



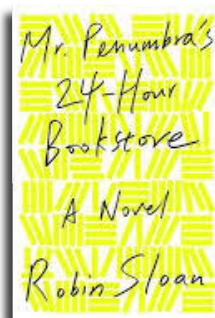
# the *Library Insider*

Winter 2013/2014 Vol 19-Number 103

Published Quarterly by The Friends of the Pasadena Public Library

## One City, One Story 2014

... the bookstore is open



In the program's 12th year, a citizens committee has selected *Mr. Penumbra's 24-Hour Bookstore* as the novel to read for Pasadena's One City, One Story celebration scheduled for March 2014. The book, by former Twitter employee Robin Sloan, is a "slyly arch novel about technology and its discontents," as book reviewer Janet Maslin wrote last year in the *New York Times*.

Set in San Francisco, *Mr. Penumbra's 24-Hour Bookstore* introduces Clay Jannon as an unemployed techie who takes a job as bookstore clerk and discovers a secret society of bibliophiles destined to collide with the digital sphere of Google. The author "arranges a cage match between scholars and Googlers as they try to crack secret texts," said Maslin, the reviewer. "The culture clash . . . has a topicality that works to this novel's advantage."

(continued page 2)

*Were you there?*

## Library Director Hails The Friends' Fundraiser

Saturday, October 19 was a really big night for those of us here at the Pasadena Public Library. It brought the first event in a long time (the only event during my tenure which began in August, 2005) which was designed exclusively to promote the Friends and to raise money for the library.

And what a great event it was! Thanks to all who made it possible, including all the officers, volunteers, designers, publicists, and (especially) ticket buyers. I spoke to many, many of the attendees, and everyone had good things to say.

From the clever title (Beer, Brats & Books) to the lovely set-up, to the perfect weather, everything came together for a memorable evening. I wanted each of you to know how appreciative I am and how valued we feel as staff as a result of your work. I know the event will grow every year and we look forward to working along with you in 2014!



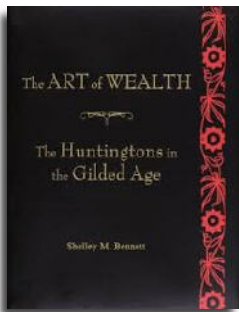
**Partying at Central**

(from left) Phoebe and Larry Wilson, Mary Wilson and Jan Sanders.

—Jan Sanders, Director

# What's on Your Nightstand?

It's fun to ask a local author about her reading habits and current choices. *The Insider* was fortunate to catch Shelley M. Bennett at home between speaking engagements about her compelling new book, *The Art of Wealth: The Huntingtons in the Gilded Age*, published in her first year of retirement from The Huntington Library, Art Collections and Botanical Gardens. Bennett spent 27 years as curator of European art for the San Marino institution, followed by a five-year stint as senior research scholar, which permitted her to work on the Huntington book.



*The Art of Wealth* “expertly brings to life a remarkable family of the early 20th-century,” as *Publisher Weekly* said in its review. The book chronicles the philanthropy and colorful lives of railroad magnate Collis P. Huntington, nephew Henry E. Huntington, Arabella Huntington (Collis’s mistress-wife-widow, who later

married Henry) and Arabella’s son, Archer, who was adopted by Collis. (Intrigued? Take *The Insider*’s advice: read the book!)

Prior to joining the Huntington staff, Bennett earned her doctorate in art history and taught at several universities. Looking back, she marvels at the challenge—and opportunities—she found in San Marino. “When I started at the Huntington in 1980, I was one of a staff of three for the art collection,

which is massive. In essence, I was in charge of 30,000 objects in 10 different media . . . and I had no assistants,” Bennett said. “I was in charge of the buying, the display, the conservation and the publications.”

How did she handle it? By becoming “ruthlessly organized,” said Bennett, a self-described workaholic. Those traits helped her complete the *Art of Wealth* manuscript in just 11 months after she commenced writing. During that stretch, however, Bennett said she read no unrelated material. Indeed, throughout her career, she’s kept a tight rein on her reading hours.

“I’ve been thinking about this. I worked so hard, and I was often working on Saturdays and Sundays, that I had this sort of puritanical notion that reading was something you should do in the evening before you go to bed. Otherwise, you worked,” she said. “I have to deprogram myself to be able to read at any time that I want to.” (*The Insider* thinks that might be a challenge, as Bennett researches a new project and continues to teach one or two art history courses at Caltech each year.)



Shelley M. Bennett

Photo courtesy of The Huntington Library, Art Collections and Botanical Gardens

## One City, One Story

(continued from page 1)

A finalist in the “First Fiction” category of the 2012 Los Angeles Times Book Prizes, *Mr. Penumbra’s 24-Hour Bookstore* is now available in paperback. Look for a copy at your local library branch, or visit a local bookstore. And mark your calendar for Thursday, March 27, for the author’s visit to Pasadena!



Robin Sloan

The selection of *Mr. Penumbra’s 24-Hour Bookstore* was kept under wraps until November 21. At that time, the four other finalists were identified: *Mary*

*Coin* by Marisa Silver; *Where’d You Go, Bernadette* by Maria Semple; *We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves* by Karen Joy Fowler, and *Yellow Birds* by Kevin Powers.

One City, One Story is designed to engage community discussion and to enhance appreciation of literature and reading. Seattle was the first U.S. city to try the idea of selecting a single book; the City of Pasadena began its program in 2002.

The Friends of the Pasadena Public Library serves, once again, as a major sponsor of the program in Pasadena.

Nonetheless, the *Wealth* author spoke enthusiastically in November about three books she was reading. The first, *Capital Culture: J. Carter Brown, the National Gallery of Art and the Reinvention of the Museum Experience*, “is brilliant,” she said, although she cautioned that it might appeal more to academics than a general audience, as the book focuses on the institution rather than colorful personalities. The author is Neil Harris, professor history emeritus at the University of Chicago.

(Readers indeed may hanker for more details about Brown, who was director of the National Gallery of Art from 1969 to 1992. He was “the golden boy of the Washington cultural scene for decades,” said Meryle Secrest, a former *Washington Post* arts writer who wrote a regretful review of Harris’s book for that newspaper. “‘Capital Culture’ focuses on the public facade of decisions made and programs launched, while personalities remain in the background,” Secrest said.)

Bennett said she’s also reading *Making Masterpiece: 25 Years Behind the Scenes at Masterpiece and Mystery! on PBS*, by Rebecca Eaton with Patricia Mulcahy. The book is a “pleasing blend of memoir and retrospective with a wide audience

appeal,” the *Library Journal* declared.

Like many local readers, Bennett was delighted to learn that Eaton, the longtime Masterpiece executive producer, grew up in Pasadena. The daughter of a Caltech professor, Eaton attended Polytechnic School before heading to Vassar for college. When Eaton visited Pasadena recently to speak at Vroman’s Bookstore, Bennett was in the audience. The art historian has a gleam in her eye when she talks about the Huntingtons as perfect material for a Masterpiece-caliber production.

Bennett is very enthusiastic about *Aimless Love: New and Selected Poems*, the latest work by Billy Collins. (As are other readers: the book jumped to the *New York Times*’ list of best-selling hardcover fiction in November. “Suddenly, poetry is hot,” observed Gregory Cowles, “best-seller” columnist for the *New York Times* Book Review.)

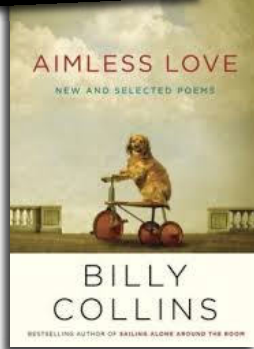
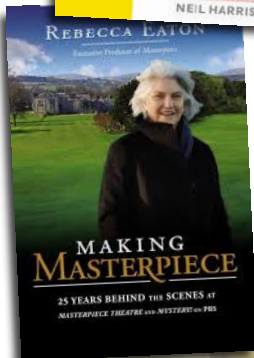
Bennett is no newcomer to Collins or his work. The two met more than 40 years ago at the University of California, Riverside, where Bennett was an undergraduate and

Collins earned his doctorate. “He is one of my oldest and dearest friends,” she said. “I always believed in his vision of poetry.” Collins, the poet laureate of New York State from 2004 to 2006, was also a two-term poet laureate of the United States.

The selection of U.S. poets laureate can be traced to 1936, when the Library of Congress received a generous endowment to name “consultants” in poetry. The designation was later changed to the current honorific.

Who was the philanthropist who so valued poets in 1936? None other than . . . Archer M. Huntington.

—Katie Harris



The Library Insider  
is published quarterly by  
The Friends of the Pasadena Public Library  
Pasadena, California

Editor: Katie Harris  
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For questions regarding membership or  
our activities and projects,  
please contact The Friends through our  
voice mail at 626.744.4680 or  
email at friendspp@yahoo.com

## True Friends . . .

Did you miss author Lian Dolan’s appearance at Central Library in September? She spoke with wit and candor about her move from radio to the solitary business of writing novels (*Elizabeth the First Wife* and the earlier *Helen of Pasadena*). Dolan and her publisher, Prospect Park Books, generously donated a portion of her book sales that evening to The Friends of the Pasadena Public Library.





# Nightstand

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## Recommendations of 2013

As winter holidays approach, you might wish to recall, read, or gift-wrap a book mentioned earlier in the year by avid readers and contributors to *The Insider*. Below, we list the titles and authors of books featured in the “What’s on Your Nightstand?” columns of 2013. The selections are diverse!

- *Aimless Love: New and Selected Poems* by Billy Collins
- *Beautiful Ruins* by Jess Walter
- *Canada* by Richard Ford
- *Capital Culture: J. Carter Brown, the National Gallery of Art and the Reinvention of the Museum Experience* by Neil Harris
- *Catching Fire* by Suzanne Collins
- *Crazy Rich Asians* by Kevin Kwan
- *Let’s Explore Diabetes with Owls* by David Sedaris
- *Life After Life* by Kate Atkinson
- *Making Masterpiece: 25 Years Behind the Scenes at Masterpiece and Mystery! on PBS*, by Rebecca Eaton with Patricia Mulcahy
- *Mary Coin* by Marisa Silver
- *Mayday* by Thomas Block and Nelson DeMille
- *Me Before You* by Jojo Moyes
- *My Reading Life* by Pat Conroy
- *On the Road* by Jack Kerouac
- *One Shot* by Lee Child
- *Play It As It Lays* by Joan Didion
- *Pym: a novel* by Mat Johnson
- *Psychoanalysis of Fire* by Gaston Bachelard
- *Tattoos in the Heart: The Power of Boundless Compassion* by Gregory Boyle
- *Telegraph Avenue* by Michael Chabon
- *Ten Days in the Hills* by Jane Smiley
- *Tenth of December* by George Saunders
- *The Art of Thinking Clearly* by Rolf Dobelli
- *The Art of Wealth: The Huntingtons in the Gilded Age* by Shelley M. Bennett
- *The Big Book of Words You Should Know* by David Olsen, Michelle Bevilacqua and Justin Cord Hayes
- *The Dogs of Babel* by Carolyn Parkhurst
- *The Engagements* by J. Courtney Sullivan
- *The Fifties* by David Halberstam
- *The House of Mirth* by Edith Wharton
- *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins
- *The Interestings* by Meg Wolitzer
- *The Leftovers* by Tom Perrotta
- *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* by Rebecca Skloot
- *Three Sisters* by Susan Mallery
- *Where’d You Go, Bernadette* by Maria Semple
- *Wild: From Lost to Found on the Pacific Crest Trail* by Cheryl Strayed

### Central Library

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Fri 2 - 6 pm

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**626.744.7262**

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Fri & Sat 10 am - 6 pm  
Sun 1 - 5 pm

### Hill Avenue Branch

**626.744.7264**

55 South Hill Ave.  
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### La Pintaresca Branch

**626.744.7268**

1355 North Raymond Ave.  
Mon - Sat 9 am - 6 pm

### Lamanda Park Branch

**626.744.7266**

140 South Altadena Dr.  
Mon - Thurs & Sat 10 am - 6 pm  
Fri 2 pm - 6 pm

### Linda Vista Branch

**626.744.7278**

1281 Bryant Street  
Mon - Thurs & Sat 10 am - 6 pm  
Fri 10 am - 2 pm

### San Rafael Branch

**626.744.7270**

1260 Nithsdale Road  
Mon - Thurs & Sat 10 am - 6 pm  
Fri 10 am - 2 pm

### Santa Catalina Branch

**626.744.7272**

999 E. Washington Blvd.  
Mon - Thurs & Sat 10 am - 6 pm  
Fri 2 - 6 pm

### Villa Parke Branch

**626.744.6510**

363 E. Villa Street  
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Sat 10am - 2 pm



# Beer, Brats & Books

On October 19th, The Friends of the Pasadena Public Library hosted its first “Beer, Brats & Books” fundraiser. Beneath a full moon, attendees mingled in the front courtyard of Central Library to enjoy beer, Bratwurst sausage and the opportunity to meet or reconnect with other book lovers. The lights sparkled and the conversation flowed. Pasadena’s Craftsman Brewing Company poured a variety of lager beers; Robin’s Wood Fire BBQ cooked brats, sauerkraut and garlic fries. Central Grounds, the popular coffee stand at Central, provided lattes.

We had fun hosting our inaugural “Beer, Brats & Books” party and look forward to welcoming you to our next fundraising event in 2014. What a great way to raise money to support the library’s programs for children and teens, One City, One Story, and other worthy projects!

—Martha Denzel,  
Events and Publicity Chair



Clockwise from left: Martha Denzel with Don and Fran Shelgren; Christine and John Reeder; Neil Reinalda, Megan Plunkett, Buff McGaw and Carey Chiaia; Donna and Arturo Del Rio with Joan Fornaciari Cathcart; Paul and Mary Rita Katana, Marvin Rudnick, Katie Harris and Pat McMahon.



Photos by Molly Kennington

Library Patrons Ask: How can I help?

## Use the Vroman’s “Gives Back” Program

Are you participating in the independent bookseller’s “Gives Back” program? If so, please designate The Friends of the Pasadena Public Library as the charity that you wish to benefit. Vroman’s Bookstore will then donate to our organization a portion of the proceeds from your in-store purchases over the course of a year. What a fitting way to support the Pasadena Public Library!

Not yet a member of the Vroman’s “Gives Back” program? Enroll at a Vroman’s store register, or sign up online at [www.vromansbookstore.com](http://www.vromansbookstore.com). Make every purchase count!



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The mission of The Friends is to support the library's programs, special services and cultural events. Priority is given to projects that instill the excitement of discovery and the love reading in library patrons of all ages.

## The Friends' Upcoming Book Sales

Saturdays  
December 14,  
January 11 &  
February 8

### Central Library's East Patio

If you wish to donate books to The Friends' monthly sales to help raise funds for library programs, you may deposit books in the Book Drop container on the loading dock next to Central Library's north entrance. Donations may also be left inside at the Circulation Desk or in The Friends' book store during store hours (11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday).

Need help with your donation?  
Call us at 626.744.4680

All donations are tax-deductible.  
Request a receipt in The Friends' book store or at the Circulation Desk.  
The Friends thank you!



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