



**Friends** *of the*  
**SARATOGA SPRINGS**  
**PUBLIC LIBRARY**

# 2023 - 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

## A Message from Library Director, Ike Pulver

Saratoga Springs has always been a community of readers. Few other communities our size support a bustling public library that is a community hub, a writers' and artists' colony, a large independent bookseller, a large retail chain bookstore, and two used and vintage book shops (including the Friends Book Shop inside the library, which has just completed its busiest year, ever), let alone a 20-year-old shared community reading project, SaratogaREADS! and a growing annual book festival.

Our reputation as readers has historically been reflected in circulation patterns. Unlike most other public libraries, when our collection began to include audio-visual materials, like movies, music, and audiobooks, movies never overtook books as the most-borrowed items. At the apex of DVD circulation, non-print materials peaked at about 50% of our circulation. Given the constantly-changing publishing landscape, and the ever-growing array of digital streaming and downloadable content, the trend of print circulation outpacing other formats became even more marked in 2023, when 65% of our circulation was print books. In fact, only 3 of the top 100 items borrowed in 2023 were DVDs, and book borrowing increased by 3% over 2022.

To be sure, while reading remains at the core of our mission, we are no strangers to innovation in our collections, programs, and services. Among the top 100 items circulated in 2023 were djembe drums, and passes to the Children's Museum at Saratoga, from our growing "Library of Things" that now includes cake pans, a metal detector, board games, gardening tools, and a car diagnostic device, among many other items.

Support from the Friends of the Saratoga Springs Public Library nurtures both our bookishness and our innovation. By a popular vote of the community, we celebrated the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of SaratogaREADS! by revisiting a past favorite, *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* by Rebecca Skloot. Support from the Friends allowed us to be in conversation with members of Henrietta Lacks' family, about her ongoing legacy, and our country's continuing reckoning with issues around race, gender, and access to quality medical care. Since the Friends have taken stewardship of the Saratoga Book Festival, it has grown into a marquee event in the community, drawing writers and readers from far and wide to celebrate the written word. With support from the Friends, we have just wrapped up a Summer Reading Program during which our littlest readers logged nearly a half-million minutes of reading time, earning a Nintendo Switch for the Children's Room, and teens logged enough books read to earn 3D pens and a VR headset for the Teen Room.

As always, we remain grateful to the Friends staff, board, volunteers, and members for your ongoing support of our mission and operation.

# 2023-2024 President's Report

Klare Ingram, President, Board of Directors, FSSPL

In reflecting on the past year – my last as president of the board – I am hard pressed to not compare the Friends of today with the organization I was initially charged with leading. I am sincerely in awe of what has been achieved in the time since, and the ways in which the Friends are ready and poised to accomplish even more in the years ahead.

Back in May 2021, fresh on the heels of the pandemic's first 'full year' and all the ways it turned 'business as usual' on its head, our library interlocutors – Ike and the SSPL board – and the Friends board, staff, and volunteers were remarkably receptive (though not entirely unwary) to the somewhat radical challenge I proposed: a thorough self-reflection and bold reinvention for the 45-year-old community organization rooted deeply in tradition and fiercely protected and dutifully supported by its, well, friends.

As we navigated this undertaking, through *many* hours of discussion and work, I was humbled by and grateful for the trust, confidence, openness, passion, and vigor with which the task was met by everyone I asked to join me. Looking back, I'm struck by the collective commitment to meeting and fulfilling this seemingly endlessly evolving effort.

To all those who were part of that journey: *thank you*. Thank you for choosing to make into reality the vision of a stronger Friends, still rooted in tradition while better prepared to support our Library and meet the evolving needs of our community.

As you see on the following pages, it is with great pleasure and pride that I report: 2023–2024 proved to be another year of transformation and growth for the Friends of the Library. The Friends codified its relationship with the Library through a mutually-signed Memorandum of Understanding. The Friends Bookshop saw *another* record-breaking year and membership remains stable in number. The Friends Coffee Shop celebrated its first anniversary and continues to grow in revenue, offerings, volunteers, and patronage. The Saratoga Book Festival has matured at a near-unimaginable pace and continues to treat authors and readers, both local and visiting, of all ages and genres. And Friends Executive Director, Jen Allen, continues to balance the multi-faceted juggling act, while setting her sights on further growth and increasing the ways in which the Friends can support the Library and the community we serve.

It has truly been a team effort! So while it has been my honor to serve as steward of the Friends these past 38 months, the Friends' success, growth, and future potential would only have been possible because of you. Whether you are a Friends board member, staff, volunteer, member, donor, or customer; a Library trustee, employee, volunteer, or patron; or a member of the community we serve – thank you for the role you have all played in making the Friends the best it can be.

# Executive Director's Report

Jennifer Allen, Executive Director, FSSPL

As we reflect on the past year, I am proud to share the remarkable progress and achievements of our organization. This year has been filled with significant milestones, thanks to the dedication and hard work of our team, volunteers, and supporters.

We have made great strides in strengthening our leadership and team dynamics. Monthly team meetings have been instrumental in breaking down organizational silos, fostering stronger relationships, and enhancing collaboration. Our focus on clear communication and realistic expectations has been vital. Moving forward, we aim to maximize board and committee member involvement to further our mission. Over the past two years, we have dedicated ourselves to building strong, trust-based relationships with library staff and volunteers. Through formal and informal meetings, as well as Friends' gatherings, we have created a more connected and collaborative environment. Looking ahead, we will focus on engaging board members between regular meetings to strengthen our collective efforts and keep our organization at the forefront of their minds.

## Key Achievements

- **Book Shop and Coffee Shop Success:**
  - The Book Shop experienced a record-breaking year, achieving the highest sales in its history. This success is a testament to the dedication of our volunteers and the strategic improvements we implemented.
  - The Coffee Shop has shown steady growth and is now on the verge of breaking even. This achievement highlights our efforts in enhancing the shop's appeal and customer experience.
- **Membership Growth and Increased Support to the Library:**
  - Our membership base has continued to expand, reflecting the growing community support and engagement with our organization.
  - We successfully increased our financial contributions to the library, providing more funds than in the previous year. This enables the library to enhance its services and resources for the community.
- **Community Engagement and Events:**
  - We hosted a highly successful book festival, drawing significant participation and fostering a love for reading and literature within the community.
  - Launched Farmer's Market Pop-Up days, creating additional opportunities for community interaction and support for local vendors.

- **Strengthening Partnerships:**
  - Collaborated with the History Museum to produce and distribute calendars, merging educational content with community engagement.
  - Partnered with Saratoga Living for advertising and event hosting, significantly boosting our visibility and outreach.
- **Fundraising and Sponsorships:**
  - Secured local business sponsorships, which have been crucial in funding our various initiatives and programs.
  - Obtained a grant for a professional development opportunity, enabling our team to enhance their skills and effectiveness.
- **Policy and Infrastructure Improvements:**
  - Approved a new fiscal policy, ensuring better financial management and accountability.
  - Finalized a memorandum of understanding with the library, solidifying our partnership and aligning our mutual goals.

This past year has been incredibly busy and rewarding. Leading this organization is an honor, and I am thrilled by our progress and the recognition we are gaining. Our policies, procedures, and professionalism have improved significantly. We are poised for continued growth, and I am excited about the future.

## Finance Report

**Jay Portnoy, Treasurer, FSSPL**

Although we still operated with a deficit last year, we still ended the year in a better financial position than the year prior. In Fiscal year 2023-24 the Friends projected net income of \$2,750; but ended with a loss of \$31,689. However, this was better by \$21,690 compared to the 2022-23 loss of \$53,379. Revenues fell short by \$41,685, even though they improved by \$82,176. Most of this was due to overestimating the expected revenue of the newly opened Coffee Shop and less revenue than expected from grants and donations. Expenditures were actually \$7,246 under budget, even though they increased by \$60,486 over 2022-2023. We have planned for a net-zero budget for the 2024-2025 fiscal year.

## 2023-2024 FSSPL Annual Finance Report

			2023-2024		2023-24			2022-23		
			July>June		Budget		Difference	July>June		Change
	<b>REVENUE</b>									
	<b>Development/Special Events</b>			<b>\$ 101,894</b>		<b>\$ 113,000</b>	<b>\$ (11,106)</b>		<b>\$ 47,080</b>	<b>\$ 54,814</b>
	Book Festival		\$ 85,557		\$ 60,000		\$ 25,557	\$ 26,276		\$ 59,281
	Grants/Donations/Other *		\$ 16,337		\$ 53,000		\$ (36,663)	\$ 20,804		\$ (4,467)
	<b>Membership *</b>			<b>\$ 8,366</b>		<b>\$ 19,000</b>	<b>\$ (10,634)</b>		<b>\$ 16,133</b>	<b>\$ (7,767)</b>
	<b>Retail</b>			<b>\$ 140,605</b>		<b>\$ 160,550</b>	<b>\$ (19,945)</b>		<b>\$ 105,476</b>	<b>\$ 35,129</b>
	Book Shop		\$ 124,995		\$ 116,000		\$ 8,995	\$ 104,988		\$ 20,007
	Coffee Shop		15,609		\$ 40,000		\$ (24,391)	\$ 431		\$ 15,178
	Other		\$ -		\$ 4,550		\$ (4,550)	\$ 56		\$ (56)
	<b>Total</b>			<b>\$ 250,865</b>		<b>\$ 292,550</b>	<b>\$ (41,685)</b>		<b>\$ 168,689</b>	<b>\$ 82,176</b>
	<b>EXPENDITURES</b>									
	<b>Administrative</b>			<b>\$ 12,468</b>		<b>\$ 12,500</b>	<b>\$ (32)</b>		<b>\$ 21,671</b>	<b>\$ (9,203)</b>
	<b>Personnel</b>			<b>\$ 140,705</b>		<b>\$ 147,400</b>	<b>\$ (6,695)</b>		<b>\$ 120,384</b>	<b>\$ 20,321</b>
	<b>Development/Special Events</b>			<b>\$ 48,987</b>		<b>\$ 45,500</b>	<b>\$ 3,487</b>		<b>\$ 38,628</b>	<b>\$ 10,360</b>
	<b>Retail</b>			<b>\$ 41,339</b>		<b>\$ 34,200</b>	<b>\$ 7,139</b>		<b>\$ 18,429</b>	<b>\$ 22,909</b>
	Book Shop		\$ 12,283		\$ 9,400		\$ 2,883	\$ 8,518		\$ 3,765
	Coffee Shop		\$ 18,110		\$ 18,800		\$ (690)	\$ 1,905		\$ 16,205
	Other		\$ 10,946		\$ 6,000			\$ 8,007		
	<b>Library Support</b>			<b>\$ 29,439</b>		<b>\$ 40,200</b>	<b>\$ (10,761)</b>		<b>\$ 16,141</b>	<b>\$ 13,298</b>
	Rent (both shops)		\$ 16,150		\$ 17,700		\$ (1,550)	\$ 7,800		\$ 8,350
	Staff Development Day		\$ 3,567		\$ 3,000		\$ 567	\$ 3,000		\$ 567
	Other		\$ 9,722		\$ 19,500		\$ (9,778)	\$ 5,341		\$ 4,381
	<b>Marketing</b>			<b>\$ 6,410</b>		<b>\$ 6,000</b>	<b>\$ 410</b>		<b>\$ 4,017</b>	<b>\$ 2,392</b>
	<b>Volunteer Recognition Events</b>			<b>\$ 3,206</b>		<b>\$ 4,000</b>	<b>\$ (794)</b>		<b>\$ 2,798</b>	<b>\$ 408</b>
	<b>Total</b>			<b>\$ 282,554</b>		<b>\$ 289,800</b>	<b>\$ (7,246)</b>		<b>\$ 222,068</b>	<b>\$ 60,485</b>
	<b>Net</b>			<b>\$ (31,689)</b>		<b>\$ 2,750</b>	<b>\$ (34,439)</b>		<b>\$ (53,379)</b>	<b>\$ 21,691</b>

\* Almost all of the yearly difference in Membership revenue was due to a misallocation of Membership revenue by our bookkeeping service to the Book Festival.

## **Book Shop Report**

### **Vinnie Asaro, Book Shop Committee Chair, FSSPL**

The Book Shop continues to perform well and to break new records in 2024. This year marked an expansion in our online Amazon and Ebay sales. Inventory is stable as donations of books continue to be robust. CD's and DVD's have continued to be our best sellers. Foot traffic at the Book Shop continues to increase to pre-COVID numbers. Numerous sales have been successful and we have been able to increase our membership due to our monthly sales. Pop-up sales at the Saratoga Famer's Market continued this year and have increased our exposure in the community. Our volunteer corps continues to grow and many volunteers have been trained to help out with our online sales. A heartfelt thanks to our book shop manager, Jeff Budge and the dedicated team of volunteers he has trained to continue to promote our mission.

### **Jeff Budge, Book Shop Manager, FSSPL**

Total revenues from the shop set an all-time record for the 2nd year in a row, over \$125,000 - up over 8% from last year. The shop also posted strong post-recovery Covid numbers, reaching 93% of pre-Covid numbers. Amazon sales remained steady- providing 33% of total shop revenues and EBAY sales dramatically increased 20% year over year - providing over 9% of total shop revenues. Our volunteer corps has expanded to over 65 volunteers and our support to the Community through two Outreach Programs and large paperback sales have been successful.

## **Coffee Shop Report**

### **Floria Huizinga, Coffee Shop Committee Chair, FSSPL**

The Friends Coffee Shop has had a good start to its first year. Revenue continues to grow slowly and steadily. At present there are 8 volunteers dedicated to the coffee shop. The hours of operation are typically 10:00 am to 3:00 pm. Foot traffic is steadily increasing at the Coffee Shop. As the year progressed, we were able to offer food items for sale such as baked goods, soup and salads and iced coffee. Promotional gift bag sales were also offered during the holidays and summer. Space is a little tight in the coffee shop and we have worked to use the space more efficiently. Many thanks to Jen and Kristin and the dedicated volunteers who have made all of this possible, despite some challenges along the way. We look forward to another year with increased sales revenue and the pleasure of providing library visitors and staff with coffee and snacks.

### **Kristin Salisbury, Coffee Shop Manager, FSSPL**

During its first year, the Coffee Shop grew revenue and customers each month. We started with a small menu and throughout the year have introduced iced coffee and daily soups, which have been well received by our patrons. Our dedicated team includes 5 regular volunteers and 3 seasonal volunteers. We continue to receive positive feedback, with many customers returning regularly, reflecting strong customer satisfaction and loyalty.



# **Public Relations, Memberships, & Development Report**

**Amanda Martini-Hughes, Public Relations Committee Chair, FSSPL**

**Jennifer Castellani, Development Committee Chair, FSSPL**

**Ashley Richardson, Membership Committee Chair, FSSPL**

Promotions on our social channels continue to help drive sales and awareness. In the latter part of the previous year, engaging with a book shop volunteer allowed us to diversify the types of posts we were putting on Facebook and Instagram, featuring items currently in stock in the shop. We hope to continue this trend. Our Facebook page has grown to 1.5k followers, which is an increase of more than 400 from the previous fiscal year. Our Instagram page continues to perform at an acceptable pace, still well behind Facebook but tends to pick up when we're posting substantive information (i.e. posts featuring items in the shop) on a regular basis. It has grown to 1,016 followers, an increase of 280 from last year.

The inclusion of the Saratoga Book Festival marketing on our channels continues to dramatically shift the reach of our posts. Ensuring we have SBF events listed on Facebook is helping drive the visibility of the event. The main event post has nearly 5K interested in the event with nearly 200 saying they are attending.

This past fiscal year we simplified our membership structure to 6 levels, ranging from \$15 to \$500. We have noticed a shift with more people purchasing higher level memberships than just the base. We remain steady with an average of 350 members, depending on the month.

We continue to raise funds through sponsorships and donations, both for the Saratoga Book Festival and in the general fund. Although we intended to run an annual campaign this past year, we were unable to get it off the ground. We anticipate being able to start an annual campaign this November.

We continue to work with community partners to highlight coming events in exchange for them doing the same. This increases our foothold in the community and allows the community to see our name in conjunction with appropriate events and not just the book shop.

# Saratoga Book Festival Report

Ellen Beal, Vice President and Saratoga Book Festival Chair, FSSPL

The third annual Saratoga Book Festival was held October Oct 10–13 and featured more than 50 featured authors and a Literary Marketplace that included 90 local writers. Attendance grew over the previous year, with approximately 1,500 people registered for at least one program. The 2023 festival introduced several innovations in its second year of operation:

1. Added a performance of *Fahrenheit 451* by the nonprofit theater company “Literature to Life” for area school students and teachers. The performance was attended by more than 200 students from five school districts in Upstate New York.
2. We increased the number of headliners. Popular authors included Wally Lamb, Roz Chast, Simon Winchester, Will McKibben, John Sayles, and Dani Shapiro.
3. We added sessions for writers on how to market their work, find an agent, and get started in publishing.
4. We held author events at the Literary Marketplace to increase floor traffic.

## SBF 2024 Special Event held in April

On April 27, the Festival presented an “Evening with Donald Miller,” author of the award-winning book *Masters the Air*. FSSPL was able to capitalize on the popularity of the Apple TV series *Masters of the Air* to market the event. Saratoga County Veterans Services provided a \$3,000 grant which allowed veterans to attend for free.

## 2022 Marie Madden Volunteer Award

The Marie Madden Volunteer Award is presented annually by the Friends of Saratoga Springs Public Library to recognize those who support reading, learning, and a literate society by offering their volunteer services to the public library. This award is given in memory of Marie Madden, a dedicated and tireless library volunteer whose good humor, high spirits, and hard work were an inspiration to library workers, library users, library trustees and all true FRIENDS of the Saratoga Springs Public Library and libraries everywhere.

For the last twelve years, **Garth & Diane Lloyd** have been actively in the Friends Community Outreach Program. In addition, they have gone above and beyond and supported the Library Outreach Program with Better World Books. They have handled about 15,000 books a year, and physically delivered many of them to not-for-profit destinations in the Saratoga area. Their consistent efforts to distribute, support and promote reading through our Outreach Programs epitomize the spirit of this award.



## 2022 H. Dunham Hunt Award

The H. Dunham Hunt Award is presented annually by the Friends of Saratoga Springs Public Library to recognize outstanding service to the community through support of the public library.

This award is given in memory of Dr. H. Dunham Hunt who throughout his life was a dedicated and tireless supporter of public library service, and who gave endlessly of his time and talent to create and nurture the Saratoga Springs Public Library from its inception in 1945 to his death in 1982

This year's honoree, for her stewardship of the Friends of the Saratoga Springs Public Library through a tumultuous period in the history of the organization, the Library, and, indeed the country and the world, is **Klare Ingram**.

Klare has devoted untold hours to reimagining, reorganizing, and revitalizing the Friends of the Saratoga Springs Public Library. Her efforts have resulted in the hiring of the Friends' first Executive Director, expansion of the operation of the Friends Book Shop into online sales and record profits, and the opening of the Friends Coffee Shop in the library's café space. She has worked tirelessly to modernize and energize the organization, and to maximize its impact on supporting the mission and staff of the library.

## 2023 Book Shop Volunteer of the Year

**Don Proulx** came on board last year to fill a major role for the Friends. He was assigned to help out with Amazon and Ebay on-line shipping, including shelving newly-listed items, packing up all sales, bringing them to the Post Office and recording tracking numbers. Don is one of those rare volunteers who comes in three times a week to help. In addition, he has found time to help out with inventory. As these duties were formally done by the Manager, this has allowed the manager to pay more attention to the shop and on-line sales programs. We are so grateful for the addition of Don to our volunteer family.

## 2024-2025 Board of Directors and Officers

Caroline Amicone-Ren, *Student Board Member*

Vincent Asaro, *Secretary, Book Shop Committee Chair*

Ellen Beal, *Book Festival Chair*

Jennifer Castellani, *Development Committee Chair*

Jennifer Coffey, *Governance Committee Chair*

Lauren Hatch

Floria Huizinga, *Coffee Shop Committee Chair*

Klare Ingram, *Immediate Past President*

Amanda Martini-Hughes, *President, Public Relations Committee Chair*

Jay Portnoy, *Treasurer*

Ashley Richardson, *Membership Committee Chair*

Sherri Rose

Dawn Sauer

Carol Wang, *Student Board Member*

# Book Shop & Coffee Shop Volunteers

*\*As of September, 9, 2024*

## Book Shop

Lisa Aronson  
Ev Bedard  
Phyllis Benaman  
Suzi Berg  
George Bergmann  
Amanda Blodgett  
Betsey Campbell  
Shelley Carter  
Janice Christiano  
Jessica Connors  
Joan Crean  
Annie Crowell  
Ann Cullen  
Mary Beth Delarm  
Marilyn Devine  
Laura Doolin  
Barbara Egerman  
Michele Feinstein  
Diane Fitzgerald  
Jackie Foster  
Melanie Gerace  
Denise Gordon  
Vicki Harkins  
Lauren Hatch  
Pat Hennessy  
Jesse Hunter  
Penny Jolly  
Debbie Kemp  
Gloria Kupferman  
Michael LaBelle  
Carolyn Lansberry  
Erin Lindsay  
Diane Lloyd  
Garth Lloyd  
Penny Lockwood  
Peter Luczak

Sharon Maidment  
Gary Mann  
Staci Mannian  
Melanie Mason  
Mary Jo Michaud  
Diana Miller  
Patty Millins  
Linda Morzillo  
Linda Noble  
Maureen Palmateer  
Margaret Pearson  
Mary Perez  
Kathy Pike  
Don Proux  
Shelley Riley  
Kathlyn Rooney  
Betty Ruger  
Linda Schneider  
Brooke Smith  
Brittany Tyrrell  
Stephanie Venerus  
Bonnie Wasson  
Linda Wilson  
Roland Wright  
Dee Wright  
Alice Zeiger

## Coffee Shop

Joan Alexander  
Shelley Tabakman  
Cheryl McCall  
Glenn Stamile  
Mike Plabelle  
Matt Albers

## Members at the Ex-Libris+ Levels

- *Publisher, Editor, and Ex-Libris*
- *As of September 9, 2024*

### Publisher

James Gold  
Jennifer Castellani\*

### Editor

Elsie & Laurence Cagle  
Joseph Nathan  
Jennifer Coffey\*  
Eric Mumford  
Maureen Hayes  
Ellen Beal\*

### Ex-Libris

Ann Crowell  
Nancy Castillo  
Kay Olan  
Mary Beth Winn  
Ike Pulver\*  
Katherine Currie  
Henry Hamelin  
Kris Neddo  
Pat Oles  
Jay Portnoy\*  
Marilyn Vanden-Handel  
Kathleen Young  
Deirdre Leland  
Frank Brady  
Valarie Dohn  
Bridget Languth  
Timothy Maguire  
Richard Vaccaro  
Marian Lewis  
Klare Ingram\*

Vincent Asaro\*  
Kim Smithgall  
Marcia Krantz  
Katie Capelli  
Floria Huizinga\*  
Michael Rowan  
Kathleen Farrell  
Gail King  
Alicia Makenzie  
Elizabeth Brooke Smith  
Richard Comstock  
Katherine Graney  
Ellen and Todd Downing  
Wayne T Senecal  
Douglas Logan  
Gokhan Oguz  
Jeannette Zehr  
Susan Schuster  
Mary Jo Michaud  
Melanie Mason  
Diane Fitzgerald  
Jean Murphy  
Beverly Relyea  
Marcia Connolly  
Natalia Borja  
Mary Ainsworth  
Marguerite Lawler  
Meluyn Patashnick  
Douglas De Haas

\* FSSPL Board Members