STAYING CONNECTED

Member 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. The committee and others working with them will follow up with members who want to be contacted so it is important to complete the survey, indicating your wish to be contacted and your willingness to contact others.

From the Curriculum Committee: Summer School
In recognition that we will be overwhelmingly likely to continue with our current reality in the summer months, the Curriculum Committee wants to expand our summer program to hold, online, a greater number of study groups than usual over two sessions. Jonathan Gaines, the chair, asks 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, but they are tentatively set as:

- Session 1: May 26-July 6
- Session 2: July 13-August 21

Let us know whether you are interested in the first session, second session, either or both. And note that classes may take place over a 5-day schedule, assuming there are enough proposals. Our goal is to keep members intellectually and socially engaged as we cope with our new reality.

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 expand the summer program. As a special incentive, the committee has relaxed its summer syllabus requirements and the extended deadline for summer proposals is May 8. Again, email your interest to Jonathan at jegaines@att.net.

Latest About Zoom

Having Trouble? 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.

Policies and Practices
The Tech Committee has adopted additional policies regarding security that can
be found at: https://sites.google.com/view/irptechstuff. The Executive and Tech Committees have adopted a policy that our study groups and meetings will not be recorded. This policy too can be seen on the tech site.

Hosting Your Own Zoom Sessions
If you are interested in hosting a Zoom session to get together with colleagues and friends, apart from your study groups, (e.g. to check in on one another, share a virtual drink or brunch, or to discuss a book, or a current event), sign on to https://newschool.zoom.us and follow the prompts to host a meeting, with invitations sent to specific members. All you need to know is your New School ID and password.

And remember you can arrange to meet your colleagues and friends on the new 24/7 Chat Room that the Tech Committee has established and that you can access directly at https://sites.google.com/view/irptechstuff. Just make arrangements to meet at a given time and simply sign on. You can also sign on at any time and talk to anyone who happens to be there.

We also are hoping to schedule some events for the 24/7 site, so if you are interested in hosting an event for the site, such as a discussion of a book, movie, play, or TV show, please contact Jan Adler at adlerjan@optonline.net. In the meantime, here are two events now scheduled for the site.

Pour At Four Is Back
The first event for the new 24/7 Chat Room will be a virtual Pour at Four on Friday, April 10, organized by Susan Rubens. Set up your own “pour,” and join your fellow IRPers via Zoom to toast our newest way to get together. You don’t need an invitation. Just go onto the chat room website, given above, at 4PM. If you plan to attend, please email Susan Rubens at sfarubens@gmail.com so she can get a handle on the numbers involved.

Chat Group for Members Who Have Been Widowed
From Susan Sabatino: As many of you know, I lost my husband suddenly on August 31. Many IRPers have experienced similar loss. With the help of my family and friends from the IRP, especially other widows, I have felt that I was rebuilding a new normal that was bearable. Then this COVID-19 isolation happened, and a fresh hell of longing for my partner descended. You’ve probably experienced them, those Sudden Upsurges of Grief? Anyway, I was wondering if anyone might be interested in an online Zoom chat group for widows and widowers. Perhaps in the evening? Please email me at: ssabati9316@gmail.com

Scheduled Events by Zoom Invitation

Reflections on Virtual Life
• Monday, April 13, 3PM
We’ve just completed our third week as IRP Zoomers and would like to offer all members an opportunity to 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.

Current Events Group
• Wednesdays, 4PM
Steve Kalinsky, who is hosting a weekly current events group, says the first session last week attracted 24 people who met for 90 minutes. It was a spirited discussion of many aspects of COVID-19, including the model numbers, the political players, the economic impact, and ethical issues for folks like us, such as dealing with the people we employ to clean our homes or with those who deliver our food and prescriptions.

The second discussion will be this Wednesday April 8. If you are interested in joining the group, email Steve at stephenkalinsky@gmail.com and he will send you an invitation.

Women’s Group
- Thursday, April 9, 3PM
The Women’s Group met via Zoom for the first-time last week and decided to do it every week. More than a dozen women attended, including some new members. The topics covered during the 75-minute session included women VP possibilities and the future of the young progressive vote, as well as some reflections on coping with social distancing. If you have never been to a Women’s Group meeting and wish to attend, please send your email address to Arlyne Le Schack, lesca683@newschool.edu, and she will email you an invitation to the meeting.

Theatre SIG
If you miss being able to see and discuss theatre in these challenging times, you may be interested in a Zoom IRP Theatre SIG that Bruce Smith is organizing for spring and summer. Participants will view selected productions that are available online and then discuss the play production via Zoom, much like our study groups. If you are interested in participating, send an email to Bruce at drbsny@gmail.com.

Planned Events Between Spring and Summer Semesters

The Great IRP Read
Join with us in our first Great IRP Read. Our book will be Slaughterhouse-Five by Kurt Vonnegut which celebrated its fiftieth anniversary last year. Depending on how many people sign up, we will organize one or more Zoom discussion groups during the break between spring and summer sessions.

If you are interested, please send an email to Arlyne Le Schack at lesca683@newschool.edu, obtain the book ($7.99 as a PB or Kindle download at Amazon, 288 pp.) and start reading. In early May you’ll be advised of the days/times of the discussion groups and receive a Zoom invite shortly thereafter.

Special Request: We are looking to plan more events for this inter-semester period, both on the 24/7 site and by zoom invitation. So if you are willing to host a discussion of a book, play, movie, or topic or if you can repeat a session you gave for our Virtual Learning Center or Tuesday With Friends, please email Jan Adler at adlerjan@optonline.net.

FROM THE ADMISSIONS COMMITTEE: A HISTORIC FIRST
Members of the Admissions Committee made history on April 1st and 2nd by conducting their first-ever online interviews of IRP applicants. Using Zoom, the committee interviewed 14 people who submitted applications after attending an Information Session. According to Barry Cooper and Laini Gerald, co-chairs of the committee, “it would have been nice to
interview the applicants in person but Zoom worked quite well.” The committee overcame a few minor glitches—when screens froze once or twice. And when one applicant had trouble using Zoom, committee members found the solution through FaceTime and a cell phone.

A significant plus was that it was not necessary to find rooms at TNS—it’s never easy to find three rooms for over three hours each. The committee members had plenty of rooms, including kitchens, living rooms, dens, and even bedrooms to conduct the interviews. Thanks to Mark Scher, Ken Witty, Kathy Dieter, Jerry Vogel, Alix Kane, Janna Amelkin, Micky Josephs, Phyllis Holloway, Laini Gerald and Barry Cooper for stepping up to the plate and making the interviews happen.

FROM THE ADVISORY BOARD

RMD Is Not Required This Year
Collette Siegel, member of the IRP Advisory Board and the IER Treasurer, sends this information for IRP members who have retirement accounts: The Coronavirus Economic Stabilization Act passed by Congress has changed the required minimum distribution so that it is no longer required for 2020. Please consult your financial or tax advisor.

The first thing to consider is if you need the money to live on. We all have different ways of taking our RMD. Some take it as a lump sum at the beginning or at the end of the year, and some take it monthly. If you already have taken it as a lump sum at the beginning of the year, then there is nothing to do. If you take it at the end of the year, you should revisit how much you need and wait, but try to take as little as possible. If you take it monthly, maybe you can stop taking it now and take a small distribution when needed later.

You should definitely adjust your withholdings on those distributions or your quarterly estimated payments if you are reducing your RMD. Your RMD for 2021 will probably be lower, based on the value of your retirement accounts at 12/31/2020. If you are living partly on your RMD, you should consider that issue as part of your financial health.

You want to keep your retirement accounts as solid as you can, which means do not draw down in a down market.

From the Voter Registration Project

Absentee Ballots. As we reported last week, the Presidential Primary in New York has been postponed to June 23. The new deadline to apply for an absentee ballot is May 29. For full information, go to: https://www.elections.ny.gov/votingdeadlines.html

The project’s preferred site for absentee ballot requests is https://www.vote.org/ because it will actually put all your information directly in the absentee ballot request form and provide you with reminders.

MEMBER FORUM

We’re looking for short items about life in virtual reality and social distancing that you find funny or unexpected and also tips on how to negotiate these weeks. Please keep them coming to Leslie Davis at ldavis7104@yahoo.com
Online Art Show
Peter Houts provides the fourteenth contribution to the online art show.

Title: Should I Join Them?
By Peter Houts, Multi-media image (photograph enhanced with oil paint)

According to Peter:
“This little girl had just arrived at the Carol Street Park in Brooklyn and was hesitating while deciding whether to join other children being entertained by a puppeteer in the red shirt. A few seconds later she was with them.”

Reflections and Tips on Surviving and Thriving

From Maury Harris: There are No Atheists in Foxholes
During WW2 my mother’s cousin served on a battleship in the Pacific. Many years later he related to me the following story: A thoughtful young man just out of medical school, he entered the war as an atheist. That is, until the day when his battleship was being approached by a Japanese kamikaze suicide bomber. The ship’s gunner took aim, but his shells were not flying straight, and he had to hurriedly adjust his gun to compensate.

As my cousin anxiously observed what was happening, he prayed to G-d and pleaded that he would become a believer if his prayers were answered and the gunner could start to shoot straight. His prayer was answered at the very last second.

The obvious moral of this story is that “there are no atheists in foxholes.” Today as the globe is under attack from the raging COVID19 pandemic, we’re all in the proverbial “foxhole.” Pray.

Only Connect

From Jan Adler: Renewing Friendships.
I have been thinking about people I used to feel connected to who I have let drift away for no good reason. I decided to call someone I worked with and was friendly with years ago. I haven’t spoken to her in 20 years, but I still had a number to try. She was very happy to hear from me and said she was trying to email me, but it bounced back because I had changed email addresses. We caught up, she is now married to the woman she had been living with for 25 years and they are living in San Francisco. I was very happy I called and will keep in touch. Calling made me feel a little more in control of my life and I also resumed a friendship.

From Annette Fidler: No Broken Bones.
Long-term former member Annette
reports this recent experience. I am fortunate to have a lovely landscaped outdoor space in my apartment building the size of 5-6 tennis courts. It includes paths, tables, benches, and a huge circular lawn, perfect for speed-walking albeit in circles.

One sunny day, enjoying being out, I am hit from behind by a 4- or 5-year-old racing his scooter.

Although I am knocked down, fortunately landing half on the lawn and half on my side, nothing is broken, but I have a bad bruise on my knee and elbow. I receive numerous comments from residents offering to help but not wanting to come too close. I say I'm okay, the boy's father is very apologetic, the kid is hysterical, and I assure him that I'm fine.

An older woman comes over, yelling at the father; why wasn't he watching his child, etc. Another woman I know, a therapist, comes over, tells the woman to stop yelling, saying the father's job right now is to support and comfort his child. She leaves mumbling something about today's parents.

I can't get up off the ground. A personal trainer about 15 feet away doing an online session gets on the ground to demonstrate how to get up. I manage to get to my knees; another woman pushes over a chair; I use it for support and get up and sit. A man shouts from afar asking if I would like some water. He comes back a few minutes later holding a clear plastic cup of water with a slice of lemon perched on the side. Very classy!

From Lynn Brenner: The Coffee Klatch Makes a Comeback on Zoom. Several of us who live in Brooklyn Heights have replaced occasional Sunday brunches at a local restaurant with a weekly Sunday get-together on Zoom. We find it’s a great way to stay connected, keep our spirits up, and pool information on how to survive social distancing. We share tips about what’s happening in our neighborhood: which local grocery stores have reserved a daily shopping hour for seniors; which pharmacy is offering a one-day-a-week senior discount on purchases; and which hardware store has a treasure trove of toilet paper tucked away at the back of its housewares department.

It's easy to create a similar group in your neighborhood: Just check the Zine Member Directory for the names of members who live in your zip code and float the suggestion on email.

Enlightenment and Entertainment

Gently Down the Stream
More great streaming suggestions continue to pour in, reported by Miriam Lawrence.

From Susan Winston: Creative Mornings: https://creativenornings.com/talks Talks from around the world. To date, there have been 8,334 talks from 215 cities on a wide variety of topics. (If you are not able to get directly to the Talks, go to https://creativenornings.com/, on the top right, click on Learn and then in the drop down menu click on Talks.)

Four recommendations! From Joan Rosenbaum, Nicole Gartner, Ettie Taichman, and Mariel Villare (Program Director at CUNY GC, who has become a faithful reader of the Observer—welcome Mariel!). Unorthodox on Netflix (4 episodes). A young woman flees her Satmar Hasidic community in Williamsburg to explore an uncertain future in Berlin. Features a stunning performance by Shira Haas (who also played Ruchami on Shtisel).

More from Joan Rosenbaum: The Restaurant on Amazon Prime (3 seasons). It takes place in Stockholm in 1945 and is about the lives of all the people associated with the restaurant, including those who remain sympathetic to Germans, a Jewish refugee from France, and appealing young men and women learning to navigate their way in a changed world.

The English Game on Netflix (1 season). Written by Julian Fellows, who wrote Downton Abbey, about the beginnings of professional football (soccer) in England and the lives of the key players in both the working and upper classes.

My Brilliant Friend: The Story of a New Name currently running on HBO. The second season of the Italian series based on the Elena Ferrante novels.

Keep your recommendations coming! Email Miriam Lawrence at: miriamiar@aol.com.

From Nancy Small: TDF is offering Broadway HD free for a month. The catalog includes Kinky Boots, Falsettos, The King and I, and many others. To create and activate your account, follow these steps:

1. Go to broadwayhd.com and click "Subscribe Now" at the top of the page.
2. Pick the monthly subscription by clicking "Choose this Plan."
3. Register your account by entering your email address and first and last name and creating a password. When you're finished, click "Submit."
4. At the checkout page, click "Redeem Coupon," enter the code TDFFM and click "Activate."
5. Click "Get Access" and start browsing BroadwayHD's wonderful offerings.

From Susan Sabatino: PLAY AT HOME The Public Theater along with Baltimore Center Stage, Long Wharf, The Repertory Theatre of St. Louis, Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company, and other theater companies have created a series of short plays commissioned specifically for this moment of unprecedented isolation to inspire joy and connection for all. All plays are original, family-friendly, and ready to be downloaded and enjoyed by everyone. Read More at The New York Times - "Making Art During a Pandemic: Theaters Seek and Share Mini-Plays" and https://www.playathome.org/.

From Sue Goldman: Bolero: An "amazing" production from Lincoln Center https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D3UW218_zPo


From Leslie Davis: Many other cultural organizations have put offerings online. The Metropolitan Opera is screening a different opera every day. Lincoln Center
is a source of other performances. Check out the websites that interest you for details.

**Health: Physical and Mental**

**Fitness From Linda Anstendig:** I've been trying to exercise at home with help from Leslie Sansone Walking Videos. There are many of them, but here's one link to get you started: https://youtu.be/X3q5e1pV4pc

And From Susan Sabatino: United We Move, live online classes on Facebook, but also archived and available on YouTube, and a free phone app. Also, on Facebook for free, or available by subscription on her own web channel, is Marie Esmonde White, with her “Aging Backwards” Essentials series. Also, 7 minute Yoga for Seniors: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NDLad2vOHkU and a 10-minute “Relaxing Yoga IN BED”: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QKqnhbrV6ms.

From Marilyn Menack via her daughter on the west coast: "Isolation Latino Style.": https://twitter.com/Enrique_Acevedo/status/1243725294789431296?s=20

From Audrey Lipton: Letting Go. A few weeks of self-isolation are beginning to bring about unintended consequences. This morning I got an offer from Neiman Marcus literarily bringing the realities home. NM asked if I would like to avail myself of the services of a fashion stylist. As I’ve been waltzing around my apartment alternating between ancient bathrobes and sweats no longer suitable to be worn in polite company, I wondered how they found out about the state of my frumpiness. Who ratted on me? Was it Alexa or maybe Google? Perhaps Zoom no longer wanted to display my current state to others. However they got the word, Neiman Marcus wanted to improve my appearance. No way, NM! The luxury of not giving a damn has triumphed over wanting to be a fashionista.

Added to closets full of unworn clothes are unnecessary shoes, makeup, trinkets, scarves and what seems to constitute a good portion of the recent inventory of TJMaxx. It is strangely empowering not to miss any of them.

There used to be a hair color commercial that asked, “Does she or doesn’t she?” Well, I can now honestly answer and tell them she did, but she no longer does. Hair salons are closed, and Amazon is sold out of do-it-yourself hair color products.

Women, and some men, are starting to reveal the effects of having what erupts from their follicles be a different color from the rest of their tresses. In other words, many of us will soon be sporting the kind of two-toned hair we recently sneered at when we saw it on trendy kids. Discovering your roots no longer refers to getting results from Ancestry.com.

Another realization is how much time and money we used to spend on all of the above. And how with intelligent planning what little it takes to get by. The omnipresent COVID-19 life-threatening dangers, the self-isolation, the social distancing, the disruptions to ordinary life all serve as reminders to reset our priorities.

**Services**

Need a Notary? In response to COVID-19 Governor Cuomo authorized notary publics to officiate documents remotely.
IRP member David Lerner happens to be a Notary Public in New York State, and he has offered to notarize (for no fee) documents for IRP members. If you need a document notarized, please email David at his email address in the IRP Zine directory and include your phone number.

Strictly for Laughs

Who Was That Masked Man?

One member got it right: Michael Shapiro recognized that it was Ajit Kumar. Other guesses were Jan Adler and James Gould.

From Judy Goldman.
MASH Knows about the Coronavirus
Click here to check out the video: https://drive.google.com/open?id=1e8NGnoPxlISLGzAgEfa3IMUFMi--3

Also from Judy: A woman asked what she does all day, says, "Well, right after I bake the mail, I'm going to clean the groceries."

From Michael Switzer: Hospitals
My son, who lives in the city, was looking for a place outside the city that he, his wife and daughter could escape to. He told me he was considering a house in Lake George, and I asked him about available medical care. He looked up the nearest hospital, and there was only one review. That patient gave the hospital a rating of one out of five stars, and his comment was “I’d rather die than go back to this hospital.” My son is now ensconced in a rental house in Maine.

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-observer-2/