FROM THE TECH COMMITTEE: MORE ON USING ZOOM

If You Are Having Technical Issues
If you are having any technical or equipment problem with Zoom connected to your study groups, please send an email to tech@iernyc.org with your name and telephone number, describing the equipment you are using and the problems you are experiencing. If you know the brand of your computer, tablet or other device, please include that information. We will get back to you within 24 hours.

Hosting Sessions
If you are interested in hosting a Zoom session to get together with IRP colleagues apart from your study groups (e.g. to discuss a book, a current event, or simply to check in on one another), you simply sign on to https://newschool.zoom.us/ and follow the prompts to host a meeting.

24/7 Chat Room
The Tech Committee has now established a 24/7 chat room that you can use for planned get-togethers or simply to sign in to chat with any IRPers who happen to be there. The “IRP 24 Hour Chat Meeting Room” can be found at https://sites.google.com/view/irptechstuff. Jan Adler of the Community-Building Committee will try to arrange a virtual “pour at four” on several days next week for those interested in raising a glass with IRP friends. If you are interested in hosting such a session or participating in one, notify Jan ASAP via email to adlerjan@optonline.net, telling him the day next week that you can host or attend so he can get a sense of numbers.

FROM THE ADVISORY BOARD

Auditing
By unanimous roll call vote, the board decided that given our extraordinary circumstances, current study groups would be open to auditors for the rest of the semester, with the coordinators’ permission. Auditors, on the Columbia University model, will attend the class but not participate in the discussions. Coordinators from 21 study groups, roughly two-thirds of the total, agreed to accept some auditors and 53 IRP members submitted their requests by the deadline Monday morning.

In the interest of efficiency, members will learn of the study groups they may audit when they receive the Zoom invitation from the coordinators. We hope everyone will understand that this was a massive undertaking, accomplished in record time, and replying to each member would be cumbersome and time-consuming.
FROM THE CURRICULUM COMMITTEE

Summer School
Recognizing the vital role study groups play in keeping us connected, and assuming that we may be living in a virtual world this summer, the Curriculum Committee is considering expanding our online summer program in terms of both number of sessions and study groups. On behalf of the committee, Jonathan Gaines, the chair, is requesting members who might be willing to offer a 6-week study group this summer to email him at jegaines@att.net. The committee is not yet certain of the dates, hoping that we may be able start earlier and end later than usual, so please say in your email if you have a preference or constraint regarding time.

The topic you are suggesting for the summer may be a repeat, shortened to 6 weeks; a potential fall or spring study group that you can pilot; or something that has long interested you or has just recently perked your curiosity. The committee encourages first time coordinators. So let’s help the committee assess the feasibility of expanding the summer program: email Jonathan about your interest in coordinating a 6-week summer study group!

EVENTS: ALL ON ZOOM

Reflections on Virtual Life
• Monday, April 13, 3PM
We’ve just completed our second week as IRP Zoomers and would like to offer all members an opportunity to reflect and share thoughts and feelings about how this transition has affected our communal and private lives. Let’s share experiences and also strategies to survive and even thrive. If you are interested, contact Jan Adler at adlerjan@optonline.net, and he will send you an invitation.

Discussion 1918 Flu Pandemic
Bernie Belkin writes: "They say the closest thing in modern times to what we are going through now is the 1918 Worldwide Flu Pandemic. So, I picked up American Pandemic: The Lost Worlds of the 1918 Influenza Epidemic by Nancy Bristow, a chronicle of a major crisis that until recently was erased from memory. If others are interested in reading and discussing this book, please email me at bernardbelkin@gmail.com and we will set up regular zoom sessions."

Curriculum Workshop: The Art and Science of Leading a Discussion
• Wednesday, April 1—3-4:30PM
Whether you are a new coordinator or a veteran, join us to share and learn strategies for enhancing your study group discussions. RSVP to Linda Anstendig via email to lanstendig@gmail.com no later than Wednesday, April 1, 10AM so that Linda can send you an invitation to join the Zoom session.

Current Events Group
• Wednesdays, 4PM, starting April 1
Study groups are only the first of many uses for the Zoom platform. Steve Kalinsky will host a current events group every Wednesday at 4PM. Members interested in joining should contact Steve at stephenkalinsky@gmail.com. Steve will send you an invitation to join after you have submitted your response. As of today, 17 members have signed on for the first session on Wednesday.

Women’s Group
• Thursday, April 2, 3PM
If you have never been to a Women’s Group meeting and you want to attend,
please send your email address to Arlyne Le Schack, leesca683@newschool.edu, and she will email you an invitation link to the meeting.

ACTIVITIES

Survey: “IRP in the Time of Coronavirus”
The Community-Building Committee (Jan Adler, Jane Case Einbender, Bernard Belkin, Aileen Gitelson, and Michael Hill) has prepared a brief questionnaire to find out how members are faring and how best to maintain our connections to one another. Please click here to complete the survey telling us how you are, and what you think.

Absentee Ballots
IMPORTANT: Change in Election Date
Here’s an updated notice for all IRP members from our Voter Registration Project.

The Presidential Primary in New York has been postponed from April 28 to June 23.

Accordingly, the date to request an absentee ballot has changed. The NY website has not been updated as the decision to postpone was just made. We realize there will be many questions associated with this decision. One of the more important questions is whether the absentee ballot request that has already been submitted will still be deemed effective for the June primary or will people have to reapply.

Therefore, in light of the changed circumstances, we advise our members to sit tight and not fill out absentee ballot requests until we receive further information. We will report back as soon as we have that information.

MEMBER FORUM

Online Art Show
Jerry Vogel provides our thirteenth contribution to the online art show.

Title: Easter Parade with Mommy
By Jerry Vogel, Photograph

According to Jerry:
“I took many pictures of the hats and costumes at the parade, but this is the shot that meant the most to me.”

Can You Help? Books for Kids
Charitable organizations, disrupted like the rest of us by the coronavirus emergency, are struggling to provide their services in the new remote environment. The My Own Book Program, a charity launched in 1999 by IRP member Burt Freeman, and expanded the following year when Carole and Jerry Chamlin signed on as the second and third volunteers over a coffee in our old cafeteria, is no exception.

Over more than 20 years, the program has shown third-graders in NYC public schools the importance of reading books and the special joy of actually owning them. In partnership with school
principals and teachers, volunteers visit third-grade classrooms, encouraging the children to think about the kinds of books they like to read and helping them develop a “shopping list” of the books they will buy with the $50 allowance the program gives each of them. Volunteers then accompany the children to a local bookstore to browse, buy, and take home a shopping bag of books. About three weeks later, the volunteers visit the classrooms to get the children’s reactions.

Over time, My Own Book has expanded its services. Volunteers also visit kindergarten and first-grade classrooms to read stories to the children and talk about them. The program now has 80 volunteers, including IRP member Linda Anstendig as well as Burt and the Chamlins, serving about 50 public schools, in disadvantaged neighborhoods in all five boroughs.

Carole notes how excited the children are when they visit the bookstore and recognize her from the classroom visit. One girl said she wished she could go to a ballet with Carole, and another said Carole reminded her of Laura Bush—a pretty good analogy given Mrs. Bush’s advocacy of reading. Burt has received hundreds of thank you letters from the children and is most touched by one boy who said proudly “now I can read these books to my brother and sister,” indicating the ripple effect of the program, and by another who thanked him “for spending money on us.”

The future of My Own Book is secure as Burt and the Chamlins have arranged a long-term partnership with the Ethical Culture Society. The issue is the loss in the present. Can a way be found to read stories to the kindergarten and first-grade children remotely? Burt is developing ways to do this and would welcome suggestions and help from our tech-savvy members—that is, those not heavily involved with maintaining IRP’s online activities.

To find out more about My Own Book, including the various ways you can contribute, visit the website at www.mobf.org. To volunteer for the future when the program resumes regular operations, or if you can help develop remote operations for the next few months, email Burt Freeman at bfre1926@rcn.com.

How Are We Doing?
We’re looking for short items about life in virtual reality and social distancing that you found funny or unexpected and also tips on how to negotiate these weeks. We have a bunch of new ones for you this week. Please keep them coming to Leslie Davis at ldavis7104@yahoo.com.

Tips—for Services Health and Safety, Enlightenment, Entertainment, and Laughs

Services: Need a Notary?
In response to COVID-19, on March 19 Governor Cuomo signed Executive Order 202.7, which authorizes notary publics to officiate documents remotely. Specific procedures must be followed. IRP member David Lerner happens to be a Notary Public in New York State, and while we are all stuck at home, he has offered to notarize (for no fee) documents for IRP members who are also in New York State. If you need a document notarized, please email David at his email address in the IRP Zine directory and include your phone number. He will call you back and set up a Zoom meeting to
notarize your document. Details on the NYS law can be found here.

Health and Safety

Virtual Gym
From Ellen Kolegar: For those of you who miss your sessions at the gym, you can take advantage of the YMCA home workouts at YMCA @ Home. I have been following two programs for seniors, Cardio with Brian and Weights with Brian. Each workout is 15 minutes. I do each every day and it is a welcome change from sitting at my computer. Now if you could listen to The Village People singing “YMCA” at the same time, you’d be all revved up.

Be Careful Out There
From Carol Millsom: Carol Schoen and I were walking down Broadway last week, six feet apart, of course. We chanced upon two policemen lounging against a wall. “You guys must not have too much to do now that everybody’s off the street,” I called. “You’re wrong,” one of them replied. “We’re here because crime is up in the neighborhood – muggings and break-ins. The lock-down has cut into the business of a lot of criminals.” I immediately thought of the dealers who hang out in nearby Washington Square Park, then almost deserted. “You’re all alone on these empty streets,” he cautioned us. Good advice.

Enlightenment

Virtual Museum Link
Carolyn Preiss sent this link to virtual tours of a dozen major museums posted by Travel and Leisure magazine: https://www.travelandleisure.com/attractions/museums-galleries/museums-with-virtual-tours.

Entertainment

IRP Goes Gently Down the Stream
There was an overwhelming response to our request for binge-worthy streaming opportunities—yet another example of how our community takes care of one another. Miriam Lawrence reports the results from just the first week.

From Hannah Shear: The Bodyguard (Netflix). One season. A British political murder mystery.

From Carolyn Grossner: Occupied (Netflix). Two seasons about a "silk glove" invasion of Norway by Russia to restart oil production.


From Bob Sholiton: Slings and Arrows (Acorn). Quoting Times critic Margaret Lyons: "I've re-watched 14 episodes of my favorite Canadian theater comedy, a real bright spot in some otherwise murky days."

Several from Bruce Smith: Secret City (Netflix). An Australian political drama. A Canberra journalist uncovers a secret
city of interlocked conspiracies which threaten her life and endanger the freedom of every Australian. **Peaky Blinders** (Netflix). Five seasons follow a gang from Birmingham, England, starting just after WWI. Interesting commentaries on class, religion, business, and social connections. **Broadchurch** (Netflix). Three Seasons. A complex contemporary British “whodunit” in a small town with fascinating family complications. **Lilyhammer** (Netflix). Three seasons. Steven Van Zandt plays a Mafioso who turned state’s evidence and, asks to be moved to Lilyhammer in the witness protection program. **Charite at War** (Netflix). German television series. Berlin1943, told from the viewpoint of German hospital personnel and students with contrasting views and connection to the Third Reich. **Goliath** (Amazon Prime). Billy Bob Thornton plays a former big-name L.A. attorney who has fallen into alcoholism. The supporting cast is great.

If you'd like to add your favorites to this growing list of treasures, send your recommendation with a brief description and where it can be streamed to Miriam at miriamiar@aol.com.

And Now The Laughs

Season’s Greeting?
From Leslie Davis: Scrolling through my inbox last week, I noticed amid all the Zoom invitations and Observer business, an email entitled “Season’s Greeting to Friends and Family.” What could this be? It came from Marilyn Goldstein, a friend who had a column in Newsday on Long Island for many years when I was an editor there. Here’s how it began:

“Dear Friends and Family,

“You may be a bit surprised to get the ritual year-end season’s greetings, this-is-what-I-and-my-family-did-over-the-year, at this time. I have never written a friends and family letter before. I’m sort of an observer of Christmas, and I’ve been asleep when the ball drops on the New Year since a year that began with 19. But this is a different Season’s Greeting letter because it’s reviewing a season I’m actually part of, down to my paper mask, which a construction worker on Ninth Avenue gave me and which protects me from nothing. Yes, I’m an actual participant in The Season. Of course, I mean The Season of COVID-19.

“So here go my personal reminiscences of The Season to my dear friends and family.”

Of course, I read on. And you can, too—[click here](#). Warning: you may laugh.

Pat Is Posting
Here’s the opening of Pat Fortunato’s latest post for her blog, I Can't Believe I'm Not Bitter: "These are strange times. ‘To wit: How the hell could a show as bleak as *The Handmaid’s Tale* actually improve my outlook on life in this time of global pandemic and economic meltdown?’" Find out how at: [www.i-cant-believe-im-not-bitter.com/the-handmaids-and-me/](http://www.i-cant-believe-im-not-bitter.com/the-handmaids-and-me/)

Ready for Anything
An intrepid IRP member in war gear to fight the pesky virus, ready to do battle and triumph! But who is it? Send your guess to Leslie Davis at: [ldavis7104@yahoo.com](mailto:ldavis7104@yahoo.com).
Adapting to Zoom
From Harold Berkowitz:
https://youtu.be/CCe5PaeAeew

Social Distancing
From: Sara Otey "Stayin' Inside"–Corona Virus Bee Gees Parody:
https://youtu.be/nmUXntGlqFI

Home Schooling
From Nancy Small: Israeli Mother on the subject:
https://youtu.be/8U6zU4MXmnA

Routines
From Miriam Lawrence: New Yorkers are advised to keep their regular routines, even while working at home.

RESOURCES

IRP Zine
- To access the Zine, go to www.irpzine.org. To view the directory or IRP Faces, you must login with these credentials:
  - Username: IRPNewSchool
  - Password: Fall2018
  - For the fall and spring calendars, click here.
  - Member bios: https://www.irpzine.org/news/new-member-bios-fall-2016/
  - Observer Archive: https://www.irpzine.org/irp-observer1-1/