Empire State Book Festival and Gala:
Successful First Effort!

by Michael J. Borger

On April 9-10th, the New York Library Association launched the first ever Empire State Book Festival and Gala. The two-day event started with the NYS Writers Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Albany on Friday, April 9th. The gala event drew 130 attendees to witness the induction of 12 writers, both past and present, into the newly created NYS Writers Hall of Fame. Robert Caro and Mary Gordon were present to be inducted along with family members and representatives of the deceased authors who came to accept the awards on their behalf. The deceased authors inducted include James Baldwin, Elizabeth Bishop, Frederick Douglass, Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Issac B. Singer, Edith Wharton, E.B. White and Walt Whitman. The Albany Public Library will be the temporary home of the NYS Writers Hall of Fame until a more permanent location can be found.

Gregory Maguire, author of Wicked, kicked off the Empire State Book Festival the next morning on Saturday, April 10th at the Empire State Plaza. The daylong event was open and free to the public and attracted over 2,100 book lovers, and 160 authors, poets, storytellers and illustrators participated in 45 panel discussion and workshops. The event was made possible thanks to a $40,000 grant from Senator Neil Breslin (D-Albany) and several sponsors including SEFCU, the Times Union, WMHT, Spotlight Newspapers, CBS6, CW, Amtrak, Mango Languages and the New York Council for the Humanities.
2010 NYLA Candidates for Office

For ALA Councilor
Rosina Alaimo
Library Media Specialist, Maple West Elementary School
NYLA has been my professional organization since I became a practicing school librarian in 1986. Throughout those years, NYLA has been my professional guiding light. It has given me the opportunity to meet other librarians from all areas of the library world throughout New York State and learn from them. One of the proudest times of my life was being elected to serve as your president a couple of years ago. NYLA has served me well and I believe that I have served NYLA. I am running for the position of ALA Councilor and I feel that I am extremely qualified for this position for several reasons. I have been on NYLA Council for many years—both as president of SLMS for two years and during my tenure as president-elect, president and past president of NYLA. I know how the NYLA Council works. I have served as SLMS delegate to AASL for three years. I have represented SLMS on the AASL Affiliate Assembly as well as the AASL Board and I look forward to using my expertise and knowledge of how ALA works to make sure that New York’s voice is heard at the national level. Both these roles have given me a degree of familiarity with ALA and how it works. This is essential knowledge for the NYLA ALA Councilor.

NYLA is important to me and I am committed to making sure that NYLA continues to support libraries, librarians, and library principles in New York State. I am eager to play an active role in helping to shape my association and assure that it remains relevant and vibrant. I want to be your ALA Councilor and your voice on national library issues. If elected, I promise to work in the best interest of New York libraries and the many wonderful people who work in our libraries.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to serve you in this capacity.

For ALA Councilor
Rocco Staino
Retired School Librarian and Empire State Book Festival Chair
“How can ALA help state chapters become stronger and how can the chapters make ALA stronger?” That was the question I asked the candidates running ALA president & treasurer during the election forum at ALA mid-winter meeting in Boston. If the members of NYLA select me as the next ALA Councilor, I will continue to ask that question and work to achieve an answer.

During my library career that spans over 30 years, I have been fortunate to have been selected as a representative to the White House Conference on Libraries, I have been a president of NYLA and have been recently asked to serve as the chair of the ALA Public Awareness committee. In addition, I have recently worked with NYLA as chair of the first Empire State Book Festival and NYS Writers Hall of Fame.

If elected, I will work with my colleagues from the other state chapters and the leaders of ALA to work cooperatively for the betterment of the libraries and librarianship.

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Special thanks to the Planning Committee including Rocco Staino, Lauren Gilbert, Ellen Rubin, Evelyn Butrico, Starr LaTronica, Tim Burke, Sue Rokos, Mary Woodward, Michelle Vennard, Amanda Wing, Catherine Dumas, Mary Anne Waltz and Terry Tyson from Communication Services as well as all the volunteers who helped out the day of the event. Headlines like “Empire State Book Festival Brings Literary Extravaganza to Albany,” and “Albany Book Festival Showcases Power of Storytelling,” from the Times Union summed up the event very well.

Planning is already underway for the Second Annual Empire State Book Festival and Gala scheduled for April 1-2nd, 2011 and if you are interested in serving on the Planning Committee (especially if you know lots authors who can be invited), please contact me at director@nyla.org

The Empire State Book Festival and NYS Writers Hall of Fame are two of the initiatives that NYLA has launched as part of its designation as the NY Center for the Book by the Library of Congress. In addition, NYLA will be establishing a calendar of literary events that occur around the state, continue the Letters about Literature program sponsored by Target, and perhaps launch a Statewide Big Read in Winter 2011. •

Interview with
Patti McCall
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taken for granted and contrary to the stereotype, there is no room in this profession for the meek and mild.”

And finally I asked her about the role she sees NYLA playing in the library community. “NYLA has always been there for libraries but there is a real opportunity for NYLA to show all types of information professionals that it can be the heart of networking around the state, putting people in touch with other people, with resources, with opportunities for professional development. As a corporate librarian I can safely say that NYLA has enabled me develop new skills and make connections with colleagues who have been instrumental in my career,” concluded Patti. •