When I was asked to serve as the president of the Friends of the Key West Library last winter, I was honored and thrilled. I love our little pink library and our dedicated and smart librarians, and I am crazy about the volunteer friends. I certainly didn’t imagine I’d be serving during a pandemic, with all normal life—including our meetings, lectures, and book sales, either postponed indefinitely or moved online. I will miss every one of these events this season, and especially the people who attend them!

One of the things that’s helped me survive the isolation and fear of the past months is finding a good book and letting the story carry me into a different world. My favorites this past year have been lighter books about strong women surviving hard times, including anything by Ann Cleeves, *The Bright Side Of Going Dark* by Kelly Harms, *The Vineyards Of Champagne* by Juliet Blackwell, Rhys Bowen’s *The Last Mrs. Summers*, and *The Henna Artist* by Alka Joshi—extra points for being set in another country without our nasty politics!

And that’s where our library comes in. Even though it’s been closed for normal business since July, the library’s work of sharing books and movies and author talks and children’s programs and talks about Key West history has continued. And that means the work of the Friends will carry on as well! We don’t know whether we’ll be able to hold book sales or in-person events, but we are planning a lecture series in some form and will keep you posted on all of that.

We appreciate each and every one of you for becoming a Friend. I truly hope that you and your families are surviving these difficult times with brave hearts and good books.

_Roberta Isleib_

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**Due to Covid-19, there will be no book sales in December or January.**

**February through April events are yet to be decided.**

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**AT THE LIBRARY**  
**by Michael Nelson**

For this short article, I’m going to pretend that the year 2020 doesn’t exist, like that season of Dallas which turned out to be one long peculiar dream, or prosaic nightmare. Or maybe a bit of both. However, this article is about time, and the good fortune of time well spent in preserving seasons long gone. In 1960, the Old Island Restoration Foundation was formed and began collecting historical documents and receiving grants to restore historic buildings in Key West. Painter Betty Bruce was primarily in charge of collecting records and materials, and as the collection grew, these historical documents were soon housed at the library. In the mid-1970’s, two wings were added to the original 1959 library building, and soon Betty Bruce was hired on as the first local historian to oversee the Florida History department.

In 1985, Bruce and the department added an invaluable member to the team in Tom Hambright. If you’re counting, and we are, this December marks the 35th anniversary of Hambright as a member of the Key West Public Library staff. A library, at its core, can only be as good as the people who run it, and no one is more precious to our staff than Tom. His dedication to preserving Key West’s unique and fascinating history...
Even during these stressful times, critical institutions such as our public library continue to provide much needed services to all residents. The need for funding is always present but the Friends’ donation of $50,000 this year is especially welcomed.

Roberta Isleib, president of the Friends of the Key West Library, says, “Our favorite Friends moment every year is the day we hand over the “big check” to our wonderful librarian. All dues and donations collected by the Friends as well as the proceeds of our book sales go directly to support the Key West Library. We have learned during this horrible pandemic time that both reading and staying connected help keep us sane, so that means our library is more important than ever.”

Librarian Michael Nelson reminds us that libraries are a microcosm of democracy, and this is particularly true during times of financial difficulty. “Libraries allow people of all income levels to have the same opportunity to read, have access to new information and get exposed to current and past culture. Supporting libraries is essential.”

Funds given by the Friends goes directly into building the library’s collection of books, eBooks, eAudiobooks and various feature films, documentaries and series available on Blu-ray or DVD. This includes materials for the Children’s department and items for the young adult population. The donation also helps further develop the Florida History department, which has been working extensively on the digitization of historical documents, photographs, and films, which is both costly and time-intensive, but enormously popular and extends the library’s reach to the entire nation.

The donation money also helps the library offer new eResources, such as Mango, which is a learning language application/program. The library started offering Mango in 2019 and it has proven especially popular with patrons who are learning English as a second language. There are approximately 70 different languages you can begin learning by using this resource. Another recent popular addition is the streaming service called Kanopy, which offers a plethora of independent cinema, documentaries, classics, world cinema, and The Great Courses, which offers the opportunity to view lectures by leading scholars on a number of fascinating topics.

For more information about the Key West Library and the enormous range of services that it offers, please visit.

You can also support the work of the Friends by becoming a member of the Friends. Learn more at: https://www.friendsofthekeywestlibrary.org/join

The mission of the Friends is to support, improve, and promote the Key West Library through fundraising, volunteering, raising public interest in and advocacy for the library.

The Friends of the Library newsletter is published monthly from December through March. Editor, Candy Block. Please address all correspondence to her at the library: 1025 Fleming Street, Key West, FL 33040.
Join The Friends of the Key West Library

You can join Online at: http://friendsofthekeywestlibrary.org or by completing and returning this Membership Application.

☐ $1000 Publisher  ☐ $250 First Edition  ☐ $50 Novel
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Please make checks payable to: The Friends of the Key West Library

Return check and application to: The Friends of the Key West Library
1025 Fleming Street
Key West, FL 33040

Please be a legacy donor and consider naming The Friends of the Key West Library in your will.

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