

## AFTERWORD

Tuesday mornings at Gill Library were something I always looked forward to. That's when I met with Terry Ballard over coffee and he would tell me about his most recent library journey through New York City for his book *50 Specialty Libraries in New York City*. The stories kept me in awe, because all I knew was my local library and the main branch of The New York Public Library, and here was this Arizonan telling me, a native New Yorker, about these marvelously unique libraries that are right under my nose.

Terry told me about The Players Club, founded in 1888 by American actor Edwin Booth. Though Edwin rarely, if ever, spoke of his infamous brother, John Wilkes Booth, he did have his brother's photo by his bedside. Then there is the New York Society Library, which was founded in 1754 under a charter from King George III. One of the library's famous patrons was George Washington, who, by the way, still owes a late fee.

I asked Terry about the criteria of selecting libraries for *50 Specialty Libraries in New York City*, and he simply stated that the libraries needed to be somewhat accessible, interesting, and unique. It was also interesting to hear from Terry that many of the libraries he visited are aware that they are as not well known as they think they should be. He wanted to give people "a sense of the enormous variety of services available to the interested researcher besides the traditional well-known system in New York City."

In asking the author about what inspired him to research and write a book about unique libraries, he mentioned the author Marilyn Johnson, and her book *This Book is Overdue*, who had written about the little-known American Kennel Club Library, so he wondered what other libraries existed in NYC. Places such as the Masonic Library, the Hispanic Society Library, and the Xavier Society for the Blind, which houses Helen Keller's writing desk and Oscar award and where, on a wall, there is writing from Helen's hand that mentions her meeting with Mark Twain and that "I have met a king," and that just by touching him she felt his humanity. At the Explorer's Club Terry's mind was blown, seeing the table where they began planning the Panama Canal and where a piece of Thor Heyerdahl's Kon-Tiki was displayed; Theodore Roosevelt's lantern slides of his honeymoon in Egypt and his explorations of the Amazon are available for viewing. The Conjuring Library for Magicians, where incunabula from the 1400s are displayed

absolutely amazed me. Then there is The Poet's House, where one can see the desk of E.E. Cummings.

It took Terry four intense months to investigate all the libraries, and all but two were traveled to via New York City public transportation. Perhaps in the future, Terry Ballard will revise this work to *60 Specialty Libraries in New York City*, because they are certainly out there. He would be delighted to see someone take the time to explore the somewhat obscure and unobserved libraries in Boston, Washington, DC, San Francisco, and Philadelphia. I think everyone will be well served if he continued his work.

—by Kathleen S. Mannino, an academic librarian