Jane Austen Society of North America Southwest

January 2016 Newsletter

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"Jane Austen: 6 Interesting Facts About the Beloved

JASNA-SW Winter Meeting Recap

Reading in the Time of Jane Austen

English Author," co-authored by Iris Lutz and our own Claire Bellanti, JASNA president.

Melvyn Bragg and guests discuss Emma, In Our Time on BBC Radio, plus a quiz to test your knowledge of the novel.

"How Jane Austen's Emma changed the face of fiction" - from *The Guardian* and John Mullan, author of *What Matters in Jane Austen? Twenty Crucial Puzzles Solved.*

Emma also figured in a *New York Times* opinion piece on Alzheimer's disease that discusses the heroine's role as caregiver to her

The Circulating Library in Scarborough circa 1818

From the 18th century circulating library to bibliotherapy to Regency-era book design and production, the Winter Meeting of the Jane Austen Society of North America (JASNA) Southwest explored the theme of *Reading in the Time of Jane Austen*. The December 5 event at the UCLA Faculty Center attracted a capacity crowd to celebrate the author, just before the 240th anniversary of her birth. The day concluded with a visit to one of UCLA's special collections libraries.

"You Can Get a Parasol at Whitby's": Circulating Libraries in Jane Austen's Time

The opening presentation by JASNA President Claire Bellanti discussed the centrality of the circulating library and other forms of book sharing in Regency England as well as their importance to Austen in her life and fiction.

"The driving force behind the circulating library was economic," Bellanti noted. "These were businesses, often run by publishers." Despite high demand and new efficiencies in publishing practices, books were generally

father.

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still expensive to purchase, and the growing middle class could not afford many of them. Books in the Regency era each cost roughly the equivalent of $100 today, putting them out of reach entirely for new readers of the working class. Even the wealthy used circulating libraries, and they became important meeting places in many communities.

Books were rented by subscription, with the fee based on the number of volumes and the number of subscriptions. The cost also varied by the quantity you could take out at one time. For an additional fee, a subscriber could also access newspapers and magazines. "Books were combined with other goods -- such as stationery, jewelry, and gloves -- in smaller stores," Bellanti added. Novels in three volumes meant triple the revenue, as three people could read parts of the same novel at one time.

By the turn of the 19th century, nearly every town in England had a circulating library. They were especially popular in such resort areas as Brighton, where Lydia visits one in *Pride and Prejudice*, and Austen's fictitious *Sanditon*, in which Whitby's Circulating Library is central to the narrative.

In 1801, a thousand such businesses could be found throughout the country. The majority of patrons were ladies, and the most popular books were novels. Some circulating libraries in large towns would make subscriptions available to rural areas, with carriages traveling back and forth, charging rural patrons a higher fee, Bellanti said.

Women subscribers and institutions such as Minerva Press in London -- which specialized in women authors and, with 20,000 volumes, was the largest circulating library in 1800 -- helped fuel the rise in female novelists.

"Austen brought mentions of libraries into each of her novels," Bellanti added. "Four circulating libraries are mentioned in *Emma*." The Austen family enjoyed novel reading and frequented such institutions themselves, as evidenced by this excerpt from a letter Jane wrote to her sister, Cassandra: "I have received a very civil note from Mrs. Martin requesting my name as a Subscriber to her Library which opens on the 14th of January. ... My mother finds the money. ... As an inducement to subscribe Mrs. Martin tells us that her Collection is not to consist only of Novels, but of every kind of Literature & etc. -- She might have spared this pretention to our family who are great Novel-readers & not ashamed of being so; but it was necessary, I suppose, to the self-consequence of half her subscribers."

"I Want My Mr. Darcy: Using Pride and Prejudice *as*

Bibliotherapy"

The day's second presentation by sisters Emily Bergman, a librarian, and Alice Bergman, a therapist, focused on the healing power of reading. This process is at the core of bibliotherapy, an expressive therapy that uses the patient's relationship to the content of books to assist with the resolution of complex problems. The treatment is based on the human inclination to identify with others as expressed in literature, whether the individual identifies with a character or an experience in a novel. In addition, biographies can be instructive in showing failures and successes in real proportion. "Finding the right book for the right patient can be transformative," noted Alice.

The duo offered several scenarios for audience participation, bringing the *Pride and Prejudice* characters into modern situations, such as Elizabeth being asked to be maid of honor for her best friend, who is marrying someone decidedly unsuitable in Elizabeth's opinion -- or a friend of Darcy's approaching Elizabeth, who has been dating Darcy for awhile, to let her know she would never be accepted by his family or the "country club."

"Elizabeth exudes self esteem," Alice added. "Many in therapy struggle with that. Elizabeth is not looking for external happiness. She looks to herself. She also has the capacity to grow and change. She admits and learns from her weaknesses."

It was noted that bibliotherapy started at least as early as World War I, when Austen novels were given to soldiers to help them cope with being far from home and under great stress. And Austen herself may have even invented the concept, as Anne Elliot actually uses bibliotherapy to help Captain Benwick in *Persuasion*.

Pressman and Bookbinder: A Look at 18th Century Book Design and Printing

The final presentation featured Rand Boyd, coordinator of Special Collections and Archives at Chapman University, who provided a broad overview of the developments in book layout, ornamentation, and typography in North America and England during the 18th century. He also brought along a display of books from the era that attendees could examine throughout the day.

Boyd explained that, until the 18th century, most books were religious and all were nonfiction, including geography and history. "People were taught to read so they could read the Bible," he said.

During the 18th century, the increased demand for books was driven by a decrease in their cost. In 1725, London had 75 printers. By 1785, that number had grown to 124. Demand for business rapidly grew, with an increased trend toward fiction. The literacy rate in Britain was lower than in Europe and the Colonies, although the vast majority of books were published in the British Isles, compared with North America, which imported most

volumes.

Boyd noted that women were frequently employed in the production of books during this period. Everything, including the paper, was handmade. The biggest cost at that time, he said, was the paper -- even more than the cost of labor. The pages were sewn together, and women typically worked in the bindery, using their fine needlework skills.

The 18th century also saw passage by Parliament of the first copyright law, the Statute of Anne, in 1710, which for the first time recognized authors as important to the process of book creation, Boyd noted.

Attendees also had the opportunity to choose which of the six deluxe Austen-related baskets they wanted to compete for.

A tour of one of UCLA's special collections libraries concluded the day.

Reading Groups Upcoming Meetings/Info

The Long Beach Reading Group's December 2015 tea in honor of Jane Austen's birthday

Send us photos from your reading group so we can share them here, on our Facebook page, and/or the JASNA-SW website.

ANNOUNCEMENT:
A new South Bay Reading Group has formed! The

first meeting will be on Sunday, January 10 in Redondo Beach. See details below.

Sunday, January 10, 2-4 p.m.
South Bay Reading Group (NEW!)
The Real Jane Austen: A Life in Small Things
by Paula Byrne
Location: Redondo Beach (email/call for address)
This will be the first meeting of the new South Bay reading group! To RSVP or for more information, email Jeanine Holguin or call her at 805-444-8999.

Sunday, January 17, 5:30 p.m.
Santa Monica Reading Group
The Fair Jilt by Aphra Behn
and
The Secret Life of Aphra Behn by Janet Todd
Location: Hermosa Beach (email/call for address)
For more information, email Diana Birchall or call her at 310-394-2196.

Sunday, January 17, 12:30 p.m.
Orange County Reading Group
Emma by Jane Austen
For more information, email Annmarie Thomas or call her at 949-487-7028.

Sunday, January 24, 1:30-4 p.m.
San Fernando Valley Reading Group
Pursuit of Love by Nancy Mitford
For more information, email Cheryl Cole or call her at 310-422-5475.

Saturday, January 30, 11 a.m.-2 p.m.
Long Beach Reading Group
The Real Jane Austen: A Life in Small Things by Paula Byrne
For more information, email Gerda Kilgore, or call her at 909-967-6630.

Saturday, January 30, 11 a.m.-2 p.m.
San Gabriel Valley Reading Group
Location: Lamanda Library, 140 S. Altadena Drive, Pasadena
Book: TBD
For more information, email Kelly Duir or call her at 909-967-6630.

Sunday, February 21, 1:30 p.m.-4:30 p.m.

West Los Angeles Reading Group
Shirley by Charlotte Bronte
Discussion leader: Dr. Charles Lynn Batten
This group is at capacity and cannot accept new members. Current members may email Clara Browda or call her at 310-278-8759 for more information on upcoming meetings.

Sunday, March 6, 2-4 p.m.
San Fernando Valley Reading Group
Jane's Fame by Claire Harman
For more information, email Cheryl Cole or call her at 310-422-5475.

Sunday, May 15, 2-4 p.m.
San Fernando Valley Reading Group
Ivanhoe by Sir Walter Scott
For more information, email Cheryl Cole or call her at 310-422-5475.

Sunday, July 17, 2-4 p.m.
San Fernando Valley Reading Group
The Prime Minister by Anthony Trollope
For more information, email Cheryl Cole or call her at 310-422-5475.

Sunday, September 18, 2-4 p.m.
San Fernando Valley Reading Group
Emma by Jane Austen
For more information, email Cheryl Cole or call her at 310-422-5475.

Sunday, November 13, 2-4 p.m.
San Fernando Valley Reading Group
Dean's Watch by Elizabeth Goudge
For more information, email Cheryl Cole or call her at 310-422-5475.

Additional Reading Groups

Pasadena Area Reading Group
This group is at capacity and cannot accept new members. Current members may email Susan Ridgeway or call her at 626-357-1397 for information on upcoming meetings.
The San Gabriel Valley Reading Group is accepting members. Email Kelly Duir or call her at 909-967-6630.

Riverside County Reading Group
Meetings are held at the Temecula Publc Library, 30600 Pauba Road, Temecula, in Community Room B. For more information, email Rebecca Weersing or call her at 951-595-7046.

Ventura Reading Group
The group usually meets on the third Saturday of every month at 11:30 a.m. in the E.P. Foster Library, 651 E. Main Street, Ventura, California 93001, 805-648-2715.

San Diego Reading Group
Although San Diego is a separate JASNA region, many JASNA-Southwest members are interested in San Diego JASNA events and vice versa. For information on upcoming San Diego JASNA meetings, email Jeanne Talbot or call her at 808-342-0666.

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