

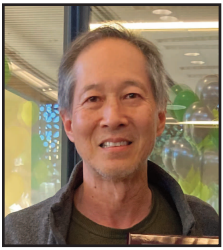


Foreword

The Newsletter of Friends of the Palo Alto Library

Spring 2025

President's Message



We had a great 2024 under the leadership of outgoing President Jenny Munro, and a very eventful start to my 2025. This being my first President's message, naturally I looked at the previous one last fall from Jenny. I had to chuckle when I read it, because she said it would be the last *Foreword* she would be putting together. Little did she know, her talents would be once again tapped for this issue!

Although our fiscal year resets in July, the calendar year is usually of popular interest. Our gross sales of your donated books, media and toys approached \$400,000 in 2024 as it did in 2023. We continue to improve our sales process, look for new opportunities to gain revenue while serving the community. Thank you for memberships, monetary donations, donations of salable items, patronage of our sales, and volunteer service.

The first two months of 2025 were indeed very eventful for our Board, having three new officers including myself still learning the ropes. In January the Board decided to institute term limits for Board members for the first time in our 80-year history, and we updated our by-laws accordingly. In February, our longtime director Janette retired (see her parting article elsewhere in this newsletter).

Having to keep things afloat in short order without our only employee was and is quite a challenge! From the Board, our officers both new and old, to a group of stalwart volunteers, we, as an organization, had to rise to the challenge of running day-to-day operations ourselves, as well as keeping our monthly sale going. This proved to be an incredible learning and bonding experience for us. We quickly learned

(Continued on page 2)

About Our 'Native American' Section



Tisa Abshire Walker, 'Native American' section manager

A bit of a back story: In the early 2000s when I started volunteering here at FOPAL, I was a book-sorter, as well as a floor-walker at the monthly sales. And while doing both of these jobs I noticed a couple of odd things about the way books were assigned to categories. One oddity puzzled me professionally, and the other upset me personally. So, what am I talking about?

Well, professionally I am an anthropologist, specializing in studying and knowing about a wide variety of the indigenous peoples of North America. And so when I discovered that all books on the Native Americans were being put into the sorting room box labelled 'The West,' I was puzzled that (especially in this highly educated area) such an obvious mistake would be made.

And then I was also upset personally, for I noticed as I floor-walked that indeed the Native American section itself had been encased within 'The West.' Having grown up as an honorary part-time daughter in a Pueblo family, from whom I learned about the many different Native American peoples across North America, I found that an especially egregious example of Euro-American stereotyping. Grumble.

But the volunteer who was then in charge of that large

(Continued on page 3)

President *(Continued from page 1)*

a lot about, and gained an appreciation of, all facets of our operations small and large. We learned teamwork in distributing and undertaking tasks that multiplied as quickly as we could perform them. Perhaps most importantly, we know each other a lot better, galvanizing as a truly tight-knit group. As we hire and bring a new staff member on board, we'll be poised to move forward in new and exciting ways.

One last big change to mention is the monthly sale hours for Sundays only, to 1:00-4:00 pm beginning in April. This change may be permanent. Thanks for your continued support! Finally, two of our Palo Alto libraries, Mitchell Park and Rinconada, celebrated their 10-year anniversaries recently. Happy Anniversary!

Hello Neighbor

A couple doors down from the Bargain Room, a brightly lit and colorful room beckons. I stopped in there recently to meet two very friendly and enthusiastic neighbors! Avenidas is a fifty-year-old non-profit organization, but their Chinese Community Center branch at Cubberley is only six years old. While at first glance they cater to Chinese people, in fact their classes are in English, and they told me that many of their members are not Chinese. All their programs are for adults over fifty. They aren't open on the weekends, but if you are dropping off a donation to our main room on a weekday, feel free to stop by and see for yourself. They also have a back room where they have special exhibits. You can look for them online information at <https://www.avenidas.org/programs/chinese-community-center>.

Henry Yu

Gamble Garden Social

On December 24th of last year, FOPAL volunteers enjoyed a social gathering at the Gamble Garden in Palo Alto. With the help of Event Intern Akleysa Dechasa, approximately 40 volunteers were treated to goodies from Ada's café, which included various delicious brownies and cookies and hot chocolate. A staff member from Gamble Garden welcomed volunteers and handed out a list of items to look for in the gardens. There were many plants on the list, and also an elusive gnome! The rain held off for this event, and everyone enjoyed socializing in a lovely setting.



Wendy signing in



Janette and Akleysa



Steve and Laurel
choosing goodies



Grandchildren
enjoy the treats

Native *(Continued from page 1)*

and eclectic section did a remarkable job of sorting out and organizing the large and varied set of books which came into 'The West,' so I kept my grumble to myself.

And so how have things changed since then? In 2016 my husband, Ed Walker, who already had been FOPAL treasurer, Chief Librarian for HV books, and section manager for 'Science,' was asked to take over 'The West.' And would I do the 'Native American' part? We both said yes, and so we immediately moved the 'Native American' section out of and away from its attachment to 'The West.' And in fact, we were able to put it next to the sociology and anthropology sections. Yes!

Over this past decade then it's been fascinating to be the section manager and to see how the books on Native Americans have 'evolved,' so to say. We still get donations of tomes, large coffee table books, which focus on the history of the native peoples, usually well-written, but still somewhat done through colonial-Anglo eyes.

Then we move on to the kind of books written in the mid-1900s by Anglos who themselves were close friends of native people and who therefore wrote with something of an insider's eye about those people's cultures and ways of being. (Alice Marriott's 'Maria: The Potter of San Ildefonso,' and Frank Waters' 'Masked Gods' are two classic examples of this.)

And since that time the situation has continued to change and change again even more. There have been major movements to establish Native American legal land rights, tribal rights, and such. The complexities of Native American cultures and lives, in urban life as well as reservation life, are now more recognized in the larger US population. And of particular importance, more Native American writers and artists themselves have become major voices for their own indigenous peoples and lifestyles. (See for instance N. Scott Momaday's 'The Way to Rainy Mountain,' Chief Clarence Louie's 'Rez Rules,' Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz's 'An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States,' and works by artists such as the Hopi watercolorist, Kai-Sa.)

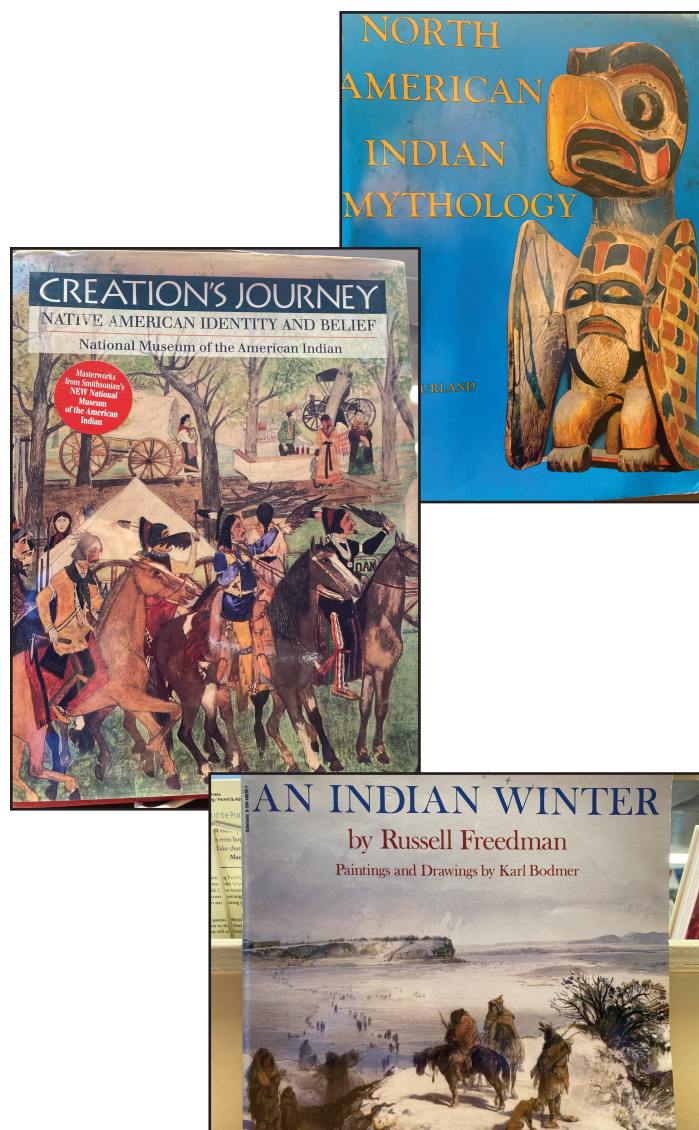
Therefore, our 'Native American' section has at all times a fascinating array of many different kinds of books. Currently, the *large oversized tomes* (which are on the topmost and bottommost shelves) have the titles 'Objects of Myth and Memories' (arts), 'Creation's Journey' (mythology), 'Native Universe: Voices of Indian American' (National Museum of

the American Indian).

Then the shelves below are organized by different foci: *Tribal and chiefdom groups*: ('Aboriginal Ontario,' 'The Ohlone Way,' etc.), *Biographies*: ('Crazy Horse,' 'American Indian Women,' etc.) *Native American/ Euro-American relations* ('The Last War Trail,' 'In the Absence of the Sacred,' etc.), *Arts and literature* ('Weaving the Dream,' 'Arts of the Northern Tlingit,' etc.), and *Worldviews/philosophies/religions/mythologies* ('The Sons of the Wind,' 'Dzeldarhons,' 'The Storytelling Stone,' etc.)

So come in for our monthly sale and enjoy browsing through and savoring the many books about the Native American worlds, and choosing which you would like to have for your own bookshelves.

Tisa Abshire Walker
'Native American' section manager



A Student Volunteer's Experience

I have been volunteering at FOPAL ever since February of 2023, and since then I have filled primarily two positions, donation monitor and Asian-language section manager.

As a donation monitor, I help receive donations, primarily on Saturdays, and either pack them into boxes if there is a high throughput, or sort them by category if there is time. I do this with other volunteers (primarily other high schoolers) and we all work together fairly well. I find that what I like best about this position is simply the variety of people we meet. Especially on the more laid-back days, where I can get to talk to my fellow volunteers or some of the donors just for a little while; it is refreshing.

I also serve as the Bargain Room's Asian-language section manager. Primarily we receive lots of Chinese, Japanese, and Korean books, and my ability to passably read Chinese and Japanese is a boon when it comes to sorting them. As the books are on pretty much every topic, it's not hard to find something interesting, whether it be a famous Japanese novel, Bibles (a surprisingly common donation) or travel guides. Working with the other section managers is especially rewarding; it's less like work and more like a collaborative project.

In the end volunteering at FOPAL has transformed from being something I am doing for the reward of volunteer hours to something I do because I enjoy it. Even though school and college applications might keep me busy for the near future—and once I go to college I'm afraid I won't be able to volunteer often—it's still something that I value doing and will continue to do whenever I can.

Benjamin Yang



Music Sales at FOPAL

About a year and a half ago some FOPAL volunteers decided to tackle the large backlog of donations of 12" and 10" vinyl records, 45 rpm 'singles,' and cassettes, 8-tracks, and reel-to-reel tapes, all of which had been lingering in storage due to the Covid epidemic. Sorting through this music collection has involved many hours of carefully examining each item for playable condition and potential audience, based on repertoire and performance.

As a result, over 30 bins of music have been made available at our special pop-up monthly Saturday sales under the tents next to the Main Room entrance ramp. To date, these sales have contributed over \$10,000 to FOPAL's library funds!

The titles span all genres of music: pop, R&B, rock, country, jazz, Broadway tunes, film scores, comedy, spoken word, and other eclectic releases. Prices run from \$2 up to \$35 for mint and near-mint condition highly-collectable discs. Every month more than 1,000 new titles are added to the previous month's sale, so there are always new releases to choose from.

In the future, stay tuned for two special sales: 1) laser discs and 2) a huge classical collection.

Sale hours are 10am-3pm on the second Saturday of the month, weather permitting. You will be greeted by knowledgeable music industry retirees who will be more than glad to answer any questions.

George Chaltas



FOPAL eBay High-Value Sales

Nestled in the back of the FOPAL Children's Room, the High-Value team works diligently among rare and valuable books spanning from pre-1800s to the present. Our team includes the powerhouse top lister, Karen; Lisa, our expert in vintage children's books; Nancy, a retired Google researcher; and myself. Nigel serves as the Principal Officer of the eBay platform, and Nancy C. consistently contributes valuable books for listing. The irreplaceable Frank is always on hand to assist with technical issues. Together, we're averaging around \$7K to \$8K per month in sales, with nearly \$93K in revenue for FOPAL last year. As a result, eBay has awarded us Top Rated Store status as of February 2025.

FOPAL eBay was founded in 2002, initially selling books and other donated items on a small scale, with only one part-time paid employee. I joined in March 2017, primarily listing DVDs. After the departure of the previous personnel, KC and Lisa came on board, focusing on high-value books and vintage children's books, respectively. The real breakthrough came in 2019 when Karen joined the team, listing and selling four-figure books, including rare titles like those by Aleister Crowley. Inspired by Karen's pricing strategies, Lisa and I became more confident in recognizing valuable items. Lisa successfully sold a rare edition of *Anne of Green Gables* by L.M. Montgomery for a substantial price, while I sold a 1909 edition of *Dracula* for a high three-figure sum.

Another turning point for our eBay business came when we switched our shipping method from Stamps.com to eBay's integrated shipping service, including international shipping. Previously, shipping overseas was a cumbersome task, particularly with customs regulations. I recall one buyer from the Netherlands who didn't pick up a DVD because of high fees, and another from Brazil who had to wait over a month for his video game. Now, shipping internationally is seamless, making the process much easier for us and our buyers.

Every time I open a box brought to Annex B—where the High-Value listers work—I feel a deep sense of gratitude for the section managers who curate these rare books. Mandy's beautifully handwritten green HV slip with poetry books, Fiona's curated art books, Ed's selections on computer science, along with classics, nature, westerns, medicine,

religion, and science—they all enrich my soul. These donated books are purchased for various personal reasons, and I am constantly humbled by not only their content but also their design and craftsmanship. Listing each book provides immediate feedback through views and engagement, making the process incredibly rewarding.

Customer feedback drives our success, with a 99.7% rating and four-star reviews. As one observed, 'FOPAL volunteers don't leave—they stay on.' I'll be sticking around too.

Young-Jeh Oh

Last year's gathering at the Downtown Library

In September of 2024, volunteers were invited to brunch (catered by Ada's Café) at the Downtown Library. Many people are more familiar with Mitchell Park and Rinconada Libraries than with the Downtown branch, so it was interesting to see this smaller library. We were greeted by Gayathri Kanth (Director of the Palo Alto City Libraries) and other members of the library staff, including Julie Finklang, Alex Perez and Barbara Bruxvoort. Volunteers toured the library, chatted with library staff and enjoyed socializing with other volunteers. Ada's goodies were enthusiastically devoured by all!



An attractive Disney display

Celebrating 13 Years of Dedication: Janette's Journey as FOPAL's Director of Volunteer Engagement

As I reflect on my 13 years as the Director of Volunteer Engagement, I am filled with a sense of accomplishment and gratitude. It's been an incredible journey, and I am excited to share some of the highlights and achievements during my tenure. I started by learning the ropes from my predecessor, Jerry Stone. Together we navigated the challenges of moving out of an enormous East Palo Alto warehouse to a new location. Another memorable experience was working with Palo Alto Library Director Monique le Conge on opening the FOPAL Store at the Mitchell Park Library/Community Center.

I had the pleasure of collaborating with many Palo Alto community partners, including the Palo Alto Historical Society, Youth Community Service, One-Brick, National Charity League, and the Junior Museum and Zoo, to name a few. Managing the move of FOPAL's Bargain Room to a more spacious location was another significant milestone.

The pandemic presented new challenges in 2020, but I was able to create socially distanced volunteer work schedules and pivot to using Signup.com for donation and sale appointments. In-person sales resumed, and to date, I've successfully managed over 130 second-weekend-of-the-month sales with 70+ volunteers, bringing in approximately 2,000 customers and \$20K per sale. Celebrations have been a big part of our journey, from pre-pandemic monthly before-sale luncheons, to quarterly section-managers and sorters meetings, to the popular All Library Volunteer Luncheon.

Helping mentor students, overseeing Eagle Scout projects, writing recommendation letters, and working with county community service programs and participants have all been highlights of my tenure. Tens of thousands of books have been donated, processed, and sold, with hundreds of free books going to other countries, staying locally, or heading to prisons and juvenile halls.

As I retire, I look back with pride and gratitude. It has been an honor to serve as the Director of Volunteer Engagement, and I am confident that FOPAL's future is bright. I could not have accomplished all of this without the unwavering support of the FOPAL Board, dedicated volunteers, and the love and encouragement of my family and

friends. A special thanks to Tyler Vinciguerra, who often served unsung as my second in command, and made countless contributions behind the scenes. Thanks for the memories!

Janette Herceg

Farewell to Janette

On February 26, fifty volunteers and several library staff persons gathered to celebrate Janette's well-deserved retirement as FOPAL's Director of Volunteer engagement. Our new President, Henry Yu, said a few words and presented Janette with a lovely plaque to commemorate her thirteen years at FOPAL. Gayathri Kanth, Palo Alto Library Director gave a short speech, after which everyone enjoyed the delicious cake baked by Ada's Café. We all wish Janette a happy retirement!



Henry and Janette



Tyler and Janette



Jim, Virginia and Steve



*Reshard, Celeste, Gayathri and
Barbara*

FOPAL VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Won't you consider contributing a few hours a week to help keep our Palo Alto libraries up-to-date and thriving? FOPAL's monthly sales of donated books and media raise much-needed funds to purchase books and technology, and to support numerous special programs. The sales happen though the efforts of many individuals just like you.

CHOOSE A JOB TO SUIT YOUR TIME, TALENTS, AND INTERESTS

High Value online e-business team - volunteers needed

Learn how to research, describe, price, and prepare our most significant high value books on eBay and for Amazon through our partner The Book Forest. Books can range from antiquarian to modern, art to technology, and media from CDs and DVDs, to games and software. You can work on all these materials at FOPAL or at your home; your hours are up to you. We will provide detailed training and mentoring. We need volunteers right now to join our successful and supportive high value team. For additional information contact Nigel Jones at nigelgj@gmail.com.

Help FOPAL with its technology needs

FOPAL needs volunteers to take on regular or one-time tasks such as updating the web site, maintaining email lists, evaluating new software, inventorying equipment, creating Google forms, and occasional troubleshooting. Many of these tasks can be done remotely.

Donation Monitor

Enjoy a first look at some wonderful books as you greet donors, help them with their bags and boxes, and thank them for their donation. Monday through Saturday from 3-5pm; you will meet other friendly volunteers as you help with this essential task.

Section Managers needed

Take charge of an available section that interests you, pricing and shelving books on your own schedule.

Book Sale volunteers

FOPAL book sales are held on the second weekend of

every month. We always need cashiers, door monitors, floor supervisors, and set-up / breakdown volunteers before and after each sale. Meet fellow bookaholics and experience the thrill of the marketplace!

Bargain Room book shelving

By volunteering two hours a week, H-2 volunteers are able to take ownership of a specific section or two. Flexible schedule and no pricing needed as all books are \$1 or \$2.

Children's Room Tuesday Team

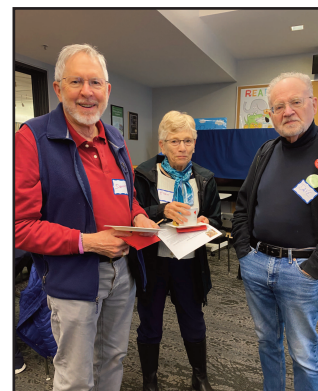
Help sort and price children's books each Tuesday afternoon. You will meet other volunteers who love books for kids and teens.

To Volunteer for any of the above opportunities, please call (650) 494-1266.

Our Wonderful Volunteers



*FOPAL volunteers
Richard and Sven, the
Military History guys*



*FOPAL volunteers Dennis,
Ellen and Dave*

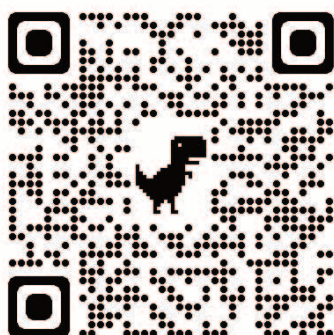


*FOPAL
volunteers Nikole
and Hannah*

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