



Five Colleges Learning In Retirement

Peer-led Lifelong Learning in the Pioneer Valley

Amherst College - Smith College - Hampshire College - UMASS Amherst - Mount Holyoke College

July 2022 LIR Newsletter

Letter from New LIR President



Dear Fellow Learners,

I am writing this in anticipation of becoming your new president on July 1. While I am delighted to assume that role, there is another title that I much prefer: learner. I have enjoyed that role for many years, and it is one I am privileged to share with each of you. How fortunate we are to continue to explore new fields, new ideas, and new takes on both new and familiar tropes. As T.H. White has Merlin say to his young student, Arthur, "...the best thing...is to learn something. That's the only thing that never fails."

What could be better than an organization dedicated to learning? I look forward to working together and with our community to continue to support and expand opportunities for active, self-directed, peer-led learning.

Our programs and our activities depend on you, our member volunteers. Volunteers who organize a party like the one at Look Park earlier this month. Volunteers who have ideas for seminars you have recently signed up for. Volunteers who collect, codify, and support all those seminars. Volunteers who produce our newsletter and who get the good news about LIR to the public. Volunteers who arrange special events, Encore programs, summer and winter programs, Great Decisions. And volunteers who look after our organization as elected Council members and officers.

We all will need to draw on that energy and commitment while we ride out the hiatus between office managers. We can do so knowing that we are emerging from the disruptions of Covid stronger than ever. We are committed to continuing to offer Zoom seminars for housebound and far-flung members, to explore hybrid seminars, and to resume in-person seminars. Our numbers are strong, and finances strongly backed.

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Let me close by thanking President Tyll van Geel and Past President Nancy Denig, from whom I have spent this year learning all about what is behind the green curtain. They have been outstanding mentors of my apprenticeship. The continuity of leadership provided by the "presidential triumvirate" will now include the new vice president, Michael Miller. I look forward to working with our officers, Council, committees, and YOU. Please let me hear from you any time. at francieborden@gmail.com

Francie Borden

LIR OFFICE ANNOUNCEMENT

The LIR office will be closed for the Summer, however you can reach us at admin@5clir.org, if you have any issues we will get back to you as quickly as possible. During this period, email is going to be the most reliable way to reach the LIR Office. Thank you!

Short Summer Seminar Offerings

LIR's summer programs are proving to be popular. The sessions will all be on Zoom. Registration is available on the LIR website under Programs.

The summer offerings opened on June 24 with a workshop on finding information on the Internet, led by Larry Ambs.

The six-week session on participants' stories of the **Feminist Movement**, starting July 6, filled up nearly two weeks ago. Finnegan Alford-Cooper and Bonnie Strickland are leading the program.

Lise Armstrong will moderate "**Sound and Sense: the Poetry of Robert Frost**," which will take place on July 11, 14, 18 and 21 from 2-4 pm. Each participant will be responsible for one to three poems of their own choosing. An optional meeting will be a visit to the Robert Frost collection at Amherst's Jones Library. If you are interested in the **Sound and Sense** seminar, please contact Lise ASAP in order to enroll directly.

Lise is also offering an open-book discussion of Frankenstein on August 25 at 2 pm. Up to six people are invited to join the August meeting of the Reading the Classics book group. Frankenstein is available online. Lise asks that anyone with questions may contact her by phone or email.

In "Opera Areas," participants will choose their favorite aria, either from youtube.com or a music app, to share with the group, describing the plot and sharing the aria on screen. This will be offered on August 8, 10 and 12 at 10 am, by Katy van Geel.

Five College Library Update



IMPORTANT DATES

All Five College Libraries are updating their computer systems this summer. This will change how you access the Library systems. It should have a positive impact on your Library experience. Please see some important dates and a new usage policy below:

June 26: Last day to check out physical items (such as books and DVDs) at libraries as well as the Five College Library Annex before circulation activity is paused. Self-checkout kiosks and the Smith Libraries Self Checkout app will be unavailable during this period as well. Checkouts will resume on July 5.

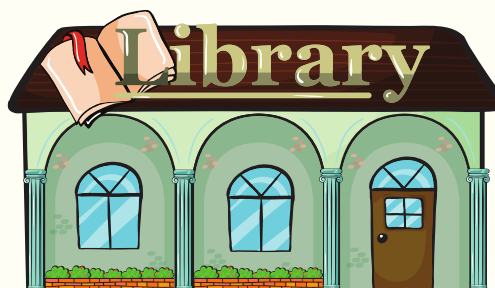
June 30: Migration from Aleph to FOLIO is complete.

July 5: Circulation of physical materials resumes at Smith and throughout the Five Colleges.

To Access all Five College Resources after July 5th:

Choose your home library, this will be the Library that you find most convenient for you to access.

- At the Circulation Desk, present the 5CLIR membership card that clearly displays your name and expiration date for your membership. (cards are sent upon payment of Dues)
- The librarian will use this to create your account with the Library and you will have full borrowing privileges, the same privileges that alumni or staff members have.
- You will be provided with instructions to create a username and password so that you can search the database and request books via the online account, which will then be placed on hold to be picked up at the 'Home' Library.
- In consideration of Library access being a benefit of Membership, the access expires with the expiration date on the 5CLIR Membership Card, which means that the access will now be open for an entire year, as opposed to the 3 months that it used to be.



Council Corner

The LIR Council had its monthly meeting on June 9 with a sizeable attendance of 17 people.

I'll begin a little out of order. Catharine Porter stated that the Social Events Committee was delighted with the turnout at the Look Park get-together (55 people attended). Despite the rain, people came and enjoyed the opportunity to be together. If you were there, you know that a good time was had by all. Catharine thanked Nancy Clune for the idea and Mindi Winter for providing materials and assistance.

Back to the beginning. Our new year begins July 1, with Francie Borden as our new president. She has asked for a July Council meeting (a month normally skipped) with the only agenda being to meet-and-greet the new officers and members of Council. The idea was enthusiastically accepted.

Gene Fisher reported what we already knew, that LIR will have a deficit for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2022. Fortunately, despite that, we are in a very good financial position.

Summer seminars are rapidly filling up, so be sure to register if you don't want to miss out.

Encore presentations will continue on Zoom this coming Fall.

The experiment with the hybrid format is a work in progress. Kip Fonsh brought up the issue of the cost of gasoline, which is not likely to abate anytime soon, and which is a reason to consider continuing Zoom or hybrid seminars going forward.

Bruce Brewer reported that attendance at Great Decisions was down a bit this year, and he and his committee will be working on ways to bring it back up next year.

Kay Klausewitz reported that through the Look Park event, the Outreach Committee has attracted several new members. Outreach is working on several ways to increase our membership.

Larry Ambs' summer program on searching the Internet could be a benefit for those of you who want to be better able to find good information to include in your seminar presentations.

Mindi's report was heartening. We have had a significant number of members return since COVID. Some fall seminars are full, some are growing. Thus far there has been no need to use the lottery system, so everyone should be happy with their placements. After July 6, LIR members will be able to get a library card good at all of the five college libraries, which is a great convenience. BTW, some folks have registered for classes without yet renewing their membership. If you have not done so, please be sure to complete your registration on the LIR website.

The ad hoc Strategic Planning Committee has produced a report that should be out shortly. Members can look forward to examining the ways the committee has suggested for long-term improvement and growth of LIR.

Since this is the end of our fiscal year, numerous officers and committee members are stepping down. They will no doubt continue to be deeply involved in the work of LIR, but we need others to step up to take their places. LIR is a dynamic organization and needs your commitment to thrive.

Stay tuned.
Bob Cohen

FALL REGISTRATION UPDATE

Change in location:

- 22F-NDN will be on Zoom rather than Applewood

Seminars are Canceled:

- 22F-JAH
- 22F-WAS

Seminars that are full:

- 22F-BDL
- 22F-IPT
- 22F-WTRP
- 22F-EMM
- 22F-DEC
- 22F-NDN
- 22F-WTRB
- 22F-LAC

2023 Executive Committee Members

At the annual meeting, the LIR membership elected the following to represent the membership for the following year as the Executive Committee. This team will lead LIR for the membership year of 2023. Due to the leadership succession plan for the president, it is a pleasure to introduce Michael Miller as vice president/president-elect as he joins this committee.

Missing from this list is Tyll van Geel, who as past president will serve his final year in leadership on the Executive Committee and Council to help Francie and Michael transition into their leadership roles.



Francie Borden, President

A civic meeting about the Mill River in Florence was the start of Francie's involvement in LIR. Member Gail Gaustad "introduced herself to me, saying 'you sound like you would be a great match'" for the organization. Francie looked up LIR online, attended the next preview, and has been active ever since.

She joined the Social Events Committee ("I loved meeting new LIR members at the coffee and on Zoom"), then joined the Curriculum Committee, chairing it with Kathy Campbell. Later she was elected to the Council and served as vice president last year.

A resident of Haydenville, Francie is a member of Williamsburg's Mill River Greenway Committee.

She and her husband Ken, with rescue dog Guthrie, moved to the Valley eight years ago when they retired from administrative and teaching roles at the Kildonan School in Amenia, New York, a school for children with dyslexia. Earlier, Francie was involved in starting an elementary "free" school on Long Island.



Michael Miller, Vice President/President-elect

A resident of Florence, Michael began to volunteer on LIR committees not long after joining the organization in 2019. He has served on the Encore Committee, Technology Committee, and the Strategic Planning Task Force, which conducted a survey this past year on membership demographics and came up with recommendations for increasing membership and involvement in LIR.

Michael has moderated and co-moderated several courses. He and Bob Cohen will lead a seminar in the fall on the evolution of flight, which has the whimsical name of "Somewhere Over the Rainbow."

A biologist, Michael taught at several universities and medical schools.

2023 Executive Committee (continued)



Gene Fisher, Treasurer

Gene's term on the Council was wrapping up two years ago when an appeal went out that LIR needed an assistant treasurer. "I volunteered," he said. He served in the role for two years and was elected this spring as treasurer of the organization.

He moved to Amherst in 1984 to join the Sociology Department at UMass, eventually focusing on research methods and statistics. It was a colleague in the department, LIR member Chris Hurn, who told him about LIR.

He has moderated numerous courses since joining in 2016. Most of his seminar interests have been politics and the Bible.



Roger Webb, Assistant Treasurer

Roger left his home in Surrey, England, for a job in the US 44 years ago, writing software for a company he co-founded in Ludlow. He thought he would be here for a year or two, but "I never got around to leaving," he said. He later left to start his own software company, Cimex, in Belchertown.

Now an Amherst resident, Roger has been an LIR member for six years, taking seminars on history, economics and science.

An admitted "numbers guy," he has volunteered as treasurer for several organizations, including the Amherst Club. He is now treasurer of the Center for New Americans.



Darcy Johnson, Secretary

Learning of LIR from a friend, Darcy joined LIR in the spring of 2020, the last semester before all classes were moved to Zoom. A year later, she volunteered to serve as secretary. Now she's signed on for another year. She is also a member of the Curriculum Committee.

In addition to those responsibilities, she has signed up for three courses in the fall, one in person and two on Zoom.

Darcy moved from Plum Island in Newburyport to Northampton in 2018, retiring from her job as administrator of the Office of Public Guardian in Concord, New Hampshire. The nonprofit provides services for adults who are legally incapacitated.

An ordained interfaith chaplain, Darcy serves at weddings, baby blessings and memorial services.

Member Spotlight - Linda Honan

Three years ago, Linda Honan organized a special program on Edith Wharton for Five College Learning in Retirement.

The program included three lectures at Applewood and Loomis retirement communities, ending with a lunch and a garden tour at The Mount, Wharton's home. The featured speaker was well-known architectural historian Richard Guy Wilson from the University of Virginia, whose expenses were picked up by LIR.

"The gardens are a large part of the interest at The Mount," Linda said. "But they had been let go to almost nothing."

The Mount brought in a team from The University of Massachusetts-Amherst, who excavated the gardens that had been designed by Beatrix Farrand, who also designed the carriage roads at Acadia National Park. By the time of the Five Colleges lecture series that Linda had arranged, the restoration of The Mount was complete.

The timing of the lecture series was vital for Linda. She had begun to experience problems that steadily morphed into kidney failure. Now on dialysis three days a week, Linda's life has been flipped by treatments that leave her weak and exhausted.

Her ordeal has not dampened her enthusiasm for Learning in Retirement.

"I am teaching myself American history because I never learned it," said Linda, who was born in Ireland. She has led seminars on the writings of presidents and vice presidents, the musical "Hamilton" by Lin-Manuel Miranda, and this fall is offering a seminar called "Rationalism in American Religion."

That seminar "is something that interests me and has for a long time," she said.

"The title is a bit unappealing, and would probably put anyone off," Honan acknowledged. "But I think we can still have a good discussion, and so we are doing it."

The seminar will explore several books, including Thomas Paine's *The Age of Reason*, William Ellery Channing's *Unitarian Christianity*, Amy Kittelstrom's *The Religion of Democracy: the American Reformation and the Making of Modern Liberalism*, and Thomas Jefferson's *The Life and Morals of Jesus of Nazareth* – also called Jefferson's Bible.

"In his older years," Linda said of Jefferson, "he took six early translations of the Bible and compared them." He removed everything miraculous from the text, any mention of the resurrection, the virgin birth, or the raising of the dead.

"This is what (Jefferson) actually believed and wanted us to know," she said.

Linda calls herself a Catholic Church "dropout" and Unitarian. "I like the idea of a church that lets you think whatever you want, and respects other religions" she said. "And now that I am one, I like it very much."

David Whitney



Look Park Get-Together, June 1st

Close to 60 members attended the June 1 get-together at Look Park. For many, it was the first opportunity to greet members in person after the pandemic shut down classes and events 26 months ago. Thanks to Nancy Clune and Catharine Porter of the Social Events Committee for organizing the event, and thanks to Katy van Geel for taking photographs.



Ken Borden (in the blue jacket), Seth Eiseman and his wife, Erica Hollister, and (far right) Darcy Johnson



Diane Liebert left, and Cat Batson



Susan Lewandowski, left, and Signia Warner



The incoming and outgoing Presidents, Francie Borden and Tyll van Geel



Jim Lee, from left, Tyll van Geel, and Larry Ambs