

Brooklyn Lifelong Learning

Annual Report 2025

July 1, 2024 through June 30, 2025

Letter from the President

July 14, 2025

As we approach the end of another rewarding year at **Brooklyn Lifelong Learning**, I'd like to take a moment to reflect on our progress and look ahead to what's coming next. While each committee chair will provide more detailed reports, here's an overview from where I stand.

A Year of Growth and Balance

After years of strictly in-person classes—and a necessary shift to Zoom during the pandemic—we've now embraced both, as some members thrive in a classroom, others prefer the convenience of remote learning. The good news? Our membership continues to grow, and we're committed to keeping that momentum going.

Diverse and Dynamic Programming

Thanks to our Program Committee, our class offerings remain broad and engaging. We've featured or will soon include:

- **Academic courses** across multiple disciplines
- **Literature classes**
- **Physical activity sessions** like Tai Chi and folk dance
- **Hands-on workshops** in crocheting and knitting
- **Arts and entertainment courses**, including music, painting and film appreciation

In addition, we continue to offer opportunities for members to connect socially, often with an educational twist.

Celebrating in Style

A major highlight this year was our upgraded, catered end-of-year luncheon, which drew a robust turnout. Given the enthusiastic response, we plan to repeat this event in the future.

What's Here to Stay

Some of our most beloved programs will return next year, including:

- **Museum Walks & Talks**
- **Ethnic Lunches**
- **Neighborhood Walking Tours**
- **Bus Trips and Local Events**

And thanks to responsible planning, we're pleased to report that **BLL's finances are stable and healthy**.

Looking Ahead

We recently invited all members to take part in a survey, asking what activities they've enjoyed, what they'd like to see more of, and what new ideas they'd like us to consider. Your feedback will help shape our programming, so thank you for participating.

As you know we are a volunteer organization. I thank all of our officers, board members, committee heads and committee members. Our Vice President Annette Libert, who works tirelessly in support of BLL, is deserving a special thanks.

As we look ahead, our goal remains clear: to provide engaging, enriching, and inclusive experiences for all members of our vibrant community. Here's to another year of learning, connection, and discovery.

Warm regards,
Robert Mishaan, President

Annual Report Narratives 2025

Committee Activities

Program Committee – Report from Rona Goldwitz

This new group reorganized again this year, and now has a small but effective membership. Its members are: David Clough, Doris Adler and me. Our primary focus is obtaining notable and interesting guest speakers, particularly professors from Brooklyn College and other institutions of higher learning as well as professionals in other fields. Despite the committee being so new, some noteworthy presentations were arranged for this year. Overall, 65 courses were offered, comprising 322 class sessions.

Summer 2024:

Seventeen courses were offered, with a total of 56 class sessions. Highlights include:

**THE REAL FIRST WORLD WAR: RECONSIDERING COLONIAL WARS AND THE
“GREAT WAR”**

MAKING BLACK AMERICA

**THE FORGOTTEN STORY OF THE BLACK WOMAN LAWYER WHO TOOK DOWN A
POWERFUL MAFIA BOSS IN NEW YORK IN 1939**

PERCEPTIONS OF LIFE AND DEATH IN VARIOUS CULTURES

Fall 2024:

Nineteen courses were offered, comprising 117 class sessions. Some of the highlights were:

THE 2024 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

KAREN BROOKS HOPKINS – former president of the Brooklyn Academy of Music

HOW THE GREAT MIGRATION CHANGED AMERICA

BROOKLYN HISTORY

ENTRANCES AND EXITS: HOW DOORS MAKE THEATRE POSSIBLE

Winter 2025:

Nine courses were presented, with a total of 22 class sessions. Among the highlights were:

THE MARS ROOM (book discussion)

ARCHITECTURAL GEMS of NYC – Above and Below Ground

It is worth noting that in 2024, all Winter Session classes were held on Zoom owing to the uncertainty of the weather at this time of year. However, now that winters are generally milder and members had expressed the desire to see each other rather than being isolated during this month, there was a mix of in-person and Zoom classes in January 2025. There were also two trips, which provided additional opportunities for members to get together.

A MIDWINTER TOUR OF THE BROOKLYN COLLEGE CAMPUS

MORGAN LIBRARY AND MUSEUM: Belle da Costa Greene: A Librarian's Legacy

Spring 2025:

Twenty courses were offered, comprising 127 class sessions. Some of the highlights were:

NUTRITION AND COGNITIVE FUNCTION

ROMEO AND JULIET by WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

***THE PATH TO POWER* by ROBERT CARO
COLONEL JOHN TRUMBULL, ARTIST OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION
THE MUSICALS OF LEONARD BERNSTEIN**

Membership/Publicity Committee – Report from Robert Mishaan

Outreach & Recruitment

The committee continues to promote BLL and attract new members through a variety of outreach efforts. With the addition of new committee members, we've expanded our reach. Presentations in Brooklyn Heights and Clinton Hill have introduced BLL to previously untapped neighborhoods. We've already gained members from Brooklyn Heights and are awaiting results from Clinton Hill. We are also making strides in diversifying our membership and will continue outreach to more Brooklyn communities.

Annual Information Session

Our main recruitment event is the annual Mini Class & Information Session, scheduled for:

Friday, August 22 • 10:30 AM – 12:00 Noon

Tanger Auditorium, Brooklyn College Library

Last year's session resulted in over 45 new members. This year's highlight is a presentation by Brooklyn Borough Historian **Ron Schweiger**, who will speak on "**The History of Coney Island.**" We'll also share the fall curriculum, which includes:

- In-person and Zoom classes
- Museum Walks & Talks
- Walking tours and Outside Activities
- Bus trips
- Ethnic lunches
- Membership Lunches
- Local events

Advertising & Word of Mouth

To publicize the event, we'll place an ad in the "Boomer Edition" of *The Tablet*.

However, word of mouth remains our strongest recruitment tool, and we encourage all members to spread the word about BLL.

Community Events & Street Fairs

We maintain a presence at local events such as:

- The Older Adults Fair at Brooklyn Public Library
- The Flatbush Frolic
- Newkirk Avenue Open Streets

Committee members also distribute fliers at Greenmarkets and other gathering spots in Brooklyn.

Grants Committee – Report from Rona Goldwitz

Grants

We had one grant award for fiscal 2025. A new system in which grants are given in 3-year increments, provided us with an award of \$5000 in discretionary funds from City Council Member Farah Louis for the current fiscal year.

Donations from members (as of January 2025)

- \$5026 was received in response to the BLL Annual Appeal. This was a marked increase over amounts received since 2020.
- Seventy-three members joined at the “Friends of BLL” level, which adds a \$50 donation to the basic cost to participate. A total of \$3650 was thus netted. This too was an increase over the prior year (\$3250).
- Other donations totaling \$265 were also received.

A total of \$13,941 in Grants and Donations were received.

Joel Duckoff and Morty Marshack continue to handle the responsibilities of navigating the NYC grant paperwork. They are greatly appreciated!

Events Committee - Report from Gail Naftalin

The Events Committee organizes “outdoor activities” for members and visits to sites of interest (but usually not art museums, as that is Linda Silverman’s bailiwick), including walking tours. We also plan and execute major BLL social events.

This year’s committee members have been Candace Lieberman, Iris Brahms, Marie Romano, Sheila Gerstein, Mark Levine and Gail Naftalin (chairperson). Mark is moving on to other activities. We are seeking a couple of new members for the committee.

Walking Tours

9/13/24- Chinatown, led by Robert Mishaan
10/9/24 - Lower East Side, Robert Mishaan
10/10/24 - Ditmas Park, led by Ron Schweiger
4/23/25 - Chelsea & the Highline; R. Mishaan

Tours and Outings

9/11/24 - Brooklyn College campus tour
9/18/24 - Whale watching
10/30/24 - Poe Cottage tour
11/13/24 - Lincoln Center tour
11/22/24 - Morris Jumel Mansion tour
12/5/24 - Hispanic Society Museum and Library tour
2/12/25 - Plymouth Church and Brooklyn History Center tours
3/6/25 - African Burial Ground Tour
3/30/25 - Wyckoff House Tour

6/13/25 - Greenwood Cemetery trolley tour

Social Events

We arranged and executed two lunches, one to finish out each semester. On December 13, 2024 in SUBO, all members and faculty were invited to attend a brown bag lunch. We provided fruit, cookies, salty bagged snacks, paper plates, napkins, plastic tablecloths, table decorations and a gift for the speaker. Members brought their own lunch and drink. We welcomed the 60-70 attendees and conducted a non-competitive Brooklyn trivia quiz (successful because fun). The speaker was Mimi Bluestone who spoke about climate change and how it's being addressed in Brooklyn. The talk was interesting and informative, but a bit dry.

On June 11, 2025 we closed out spring semester with an end of the year gala in SUBO's Bedford Room. There were ~100 attendees for a catered luncheon. Bassett's catering provided food, hot and cold beverages and supplies. This was the first time we provided free lunch for members. The speaker was Alice Alexiou. Her talk was based on her book, "Devil's Mile: The Rich, Gritty History of the Bowery". We received many compliments from BLL-ers who considered the event a success. The board and the committee have several ideas for tweaking the event for next year to make things go more smoothly and improve the overall experience. We have discussed, among other things, having an earlier deadline and sending reminder emails to those who have signed up, two food lines to cut down on wait time, more entertaining entertainment, as opposed to an educational lecture and fine-tuning our catering order in hopes of less food waste.

Travel Committee — Chaired by Sheila Gerstein

The committee arranged full-day trips, all of which were bus trips except for the whale watching trip.

WHALE WATCHING AND DOLPHIN ADVENTURE CRUISE September 18

We had a pleasant day on the water in Sheepshead Bay.

A DAY IN HARLEM

September 25

The trip included a tour of the iconic **Apollo Theater**, the **National Jazz Museum** and a soul food lunch at **The United House of Prayer For All People**.

HUNTERDON HILLS PLAYHOUSE

October 19

This bus trip included "*Simply the Best*" which recreated the excitement, look and performance of the Queen of Rock 'n 'Roll, Tina Turner.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG MUSEUM

December 6

We toured the home and museum of this jazz great, and also visited the house of inventor Lewis Latimer.

HUNTERDON HILLS PLAYHOUSE

April 2

We saw *Swing!*, which combines high energy singing, dancing and acrobatics to celebrate the music of the swing era of jazz.

BAPS SWAMINARAYAN AKSHARDHAM

May 8

We toured the largest Hindu Temple in the United States and had lunch there.

Museum Walks and Talks – Chaired by Linda Silverman

These docent-led tours were among our most popular programs. Many members particularly enjoyed these outings. Several of the exhibits required two docents or two time slots because so many people signed up to participate.

- **New-York Historical Society** September 20
Exhibit: *From Paul Revere to Edward Hopper and Lost New York*
- **Asia Society** October 18
Exhibit: *Aboriginal Australian Bark Painting*
- **The Metropolitan Museum of Art** October 25
Exhibit: *Mexican Prints at the Vanguard*
- **Grey Art Museum, NYU** November 1
Exhibit: *Berthe Weill: Art Dealer of the Parisian Avant Garde*
- **Morgan Library and Museum** January 17
Exhibit: Belle da Costa Greene: A Librarian's Legacy
- **The Guggenheim** March 7
Exhibit: Harmony and Dissonance: Orphism in Paris, 1910-1930
- **The Met** March 28
Exhibit: Caspar David Friedrich: The Soul of Nature
- **Japan Society Gallery** April 11
Exhibit: Kotobuki: Auspicious Celebrations of Japanese Art
- **Poster House** April 25
Exhibit: Puerto Rico in Print: The Posters of Lorenzo Homar
- **Asia Society** May 2
Exhibit: Imperial Treasures: Chinese Ceramics of the Yuan and Ming Dynasties

Diverse Ethnic Lunches – Report by Gail Weber

BLL'ers have enjoyed socializing at LUNCHEONS! The excitement about our diverse cuisine lunches indicate to us that they are something our membership really wants. We have seen our monthly participation jump from a mere 18 to topping out at 42!

We have sampled the food from many different parts of the world this year. October was spent sampling Georgian food at **Assaia**. November found us at the Afghani restaurant **Dunya Kebab House**. In January, we journeyed to Ethiopia at **Bati**. We took over the whole restaurant when we dined at **Levant** for French fare in March. We practiced with our chopsticks in April at the Japanese restaurant **Fujisawa**. To cap off our lunch dates, we dined al fresco at **Maria's**, a Mexican restaurant in May!

This coming term, we will be starting our gastronomic exploration at **Miriam's**, an Israeli restaurant. And to think all that globe-trotting and no hassles with the luggage!

