

## ANNUAL REPORT 2011

July 1, 2010 – June 30, 2011

### SETTLING INTO A NEW ENVIRONMENT & GROWING



While 2010 was the year of our homecoming, 2011 was marked by Poets House's astonishing growth as an organization. Our larger facility, with dedicated spaces for the library, adult programs, children's programs and exhibitions, has allowed us to reach more people in more ways than ever before. It has allowed us to venture deeper into complex subjects that require time, space and attention to make them accessible, such as the year's highlight, *Illuminated Verses: Poetries of the Islamic World*, a three-month series designed to deepen the public's understanding of Muslim cultures by bringing together poets, artists and scholars. Our new home has allowed us to provide a place of many rooms for learning, discussion and inspiration that welcomes poets, readers, fellow arts and cultural organizations and the community at large and to more effectively realize our mission of providing a *place* for poetry for *everyone*. In 2011, nearly 50,000 people walked through Poets House's doors to:

- Read, write and spend time in the Poets House Reading Room and The Reed Foundation Library;
- Attend one of our 150 programs, as varied as *Illuminated Verses: Poetries of the Islamic World*; *North of Invention: A Festival of Canadian Poetry*; *Poetic Process & Inspiration* with Jean Valentine and Brian Teare; and a *Nuyorican State of Mind: the Life & Writing of Poet Pedro Pietri*;
- Peruse the 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Poets House Showcase of 2,458 poetry books from 767 different U.S. publishers;
- View paintings, manuscripts, rare books and letters in our exhibitions; and
- Visit the Constance Laibe Hays Children's Room.



Last year, 8,000 children experienced poetry at Poets House—4,000 on free school trips. Four thousand more came for our public programs designed specifically for children and open family hours. We have become a destination for tourists from around the world. We are involved in partnerships and collaborations of every kind. And this year, as we enter our 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary year programming, we offer events that span the history of poetry, from *Gilgamesh* to the Modernists, inviting more of the public into the art of poetry and what it can do.

Despite the difficult financial climate, Poets House has finished off its construction project for the new space and is debt-free. Happily, the many years of working on the capital project have delivered the organization into a time of dramatically increased service. Poets House is visited by more people than ever before. But in order to accommodate a time of programmatic flourishing in the midst of an economic downturn, we have had to assiduously restructure our business model—we learned how best to use the space; reinvented our earned income and space rental programs; and, when necessary, cut back.



**50,000 volumes! Is there a place in New York where one can find so many poets in the same room?**

**Marie Howe, Poet**

**July 2010 – June 2011**

**50**

Interns and volunteers helped with the library and programs

**Every year the children in my school do a poetry unit and it would not be complete without a visit to Poets House.**

**Pat DeMarco  
1<sup>st</sup> Grade Teacher, P.S. 234**

**3,600**

Exhibition visitors perused the archives of Portuguese poet Alberto de Lacerda, broadsides and books of Charles Olson's poetry, and art and manuscripts of the 75-year old publisher New Directions

**Board of Directors**

Martín Gómez, President  
Frank C. Platt, Co-Vice President  
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Wendy Larsen  
H. Bruce McEver  
Myra Shapiro  
Michael T. Sillerman  
Ward Smith  
André Spears  
Kevin Young

**4,500**

Poets House Showcase visitors browsed through the year's latest crop of poetry books

**Staff**

Lee Briccetti -- *Executive Director*  
Jane Preston -- *Managing Director*  
Joe Fritsch -- *Program Assistant*  
Reggie Harris -- *Poetry In The Branches Coordinator & IT Director*  
Christina Lem -- *Foundation & Government Partnerships Director*  
Alexandra Mann -- *Marketing & Publicity Coordinator*  
Krista Manrique -- *Development Manager*  
Claude McCalla -- *Facilities Manager*  
Stephen Motika -- *Program Director*  
Mike Romanos -- *Children's Room Director and Education Coordinator*  
Gina Scalise -- *Library Consultant*  
Bleuberthol Scott -- *IT Coordinator*  
Suzanne Wise -- *Foundation & Government Partnerships Specialist*

**8,000**

Children and youth came to programs and visited on school trips

**50,000**

Adults came to public programs and the Reading Room and The Reed Foundation Library

**5,000,000**

People experienced Poets House through our website and national public partnerships

## LIBRARY AND SHOWCASE



**The Poets House Reading Room and The Reed Foundation Library** are the heart of Poets House’s mission: to provide a *place* for poetry in our culture. Poets House’s collection is one of the most comprehensive open-stack poetry libraries in the country, offering books, chapbooks, anthologies, literary journals, translations, audiobooks and more. Over the course of 25 years, the library collection has grown from a few hundred poetry books installed in a home-economics classroom of a New York City public high school to 50,000 volumes housed in an 11,000-square-foot space with room

to grow. Free and open to the public five days a week, the Reading Room offers comfortable couches and chairs, work tables, and free wireless and sweeping views of the Hudson River, allowing a wide range of visitors to read, write and explore poetry in an accessible, welcoming environment.

In our new home, the Reading Room and The Reed Foundation Library attracted record numbers of visitors: nearly 25,000 people—double the number of the previous year. Visitors included poets and poetry readers, students of all kinds, local residents and tourists from around the world. This increase in library use is a testament to the long and careful building of the collection, the successful search for an inviting place in which to house it, and our many supporters who shared our commitment to creating a home for poetry.

**The Poets House Showcase**, an annual exhibition that displays all the books published in the U.S. during the previous year, is the primary means by which we grow The Reed Foundation Library. Donations of the latest titles from publishers across the country are submitted to the Showcase exhibition, and each title is entered into our online *Directory of American Poetry Books*, one of the most current and complete sources of data on American poetry books anywhere. All Showcase books become part of our permanent collection.



This past year the 19<sup>th</sup> Poets House Showcase gathered more books than any Showcase in our history—2,458 books from 767 U.S. publishers. The Showcase opened on June 28, 2011, with over 300 attending the opening reception (nearly double the attendance of the previous year). In conjunction with the exhibition, Poets House also offered a Showcase Reading Series—five free readings during July that represented a range of presses, from mainstream to small-press publishers; a broad spectrum of aesthetics; and a diversity of authors.

The 19<sup>th</sup> Poets House Showcase also paid special tribute to the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of acclaimed literary publisher New Directions, with a related art exhibition and a reading. The New Directions exhibition was comprised of rare books, letters, photographs and works of art including pieces by Jean Cocteau, Alvin Lustig and Henry Miller, among others. The reading featured renowned poets and translators, including Susan Bernofsky, Forrest Gander, Susan Howe, Nathaniel Mackey, Richard Sieburth, Mónica de la Torre and Eliot Weinberger.



In addition, this past year also saw the donation of a major new treasure to the library—an 1830s mahogany **desk belonging to E.E. Cummings**. Donated by Maryette Charlton, a friend of Cummings, the desk is displayed in the library with a number of Cummings’ books. The desk joins two paintings by the poet (who was also an accomplished painter)—gifts to Poets House’s co-founder Elizabeth Kray.

## LITERARY PROGRAMS FOR ADULTS

Continuing Poets House's 25-year-old tradition as a leading presenter of literary programs, this past year we produced nearly 150 events. Featuring readings, talks, performances, panels, seminars, workshops and master classes, our programs were culturally wide-ranging, drawing diverse audiences from all over New York City and often from around the world.

Most of these programs were held on-site in Elizabeth Kray Hall, our state-of-the-art program hall wired for archival-quality video recording of all programs. (Ultimately, all events will be viewable on video in the Multimedia Archive of The Reed Foundation Library and available for future dissemination via our website.) FY 2011 included rare appearances by Pulitzer Prize-winner Gary Snyder; U.S. Poet Laureate W.S. Merwin; and the great Syrian poet Adonis. Many events attracted overflow crowds, which we accommodated with live video wired into the Reading Room. During the summer months, we took advantage of the *al fresco* feature of Kray Hall—the back wall rolls up like a garage door allowing attendees to sit outside in Teardrop Park South's amphitheater.



Gary Snyder

### ***Illuminated Verses: Poetries of the Islamic World***



*Illuminated Verses: Poetries of the Islamic World* brought together poets and artists—from Yemen to Sierra Leone to Syria—for a multidisciplinary series of panel discussions, readings and performances over the course of three months in the Spring of 2011. *Illuminated Verses* was funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) as part of their *Bridging Cultures* initiative, which is designed to deepen the public's understanding of Muslim cultures. We collaborated with City Lore, Asia Society and the Borough of Manhattan Community College, expanding all our audiences.

Among the events we featured:

- An introduction to the language of the *Qur'an* with Bruce Lawrence;
- The literary history of Islam with Reza Aslan;
- Arab poets since pre-Islamic times with Muhsin al-Musawi;
- Poetries of the Arabian Peninsula with Najwa Adra, Steve Caton and Suzanne Stetkevych;
- Lyric traditions of Persia and Iran, from Rumi and Hafez to modern poets, with Jawid Mojaddedi, Persis Karim and Kaveh Bassiri;
- Modern poetry in North Africa with Stefania Pandolfo, Clarissa Burt and Pierre Joris;
- The Urdu tradition in South Asia with Frances W. Pritchett, Syed Akbar Hyder and Mahwash Shoab; and
- The poetry of Muslim America with Sylviane Diouf, Kazim Ali, Rashidah Ismaili AbuBakr and Daniel Abdal-Hayy Moore.

*Illuminated Verses* also offered a number of exciting performances that revealed the intersection of poetry and music, such as:

- A West African oral epic recounted by Kewulay Kamara with Jali musicians;
- A Yemeni wedding procession with drums, pipes, horns, and a chorus chanting in a poetic form called *zamil*;
- Persian classical music, featuring poems by Rumi and Hafez and traditional instruments; and
- Urdu *ghazals* sung at *mushairas* or literary gatherings where audiences participate in call and response.



On May 7, 2011, *Illuminated Verses* culminated with an all-day public symposium and celebration at Borough of Manhattan Community College, followed by an all-day closed-session discussion held at Poets House with symposium participants and cultural leaders to discuss strategies for national dissemination of the project.

**Other international programs at Poets House** roamed all over the globe. Here are some highlights:

- A tribute to the Polish master Zbigniew Herbert with poet Edward Hirsch, poet Adam Zagajewski and translator Alissa Valles;
- A talk with scholar Archie Burnett and poetry critic Christopher Ricks on the work of English poet A.E. Houseman;
- A performance and discussion by Greek avant-garde artist and poet Demosthenes Agrafiotis;
- A conversation and reading with preeminent British poet and translator Christopher Middleton;
- A reading and discussion with Swedish poets Jörgen Gassilewski and Anna Hallberg; and
- *North of Invention*, a two-day festival of Canadian poetry with 10 leading Canadian poets at the cutting edge of contemporary practice: Christian Bök, Stephen Collis, Jeff Derksen, Sarah Dowling, Roy Miki, M. NourbeSe Philip, Lisa Robertson, Jordan Scott, A. Rawlings and Fred Wah.



Poets House creates one of the most engaging environments outside the university for learning and conversation about poetry. The 2010-2011 program season also featured talks and panels on **cultural and historical aspects of modern and contemporary poetry**, such as:

- Biblical themes in contemporary American poetry with Kathleen Norris;
- Radical poetics and Jewish secular culture with Maria Damon, Hank Lazer, Paul Miller and Alicia Ostriker;
- The poetry of World War II with Daniel Swift;
- Queer optimism and affective poetry with Wendy Lee, Michael Snediker, Brian Teare and Dara Wier;
- The elegy with Nick Flynn, Marie Howe and Kevin Young;
- The intersection of cultural history and poetry presented by poets of Korean, Chamorro and Filipino ancestry, with Sueyeun Juliette Lee, Craig Santos Perez and Barbara Jane Reyes;
- Poetry and politics with Andy Croft, Thomas Sayers Ellis and Aracelis Girmay; and
- Karen Swenson on Robert Browning.



Other adult literary programs focused on **important figures of American poetry**, including:

- Major tributes to Elizabeth Bishop, the Nuyorican poet and playwright Pedro Pietri, and San Francisco Renaissance poet Robert Duncan's seminal book on the poet H.D.; and
- Conversations and readings with today's important American poets such as Ann Lauterbach, Dorianne Laux, Harreyette Mullen, Eileen Myles, Marie Ponsot, Gary Snyder, Gerald Stern and Jean Valentine.

The diversity of our programs and presenters allowed visitors to discover many ways of experiencing a wide-ranging art with a multitude of traditions from around the world.

## PUBLIC POETRY PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES

Nearly 8,000 children visited Poets House during FY 2011, double the number from the previous year. The Constance Laibe Hays Children's Room has become a beacon for parents, teachers and children around the city for its **free programs**, including:

- Weekly poetry readings for children ages four to ten;
- Monthly visits from acclaimed poets and illustrators who lead children in writing and poetry-related workshops;
- Tiny Poets Time, a weekly poetry program for toddlers; and
- School tours for grades K – 12.

All of these initiatives have gained momentum as word has spread.

### **Free School Trips**



This past year we expanded our school trips program, which has become extraordinarily popular. The free school trips program has enabled Poets House to reach out to diverse populations around New York City, creating access to poetry in schools that would otherwise have had little exposure to the art. This program encourages a love for language and jumpstarts writing, literacy and creative thinking at an early age.

Poets House Free School Trips July 1, 2010 – June 30, 2011	
Level	No. of classes
K – Grade 5	<b>49</b>
Grades 6 – 12	<b>77</b>
College, Nursery & Early Childhood Development Centers	<b>12</b>

School trips have included students from as far away as Washington D.C., as well as those closer to home—including P.S. 18 in the Bronx and I.S. 392 in the Brownsville section of Brooklyn, P.S. 2 in Chinatown and classes from schools just down the block. As news spread throughout the public school community, school tours began taking place nearly daily and sometimes several tours are given in a single day. In the past year, over **4,000 children participated in these trips**, visiting from 49 different elementary school classes (K – Grade 5) and 77 different middle and high school classes (Grades 6 – 12). We have also become a resource for early childhood development centers, nurseries and colleges interested in how we operate our educational services. In the past year, 12 groups from colleges, nurseries and early childhood development centers visited Poets House.



### **Expanding the Children's Room and Free Public Programs**



In 2011, we expanded visitorship by increasing open hours for the Children's Room, transitioning from being open one day per week to three days per week. During open hours, children and their caretakers can read children's poetry books, explore the whimsical objects in the room or compose poems on old-fashioned manual typewriters. Nearly **3,000 children learned about poetry during our Family Hours and Tiny Poets Time**. The days that the Children's Room is not open to the public are regularly scheduled for school tours.

We also presented more **free weekend programs for families, benefitting approximately 1,000 children**. Poet and educator Richard Lewis led a performance and writing exercises about "play"; Karen Benke, author of *Rip the Page: Adventures in Creative Writing*, taught a poetry writing workshop; Marie Ponsot, a National Book Critics Circle Award-winning poet and a translator of fairy tales, taught a class on the fairy

tale and poetry; James Stevenson, an author/illustrator for *The New Yorker*, read from his work; Bobbi Katz, author of *The Monsterologist: A Memoir in Rhyme*, taught a poetry writing workshop for youngsters; and author and illustrator Carin Berger led a poetry and collage workshop in celebration of Spring, among other events. Press coverage for children's programs at Poets House included listings in *The New York Times*, *Time Out New York Kids*, *New York Magazine*, the *Tribeca Trib*, the *Battery Park City Broadsheet*, the *Downtown Express* and other media outlets.

### **Community Partnerships for Children**



Poets House also had the opportunity to partner with neighboring cultural institutions in presenting: a poetry and jazz event at the Bogardus community garden in TriBeCa, interspersing readings of haiku with live jazz; a poetry writing workshop on the science of bubbles at the New York Hall of Science; a reading by the artist and children's author Douglas Florian in Teardrop Park co-sponsored by the Battery Park City Parks Conservancy; a poetry writing booth at the TriBeCa Family Festival, sponsored by the Tribeca Film Festival; and a poetry reading at Poets House that was the culmination of the World Financial Center's ecology-themed Halloween parade.

## **EXHIBITIONS**

The Cheney Chappell Exhibition Space introduced the public to exciting international shows that attracted diverse literary and arts communities. Designed to show rare poetry books, archival materials and poetry-related visual art, the exhibition space is a museum-quality, climate-controlled gallery with glass walls that allows for natural light and riverside views. As we look to the future, we have engaged art critic and esteemed poet John Yau to head a new Advisory Exhibitions Committee. This past year's exhibitions included:



***Insolent Grace: An Exhibition on the Transatlantic Life of Alberto de Lacerda***, featuring artwork by artists David Hockney and Sonia Delaunay along with inscribed books and manuscripts by poets John Ashbery, Marianne Moore, and Anne Sexton, among others, drawn from the archives of the charismatic Portuguese poet Alberto de Lacerda. In conjunction with exhibition, Poets House also hosted a panel discussion on de Lacerda's collection with acclaimed novelist Jhumpa Lahiri and poets Christopher Middleton, David Wevill and Luís de Sousa.

***Afterwards, in between, and since: A Charles Olson Centennial Exhibition*** paid tribute to the 100th anniversary of Charles Olson's birth with a selection of books by and about Olson, along with broadsides drawn from his epic work *The Maximus Poems*. The broadsides and books belong to the collection of poet, Olson scholar and board member André Spears, who subsequently donated four broadsides to Poets House. Photographer Elsa Dorfman also donated a photograph of Olson.

***The 75th Anniversary of New Directions*** celebrated the legendary publisher's legacy with a special exhibition of rare books, letters, photographs and works of art including pieces by Jean Cocteau, Alvin Lustig and Henry Miller, among others. This exhibition was complemented by a major reading this summer.



## VIRTUAL POETS HOUSE



Current Homepage

After creating an inviting and accessible physical home for Poets House, we have now turned our attention to our virtual home. With the rise of electronic communication over the last two decades, a website is increasingly a visitor's initial interaction with any organization, cross-cutting geography and time constraints. One of the most significant paradigm shifts resulting from increased social media use is the way engagement has changed between organizations and their constituents—the process is more interactive and the conversation goes two-ways. Since Poets House is a “meeting place” dedicated to one of humanity's central art forms, better participation in these new methods of communication will help Poets House invite new audiences into all we do.

Over the past year, a generous gift from our Board Member Bruce McEver allowed us to work with the award-winning design firm Ralph Appelbaum Associates (RAA) to create a website that is more inviting and has user-friendly graphic presentation; easier navigation; more interactivity; and the ability to post audio, video, multimedia and ephemera that will complement our programs and serve those unable to attend our events.

We are creating our new website to reflect our clean, light-filled physical home for poetry. Through a combination of text, visuals, audio and multimedia, we hope to provide a window into our book collection, programs, Children's Room, archives, exhibitions and organizational story, while providing better information on our location and the surrounding neighborhood.



New Homepage

Leading up to our work with RAA, we conducted a number of informal focus groups throughout the year to gather input and feedback from staff and key stakeholders about the priorities of our website and what the overall tone, feel, design and content should be. The new website will be integral to our 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, celebrated from Fall 2011 through Fall 2012.

## PUBLIC PARTNERSHIPS

Now that we have settled into our permanent home, we have been able to devote even more attention to finding creative ways of bringing poetry and the public together.

### ***Port Authority of NY & NJ***

The Spring of 2011 marked the debut of ***Along These Lines***, a new public partnership between Poets House and the Port Authority of NY & NJ that brings poetry to millions of commuters. Poetry appears on PATHvision television screens (which usually report news, weather and service updates) and lines of poetry emblazon colorful posters. Through this partnership, Poets House is introducing poetry to millions of daily commuters, tourists and other people previously unfamiliar with poetry. The selection is themed in this iteration around issues of travel and includes works composed



by literary giants such as Marianne Moore, Allen Ginsberg and Muriel Rukeyser as well as exciting poets of our moment. Because a single short poem or poetry excerpt can easily be read between train stops, PATH riders can quickly experience a poem that will continue to live in their imagination through the day or night. Over 250,000 commuters ride the PATH train daily during the week.

Chris Ward, former executive director of the Port Authority of NY & NJ said of this project: “For obvious reasons, we typically overlook the romance of the daily commute. That is why the Port Authority partnered with Poets House to create *Along These Lines*, a series of posters beautifully adorned with poems that evoke the bustle of New York and the quiet moments of reflection fleetingly achieved on the train ride home.”

### ***Poetry In The Branches***

Through *Poetry In The Branches* (PITB), Poets House’s nationally-recognized program for developing new audiences for poetry and increasing poetry circulation in libraries nationwide, we presented a free training program for public librarians from all over the city, which featured then U.S. Poet Laureate, W.S. Merwin (funded by the Brooklyn Community Foundation). In October, Merwin had just begun his tenure as Poet Laureate and spoke about poetry and the environment, the importance of teaching poetry to children and other topics.

### ***The Language of Conservation***



With a leadership grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), Poets House spent July 2010 – June 2011 putting into place the penultimate phase of our *Language of Conservation* project—bringing together poets, zoo staff and librarians to curate permanent, conservation-themed poetry installations in zoos and to create supporting programs at local libraries in Jacksonville, FL; New Orleans, LA; Little Rock, AR; Milwaukee, WI; and Brookfield, IL.

*The Language of Conservation* originated in a pilot project at the Central Park Zoo in a collaboration between Poets House and the Wildlife Conservation Society. There, an installation of 40 poems and poem fragments throughout the zoo’s exhibits and walkways dramatized the impact humans have on natural ecosystems and led to a new appreciation in the conservation community of how poetry can deepen conservation awareness among zoo visitors. An evaluation conducted by the Institute for Learning Innovation concluded that the installations brought about a significant increase in awareness of the interrelatedness of humans, animals and the natural world. Now the *Language of Conservation* has spread the model to five other cities, inviting millions who see the installations to think and feel more about what they are seeing at the zoos through poetry.

In addition, during FY 2011, Poets House and the participating zoos and libraries conducted 33 public programs associated with *The Language of Conservation*, reaching approximately 1,000 people nationally. Four programs took place in Brookfield, IL; five in New Orleans, LA; six in Milwaukee, WI; four in Little Rock, AR; and five in Jacksonville, FL. We also participated in nine conferences throughout the country, presenting to professional associations such as the Arkansas Library Association, Associated Writing Programs and American Association of Museums, to discuss the details of the project, read selected poetry, and share evaluation findings with librarians and other organizations for possible replication. Already this project has brought poetry to millions, while also deepening visitors’ appreciation for the natural world. A publication is in development that will guide organizations interested in replicating this project on the implementation process, as well as a book of photographs that will showcase the beauty of the zoos’ poetry installations.

## POETS HOUSE RESPONDS TO THE FINANCIAL CLIMATE

This past year's financial downturn was hard on everyone, and Poets House was no exception. Local public funding suffered cuts, and the budgets of the twin federal agencies, the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities, which are responsible for a significant amount of arts funding, were each reduced by 8% overall. Typically, arts organizations and our entire field felt the effects of these cutbacks.

Our private support, which was often directly tied to the volatility of the stock market, was reduced. Individuals continued to give, but gave less. Three of our long-time foundation supporters stopped funding the arts all together, and other private funders either halted or reduced their funding. As a result, instead of the financial growth we had projected in 2010, we revised our budget mid-year and, with careful re-calibration, made operating cuts where necessary.

It was a difficult decision, especially given everything we were doing programmatically and organizationally, and the decision came just as we were beginning preparations for our year-long 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations (September 2011 – September 2012). We have managed to respond to a precarious economic climate with resourcefulness and creativity. While the following measures are not enough to allow us to maintain our current level of service on their own, they have helped us to be a more fiscally robust organization in this difficult time.

### ***Volunteer/Internship Program***

Our volunteer/internship program has expanded more rapidly than we could have imagined and has provided administrative and library support, as well as valuable, real-life experience for students. In our new home, the volunteer/internship program has attracted dozens of high school students, college students, graduate students, as well as those who just completed their studies. Volunteer/internship responsibilities have been expanded to also include work in the Children's Room and in publicity and marketing. Last year, 50 people graduated from our volunteer/internship program, and we are significantly formalizing the structures and streamlining the procedures and protocols.

This past year we had volunteers and interns from local high schools and colleges such as Stuyvesant High School, City-as-School High School, Barnard College, Columbia University, New York University, Queens College, Pratt Institute, Long Island University and Sarah Lawrence College. A number of colleges from beyond the city and across the country have also sent their students to volunteer and intern with us, from institutions such as Bennington College, the University of Michigan, Smith College, the University of Rochester, Carnegie Mellon University, Brown University, Bard College and Kalamazoo College (New York Arts Program).

Not only has this program been a great source of professional development for young writers interested in working in a library, research setting, literary arts administration or the non-profit environment in general, it has been an energetic way to increase our capacity. With volunteer and intern assistance, we have been able to manage large-scale simultaneous programs on an unprecedented level.

The program has also provided young writers a sense of community that allows them to share poetry and ideas about poetry and to keep in touch after they "graduate" from Poets House. Former volunteers and interns have told us how formative the experience at Poets House has been for them.

### ***Workshops and Space Rentals***

It was critical that during this period of financial uncertainty Poets House continue to present vibrant, important programs and services that draw more people to the new space and continue to vigorously serve its mission. Many in the arts sector have discussed at length the need for non-profits to engage in *more* innovative programming during times of financial difficulty, not less. For arts organizations, great programming is one of the best sources of continual public engagement, support and revenue.

This past year, we did just that. In addition to our *Illuminated Verses* series and expanding the children's and youth programs, we ramped up our workshop offerings and our space rental program gained traction. Workshops and space rentals are two great sources of earned revenue that have helped to buoy us through some rough waters as we continued to diversify our business model in our new context. They have also been a great way for us to share our space and resources with fellow arts organizations and those interested in learning more about poetry, leading to powerful word-of-mouth publicity and familiarity with Poets House.

Our total earned income now constitutes 6.5% of our annual operating budget. (This has been a boon since this coming year we will no longer transfer funds from our capital reserves, which were necessary during our first two years in the space.) During FY 2011, close to 1,900 people were introduced to Poets House as a result of our space rentals, compared to 275 people in FY 2010. As we hold more workshops and classes and more people find out about our beautiful space, we expect our earned income line to grow steadily.

### ***Diversifying Our Funding***

In an effort to fully invest in the future of Poets House, we expanded our development department, creating a Foundation and Government Partnerships division. This new focus allows us to continuously look for new sources of support, which is critical for Poets House as our programs and public partnerships expand locally, nationally and globally. So far, this past year, our investment has been paying off: we were able to gain four new foundation sources of support and managed to increase our new foundation income by 73% (please see "Poets House Financials" on page 14).

This year's annual Poetry Walk benefit was on par with last year's goal even in a difficult climate. We also piloted a second annual benefit on November 8, 2010 at the Bouley Test Kitchen. It was an evening of amazing food paired with poetry readings by poets Gerald Stern, Tracy K. Smith and Daniel Halpern. Catullus and porcini flan started the evening, Edna St. Vincent Millay and William Matthews accompanied the roasted sea bass with chanterelles and Neruda came between the sirloin strip with black truffle and mango and passionfruit dome. The pilot was a great success and a Fall benefit event has now been added as part of our annual fundraising plan.



### ***Expanding Our Board***

As the breadth of what we do expands, it is critical to have leadership that can guide us into new areas and contribute to the energy and acumen of our team. This past year, we added three new board members.

- The recent election of **Kevin Young** to the board is also the start of a new direction in terms of diversifying the age of our board. Kevin is the author of six books of poems and an editor of five others. He is the Atticus Haygood Professor of Creative Writing and English and Curator of Literary Collections at the Raymond Danowski Poetry Library at Emory University.

- **E. Ward Smith** is an avid poetry book collector and retired banker. He is Trustee Emeritus of Bates College; former Vice-Chair of Overseers and Secretary of the Bates Corporation; former Chairman of the Board of Trustees of Christ Church, NYC; and a founder and organizer of poetry evenings at the Grolier Club.
- **Linda Earle** is currently the Executive Director of the New York Arts Program, an academic and experiential off-campus study program for undergraduates and post-baccalaureates in the visual, performing and media arts, writing and journalism.

### **Marketing and Publicity**

Understanding how critical visibility is to an organization’s continued success—even more so during times of economic recession—this past year, Poets House maintained an unprecedented level of visibility in the local and national press under the leadership of a new Publicity and Marketing Coordinator.

In our second year in our new home, we capitalized on press attention that had focused on our move and Grand Opening, and we began to garner major press coverage for programs and services. Over the last year, Poets House has been the subject of feature articles published in the *New York Times*, *Crain’s New York Business*, *AM New York*, *DNA Info*, *Provincetown Arts*, *Downtown Express* and *Tribeca Trib* as well as in the blogs of the Poetry Foundation and *The Jewish Daily Forward*, among many others. Poets House also hosted PBS television interviews with the writer Edwidge Danticat and the poet Ernesto Cardenal. In addition, Poets House events have been consistently listed in the *New Yorker*, the *New York Times*, *Time Out New York*, *Time Out Kids*, *New York* magazine, the *Daily News* and elsewhere.

This past year was also a breakout year in terms of Poets House’s visibility on various social media platforms. Our Facebook fans and Twitter followers have nearly doubled from a year ago; as of June 2011, we had 4,166 Facebook fans and 5,484 Twitter followers. We have also begun to showcase select program videos on YouTube. Additionally, Poets House had 250 spots on WNYC radio via the Cultural Arts Program.

We also capitalized on our current *Along These Lines* partnership with the Port Authority of NY & NJ by distributing 4,000 pocket-sized poetry cards (printed with four of the poems included in the *Along These Lines* project) as part of national Poem in Your Pocket Day on April 14, 2011. Poets House staff and interns handed out these poetry cards—which also included the Poets House website and contact information—to commuters, businesspeople, parents and children, construction workers and passersby at the Port Authority ferry terminal, the World Financial Center, and in Battery Park City at large. Reaching people twice through two different channels—the poetry cards and the PATH signs—allowed us to reinforce our message.

Our new website will offer us a platform to extend the work we do in our space by providing supplementary materials, video and audio recordings, and images and links that give our offerings greater depth and accessibility. The new website will allow us to invite an even larger audience to enjoy and support our efforts, and invite many more people to make a home for poetry in their own lives.



## POETS HOUSE 25<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY & LOOKING TOWARD THE FUTURE

This past year was also devoted to preparing for our 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, which runs from September 2011 to September 2012. During the Anniversary year we feature an ambitious series of 25 programs that trace the history of poetry from *Gilgamesh* to the myriad poetic voices that are defining the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This effectively provides a welcoming, informative opportunity for new audiences to learn about and experience poetry.

The Fall season has featured the diverse early origins of the art with programs spanning Ancient Greek, Roman, Chinese and Sanskrit poetry as well programs on Rumi, Sappho, Chaucer and Dante, among others. These anniversary events have been presented by some of our country's most renowned translators, scholars and poets including David Ferry, Anne Carson, Jean and Robert Hollander, Arvind Mehrotra, Rosanna Warren, Jerome Rothenberg and many more. Throughout the year, major figures in contemporary poetry—such as award-winning poets Jane Hirshfield and Garrett Hongo and former U.S. Poet Laureate Rita Dove—have also gathered to speak about the current state of the art.

During our Anniversary year, we also launched *Emily Dickinson at Poets House from the Donald and Patricia Oresman Collection*, a breakthrough exhibition of rarely-seen manuscripts in the Cheney Chappell Exhibition Space.

In addition to celebrating the history of poetry throughout the year, we will also honor key figures of Poets House who had the vision and commitment to help us fully realize this beautiful and accessible place for poetry. Later in the season, we plan to present exhibitions, readings and programs that honor our co-founders, the poet Stanley Kunitz and arts administrator Elizabeth Kray.

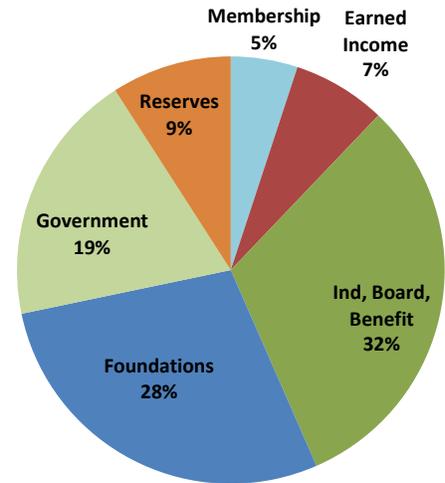
We invite our friends new and old to join us in taking stock of this momentous milestone—a quarter of a century of serving poetry and the public—and the exciting future that lies ahead at Poets House as we continue to work toward make the living tradition of poetry in all its vibrant multiplicity available to all.

**POETS HOUSE FINANCIALS, FISCAL YEARS 2010 AND 2011**

**OPERATING INCOME**

	<b>2010</b> (\$)	<b>2011</b> (\$)	<b>Change</b>
Membership	86,519	<b>82,107</b>	-5%
Earned Income	36,631	<b>104,407</b>	+185%
Individuals, Board & Benefit Income	562,676	<b>485,862</b>	-14%
Foundations	254,075	<b>439,500</b>	+73%
Corporations	21,399	<b>12,119</b>	-43%
Government	250,461	<b>286,024</b>	+14%
Reserves	356,000	<b>142,500</b>	-60%
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>1,567,761</b>	<b>1,552,519</b>	-2.5%

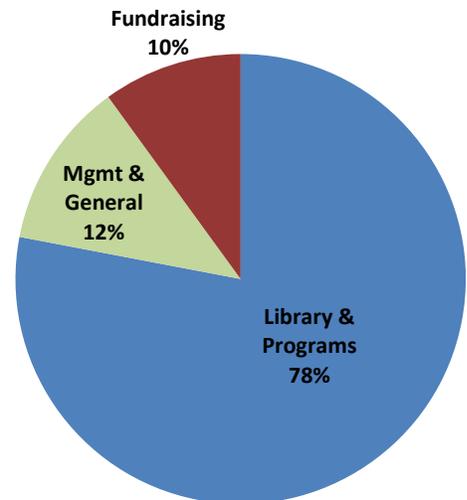
**2011 Operating Income**



**OPERATING EXPENSES**

	<b>2010</b> (\$)	<b>2011</b> (\$)	<b>Change</b>
Library & Programs	1,198,540	<b>1,205,445</b>	+1%
Management & General	230,171	<b>188,037</b>	-18%
Fundraising	127,871	<b>147,809</b>	+16%
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>1,556,582</b>	<b>1,541,291</b>	-1%

**2011 Operating Expenses**



## POETS HOUSE THANKS ALL OF OUR SUPPORTERS

Poets House is grateful to all who contribute to this place for poetry. We send a special thank you to Deborah S. Pease for her extraordinary support of Poets House throughout the life of the organization.

**We salute those individuals and foundations whose recent generous leadership donations have enabled the growth of Poets House:** Penny & John Barr; Thomas M. & Kate Cheney Chappell; Robert Kissane; Myra & Harold Shapiro; Margo & Anthony Viscusi; Brooklyn Community Foundation; The J. M. Kaplan Fund; The Leon Levy Foundation; The Reed Foundation; The Tomorrow Foundation

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**Additional support comes from the following donors:** **Foundations:** Axe-Houghton Foundation; Bloomberg Philanthropies; Bydale Foundation; The Canada Council for the Arts; The Concordia Foundation; Cornelia Bessie Trust; The Dedalus Foundation; The Gladys Kriebel Delmas Foundation; The Greenwich Collection; The Howard Bayne Fund; Jerome Foundation; Lower Manhattan Cultural Council; The New York Community Trust; Poetry Foundation; Rockefeller Brothers Fund; The Sherman Fairchild Foundation; The Vervane Foundation; The Walbridge Fund; The Whistler Trust; The William Bingham Foundation; The Winston Foundation; Anonymous (1) **Corporations:** AKRF, Inc.; Alfred A. Knopf/Random House; American Express Foundation; Barnes & Noble; Berkshire Capital; Brookfield Properties; Cauldwell Wingate; Con Edison; Debevoise & Plimpton; Denham Wolf Real Estate Services; Goldman Sachs; Home Box Office; Kramer Levin Naftalis & Frankel LLP; Merck Partnership for Giving; O, The Oprah Magazine; Sullivan & Cromwell; Tutor.com; W.W. Norton & Company **Major Individual Donors:** Roger Alcaly & Helen Bodian; Arthur Yorke Allen & Mary Stewart Hammond; Naomi & Stephen Antonakos; Anne Newman Bacal & Jules Bacal; Ellen & Jim Bates; Elizabeth Berger / Downtown Alliance; Jutta & Hans Bertram-Nothnagel; Ernest & Rita Bogen; Louise Braverman & Steven Glickel; Lee Briccetti; Bobbie Bristol & Galway Kinnell; Marilyn Callander; Jane & Ivan Chermayeff; George Cigale; Hallie Cohen & Francis Levy; Mary Cronson; Joan Davidson; Jose & Maria De Lasa; Pierre & Ellen De Saint Phalle; Pierre & Ellen De Vegh; Frederick Doner & Michele Oka Doner; Howard Ellin; Priscilla & A. Whitney Ellsworth; Cheri Fein; Silas & Vicki Ford; Fredericka Foster & Bennett Shapiro; Lorraine Gallard & Richard H. Levy; Elisa Gerarden; Martín Gómez; Myrna & Larry Goodman; David & Joan Grubin; Thomas Healy; Nancy Hechinger; Edward Hirsch; Helen & Frank Houghton; Mary-Beth Hughes & Duke Beeson; Fredric Hugue; Allen & Valerie Hyman; Elizabeth Kandall; Meredith J. Kane; Mary Kaplan; Bobbi Katz; Wendy Keys & Donald Pels; William Kistler; Lori & Philip Landau; Wendy Larsen; Bokara Legendre; Anne M. Locke; Clara & Bevis Longstreth; Susan Lorence; Thomas Lux; Rosemary Mathews; Mary McCormick; Bruce & Christina McEver; Ann McGovern; Sarah McNally; Josephine A. Merck & James Stevenson; Jim & Agnes Metzger; Barbara & Richard Moore; Hadassah Brooks-Morgan & Thomas Morgan; John Morning; Stanley & Jane Moss; Richard Motika and Jerrie Whitfield; William James Murray; Susan Oliver; James & Mary Ottaway; Thomas Palmer & Dominique Alfandre; Annette Penniman; Antonio Perez /Borough of Manhattan Community College; Lin Peyton & Morris Hancock; Katharine Pierce; Carole Pittelman; Frank & Judy Platt; Nicholas & Sheila Platt; Renate Ponsold; Ginger Potter; Nicholas F. Potter; Warrie & Warfield Price; Anna Rabinowitz; Harold Reed; Theresa Marie Reilly; Fredric C. Rich; Lillie Robertson; Theodore Rogers; Susie & John Rolander; Paul Romero; Joanna & Daniel Rose; Ruth & Alfred Rosenthal; Tony Sanders; Jeannette & Alexander Sanger; Gary & Karlan Sick; Michael Sillerman; Laura Baudo & Robert F.X. Sillerman; Susan Sindall & Peter Schickele; Deborah Klang Smith; Kent Smith; Ward & Carolyn Smith; Gregory Solak; Henry Solan; André Spears & Anne Rosen; Dana Stangel-Plowe & Jonathan Plowe; Peter Stern & Helen W. Drutt English; Catharine Stimpson; Roger & Sava Thomas; Alan Turner; John & Eva Usdan; Enzo & Mayalen Viscusi; David & Jane Walentas; David & Joan Wicks; Peter Wiley; Robert J. Wilk; Catherine Woodard; Alex Wragg; Annie Wright; Barbara & Charles Wright; Anonymous (3) **Special thanks to our more than 1,000 members**

P O E T S  H O U S E

10 River Terrace  
New York, NY 10282  
212-431-7920  
[info@poetshouse.org](mailto:info@poetshouse.org)  
[www.poetshouse.org](http://www.poetshouse.org)