

YES!
Book Club of Detroit at 65

By Maureen E. Mulvihill
Guest Writer & Former Detroiter
Hosted by Rare Book Hub (San Francisco)
December 1st, 2023



IN A SPIRIT OF CAMARADERIE, Rare Book Hub in San Francisco salutes Detroit bibliophiles. The Book Club of Detroit is making joyful preparations for its 65th annual meeting and anniversary on December 9th. *We shall be there in spirit, Detroiters!*

This event will also be a holiday luncheon, with guest speaker **Paul J. Erickson**, Randolph G. Adams Director, Clements Library, University of Michigan-Ann Arbor. Clements Library is marking its 100th anniversary this year. December 9th will be one festive day!

The Book Club of Detroit is something of a success story in book club lore. The Club was organized in 1957-‘58 by Detroit antiquarian book dealer, **Charles S. Boesen**, and his “History of the Book” students at Wayne State University, Detroit. In December, 1957, Boesen and his energetic circle of advocates circulated a printed announcement and invitation to numerous bibliophiles in the Detroit area: “*We believe that there are more than enough friends of the book in Detroit to warrant the calling of a first explanatory meeting with the view to establish THE BOOK CLUB OF DETROIT.*” The idea was warmly received, and the first official meeting of the Club took place in January, 1958. Membership rapidly expanded. Most of the Club’s meetings were held at the city’s historic Scarab Club for several decades.

While the Club enjoyed many active, successful years, it eventually faced serious challenges. In the mid-1980s, enthusiasm began to wane; rising apathy threatened extinction. But then: *Enter Detroit women!* In 1985, a **Women’s Committee** was formed to strengthen the Club’s organization, leadership, and urban engagement. The commitment of Ada Booth, Annie Brewer, Joann Chalat, Jean Colburn, Wilma Hendrickson, Kay MacKay, and Elizabeth Walker resulted in a revitalization of the Club and thereafter a new Constitution, a first Board of Directors, and a first *Membership Directory*. As Kay MacKay mentions in her monograph, *The Book Club of*

Detroit, 1957-2007 (Book Club of Detroit, 2008), the Club's membership soon expanded to include more librarians, teachers, students, and booksellers.

At its upcoming 65th annual meeting, the Club can be proud of many achievements:

◆ In addition to its successful book fairs in Detroit's downtown Eastern Market (its sixth fair, 2023), the Club regularly interacts with other book-related groups and institutions, such as the Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit Public Library, and Wayne State University where a Detroit book club was first discussed;

◆ The Club hosts presentations by established book specialists, such as hand-bookbinder, **Jon Buller**; and bookstore owners, **John King** (Detroit), **Jay Platt** (Ann Arbor), and **C. Hedger Breed** (Ypsilanti);

◆ The Club's newly designed website of six dedicated sections offers a comprehensive view of its history, leadership, and public events < bookclubofdetroit.com >;

◆ The Club's activities are summarized in the *CLUB NEWS* section of *The FABS Journal* (Fellowship of American Bibliophilic Societies), published twice annually, distribution 5500 copies; in the Fall, 2023 issue, the **Book Club of Detroit's current president, novelist Charlene Kull**, mentions, "We've [also] expanded our reach through social media, including Facebook and Instagram, and our participation in major area book fairs has lead to a leap in membership";

◆ The Club's archives are housed in the Burton Historical Collection of the Detroit Public Library, Woodward Ave., Downtown Detroit; **curator, Mark Bowden**. Owing to the sharp eye and generosity of **Gary Simons of the Florida Bibliophile Society**, the Club's archives now include some vintage material listed on eBay in 2022: four issues of the Club's *Quarterly Journal* (1960s) and other items, such as internal memos to the membership.

Speaking to the Book Club of Detroit's longevity is **C. Hedger Breed** (owner, White Raven Books, Ypsilanti), former Club president and current vice-president:

"I've noted the ebb and flow of the Book Club of Detroit these 25 years. About six years ago our youngest member, **Ryan Place**, asked the Board for seed money to start what he called BookFest. We had nothing to lose. We are now riding in part on the success of BookFest and the exposure it gives us to thousands of readers and bibliophiles, many of whom are 'young'. Our ranks are growing, and many dynamic new members -- finding our commitment contagious -- are volunteering to be involved in the operation of the Club. Let's keep it all going! *Why not look forward to another 65 years?*"

Let us raise a glass on December 9th to Detroit bibliophiles. They are a living example of the city's most monumental sculpture: Marshall Fredericks' *Spirit of Detroit*. That great bronze statue and the Book Club of Detroit share a birthday: they both entered the historical record in the same year, 1958. O, we like that.

~ a *GALLERY* follows ~

Gallery

Book Club of Detroit (1958 -)



Historic Scarab Club
Farnsworth Street, Downtown Detroit
Street view and Interior view (detail, lounge).
 Original home and meeting space of the
 Book Club of Detroit for many years.



Detroit BookFest

The Book Club of Detroit has co-organized many successful events in metropolitan Detroit, especially the city's annual book fair. The **2018 Festival of Books** (aerial view, above) set an attendance record.

Rare Book Hub presented a comprehensive, illustrated feature on the 2021 book fair at Detroit's Eastern Market, Downtown Detroit, with high praise to continuing event organizer, and former Club president, **Ryan M. Place**:

"Detroit Hustles Harder"

https://www.rarebookhub.com/uploads/article_pdf/upload_file/67/Detroit-BookFest-2021-Rev-Final-Rev-Final-RBH-24-June-2021.pdf



*The Book Club
of Detroit*

**Membership
Directory**

2023-2024



Membership Directory

Book Club of Detroit

28 pages, softcover, 5 ½" x 8 ½"

KolossosPrinting.com / Ann Arbor, Michigan

The current edition includes: Historical information on the Club; a list of officers over the decades; a list of (12) booksellers in the Club's membership; the Club's *Constitution* and *Bylaws*; Current Membership (80+ listings, with book-related interests); and business cards of the Club's booksellers, guest speakers, *et al.* The *Directory* is a resource for existing members and potential new members.



YOU ARE INVITED TO THE BOOK CLUB OF DETROIT'S
ANNUAL MEETING & CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON

featuring guest speaker

PAUL J. ERICKSON

Randolph G. Adams Director, Clements Library

SATURDAY, DEC. 9, at 12 NOON
at the HISTORIC LONGACRE HOUSE
24705 Farmington Road, Farmington Hills

Cost: \$53 per person
Buffet luncheon; wine included

Please RSVP by Monday, Nov. 27
to BCDrsvp73@gmail.com
or (text only, please) to 313-300-2149



2023 Gala Event: Invitation & Venue

Book Club of Detroit, 65th Annual Meeting & Holiday Luncheon
Historic Longacre House,
Farmington Hills, Michigan. December 9, 2023.

Guest Speaker: Paul J. Erickson, Randolph G. Adams Director,
Clements Library, University of Michigan-Ann Arbor,
celebrating the Library's 100th birthday in 2023.



The Spirit of Detroit

by Marshall Fredericks (1958)

A 26-foot Monumental Bronze Sculpture (9 tons)

Woodward Avenue, Downtown Detroit

Photo Credit, VoxLuna



Acknowledgments For prompt and cordial contribution, the author thanks Bruce McKinney and Michael Stillman, Rare Book Hub, San Francisco; C. Hedger Breed, Vice President, Book Club of Detroit; Daniel R. Harris, Brooklyn, NY / Sarasota, Florida.

Contributor Maureen E. Mulvihill (Princeton Research Forum, NJ) studied at Monteith College, Detroit; The University of Detroit, where she worked with Visiting Artist, Sir Tyrone Guthrie; Wisconsin (PhD '82); Columbia University Rare Book School; Yale Center for British Art; and (as NEH Fellow) The Johns Hopkins University. She has published editions of 'Ephelia' and Mary Shackleton Leadbeater, and was Advisory Editor, *Ireland And The Americas*, 3 vols (ABC-Clio, 2009). Her many essays are listed on Google Scholar. Her present interest is Irishwomen writing politically, c1660-c1800. She is a member of the Book Club of Detroit and was Vice President, Florida Bibliophile Society, 2012-2015. ♦