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2021: THE YEAR IN REVIEW

As 2021 draws to a close, it’s time for our annual review of the year’s highlights for the Ohioana Library. Despite the lingering impact of the pandemic, we continued to keep everyone safe by connecting readers and writers virtually. The Ohioana Book Festival and Ohioana Book Awards both celebrated significant anniversaries. The Ohio Literary Trail expanded, and one of the sites added was in tribute to one of Ohio’s most beloved authors. It was another busy and productive year, as you’ll see from the highlights below.

Winter

- Ohioana “went to the movies” in the winter issue of the *Ohioana Quarterly* with a look at recent films and television series based on books by Ohioans, including an interview with *Ready Player One* and *Ready Player Two* author Ernest Cline.
- On January 9, we presented a virtual workshop titled “Writing Children’s Books: Where Do I Begin?” with award-winning author Michelle Houts.
- On January 14, in partnership with the Euclid Public Library, Ohioana presented its first virtual Ohio Literary Trail event. Over the course of the year, we presented sixteen additional events to libraries and literary groups across the state, each one tailored to the region and audience. Most programs were presented by trail organizer, author, and Ohioana trustee Betty Weibel, whose *The Ohio Literary Trail: A Guide* was published in April 2021.
- On January 28, authors NF Johnson and Chera Thompson joined the Ohioana Evening Book Club for a discussion of their coming-of-age novel, *A Time to Wander*.
- On February 16, Ohioana hosted a special poster reveal event with *Funky Winkerbean* and *Crankshaft* creator Tom Batiuk, who designed the official poster for the 15th anniversary Ohioana Book Festival.

The Director’s Chair

Dear Friends,

We’ve just celebrated Thanksgiving—my personal favorite holiday of the year. I hope yours was wonderful. It’s a time to not only share with loved ones, but a time to reflect and express our gratitude. I want to express my gratitude on behalf of Ohioana for your encouragement and support in 2021. Our special thanks goes to:

- Governor Mike DeWine and First Lady Fran DeWine, for their continued enthusiastic support as champions of reading and books.
- The Ohio General Assembly, especially this year as they passed a new biennial budget, signed by the Governor, which provides the core operating support that maintains the library and makes our programming possible.
- Ohioana’s Board of Trustees, comprised of dedicated members throughout the state and led by President John Sullivan. The Board provides endless support, especially to the Ohioana staff as it continues to work remotely due to the pandemic.



For the virtual 2021 Ohioana Book Festival, we partnered with illustrator and paper engineer Merrill Rainey to create a fun contest for kids featuring his two books, *Color, Cut, Create – Dinosaur World* and *Horse Ranch*.

Spring

- Author David Giffels joined our LLI Book Club to discuss his best-selling title *Barnstorming Ohio: To Understand America*, which was a 2021 Ohioana Book Award finalist.
- The 15th Anniversary (and second virtual) Ohioana Book Festival was presented over four days, April 22-25. More than thirty live and recorded programs featured nearly 140 Ohio authors, reaching an audience of more than 5,000 online viewers from eleven states. Our preview featured a greeting from Governor Mike DeWine and First Lady Fran DeWine, who honored the festival's anniversary with a special proclamation. Recordings of the entire festival can be viewed on Ohioana's YouTube channel.
- As part of the festival, Ohioana presented its first-ever children's contest, "Color, Cut, Create" with author/illustrator/paper engineer Merrill Rainey. The contest featured creative photo and video projects from talented kids across the state and ended with a virtual award ceremony on June 28.

Summer

- Carter Sickels, Aimee Nezhukumatathil, Carole M. Genshaft, Marianne Chan, Thrity Umrigar, and Jacqueline Woodson were announced as the juried winners of the 2021 Ohioana Book Awards. Tiffany McDaniel was selected by fans for the sixth annual Readers' Choice Award.
- Hagan Faye Whiteleather of Alliance was announced as the 2021 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.
- Children's literature was the theme for the summer issue of the *Ohioana Quarterly*. Among the special features was a tribute to the first five years of Floyd's Pick, an award honoring the late librarian and children's literary advocate Floyd Dickman, an interview with

- Ohioana's remarkable staff, which continues to amaze everyone with their creativity and flexibility. Their efforts have made our virtual programming a model for other organizations and enabled us to keep our commitment to connect readers and Ohio writers.
- Ohio's talented authors and illustrators. Your stories, poems, and pictures touch readers of all ages . . . celebrating your work is why Ohioana was founded.
- Our contributors—individuals, foundations, corporations, and organizations, who helped make this a year of remarkable achievement in spite of the pandemic.

And most of all, thank YOU for sharing our love of books and reading! YOU make what we do possible.

I know we all hope, despite the periodic surge of new variants, that 2022 will be the year when we finally put COVID behind us. We have missed seeing you, and look forward to getting together once again. Until then, please stay safe. 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

2021 Floyd's Pick winner Aiko Ikegami, and an article about the Ohio Governor's Imagination Library, a project spearheaded by Ohio First Lady Fran DeWine that aims to provide a new book to every Ohio child each month from birth to age five.

- On August 12, Ohioana staff joined in the dedication of the Toni Morrison Historical Marker in front of the Carnegie Center in the author's native Lorain, Ohio. The marker, for which Ohioana was the lead sponsor, is one of seven new sites on the Ohio Literary Trail that were announced in August.
- On August 18, Andrew Welsh-Huggins joined the Ohioana Evening Book Club to discuss his latest Andy Hayes mystery, *An Empty Grave*.

Autumn

- The LLI Book Club welcomed author Brad Ricca to discuss his 2021 Ohioana Book Award finalist, *Olive the Lionheart*.
- Ohioana welcomed Miriam Nordine to the staff as Library Assistant. Miriam is a 2020 graduate from The Ohio State University.
- On October 14, the 80th anniversary Ohioana Book Awards were presented virtually to an online audience of nearly 4,000 viewers. The event was streamed live by our media partner, the Ohio Channel, from their studio in the Ohio Statehouse. All eight honorees joined us virtually for the ceremony and the post-awards roundtable. Special guest Dan Shellenbarger,

producer and host of the Ohio Channel's literary program, *Book Notes*, moderated the lively roundtable discussion.

- On October 22, Ohioana virtually held its 92nd annual meeting. Highlights of the meeting included the election of new trustees Todd Kleismit, Kerry Teeple, and Rekha Voruganti, and re-election of trustees Katie Brandt and David Siders.
- Our exciting year of programming comes to a close with our December 8 virtual event, "Brunch with Bromfield," celebrating the 125th anniversary of the birth of famed Ohio author Louis Bromfield (see page 4).

With the new year on the horizon, we are cautiously optimistic for a return to live events. We've already scheduled the 16th Ohioana Book Festival for Saturday, April 30, at the Columbus Metropolitan Library's Main Library. The winter *Ohioana Quarterly* will feature a cover story on memoir and include an interview with Brian Broome, whose book, *Punch Me Up to the Gods*, recently won the prestigious Kirkus Prize. Speaking of the *Quarterly*, the winter issue marks the start of its 65th year of publication—a major milestone!

Whether we connect with you virtually or in person, at a live event or online, we will be here, continuing to celebrate Ohio authors and books with you. We'll see you in 2022!



The 2021 Ohioana Award winners roundtable, moderated by the Ohio Channel's Dan Shellenbarger. Photo by the Ohio Channel.

BRUNCH WITH BROMFIELD

Join author Stephen Heyman and Ohioana's David Weaver for a brunchtime discussion in celebration of the 125th anniversary of Louis Bromfield's birth.

Louis Bromfield was a World War I ambulance driver, a Paris expat, and a Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist. He was as famous in the 1920s as Hemingway or Fitzgerald, but he cashed in his literary success to finance a wild agrarian dream in his native Ohio. The ideas he planted at his experimental utopia, Malabar Farm, would inspire America's first generation of organic farmers and popularize the tenets of environmentalism years before Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*.

A lanky Midwestern farm boy dressed up like a Left Bank bohemian, Bromfield stood out in literary Paris for his lavish hospitality and his green thumb. He built a magnificent garden outside the city where he entertained aristocrats, movie stars, flower breeders, and writers of all stripes. Gertrude Stein enjoyed his food, Edith Wharton admired his roses, and Ernest Hemingway boiled with jealousy over his critical acclaim. Millions savored his novels, which

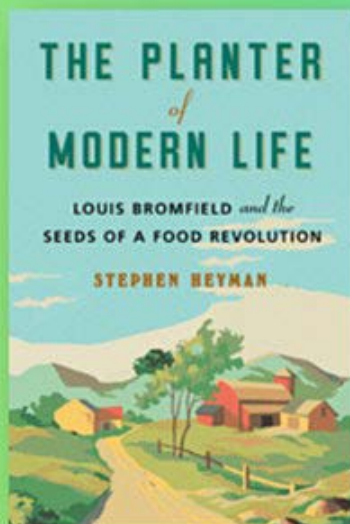
were turned into Broadway plays and Hollywood blockbusters, yet Bromfield's greatest passion was the soil.

In 1938, Bromfield returned to Ohio to transform 600 badly eroded acres into a thriving farm, which became a mecca for agricultural pioneers and a country retreat for celebrities like Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall (who were married there in 1945).

Stephen Heyman's sweeping biography, *The Planter of Modern Life*, a 2021 Ohioana Book Award finalist, unearths a lost icon of American culture. While Bromfield's name has faded into obscurity, his mission seems more critical today than ever before.

Stephen Heyman has written for the *New York Times*, *Slate*, *Vogue*, and other publications. He is the recipient of fellowships from the Leon Levy Center for Biography and the National Endowment for the Humanities.

This virtual event is free. To register, please visit: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/brunch-with-bromfield-tickets-209933445587?aff=erelexpmlt>



**Brunch with Bromfield: author Stephen Heyman and Ohioana's David Weaver
Wednesday, December 8 at 11am.**

COMING SOON

The Writer's Block Author Fair

December 11, 2021, 11:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., Franklin Park Mall, Toledo, live event.

The largest book fair in Northwest Ohio, with nearly forty local and regional authors. From children's books to fantasy; western novels to poetry; romance to sci-fi. Free. For more information, visit <https://www.facebook.com/Writers-Block-Author-Fair-2021-335073540537397>.

Ohioana Book Club

December 15, 2021, 10:00 a.m. - noon, Ohioana Library, online event.

The book club's fall pick is TaraShea Nesbit's novel, *Beheld*, which was a 2021 Ohioana Book Award finalist in fiction. If you would like to attend, please email us at ohioana@ohioana.org.

Author Event: Thrity Umrigar

January 25, 2022, 7:00 – 8:00 p.m., Joseph-Beth Booksellers, online event.

Ohioana Award-winning author Thrity Umrigar returns to adult fiction with *Honor*, a riveting and immersive novel that tells the story of two couples and the sometimes dangerous and heartbreaking challenges of love across a cultural divide. For more information, visit <https://www.josephbeth.com/event/thrity-umrigar-discussing-honor>.

Author Event: Ira Sukrungruang

January 26, 2022, 7:00 – 8:00 p.m., Gramercy Books Bexley, live event.

Join Kenyon College creative writing professor and author Ira Sukrungruang in conversation with noted memoirist, novelist, and Ohio State University creative writing professor Lee Martin about Ira's latest memoir, *This Jade World*. Free. For more information and to register, visit <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/ira-sukrungruang-and-lee-martin-discuss-iras-memoir-this-jade-world-tickets-178308003037>.

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 January 31, 2022. Download the application here: <http://www.ohioana.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Marvin-application-2022.docx>.

Do you have a literary event you'd like to list in the next newsletter or the next edition of the *Ohioana Quarterly*? Contact us at ohioana@ohioana.org.