



Rudolf Steiner Library Transition Update • Fall 2014



LIBRARY STEERING COMMITTEE
Maurice York – Project Manager
Marian Leon – Director of Administration
Virginia McWilliam – General Council

LIBRARY STAFF
Judith Kiely – Interim Librarian
Seth Jordan – Transition Manager



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At the Annual General Meeting in Keene, NH, in October of 2013, the General Council of the Anthroposophical Society in America (ASA) considered a proposal to provide financial resources to the Rudolf Steiner Library to begin a transition project that was defined by two parallel paths: the move of the existing main collection of materials from the Carriage House in Harlemlville, NY to a temporary facility where much-needed care and repair of the collection could be accomplished; and an envisioning process for a programmatic expansion of the services of the library to encompass a higher level of engagement with the membership, expanded support of the mission of the ASA, and greater partnership with anthroposophical daughter movements and initiatives. Following the AGM, the General Council approved the necessary resources to support the transition project for one year and delegated project oversight to the Library Steering Committee, with Maurice York as project manager, Virginia McWilliam as General Council Representative, and Marian Leon as the Society Administrative Representative. This document gives a brief progress report for the last year, an updated vision and goals for the library, and a proposed governance and financial model for the future sustainability of the library.

The report weaves together a number of themes that create a picture of what the library has accomplished over the last nine months, and the promise for what is to come.

- *Progress.* The collection is secure and stable in a facility that affords the proper tools for repair, conservation, preservation organization, and digitization. The majority of the collection materials—books, journals, pamphlets, manuscripts—have been treated and cared for to ensure long-term access and use.
- *Community engagement.* Through conscientious engagement, the relationship with the local community has been nurtured into one of active engagement with and investment in the future of the library. The library has new visibility and connection not only with the membership of the Society, but with the broader anthroposophical community. In particular, a strong link is being forged with the youth.
- *Vision and Partnerships.* The new vision for the library, described in this document, has attracted interest and conversation with a wide variety of individuals and organizations—including the Sections, several branches, BD and AWSNA, Camp Hill, Steiner Books, the Societies in Canada, Great Britain, and Ireland, and numerous others—creating promising opportunities for new partnerships to support the intended future.
- *Archives and Research.* The current archival collections have been stabilized, organized, and secured. A major acquisition of a new archive—the Ehrenfried Pfeiffer papers—is working towards completion, and opportunities for acquiring further archives are developing.

As the library staff have pushed forward in these areas, they have also encountered numerous challenges and changing conditions that have required them to adapt and change strategies throughout the course of the year, including an accelerated move timeline in order to sell the old Carriage House; the discovery of unexpected conditions and incomplete repairs, with a challenging landlord, in the new facility; an unanticipated and urgent push to remove a portion of the collection that had carried mildew from the old building; early challenges with recruiting volunteers in the

first half of the year; and the final push to resume lending and research activities this fall. Any one or two of these events could have been absorbed by the original plan and timeline for the project, but taken together they have required such a quantity of focused effort from a small staff that the library is short of achieving the goal that was set out a year ago last October, to be finished with the transition and repair project by December 2014.

Despite the challenges and expenses that we have encountered, the library is operating within budget. The many projects that make up the transition work are strong and on track towards completion, but they are on hold while we focus on the priority of resuming the lending operations. Once lending resumes, the project work will necessarily move at a slower pace as it shares time with the public operations; yet the project completion targets are all within sight.

Over the course of the last year, the library has seeded many conversations. Those seeds, full of potential for growth, are being tended with care. The enthusiasm from the community—the whole community, including the membership proper and extending beyond—is palpable, and the library is poised to engage, yet cautious to promise too much until the transition is complete and the collection and staff are once again firm on their feet. The roots that have begun to spread in the year past are strengthening and enlivening; we look forward to seeing the first green shoots in the year to come.

PROGRESS TO DATE

The Rudolf Steiner Library is well on its way into a bright new future. A great deal of imagination and effort has gone into the recent work at the library, with much remaining to be done. We are grateful for the thought, generosity, and effort that have come toward the library over the past several months. The Library's progress has been strong, and our plans for the future are robust.

The increased financial support from the Society has of course been the key pillar supporting the successes of the last year, but the library has received strong additional support directly from the membership. Last winter, in its annual appeal, the ASA sent out a call for financial assistance to bring much-needed aid to the national library, then housed in Harlemlville, NY. As the appeal went out to members' mailboxes, library staff and volunteers were hard at work planning a move of the collection from the old Carriage House in Harlemlville to a brick church in Philmont, NY, just a few miles away, that had been vacant for many years. Hearing the need, the membership responded with great strength to help preserve this unique jewel, created by Society librarian Fred Paddock over the course of thirty years and lovingly tended over the last decade by librarians Judith Soleil and Judith Kiely, along with a cohort of dedicated volunteers from the local community.

The response to the appeal was warm and wholehearted. We received 273 gifts, for a total of \$22,780. This support is critical to the work at hand, and we are grateful for the generosity of our donors. Even as members sent in their contributions and support, the books began to move to their new home in Philmont; the significant accomplishments of the move are documented in the video posted at <http://bit.ly/rsllibrarymove>. The outpouring from the appeal has been crucial to the

success of the library in the eight months since the move, helping to offset the many expenses of preparing an appropriate environment for this valuable collection and beginning the work of care and repair.

The contributions from the membership went directly into the immediate needs of the library—preparation and upkeep of the building, book shelving, environmental control and security, book repair equipment, preservation supplies, furniture and work surfaces, updated computers and network equipment, and support for the staff and volunteers who have poured their time and energy into the task of renewing the library. As a Society, as a community, this is the work that we have enjoyed—the care and renewal of this precious resource so that it may become a seed for a new flowering of the living study of anthroposophy.

Progress Report, January through October 2014

The library newsletter sent to the membership in August drew a picture of what the library staff and volunteers have been able to accomplish in just nine months since the books moved to their new home in Philmont. With great hope, we look forward to what the future will bring as we continue the repair work, start to collect new and important archival materials, form new partnerships, and prepare to resume lending services to the membership.

The library is on track to reopen and resume local lending and research services beginning October 31st of this year; national lending by mail will resume by mid-November. The path towards reopening has been defined by energetic and sustained efforts in several areas, including repair and conservation; collection organization; stabilizing and growing the archives; and community engagement.

REPAIR AND CONSERVATION

The conservation of the book collection consists of two parallel efforts: cleaning the books, which encompasses every book in the collection; and repair, which targets those items in very poor condition. Book cleaning consists of vacuuming, erasing writing in pencil, and mitigating the musty smell when needed. To date, we have finished cleaning books by Steiner from “Agriculture” through “Theosophy”; as of late summer, about 200 hours of vacuuming remained to clean the rest of the collection. A call for volunteers in early September brought commitments that filled all of the needed hours to make the final push on cleaning. Book repair focuses on those items that need intervention to rebuild broken spines, tighten loose hinges, reinforce damaged corners, and repair a variety of other maladies. Although the books by Steiner comprise about 20% of the collection, they are the most heavily used and in need of repair. Over 130 books have been treated to date, with another 650 identified as needing repair.

For journals, pamphlets, and typescripts, the conservation work consists primarily of moving the materials to archive-quality, non-acidic folders and boxes. The progress on this significant part of the collection includes:

- Typescript re-folding. Completed work to transfer and re-label 2800 copies of English translations of Steiner lectures and essays. Work is now in progress on the remaining 3000 articles by other authors.
- Pamphlet binding. Completed rebinding 450 out of 1600 booklets and pamphlets of lectures by Steiner and other authors. Pamphlet rebinding consists of removing old staples and re-sewing the signature into an acid-free pamphlet binder.
- Journal rehousing. The library's journal collection consists of over 200 current and archival periodical titles. Our preservation work with the periodicals includes removing the journals from their old acidic enclosures, sorting out duplicates, cataloging, re-housing the journals in new acid-free boxes, and printing non-acidic box labels. Approximately half of this work has been completed. Once we have re-boxed and cataloged all the English anthroposophical journals, we will send them out to be scanned for inclusion in an Internet archive.

COLLECTION ORGANIZATION

The availability of the library's holdings in the online catalog has overcome perhaps the single most significant barrier to access and use of the collection, yet a portion of the materials remained uncataloged before the move, and much of the conservation work described above required some form of cataloging work. Since the beginning of the year, library staff have cataloged 2000 items, including books, articles by anthroposophical authors, and individual issues of periodicals. A half-dozen drawers of articles are yet to be cataloged, along with several shelves of older books, and many of the periodicals. Newly purchased editions of Steiner's works, in progress this fall, will need to be cataloged as well.

Beyond the cataloging of library materials, the physical arrangement of the books and journals in the Carriage House presented several challenges to those who wished to browse the collection, as well as volunteers who worked to fill requests for mailing. Most visitors to the library needed a guide through the stacks to find what they were looking for, and because of space constraints as the collection grew, common topical areas or related journals could be on different floors of the building. The books came to the new building in much the same order they had stood. As a final preparation for opening, in the final weeks of October, a large-scale shift of the whole collection will arrange the books for easy browsing and retrieval.

STABILIZING AND GROWING THE ARCHIVES

The manuscript papers held by the library, forming the smallest part of the collection, are the most valuable, yet received a small share of attention in the old Carriage House as the bulk of limited staff time went towards the use of the published lending materials. These unique and irreplaceable research materials form the heart of a new direction for the library as we begin to focus on building the memory of anthroposophy in America by the making these unpublished fruits available as seeds for new research. As a start on this effort, library staff preserved and protected 35 file boxes of archival materials, including the papers of Henry Monges and Henry Barnes. The papers were re-folded in preservation-quality folders, placed in new, non-acidic boxes, and brought to a climate-controlled facility in Poughkeepsie, NY, where they will be processed by an expert archivist.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community engagement has been a particular focus for the library over the past year, and in the last few months in particular. The relationship between the Society and the local community in the Berkshire-Taconic region, which had become tense as the question of how to solve the challenges of the library played out over several years, has been turned towards productive partnership. The local branch became immediately engaged in the task of finding a permanent home for the collection, and has poured great time and energy into the search for a building, while also engaging with the question of how to partner with the library to find a new ownership and sustainability model for the facility.

Beyond the immediate community that has hosted the library for thirty years, the broader anthroposophical community has engaged with the inspiration for a network of lending libraries across the country, with both digital and physical collections hosted and managed by the Rudolf Steiner Library. The practical structure for this network and how it would operate will be presented in the coming months, but the concept has resonated with each group and individual that has heard it through dozens of conversations and meetings over the last six months. Such a network of library branches would necessarily need a central hub to coordinate the overall collections, lending activity, programs, and digital initiatives. The Berkshire-Taconic Branch, as the long-time host of the national library, was presented with the opportunity to play a significant role in the larger future of the library by hosting the central branch, or to step back from its long labor and become a smaller node in the national network. The Branch, enrolled in the future vision and energetic to help achieve it, stepped forward to partner with the library in the planning and feasibility study for the new hub.

Other accomplishments in community engagement include the collaborations that have begun to form with partners as diverse as Steiner Books and the Society of Ireland. One example of these promising partnership conversations developed with the Camphill Academy, a credit-bearing educational program that is starting up this fall, with ambitions to extend to numerous Camphill communities in the next few years. The teachers and students for the Academy need better access to books to support the curriculum, which lead to a conversation about how the Academy and the Library could productively partner, first through the established lending system and eventually, as the program grows, through establishing libraries alongside the Academy locations that could also provide services to the entire community where the Academies are located. Another marked success has been engagement and enrollment of the Youth in the work of the library and the potential for its future. In July of this year, the library hosted a Youth workweek immediately following the Youth InPower Conference, which took place in Spring Valley, NY. A report on the week—the handwork with repairing the books, the spiritual study, the deepening of community that took place—is included in the library newsletter for August.

Seed Initiatives

The concept of an extended network of library branches across the country is intended to become the foundation of new programs and initiatives, hosted through the library, that will enrich the membership, the Sections, and the initiatives. The goals for library of the future are presented in

this report in brief form. While the focus in this first year of the new library, out of necessity, has been on the existing physical holdings in the main collection, library staff have been able to start seeding several of the initiatives that will blossom through as the network starts to grow. These include building up the archives, which has seen a major advancement this year by securing a commitment from Threefold to give the Ehrenfried Pfeiffer papers to the library; recording oral histories from anthroposophists who are entering the final phase of life in order to build a living memory of anthroposophy in America; and starting conversations with Branches and communities that have small book collections already and those who are in need of book collections in order to start pilot projects for how to create regional library branches.

VISION AND GOALS

The following is the working vision for the library, that has emerged from open engagement, conversation, and input from the membership, representatives of the Collegium, partners in the daughter movements and initiatives, and interested representatives of other national societies, including Canada, Great Britain, and Ireland. The vision is based in the tradition and established role of the library today, alignment of the library with the goals of the ASA, the insights of Fred Paddock into the nature of the library, and broader community conversations of the last several years since the question of the future of the library came before the General Council. Working from that foundation, the vision folds in the context of the state of anthroposophy in America today, the current and projected research and study needs of the membership and the broader anthroposophical community, and the state of the art in modern library science and library services. It is accompanied by four “first principles” that help define the nature of the library.

The Library creates a framework of services and collections that build capacities for a community of spiritual scientific research and activity in America. The Library serves Society members, anthroposophical practitioners, and all those who seek to understand the roots of human experience from a spiritual scientific point of view in order to realize the higher potential of the individual and of humanity.

PRINCIPLES

1. The library is open and accessible to anyone with interest.
2. The library’s services, community engagement, and collections are rooted in anthroposophical thought and practice.
3. The library cultivates a community of spiritual scientific research and discovery.
4. The library builds and maintains channels of thought to promote the insight necessary for an understanding of our times.

The first principle is an extension of a core tenet of the library espoused by Fred Paddock since he became responsible for the library in 1974—that the collection be embracive of the world and include numerous perspectives and voices beyond anthroposophy itself. To reflect the open aspirations of the Society itself, the library would remain, as it is now, open to anyone with interest in its materials and services.

The second principle simply states that as the library of the Anthroposophical Society, its collections and services will start with and be governed by anthroposophical thought and practice. However, as Fred Paddock's collection development principles state, the library will not end with the boundary of anthroposophy; it will be anchored by its anthroposophical roots, but be encouraged to continue to grow branches outwards into the world to bring all relevant topics, subject matter, and materials under its shade.

The third principle reaffirms the role of the library in defining a core purpose of the Society, to create and cultivate a community of spiritual scientific activity expressed in study, research, and discovery.

The fourth principle speaks to the last and perhaps most important of Fred Paddock's criteria for building the library collection, the selection of works that reveal the nature of our times and provide the basis for a dialog with the world that helps to clarify understanding of the current crises facing humanity and the spiritual forces that are active in them. This principle reaffirms the commitment of the library to encouraging and sustaining this fundamental dialog within and without of the Society.

The following goals and strategies outline the areas of activity that will enable the vision as a practical path forward for the library.

Library as Place

GOAL 1: *Expand the idea of the library to include a multiplicity of locations, services, and collections.*

Beyond the collection of the national library in New York, there are many anthroposophical collections throughout the country, some smaller and some more significant, in a variety of locations such as branches, homes, Camphill communities, closets, and basements. The job of the library is to assess, organize, and make these materials available to the whole community.

Administrative and Operational Organization

GOAL 2: *Create an organizational structure to support the expanded role and extended presence of the library.* The vision for a new library with expanded programs and services that deeply and broadly engage with the mission of supporting the research and study requires new thinking about organizational structure and greater financial security and independence.

Library Programs

GOAL 3: *Create a robust stream of programs and services that acts as a life-giving force to vitalize, connect, and organize the components of the Society and reach out to the extended community.* Once a network of libraries has been created to connect communities across the country, it can become a platform to extend a variety of study, research, and programming activities to a broad audience. The local presence of these branches and a robust suite of services can increase connectedness of individuals involved in many different aspects of anthroposophical life, and serve to increase interest, membership, and participation in the Society.

Research

GOAL 4: *Extend and deepen the portfolio of the library as a facilitator of research as well as a repository of knowledge through focused efforts to promote spiritual research throughout the Society and beyond.*

Collection Services

GOAL 5: *Create a network of services that promote the inner life and define the library as a national entity with a presence throughout the country, a consistent service promise, and consistent service experience.*

LIBRARY STAFF

It would be difficult to list the many people who have poured hours upon hours into the library transition effort. Below is a list of the key staff, volunteers, and friends who have been central to the effort over the last year.

STAFF

Judith Kiely – Interim Librarian
Seth Jordan – Transition Manager
Maurice York – Project Manager

SPECIAL PROJECTS ASSISTANTS

Book Repair, Preservation, Cataloging, and Special Collections

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WEEKLY VOLUNTEERS

Martin Miller
Ann Finucane
Joyce Gallardo
Caroline Gordon
Geraldine Olszewski

SPECIAL THANKS

The Berkshire-Taconic Branch of the ASA, especially the local Library Committee
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Basil and Christiana Williams
Nathaniel Williams and Free Columbia
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