


FALL 2015



A LOOK INSIDE BROOKLYN PUBLIC LIBRARY

OFF THE SHELF



BRANCH LOCATIONS

BROOKLYN PUBLIC LIBRARY (BPL) IS THE FIFTH-LARGEST PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM IN THE UNITED STATES, SERVING THE BOROUGH'S 2.5 MILLION RESIDENTS AND OFFERING THOUSANDS OF PUBLIC PROGRAMS, MILLIONS OF BOOKS, FREE WIFI AND MORE THAN 1,100 INTERNET-ACCESSIBLE COMPUTERS.

PREMIERE ISSUE

HAPPENINGS
THE BROOKLYN EAGLES
LITERARY PRIZE

5

FEATURE
ADULT LEARNING

6

ARTS & CULTURE
DIVA DOCS

8

BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS
YA, BABIES TO TEENS

12

BROOKLYN STORIES
ARCHIVING OUR HISTORY

14

SPOTLIGHT
LISA G. ROSENBLUM
CHIEF LIBRARIAN

18

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



WELCOME TO THE PREMIERE EDITION OF *OFF THE SHELF*, Brooklyn Public Library's digest of news, events and library information. The theme of our inaugural issue, education, is the ideal lens through which to view the evolution of BPL's services since we opened our first branches in the late nineteenth century.

The once-popular conception of libraries as the hushed, musty haunts of solitary scholars is several generations obsolete. Today, much of the learning that takes place at BPL occurs off the shelf, in courses and programs that serve students of every stripe: Seniors who don't want to be on the wrong side of the digital divide. Adult learners hoping to connect more deeply with the world around them. Teens pursuing the dream of a college education. Children newly discovering the wonders of reading.

No civic institution is better prepared than Brooklyn Public Library to help a diverse and growing borough achieve its dreams. Many of our students have crossed oceans and continents to make their homes in Brooklyn, while others are proud lifelong New Yorkers. Some are working to become United States citizens; others are preparing for the high school equivalency assessment. Wherever their points of departure and whatever their destinations, all are welcomed and supported at BPL's 60 branches.

Of course, our shelves continue to house nearly all of humanity's accumulated wisdom, available for free to all who seek it. On the shelf and off, our aim is to offer patrons a sense of possibility, of new worlds revealed and old ones illuminated.

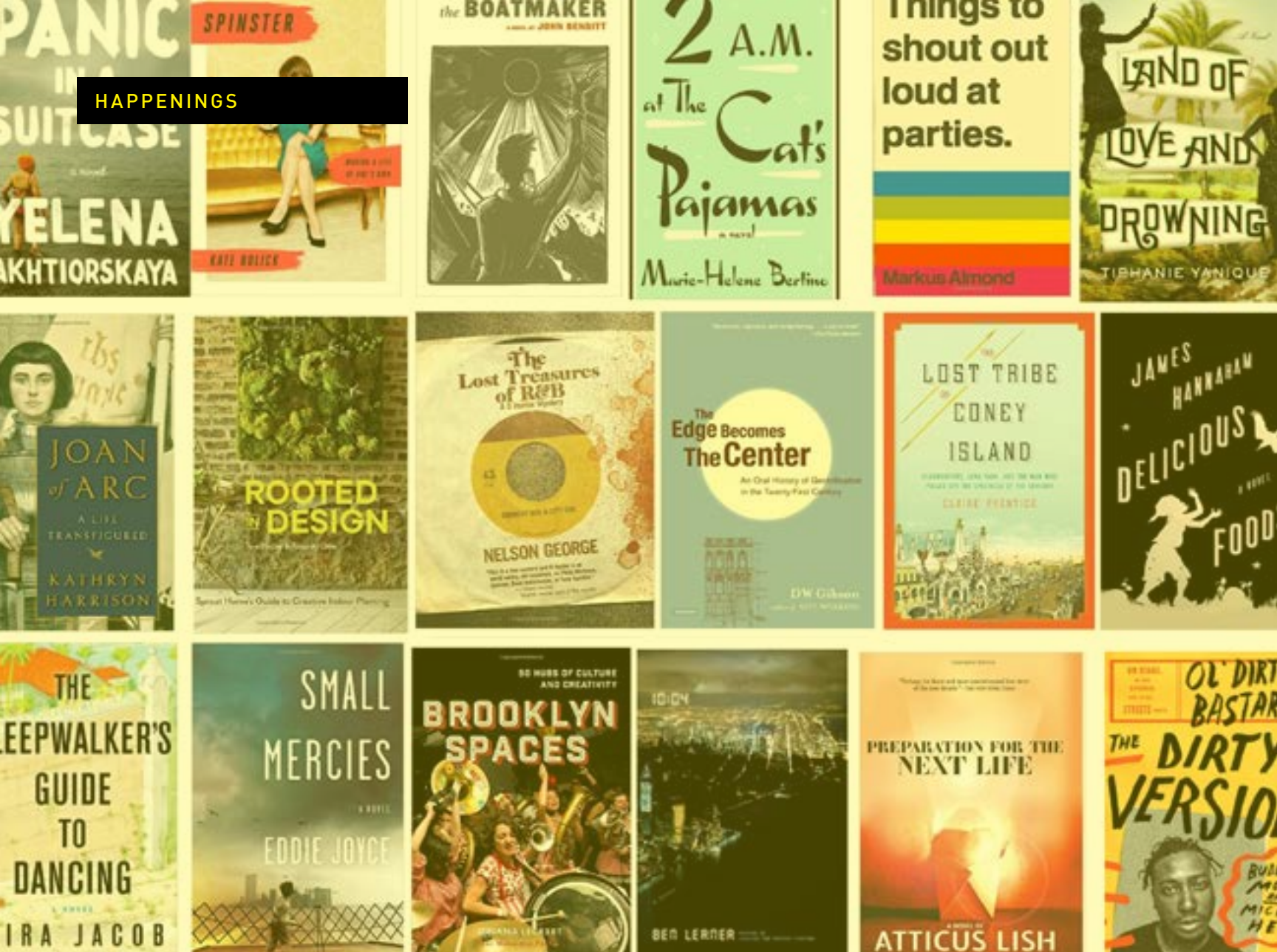
As you will see in the following pages, and in future issues of *Off the Shelf*, Brooklynites are relying more than ever on their local branches not just for great books, but for essential, life-transforming services. Their experiences illustrate the profound positive impact of libraries on the patrons we have the honor to serve.

Very truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Linda E. Johnson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Linda E. Johnson
President & CEO

HAPPENINGS



THE BROOKLYN EAGLES LITERARY PRIZE

Brooklyn Public Library and borough bookstores are celebrating Brooklyn literature this year with the inaugural Brooklyn Eagles Literary Prize! With three fiction and three nonfiction finalists, all nominated by Brooklyn library professionals and bookstores, the annual prize will be awarded during the Eagles' Brooklyn Classic on October 23 to authors who have lived in Brooklyn, portrayed the borough in their work or addressed themes relevant to its life and culture.

The inaugural Brooklyn Eagles Literary Prize is generously supported by the Peck Stacpoole Foundation.

FICTION

Delicious Foods by James Hannanham

Lena Finkle's Magic Barrel
by Anya Ulinich

Preparation for the Next Life
by Atticus Lish

NONFICTION

The Edge Becomes the Center: An Oral History of Gentrification in the 21st Century by DW Gibson

I Am Sorry to Think I Have Raised A Timid Son
by Kent Russell

The Lost Tribe of Coney Island: Headhunters, Luna Park, and the Man Who Pulled Off the Spectacle of the Century by Claire Prentice

A photograph of a person's hands and head in profile, using a tablet. The tablet screen shows a map and a list of items. To the right of the tablet are several orange cards with phrases like 'under the table.', 'of home.', 'in the fish bowl.', 'to school.', and 'the garden.'. The background is a desk with papers and a blue folder.

ADULT LEARNING CENTERS: CHANGING LIVES THROUGHOUT BROOKLYN



PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT

BPL's Adult Learning Centers teach life-transforming literacy skills at Bedford, Central, Eastern Parkway, Flatbush and New Lots libraries.

The centers were founded in 1977 to help residents of a nearly bankrupt city earn high school diplomas; they have served thousands of beginning adult readers and writers in the decades since. The Adult Learning Centers host a variety of adult education programs, including courses for Brooklynites who hope to improve their English or pass the high school equivalency exam. The work of the centers is funded by government grants and support from private donors.

"The Adult Learning Centers offer a flexible program that can assess, accommodate and refer adult learners of all levels," says Kerwin Pilgrim, BPL's director of adult learning.

"And it's not a traditional school model," adds Erna Golden, manager of adult education and training. "The students are working together as a team in small groups. Everybody comes in with different skills, and that's where the collaborative model thrives. That can be more comfortable, especially if adult learners weren't successful in a traditional classroom."

More importantly, however, students at BPL's Adult Learning Centers receive access to free resources and learn to advocate for themselves. Pilgrim describes the students as motivated and determined: "They have overcome a lot of

obstacles to improve their lives. We replace the negative experiences students have had with more positive learning experiences."

The proof is in the results. Recently, BPL's adult learners published short personal essays in *New Expressions*, a journal that gives students the chance to express themselves on paper, in some cases for the first time. As one student wrote,

I am proud of my writing because when someone reads it they will be able to understand where I was and where I am right now. They will be motivated to move forward with their life like me.

Key to the success of BPL's Adult Learning Centers are the volunteer literacy tutors who complete twenty hours of extensive training before stepping into the classroom. The tutors become deeply invested in the progress of their students. As Deirdre Jordan, a volunteer tutor for the past 10 years, says, "You see students who come to the center who can't read at all become brave enough to read in front of a group, and that's a major accomplishment for them."



MARC WANT TUTOR, FLATBUSH LEARNING CENTER

To find out more about BPL's Adult Learning Centers, or to become a volunteer literacy tutor, stop by any center or visit us online at bklynlib.org/adultliteracy.

Hear from students, staff and volunteers at bklynlib.org/adultlearningcenter

ARTS & CULTURE AT
CENTRAL LIBRARY

Brooklyn Public Library offers cultural events throughout the borough, including special series and programming at Central Library's Dr. S. Stevan Dweck Cultural Center. Join us to ignite your curiosity and immerse yourself in art and ideas.

FALL SERIES SPOTLIGHT

DIVA DOCS

WEDNESDAYS
7:30 PM

A documentary film series on women in music that examines their impact on the industry, popular culture and our collective memory.

Amy

October 7

Sister Rosetta Tharpe:

The Godmother of Rock & Roll

October 14

What Happened, Miss Simone?

October 21

Shut Up and Sing

October 28

The Girls in the Band

November 4



EXHIBITIONS / OCTOBER 1 – JANUARY 24



from left to right:

Coney Island Dreams
by Karen Brussat Butler

**From Oil Paint to Egg Tempera:
Portraits and Still Lives**
by Kam Mak

Ten Years of Artists' Books
curated by Donna Seager

FROM OIL PAINT TO EGG TEMPERA: PORTRAITS AND STILL LIVES BY KAM MAK

Kam Mak explores the techniques and methodology of egg tempera, a medium of easel painting widely used in Italy prior to the invention of oil paints in the early 16th century. The works include portraits of the diverse community at the Fashion Institute of Technology, along with traditional still life renderings.

[Grand Lobby](#)

DEAR HOME BY JUNG EUN PARK

Jung Eun Park's *Dear Home* documents the artist's obsession with the concept of home, and her relationship with her family, since she moved to New York from Korea. Her drawings (paper, pencil and thread) and yarn-embroidered letters record her intimate life and map the psychological narratives of human beings as they adapt to new environments.

[Foyer Cases](#)

TEN YEARS OF ARTISTS' BOOKS CURATED BY DONNA SEAGER

Seager Gray Gallery, a well-known contemporary art gallery in the San Francisco Bay Area, has long promoted the book as a medium for contemporary art. In ten years of mounting its annual *Art of the Book* exhibition, the gallery has featured over 500 works by artists from around the world. The exhibition features many of the curator's favorites.

[Balcony Cases](#)

CONEY ISLAND DREAMS BY KAREN BRUSSAT BUTLER

Inspired by Brooklyn's famous amusement park, the exhibition mixes past and present in dream-like lithographs and paintings.

[Lobby Gallery](#)

PLUS

Renowned and controversial author **Salman Rushdie** stops in to discuss his latest novel (October 18); the **Frank Otero Quartet** returns to the Dweck (November 8) for the Classical Interludes concert series; **Stomp, Clap & Sing** with your babies and toddlers (various).

Visit the online calendar for full details and more. **Hours:** M – Th 9 – 9 | F 10 – 6 | Sa 10 – 6 | Su 1 – 5

I SPENT THREE DAYS
A WEEK FOR 10 YEARS
EDUCATING MYSELF IN THE
PUBLIC LIBRARY, AND IT'S
BETTER THAN COLLEGE.
PEOPLE SHOULD EDUCATE
THEMSELVES — YOU CAN GET

A COMPLETE EDUCATION FOR
NO MONEY. AT THE END OF
10 YEARS, I HAD READ EVERY
BOOK IN THE LIBRARY AND
I'D WRITTEN A THOUSAND
STORIES.

RAY BRADBURY

YA ASSIGNMENT BOOKS THAT AREN'T SNOOZERS

By Leigh Hurwitz, Young Adult Librarian, New Lots Library

Assign yourself a few of our favorite picks from a variety of assigned reading lists for Brooklyn middle and high school students. Most of the books on the list have been published within the past five years and are not quite as well known as some of their frequently-assigned counterparts. Diverse voices, cultures and identities are represented in the works, all of which, whether labeled YA or Adult, will appeal to readers from both age groups. Complex yet accessible, funny and dark, the stories on this list challenge the perception that assigned readings are a musty, crusty old battalion of decades-old, dry, irrelevant tomes.



Gabi, A Girl in Pieces
by Isabel Quintero



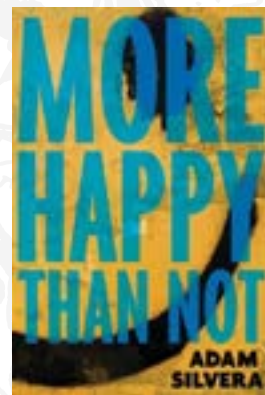
Rethinking Normal
by Katie Rain Hill



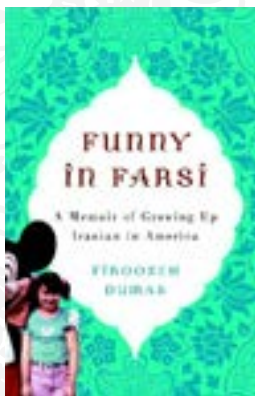
Ready Player One
by Ernest Cline



El Deafo
by Cece Bell



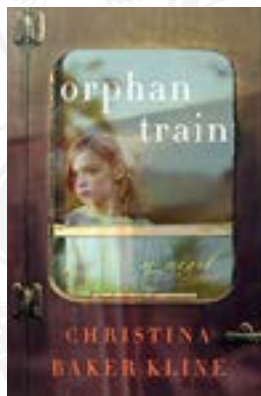
More Happy Than Not
by Adam Silvera



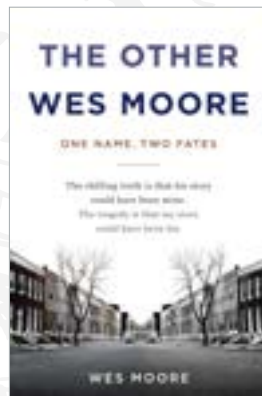
Funny in Farsi
by Firoozeh Dumas



American Born Chinese
by Gene Luen Yang



Orphan Train
by Christina Baker Kline



The Other Wes Moore
by Wes Moore



Parable of the Sower
by Octavia E. Butler



BOOKMATCH LIBRARIAN SPOTLIGHT

LEIGH HURWITZ
YOUNG ADULT LIBRARIAN
NEW LOTS LIBRARY

Leigh Hurwitz is a school outreach librarian at Brooklyn Public Library. She has lived in Brooklyn for eight years and has worked for BPL since January 2014. Leigh volunteered to serve on the BookMatch committee because she loves curating unlikely, yet successful, reader-book pairings.

Visit Bklyn BookMatch online (bklynlibrary.org/bookmatch) and complete a reader profile to get your personalized book suggestions today!



Photo: Johanna Lewis

NEED A GOOD BILDUNGSROMAN LIST?

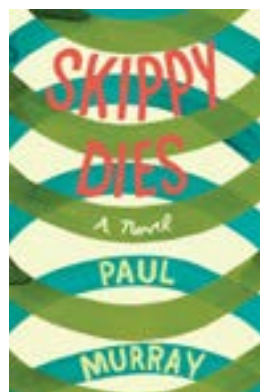
A BPL patron asked: My favorite genre is the bildungsroman, or coming-of-age novel. Some of favorites have been *The Catcher in the Rye*, *Of Human Bondage*, *Sons and Lovers*, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* and *Goodbye, Columbus*. Are there any essential coming-of-age novels that I'm missing?

Librarian comment: I got carried away with my recommendations. Who doesn't love a good bildungsroman?

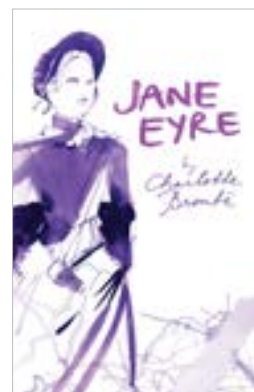
Check out the selections below and find the full list of recommendations online at bklynlib.org/comingofage



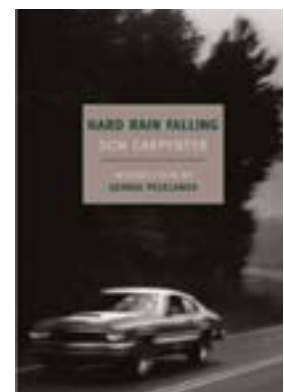
Winger
by Andrew Smith



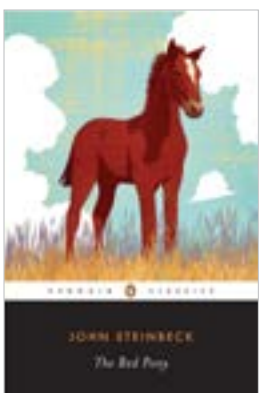
Skippy Dies
by Paul Murray



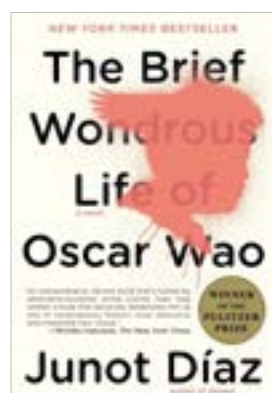
Jane Eyre
by Charlotte Brontë



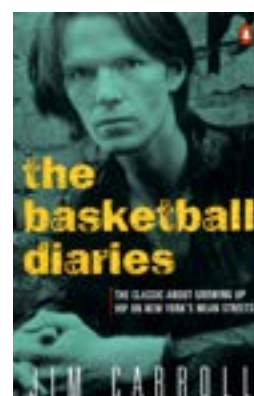
Hard Rain Falling
by Don Carpenter



The Red Pony
by John Steinbeck



The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao
by Junot Díaz



The Basketball Diaries
by Jim Carroll



**Jimmy Corrigan:
The Smartest Kid on Earth**
by Chris Ware

A vintage-style photograph of three young women standing outdoors against a plain, light-colored wall. The woman on the left is wearing a dark brown, quilted parka with a fur collar and dark pants, gesturing with her right hand. The woman in the middle is wearing a grey parka with a fur collar and dark pants, smiling. The woman on the right is wearing a tan parka with a fur collar and light-colored pants, also smiling. The word "BROOKLYN" is overlaid in large, white, sans-serif capital letters across the middle of the image.

BROOKLYN



STORIES

BROOKLYN COLLECTION

KEY PIECES OF BROOKLYN'S HISTORY

are sitting forgotten in attics and basements throughout the borough, slowly degrading and, in some cases, being lost entirely due to improper storage conditions and neglect. With the Our Streets, Our Stories project, we're encouraging patrons to dig out these items and bring them to the Library.

A partnership of BPL's local history division, the Brooklyn Collection, and the Library's Services for Older Adults team, Our Streets, Our Stories is creating a digital archive of oral histories, historic borough photos, documents and ephemera that will be accessible for free to the public. The project democratizes the preservation of Brooklyn's history by providing community members with tools and technology to share their Brooklyn memories with the world.

The newest addition to Our Streets, Our Stories is a mobile lab that allows members of the community to digitize memorabilia at their local libraries. All scanning is handled by BPL staff and volunteers, and patrons are invited to share their histories in the Digital Public Library of America and BPL's own digital catalog.

*I PARTICIPATED
IN THE PROGRAM
TO PRESERVE MY
HERITAGE AND INCLUDE
ARTIFACTS FROM
BROOKLYN'S IMMIGRANT
POPULATION.*





The project's digital scanning initiative is a component of Culture in Transit, a partnership between BPL, Queens Library and the Metropolitan New York Library Council. With a goal of helping New York City neighborhoods define and catalog their histories, the project was selected for full funding earlier this year by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation's Knight News Challenge on Libraries.

"There is a growing demand for libraries to evolve their role and become more dynamic, living platforms, responsive to community needs," says John S. Bracken, Knight Foundation vice president for media innovation. "The winners are working to reinvent the ways in which people experience the library, and providing citizens with the tools and information they require to contribute and strengthen our democracy."

For a schedule of upcoming events, and to learn more, visit bklynlib.org/communityscanning.

The community scanning project kicked off on July 14 and 18 at Leonard Library, then visited New Lots on August 29. We met lifelong Brooklynites and collected incredible images of their families, homes and businesses. Enthusiasm for Our Streets, Our Stories isn't just local; people from all over the country have contacted us about donating their Brooklyn memorabilia. Many of these families haven't lived in Brooklyn for generations, but still feel a connection to the place their grandparents and great-grandparents called home.

There is still plenty of time to participate in Our Streets, Our Stories! We have several scanning events scheduled this fall, with more dates to be added in winter and spring. Please consider attending an upcoming event and helping BPL preserve Brooklyn's cultural heritage.

Hear the oral histories and explore some of our newly scanned materials at ourstreetsourstories.tumblr.com.



IVY MARVEL CURATOR, BROOKLYN COLLECTION



INTRODUCING LISA ROSENBLUM BPL'S NEW CHIEF LIBRARIAN The chief librarian of the nation's fifth-largest library system has a big job. But with 25 years' experience managing libraries, Lisa Rosenblum is up to it.

"When you've worked in libraries as long as I have," Lisa says, "you learn to recognize an extraordinary opportunity. And we have the chance to do some really great things in Brooklyn."

Rosenblum joined Brooklyn Public Library in July after building a national reputation as an innovator for her work in the Silicon Valley area. Lisa recognized early on that libraries should embrace technology, and hers always have: in Sunnyvale, Lisa introduced an innovative radio frequency tagging system—similar to those used by large retail chains to track inventory—to more quickly process materials, and she managed the first library in California to make 3D printers available to the public. Lisa also helped women and girls pursue careers in technology with a series of mother-daughter coding camps.

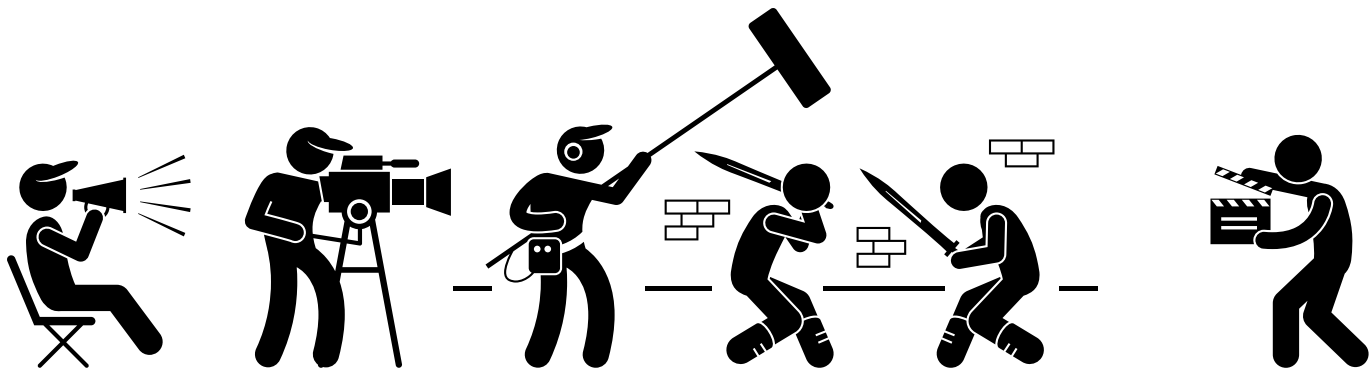
"Working in Silicon Valley, I saw the transformative impact that technology can have in people's lives," Lisa says. "One of the things that drew me to BPL was that the system has long been a leader in this area, with the Library HotSpot MiFi device lending program, great online professional development resources and programs for young people like Today's Teens, Tomorrow's Techies."

Lisa earned a BA in Liberal Arts from St. John's College and a Master of Library and Information Science degree from San Jose State University, where she subsequently taught classes in the master's program. She lives in Park Slope and enjoys walking to work at Central Library.

In her first weeks on the job, Lisa has visited dozens of branches, getting to know patrons and staff in Brooklyn's diverse neighborhoods. Her impression so far?

"Brooklyn is special. We have patrons whose families have loved our libraries for generations, and we're also a first stop for newly-arrived immigrants from all over the world. To me, that's what libraries are all about: serving patrons from every walk of life and helping them achieve their dreams."

WELCOME TO BROOKLYN



A NEW TV STUDIO COMES TO CONEY ISLAND

BRIC's mission is to bring open and accessible media to Brooklynites, and it has certainly done that with the opening of a brand-new, state-of-the-art television studio at Coney Island Library. With green screen capabilities, three cameras, a comprehensive graphics package and a TriCaster switcher, the studio has opened a world of possibilities to Coney Island residents, who can now create and share their own stories at their local branch.

Everyone has a story. Ready to tell yours? Register for one of BRIC's free or low-cost courses today.

BRIC is Brooklyn Public Library's lead media education partner, offering free and low-cost media education courses at four Brooklyn libraries: Central, New Lots, Kings Highway and Coney Island.



WHITMAN circle

TAKE YOUR SUPPORT TO THE NEXT LEVEL: JOIN THE WHITMAN CIRCLE

You are invited to join the Whitman Circle, Brooklyn Public Library's newest community of patrons who value the Library's role in our communities and enjoy the best of BPL's cultural offerings.

To learn more and join online,
visit bklynlibrary.org/support/whitman-circle.

BROOKLYN CLASSIC

The Brooklyn Eagles are a vibrant group of young and engaged Brooklyn Public Library supporters. Each fall, the Eagles host the Brooklyn Classic, a cocktail party that celebrates and raises funds for Brooklyn Public Library. This year, we're hosting the party in the stacks of the historic, stunningly renovated Park Slope Library. The night will begin with the presentation of the inaugural Brooklyn Eagles Literary Prize, followed by cocktails, hors d'oeuvres and dancing.

Proceeds from the Brooklyn Classic provide support for Park Slope Library, as well as BPL's children's and youth programming.

October 23

To purchase tickets, visit
bklynlibrary.org/brooklynclassic.



Brooklyn Public Library gratefully acknowledges the generous support of our corporate donors.



New York Life Foundation

Citi Foundation



nationalgrid Foundation



Bloomberg Philanthropies

Goldman Sachs

BOIES, SCHILLER & FLEXNER LLP

