MEMBERSHIP HAS ITS PERKS

by Megan Curtis

As a BOLLI member, you already know that you benefit from being part of a community of learners and friends. Many people focus especially on our wonderful peer-led courses, but only take one or two at a time. Here’s something you might not know: if you so choose, you may enroll in up to three 10-week courses or the equivalent, for 30 sessions of classroom learning per semester.

Lunch & Learn is another popular learning opportunity and deservedly so. There are more than 25 distinguished speakers scheduled for just this fall. But did you know that our Enhancement Committee has arranged a great many peer-led activities including play reading and special book discussion events, and that BOLLI also sponsors outings to theaters and other great Boston destinations?

Many members cherish the intensive Brandeis Faculty seminars offered in Winter and Summer terms. All members receive a significant discount, and Annual Members enjoy a reduction of half-off the general admission price. This year a BOLLI membership also includes new complimentary Faculty Lecture Courses, to be held in the Winter and Summer. Our winter course will feature lectures on the radicalism of the American Revolution, examining the dramatic break our forebears made with their political and religious past.

As valued members of the Brandeis community, BOLLI members are invited to programs of interest on the Brandeis campus, including such speakers as Alan Khazei and Albie Sachs. Find out about all of these exciting events, as well as everything going on at BOLLI, in our e-newsletter (the Bulletin), which is exclusively available to members, as well as the print and on-line versions of the Banner.

Here are some other perks of BOLLI membership that you might not know about:

• Discount tickets are often available to arts events at Brandeis and in the Greater Boston area. For instance, members were recently offered $5 tickets to a summer production at the New Repertory Theater.

• With a Brandeis ID card, BOLLI members are eligible for the education discount on Apple products.

• Members are entitled to on-site use of the Brandeis libraries. Become a Study Group Leader and receive remote access to online journals and publications as well!

• We also offer free parking and shuttle service from our Charles River Parking Lot.
As BOLLI enters its 15th year, it might be helpful to review the motivation of its founder, Brandeis professor Bernard Reisman. Most other learning-in-retirement programs across the country focus on academics. It was Bernie’s special insight to foster a social community as well as an intellectual one. As a social scientist, Bernie understood that many working Americans felt measured by their job: the question posed at meeting new people was typically, “What do you do?” When these people retired, they were bereft—they did not do anything anymore. What was their place in society to become? In addition, their existing social community was shrinking: friends had moved away, died, or become seriously ill. They wanted to replace the friends they lost with new friends who more-or-less shared their own values. Bernie’s vision was to develop a program for mature adults seeking the joy of both intellectual stimulation and the opportunity to rejuvenate their social connections. He used the term conviviality to encompass these aspects of his vision.

The plan called for member-led classes and lectures, member committees to guide decisions about the curriculum and other aspects of the program, member involvement with University programs, and member attendance at University events to enhance the feeling of community.

The President of the University at the time, Jehuda Reinharz, immediately saw the validity of Bernie’s vision, and he championed the establishment of a lifelong learning institute at Brandeis. He obtained space for us in the Gosman Athletic Center, and he was instrumental in obtaining a million-dollar-plus endowment from the Osher Foundation.

Gosman, with its large open area, spacious well-lit classrooms, and nooks and crannies for spontaneous informal discussions, became a welcome facility to encourage new friendships. President Reinharz liked Gosman because the undergraduates used the same facility to swim and work out. As he saw it, when the students see you and ask “What are all these old people doing here?” they will understand that learning does not end after four years but it is a lifelong endeavor.

As BOLLI enters its second 15 years, it must not forget the need of its members for social rejuvenation as well as for intellectual stimulation.
MEMBERSHIP TRENDS
by Richard Glantz

Source: BOLLI Office

“Total Members” = active + associate + inactive
(Inactive category eliminated as of Fall 2012)

This chart reflects the most current available data.

Who Are Our New Members?

Arlington
Daniel LeClerc

Boston
Leslie Blachman
Shelly Bramson

Auburndale
Bill Saunders
Myron Simon
Art Singer

Bedford
Kathleen Barrett
Elly Edelstein
Sarah Freeman

Belmont
Linda Dietrich
Diane Kobus
Becky Norman
Martin Norman
Daniel Roos

Concord
Jean Wood

Chestnut Hill
Rosalie Fink
Ellen Fredberg
Eziz Fridman
Beverly Siigel

Sudbury
Susan Thel

Dedham
Bette Schiffer

Framingham
Roz Cohen

Lexington
Sandy Miller-Jacobs
Sumner Perlman
Maria Smith

Milton
Cheryl Shields

Needham
Carol Kotler
Sara Shapiro
Bonnie Weiss

Revere
Ira Dorfman

Newton
Martha Berardino
Nancy Connery
David Diamond
Judith Diamond
Philip Fishman
Arlene Franklin
Rick Gander
David Greenfield
Nancy Kolodny
Rachel Weitzman

Waltham
Linda Boyce
David Nevard
Michael Shear
Diane Sternberg
Emily Weidman

Watertown
Helen Abrams
Nancy Callan

Wellesley
Susan McCraw

Westborough
Karen Bloom

Westwood
Rebecca Forester
Sally Weiner

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This past April, Megan Curtis and I had the opportunity to attend the 2014 OLLI National Conference at the Park Hyatt in Carlsbad California.

If you are reading Carlsbad and Park Hyatt, and thinking, “What a junket!” you are wrong, though, I confess, not entirely.

Every 18 months, the Osher Foundation hosts a three-day event to celebrate lifelong learning at Osher Institutes nationwide. The gathering allows ample time for eating, drinking, and socializing.

However, the Conference is also a serious working meeting, to which almost every OLLI sends representatives. Sessions are run by directors and experienced members. In a session that I attended, participants explored the possibilities and limits of diversity in OLLI communities. We all found ourselves bemoaning the fact that our institutes are disproportionately white and upper income. One woman, an African American OLLI director, passionately exclaimed, “Your OLLIs are not reflective of your communities.” Another woman retorted, “Don’t try to be all things to all people. Lifelong learning is not for everyone.” But she also added, “For every white teacher and lawyer and librarian attending your OLLI, there is a Hispanic, African-American, and Asian one also looking for the same lifelong learning experience. Recruit them.”

Megan attended a session titled “Now Hear This!” that began with the admission that “one of the biggest obstacles” to learning is hearing. With the right facility and equipment our institutes and their members can meet the challenge of hearing impairment, but it requires both to expend significant funds. Megan returned to Waltham with a new awareness and determination.

I attended a session called “The Hungry Games: Catching Funds” with Shino John, a Rutgers University Associate Vice President. Shino was a passionate speaker, and his message resounded through the hall of 500 attendees: “Lifelong learning changes lives, renews hope, helps overcome isolation, and revitalizes communities. People who understand what they are supporting will give generously and thank you for the opportunity to do so.” Shino earned the right to speak. He was a key player on a team that just completed work on a successful billion-dollar campaign for his University.

One of my favorite Conference sessions was titled “OLLI Collaborations on Campus and Beyond,” led by Ron Osajima of the California State Fullerton OLLI. By systematically pursuing campus collaborations, Ron and his fellow members furthered Cal State students’ education on 400 occasions in the course of the last year alone. While this surge in collaboration required a tremendous effort for Ron and his task force, he primarily focused on the positive outcomes: Cal State OLLI members found this kind of campus engagement— involving teaching, tutoring, and coaching— extremely satisfying, and the level of influence and access his OLLI now enjoys with the Cal State administration has escalated.

At the close of the Conference, Megan and I quizzed each other on our biggest takeaways. For Megan it was the overwhelming sense of belonging to a movement. I found myself nodding my head, and adding: “This junket’s going to pay dividends year round.” Given the number of phone calls and emails I have exchanged with fellow directors these past months, it’s true.
SGL with a Paintbrush

by Phil Radoff

Nancy Alimansky leads a busy life. She’s been a BOLLI member since 2009 and a popular SGL for the past two years, leading courses on the lives and paintings of the French Impressionists and Post-Impressionists. In addition, Nancy is a member of BOLLI’s French conversation group and has given an Enhancement talk about her varied and fascinating career as computer professional, French teacher, impresario for Highland Jazz of Newton (and frustrated jazz pianist), and artist. For the past 25 years, Nancy has been an active member of New England’s watercolorist community. As a recently self-published author, Nancy will also participate, along with other BOLLI members, in a roundtable discussion of the self-publishing phenomenon later this year.

Nancy has always been interested in art history and was a docent at Wellesley College’s Davis Museum. For her BOLLI courses she has had the luxury of choosing the art of the historical periods that she likes best and avoiding styles that she doesn’t care for, like abstract art. Not surprisingly, Nancy sees a link between her own artistic expression and the way she conducts her courses. Her enthusiastic students have also been quick to recognize that Nancy’s familiarity with the tools of her craft informs her discussion of the paintings that she displays in class. Her experience in addressing the creative issues that she has confronted in her paintings—such as color selection, shape, and composition—enables her to analyze related or similar concepts in the Impressionist and Post-Impressionist paintings she displays to her classes. Nancy, for her part, says that teaching at BOLLI is the most enjoyable job she’s ever had. She likens BOLLI members to the graduate students she encountered during her long career at Lesley University, where she taught management, computer technology, and art. At BOLLI, as at Lesley, Nancy has found students to be serious, committed to learning, enthusiastic, and appreciative of her class leadership. She is particularly pleased when class members bring to bear their own life experiences to enhance classroom discussions and when her analysis of a painting elicits thoughtful analytical commentary from the class.

When it comes to selecting courses in which she participates as a class member, Nancy looks to disciplines other than art. Many of her choices are in the fields of literature and music, and she keeps hoping that one day a jazz course will be offered. In coming semesters, Nancy plans to repeat the Impressionist and Post-Impressionist courses that have proven to be very popular with BOLLI students. She also would like to develop a course featuring the works of some representational painters like Benton, Bellows, and Hopper who were active in the United States in the first half of the 20th century. Preparing a new course, as other SGLs have found, is hard work, but Nancy insists that she enjoys the preparation and research that go into course creation quite as much as actually teaching the course.

Certainly her efforts have been very much appreciated by the considerable numbers of BOLLI members who have taken her courses.
“Mum! Sweet Mum!” Over the crowded racks of clothing, sale signs, and abundant displays of shoes, my two Nigerian Heller students called and beckoned. I had found a chair in an attempt to rest after three hours at Old Navy. We were now at The Rack.

It is the norm to take international students to cultural events or sites. Their request was to shop. I thought I was a veteran shopper, but I was proven wrong.

It was a marathon shopping expedition. They had inexplicable enthusiasm for the task at hand. At one store my students instructed the check-out lady to ignore our skin color: I was their Mum. After three stores and eight hours, I was exhausted. My students? Not. And so it was off to dinner. Two Nigerian Christians and an American Jew at a Mexican restaurant. We talked and talked about our governments, food, their families, and Anita Hill. They presented me with a frame with the word “Family” across the top. I am their family, their “Mum.”

In Nigeria one student is a pharmacist (Bridget) and the other is a dentist (Ogechi). One woman left a husband and the other a fiancé in Nigeria to come to Brandeis to study.

My last year’s student, from Uganda, had a wife and two young children back in Africa. When he and I perused a Waltham supermarket together, I learned that in his town they ate white ants but in the next town, grasshoppers were on the menu. He had never experienced snow so I made sure to pick him up the morning of the first snowfall and to teach him how to make snow angels.

Another student came to Thanksgiving although his wife had given birth the previous night! I loaded him up with food and sent him off to the hospital. His effort to attend dinner at my home shows how grateful these students are to have BOLLI members care about them.

I have been honored to have students in my home for Thanksgiving and Passover dinners, graduation parties, and brunches. Each one has taught me about life, perseverance, and strength.

When I arrived at BOLLI three years ago, I immediately signed up to be a “host” person for an International Heller student. Through this program I have met wonderful people at BOLLI and created friendships with both members and international students. It was a great decision.
The Enhancement Committee

Well hello BOLLI, it's so nice to have you back where you belong!

by Myrna Cohen, Committee Chair

With a mission to solicit, evaluate, and implement ideas for programs and activities beyond the course schedule, the BOLLI Enhancement Committee is rapidly filling its calendar with programs, including “Fridays with Friends,” panel discussions, lectures, movies, and other events intended to educate, enrich the mind, and entertain the BOLLI member audiences. These events bring together BOLLI members in settings where they can mix and mingle. We invite you to introduce BOLLI by bringing a guest to an Enhancement Program.

All programs are held at 60 Turner St. Information about specific programs is in the weekly BOLLI Bulletin and on the Bulletin Board at Turner St.

As we plan for presenters for the Spring–Summer 2015 program, we once again appeal to the BOLLI community for suggestions about life stories and hometown/country or professional/occupational experiences.

Please contact any Enhancement Committee member to bring your suggestions to the full Committee:

Myrna Cohen  Steve Messinger  Bob Pill
Iris Kinsbury  Barbara Rabinowitz  Lois Silver
Ed Goldberg  Sherry Wexler  Beth Davis
Sandi Levy  Charlie Raskin  Ann Kazer

We look forward to seeing you at the Fall Enhancement Programs.

Upcoming Enhancement Committee Events

Fridays

**Turner Street, 10:30 A.M. - noon**

**Sep. 12** Panel discussion on At-Home programs

**Sep. 19** Judge Paul Chernoff will discuss his book, “Bench Notes: A Judge’s Reflections for his Grandchildren”

**Oct. 10** BOLLI member Peter Schmidt will talk about the physics of baseball

**Oct. 17** BOLLI member Phil Radoff will talk about “The Marriage of Figaro”

**Oct. 31** Panel discussion: Come Together to Celebrate the 50th Anniversary of Yesterday - 1964

**Turner Street, 1-3:30 P.M.**

**Sep. 19** Play reading

**Oct. 31** Play reading
Special prices for BOLLI members with ID. Tickets may be purchased by telephone at 781-736-3400 ($2 handling fee) or at the Shapiro Campus Center box office, which opens at noon, Mon.–Sat. or on-line at brandeis.edu/tickets

SPINGOLD THEATER CENTER
Oct. 9–11 (8 P.M.) and Oct. 11–12 (2 P.M.)

Dead Man’s Cell Phone
by Sarah Ruhl

Jean, unmarried and approaching 40, sits in a cafe as a man's cell phone rings. And rings. And continues to ring. Irritated, Jean approaches the owner of the phone and discovers he has quietly died in the cafe. She decides to keep his phone and begins answering his calls, keeping him alive in a strange yet significant way. As she takes messages from the dead man's colleagues, friends, family members and even his mistress, she finds herself involved in his life and afterlife in hilarious and shocking ways. This play, which had its New York City premiere at Playwrights Horizons, is a moving and funny exploration of how, in the midst of our fragile lives, technology can both unite and isolate us, especially in our quest for true love.

Tickets $15 for BOLLI members.

NEW YORKER FICTION SALON

Meets during the BOLLI 2014 Fall term starting September 10, on Wednesday afternoons at 3:20 P.M. (4th period).

We are celebrating our 11th year together!

Join us to enjoy iconic fiction, lively discussions, and lots of laughs.

See the weekly BOLLI Bulletin for full details.

— Sandy Traiger

TEACHERS TALK

Several SGLs have met a number of times in the last three semesters to talk informally about the kinds of issues that emerge in our courses: how to elicit more response, what balance to establish between instruction and class participation, what concerns are particular to teaching the BOLLI population, how to meet the needs and expectations of our classes.

We invite any SGLs (present, past, or future) to drop into any of our meetings to share thoughts with us. This is a leaderless group . . . no pressure . . . no preconceived agenda . . . just a chance to think through ideas with others.

Our dates for this Fall are Oct. 6 and Nov. 3, 1-2:30 P.M. in the Gold Room

— Marjorie Roemer