Inside this issue: A New Campaign to Increase LIR Membership, Preview and Spring Registration Start December 4, Volunteers’ Expertise Sought for New Website, Council Corner, Member Spotlight on Kevin Foley, Report on Class Visit to Hadley Museum, and President Plans Forum to Hear from Membership.

New Members Mean Happy Holidays
December is the month when we turn to lights of all kinds to deflect winter’s darkness and to celebrate the presence of family and friends in our lives. Whether striking a match to a candle’s wick or struggling with an extension cord to illuminate a fir tree, our thoughts are never far from what we value most in this world.

Let’s agree, fellow members, that LIR is an element of the light we all seek for ourselves at this juncture in our lives. As we re-explore old interests from new vantage points or sail into heretofore uncharted waters of new knowledge, LIR offers not only a boost to the mind’s capacity but also the enhancing benefit of new associations and friendships.

New Members Make All the Difference Sale
This holiday season we all need to be mindful of the need to bolster LIR’s membership rolls to make certain our all-volunteer program continues to thrive. We need new people, new seminars, new approaches to learning from each other; and, yes, we could use the money.

And speaking of money: remember we have a holiday sale in progress. $85, for those who have it, can buy a family member or friend a pass to the spring semester allowing them to jump in the pool and find the water is warm and welcoming in the midst of winter.

The sale lasts until the end of December, but we should all be mindful that registration for spring seminars will begin right after the December 4 Zoom preview. You must be a paid-up member to register. So whether recruiting or purchasing a membership for someone, remember the sooner the better to maximize their opportunity to find the seminars that most interest them. Be sure to invite them to register for the preview by emailing the office: fclir@fivecolleges.edu

Of Course There’s a Prize
Just to make it interesting, and maybe to get tongues wagging about this new members campaign, we are planning to throw the names of existing members, who either recruit or purchase a spring membership for someone, into a hat. Then we will ask some disinterested party to randomly select a name from the hat. And that member will win a dinner for two at the restaurant of their choice in Northampton. (Yes, drinks/wine are included; thanks for asking).
So remember to have the new members you bring onboard to mention or include your name in their communication with LIR.

New members. Let's do it.
Kevin Foley, Communications Committee

**Announcements**

**Spring Preview Is Here!**
The Preview of Spring Seminars is Sunday, December 4 at 2 PM. Members Karen Furst and Katy van Geel will moderate the session and ask questions of the moderators about their seminars. Several breakout rooms will be available following the general session. Members can use the chat feature to ask questions of moderators throughout the program.

Don’t forget to send the Zoom link to your friends who might be interested in LIR! Members will receive a zoom link reminder Sunday morning.

**Registration**
Members can sign up online for spring seminars starting on December 4, the day of the preview. (Your membership dues must be current to register.) You must sign up by December 13 to be eligible for the lottery, which is held for classes that are oversubscribed. Registration for seminars that aren’t filled up will, as usual, remain open. Members can still sign up for those classes after December 13 on a first-come, first-served basis.

**Seeking Volunteers for New Website**
Kevin Foley, Kathy Campbell and Tyll van Geel are working on a new website for LIR and would like input from members with expertise and experience in website design or oversight. After researching and evaluating options, the website group will present the Council with a specific plan and the cost of a new website. If you would like to help this effort, contact Kevin Foley, co-chair of the Communications Committee, kefoley@mac.com

**Reminder:** The LIR office will be closed from December 23 - January 9. Contact francieborden@gmail.com if you need to be in touch during that time.

**Council Corner**

Your LIR Council met for its monthly meeting on Nov. 10. 21 people attended, which led to some lively discussion.

The Executive Committee approved a discount plan proposed by the Communications Committee to entice new membership. Between now and Jan. 1, new members can join for a half year at the discounted rate of $85. This is a good time to talk to your friends and acquaintances about joining.

Important upcoming dates are as follows:
Dec. 4 - Renewal dues due
Dec. 4 - Preview; Registration opens
Dec. 13 - Registration for lottery ends
Office Manager Kristin Langevin reports that five new members were added in the last month. She is doing further work on integrating the various sources of data we have to simplify cross-referencing such things as membership and dues payments.

It was decided that the Memorial Service will be held on Zoom on Jan. 12, 2023.

Various ideas were put forth for winter recess programs. If you have an idea for an intersession course, please submit it to Tyll or Katy van Geel.

Great Decisions Chair Linda Lau added Nancy DiMattio to her committee.

Financial issues were discussed at length. We will begin enforcing the rule that members must pay their dues before they can register for courses. In order to help members comply, we will begin sending invoices for dues.

Dick Stonberg, co-chair of the Communications Committee, reported that the committee has scheduled three live talks to explain LIR to prospective members. One occurred at Applewood, and it was quite successful. The others will be held before the preview at Rockridge Retirement Community and Loomis Village.

A new name for LIR is being weighed. The Strategic Planning Committee has discussed changing the name of Five College Learning in Retirement. LIR is not connected to the Five Colleges, we do not require that people be retired, and the name implies that we are offering for-credit courses taught by professors. The name that has gained some traction is “Learn for Life.” There is no commitment to that name, nor to changing the name at all. LIR would like to know how you feel about a name change, and how you feel about the name “Learn for Life.” Please send comments to Tyll van Geel at tyllvangeel@gmail.com.

Council members continued the ongoing discussion about updating our website. The consensus seems to be that we need outside help, and we are grappling with how to proceed along those lines. Kathy Campbell, of the website committee, is looking into hiring a database person to aid in the development of the website. Stay tuned.

Bob Cohen

**Member Spotlight: Kevin Foley**

Kevin Foley has been taking seminars at Five Colleges Learning in Retirement for almost three years. As co-chair of LIR’s communications committee with Dick Stonberg, his fondness for LIR is deepening.

He has ideas for attracting new members. He hopes the recently introduced price discount for a trial semester might help draw new people in. He also thinks current members are the best way of recruiting new members: “I think that if you believe
someone might be interested in LIR, they probably would be,” said Kevin, 72, who lives in South Hadley. “And if they get a chance to sign up and be in a seminar, the chances that they would stick around greatly improve.”

Kevin has lived in the Pioneer Valley for a half a dozen years, first in Northampton and now in South Hadley. He has long been interested in politics, working in many political campaigns, including Mario Cuomo’s campaigns for mayor and then governor of New York. He then served as head of Public Relations for the New York State Insurance Department and, later, head of MetLife’s communications operation.

He and his wife, Mary Anne Myers, then formed a two-person consulting company and moved from New York City to the Hudson Valley in 2002.

Since their speciality was financial services, the financial markets collapse in 2007-8 hit them hard. “We had no clients, and former clients were asking us for work,” Kevin recalled. “I started writing articles just for going-out-to-dinner money for The Putnam County News and Recorder, the weekly paper in Cold Spring, N.Y. When Roger Ailes, the head of Fox News, bought the paper, Kevin joined a group that started their own weekly newspaper, The Highlands Current, with Kevin as editor, is still publishing. When a job change was offered to Mary Anne, who had gone back to college for a PhD in English to establish a Bard micro-college in Holyoke to serve single mothers with children “we packed up and moved here.”

“I have come to appreciate more fully that LIR is a volunteer organization,” Kevin said. “The organization depends on people willing to lend their talents, time and energy to keep the program going.”

David Whitney

Participants in the fall seminar on Life Along the Connecticut River gather for a tour of the Porter-Phelps-Huntington Museum in Hadley.
Connecticut River Exploits
This fall Jim Harvey and Kay Klausewitz organized a real winner of a seminar, Life Along the Connecticut River, which included a field trip to the Porter-Phelps-Huntington Museum in Hadley shortly before it closed for the season. It was a beautiful, sunny day and our group very much enjoyed the visit.

Construction on the house began in 1752. We noticed right away that the house was clearly divided into two parts: the fancy rooms for the family, which faced the road, and the plainer parts for the servants (including several slaves) facing the river. This hierarchy was reflected in all sorts of ways, from the stylish furniture and family portraits to the amount of heat each room received.

In the dining room we encountered some beautiful blue and white porcelain cups with no handles, as was the fashion back then. Looking at them, I realized that’s where the expression “cup cake” originated. And I was right: the 1796 cookbook *American Cookery* by Amelia Simmons mentions baking small cakes in cups — plain pottery, not the fancy ones in the Porter-Phelps-Huntington house. The house remained a family dwelling until the 1940s, when it was turned into a museum.

As a member of Grace Episcopal church in Amherst, I recalled that Frederic Dan Huntington was a bishop in the Episcopal Church, and instrumental in establishing Grace Church on the town common — mainly by raising money from his well-connected friends. The first services were held in 1866.

While attending church a few weeks ago, I noticed a stained-glass window with the name “Susan Davis Phelps” near the front of the church. It was the first such window given to the church.

But who was Susan Davis Phelps? One of eleven children, she lived from 1827-65, never married and died at the age of 38. She was Frederic Dan’s cousin and a close friend of Emily Dickinson.

Two members of this seminar with long connections to the Connecticut Valley are Sandy Belden and Kim Wisseman. Sandy’s ancestors came to Connecticut in 1638 and to Hatfield in 1661. Kim’s family is on its tenth generation in Sunderland. No matter how long you’ve been here, I think we are pretty much agreed that it’s a lovely spot in which to live.

Nina M. Scott

Letter from the President

All Members Invited to Share Their View of LIR At President’s Forum During Winter Break

Dear Fellow Learners,

I am given this opportunity to communicate with you each month. While that is a privilege of this office, it is a one-way street. I would like to hear what you are thinking about LIR as we emerge from the pandemic into a still uncertain future. To that end, I am planning to offer at least one — more, if interest warrants —
“President’s Forum” on Zoom during the winter break from seminars. My hope is that some of you who enjoy seminars and other LIR activities, but whose voices are largely missing from Council and committees, would spare an hour to share your hopes, frustrations, and pleasures of LIR. If you are interested, drop an email to me (francieborden@gmail.com) or the office and we will make this happen!

A lot of you have been very busy at LIR, even as you are participating in fall seminars, preparing a roster of interesting seminars for Spring 2023 and doing all the behind-the-scenes work of preparing the catalog and the Preview to introduce them. Perhaps less well known are all those of you who are working on everything from budgets (so that we can plan how to survive in an inflationary economy) to publicity (so that we can get the good word about LIR to all those life-long learners who have not found us). LIR offers rich opportunities for learning, for connecting with people, and for using expertise for our organization instead of wages. Please join me at this time of year in giving thanks to all who make this amazing organization possible.

Francie Borden