President’s Message

One of the real joys of being President is seeing how much MISF means to its members. Each brings a passion which shows up in hard work done on behalf of the organization.

Part of that hard work has been a series of popular Saturday morning programs at Washburn Library. The excellent Minnesota Scholar is a lively journal with articles and reviews on a multitude of topics and, through the “Why Genealogy” introduces members to each other. We are fiscal agent for a study of the Booth Memorial maternity hospital. A history of MISF will hopefully be available next year. Study groups on philosophy and history continue to meet.

My vision is to help foster the eclectic spirit of MISF which can host events on G.K. Chesterton, cold fusion, Sicily, political polling, education, limits of liberalism, and poetry in its Saturday programs. Scholarship should range widely, address many divergent interests, and appeal to as many eccentric spirits as possible. If we can facilitate scholarly research which might otherwise not be done, so much the better.

Each of the components of MISF means something. Minnesota, because that’s where we are. Independent, because we are hard to pigeonhole and not tied to an academic or corporate structure. Scholars, because we seek to understand the world about us and even meditate on what it’s all about. Or we can just learn about some peculiar topic of personal interest. Forum, because we provide a place for likeminded and even unlikely minded individuals to commune together.

Steven Miller, MISF President
Editor’s Perspective

Of Independent Scholars
by Evelyn D. Klein

With today’s globalization and technology, the world has become more accessible. For those of us who have traveled outside as well as inside the U.S., we have a first-hand glimpse of the diversity of our world, not only in terms of the people who populate it but also the cultures, ideas, and perspectives that mark it.

And if some of us painstakingly worked our way through undergraduate college, it was not because we followed a tradition or were expected to, but because we instinctively knew there had to be more to life. And if we went on to an advanced degree sometime after that, it was because we held out for a more in-depth view of whatever field we were in. In my case, it was the teaching of English. My thesis, “Virginia Woolf, the Creative Vision,” brought me to a new concept of creative process, opening the door to my life-long dream – writing. This in turn, helped me climb, independently, from teaching to editing to publishing, which, in turn, led to graphic art and on to independent scholarship. And on it goes.

Emily Dickinson referred to her poetry as her “letter to the world.” Writing for me, is not so much a letter as it is an exploration, a discourse, or conversation with the world, albeit on paper. Yet every poem, every article, every story I write is a response or processing of something already existing in the environment, something I did not see before, something that struck me as needing a response, or requiring further thought, inquiry. Drawing has become the visual version of perspectives explored in writing.

In this “swiftly moving” world of new possibilities, the greatest challenge is to catch up and keep up, perhaps even get ahead of the game a bit. We may not even have realized it until it became official, but the notion of lifelong learning, born in this age of technology, moves along faster than some of us, working on our own, can follow. Still, many of us have a hand in the changes, because they help us move forward, too.

Since the world seems to have moved closer together, made more accessible through technology and media, we hear diverse voices of varying credibility, depending on which media and which voice is presenting fact or belief, myth or alternate fact, even post-truth. These do not usually come with labels attached, so the listener or reader has to decide. Someone may say “I believe my friend. Therefore, I take whatever he/she says as fact.” We all love the story of Thanksgiving with the Pilgrims. But is it fact or cultural myth? And if we choose a political candidate on the basis of appeal to our fears rather than the individual’s given track record, are we dealing with facts or post-truth? But all of these have been around in human discourse for eons, if perhaps by different names. Yet the issues are much more sweeping than that. With all that is going on in the world, it is important to keep informed. The trick is to sort out the different voices.

Many of us like to ponder truth, the meaning of existence, our way of life, our environment, institutions, commerce, politics, etc., and our place in it beyond the every-day. While our culture greatly esteems the authoritative voice of academia, as far as scholarship and expertise are concerned, not every inquiring mind, or scholarly individual is necessarily connected to academia, even after earning a degree. There are many reasons for it. Not every scholar chooses teaching, for instance. Some may have no
connection to academia or find it too confining. Or perhaps opportunity for employment was not there when they were ready to enter the field, as was the case for me, some years ago. But some people continue their studies on their own, nevertheless, free spirits of sorts. And the voices of some of these may be as expert as any today. Growth is a state of mind, along with the need to engage in intellectual and scholarly discussions or exchanges, in person and/or on paper.

Historically, we are preceded by great scholars, who were not linked to academia in their creative output. And while the term “independent scholar” may have been coined in the late 20th century, we find some impressive names, coming from every imaginable field of study, creativity, expertise, or innovation, who fit that category. Among them are Leonardo da Vinci, Nicolaus Copernicus, Johannes Kepler, Hildegard von Bingen, Martin Luther, William Shakespeare, René Descartes, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Edison, Ludwig van Beethoven, Henry David Thoreau, Emily Dickinson, Henry Ford, Käthe Kollwitz, Carl Jung, Kate Millet, Jane Goodall, Pinchas Zukerman, Gloria Steinem, and Steven Jobs. They represent only a few of the luminaries on the long list of the curious, the seekers, the originators, the savants – the independent thinkers.

Of course, these thinkers have contributed to the way we live today. And knowledge and education as well as life experience have become the prerogative of the ordinary person. Fortunately, independent thinkers are still busily at work. Independent scholarship offers a parallel, a balance and supplement, to academia, arising out of a variety of needs and allowing for more flexibility and, perhaps, even a quicker surfacing of new influences, ideas, and creativity.

A case in point is The Loft Literary Center in Minneapolis. When I completed my M.S., the writing inspired by my course work found support not at the university but at The Loft. Considering my professional background, they asked me to facilitate a poetry group which I, then, did for seven years. This led to my teaching at the Loft off and on, when my schedule of writing, publishing, and editing allows.

When the creative process of writing was first beginning to take hold among writers in the 1980s, I was among those writers by virtue of my master’s thesis. The Loft, recently established, had already dedicated itself to creative writing at a time when academia did not pay much heed to it, because it uses the inverse approach of expository writing required for scholarly writing. Yet the Loft, sideling the academic approach, attracted increasing numbers of students. Even academicians and people of all educational backgrounds began to attend Loft classes. Soon academia, not to be outdone, added creative writing courses of their own to their other academic offerings. Thus, while the Loft considers itself a community based literary arts organization, it also represents independent scholarship by exploring and promoting, in-depth, the process and rendering of creative writing.

A more recent example of independent scholarship is the East Side Freedom Library in Saint Paul. Founded in 2014 by Peter Rachleff and Beth Cleary, both educators, it turned to “Producing Knowledge Outside the Walls of Academia.” The library houses non-circulating research collections with appeal to general learners as well as to scholars. Here diverse people can come and access knowledge about a diverse neighborhood not otherwise available to do research and develop their own ideas.

The general need and desirability of independent scholarship is evidenced, also, by organizations that capitalize on scholarly topics, in their programming. In the Twin Cities, we have such groups or organizations as Conversations of the Valley, the AAUW-St. Paul with weekly and monthly programs respectively. The Minnesota Jung Association is another stand-alone organization with regular scholarly salons, lectures, workshops, and seminars on psychology, at times publishing an on-line journal, to give only a few examples.
Groups like MISF have made it easy for anyone from stay-at-home parent to academic, from hobbyist to professional and everyone in between to carry on the discourse about the world we live in.

Today, we have a number of organizations that specifically promote independent scholarship per se, offering a place to otherwise unheard voices. In the United States, we have the National Coalition of Independent Scholars, located in San Antonio, Texas, of which the Minnesota Independent Scholars Forum is an affiliate. Formed in 1989 to support independent scholars, it boasts five affiliates in the U.S. and one in Australia. According to their website, the coalition caters to those “who have not or never wished to enter academia” or have left its increasingly “unstable” climate. It also includes emerging scholars or those seeking a second or new career.

Our neighbors to the north, The Canadian Academy of Independent Scholars in Vancouver, British Columbia, functions much as the U.S. organization does. Further, it caters to “a network of lifelong learners,” and offers grants and library support for its members.

If we observe the trend, despite the fact that academia remains the esteemed model of expertise, independent scholarship seems to be the wave of the future, along with the changing world of publishing. With increasing numbers of people who are educated, have intensive or long-time work experience, traveled extensively, found new insights, and conduct their own experiments, we may, increasingly, draw scholars of the future from this pool of independents at large. Since the prevalence of scientific method and expository writing enjoy more widespread accessibility and application than formerly, they help open this new door.

When in 2010 Shirley Whiting suggested I join The Scholars, I was intrigued by the intellectual and scholarly discussions of its members. I soon joined the philosophy group, because I always wanted to study philosophy but never found time. Being part of a discussion group helps me see the world through others’ eyes as well, which helps me expand on my own ideas and allows me to put them in a relevant frame of reference.

Sometime after I joined the philosophy group, I was asked to serve on the board, which I was happy to accept. Only then did I discover the mission, purpose and kind of participation open to MISF members. When the, then, board president, Mike Woolsey, asked me to be new editor of The Minnesota Scholar, I felt inspired enough that I managed to carve out a space in my busy free-lance schedule to make it become reality.

As writer and artist, what I appreciate most about the Minnesota Independent Scholars Forum, aside from gregarious meetings, is the opportunities to be part of a forum of discussion, attend stimulating programs, field trips to the MIA and other cultural venues, as well as presenting, on occasion, programs for which I receive instant feedback from peers. Besides, writing left to itself can easily become stale, even be forgotten, and ideas neglected or ignored in the first place can die on the vine.

Therefore, I encourage members to tell their stories, because as Brenda Ueland said, “everyone has an interesting story to tell.” Essays and articles, whether based on research or experience, practical application or philosophical thought, travel or exploration, or a lost or newly discovered way of doing something, qualify. After all, Carl Jung said that life is an experiment! The thing about independent scholarship is to keep the discourse flowing. Yes, Charlie Brown, independent scholarship by any other name is still independent scholarship.

Currently, The Minnesota Scholar continues articles on the “Why Genealogy,” namely a particular passion we enjoy engaging in, whether that be scholarly pursuit or personal interest, along with other topics relevant in today’s world. Complete guidelines are available by contacting the editor.

~Evelyn D. Klein, TMS Editor, is an author, speaker, artist. She has a B.S. in Secondary Education, and an M.S. in Teaching of English, taught in the public schools, at Century College and teaches at the Loft Literary Center. Her three books comprise, poetry, essays, and art. www.evelynkleinauthor.com
Why Genealogy

Preserving Memories through Oral Histories
by Barbara W. Sommer

When I was in graduate school at the University of Minnesota, Duluth, during the years my husband and I lived in Duluth, I was asked to do a project for the Sea Grant Institute. The project involved going up and down the North Shore of Lake Superior, recording oral histories with second-generation commercial fishermen and their families. This was my introduction to oral history, a public history research methodology that I am still involved with today. At the time, I was just beginning to work in what we now call public history. I liked the contact with local history – history from the ground up – and found that oral history fit this interest well.

More Than 30 Oral History Projects
Since that first project, I’ve led or helped lead more than 30 oral history projects on a variety of subjects. I’ve taught it at the post-secondary level and have led dozens of community workshops. One of the most well-known of my oral history projects was the Civilian Conservation Corps Oral History Documentation Project. The interviews from this project are at the Iron Range Research Center in Chisholm, Minnesota. I used them to write Hard Work and a Good Deal: The Civilian Conservation Corps in Minnesota (Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2008), drawing on content in the interviews to help guide the organization of the book. The book won the Minnesota Book Award, the Northeastern Minnesota Book Award, and a national award from the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH).

Several years ago I worked with the Commission of Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing Minnesotans to record interviews, some in American Sign Language, about deaf activism in the state. I recently finished work on the HIV Care Providers (in Minnesota) Oral History Project. The interviewing team for this project included a social services consultant, a retired epidemiologist, another interviewer, and me. The fully transcribed interviews are at The Jean-Nickolaus Tretter Collection in Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Studies in Special Collections at the University of Minnesota and are now being used by several members of the interviewing team to write an extensive report describing lessons learned from working with an epidemic of unknown origins.

What Is Oral History?
So what is oral history? The classic definition is: oral history is primary source material created in an interview setting with a witness to or a participant in an event or a way of life for the purpose of preserving the information and making it available to others. The term refers both to the process and the interview itself (Sommer/Quinlan, The Oral History Manual, 2nd ed., 2009).

In discussions about oral history, you may have heard reference to the term oral interview. While this term is commonly used, it is somewhat misleading. Oral history actually is a research methodology that begins with an idea for an interview or a series of interviews and ends with depositing the recordings, transcripts, and related documents in an archive. The entire process, including the interview, is referred to as the oral history life cycle.

Five Steps in the Oral History Life Cycle
Oral historians recognize five steps in the oral history life cycle. They are: Idea, Plan, Interview, Preservation, Access/Use. The steps help us understand that oral histories begin with an idea for doing interviews. The plan includes determining who to interview, what questions to ask, what type of recording equipment to use, which archival facility to work with, and the process for dealing with copyright.
Each of these steps helps move the idea toward the interview.

When I did my first oral history project, it was the interview that interested me. Not only hearing first-hand history, but having an opportunity to ask questions to better understand spoken memories, was fascinating. As I learned more about doing oral history, I began to understand the importance of all steps in the life cycle. The steps build on one another, leading to interviews with depth and substance, providing insight into past events. The final two steps are equally important; they guide us in preserving the information and making it accessible to others.

Oral History Benchmarks

When thinking about doing oral histories, it is helpful to be aware of certain benchmarks. Using them as guides helps oral historian meet national standards. They are: evidence of thoughtful planning, careful attention to copyright and other legal and ethical issues, clear identification of participants, controlled, recorded interview setting, use of high-quality recording equipment, use of a structured, well-researched question guide to collect first-hand information, incorporation of probing follow-up questions to explore nuances and meanings of memories, adherence to careful processing techniques, preservation in a designated repository, and access to interview information. The result, as acclaimed oral historian Willa Baum wrote, “is a good historical account, firsthand, preserved, and available.”

Many Stories Could Have Been Lost

Many of the stories I have recorded could have been lost. In addition to recording information about the lives of commercial fishermen (and women) on Lake Superior, I’ve interviewed women beginning political careers during the early 1980s, labor leaders who remembered the difficulties of union organizing during the Great Depression, women educators developing pioneering international education projects, elders on the Fond du Lac Reservation describing sights of historical importance to them, and interviews about the life and work of Governor Rudy Perpich. I’m currently working on a series of oral history interviews about the history of philanthropy in Minnesota.

Of the many oral histories I’ve done, those that were the most thoughtful involved people who were committed to being recorded. Some stand out because of what we recorded or because of the responses of the interviewees. I remember Civilian Conservation Corps enrollees, interviewed more than 50 years after their involvement as teenagers in this Depression-era program, speaking with pride about their contributions to developing forests and parks in Minnesota. I remember the stories of life on Lake Superior in the first interviews I did, with people talking about both the difficulties and the beauty of making a living on the lake. I remember a man who grew up in the children’s home and school in Owatonna after the disintegration of his family, talking about what it felt like as a child to be taken to that place. I remember the HIV care providers talking about their commitment to providing care to people who had HIV and AIDS and of the difficulties of doing so, especially in the early years of the epidemic.

What Can We Learn from the Interviews?

Each of these interviews help us better understand the past. What can we learn from them? The Civilian Conservation Corps enrollees often began their interviews by asking if it would be all right to talk about their participation in the program. It was a work/relief program; the stories can help others understand the difficulties of living through severe economic downturns. We recently went through a major recession; hearing the enrollees talk about what it was like to live through a 25% unemployment rate put it into perspective. The story of the boy in the children’s school, believed at the time to be progressive in its approach to child care but organized with little care for the children’s overall
well-being, can provide insights for social services providers today. The recordings with members of the deaf community can help us understand what it takes to fight for basic rights. Information gathered through the HIV care providers interviews is being made available to help others, facing new epidemics, such as Ebola, learn how to respond to difficult medical situations.

Each oral history represents the viewpoint of the interviewee and the unique interaction between interviewee and interviewer. As primary source documents, oral histories are first-hand accounts of events or ways of life. Oral historians can help users of oral histories by documenting the circumstances of each interview—for example, why these questions were asked of that interviewee by that interviewer at that time and that place. This information helps users of oral histories better understand spoken memories and their meanings.

Projects Are Available Through Archives
Most of the projects I’ve worked on are available through various archives in Minnesota and other states. When I began this work, we relied on photocopying transcripts and copying audio tapes. The Digital Age has expanded opportunities for access and opened new options for use. As the use of oral histories increases, it is helpful to remember that, although there are many types of recorded conversations about the past, when we turn to oral histories, we are accessing documents that have been developed through this careful research process.

~Barbara W. Sommer has over thirty-five years of experience as an oral historian. She has directed major oral community history projects and has taught oral history. She is the author and co-author of several key publications in the field and of the award-winning book Hard Work and a Good Deal: The Civilian Conservation Corps in Minnesota (2008). She holds degrees from Carleton College and the University of Minnesota. http://barbarawsommer.

SUGGESTED READING

In The Institute for Historical Study newsletter, spring 2017, Jody Offer suggests the 1860s political novel, Felix Hold, the Radical, by George Eliot. It precedes Donald Trump by 150 years and represents Eliot’s fascination with a local parliamentary election. Offer states: “As I read...I started feeling a little like the Trump election was emanating from Eliot’s pages.”

She found particularly interesting what Eliot had to say through Felix about politicians. According to Eliot, “I’ll tell you what’s the greatest power under heaven and that is public opinion – the ruling belief in what is right and what is wrong, what is honorable and what is shameful. That’s the steam that works the engines.”

George Eliot (1819-1880) is the pen name of Mary Ann Evans, British novelist and realist who wrote Silas Marner and her masterpiece, Middlemarch, among other works.
**Book Review** by Lucy Brusic

**Everyday Life:**
**How the Ordinary Became Extraordinary**
by Joseph A. Amato
Reaktion Books, Ltd.: London, 2016, 256 Pages, including Index

Joe Amato has a dense writing style with lots of long sentences and many modifiers and lists. I find his work hard to read for any sustained time. I have to do a lot of rereading to figure out what he is trying to say. The following paragraph from his newest book, *Everyday Life*, serves as an example of this style:

As much as historians, by disposition, are against homogenizing lives and narratives, they must structure their inquiries and frame their narratives with generalizations if they are to be true to modern times in which at ever greater rates across ever vaster distance nations, economies, and people expand and interact. (133)

Amato’s style is so dense that it requires intense concentration on the part of the reader. Even then, full comprehension is often elusive. Nevertheless, in retrospect, I find that struggling with this book has changed the way I see the world around me. When I was on a street corner in Minneapolis recently, I found myself wondering what changes had taken place that altered the population of the neighborhood. Basically, Amato’s book has given me a new lens through which to view the details of change in the history of my times and times gone by.

Amato’s point is that small changes, many of them technological, have changed ordinary life in extraordinary ways. This point is fairly straightforward. But he has trouble keeping it in sharp focus. Dealing with a complex subject over a wide time span (medieval to modern), he tends to complexify rather than clarify his point by citing so many examples that my head was spinning.

For example, Amato commences (41-46) with the observation that geography and landscape once defined life. Medieval life was for the most part lived on foot, measured on foot, and timed by walking. The clock was "set" by the sun; the shape and the condition of the land determined almost every aspect of life. He then points out that technology, in the form of the wheeled plow (47) gave rise to land clearance and thus the growth of markets—a simple change changed "ordinary" life.

In Chapter 3, Amato turns to the meaning of change. Change alters both places and everyday life (57). Faster changing civilizations are very different from slow, remote, autonomous societies (58). How a society sees time determines how the society defines itself.

Amato then goes on to describe his belief that historians should tell the details of individual towns and characters, though they must remain aware of outside agencies (76). He refines this view to say that the local historian is not called to write theory, but to honor the richness of human life. Local historians should pay attention to small particular details (81).

Stylistically, Amato favors listing things. In describing the effect of the Industrial Revolution on everyday life, he says:

Vastly expanded and accelerated transportation and near instantaneous communication entered humanity into a new order of speed. Urban centers gained unprecedented control of water and...
liquids and of energy, while public and private lighting turned night into day, enhancing safety, health, theater, surgery and pleasure. Industry's creations and products metamorphosed town and country, increased their proximity and interaction. New orders of having and powers of spending multiplied wish and possibility. (111)

Further spelling out changes in modern life, he adds comments on the importance of newspapers and automobiles and the omnipresence of clocks (which Lewis Mumford has described as the reorganizer of modern life) (158). When Amato assesses the period between the Great Depression and the Cold War, he cites another list of things that have changed the way we perceive the world: typewriters, education, self-help, government reform, and popular culture (161). In all cases, he is trying to relate the ordinary things of our lives to the way we live (164).

Amato has many philosophical insights that are worth considering. For example, he says that our lives are experienced as "change, design, individuality, and subjectivity" (187). Wisely, he points out that too many changes make us retreat into indifference (196).

In his final chapter, Amato recommends that we turn to literature to see "what slips below the surface of the ordinary" (203). He ends by suggesting that "the historian who seeks aesthetics in his recounting of modern life can learn from the poet" (204). It is appropriate to end with poetry because one perceives Amato to be a poet; he is right to remind his reader of the importance of poetry and literature in defining and understanding an era, a place, or a person.

This is not a book for the general reader. It is quite challenging to read and absorb. In a complicated philosophical discussion of historical research, I wonder whether Amato's stream-of-consciousness poetic approach is the best teaching method. Shorter sentences with clearer definition might have helped to make his point more understandable.

I also missed seeing anything about Colonial America — a period rich in well documented small details. (Amato's discussion of American life begins with nineteenth century immigration.) It would be interesting to see how he would incorporate colonial religion, warfare, politics, and agriculture into his historical view. Or women's handicrafts such as weaving and spinning. And what about native Americans? Or slaves?

Amato’s own genealogy is diverse and complicated, as he explains in his Acknowledgments (240) at the end of the book. In fact, by knowing something of Amato’s background, one can better understand how he came to see the importance of the small details that make up a life.

~Lucy Brusic is a writer and hand weaver. She is the author or co-author of five books under her own name and the editor or designer of at least a dozen books written by other people. She is the former editor of this journal.

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**Call for Pictures:**

Lucy Brusic, who is diligently working on the Minnesota Independent Scholars history, is sending out a call for pictures or photographs. If anyone has pictures showing members of MISF, past and present, including events and activities and would be willing to share them for inclusion in the history project, let Lucy know. Please contact her at lucy@brusic.net.
Liberalism is considered one of the most long-lasting ideologies in America. The Oxford English Dictionary dates the first use of the word “liberal” as 1816.

Philosophically speaking, however, it found its beginnings with Thomas Hobbes in 1651 in his treatise Leviathan. Hobbes is regarded as the founder of Liberalism. He considered that in a state-of-nature, “man” has freedom. But by leaving the state-of-nature, “man” makes a social contract. He sought a rational, scientific basis rather than a religious one for his conclusions with secularism at the heart. The social contract requires that “man” gives up his “natural” freedom in exchange for other freedoms that allow him to realize his full potential as a human being, allowing him to have “human rights” which he could not realize without social contract.

John Locke, 1632-1704 exerted considerable influence over the Founding Fathers in his philosophy. He accepted Hobbes state-of-nature and social contract theories. However, he felt all men were subject to the law, including the monarch. He believed in a government of law rather than men and social equality. He felt the social contract assured the best approach for every citizen to find the best means for self-preservation. Universality and reciprocity characterize Locke’s idea of the social contract.

Adam Smith, 1723-1790, set forth that general wellbeing is related to economic wellbeing. He was to set the stage for free market economics.

All of these ideas became fundamental principles in The Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. The principles adhered to here are known as “Classical Liberalism” which differs from today’s notion of Liberalism but is close to today’s Conservatism. Woolsey felt that today’s disparaging remarks about Liberalism, therefore, are surprising. The French Revolution, which followed the American revolution, was in itself a triumph for “Liberalism,” even though it also held significant differences.

It is not clear how Jean Jacques Rousseau, 1712-1778, influenced the French Revolution, but he is closely linked to the ideologies of Hobbes and Locke. He felt that complete freedom can only be achieved by freedom for all, including slave and master, as the social contract must be universal. He, thereby, reinforced the theory of secularism. He believed in popular sovereignty and the people’s right of revolution. He saw the voice of the people as the voice of God. But departing from earlier theories, he felt that freedom was a primary human value that gives humans the capacity for compassion. He saw civil society as a corrupting force for which the social contract compensated. By entering the social contract people merged “individual will” into “general will,” which is much more powerful, without losing any aspect of the state-of-nature freedom. Since general will includes every citizen, it is always just.

Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau exerted their influence over other philosophers. For instance, Karl Marx, 1818-1883, adopted Rousseau’s notion of collectivism. Immanuel Kant, 1724-1804, expanded Rousseau’s “General Will” to include “all men” and thus forged a foundation for cosmopolitanism that would include all nations. Kant felt that since history is continual progress, “General Will” will bring about ongoing peace. Further, people do not change but laws do, and he set forth a “moral imperative.”

Woolsey indicated that since Kant, mainstream philosophical principles have basically remained the same in modern times. Francis Fukuyama, born 1952, wrote about The End of History, Kant in 1804, having given birth to Modern Liberalism. Alexis de Tocqueville, 1805-1859, indicated that gradual progress of equality is something fated. The plight of workers encouraged communism. Exploitation of workers caught everyone’s attention and led to a breakdown of the
system, and Liberalism developed into Modern Liberalism or Socialism.

The ideologies of Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, and Kant are at the base of Modern or Social Liberalism. The expanding notion of government includes women’s vote and the Civil Rights Movement. According to the Encyclopedia Britannica “the point of government is to remove the obstacles that stand in the way of individual freedom,” namely poverty, disease, discrimination, and ignorance. These “individuals could overcome only with positive assistance from the government.”

In this respect, government programs, such as free public school education, workman’s compensation, unemployment benefits, health insurance, minimum wage, etc., were introduced to be funded by graduated income tax and inheritance tax. The next step in this progression is globalization.

February 25, 2017

Education by Democracy
Presented by Evelyn D. Klein

The education debate continues in America, particularly when topics like test scores, the education gap, technology, violence in the schools and others surface. Nearly everyone who has an opinion joins the conversation. Yet we rarely consider the complexities involved in educating a diverse student population.

Unlike in other occupations, where professional expertise is paramount, the expertise of educational professionals, such as teachers and educators working in the classroom, is frequently not enlisted on a decision-making level. As education changed its approach over the last several decades, laws and trends, such as integration through busing, outcome based education, and “No child left behind,” for example, have, had little effect on improving public school outcome. The latest approach proposed by the U.S. Department of Education promises to center around school choice, including private schools, charter schools, home schooling, and public schools. Interestingly, it is spear headed by a non-educator. The effectiveness of such a program has been called into question by Myron Orfield, leader of the University of Minnesota Law School’s Institute on Metropolitan Opportunity.

In a society that seems to be losing its edge on democracy beyond “free and fair elections,” excluding institutions, such as the public schools from democratic debate, according to Harry Boyte, Senior Fellow at the Humphrey School of Public Affairs, University of Minnesota, the question rarely posed: “What is the purpose of education?” bears asking.

Klein, discussed the ranking of the educational system’s structure, beginning at the top with the U.S. Department of Education, followed by the State Department of Education, community school boards, administration and, last, by teachers.

She pointed out that the high school functions much as a society within a society with its own rules, principles, and measures. Further, the complexities of education are many, involving teaching methods, changing curriculum, and a pedagogy that considers stages of development, attention span, learning styles, as well as individual needs of students, and social change. American public education, despite criticism, has much to offer in its student-centered approach.

What is needed is more public and organizational support for education and educators. To achieve our goals of educating the young for the 21st century, we need to consider that our student population is diverse, not only in ethnicity, race, religion, socio-economic levels but also in social class distinctions within groups as well as individual abilities, interests, aspirations and work habits. Therefore, expecting equal opportunity to equate equal outcome is an unrealistic ideal.

A way to reach more high school students for a positive educational outcome is to make them partners in their own education. Beyond basic school requirements and emphasis on math, science, technology, we need to include civics, world languages, the arts as well as skill based classes, such as shop and home arts and sciences.

Furthermore, students should have a choice whether to follow an academic or a vocational course and have choices within the given program.
Occupational counseling would help students identify and examine their own aptitudes and interests. School programs and classes on occupations and professions out in the workplace would offer students insights into what is available. We need, also, to tap into cultural diversity with programs and classes.

Problems in the public schools have prompted some school boards to include high school students to serve on the board, undoubtedly, a positive step. What is missing is the teachers, the licensed professionals. They need to be part of the ongoing discussion and decision-making process.

What is the purpose of education? Klein concluded that we need to educate students both for themselves and their own success as well as for the success of our democratic society.

March 25, 2017

East Side Freedom Library:
Producing Knowledge Outside Walls of Academia
Presented by Peter Rachleff

The East Side Freedom Library is located in the space of the former Arlington Hills Library on 1105 Greenbrier Street in the Payne-Phalen neighborhood in Saint Paul. It has been in operation for the past three years. The ESFL’s mission is to inspire “solidarity among people.” It advocates for racial and social justice and fairness.

The library grew out of Peter Rachleff’s desire to create a community institution in his neighborhood on the east side of Saint Paul. As a professor, Peter Rachleff came to think about the importance of the production of knowledge outside the walls of academia.

This wish became reality for Peter Rachleff and Beth Cleary, his partner, both educators, when they eventually launched the East Side Freedom Library on June 1, 2014. The purpose of the library is to “support educational and cultural programs that reflect the neighborhood’s historic character as home to immigrant workers, build bridges among its current residents, and raise its visibility in the Twin Cities.”

At the East Side Freedom Library, diverse people can come and access knowledge not otherwise available to do research and develop their own ideas.

For this reason, the library houses non-circulating research collections with appeal to general learners as well as to scholars. It is accessible with innovative data bases and search aids that make research easy and fun. A major theme of the ESFL is story-telling and the acquisition of stories through formal interviews, workshops, and public performances. All of this is intended to give local residents and the general public a better insight into residential histories of the East Side.

Current East Side Library collections include journals and books, records and works of art, as well as posters. The collection also includes smaller subsections, such as Chicano and Latino histories and South African political history. Among the main collections available are:

- U.S immigration history,
- Political-economic history, U.S. and global,
- African American and African diasporic history,
- Asian American and Asian history,
- Labor and working class history,
- Women’s history and feminism,
- Political philosophy,
- Jazz and radical music history,
- Historiography, including oral history.

Inspired by the stimulating discussion, MISF members present indicated an interest in a tour of the Freedom Library. It was decided it would take place sometime in the near future.
David Wesely introduced his talk by stating that the Greeks were the first to talk about fusion. After that, it was talked about in relationship to earth, fire, and water. But it was ancient alchemy which explained the workings of the elements. In the nineteenth century scientists began to determine how elements interact with each other.

It was determined that atoms are the smallest unit of an element, consisting of a dense, central, positively charged nucleus surrounded by a system of electrons and protons. As they run into each other, they form a cluster, and for the most part, remain undivided. The neutrons shield the electrons and protons from each other.

Wesely explained that isotopes consist of one or more atoms whose nuclei have the same number of protons but different numbers of neutrons. There are isotopes of many different kinds. These include hydrogen and helium. He explained that the heavy hydrogen and the five stable or two very long-lived isotopes of nickel will not produce helium or emit neutrons in the “cold fusion” experiments to date. The helium source is found underground in radiation. Uranium is used for pottery. Both radium and polonium are radioactive and glow in the dark.

Some elements bend to the left, called alpha, some bend to the right, called beta, and some go straight ahead and are called gamma. Polonium, as it decays, turns into lead and gives off alpha particles.

In the nineteenth century scientists felt we can get energy from radiation. And they commenced attempts to create energy. The first hydrogen fusion created a light helium 3. But tables of early nuclear fusion varied. Since there is a lot of hydrogen in the ocean, if we harness it, he felt, that would solve the power problem.

Polonium can absorb hydrogen in large amounts, but there was no fusion. Yet something is going on.

There was a new experiment with nickel. It also acts as a sponge for helium, and it is cheaper. It has more isotopes, 5 and 2 radioactive isotopes. Polonium has 6 isotopes and one radioactive isotope. There are 14 possible nuclear reactions with nickel. These could result from seven different isotopes of nickel that could be present in an experiment. He discussed the fusion products and gamma radiation energies expected for each reaction. He focused on the “cold fusion” process with deuterium and nickel isotopes.

He concluded that only a small number of people work on cold fusion, because it is such a long process.

Mr. Wesely received his B.S. in physics from Hamline University in 1967 and his M.S. in High Energy Physics from the University of Kansas in 1969. He is a retired Medtronic firmware engineer. He was accompanied by three photographers who videotaped his presentation.

May 27, 2017

Poetry Day
Featuring River Maria Urke and Morgan Grayce Willow

Poetry Day at MISF featured two compelling poets, each in their own realm, warmly welcomed by the members present and moderated by Evelyn Klein.

River Maria Urke read from her first book length manuscript entitled “Spirit Song.” In this manuscript the poet took listeners on a reflective journey of her Indian-American heritage. She read from the sections entitled “Forgotten Roots” and “Red Brick Road.” One of the poems in the latter was titled “Wild Ginger with a Side of Academia,” a light-hearted allusion to the two worlds she inhabits. In her favorite poem, “Footsteps,” she describes how she lives between two realities, wearing “one moccasin and one Italian leather boot.” She also read about her
grandmother, Nokomis, Nokomis meaning grandmother in the Ojibwe language.

River explained that she is also a multi-media artist and does art along with her poetry. She used to belong to a women’s hand drum group in Duluth, where she was born.

In the section “Culture Clash,” she talks about the wound within the heart of the spirit. Reading from her poem “Message to Standing Rock,” she explained the line “They don’t stand a chance to break you down.” Her poem “Eagle Eye” is a painting, too, as many of her paintings connect to her art installations and dream catchers.

Morgan Grayce Willow read from different works. First, she read from a poetry anthology about resistance, entitled Resist Much, Obey Little. She shared the poem “Driving Home to Garfield Street in Minneapolis,” about immigrants and their contributions.

She is currently working on a fourth collection of poetry, where poems strike her like “children behaving like kindergarteners on the first day of school.” A case in point was the poem “Mercury.” The working title of the new collection is “Oddly Enough.” Some of the poems in that collection were “Now Then,” “When Nouns Leave Us,” “Owner’s Manual,” and “Numbers.” In “Numbers,” she explores her relationship with numbers which primarily rests in her every-day need for computing.

The poet explained she, too, is inspired by different arts and read the musician inspired poem, “The Violins Are Dancing,” where three small violins begin to dance to the cello.

Morgan brought some of her books for display and purchase, including Dodge & Scramble, Between, Silk, The Maps Are Words and the anthology, Resist Much, Obey Little.

The reading was well received, as evidenced by the enthusiastic comments, questions and answers that followed.

An Open Reading constituted the last part of the program. Four members and two guests participated in the open reading that found equal favor with the audience. For everyone present, the program was an enriching, inspiring event, as evidenced by continuing conversations afterwards.

Upcoming

Thursday, August 3, 2017, 7:00 p.m.
Art Hot and Cold: Works that Reflect Nature’s Moods and Human Temperament
Led by: Bob Brusic, MIA Docent
The theme was inspired by the Robert Frost poem, “Fire and Ice.” We will consider works as diverse as the sun that burns and the snows that chill.
Participants are asked to gather 10 or so minutes before the hour of 7:00 pm in the lobby by the book store. About a dozen or so works will fill the hour with an opportunity for coffee and conversation afterwards.

Saturday, August 26, 2017, 11:00-2:00 p.m.
Picnic in the Park
Meet at Cherokee Park along the Mississippi River at the small shelter. Bring a dish to share. Help us celebrate summer by getting to know fellow MISF members in a more informal setting and in adventures in eating!

Saturday, September 23, 2017
To Be or Not to Be – Historical Costume Design
Lecturer: Virgil C. Johnson
This lecture will discuss the play, The War of Roses, the central theme of kingship and the dramatic imagination necessary to create a ‘world for these [kinds of] plays.’ ‘The challenge for me designing…costumes for famous plays of history was the director’s charge that the production should ‘look contemporary and historical.’ Researching British fashion of the early 15th century and current men’s wear seen on the fashion runways in Milan resulted in vibrant designs. The entire show was purchased and/or constructed. My designs came alive in fittings with input from actors and costume staff…”

Virgil C. Johnson, Professor Emeritus, Northwestern University, was costume designer for drama, opera, and musical theater for 45 years.
Saturday, October 28, 2017
Journey to a Lost Jewish World in Latvia and Lithuania
Lecturer: Tom Lewin
In August 2016, Tom Lewin journeyed to the Baltic State, the land of his forebears. This was the center of the Pale of Settlement and a land once rich in Jewish culture and civilization. He talked with Holocaust survivors, saw the Nazi killing fields, and the stark concrete buildings of the Soviet era. He found a land of declining population but with great roads, courtesy of EU financing. Antisemitism remains in a land physically much like Minnesota.

Tom Lewin escaped Berlin in 1939 and by 1945 found himself in Minnesota. He spent his career in the burglar and fire alarm industry.

Saturday, November 18, 2017
Conservation on the Northern Plains: New Perspectives
Lecturer: Anthony J. Amato and Presenters: Joe Amato, Bill Hoffman
The presenters and panel challenge widespread assumptions about people and nature, reframing understandings of both in the process. In the plains they seek people, places, and stories that define conservation.

In addressing conservation’s reach, they reflect on the ordinary, the extraordinary, and the spaces in between, covering species ranging from horses to honeybees and from pheasants to wolves. This is a call to revisit conservation and re-engage in discussions of use and the environment. Conservation issues in eight states and Canada are considered, giving special attention to Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Montana, North Dakota South Dakota, and Wyoming.

Anthony J. Amato is an Associate Professor in the Social Science Department at Southwest Minnesota State University. He received his PhD from Indiana University. His papers have been delivered at national and international conferences, and his publications have appeared in national and international books and journals. He is editor of the book, Conservation on the Northern Plains: New Perspectives, 2017.

Joe Amato is a frequent contributor to MISF programs, poet and author of numerous books on a wide range of subjects. He will provide perspective on the history of conservation in the late 19th and 20th centuries.

Bill Hoffman is a writer and editor at the University of Minnesota and works in the stem cell lab. He will discuss, Raymond Lindeman, Minnesota founder of ecology based on energy.

In the Fall 2017, beginning with the September program, MISF programs, will be held at the North Regional Library, 1315 Lowry Ave. N., Minneapolis, MN 55411, while our regular meeting place, the Washburn Library, is being renovated. We begin gathering at 9:30 a.m.; meetings start at 10:00 a.m. with a brief business meeting first. Programs are free and open to the public.
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