# Social Responsibilities Round Table) Newsletter ALA

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## east

The Committee of Small Magazine Editors and Publishers held their eastern book fair at Temple Univ., Philadelphia, on February 15th. It was a fun affair, although such issues as better distribu+ion of small press materials was given serious thought.

The best story we SRRT'ers heard at the Fair was about the recent community occupation of NYPL's Columbia Branch. We got the following from a participant (or occupant), Mishka Chernofsky (his Yiddish pen-name), itinerant scholar and bee-keeper who was just passing through the neighborhood at the time in search of a particular delicatessen.

What he found instead was the Columbia Branch, a one-room library that has existed in the basement of the Butler Library since Columbia University donated the space in 1934.

For the past five years, the library had been cutting their services, but as Mishka noted, "not until library service descended from 'limited' to zero could a constituency organize to fight back."

The Board of Trustees of NYPL announced their decision to close eight branch libraries, including Columbia, with only five days notice. The evening before the closing, protestors occupied the library and began a twenty-four hour sit-in/read-in/sleep-in on tables, book stacks, and the floor.

Mishka says that the high point of the event was the breaking down of barriers between library patrons. People who had been coming to the library since 1934 were finally introduced to each other by name. The library became an all-night cafe with poetry readings, political discussions, and food bought with money collected from passers-by outside.

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