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2023: THE YEAR IN REVIEW

It’s December, which means it’s time for our annual Year-in-Review. It has been a truly remarkable year. For the first time since 2019, both of our signature events were presented in person: the Ohioana Book Festival returned to record-breaking attendance in April, and the Ohioana Awards kicked off the start of our 95th anniversary year in the fall. Join us as we look back at the highlights of 2023!

Winter

- Continuing our celebration of literary genres in the pages of the *Ohioana Quarterly*, our winter issue put the spotlight—or the spyglass!—on mysteries set in Ohio. Seven popular authors shared a behind-the-scenes look at their creative inspiration and writing process. We also announced the 2023 Floyd’s Pick winner and honorees, and unveiled the 2023 and 2024 Choose to Read Ohio poster. Our review section brought back a popular feature: reviews of books for young readers BY young readers!
- In January, we unveiled the 2023 Ohioana Book Festival poster created by children’s book author and illustrator Will Hillenbrand, featuring his delightful “Buckeye Reader” characters.
- In February, Ohioana transferred four original cartoons to the Billy Ireland Cartoon Library and Museum at The Ohio State University. The cartoons had originally been donated to Ohioana in the early 1960s. They were drawn by Ireland in the early 20th century to promote women’s suffrage.

Spring

- The Ohioana Book Festival returned as a live event for the first time in four years. Held at Columbus Metropolitan Library’s Main Library on April 22, the festival drew more than 120 Ohio authors and a crowd of 5,100 attendees. Over thirty festival authors participated in community outreach and media programs at schools, libraries, and other venues, reaching a statewide audience of more than 50,000 people.

The Director’s Chair

Dear Friends,

Happy Anniversary!

What are we celebrating, you ask? The 10th anniversary issue of the Ohioana Newsletter! It was ten years ago when we launched this newsletter as a way to connect online with our members, friends, and the community at large. Since then, we’ve produced more than sixty newsletters, each one about all-things Ohioana. But we continue to make each December’s issue a look back at the year. As you can see, 2023 has been memorable.

We’ve just celebrated Thanksgiving—my favorite holiday. So it’s not surprising that the words *thank you* keep coming back to me as I write this last Director’s Chair column of the year. Thank you to:

- Governor Mike DeWine and First Lady Fran DeWine, for their continued enthusiastic support as champions of books, reading, and Ohioana!
- The members of the Ohio General Assembly, especially this year, as

- The 2023 Ohioana Book Award finalists were announced and voting opened for the eighth annual Readers' Choice Award, a special prize which invites Ohioana members and the general public to choose their favorite book of the year from among the thirty award finalists.

Summer

- Celeste Ng, Ross Gay, Kelcey Ervick, Saeed Jones, Jasmine Warga, and Marcy Campbell were announced as the juried winners of the 2023 Ohioana Book Awards. Fans selected science fiction author John Scalzi as the winner of the Readers' Choice Book Award.
- Kortney Morrow of Cleveland was announced as the 2023 recipient of the Walter Rumsey Marvin Grant, a competitive prize awarded to an Ohio writer age thirty or younger who has not yet published a book.
- The state's new tourism slogan, "Ohio—The Heart of It All," served as the inspiration for the summer issue of the *Ohioana Quarterly*, which featured six authors who write about Ohio travel and local history. We also profiled Arcadia Press/The History Press, America's largest publisher of books on local and regional history. The summer issue also featured Kathryn Powers' interview with 2023 Floyd's Pick winner Andrea Wang.
- "Turning Points in a Writing Career," recorded live at the Ohioana Book Festival, premiered on the Ohio Center for the Book's podcast, *Page Count*. Host Laura Maylene Walter moderated the panel with authors Mindy McGinnis, Ric Sheffield, Judith Turner-Yamamoto, Andrea Wang, and Felicia Zamora. You can listen to the podcast here: <https://ohiocenterforthebook.org/podcast/page-count-live-turning-points-in-a-writing-career/>

Autumn

- Charlotte Houghton joined Ohioana as the 2023 Ruth Weimer Mount Intern. A master's student in library and information science at the University of Maryland, Charlotte is Ohioana's first Mount Intern since 2019.
- On September 21, the 82nd annual Ohioana Awards were presented live to a near-sellout audience in the Ohio Statehouse Atrium, with another 2,000 viewing the ceremony as it streamed live via our media partner, the Ohio Channel. All of the award winners spoke, either in person or on video. Dr. Daniel Shellenbarger, producer and host of the Ohio Channel's literary program, *Book Notes*, moderated the lively roundtable discussion that followed the awards presentation. You can watch the entire program on the Ohio Channel: <https://ohiochannel.org/video/ohioana-awards-2023>
- On October 5, Ohioana held its 94th annual meeting at the State Library of Ohio. Highlights of the meeting included the election of new trustees Ashley Bethard, Mary Curran Hackett, and Caroline Stevens, and the re-election of trustees Rudine Sims Bishop, Helen Bolte, Bryan Loar, and Betty Weibel. Outgoing

they increased support for Ohioana in the new biennial budget, which is vital to maintaining the library and making our programs possible.

- Ohioana's Board of Trustees, a group of dedicated individuals from around the state whose support, especially during these past few challenging years, is deeply appreciated.
- Ohioana's talented and energetic staff. It is thanks to them that Ohioana did not cancel a single program during the pandemic. It is their creativity and flexibility that has enabled us to transition to live, in-person programming once again.
- Our contributors—individuals, foundations, corporations, and organizations, who helped make this a year of remarkable achievement, in spite of the pandemic.

Ohioana celebrates its 95th anniversary in 2024. For me personally, it will be a year filled with mixed emotions, as I will be retiring in June after 18 years at Ohioana—the last 10 as Executive Director. So my final thanks is to ALL of you who share the love of books and reading; who make what we do possible; and who have been such an amazing part of this journey for me.

From all of us at Ohioana, best wishes for a wonderful holiday season and a happy and healthy New Year.

David E. Weaver
Executive Director

trustees Cindy Puckett and Dan Shuey, whose service to the board included two terms for each of them as President, were honored by being named as Trustees Emeriti. In November, Amy McClure was appointed to the board by Governor Mike DeWine.

- In November, Ohioana unveiled its first new website in eight years. Colorful, attractive, and more user-friendly, it resulted from six months of Ohioana staff and volunteers working in partnership with renowned, Columbus-based website developer, Switchbox.

In addition to our own programs and activities, Ohioana staff participated in a number of events, both in Columbus and around the state (see “Ohioana on the Road” on page 5).

We look forward to 2024 with great excitement! We’ll kick off the year-long celebration of the 100th anniversary of the birth of Rod Serling, one of America’s greatest writers and the creator of the iconic television series, *The Twilight Zone*, with the winter issue of the *Ohioana Quarterly*. Winter’s theme, appropriately, will be science fiction. The 18th annual Ohioana Book Festival returns on Saturday, April 20, at the Columbus Metropolitan Library’s Main Library. The 83rd annual Ohioana Book Awards will be celebrated at the Ohio Statehouse in the fall. It promises to be an exciting year—we look forward to seeing you!



A view of the 2023 Ohioana Awards ceremony from the top of the Ohio Statehouse Atrium, held on September 21. (Photo by Mary Rathke)

COMING SOON

Lunch and Learn: The Ohio Literary Trail

January 9, 2024, 12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Lorain Public Library, Main Library: Toni Morrison Reading Room, Lorain

The Ohio Literary Trail was created by the Ohioana Library to spotlight the historic homes, museums, collections, and markers of the state’s great writers, including Lorain natives Toni Morrison and Helen Steiner Rice. Join Ohioana’s David Weaver and trustee Helen Bolte as they share some of these literary landmarks. Free, but registration is required: <https://www.lorainpubliclibrary.org/programs?action=show&id=40547>

Ohioana Book Club

January 17, 2023, 10:00 a.m. – noon

Ohioana Library, Columbus

The book club’s winter pick is Gretchen Gornichec’s *The Weaver and the Witch Queen*, a novel based on Viking history and myth. Free. If you would like to attend, please email us at ohioana@ohioana.org.

Author Event: Amit Majmudar

January 22, 2024, 7:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Gramercy Books Bexley, Bexley, Ohio

Join poet, novelist, translator, and essayist Amit Majmudar as he talks about *Twin A: A Memoir*, a moving portrait of love and resilience. For more information and to register, visit: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/poet-amit-majmudar-talks-with-renee-shea-about-his-memoir-twin-a-tickets-753473939837?aff=ebdsoporgprofile>

Ohioana Walter Rumsey Marvin Grant applications are now open! This annual competition awards \$1,000 to an Ohio writer age thirty or younger who has not yet published a book. The application deadline is February 10, 2024. Download the application by clicking on the “Marvin Grant Application” button at the top of the webpage: <https://www.ohioana.org/programs/ohioana-book-awards/>

2023: THE YEAR IN PICTURES



David Weaver and Caitlin McGurk of the Billy Ireland Cartoon Library and Museum hold one of the four original Ireland cartoons that Ohioana transferred to the BICLM on February 14.



A visitor talks with Ohioana Book Award–winning poet Felicia Zamora at the 2023 Ohioana Book Festival at Columbus Metropolitan Library’s Main Library on April 22. (Photo by Mary Rathke)



Authors Stacy Nockowitz, Erik Jon Slangerup, Margaret Peterson Haddix, Tricia Springstubb, and Jeff Miller pose with the audience that attended their panel on Middle Grade Fiction at the Ohioana Book Festival on April 22. (Photo by Meg Brown)



Visitors stop by the Ohioana table at the 2023 Cartoon Crossroads Columbus event at Columbus Metropolitan Library’s Main Library on September 30.



Miriam Nordine, long-time Ohioana volunteer Melody Snure, Buckeye Book Fair director Kimberly Crislip Jarvis, and David Weaver pose at the 2023 Buckeye Book Fair in Wooster on November 4.

OHIOANA ON THE ROAD!

If 2022 saw Ohioana dip its toe back into live events as the pandemic began to subside, then in 2023 we dove headfirst into the water! Both our major events are now presented live and in person once again, starting with the return of the Ohioana Book Festival last April.

The book festival launched a month of outreach events. Thirty-four festival authors participated in programs and activities that began April 1 at Franklin Park Conservatory in Columbus and ended April 27 at Paragraphs Bookstore in Mount Vernon. Author visits to schools and libraries, bookstore events, art center programs, and media appearances took the festival out into the Columbus community and around the state.

Columbus Metropolitan Library celebrated its 150th anniversary in 2023 by hosting the inaugural Columbus Book Festival in July. Ohioana was an official partner of the event, which was held both inside the Main Library and the outside adjacent Kaufman Plaza and Topiary Park. More than 33,000 people attended the two-day event, which featured books, music, and entertainment.

In July, Ohioana Executive Director David Weaver moderated a forum on censorship, “Preserving Intellectual Freedom in Public Libraries,” presented by the Columbus Metropolitan Club. Library CEOs Patrick Losinski (Columbus), Felton Thomas, Jr. (Cleveland), Ohio Library Council Executive Director Michelle Francis, and civil liberties attorney Matthew



Program Coordinator Miriam Nordine and Mount Intern Charlotte Houghton staff Ohioana’s table at the Inkubator Writing Conference Book Fair in Cleveland on September 23.

D. Besser were the panelists. The discussion can be viewed here: <https://columbusmetroclub.org/event/preserving-intellectual-freedom-in-public-libraries/>

In September, Ohioana returned for the second year to Literary Cleveland’s Inkubator Writing Conference, one of the largest free writing conferences in the country. Program Coordinator Miriam Nordine and Mount Intern Charlotte Houghton represented Ohioana at the book fair held as part of the conference.

A week later Miriam, Charlotte, David, and Librarian Courtney Brown represented Ohioana at Cartoon Crossroads Columbus (CXC), a four-day celebration of cartooning and graphic novels held at Columbus Metropolitan Library’s Main Library. Nearly 10,000 people attended the events. Ohioana’s appearance was part of a new partnership that began in April with CXC appearing at the Ohioana Book Festival.

On October 23, Ohioana partnered with the Friends of the Delaware County Public Library for its annual benefit event, Authors and Ales. David Weaver was the moderator for a discussion with past Ohioana Book Award finalists Amy Butcher and Lee Martin, and debut novelist Thao Thai. The sold-out event was held at the Ill Mannered Brewing Company in Powell.

Finally, Ohioana staff and volunteers made several Ohio Literary Trail presentations this year, which continues to be one of our most popular programs. Look for some exciting news about the trail in 2024!



Children’s book author and illustrator Will Hillenbrand, who designed the 2023 Ohioana Book Festival poster, appears at Cover to Cover Books for Young Readers on April 14, joined by Ohioana Assistant Director Kathryn Powers.