

For Immediate Release

Contact: [Alexandra K. Mann](mailto:alex@poetshouse.org), Press & Marketing Coordinator
(212) 431-7920, ext. 2818, alex@poetshouse.org

Poets House Launches New Online Catalog Giving Wider Public Access to Its 50,000 Volumes of Poetry

New York, NY, May 2, 2013 — With the launch of its online catalog, Poets House makes its comprehensive collection of poetry searchable by readers and writers across the globe.

The new catalog provides poets and poetry readers access to the Poets House collection—more than 50,000 volumes of poetry—in a way that was not possible before. The culmination of many years of work, the catalog was originally funded by a seed grant from the actor, Bill Murray, a lover of poetry and a friend of the organization. Major ongoing support for the online catalog was provided by the Leon Levy Foundation.

“The online library catalogue of Poets House will allow a broader public to enjoy and to learn about poetry,” said Shelby White, founding trustee of the Leon Levy Foundation. “Poets House is one of the great cultural assets of this country, and we are thrilled to be part of its development.”

This essential support allowed the organization to build a powerful research tool, as rich and varied as the organization itself, which offers world class programming, an exhibitions program, a children’s room, a comfortable reading room with free wifi, and a poetry collection in some ways even more comprehensive than that of the Library of Congress, available to visitors in open stacks.

The catalog incorporates bibliographic records including:

- Founding volumes contributed by Stanley Kunitz, Elizabeth Kray, and Paul Zweig, as well as on-going contributions of books from their own collections from well-known contemporary poets;
- More than 20 years of books from the Poets House Showcase, an annual exhibit of all of the year’s new books from publishers of every size from micropresses to commercial houses; from chapbooks to coffee table editions;
- Thousands of recordings, the majority of which are one-of-a-kind recordings of readings and conversations that have taken place at Poets House and other New York City venues and hundreds of radio broadcasts from the mid-20th century.

“We consider this the final piece of the Poets House move,” said Lee Briccetti, Poets House’s Executive Director, referring to the institution’s move from Spring Street to its new light-bathed riverside location in 2009. “Poets House is a living literary center and a *place* for poetry. The catalog allows us to find a fuller expression and context for all our services, including nearly 200 programs a year on the varied traditions of poetry. It positions us to reach out beyond our area and say, ‘We are here and we are a research library. Plan your visit. Come!’”

A visitor to the catalog looking for a book by Robert Frost will find a wide array of published material, including books of poetry, a collection of the Christmas cards he sent to friends, recordings of his readings, biographies, anthologies inspired by his work and books of criticism, along with recordings of Poets House talks and panel discussions dedicated to Frost’s life and work. A search for a more contemporary poet such as Adrienne Rich or Robert Creeley will find their poetry as well as recordings of events at Poets House in which they participated.

As a literary nonprofit, Poets House has never had an acquisitions budget. Varied communities of readers, writers and publishers have together built the collection through their contributions of materials. The online catalog will help deepen the sense of community for poets and publishers, extending it beyond the walls of Poets House. “This collection is one of the great participatory libraries, and the catalog provides a way for people to see their contributions and to feel that the library represents a true community, with people from around the country donating their work and comingling their voices,” Briccetti said.

A significant portion of the literature made accessible by the launch of the Poets House catalog is otherwise unknown, including books, chapbooks, journals, broadsides and recordings. In many cases the Poets House catalog record will be the sole bibliographic record anywhere, exposing a whole body of literature otherwise uncatalogued.

Images of book jackets make the catalog a user-friendly tool for readers. Advanced Search and MARC View capabilities provide librarians and researchers the detailed and authoritative information they seek. The Poets House catalog uses an open source Integrated Library System (ILS), developed by LibLime Koha.

A database is never “done” says IT Director Reggie Harris, “our goal is to continue to develop the Poets House catalog as a programming tool.” Already most recordings of Poets House discussions and performances are listed in the catalog and many can be watched or heard

elsewhere on the site. We are exploring ways to provide better access to those recordings from the catalog itself and to make it possible to view images of book interiors, inscriptions, marginalia, ephemera or photographs. And some day we hope this collection will be searchable by individual lines or fragments of poems.

In addition to the major on-going support from the Leon Levy Foundation and the seed grant from Bill Murray, contributions from Deborah Pease, the Axe Houghton Foundation, Booth Ferris Foundation, The Gladys Krieble Delmas Foundation, Rockefeller Brothers Fund and The Sherman Fairchild Foundation have helped to support this project.

About Poets House

Poets House is a 50,000-volume poetry library and national literary center that invites poets and the public to step into the living tradition of poetry. Poets House—through its poetry resources and online catalog, literary events for adults and children, and exhibitions—documents the wealth and diversity of modern poetry and stimulates public dialogue on issues related to poetry in culture. Founded in 1985 by two-time Poet Laureate Stanley Kunitz and legendary arts administrator Elizabeth Kray, the library has created a home for all who read and write poetry. In 2009, Poets House moved into its permanent home, at 10 River Terrace in Battery Park City, on the banks of the Hudson River. Last year, 65,000 people visited Poets House, and over five million were introduced to Poets House via its new website and national partnerships. For more information about these events and Poets House in general, visit poetshouse.org and join us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

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