

P O E T R Y



F O U N D A T I O N

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The Poetry Foundation and the Library of Congress Co-Sponsor Poet Laureate's "American Life in Poetry" Project

PROGRAM BRINGS POETRY BACK TO NEWSPAPERS

The Poetry Foundation has formed a partnership with the Library of Congress to support the "American Life in Poetry" project, an initiative of the Poet Laureate Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress Ted Kooser.

Kooser is offering a weekly newspaper column called "American Life in Poetry" free of charge to any paper wishing to carry it. Each 6- to 8-inch column features a poem by a contemporary American poet and a brief introduction to the poem by Kooser. A new column is available every Thursday at www.americanlifeinpoetry.org. Outlets interested in receiving the weekly column should register for free email delivery at www.americanlifeinpoetry.org.

"Newspapers are close to my heart and my family," said Kooser, whose wife and son both work in journalism. "As Poet Laureate I want to show the people who read newspapers that poetry can be for them, can give them a smile or an insight."

Poetry was long a popular staple in the daily press. According to Kooser, "Readers enjoyed it. They would clip verses, stick them in their diaries, enclose them in letters. They even took time to memorize some of the poems they discovered."

In recent years poetry has all but disappeared from newsprint. Yet the attraction to it is still strong. Kooser observed that "Poetry has remained a perennial expression of our emotional, spiritual and intellectual lives, as witnessed by the tens of thousands of poems written about the tragedy of September 11 that circulated on the Internet. Now I'm hoping to convince editors that there could be a small place in their papers for poetry, that it could add a spot of value in the eyes of readers. Best of all, it won't cost a penny."

John Barr, President of the Chicago-based Poetry Foundation, noted that the Foundation is committed to a vigorous presence for poetry in our culture. “The Foundation welcomes this collaboration with the Library of Congress,” Barr said. “Through the office of Poet Laureate Consultant in Poetry, the Library has done much to celebrate the best poetry and enlarge its audience. We are natural partners in the “American Life in Poetry” project, which will help get good poetry back into the mainstream.”

The Poetry and Literature Center in the Library of Congress administers the home of the Poet Laureate Consultant in Poetry, a position which has existed since 1936 when the late Archer M. Huntington endowed the Chair of Poetry there. Since then, many of the nation’s most eminent poets have served as Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress and, after the passage of Public Law 99-194 (Dec. 20, 1985), as Poet Laureate Consultant in Poetry. The Poet Laureate suggests poets to read in the Library’s literary series and plans other special events during his or her term in office.

Librarian of Congress James H. Billington announced the appointment of Ted Kooser to be the 13th Poet Laureate Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress on August 12, 2004. On making the appointment, Billington said, “Ted Kooser is a major poetic voice for rural and small town America and the first Poet Laureate chosen from the Great Plains. His verse reaches beyond his native region to touch on universal themes in accessible ways.”

Kooser took up his duties in the fall, opening the Library’s annual literary series on October 7, 2004, with a reading of his work.

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The Poetry Foundation, publisher of *Poetry* magazine, is an independent literary organization committed to a vigorous presence for poetry in our culture. It has embarked on an ambitious plan to bring the best poetry before the largest possible audience. In the coming year, the Foundation will sponsor a recitation contest in the schools, a major new poetry website, and an unprecedented study to understand poetry’s place in American culture.

Founded in Chicago by Harriet Monroe in 1912, *Poetry* is the oldest monthly devoted to verse in the English-speaking world. Harriet Monroe’s “Open Door” policy, set forth in Volume 1 of the magazine, remains the most succinct statement of Poetry’s mission: to print the best poetry written today, in whatever style, genre, or approach. The magazine established its reputation early by publishing the first important poems of T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Marianne Moore, Wallace Stevens, H. D., William Carlos Williams, Carl Sandburg, and other now-classic authors. In succeeding decades it has presented—often for the first time—works by virtually every significant poet of the 20th century.

Poetry has always been independent, unaffiliated with any institution or university—or with any single poetic or critical movement or aesthetic school. It continues to print the major English-speaking poets, while presenting emerging talents, in all their variety. In recent years, more than a third of the authors published in the magazine have been young writers appearing for the first time. On average, the magazine receives over 90,000 submissions per year, from around the world.