personal tributes:

- To the memory of one of the greatest benefactors of this great city's "crown jewels." You will be missed...
- Thank you for your example of a life of privilege giving to others.
- A belated thank you to Mrs. Astor for funding the Astor Program for the Gifted from 1973-79. My son was one of the original 30+ children in the program, and I am forever grateful for her generosity.

—Joan McCann

Know Your Volunteers

Anita King

Anita's musical background is a fine fit with her volunteer work at LPA. For three years now, she has been cataloging the Music Division's holdings of American sheet music from the 1860s through the turn of the century—a tuneful lesson in America's

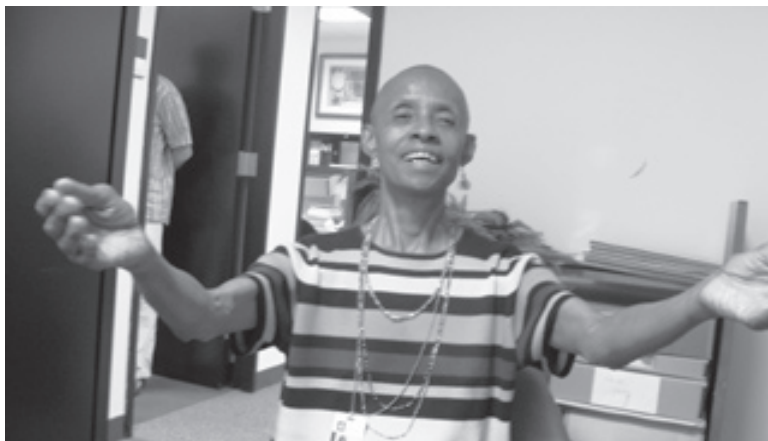


PHOTO: MARY RATCLIFFE

Anita King brings energy, enthusiasm, and commitment to whatever she tackles. Determined to swim in the Empire State Senior Games, she exercises two hours every morning.

history. With her tapping feet and gesturing hands, Anita radiated kinetic energy as she explained the job: typing data for each song, which includes a description of the often exceptional cover art, onto a catalog card. Yes, cards, and yes, a typewriter. (And yes, the data will eventually be online.)

When she was 10 and growing up in Detroit, Anita got her first library card. She's been a frequent user of libraries ever since and calls volunteering "a way of giving back." On Sundays, you'll find her at the Schomburg Center, where she is a 10-year volunteer.

Anita paid her way through the University of Detroit as a piano accompanist at a ballet studio, earning a bachelor's degree in music history. Stage fright deterred her from seeking a career as a recitalist. "As an accompanist, at least you're not alone on stage."

Anita has enjoyed what some might call a checkered career. She has worked on staff or as a temp for diverse employers: cataloging at NYPL's Donnell branch; word processing briefs at the attorney general's office; and as an associate editor at *FM Guide* a monthly radio magazine.

She has also found time for travels as far afield as Peru and Egypt. During the tumultuous years of the civil rights movement, Anita sought refuge in Europe, choosing to live in Denmark. There she found work as a nanny, learning Danish from her young charge. But when the racial blindness she thought she'd found there turned out to be illusory, Anita decided it was time to come home.

Anita is also an artist. While working in downtown Manhattan, she took to browsing in the area's low-price variety stores. She came across a plastic template of geometric forms, and that serendipitous purchase sparked a new outlet for her creativity: art. Anita now has dozens of templates with countless shapes and forms that are the basis for her imaginative and colorful abstractions. (She donated one of her pieces as a door prize for Volunteer Recognition Day this past June.)

Anita is a writer, too. Her books include *Quotations in Black* (1981) and *Contemporary Quotations in Black* (1997). Her articles have appeared in *Essence* and other magazines.

"You have to keep feeding the mind," says Anita, and this new means of expression does that; it gives her—she sought the right word. "Focus. No, balance. That's it. Balance."

— Mary Ratcliffe

New York City Opens Its Doors

For the fifth consecutive year, New York celebrated Openhousenewyork Weekend in early October. The city welcomed visitors to its finest and most interesting public and private buildings, its parks, islands, artists' studios, and townhouses to showcase New York's acclaimed architectural variety.

One of the very popular sites again this year was HSSL, where docents had prepared special tours of our world famous Beaux-Arts building. Nine stalwart docents guided 210 New Yorkers and tourists on tours during the two-day festival.

— Adele Paroni

Ken Burns's Epic

As a volunteer for LIVE from the NYPL, I am fortunate to witness exciting conversations, debates, and readings by authors covering a wide spectrum of subjects. On Thursday, September 27, the speakers were Ken Burns, award-winning documentary filmmaker, in conversation with Robert Stone, noted author of National Book Award winner *Dog Soldiers* and Pulitzer Prize finalist *Bear and His daughter*. Ken Burns's most recent documentary is "The War" seen on PBS in September and October. Among his other notable films are "Brooklyn Bridge," an Academy Award nominee, as well as "The Civil War," "Baseball," and "Jazz."

I am a history buff, so Ken Burns's "Civil War" and now "The War" have been a wonderful journey for me. I have a particular admiration for those who were touched by World War II, (as I was through my father, who served in the Army's 415th Night Fighter Squadron). The Celeste Bartos Forum was filled with people who share my interest in the period and the man behind this massive epic. As the event began, we learned some of the techniques used in producing a documentary.

Burns talked about the difference between the film and documentary styles. He discussed the impact of music and narration, explaining how music propels the story and links to the narration, and how narrators are chosen in this medium. Burns noted that documentaries try to anticipate and create reaction from the viewer. The pair touched on various topics as they relate to the documentary film, referencing sound and speech in Shakespeare and in Kurosawa's films, among others. Then, most anticipated of all, was dialogue and debate on his latest work, "The War," which focuses on families from four American cities with intimate accounts of how they were affected by World War II. Burns then answered audience questions and the evening ended with book signings by the two speakers.

With such great guests on the docket, being part of LIVE is a volunteer's dream come true.

—Debra Goldberg



PHOTO: PAT GRANT

Winnie the Pooh and pals at home

Winnie the Pooh Still on View

Despite the intermittent verbal fisticuffs in the Guests Log between British tourists who yearn for the return of Winnie the Pooh and those who demand he remain in the U.S., Winnie keeps his cool.

A little bedraggled from age and wear, but still attracting many visitors, Winnie and his pals Piglet, Tigger, Eeyore, and Kanga can be seen in the Central Children's Room at the Donnell Library on West 53rd Street—and well worth the visit.

—Bernice Tell

“Books are the carriers of civilization. Without books, history is silent, literature dumb, science crippled, thought and speculation at a standstill...”

—Henry David Thoreau

Espresso Book Machine Showcased at SIBL

Over the summer until September 29th a new invention, The Espresso Book Machine, was on display at SIBL. There are only two others in the world on view: one at the World Bank offices in Washington, DC; the other in the Bibliotheca Alexandrina in Egypt, where it prints in Arabic.

My visit revealed an innovative machine which, essentially, prints a book, its cover, illustrations, and text, in about seven minutes! One selects a book from a short list of titles that have been digitized for this machine. I chose William Blake's *Songs of Innocence*. Espresso hummed, moaned, and clicked away. First, the cover was printed on heavy, colored stock, then the pages were printed, slowly collated, and eventually bound together. A quality paperback emerged.

Two of SIBL's staff told me more; former publishing executive Jason Epstein had proposed the concept of books-on-demand years ago when he foresaw publishing evolving into new processes. After six different patents, a prototype was finally created and one was installed in the Library. Madeleine Cohen, NYPL's Assistant Director for Electronic Resources, told me that Epstein had established a rapport with SIBL and its interest in exploring new methods of technology, and chose us to preview Espresso. Gayle Snible, Associate Manager of Public Relations at the Library, added that SIBL has become known for its up-to-date approach and presentation of technology and was proud to have been chosen to introduce Espresso. She told me that it will now travel to Northshire, an independent bookstore in Vermont. Another machine will be installed in the New Orleans Public Library where it will help replace their greatly diminished stock.

I watched other visitors select books from the list which included Shakespeare, Faulkner, Einstein's *Theory of Relativity*, and even Beatrix Potter's *Tale of Benjamin Bunny*. Espresso published 1,125 books during its brief visit to SIBL.

—Joan McCann



PHOTO: JOAN MCCANN

Blake masterpiece produced by Espresso in seven minutes

Attention! Movie Buffs

On a blistering August afternoon I visited the Media Center of the Donnell Library to look at the DVD of the film *Catch-22*. On the NYPL Web site I had learned that video copies were not available. Inasmuch as I only have a VCR player, I telephoned the Media Center to ask what to do next. Well, much to my surprise, I was urged to come to the Center that afternoon where the DVD copy was waiting for me, as was an alcove with a viewing screen and topflight earphones. The DVD image and sound track were perfect.

What a wonderful few hours I spent in a cool, comfortable environment watching a great movie.

The collection of other videos and DVDs of foreign and domestic films—and other material—is superb. The Center also has an auditorium where films are shown almost every week. After I expressed my appreciation, the librarian who had assisted me asked me to tell others about the Media Center resources. Do plan a visit! I know you will enjoy it.

—Ilene Stone

Read Any Good Books Lately?

Middlemarch

by George Eliot

You may recall watching *Middlemarch* by George Eliot on “Masterpiece Theatre” a few years ago. I was not terribly impressed with a typical Victorian drama about a beautiful, young girl unhappily married to an older, unpleasant husband—a plot not very interesting or original. Thus, I was less than enthusiastic when *Middlemarch* was selected by our NYPL Volunteer Book Club. Plus, the novel was 766 word-packed pages!

I must report that PBS missed the mark. The novel was completely absorbing—equal to Tolstoy’s *War and Peace* in my opinion. I thought it showed more compassion, depth, and character development than even Dickens’ portrayals of 19th century English life. The protagonist of Eliot’s novel is Middlemarch, a provincial English town, the subject of Eliot’s sociological study of the importance of social rank in the lives of its characters. The novel presents a broad canvas detailing the lives of English classes—the landed aristocracy, clergy, professionals, and farmers, without stereotyping its characters. Eliot’s people are neither good nor evil, but nuanced shades of both, displaying goodness and generosity, as well as human foibles.

Not content with concentrating on her major characters, Eliot traces the lives of their relatives and friends and reveals the dramas of other romances. The plot also involves financial chicanery, greed, inheritance, death, and church intrigue, all of which Eliot writes about wittily as well as seriously.

Middlemarch truly deserves Virginia Woolf’s accolade as “one of the few English novels written for grown-up people.”

—Bernice Tell



PHOTO: MAURA MULLER

President LeClerc and Special Collections Director George Fletcher welcome international bibliophiles to HSSL.

Group Glimpses HSSL’s Rarest Treasures

Monday, September 24th was a unique day at HSSL. Guests, members of the International Association of Bibliophiles, numbering about 160, assembled in Astor Hall at 8:30 A.M.

Warmly welcomed by President Paul LeClerc, the group had been invited to view some of the rarest treasures held by the Library. The items were displayed as openly as possible, in many instances on top of the display cases—not under glass—while still being carefully protected. Included in the nearly 65 objects on display were: the Tickhill Psalter, a beautifully illuminated 14th century English gothic manuscript on vellum; the seminal artist’s book of Henri Matisse’s *Jazz*, which preserves the original unfaded brilliance of his collages; handwritten pages by Dr. Charles Leale describing vividly the last hours of the mortally wounded President Abraham Lincoln.

Chief librarians and curators were present, available to explain the materials and answer questions. Two shifts of five volunteers each guided the guests from room to room, floor to floor.

Visitors were heard expressing awe and their sense of privilege at what they were seeing in this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

—Adele Paroni

VOLUNTEERS OF THE NEW YORK PUBLIC
LIBRARY, THE RESEARCH LIBRARIES

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