



# Foreword

The Newsletter of Friends of the Palo Alto Library

Fall 2018

## Members' Annual Meeting

**Date:** Wednesday, October 10, 2018

**Time:** 10:30 am

**Place:** Rinconada Library,  
Embarcadero Room

**Agenda:** Election of Board members and Officers, annual financial summary, other business from the members

## President's Message

Dear Fellow Members, Volunteers and Supporters,

This coming year will be a time of transition and change for the Friends of the Palo Alto Library Board. Long term Board members and past Presidents Peter Dehlinger, Jim Schmidt and Martha Schmidt are retiring as is Tom Clark. All four will continue as key volunteers for FOPAL supporting our sales, our online business, and our book pickup program. They have made and continue to make an exceptional contribution to FOPAL's success and I thank them for their service. Continuing on with the Board but not as Secretary is Tina Kass who has done an excellent job in that role for two years.

Proposed new Board members are Young-Jeh Oh, Jim Sutherland, K. C. Saar, and Melinda Parry, who is also proposed as our next Secretary. They are all experienced volunteers at FOPAL who will bring a wealth of knowledge

*(Continued on page 2)*

## Palo Alto City Library Grants

FOPAL has committed to giving \$131,500 in grants to the library for the next financial year. Projects funded include \$37,000 for Children's and Teen's programs, \$6,000 for Adult programs, \$5,000 for the Senior Homebound Outreach program, and over \$75,000 for 4,000 new books to be added into circulation. The range and impact of these programs is extraordinary. It's estimated that 1,700 programs are offered and 75,000 people attend them.

Thank you for your dedication and generous support of FOPAL and the Palo Alto City Library

*Nigel Jones*  
FOPAL President  
[nigelgj@gmail.com](mailto:nigelgj@gmail.com)

## Members' Corner

### MEMBERS' EARLY BOOK SALE

Main Book Sale Room

Saturday, December 8, 2018

Life Members and Sponsors: 9am to 10am

All Members: 10am to 11am

General Public: 11am to 4pm

### MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

Life Members and Sponsors can each buy 100 books or other items between 9am and 10am at our biannual Members' Early Book Sale. All Members can buy 25 books or other items between 10am and 11am at the sale. Sets, regardless of size, count as one item.

For membership information see back page.

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## President *(Continued from Page 1)*

to the Board.

Continuing on as officers are Charlotte Epstein as Vice President, Shaun Maguire as Treasurer and Karen Neier as Assistant Treasurer.

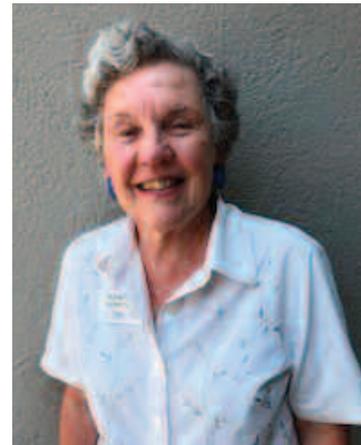
As for the President's role, at the end of the year I will have completed my three-year term. Nancy Cohen is the proposed new president and she has been a dedicated Board member and volunteer for many years and one of my main advisors over my term for which I am extremely grateful.

Being President of FOPAL has been a tremendous honor for me and a unique experience and I would like to thank all of you for your help and support over these last three years.

*Nigel Jones*  
President  
*nigelgj@gmail.com*

## FOPAL Proposed President: Nancy Mahoney Cohen

Nancy Mahoney Cohen has been a FOPAL volunteer since 2004 and on the board since 2012 and vice president/chair Book Sale Committee from 2012-2014. She manages the religion section, cashiers in the Bargain Room, lists high value books and fills in where needed. Prior to her retirement Nancy was general counsel of Roche Palo Alto. She has served as chancellor and is now vice chancellor of the Episcopal Diocese of El Camino Real and is a trustee of the Mabel B. Wright Education Fund. Grandsons and her dog Kipper provide great entertainment.



*Nancy Mahoney Cohen*

## FOPAL Board Election

### Proposed for re-election to the Board for a two-year term

Charlotte Epstein, Tina Kass, Suzanne Brown Little, Shaun Maguire, Gerry Masteller, Steve Staiger

### Continuing Board Members

Nancy Cohen, Nigel Jones, Neelima Meka, Karen Neier

### Proposed FOPAL Officers

President: Nancy Cohen  
Vice President: Charlotte Epstein  
Treasurer: Shaun Maguire  
Assistant Treasurer: Karen Neier  
Secretary: Melinda Parry

### Proposed Board Members

Young-Jeh Oh, Melinda Parry, K.C. Saar, Jim Sutherland

## Proposed New Board Members Young-Jeh Oh



*Young-Jeh Oh*

Throughout her career, Young-Jeh Oh has demonstrated a clear passion for global education and community. Prior to joining the Palo Alto Library as a volunteer, Young-Jeh worked as a broadcast journalist and educator in Korea, a translator for Samsung in Dallas, and a library specialist in Abu Dhabi. She founded the first Korean school in the United Arab Emirates and served as its principal for three years. Young-Jeh was also selected to be a member of the National Unification Advisory Council, Middle East Chapter. While she has lived internationally for much of her life, she has spent significant time in Palo Alto since meeting her husband as a student in 1981. She moved permanently to Palo Alto in 2016 but has been spending summers with her family

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## Board *(Continued from page 2)*

in Palo Alto (and its libraries) since 1997.

Young-Jeh has been volunteering with the Friends of Palo Alto Library since returning to Palo Alto. She has been thrilled with the opportunity to work with the e-commerce aspect of FOPAL's business, taking lead on the organization's eBay presence from listing to fulfillment. She is constantly humbled by the hard work and commitment that all of the volunteers bring to FOPAL. She is truly honored to be nominated to serve with the other dedicated FOPAL board members. If elected, she looks forward to helping advance the integral and critical role that the public library plays in the civic life of Palo Alto.

### Melinda Parry



Melinda Parry

A native Californian, I received a B.A. in English literature from Vassar College and a Ph.D. in art history from Columbia University. I taught art history at Columbia, York College (City University of New York), and Davidson College in North Carolina. For several years I was a lecturer for Smithsonian

Institution study tours of Italy; I met my husband, Stan, on one of those tours and moved to Palo Alto in 1985. For the past twenty-five years we have traveled extensively in France to study and photograph medieval and Renaissance architecture, sculpture, and stained glass, which resulted in his book on French Gothic cathedrals. I started volunteering with FOPAL two years ago, first in the sorting room on Friday and then becoming manager of the sorting room on Saturday; I also help with the monthly sales. I have loved books all my life, and I think my job with FOPAL is so much fun - I find the wide range of donations endlessly fascinating, and I enjoy seeing so many customers who are thrilled with their purchases.

### K.C. Sarr

K.C. grew up and attended schools in Palo Alto, including Cubberley, when it was a high school. As a child she swam every summer at Wilbur Jr. High School, where she



K.C. Sarr

was also very involved in synchronized swimming. During the school years, she took part in various dance classes including ballet and modern dance. In college, she added flamenco dance to her repertoire.

K.C. attended UC Davis as an undergraduate, where she specialized in French and International Relations. She attended graduate school at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy on the Tufts University campus. At Fletcher, she took her first trip to Africa, when she spent the summer in Nigeria doing an academic study on local farmers.

K.C. has had several careers in her lifetime that includes working as a bank economist, working as a development economist in Africa, working in film and television, and working as a technical writer in the computer industry.

In retirement now, K.C. enjoys gardening, travel, and helping out at FOPAL. K.C. and her husband are building a house in Senegal, West Africa, where they hope to spend part of each year.

### Jim Sutherland



Jim Sutherland

Genetically acquired love of books from librarian mother and have been a patron of FOPAL since the 1960s. Born in Norfolk, VA, then moved around US coast ports: Coronado, Brooklyn, Annapolis, & San Diego following Navy dad. As adult, arrived in Palo Alto area in 1955 and remained except for a few

absences.

**Education:** Stanford University BS Electrical Engineering '59, MBA '65;

**Career:** Electronic Engineer & Manager in Computer & Semiconductor companies, mostly small startups in Silicon Valley except for 23 years at National Semiconductor; Awarded several patents. Early work was in computer & peripheral hardware design; later work was in Integrated Circuit design, new product definition, and application of

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## Computer Science Section

Being in the heart of the Silicon Valley, amongst the pioneers and budding "next gen" technology experts, it's no surprise that we receive a wide assortment of Computer books. They range from the old days of FORTRAN to the latest AI, as well as books on video games, building websites, data mining and hacking. The books are for beginners all the way to experts.

It's one of the sections that receives the highest number of donations year-round. It's also a section where the content gets outdated very quickly as revisions and upgrades happen more often in this industry. Hence given the volume of books we get and how quickly the content gets outdated we are making diligent efforts to determine which books are most suitable for our different sales rooms.

Books over \$40 go to our high value online store, books less than \$5 go to our Bargain Room. Everything in between is sold in our Main Room grouped by category as well as special offers in our very popular "Best Value" section.

*Neelima Meka*  
*Computer Science Section Manager*

## Board *(Continued from page 3)*

circuits in customer systems.

**Family:** Proud father of 4 children & 2 stepchildren educated mostly in Palo Alto Schools, plus 5 grandchildren & 3 step grandchildren. Happily married to Marnie Shuey who is also a FOPAL section manager

**Travel:** Visited many countries in Europe & Asia; worked in Germany 4 years, England ½yr

**Hobbies:** (Past): amateur radio, photography, tennis, skiing, backpacking, flying, scuba diving, soccer, jogger/runner for 36 years; (Present): genealogy, gardening, now bicycling, swimming & weight lifting for exercise since my knee doesn't allow running anymore;

**Retirement:** retired from engineering at 65, but still managing a couple of rental properties.

**Volunteer Service:** (Past): AYSO soccer coach & referee; (Present): Friends of Palo Alto Library section manager (ten years) & sale cashier, Palo Alto Rotary Club, Computer History Museum docent, Palo Alto & Mtn. View Theatre usher.

## Finding Value in the Science and Technology Section

A months ago, I opened a book and became an instant billionaire. To understand how, you need to know one of the tasks required to add value to a donated book. Books that are actually read and studied with attention and interest are often littered with inserts. Some are bookmarks, others are endless page locating post-its, and for some readers, the book makes a handy storage closet for documents they need to process later on. The next user of a book generally prefers the book to be as close to "factory-fresh" as possible. This means one has to remove almost all of the inserts to increase the value of the donated item. I say almost, because there are a few inserts that should be left inside the book. The errata provided by the author of errors and mistakes found after the book went to print is generally appreciated by the next owner. When the book's previous owner was extremely knowledgeable in the field, maybe perhaps a Stanford professor who reviewed the book, the corrigenda provided by the reader, but not the author, is also of significant value. In some textbooks solutions and answers to some or all of the problems is a desired insert that can comfortably fit inside the book instead of being a separate paperback by itself. These inserts need to be kept while the rest are efficiently removed. For some kinds of donors who have a propensity for inserts, this is a significant task for the section manager. It is definitely necessary as it increases the value of the book dramatically. Realistically, most buyers will not even look at a book with forest of colorful but usually mangled post-it notes encircling the edge of the book, no matter how good a book is intrinsically. That is not to say that this task does not have direct rewards for the section manager, as sometimes the inserts have a value unrelated to the book but of considerable interest to the person plucking the feathered folio. Which brings us to the unexpected bookmark found making me prosperous in an opulent sort of way.

In 1992 the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was having significant financial problems and issued a new series of bank notes that frugally recycled previous designs but with higher denominations than the previous 1990 and 1985 series. By

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# Value *(Continued from page 4)*



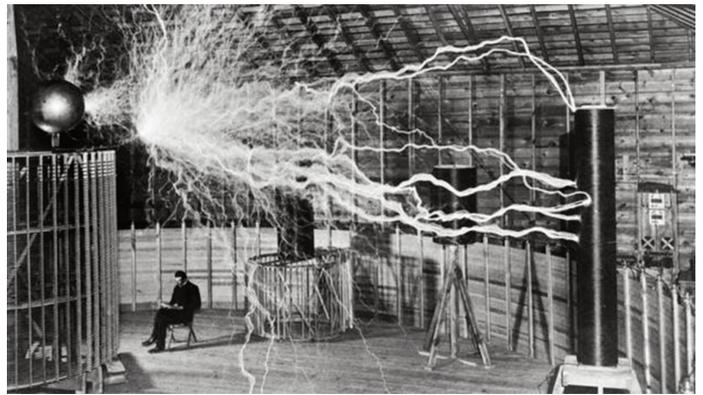
early 1993 they had to add some even higher denominations to accommodate the rampant inflation that was occurring. This included a one millard (what we call a billion) dinar note. On December 31st 1993, one American Dollar was worth 1,775,998,646,615 Yugoslavian Dinars, due to a highest hyperinflation ever seen in the world (313 billion percent). The girl in the picture is of nobody in particular, the currency is worthless and from a now non-existent country. But it looks nice and it gives me bragging rights. It also complements another “bookmark” I found a few years back of a lower denomination bill from the same series.



The man in the picture is Nicola Tesla, an electrical engineer like me, whom I learned a lot about in the 1980s during an IEEE centennial project in Colorado Springs where I lived at the time. On the reverse side of the bank note is a large coil that Tesla designed.

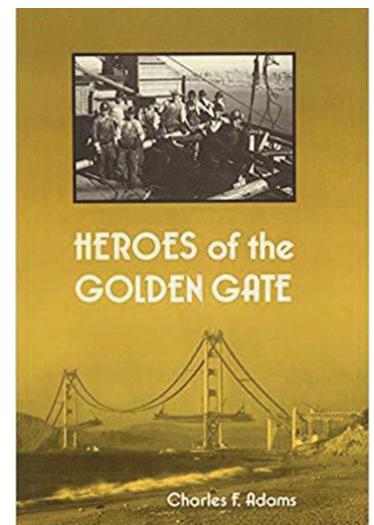
As best as I can tell from the cropped image it is of the large coil Tesla made in 1899 in Colorado Springs when he did a year sabbatical away from his New York laboratory. This coil is featured in a famous double exposure publicity picture that Tesla made showing him calmly reading a book while the coil is spewing a storm of arcs.

Tesla was very PR savvy and took every advantage he could to promote himself. Even though he was Serbian, he is a hero to many more in the Balkan peninsula and thus finds himself on currency, postage stamps, medals and other forms



of posthumous recognition. His lab in Colorado Springs is long disappeared and its location is in a tract house neighborhood just north of Memorial Park. We get a number of books in the Science & Technology section on Tesla, all heavily printed because of his current popularity and are thus low cost to anyone desiring a copy. You will also find books purportedly about Tesla in the New Age section. While these turn out to be very popular they too are heavily printed and have generally low costs to enthusiasts. The study of Tesla and his inventions generally attracts a certain nutty kind of person. Well, it attracted me. The value in all these books on Tesla is that his life, real and imagined, makes a great story-line, and just like the Arthurian genre, it will be generating tales of all kinds for eternity.

Value in a section of books comes in many flavors and some of them are not so obvious. Some years back Pacific Book Publishing faded into the sunset and donated their remaining inventory to FOPAL. Naturally they had already flogged their titles as much as they could to extract every possible dollar before surrendering their remnants to us. We were able to sell a few copies to our audience, but the prices quickly plummeted and now they are relegated to the Bargain Room in small quantities. However, about 4 years ago seeing a high stack of boxes of “Heroes of the Golden Gate” and its cover design gave me an idea.



I was in a situation in my work where I needed to  
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## Value *(Continued from page 5)*

communicate to a number of people in the very siloed business ecosystem that surrounded me that I wanted to work closer with them above and beyond how we were currently interacting. I crafted the idea of giving out a New Year's "gift" with the message. The message was to be low-key but creative and professional and focused on building bridges between me and the recipient. I used the book as the gift and the cover image as a pretext for my added message where I talked about my take on the word bridge and its many meanings (several of them electrical). I bought around 3 cases from FOPAL, printed up the message on a color printer and distributed my marketing piece. The gimmick worked, and even to this day, people still remember the "gift" I gave them. Most have never read the book (nor have I) but they still keep it on a shelf or drawer because generally people do not throw out books, which has worked in my favor as every time they see the book again it reminds them on the unexpected and unusual New Year's gift they received and the message it conveyed. I know of only one person who actually read the book and that was because he was a local history buff. While we are admonished to not judge a book by its cover, we can certainly use an otherwise low-desirability book for just its cover in an atypical manner to acquire value.

By now you have had enough of the fluffy meaning of the word value and like true American capitalist you want to know where is the beef. Where is the raw cash value in the Science and Technology section. The simple answer is in the high value books we sell on Amazon. What is sold in Marty's room shelves during sale days is a tiny fraction of the dollar value we sell on Amazon. What we sell in the Bargain room is an even tinier fraction dollar-wise. I hope by now you are not surprised by this. But you may rightly ask, after 20 plus years of doing this at FOPAL, which books are the ones that are high value? My answer is unfortunately that it is hard to tell. Certainly, the more recent books have a higher chance of being valuable. This is definitely the case for the fast-changing fields of biology and astronomy. A bit less so for electronics and chemistry. Even less for physics and mechanics. The books in the field of mathematics hold their value quite well over time. But, this is only a guideline. Not every math book is valuable. While I can look at a book and usually guess that it may have a higher chance of being valuable, I will only really know if I look it up. Worse yet, there are some books I would otherwise send to the bargain room that end up having some pretty significant value.

So, when in doubt, I have to look up each book online. While I have a pretty darn good idea what will sell on our shelves, what sells on virtual shelves online is much harder to predict. Also, there is the plain fact that Amazon (and likely others) move prices up and down in order to maximize overall revenue. Amazon has the massive advantage over me by having big-data on its side.

But certainly, there are some trends where cash value is located among the books, right? Absolutely, yes. These are the ones I have noticed so far (but note that this keeps changing over the years):

- Recent books on advanced (post-graduate) subjects.
- Books on esoteric academic subjects by university presses. (Oxford, Cambridge and MIT being more prevalent, but even some obscure Midwest university can create a stunner.)
- Some undergraduate textbooks (not always the most recent either)
- The media packages for textbooks if they have their own ISBN (sometimes)

Then there are the one that are almost certainly low value:

- Popular science for the layman that are printed in gargantuan quantities
- Custom editions of textbooks for a specific college
- Any book that was popular once (and then got printed to excess)
- Biology and astronomy books more than a year or two old.
- Books that followed a fad: nano, chaos, invincible Japanese production methods, IoT, maker, fiber optics, cloud, 3G cellular, solar power, climate change, etc.

The trend over the past 20 years is that we will get more books donated that will have a lower average value. Our revenue will be driven by how well we can keep high quality donors (like Stanford professors) giving us their collections, how fast we can sift the low value books away so we have room for the next donation. We only get a fraction of all the books people have to give away in Palo Alto. The faster we process, the more we can accept and thus the more high value we will find.

But, you too can become a billionaire in your section. We know value of a book is not always in dollars.

*Edwin El-Kareh*

*Science and Technology Section Manager*

# FOPAL - VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES!

FOPAL's success depends on the generosity and commitment of its volunteers, a team of around 160 people. We are always looking for new faces to help us carry out our mission to support the Palo Alto Library. Training is given in all areas and hours are flexible to suit your schedule.

## Current openings include:

### High Value Books

We are looking for people to support our online high value book operations. There are openings for people to do look up and research of high value books, to list the books on our store, and to ship the books out. This is an excellent opportunity to discover the fascinating world of high value books.

### Sorters and Section Managers

FOPAL's lifeblood is its endless stream of donations. We need people who can learn how to sort materials into the correct category. You will be the first to see all the new donations! We also need people who would like to be in charge of a specific book section where you learn how to price and organize your own mini book store. We have immediate openings in Reference, Large Format and Games and Puzzles.

### Pickup Team

We offer a special service to some of our donors where we pick up their materials and bring them to FOPAL at Cubberley. If you like to be out and about and meet people and have a van or pickup we need you right away. We reimburse for gas and mileage.

For more information on volunteering please contact:  
Janette Herceg, Volunteer Manager  
jherceg@fopal.org • 650-494-1266

## Welcoming new volunteers!

Isaac Tan, Clarice Wang, Sarah Prosth, Thea Schmit, Noam Katzenelson, Alex Guan, Cassie Chen, Henry Yu, Aparna Kommineri, Dan Morrison, Tara Feldmeier, Dov Shiffman, MaryEllen Campbell, Elia Gonzales, Andrew Lum, Julie Avelino, Sasha Irwin, Peggy McKee Amir Bernstein, Ena Zou, Linda Reid

## Retiring volunteers- Thank you for your service!

Juanita George and Christina Mavroudis



FOPAL's Children's Room Vintage and Antique Books

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### Book Sales:

Second Weekend Every Month  
Cubberley Community Center  
4000 Middlefield Road - Palo Alto

### Saturday Hours

Bargain Room: 9:30am - 4pm [H2, H3]  
Children's Room: 10am - 4pm  
Main Room: 11am - 4pm

### Sunday Hours

All rooms: 11am - 4pm  
For details see [www.fopal.org](http://www.fopal.org)

### Free Books

After each sale, FOPAL gives away free books from its Bargain Room (H2/H3). On Sunday between 4pm - 6pm, teachers and nonprofits can take free books and on Monday between 6pm - 8pm, everyone can come and take free books.  
Be sure to bring your own bags and boxes

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### Book Discussion Group: Second Thursday

Lucie Stern Community Center Fireside Room  
1305 Middlefield Road 7:30pm - 9pm  
For information see: [www.fopal.org](http://www.fopal.org)

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### Friends of the Palo Alto Library Membership Form

"The Friends of the Palo Alto Library is a tax-exempt organization under 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Your donation is tax deductible."

Join / Renew	1 Year	2 Years
_____ Student/Senior	\$10	\$18
_____ Individual	\$20	\$35
_____ Family	\$30	\$50
_____ Sponsor	\$100	\$175
_____ Lifetime	\$500	
_____ Corporate	\$1000	

\_\_\_\_\_ Name

\_\_\_\_\_ Address

\_\_\_\_\_ City / State / Zip

\_\_\_\_\_ Phone

\_\_\_\_\_ Email

**Matching Funds:** Many of our members and donors can increase their donation to FOPAL if their employers have a Matching Funds program for registered charities. Please contact [info@fopal.org](mailto:info@fopal.org) for more information.

Make checks payable to:

Friends of the Palo Alto Library

Return form to:

Friends of the Palo Alto Library

P.O. Box 41 Palo Alto, CA 94302

If you would rather receive the FOREWORD by email please notify us at [editor@fopal.org](mailto:editor@fopal.org).

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