



Foreword

The Newsletter of Friends of the Palo Alto Library

Spring 2026

President's Message



We had a very good 2025, not without its share of challenges, but overall, a very good year. Thank you to all volunteers, library stores, high-value team, donation monitors and sorters, large donation pickups, membership, section managers, monthly sale

volunteers both on actual sale days and before/after, and volunteers in media sales, bargain room, children's rooms, and our various committees. We represent such a wide range of backgrounds, expertise, and interests, but a common bond in our desire to support FOPAL and our libraries with ingenuity, hard work, and camaraderie. Thank you.

I completed my first year as President under a noteworthy circumstance. I was fortunate to have had the support of no less than three past Presidents serving on our board at the same time. Not to mention the current President of another non-profit as an officer on our board. Thank you to all of them, as well as the entire Board, for their sage advice and behind-the-scenes work on all matters.

Nigel Jones is the first of our past Presidents to leave the Board this year after many years of service. Thank you, Nigel!

While we have been in operation since 1938, our year of incorporation as a non-profit was exactly 60 years ago. Here's to many more!

In this issue, you'll find out just how diverse the roles we take on at FOPAL are, as well as the backgrounds and experience we bring to FOPAL. If you'd like to volunteer, please sign up.

- Henry Yu.



Good news to kick off 2026 at Mitchell Park and Rinconada Libraries

The Vintage Media Lab (VML) appointment system is now even easier to use! If you've been waiting to digitize those VHS tapes, cassettes, slides, or film, grab a spot ASAP—appointments are first-come, first-served via the library website and reset at the start of each month. We made this change so that even when last-minute cancellations happen, new users can fill those empty time slots.

VML is currently scheduled on Mondays and Wednesdays. Here's a pro tip: our booking system also sends a 24-hour reminder email. That reminder email is usually when folks will realize they need to cancel. Check out our booking system on a Sunday or Tuesday evening, and you might be the lucky winner.

Also new in March this year: Drop In Tech Help and Rinconada Library! Bring your device and your questions—email setup, eBooks, printing from your phone, privacy settings, you name it. No appointment needed; just stop by during a scheduled session.

*Chris Markman, Library Services Manager,
Digital Services, Palo Alto City Library*

Behind the Shelves



Left to right: Joyce Freiberg, Linnie Melena, Emily Collis, Andrea Schloss, and Suzanne Little. (Missing: Josephine Chen). See page 3 for the full story.

Celebrating Nigel Jones and All His Contributions

Nigel may think he has retired from FOPAL's Board and high-value operations, but we know how to find him and avail ourselves of his expertise and intuition in managing these operations. And he is still a section manager in the Main



Nigel Jones

Room. When he started with high-value, Annex B was completely full of miscellaneous books that someone thought might be valuable. There was no organization or description of value. And Annex A became full of books that had been listed on Amazon before Amazon decided to drop us as a seller. Nigel showed unrelenting patience during his hours-long telephone conversations with Amazon when they had

made mistakes but had no idea who at Amazon could solve the problems.

In his quiet way, Nigel methodically went through the inventories in both rooms, finding ways to sell them online or return them to the Main Room for sale there. He found a broker to sell books on Amazon, and now on other sites as well. A group of eBay listers has returned, increasing monthly sales and now matching those in the Main Room. What a good friend!

- Nancy Cohen, Board Member and High-Value Team

I met Nigel sometime in 2019. He was gracious with his time, and we have had some fascinating conversations! His experience and sage wisdom on the Board, as a former President, were also very beneficial to me. Like a good book, Nigel reveals himself slowly over time. Lately, I've learned how much of a music fan he is!

- Henry Yu, President, FOPAL

I first met Nigel in the spring of 2017, when he handed me a Laurel and Hardy DVD set to list on eBay. I wasn't familiar with the silent-era duo, and the high price made me doubt it would sell. When it did, I felt a spark of joy—and realized how deeply he understood the world collectors cared about. Over the years, he brought me many remarkable items, including the eight-volume History of America, which eventually sold for a strong price.

During the pandemic, our Zoom meetings always showed him in his element: surrounded by books on every wall, a guitar in the corner, and dressed in an easy, understated elegance—coordinated outfits, a blazer, and socks that hinted at his personality. Nigel's contributions to FOPAL are

extraordinary. To us, he is Mr. Book—a presence we will always remember even after his retirement.

*- Young-Jeh Oh, Board Member,
Charter member of FOPAL eBay store*

Nigel, happy retirement! I really appreciated getting to work together in High Value and beyond! Thank you for showing me the ropes and for always being so encouraging! I'm truly grateful for the time and guidance you shared. Wishing you lots of well-deserved rest and joy in this next chapter.

- Nikole Miller, Vice President, FOPAL Board.

Learning Together: Friends Groups in Conversation

Last October, FOPAL hosted a number of Friends of the Library organizations from around the Bay Area, the event organized by Board member Nancy Cohen and moderated by Henry Yu. We convened at the Mitchell Park Community Center, which our Library graciously arranged for us. FOPAL had hosted such an event in previous years and found it a valuable way to exchange ideas about book and media sales. We had about a half dozen attendees from FOPAL, and from around the bay, Friends groups from Berkeley, Burlingame, Half Moon Bay, Los Altos, Menlo Park, Mountain View, and San Carlos were represented in person or by contributing earlier.

Participants had answered a broad questionnaire about their organizations, and these were first distilled into a list of the three biggest challenges, which served as the basis for most of the discussion. Topics included space, sales, volunteers, pricing, technology, disposal of unsold books, membership, expenses vs revenue, process, price points, top sellers, levels of donations, theft, and high-value online sales. The different organizations range in the number of volunteers from 20 to 160, in sales in library bookstores, and in monthly, quarterly, 2-3 times a year, and pop-up events. They have many different pricing policies, and most have space, usually small, given to them by the library or city. The physical ability of aging volunteers to move large volumes of books was a common problem. A few rely heavily on online sales (30-40% of sales). Many have experienced a deterioration in the value of most donated books.

Together, we learned from each other about the latest opportunities and challenges, including the sales environment post Covid, our retail spaces, online sales, donations, and a host of other topics. We were grateful to share spirited conversation and the chance to meet one another!

- Henry Yu & Nancy Cohen.

Behind the Shelves at the Mitchell Park Store

In November 2014, the new Mitchell Park library opened. It was highly anticipated, especially by the Friends of the Palo Alto Library (FOPAL). For many years, there had been a free-standing kiosk at the Downtown Library selling books, but what FOPAL really wanted was a bookstore comparable to those of other Friends' organizations, such as those in Mountain View and Redwood City. Finally, that desire was going to be fulfilled. The library had designated a very large alcove for a FOPAL store in the entry lobby of the new Mitchell Park library. FOPAL was elated!

Once we realized our dream was going to be a reality, we began figuring out which subjects we would offer in the store and what the procedures would be. At first, we were disappointed that the store couldn't be closed off. Then we realized that since the store would be available to library patrons for sales during all the library's open hours, there could be more sales. We thought about our community and were sure that the "Honor System" would work very well. This has proved true, with a few exceptions.

Fast forward to 2026, and the Mitchell Park Store (MP) is very successful. That success led to the creation of a small branch store at Rinconada Library with about 275 books. It is staffed by Tina Kass and Kathy Swan. The original sales venue at the Downtown Library is also still selling books. Jennifer Wang and Elise Atkins manage our smallest store, which has about 180 books. These stores are small, but each has an interesting, varied selection of books on its shelves that changes regularly.

The Mitchell Park library is staffed every day except Sunday. This means that every day we add new books to the shelves, and a volunteer is available to answer questions and give information about our monthly sales at Cubberley, volunteering, and donations. There is a two-hour shift in the



mid-afternoon every day except Sunday. Our wonderful volunteers are: (starting with Monday) Joyce Freiberg, Linnie Melena, Emily Collis, Andrea Schloss, and Josephine Chen. Suzanne Little, the manager, works on Fridays. They are all incredible, as no one ever misses a shift unless they are on vacation or ill. Their dedication and dependability are what make the

store a success. Linnie, Josephine, and I have volunteered in the store since it opened in 2014.

In addition to the store volunteers, we have two volunteers who deliver books, CDs, DVDs, and puzzles twice a week from the Main Room. Each delivery contains six to seven banker boxes. The boxes are prepared by the manager, Suzanne, with Andrea assisting. Additionally, we receive four to five boxes of books from the Children's Room twice a month. Our terrific delivery people are Diane Moore and Jim Young (*pictured above*). Just like the MP Store volunteers, they are both so dependable that we know the deliveries will arrive when they are supposed to. These deliveries allow us to maintain our inventory of approximately 900 books. Diane and Jim also return culled unsold books to the Bargain Room.

If you have been to the store, you will know that we do not have books from every section of the Main Room. Before the store opened, a committee decided which sections to include. They were primarily the largest and most popular sections of the Main Room. The Section Managers are asked to provide us with books from their sections, subject to our requirement that they be in excellent condition. Most managers are very cooperative, though sometimes they get too busy or are out of town, so the Mitchell Park manager will take books from their sections and send them to the MP store.

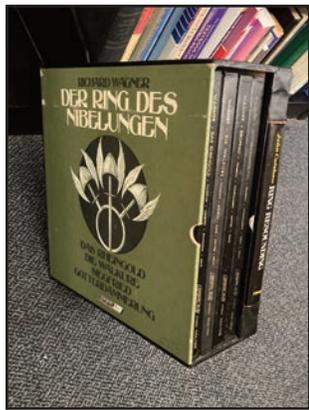
Generally, books in the store are priced at \$2 for paperbacks and \$3 for hardbacks, though prices may be higher for special or unique books. Those prices are placed on a sticker on the front cover. All books are regularly culled, so the store's selection is constantly changing. We use a colored-dot system to ensure that no book is on a shelf for fewer than 2 weeks or more than 6 weeks. This system isn't foolproof, but it works quite well, and customers enjoy browsing to see what new books are on the shelves.

Approximately every six weeks, we feature a single subject on the front kiosk at the store's entrance. Generally, the subject is a store section, but we have had sections from the Main Room that we don't regularly stock. For example, we

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From Pop to Free Jazz: The Spectrum of Sound at FOPAL

FOPAL is now approaching its third year of popup music sales! These monthly events continue to draw enthusiastic crowds of serious collectors and bargain hunters alike who head to the tents next to the Main Room entrance to comb through thousands of releases presented in hefty bins and flats full of 12" and 10" vinyl discs, CDs, cassettes, DVDs, 45s, 78s, and reel-to-reel releases.



The offerings go through a careful vetting process and are priced based on condition and collectability- from bargains to high-value rarities (see more information on our curated releases below). Releases cover the full spectrum of music,



spoken word, and even sound effects: Pop, R&B, Soul, Easy Listening, Country, Jazz, Classical, Film and Theater, Spiritual, Comedy, Children's, International, and Holiday collections.

Have any questions or looking for something in particular? Just ask the volunteers on site, who are happy to share their music business experience and provide helpful insights and suggestions.

More music can be found a few short steps away from the Popup tables by walking to the back of the Main Room, where there is a station of \$2 CDs in multiple genres, including a special section of factory-sealed donations.

Even more music can be found by taking a stroll down to the Bargain Room, where you can browse through several thousand LPs and CDs, all priced at an affordable \$1 each.

Meanwhile, we also sell our higher-value items on Discogs

(<https://www.discogs.com/>), an online website and app specializing in recorded music media, primarily vinyl. We've had some eclectic collections donated to us in the past year, which has kept us busy with research. We see everything from free jazz to no wave, original '60s UK pressings of classic rock, and the list goes on. One aspect of Discogs is the vast number of pressings of a record. The Beatles would be a prime example where the number of pressings of a particular record might easily number in the hundreds. It was an original UK pressing of Van Morrison's Astral Weeks that was our high vinyl sale in recent memory. Cassettes have also taken off in popularity. Most aren't terribly expensive, but we did sell a NZ issue of a Smiths cassette that sold for more than usual.

At the tail end of 2024, we started selling some of our higher-value inventory at the pop-up. We call them "curated" because they are handpicked from our larger inventory. They are also thoroughly cleaned, play tested, and graded to collector standards. Finally, the cover and disc are stored in protective archival sleeves. These have been popular, so we continued selling them throughout the year.

Can't make it to the sale? Check out our high-value collectables available online.

Looking to donate? FOPAL accepts all music formats: vinyl, CDs, cassettes, DVDs, 45s, 78s, laser discs, and reel-to-reel. Donations are accepted Monday-Saturdays from 3-5 pm at the Main Room. If you have a particularly large collection to donate, FOPAL will arrange a pickup.

- George Chaltas & Henry Yu.

Store

(continued from page 3)

recently had a Poetry display. It was so successful that we now have a permanent, small section of Poetry in the store. The back side of the kiosk may also have a special section, though it usually has cooking books.

Originally, we stocked blank note cards that were great sellers. Due to changes in the donation process, we had to discontinue them. However, we received so many requests to bring cards back that we started stocking them again last year. Nina Kulgein, formerly a store volunteer, prepares the card packets for sale and does a great job.

We hope that, if you haven't been to the "MP" Store, now that you have a "behind the shelves" look, you will visit us and perhaps buy one or two of the books we offer!

- Suzanne Brown Little,
Manager of Mitchell Park FOPAL store.

Came for the Books, Stayed for the People: A Volunteer Reminisces



Looking back, I realize that my path to the Children’s Book Room (CBR) was established at a very early age. My mother frequently read to me, and my first bedroom was decorated with framed nursery rhyme illustrations by Feodor Rojankovsky, a Golden Book illustrator. My lifelong love of libraries began at the old

Northtown Branch of the Chicago Public Library. (The Jeanne-Marie picture books by Françoise were particular favorites.) I recall how hard I practiced printing my name so the librarian would issue me a library card.



From my father, I acquired a love of second-hand bookstores – shelves crammed with the “usual suspects,” but always spiced with an element of serendipity.

About 26 years ago, a particular quest led me, as a customer, to the FOPAL sales at the former Terman Middle School. I was in search of a book which I fondly remembered from my childhood—an edition of *A Child’s Garden of Verses* by Robert Louis Stevenson, the poems illustrated with black-and-white photographs. I did not know the photographer’s name (Toni Frissell), and there were no robust search engines to guide me. Then one Saturday, there was the book! I was so happy to read it once again, and it still occupies a place of honor on my bookshelves.

When I expressed my appreciation to the legendary sales manager, Marty Paddock, she encouraged me to volunteer. I told her I was working full-time, and she replied, “Just come in whenever you can.” I began occasionally shelving mysteries

in the Terman Bargain Room and, after FOPAL moved to Cubberley, I did some Main Room sorting and worked at some sales.

In 2002, I began volunteering regularly at the CBR (and have continued to do so), where I could enjoy being surrounded by new and vintage picture books. To me, there is something very powerful about the combination of words and pictures. A perfect example is *Goodnight Moon* by Margaret Wise Brown, illustrated by Clement Hurd. The words and pictures complement and support one another, and those multiple representations make the book accessible and involving for even the youngest child. (Can you find the little mouse in each picture of the great green room?)

The team led by Pat Worthington welcomed me to the CBR, then in a Cubberley classroom. On the team, Pat and Deanna Walston managed school-age fiction; Carolyn Davidson oversaw activities; Nancy and Fred Olson handled non-fiction; Winnie McGannon and Ginny Quackenbush curated picture books; and Lucy LaPier ran weekend sales. I joined Carolyn in the activity section—coloring and workbooks, cookbooks, Klutz books, plus music, toys, puzzles, and games. We priced everything affordably for parents and teachers, knowing the real beneficiaries would be the children.

When the CBR moved to its current location, we were overjoyed to have more space and put a great deal of thought into repurposing the old office furniture (left behind by the previous tenants) to maximize display space and navigation. I’ll never forget our first sale in the new room—Pat had washed the windows inside and out, and the room sparkled like a beautiful children’s library.

Carolyn leads our expanded volunteer team—including veterans Nancy, Deanna, Lucy, and Pat—and co-manages the activity section with me. We carefully check every puzzle and game (fun fact: a Ravensburger 100-piece puzzle actually has 104 pieces!) to be sure everything is complete.

Although we have flexible schedules, most of us gather on Tuesday afternoons, when the CBR buzzes with sorting, cleaning, pricing, and shelving. Under Carolyn’s steady guidance, we work as a true team to support families, teachers, and the Palo Alto libraries.

For most of each month, the CBR looks a bit like a warehouse. We receive about 60 boxes of donations per week, and we use every square inch of table space to sort and process them. However, on the Friday before the sale, we transform the room into a place worthy of any children’s bookstore. It’s a privilege to be a part of the team that makes that happen. “I came for the books, and I stayed for the people”—I think most volunteers in the CBR would agree with me.

- Miriam Landesman.

Notes from the Main Room – Photography

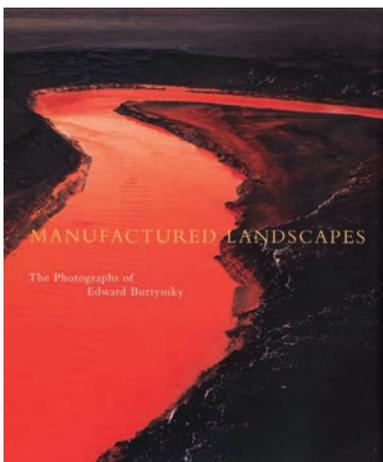
If a picture is worth 1000 words, how much is a book in the photography section worth?

Just like with a non-photography book, the questions are who took the photograph, and what is it about? Each month, over 100 books arrive in the photography section on various topics, by various authors and/or photographers. It's not difficult to separate the books into one of four categories: about photography, about photographers, about people, and about places. For some of the more famous photographers, there may be overlap in those categories.

One of the most rewarding aspects of going through the donated books is finding those of high value that can be sold on eBay. One of the first boxes I went through had *Worlds in a Small Room* by Irving Penn.



I recognized his name and froze when I flipped through the book and found the 1967 photo of Janis Joplin and the Holding Company standing beside the Grateful Dead.



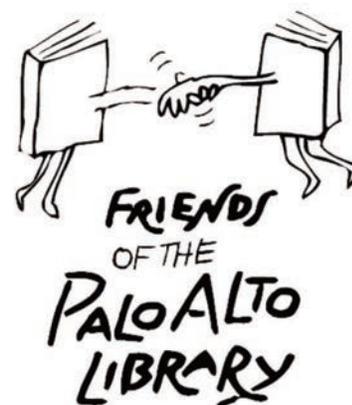
Another memorable moment was listing *Manufactured Landscapes: The Photographs of Edward Burtynsky* on eBay, and it sold 33 minutes later!

One challenge with the photography section is that some of the books might overlap with other sections, such as animal photos, political and historical photos, or specific geographic locations. My strategy has been to keep them in photography for a few rounds of sales and then offer them to other sections.

- Susan Light

New Volunteers Fall & Winter 2025

- | | |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| Roger Huang | Varsha Saxena |
| Priscila Correa | Aiqin Wang |
| Aaditya Chand | Alonso Rodriguez |
| Mounir Jabboury | Calderon |
| Bridget Ho | Alexander Efland |
| Sawyer Porte | Janet A. Martin |
| Katherine Jarvis | Fabio Galetti |
| Peter Wrobel | Detroit Dillon |
| Angela He | Farzaneh Ahmadi |
| Angeline Chen | Maya Padilla |
| Carol Achtman | Bhavna Shah-Lalka |
| Alexis Ayala-Ochoa | Dominic Stephenson |
| Shanly Vong | Ochoa |
| Liz Price | Fei Wang |
| Sameer Taneja | Cate Yan |
| Sherry Gulmon | Matthew Bass |
| Paul Cegielski | Haripriya Ramu |
| Eli Stern | Mitali Dhar |
| Mary Wrightson | July ReyNoval |
| Rachel Spronz | Jonathan Feng |
| Catherine Lee | Sarah Huang |
| Benjamin Zabriskie | Neal Desai |
| Elaine Chu | Gracia Hmelar |
| Cressida Hanson | Elinor Aspegren |
| Shantha Mohan | |



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 through 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, from art to technology, and from media such as 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 now to join our successful, supportive, high-value team. For additional information, contact Nancy Cohen at Nancy.cohen94306@gmail.com.

Help FOPAL with its technology needs

FOPAL needs volunteers to take on regular or one-time tasks such as updating the website, 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.

Main Room 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 Section Managers Needed

By volunteering two hours a week, H-2 volunteers can take ownership of a specific section or two. Flexible schedule and no pricing needed.

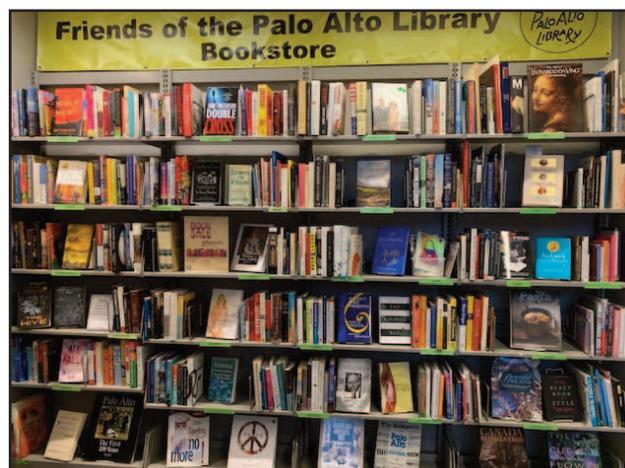
Children's Room Tuesday Team

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

Drive a Golf Cart

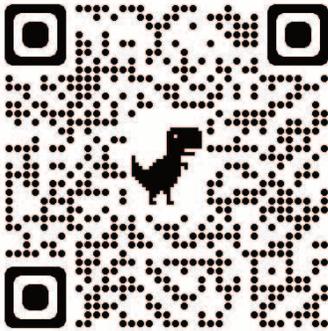
(Picking up hitchhikers is prohibited.)

To volunteer for any of the above opportunities, send an email to volunteerdir@fopal.org



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To join or renew your membership, go to fopal.org/join or scan the QR code above.

Friends of the Palo Alto Library Membership Form

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
_____ Senior	\$12	\$22
_____ Student	\$10	\$18
_____ Individual	\$20	\$35
_____ Family	\$30	\$50
_____ Sponsor	\$100	\$175
_____ Lifetime	\$500	
_____ Corporate	\$1000	

_____ Name

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_____ City / State / Zip

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_____ Phone

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 for more information.

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