

JASNA News

THE JANE AUSTEN SOCIETY OF NORTH AMERICA



WINTER 2026

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Genius From Beginning to End

A record-breaking 950 people from 10 countries—including 216 first-time attendees and 24 students—met in Baltimore in October to celebrate Jane Austen’s 250th birthday at the 2025 Annual General Meeting, with the theme “No check to my Genius from beginning to end.” The AGM is estimated to have been the world’s largest gathering of Janeites ever assembled for a conference. An additional 280 JASNA members joined the festivities via livestream.

Baltimore’s nickname, Charm City, seemed apt to many attendees beguiled by the harborside location of the Baltimore Marriott Waterfront hotel, the city’s marvelous museums, and the area’s many compelling historical sites. But the main draw, of course, was the chance to join other fans to explore Austen’s genius and observe this monumental milestone in her legacy.

Noteworthy Plenaries

Paula Byrne opened the conference with the Carol Medine Moss Keynote Lecture on “‘Looking-Glasses at Odd Corners’: Biographical Method and the Art of Reflection,” in which Byrne described how Austen faithfully held up the mirror to capture life and create such memorable and realistic characters. Sharing numerous minute but telling examples from Austen’s oeuvre, Byrne said, “You see her genius most in the tiny moments.”

In the plenary panel “Catching Austen ‘in the Act of Greatness,’” four noted scholars undertook the challenge of describing Austen’s genius in just five minutes each.

- Janine Barchas admitted she was initially a reluctant Janeite but became “smitten” after discovering that Austen used the word “very” 1,212 times in *Emma*. While Barchas admonishes students for using such a nondescriptive word, she found Austen’s prolific use of “very” in *Emma*—when it barely appears in the other novels—ingenious in its reflection of Highbury’s claustrophobic world through local idiolect.
- Inger Brodey focused on Austen’s subtle narrative techniques, such as the masterful way she shifted voice to guide—and misdirect—reader impressions.
- Collins Hemingway emphasized how Austen’s “precision creates tangibility,” with examples such as how differently Lady Russell and Anne Elliot respond to the noise of Bath.

- Given that the panel was “limited as to number” of minutes allocated, Devoney Looser chose to focus on “one thing very clever” that Austen did. Quoting Austen’s letter to niece Fanny from March



2025 AGM Coordinator Jenn Jones and 250th Anniversary Celebration Chair Liz Philosophos Cooper

1817—“pictures of perfection as you know make me sick and wicked”—Looser explained how Austen defied gendered literary conventions to create distinctive heroines who were anything but cookie-cutter.

In her talk, “Austen Through My Brown Eyes: A Personal Reflection on Her Genius, Her Relevance, and the Future of Adaptation,” Vanessa Riley—herself the author of 29 books—described how Austen was aware, honest, and bold as a writer. “Jane Austen gives us everyone,” Riley said, noting that, in addition to the heroines, Austen “speaks to us” through Charlotte Lucas, Miss Bates, Mrs. Smith, and Miss Lambe. Riley also offered fascinating behind-the-scenes insights



Plenary panelists Janine Barchas, Inger Brodey, Collins Hemingway, and Devoney Looser

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DATES AND DEADLINES

JASNA News Spring 2026

Submission deadline: January 7, 2026

Publication date: mid-March

JASNA News Summer 2026

Submission deadline: April 1, 2026

Publication date: mid-June

JASNA News Fall 2026

Submission deadline: July 1, 2026

Publication date: mid-September

2026 Essay Contest

Submission deadline: June 1, 2026

Info: jasna.org/programs/essay-contest

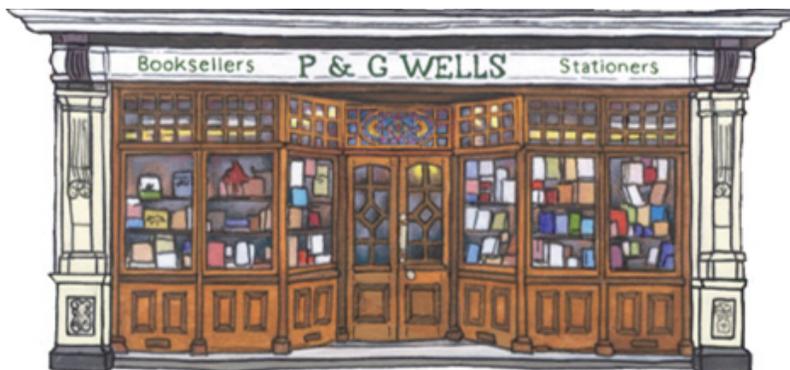
2026 Young Filmmakers Contest

Submission deadline: June 20, 2026

Info: jasna.org/programs/young-filmmakers-contest

2027 AGM Call for Papers/New Voices Speaker Grant Applications

Submission deadline: November 30, 2026



Jane Austen's father and her brother James are recorded as having held accounts with John Burdon, "gentleman bookseller" and owner from 1757 until his death in 1801 of what is now P&G Wells in Winchester. Jane wrote in a letter to Cassandra in 1798 about books they were to receive from Burdon. A descendant of subsequent owner James Robbins who visited the bookshop earlier this year shared that Jane used to take tea with Robbins' wife in the parlor upstairs, according to current shop curator/custodian Steve Scholey.

JASNA News

The newsletter of the
Jane Austen Society of North America

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President's Column

Mary Mintz

Birthdays have been celebrated for centuries for different reasons and in different ways, as distinguished historian Jean-Claude Schmitt points out in a 2007 *Annales* article on the “invention” of the birthday. Schmitt focuses in part on Goethe (1749–1832), the highly influential German writer and intellectual. As a teen, Jane Austen read Goethe’s well-known novel *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, referring to it in her raucous *Love and Freindship*.

In Germany, Goethe was such a revered public figure that his birthday was widely celebrated even during his lifetime—prompting the king of Prussia to decree that events celebrating Goethe’s birthday must not outshine those for the royal family. Annual celebrations for Goethe varied from year to year and ranged from fireworks and sculptures to what must have been a really large birthday cake for his 53rd year: Schmitt says, “*En 1802, il se voit offrir un gâteau avec cinquante-trois bougies*” or “In 1802, he was presented with a cake with fifty-three candles” (but think of the fun in telling children that their birthday cakes have “bougies”). According to Schmitt, the custom of adding candles to cakes was still quite innovative in 1802, having begun around the 1780s.

Austen did not receive such extensive public attention during her lifetime or even the celebrations and appreciation that we may think she deserved. Probably she preferred it that way. After all, she chose to omit her name from the novels published in her lifetime. The more we learn about Austen, however, the more we understand that she was keenly aware of herself as a writer. She was deliberate in trying out different plots, characters, themes, and narrative tactics; she practiced her craft very self-consciously. That awareness shows in her careful collection of reactions to *Mansfield Park* and *Emma*.

I like to think, however, that had Austen lived longer, she might have received the tributes she deserved. We have certainly celebrated her and her achievements throughout 2025. JASNA has been at the forefront when it comes to Austen birthday celebrations. Media coverage of our activities has been international in scope.

Thanks to our birthday committee, led by Liz Philosophos Cooper with members Iris Lutz and Susie Wampler, our celebrations had a special place among the far-reaching tributes to Austen. JASNA’s exciting online programs have ranged from a slow read of *Pride and Prejudice* and informative lectures—such as one on the connection between Taylor Swift and Austen—to a group watch of the movie *Clueless* and Q&A with writer/director Amy Heckerling. The interactive “250 (& More) Reasons We Love Jane Austen” and



“Unexpectedly Austen” have brought worldwide readers together on the JASNA website. The regions have also taken on an important role in gatherings to celebrate Jane Austen.

The spectacular 2025 Annual General Meeting (AGM) with brilliant presentations and special features, such as the *Northanger Abbey* escape room and a unique pop-up museum, made for an unforgettable celebration. Fortunately, many aspects of the AGM will provide us with lasting pleasure because they are preserved through recordings and in *Persuasions* and *Persuasions On-Line*. Some AGM sessions will be made available for group viewing and discussion by regions.

For the special birthday edition of the AGM, enormous thanks are due to Jenn Jones and her hard-working Maryland team; Jane Boltz, VP for conferences; and Linda Slothouber, conference director.

This year’s *Persuasions On-Line* will also feature a sampling of special exhibitions celebrating Austen in the U.S. and U.K. during 2025. Open to all, these articles illustrate JASNA’s important role in capturing the moment and sharing our appreciation for Austen worldwide.

We do not know how Jane Austen’s birthday might have been celebrated by her family. We can be confident, however, that the author who has given us so much pleasure has been properly honored during her 250th year by JASNA.



(Clockwise from top left) Hilary Davidson and Paula Byrne, John Mullan, Juliette Wells, and Vanessa Riley

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from her work as historical consultant on Hallmark’s *Sense and Sensibility* (2024).

JASNA North American Scholar Juliette Wells spoke on the topic “Genius and Ingenuity: A Literary Detective Investigates Austen Artifacts.” Wells shared highlights from her Austen research over the past 25 years as well as her work on the recent Morgan Library and Museum exhibition “A Lively Mind: Jane Austen at 250,” which attracted nearly 120,000 visitors.

John Mullan delivered the weekend’s final plenary address at Sunday’s brunch on the subject “The Minuteness of Genius: Jane Austen’s Choice of Words.” He entertainingly provided examples of Austen’s use of italics, exclamation marks, and dashes—as well as words in the Oxford English Dictionary whose first usage was attributed to Austen. Among other insights, he highlighted Mary Crawford’s frequent use of French words to demonstrate her worldliness and noted that the word “‘must’ usually means the opposite in Austen.”

Renowned Special Guests and a Pop-Up Museum

Jane Austen’s fifth great-niece Caroline Jane Knight, the last of her nieces to grow up at Chawton House, gave a talk on Austen’s Chawton



Caroline Jane Knight; Deborah Charlton; Susannah Harker and Gabrielle Malcolm; Harker responding to a question from the audience

legacy. Deborah Charlton—who led the 2012 archaeological dig at Steventon Rectory, Austen’s first home—gave an engaging presentation on the artifacts found at the site.

On Friday evening, Susannah Harker—who portrayed Jane Bennet in the 1995 *Pride and Prejudice* mini-series, a role her mother, Polly Adams, had played in the 1967 version—appeared with author Gabrielle Malcolm. The duo discussed Harker’s iconic role and her current project, *Jane Bennet’s Second Spring*. AGM attendees viewed numerous Austen-related and Regency objects at a special pop-up museum and had the opportunity to speak informally with and hear presentations by the curators and collectors. Among them:

- Knight shared precious family heirlooms passed down through generations of Knights and Austens.
- Kristen Welzenbach of Goucher College Library showcased translations and adaptations of Austen’s work.
- David Brandreth exhibited 36 coins dated 1700 to 1817.
- Candice Hern brought some of her extensive array of items that would have been kept in a reticule.
- Ann Wass displayed hand-colored fashion plates created from 1799 to the 1820s.
- Paul Savidge presented Austen’s signed copy of *Curiosities of Literature*.
- Alden O’Brien offered a selection of dresses, undergarments, and accessories from Austen’s era.
- Mary Gaither Marshall discussed how to create a collection of Austen books whether you have an unlimited—or very small—budget.

Plentiful Breakout Choices

Some 34 speakers offered 27 talks to choose from over the course of five breakout sessions. Numerous presentations focused on aspects of Austen’s literary genius—from her inspired use of place as well as misdirection in her novels to how she transformed the Georgian heroine and conveyed complex ideas in a single word. New Voices Speaker Po-Yu (Rick)

Wei from Wenzhou-Kean University spoke on “The Shyness Which Too Often Keeps Him Silent: Jane Austen and the Ethics of Shyness.” Other topics included “From Head to Toe,” which explored footwear in fact and fiction as well as what Miss Lambe and other women of the Caribbean wore on their heads; the influence of Austen’s flamboyant French cousin Eliza de Feuillide on Austen’s work; how Austen read the world across the Atlantic; and a panel on “Austen: The Adaptation Machine.”

Other Highlights

Students from 47 countries entered the 2025 Essay Contest with a total of 560 submissions. While entries to the high school group still account for the largest numbers, undergraduate and graduate submissions increased dramatically this year. Winners were recognized on Saturday morning, and the essays are available to read on jasna.org.

The Young Filmmakers Contest (YFC) went global this year, accepting international submissions for the first time and garnering record entries. At the Thursday night gala, finalist films were screened for an enthusiastic audience. Rowan Killina—an undergraduate at Bryn Mawr College—attended the ceremony, in which her short film, “Fashion Sense (and Sensibility),” took first prize. Audience favorite film was “Regency Girls,” which was screened at the Sunday brunch. The films can be viewed on JASNA’s YouTube channel.

Current JASNA Treasurer Vicki Petersen was voted president-elect at the Annual Members Meeting on Saturday.

AGM coordinator Jenn Jones and her steering committee—June Brandt, Emily Gold, Maryellen and Lou Kosydar, and Ann Wass, and their dedicated volunteers—spent years developing the conference with stellar support from JASNA Conference Director Linda Slothouber, Registrar Debbie Duncan, speaker liaison Delia Bisgyer, VP for Conferences Jane Boltz, meeting planner Michelle Eggert, Finance Director Laurie Morison, Petersen, and JASNA President Mary Mintz.



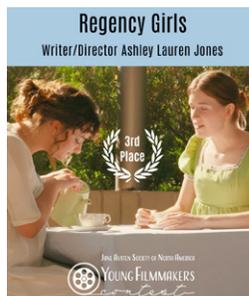
Essay Contest winners Alyssa C. Pierce, Wanas Radwan, Eva N. Rotberg, and Elizabeth Riddick; YFC Chair Erika Kotite and contest winner Rowan Killina



Fashion Sense (and Sensibility)
Writer/Director Rowan Killina



Mrs. Harris Bigg-Wither
Writer/Director Tia Marinakas



Regency Girls
Writer/Director Ashley Lauren Jones

Fashion Show



For this year’s fashion show, participants dressed as Austen characters and the audience guessed who they were portraying. (Clockwise from top left) Mistress of Ceremonies Lena Yasutake; Dee Rieber as Lady Susan; Tamara and Mike Mackenthun as the Gardiners; Lynda Hall as the Jane Austen action figure; Jane Boltz as Mr. Wickham; Toya Raffington-Garrett as Mary Crawford; and Agnes Gawne as Mrs. Croft

International News



An Idyllic Setting to Research, Run, and Reflect

By Rachel Gevlin

Is there a more beautiful place to finish a research project than Chawton? After spending five weeks there this past summer as the 2025 JASNA International Visitor, I think not. Although the subject of my book manuscript is not as saturated in beauty as the Hampshire landscape—I am researching shifting 18th century attitudes toward men’s premarital and extramarital sex—Chawton House provided a rich source of materials to study and an idyllic setting in which to think and write.

Previous research trips had allowed me to explore the way the law addressed men’s adultery around the turn of the 19th century, a period that saw an escalation of divorce petitions and a striking increase in publicity around marital infidelity. I arrived in Chawton, however, with lingering questions about how the broader culture responded to instances of men’s sexual transgressions outside the realms of law and fiction. As such, I spent my five weeks in Chawton House’s reading room examining the archive’s rich collection of treatises, letters, and essays on this topic.

Although many of the sources I examined purport to focus on female adultery, I found some fascinating material that puts forward the revolutionary hypothesis that women’s infidelity might be curtailed if husbands were more faithful to their wives. Texts such as *The Present State of Matrimony; or, the Real Causes of Conjugal Infidelity and Unhappy Marriages* and *Free Thoughts on Seduction, Adultery, and Divorce* revealed positions on men’s sexual transgressions leading up to and within the marriage state that read as surprisingly proto-feminist, even as the early pages of these documents regurgitate the same explicitly gendered arguments around adultery as one expects to find in most of the literature (fictional and otherwise) from the period.

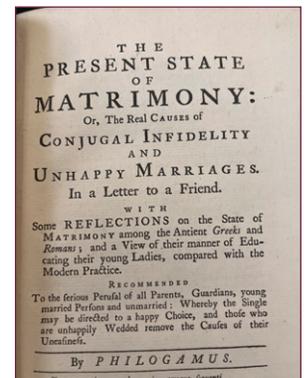
Apart from the very fruitful research component of my trip, my time in Chawton was defined by runs through the gorgeous landscape, visits to the 3,000-year-old tree in neighboring Upper Farringdon, and chats with my Airbnb host, Katie Knight. While I had imagined that staying

in an Airbnb on the Chawton estate would make for an especially memorable component of my trip, I had not anticipated the overwhelming warmth of my host, who shared with me stories of visiting Chawton House in the ’80s, when it was not the public destination it is today but an old, somewhat spooky house owned by her then-boyfriend’s family.

It was surreal to spend my days between the archives in the “big house” and these irreplaceable conversations on the stoop of Chawton House’s former falconry, and when I returned home to Virginia, it felt like I was taking with me a store of knowledge and experience that extended well beyond what I’d gained in the reading room.

At the very end of my trip, I enjoyed an active day of volunteering at the Jane Austen Society meeting—an enjoyable experience both on the level of cultural exchange (this conference is run so differently from the JASNA Annual General Meeting, and it was fascinating to observe those differences!) as well as social, as I saw several familiar faces and met some new Janeites. And, as an added bonus, John Mullan’s talk on Austen’s use of time in her novels was a hilarious and brilliant treat. This day in Steventon was a perfect way to cap an immensely productive trip, and I am incredibly grateful to JASNA for the opportunity.

Rachel Gevlin is a teaching assistant professor of English at Virginia Commonwealth University, where she teaches courses on 18th century literature, literary theory, and women writers. She is a JASNA traveling lecturer for 2025–26 and was JASNA’s International Visitor Program fellow in summer 2025.



Rachel Gevlin, *The Present State of Matrimony*

Annual General Meeting

Tucson AGM 2026: Jane Austen's Bath Novels

The elegant city of Bath afforded Jane Austen picturesque settings for two novels published shortly after her death: *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion*. At the Annual General Meeting (AGM), Oct. 30 to Nov. 1, 2026, JASNA members will assemble to explore these cherished novels at another famous resort town—Tucson, Arizona.

Like Bath, Tucson attracts a range of visitors seeking health and wellness, cultural diversion, and social interaction among kindred spirits in a setting of exceptional beauty. Famous for its waters, excellent weather, elevated cuisine, and gorgeous natural environment—including picturesque surrounding mountains, stunning canyons, and iconic sunsets—Tucson was ranked by the BBC in 2025 as “Among the Best Places to Travel.”



This AGM falls on Halloween and Dia de Los Muertos weekend and appropriate holiday activities are being planned for conference registrants, companions, and families with children. The annual Regency ball will be a masquerade ball, with attendees encouraged to bring a mask—or purchase one at the Emporium—to join the fun on Saturday evening.



Hazel Jones

Hazel Jones will serve as the Carol Medine Moss Keynote Lecturer and present the talk “Bath Is Still Bath.” Jones is editor of the Jane Austen Society’s annual report and author of *Jane Austen and Marriage*, *Jane Austen’s Journeys*, and *The Other Knight Boys: Jane Austen’s Dispossessed Nephews*. She has taught many residential courses on Austen in England with students from all over the world; has given lectures on Austen to various societies in the United Kingdom, Australia, and the United States; and has conducted tours of sites in England featured in films and television series based on *Pride and Prejudice*, *Persuasion*, and *Sense and Sensibility*. She’s also guided Janeites through the elegant streets and crescents of her favorite city, Bath. In Tucson, Jones will share the history and Regency social life of Bath, where Austen lived for five years and set her first major novel, *Northanger Abbey*, and her last completed work, *Persuasion*.



Devoney Looser

Devoney Looser, the 2026 JASNA North American Scholar, will give a talk on “Faster and Faster: The Speed of Life in Jane Austen’s Bath Novels.” The Regents Professor of English at Arizona State University and an Austen scholar, Looser has authored numerous books, including *The Making of Jane Austen*, *The Daily Jane Austen: A Year of Quotes*, *Sister Novelists: The Trailblazing Porter Sisters Who Paved the Way for Austen and the Brontës*, and her latest work, *Wild for Austen: A Rebellious, Subversive, and Untamed Jane*. In addition, Looser created a series of video/audio lessons, *The Life and Works of Jane Austen*, for The Great Courses and Audible. She is also a roller derby enthusiast who has competed under the name Stone Cold Jane Austen.

New York-based novelist, essayist, and critic **Brandon Taylor** will deliver a plenary lecture on “*Persuasion*: A Novel of Second Chances and Transformation.” While a PhD student in biochemistry, he decided instead to pursue a career in creative writing. Shortlisted for the Booker Prize for his 2020 debut novel *Real Life*, Taylor’s works have been published in *Granta*, *The New Yorker*, *The Literary Review*, and numerous other journals. In his interview for the Booker Prize, he cited Jane Austen as one of his influences. Taylor also



Brandon Taylor

authored the introduction to Vintage Books' recently reissued *Persuasion* and has been working on a Southern gothic project. His collection of literary criticism is due in 2026 and his book on the craft of writing will be published in 2027.

Sunday morning plenary speaker **Lidia Chang**, musicologist and assistant professor of music at Colorado College, will discuss "Music as Social Mediator in *Persuasion* and *Northanger Abbey*." She will accompany her presentation on the role of music, concerts, and dance in Austen's novels and Regency society by performing music on period instruments, with assistance from her Colorado College music colleagues via video. Chang's recordings of Regency and dance music can be heard on the 2015–19 BBC adaptation of *Poldark*. A classically trained musician and daughter of a NASA astronaut, she divides her time between Colorado Springs and Vienna.



Lidia Chang

Special guest speaker **Gill Hornby** will travel from her home in Yorkshire, England, to attend the AGM. She draws on Austen's life for her popular novels, including *Miss Austen*—which was adapted into a four-part television series for the BBC and **MASTERPIECE** on PBS starring Keeley Hawes—*Godmersham Park*, and *The Elopement*. Hornby is president of the Jane Austen Society U.K.

More than two dozen breakout speakers will examine various topics relating to Austen's Bath novels, while hands-on workshops, informative tours, and entertaining special events are being planned for the weekend. Following are some examples of outings attendees can enjoy while attending the AGM in Tucson:

- JASNA is partnering with internationally famous local guides **Borderlandia** for cultural tours and with other top companies for nature-focused tours.
- Several self-guided excursions will be available, with low-cost transportation provided to key sites along with all the information you need to enjoy them.
- Large-group dinner opportunities will be combined with visits to a museum or famous garden.
- Companion tours and activities open to families will be offered as well.
- And if you've never visited the **Grand Canyon** or **Sedona**, viewed the stars from **Kitts Peak Observatory**, or ridden a horse at a dude ranch, these experiences will be available before and after the conference.



Gill Hornby

Tour opportunities will include the **Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum**, a fusion of botanical garden, art gallery, natural history museum, zoo, and aquarium; **Mission San Xavier del Bac**, the Spanish colonial mission created in 1693 with the founding of Tucson; **Barrio Viejo**, Tucson's old town and one of the largest concentrations of 1880s adobe architecture in the country; and the **Tohono O'odham Nation** tribal land, where tribal members sell traditional jewelry and baskets.

The spacious JW Marriott resort provides access to numerous walking trails, bike paths, and bird-watching opportunities, pool and water features on multiple levels of the hotel property, as well as rejuvenating spa treatments and experiences. **Tucson Mountain Park**, adjacent to the hotel property, offers guided tours along various hiking trails where you may spot wildlife, such as roadrunners and mule deer. Outdoor activities at the resort include biking, swimming, walking, horseback riding, and golfing.

In addition, you can enjoy on your own any of some two dozen local museums and art galleries, including the **Tucson Museum of Art**, and over a dozen local, state, and federal parks, nature reserves, and hiking trails in the area. The **Tohono Chul Gardens** will be holding its annual **Dia de Los Muertos** festival, with local food, crafts, and music. **Sabino Canyon** offers popular tram tours of its picturesque Sonoran landscape.

Join your fellow JASNA members and gather in the assembly rooms of Tucson to celebrate 251 years of Jane Austen and enjoy good conversation, the best company, and new adventures in a beautiful resort environment.

North American News

Members Share Feedback on JASNA News

JASNA News launched in September 1985 as an eight-page, black-and-white edition published twice annually. In 1997, the publication expanded to three issues per year, varying between 28 and 36 pages and remaining in B&W. Since summer 2019, the newsletter has been published quarterly, in color, with a fixed 24 pages per issue.

Annual costs for the newsletter have risen steadily over the years, even as JASNA introduced digital-only memberships that reduced the number of pieces mailed. The total cost for printing JASNA News was \$43,498 in 2019 but rose to \$55,010 in 2024. In 2019, 22,800 printed newsletters were produced and mailed, while that number dropped to 14,000 in 2024. Printing per piece cost \$1 in 2019 and more than \$1.50 in 2024. So while the number of printed newsletters has decreased 39 percent since 2019, the cost of printing and mailing has risen by 54 percent and 38 percent respectively. Mailing costs went up again in July 2025.

Before considering potential cost-reduction measures, it was important to obtain member feedback on what you value most (and least) in the newsletter, as well as suggestions for change. A debt of gratitude goes out to every member who took the time to complete the survey.

JASNA News received nearly 1,300 comments, all of which were illuminating. One reader wrote, “The newsletter makes me feel



Inaugural issue from 1985; spring 2019 issue, prior to latest redesign

connected with other lovers of Jane Austen’s work.”

Here are a few key takeaways from the survey:

- 80 percent of respondents prefer the current 24-page length.
- 70 percent like receiving the newsletter quarterly.
- Every section of the newsletter had its advocates and detractors—demonstrating what a diverse range of interests JASNA members have.
- However, member profiles were the least-loved content and have been eliminated.
- Numerous respondents said they appreciated that the newsletter is not academic, since *Persuasions* covers that territory.
- Members were split on print vs. digital.
 - Many consider digital content too ephemeral, easy to miss, and hard on people’s vision; numerous members said reading a digital version makes them feel like they’re at work.
 - Others shared concerns about the cost of print/mail and its environmental impact.

While additional changes may come in the future, the JASNA Board of Directors voted on Oct. 9, 2025, to continue the quarterly production schedule but make the summer issue a digital-only newsletter that will also be made publicly viewable on the JASNA website as a marketing tool to help attract new members.

LAUNCH DATES OF JASNA COMMUNICATIONS

Persuasions (originally called *Persuasion*), JASNA’s literary journal—December 16, 1979

JASNA News, member newsletter—September 1985

JASNA website, jasna.org—1997

Persuasions On-Line—1999

Email communications program—November 2011

JASNA Update, monthly e-bulletin—March 2014

Austen Chat, JASNA’s podcast—July 2023

Social media presence (Facebook, Instagram, YouTube)—dates vary

SUGGESTION BOX

JASNA News would like to hear your ideas for interactive and engaging content for the summer 2026 issue of the newsletter—which will be digital-only and available to nonmembers as well as members on JASNA’s website.

As usual, the summer issue will feature an extended review section. Share your favorite Austen-related audiobooks, podcasts, theatrical productions, and other resources. Send your suggestions and comments to JASNA News Editor Susie Wampler at jasnanews@gmail.com.





HOW HAPPY IS 'HAPPILY EVER AFTER?'

Last Impressions: Jane Austen's Endings

By Theresa M. Kenney
University of Toronto Press (2025)
387 pages; paperback, \$34.95/
Hardcover, \$100/ebook, \$34.95

Review by Elsa Solender

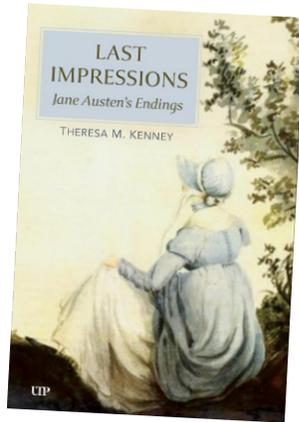
Jane Austen's opening line for *Pride and Prejudice*—that “truth universally acknowledged” (albeit ironically)—is widely and justly celebrated. Even the most avid Austenian must admit, however, that it's not (quite) as famous as another universally acknowledged (yet dubiously verifiable) ending line: “They lived happily ever after,” a conclusion that never satisfied Austen.

Professor Theresa M. Kenney believes that there have been misunderstandings and failures to appreciate the artistry, complexity, and sophistication of the finales of *all* of Austen's completed novels—even *Lady Susan*, her early epistolary work. Kenney's book, including revisions of some essays that previously appeared in *Persuasions*, offers comprehensive rhetorical analyses of the endings of each completed novel. Happily, her masterful readings of Austen texts are accessible not only to fellow academicians but also to reasonably well-informed “civilians” who, I believe, will be as inspired as I was to return to the novels “with new eyes.”

If rhetorical terms like telos, metalepsis, astutia, and paralipsis intimidate you, fear not: Google can speedily supply you with plain English synonyms. Otherwise, wait for Kenney to efficiently define whichever particular rhetorical tool Austen employed to make each of her endings work just as she planned. Far from rushing or simply stopping her novels, as some critics have argued, Austen's finales are crafted with deft and ingenious utilization of classical rhetorical devices, moral purpose, and much more, as Kenney demonstrates.

Anyone who believes Austen was (merely) a romantic novelist cannot have fully appreciated the closings of her six masterworks. An Austen ending is never a marital “picture of perfection” for her protagonist (my Austen reference there) but instead, as Kenney writes of *Northanger Abbey*, it “challenges the reader to discern what the book is really about, asking the reader to complete an exercise in interpretation” (319).

Kenney shows that Austen already possessed an impressive rhetorical toolbox even before she became the anonymous publishing



phenomenon known as “A Lady” in her first published work, *Sense and Sensibility*. She distinguishes, though, between the limited effects of the endings in Austen's teenage writings—however entertaining—and the astonishing control, reach, and unity achieved in the provocative final chapters of Austen's mature works. In each instance, the narrator offers an ironic invitation to ponder issues involving values well beyond the likely success of matrimonial pairings.

Despite the seriousness of her objective, Kenney never fails to appreciate Austen's playfulness and satiric intent. She *gets* Austen's artistry, intellect, and innovations—and she also gets her jokes.

Kenney argues, in a telling subtext, that Austen's novels ought to be read in context, not wrested from their own era to satisfy a modern reader's desire to twist her fiction to fit into a fashionable modern trend such as anticolonialism or sexual liberation or whatever comes next. Kenney's discussion of the meanings of “truth,” “happiness,” and “human nature” in the late 18th and early 19th centuries is particularly illuminating. Generous and appreciative citations of the works of scholarly colleagues and predecessors, with some explicit and implicit criticism of others, offer further opportunities to investigate questions and controversies. (Kenney's purpose and methodology in examining Austen's endings are quite different from Inger Sigrun Brodey's approach in her fine 2024 book focused on endings, *Jane Austen & the Price of Happiness*.)

Kenney's explication of the ending of *Lady Susan* returned me with considerably enhanced enjoyment to my least favorite and least reread of her finished novels. While this was for me the most revelatory chapter of Kenney's exploration, her astute commentaries on all six masterworks were no less enjoyable and persuasive. Her appreciation of Henry Crawford's character flaws and the moral, psychological, and philosophical implications of the somewhat troubling conclusion of *Mansfield Park* were particularly impressive, given persistent controversy about that notably conditional “happily ever after,” dating back to Austen's sister, Cassandra, who would have preferred Fanny Price to reform and marry Crawford. As Kenney concludes: “Austen uses apophasis,

metalepsis, analepsis, forced retrospection, and more, to engage the reader's imagination and direct us rhetorically. She gives the reader so much information, such an array of rhetorical strategies, that her conclusions are dizzying, drawing her reader to go ever more insistently back into the story, to see the unity, to see in what way Austen's providential hand has prepared every final step" (325).

Quite simply, I loved reading Kenney's book and recommend it highly, especially to obsessive rereaders.

Elsa Solender, president of JASNA from 1996–2000, wrote the biographical novel, Jane Austen in Love.

FEMALE PENS APLENTY!

Jane Austen's Bookshelf: A Rare-Book Collector's Quest to Find the Women Writers Who Shaped a Legend

By Rebecca Romney

S&S/Marysue Rucci Books (2025)

464 pages; hardcover, \$29.99

Review by Janine Barchas

It has not been a secret that Jane Austen had help—and much of it from female pens. After all, Austen declares in her own letters that she is a member of a family of “great novel readers and not ashamed of being so”—and Dale Spender pointed out in the 1980s that many of Austen's influential early novelists were women. A glance at any JASNA Annual General Meeting lineup reminds us how often we discuss Austen in relation to Frances Burney, Ann Radcliffe, Germaine de Staël, or Maria Edgeworth—all of whom enjoyed the contemporary fame that would elude Austen herself while she lived.

Burney, in particular, was an Austen family favorite. As a grown woman, Caroline Austen in 1867 recounted how her aunt, who “read remarkably well,” so entertained her nieces and nephews with “a few pages of Mr Smith and the Brangtons” from Burney's 1778 novel *Evelina* that little Caroline “thought it was a play.” In addition, Janeites still discuss how, in 1795, Reverend George Austen paid a guinea for his daughter Jane to receive a copy of Burney's novel *Camilla*, and that the mention of “J. Austen, Steventon” among its list of subscribers was that rare instance of our favorite author's name in print during her lifetime. In *Northanger Abbey*, we see how Austen champions and spoofs Burney and Radcliffe inside her own fictions.

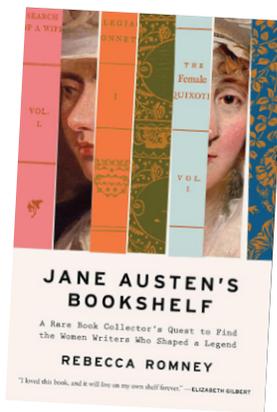
If you are nodding sagely, how would you actually do if quizzed on the plot of *Evelina*? Do you, like Caroline Austen, vividly recall the class-based humor of the would-be suitor Mr. Smith and the scheming shopkeeper family of Brangton? Do you remember the awkward assembly scene from which Austen directly cribs her own meet-cute for *Pride and Prejudice*? If you are a staunch rereader of Austen, when did

you last crack the spine of *Evelina*, or the mammoth *Camilla*, to which Austen so proudly subscribed? And what of Radcliffe's megahit *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, the gothic *Twilight* of Austen's day? The self-reproach you may or may not feel right about now is Rebecca Romney's fair point. Even when these innovative authors retain name recognition on college syllabi today, not all of Austen's fans dutifully read the bestsellers that so tickled and inspired their favorite author. If you want to make amends, this lively book can help you catch up.

A seller of rare books by trade, Romney writes well and charms with a confessional narrative that deliberately overstates both her starting naivete and her resemblance to the world's greatest fictional detective: “I took my Sherlockian skills from the rare book trade and turned them to this investigation. I wanted to know who these women were, what they wrote, and why they were no longer part of the canon. I would read their books and I would collect copies that appealed to me for their historical interest. I would fill Jane Austen's Bookshelf” (16).

Romney separates herself from the specialist who might dismiss her quest as jejune: “In some circles Burney's reputation had never deteriorated. But I wasn't part of those circles. ... I was not an academic” (56). As Romney narrates her anecdotal hunt for specific copies, she devotes one chapter of judicious and elegiac summary to each of the following worthies: Frances Burney, Ann Radcliffe, Charlotte Lennox, Hannah More, Charlotte Smith, Elizabeth Inchbald, Hester Lynch Thrale Piozzi, and Maria Edgeworth.

Romney's book, which praises eight female authors who blazed a trail for Austen, has been widely reviewed and is spreading the good word about these 18th century women novelists. It is particularly unfortunate, therefore, that Romney does not do more to acknowledge the women who cleared the trail for her own learnings. True, she has plenty of endnotes at the back listing the untold scholarly biographies and studies from which, rather belatedly, Romney learned the things that she sheepishly relates she should have learned long ago. But why mention Dale Spender's foundational *Mothers of the Novel: 100 Good Women Writers Before Jane Austen* (1986) as late as page 298, when it was “one of the first books I turned to when I started this project”? The pioneering Spender, set aside here as “an Australian professor,” and the “many other scholars” whose reclamation projects followed her lead are all



subordinated—deemed, well, academic. Have scholarship and expertise fallen so out of fashion that only self-spun truths can now convince?

And what of Chawton House, which fellow book collector Sandy Lerner (not an academic) filled to the brim with books and manuscripts by women who wrote before 1830? In the mid-1990s, inspired by Spender and disgusted that the great scholarly libraries of the world boasted only partial or paltry collections of early female authors, Lerner—who, just like Romney, was an Austen fan, collector, and autodidact—used her fortune as co-founder of Cisco Systems to build a collection of early female authors in the hopes of righting a skewed historical record and creating a laboratory for future feminist thinkers.

Lerner gave her collection to the nonprofit that became Chawton House, an act of generosity for which she was awarded an OBE. The collections at Chawton House, which also houses the Austen family books once owned by Edward Knight to which his sister Jane had access on her visits to his Godmersham estate, are as close to Jane Austen's actual bookshelf as circumstances allow. Yet Chawton House gets only passing mentions as Edward's former home and not as the world's leading institution dedicated to the very mission professed by Romney's book: to raise awareness of the female pens that inspired and made possible the likes of Austen.

As a teacher of the 18th century novel, I am thrilled to welcome an articulate fellow fighter in the trenches of the humanities! And, again as teacher, I applaud a steep learning curve—no matter how late in the game. I simply wish that this book were less insistent upon Romney's DIY education, when her endnotes and glosses indicate how she herself treads in the exact footsteps of so many other female historians and fellow book collectors.

Janine Barchas holds the Chancellor's Council Centennial Professorship in the Book Arts at the University of Texas at Austin. She is the author of three books about Jane Austen and co-curated "Paper Jane: 250 Years of Austen" at the Grolier Club in New York City.

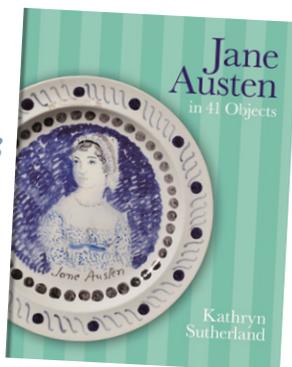
THE MAGIC OF ORDINARY THINGS

Jane Austen in 41 Objects

By Kathryn Sutherland
Bodleian Library Publishing (2025)
xiv + 209 pages; 41 color illustrations
Hardcover, \$40

Review by Susan H. Farnsworth

As Jane Austen's devoted readers know, her life was heartbreakingly short. Still, an attempt to capture its essential features in 41 objects, to match the brevity of those 41 years, is a daunting challenge. Taking up the gauntlet, Kathryn Sutherland, distinguished professor of English and patron of Jane Austen's House, compellingly demonstrates that things have their own stories to tell and collectively contribute to a fresh portrait of Austen that is informative, provocative, and often moving.



The book, published in association with Jane Austen's House, is a beautifully designed and illustrated survey of the chosen objects, showcased in striking color photographs, then described efficiently and persuasively in short essays. The book includes a detailed chronology, opening with the marriage of Austen's parents in 1764 and continuing through 2017, when the author became the face of the U.K.'s £10 note and when Jane Austen's House hosted a special exhibition, "Jane Austen in 41 Objects," to commemorate the 200th anniversary of her death. The book is enhanced by helpful notes, suggestions for further reading, an index, and attributions for the accompanying images. Sutherland argues in favor of a biography developed through commentary on material items. She emphasizes that Austen herself had few possessions: her clothing, some costume jewelry, some books, at times a piano. Like other unmarried women of her time and rank, she performed invaluable but unpaid work that preserved the social ties of kinship but left little historical trace. However, Austen was able to use the "circumstances of relative powerlessness and the tedium of daily obligation and confinement to the 'lesser duties of life' ... and transformed the novel into the most powerful vehicle for female expression" (5). As a prolific letter writer, Austen focused on the "little nothings" of her days. In her novels, she embraced the materialist philosophy and consumerist attitudes of her time, showing how objects shape the mind, reveal character, and situate individuals in their society. Following this premise, Sutherland offers us a biography of Austen "aslant" (17) through these accounts of small things that have their own histories, journeys, and afterlives.

Sutherland organizes the 41 objects in broadly chronological order. Around half of them now reside in Jane Austen's House, and details of their provenance and acquisition also comment on the growth and significance of this museum. Sutherland chose not to include objects that relate to romantic love, and Austen's novels are not a focus. Sutherland intentionally favors Austen's female connections, since Austen's life predominantly was centered within a female community. As Sutherland correctly forecasts, this is a book that readers can frequently revisit, sampling as desired, making it a valuable part of any Austen library.

While readers will find some familiar and famous objects represented, Sutherland's sharp and evocative assessments of them deepen Austen's story. Of course, we have images of items such as Cassandra's portraits,

the impossibly small writing table, and the elegant pelisse that reflects both Austen's love of fashion and her support for the Royal Navy. We read fascinating accounts of Austen family items, such as Marianne Knight's dancing slippers and Joshua Reynolds' painting of Betsy Hancock, who as Eliza de Feuillide became a mentor to Austen. Sutherland tells us how some items—such as the wallpaper fragment that has been reproduced and hung in the dining room as Chawton Leaf—were rediscovered and incorporated into the vivid family world recreated at Jane Austen's House. We have access here to family documents and letters, Austen's music book, and the family quilt, among other treasures.

Items that originate after Austen's death become important components of her story. Through them, we can trace the family's role in recording—and partially distorting—aspects of her life in early attempts to satisfy a growing popular desire for anything about Austen. We discover how Austen has been appropriated by the worlds of tourism, theater, publishing, and television. (Yes, Mr. Darcy's white linen shirt from the 1995 miniseries is here.) Among many fascinating perspectives, we learn about the Bloomsbury Group's appreciation for Austen, translated by Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant into a Wedgwood portrait plate of Austen, part of the once-lost Famous Women Dinner Service. Readers will be delighted by the breadth and diversity of the items from which Sutherland finds new angles on Austen.

The book ends poignantly with object 41, the image of the last lines Austen wrote of the unfinished novel that became *Sanditon*. Dated four months before Austen's death, we see just a few words followed by empty space. While there is no concluding, synthesizing essay to match the opening reflection on the value of a materialist biography of Austen, this selection subtly and powerfully makes Sutherland's main case: that so much of what we know of Austen took shape after her early death, so that she, too, has become an artifact—widely studied but never fully explained. Readers of this significant contribution to Austen scholarship will savor it as we incorporate into our own portraits of Jane the objects that keep her alive for us.

Susan H. Farnsworth is professor emerita of history at Trinity Washington University. She's been the co-RC for the Metro D.C. Region for the last four years and chairs JASNA's International Visitor Program Committee. She studied at Somerville College, Oxford, as did Kathryn Sutherland.

EMMA'S AMERICAN EXPRESS

Ugh! As If!

By Veronica Litt

ECW Press (2025); 200 pages

Paperback, \$15.95

Review by Colin Carman

"Disclaimer so the Janeites don't come for me," writes Veronica Litt before explaining a subplot in Jane Austen's *Emma*. There is no reason for her to be

defensive, however, since Litt is not only a cinephile but also clearly qualifies as a Janeite. Her charming *Ugh! As If!* is the 15th addition to the Pop Classics Series published by ECW Press, and it's as breezily entertaining as it is erudite and forward-thinking.

The adjective "iconic" has become one of the most overused words in English. However, it is safe to say that the 1995 film *Clueless* has secured its status as an iconic comedy, inspired, of course, by Austen's iconic—no, let's go with "sacred text"—*Emma* (1815). Infinitely rewatchable, *Clueless* is categorized as a coming-of-age tale that belongs on the Mount Rushmore of rom-com classics.

Alicia Silverstone (as Cher Horowitz, an *Emma* analog) plays the ditzy blonde devoted to a rich and irascible father. Rivalled only by the more famous beginning of *Pride and Prejudice*, the opener of *Emma* proudly lists three of its heroine's strengths: "handsome, clever, and rich." In the hands of screenwriter/director Amy Heckerling, Cher is undeniably beautiful and wealthy, but her powers of perception are questionable at best.

Litt argues forcefully that Cher is indeed clever and that to dismiss her as a dumb blonde—or a "ditz with a credit card" (46)—is to miss the point entirely. Nevertheless, like Austen's protagonist, Cher is a monster of white privilege who must, by the conclusion, drop her blinders and, in keeping with all of Austen's major heroines, improve her conduct and deepen her connections with others.

Litt does not hide her adoration for this adaptation: "With its sharp script, big-hearted message, and charming performances, *Clueless* is the perfect feel-good movie" (12). The book's design even duplicates the yellow-plaid ensemble that Cher wears as she struts into Bronson Alcott High School.

Ugh! As If! can be divided into two halves. The first might be considered A Defense of the "Ditz," a word that stems, etymologically, from the German name Dietz—which, Litt notes, "literally means 'rich, powerful person.' Privilege was baked into the airhead from the start" (59).

Proof of Cher's cleverness is on full display when, in conversation with her stepbrother, Josh (a stand-in for Knightley), she corrects his girlfriend's knowledge of *Hamlet*. Litt also confronts the ick factor—that they, however briefly, once lived together as brother and sister—that lurks beneath their love affair. Then there is the matter of Cher's autonomy. While Litt



takes issue with the way Heckerling's reboot does not challenge the class warfare found in Austen's master text, she offers an interesting insight when it comes to the scene when Cher is entering Bronson Alcott High and a classmate puts his arm around her without her consent. Cher reacts with disgust, uttering the iconic—there, I said it—"Ugh! As if!" The exasperated "ugh" is so crucial for Litt because, decades prior to the #MeToo movement, when "an entitled stranger touches your body, you are well within your rights to yell and push them away" (54).

The second half of Litt's study is more critical of the ways in which the film, being a product of the 1990s, is itself clueless, or out of touch, when it comes to its treatment of race relations and, again, the rigidities of social rank (upheld versus torn down).

Having taught *Emma* countless times, I must say that I have paired it with *Clueless* (alongside the 2020 film version of *Emma*, which adheres to the original though it does give us a nude shot of Mr. Knightley's, er, knighthood) and found that, among today's college students, many of the jokes go over like lead balloons.

Today, *Clueless* would be compressed into a 30-minute sitcom format because, per Litt, "teen comedies were not seen as a bankable genre," even 30 years ago (12). I always chuckle when Cher, trying to woo Christian (an update of Frank Churchill but reimagined as a coiffed gay teenager), shows that she has zero gaydar. "Do you like Billie Holiday?" he asks. "Oh, I love him," Cher gushes. On a movie date, Christian prefers to gaze at *Spartacus*. Such humor is completely lost on my students—or perhaps, I should say, as indignantly as Emma speaks to Miss Bates on Box Hill, college kids today are not stupid per se, but they are, well, clueless.

Colin Carman is an assistant professor of English at Colorado Mesa University. He served as the International Visiting Scholar for JASNA in 2019 and is writing a book on Austen's representation of addiction, specifically the shifting notions of alcoholism in 19th century medicine.

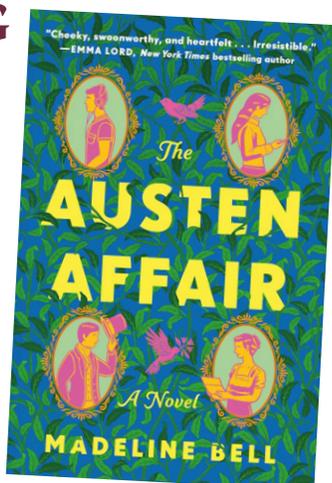
A TIME-TRAVELING ADVENTURE

The Austen Affair

By Madeline Bell
St. Martin's/Griffin (2025)
336 pages; paperback, \$19

Review by Julie Hennrikus

In fiction, a writer needs to understand the tropes and "rules" of the genre they are writing in. It could be argued that Jane Austen typified many of the romance tropes: frenemies becoming lovers, almost-too-late revelations that you love your best friend, loving the wrong person until you come to your senses. In order



to eclipse the trope, the author must add her own spin. Madeline Bell's *The Austen Affair* provides a delightful whirl for the reader.

Tess Bright, a C-list, Gen Z, California-born actor, is the first-person narrator of *The Austen Affair*. Tess was raised by an Austenophile single mother who has recently passed away. Playing Catherine Morland in a new update of *Northanger Abbey* is a dream for Tess. Except that she is still deeply grieving her mother. Except that Henry Tilney is being portrayed by Hugh Balfour, a type-A method actor who will interact with her only while in character and whose personality is more Darcy than Henry Tilney.

At the beginning of the novel, Tess laments her lack of chemistry with Hugh and worries that she is over her head in the role of Catherine: "I cannot be like Dakota Johnson in the Netflix *Persuasion*, I cannot. I don't have the career she has—this is my last chance, and my big break. If I blow this, I don't bounce back" (10). After overhearing a conversation out of context (another trope), Tess argues with Hugh, and both of them are accidentally electrocuted. When they come to, they are in the year 1815.

I suspect more than one reader of this review would envy the opportunity to travel to Austen's era. Bell creates a credible gateway for the reader to believe the time hop could work if one were prepared. Tess and Hugh assimilate by pretending to be a dead man and his fiancée, which is helped by their acting skills. Since they were dressed in period costumes at the time of the zap, the ruse works. But as they continue to live in the time, and the town, they become attached to people. Tess makes friends, but Hugh worries about the lineage of his family being interrupted by the shift.

Secondary characters in *The Austen Affair* feel familiar in an Austen-like world: the befuddled father, the roguish military man, the unhappy heartbroken ex-fiancée of Waterloo Hugh, the overbearing doctor and his wife. Coupled with many Austen allusions, the book has another layer for readers to enjoy.

As Tess and Hugh become closer, tension comes in several forms, including the time difference. Tess comes to think of being in 1815 as a sort of miracle manufactured by her mother. She'd be happy to stay while Hugh is desperate to go back. One of the tropes of romance is a "happily ever after," and what that means to Tess and Hugh kept me reading to the end.

The Austen Affair is a modern romance (complete with sex and several f-bombs, so fair warning), and a wonderful diversion.

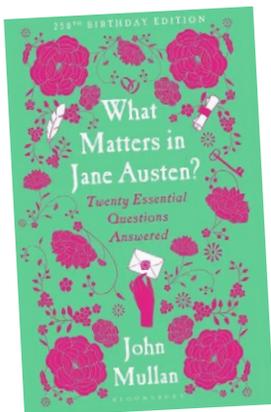
Julie Hennrikus is a mystery author. Her most recent series, the Garden Squad mysteries, was written as Julia Henry. Hennrikus is also executive director of Sisters in Crime, an organization that supports crime writers.

TWO CELEBRATORY 250TH BIRTHDAY EDITIONS

The Folio Society has released the ultimate limited-edition boxed set of Austen’s primary novels—at the eye-watering price of \$1,250. Every detail has been crafted with exceptional care. A cloth box houses books encased in silk-and-cotton jacquard (by the luxury maker who wove the silk for Princess Diana’s wedding dress, no less) with gilded edges on three sides; woodcut, linocut, and full-color illustrations throughout; and a ribbon marker. A new



foreword by historian and author Lucy Worsley and thought-provoking introductions by an impressive lineup of contemporary literary lights—including Elena Ferrante, Sebastian Faulks, Fay Weldon, Val McDermid, and Siri Hustvedt—complete the package. This is truly one for the ages.

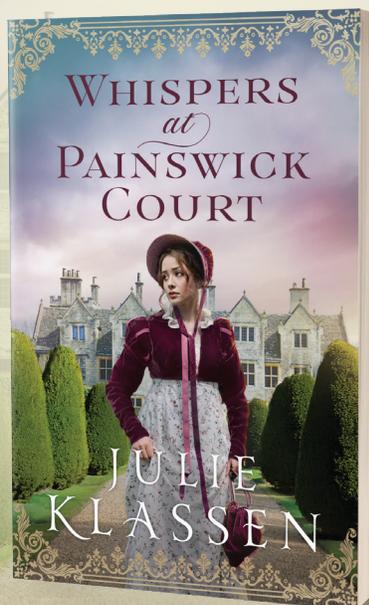


Bloomsbury has published a handsome new edition of Austen scholar John Mullan’s highly acclaimed *What Matters in Jane Austen? Twenty Essential Questions Answered*. Originally released in 2013—when *Kirkus Reviews* called it “A box of 20 literary chocolates for Austen fans to savor”—this new edition is even more delectable with its hot-pink foil-cover illustrations. Hardcover, \$20, 352 pages

Betsy Groban is the JASNA News book review editor.

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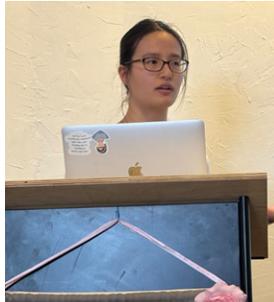
Regional News

CANADA

Alberta, Calgary

In September, we discussed *Jane Austen's Bookshelf: A Rare Book Collector's Quest to Find the Women Writers Who Shaped a Legend* by Rebecca Romney.

Later that month, member and author Nicole Lam gave a talk on "Jane Austen and the Romance Novel." Lam guided us through the evolution and enduring popularity of the genre. She explained that, during Austen's time, the term "romance" referred not to love stories but to fantastical, nonhistorical tales, such as Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. To wrap up the afternoon, Lam led a creative activity in which teams crafted a short romance story. Each group received a setting, two characters, and two tropes inspired by Austen's novels.



Nicole Lam

British Columbia, Victoria

In January, we kicked off Jane Austen's 250th year with intrigue and laughter with *Murder & Merriment*, an Austen-themed murder mystery set at Pemberley. In March, we turned heads at a fashion show presented by Victorian Vogue, a nonprofit volunteer group that brings the past to life with fashion.

Over three days in June, we hosted *Wit & Wisdom: Celebrating 250 Years of Jane Austen*, a full weekend tribute. It was a fabulous

celebration from start to finish, with attendees coming not only from Victoria and other parts of Vancouver Island but also from elsewhere in Canada as well as Washington state. Events included a craft workshop on beetle-wing embroidery, a talk by noted fashion historian Ivan Sayers, a reception featuring entertainment from local troupe Paper Street Theatre, a Regency dance workshop, four



Paper Street Theatre performance



Ogden Point on the southern tip of Vancouver Island—site of Victoria's promenade



Freydis Welland and Damaris Brix at Victoria's Wit & Wisdom weekend; Victoria's Regency ball



presentations, a Regency ball, a promenade on our very own Cobb, and a Regency breakfast.

Nova Scotia

In a quiet corner of Halifax Public Gardens that would have been enjoyed by Charles and Francis Austen in their naval days, in August we presented a program of readings, poems, prayers, and



Nova Scotia members Darcy John, Anita Campbell, and Joy MacSwain

music in association with Friends of the Public Gardens. Sarah Emsley did sterling work as emcee and Adria Jackson charmed the audience with Austen-inspired harp music. Darlene Savage, wife of the lieutenant governor, was our special guest.

Ontario, London

In September, we held a double celebration of Jane Austen's 250th birthday and our region's 25th anniversary. Along with afternoon tea and celebration cake, our program included dramatized scenes from Austen's novels prepared by Marion Johnson, a founding member of our region and well-known playwright, author, and producer. Highlights included the imagined proposal scene between Wickham (Edward Avey) and bonnet-obsessed Lydia Bennet (Joan Clayton); Norm Abbott playing the arietta



Sandra Safran and Norm Abbott

“Caro mio ben” by Guisepppe Giordani; and Abbott portraying Mr. Woodhouse as he receives the news from Emma (Sandra Safran) that she is engaged



London Region’s 25th anniversary celebration

to Mr. Knightley. Interim RC Nancy Johnson served as emcee and JD DeLuzio provided entertaining scene introductions. Toasts were given by Avey and region founder Eileen McCurdy.

INTERNATIONAL

In July, Susan Allen Ford—editor of *Persuasions* and *Persuasions On-Line*—spoke about the history of JASNA’s literary journal. She and former editor Laurie Kaplan



International Region’s July meeting

regaled attendees with personal stories from their work on the journal. In September, Nicky Pritchard-Park gave an illustrated talk on the topic “Muddy Petticoats and Parasols: Uncovering Jane Austen’s Experience of Walking.”

UNITED STATES

Arkansas, Ozark Foothills

A new region serving northwestern Arkansas, northeastern Oklahoma, and southern Missouri has been formed under the leadership of Jenni Taylor Swain and Laura Goodwin.

California, Greater Sacramento

Members of our Jane Austen Book-to-Fork Cooking Club met for an event titled “Welcome to Molland’s.” Host Joy Prevost presented a history of Molland’s Pastry and Confectionery—a shop Austen



Greater Sacramento members at the cookie exchange; Joy Prevost



would have known while living in Bath. Then we listened to a reading of the Molland’s scene from *Persuasion* where Anne Elliot and Captain Wentworth reconnect. In honor of the 250th anniversary and sweets that would have been eaten at Molland’s, we held a cookie exchange.

California, Northern

Several members gathered in August to picnic and attend Silicon Valley Shakespeare’s presentation of *Emma* in Sanborn Park in Saratoga. The highlight of our reading group’s recent topics was having Caroline Jane Knight—one of the last Austen relatives to live in Chawton House—join us in September to discuss her memoir, *Jane and Me*.



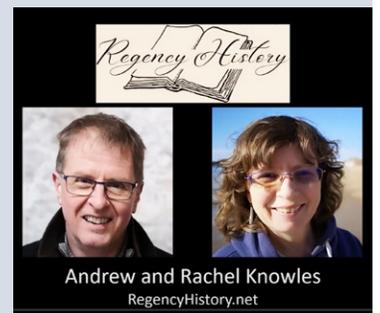
Northern California members at the Emma performance

California, San Diego

In July, several members attended *Jane Austen Unscripted!* at the North Coast Repertory Theater in Solana Beach. Also that month, we met via Zoom to hear historians Andrew and Rachel Knowles’ talk on “Jane Austen’s London,” in which they described some of the landmarks Austen would have seen in 1811, including Carlton House Library. They also explained how Austen’s visits to London—and the musical parties, theater performances, and museum exhibitions she attended—helped inspire some of her characters and plots.

In August, several members met at the Allied Gardens Library to hear Jeanne Talbot’s presentation on her recent stay at Chawton House. Later in August, our region hosted a booth at the KPBS Book

Andrew and Rachel Knowles’ talk





San Diego book club; San Diego members at the KPBS Book Festival

Festival on the campus of the University of San Diego. The festival helped us garner 85 new names for our newsletter as well as several new JASNA memberships.

California, Southwest

In September, some 90 members—including numerous students—and guests joined us for “The Great JASNA Southwest Bake-Off” and “Jane Austen and the Royal Navy” half-day event at California State University, Fullerton. Lynda Hall, chair of the English Department at Chapman University, presented the topic “Of Rears and Vices: What They Say (and Think) Tells Us Who They Are,” which focused on characters from Austen’s novels *Mansfield Park* and *Persuasion*. British naval scholar Christopher Empett gave a talk on “Jane Austen’s Navy: Brothers, Wives, Women, and Warriors of the Royal Navy,” which focused on Austen’s brothers Francis and Charles, Admiral Nelson, and the real-life women who may have influenced Jane Austen’s representation of the British navy in her novels.



Lynda Hall



Rosary and Christopher Empett

Glenda Pinney won the bake-off, and attendees enjoyed baked goods provided by participants.

Colorado, Denver/Boulder

Our August meeting featured the virtual presentation “‘Forgive us our trespasses’: Being where you oughtn’t in *Pride and Prejudice*” by JASNA Traveling Lecturer Douglas Murray. The talk was followed by a lively discussion about the concept of trespassing in some of Austen’s other novels.

District of Columbia, Metro

In August and September, two groups of region members enjoyed



D.C. members at the DAR Museum

private tours of the exhibit “Undressing Jane Austen’s World” at the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) Museum in Washington, D.C., led by DAR Museum Curator of Costumes and Textiles Alden O’Brien and exhibit creator Isabella Moritz.

Florida, Orlando

Through our continuing partnership with the Winter Park Library for “A Year With Jane,” we took a closer look at the symbolism, elegance, practicality, and growth of Regency women’s style in a “Regency Lady Fashion” presentation from our region’s own Regency historian Annette Williams and historical seamstress Gabrielle Helena in July. We also celebrated the 30th anniversary of *Clueless* by attending JASNA’s watch party dressed for the occasion.

In August, we explored “Imperialism and Anti-Slavery Sentiment,” with connections to Austen’s novels, followed by Regency dance lessons the next weekend and a “Regency Male Fashion” presentation. We finished the month with a lecture on “Romanticism in Austen.”

September began with a presentation highlighting the evolving aesthetics of architecture in Austen’s time, and finished with a day in which we learned classic Regency games.



Orlando members getting into the *Clueless* spirit



Orlando Region’s partnership with Winter Park Library

Florida, Southwest

In July, we met at the home of RC Jerry Vetowich to watch *Clueless* and the Amy Heckerling Q&A. In August, we met via Zoom and were led by

member Mindy Harris in a discussion of the book *Miss Austen* by Gill Hornby as well as the PBS miniseries. Our September meeting was focused on “Whining, Part One,” featuring Austen characters who complain frequently. Our discussion and games were based on two articles in *Persuasions* (vols. 15 and 46).



Reticule and pocket tutorial



Christel Ford

Georgia

In September, we held a daylong event at Emory University called “Celebrating 250 Years of Jane Austen.” The day featured talks by Laura Dabundo, Christel Ford, Devoney Looser, Judith Miller, and Vanessa Riley, and a live taping of JASNA’s *Austen Chat* podcast with host Breckyn Wood. Ford also gave a tutorial for attendees on how to make a pocket or reticule.

Idaho, Southern

In July, our book club met at Co-RC Anna Lee’s house in Nampa to discuss Hilary Davidson’s book *Jane Austen’s Wardrobe*, presented by member Tamara Mackenthun, modiste of historically accurate Regency costumes. Mackenthun brought many of her fashions and discussed ball gowns, headdresses, outerwear, lace, jewelry, corsets, and undergarments, as well as the fabrics used, and shared how items were sewn.

In August, we tuned in to a Zoom lecture presented by Brenda Cox on “Reading With Delight: Jane Austen on Hannah More.” We enjoyed learning about More as a philanthropic, prolific woman who brought about huge social change.

In September, we held a garden party at the home of Treasurer Susan Jareczek to discuss *Sense and Sensibility*. Several student members attended, providing a fresh outlook on the book’s themes of love, society, and family dynamics.

Indiana, Greater Indianapolis

The Indiana Region has been renamed the Greater Indianapolis Region.



Southern Idaho’s garden party



Tamara Mackenthun

Indiana, Northern

JASNA’s newest region, the Northern Indiana Region, has been formed under the leadership of Morgan Lee Wilson.

Maryland

In July, we partook of afternoon tea and trivia at the historic Beans in the Belfry coffee shop in Brunswick. In August, we enjoyed an ice cream social with Jane Austen board games at the Plum Crazy Diner in Westminster.



Maryland’s board-game event

In September, Maryland Janeites joined award-winning chef Nancy Longo at Pierpoint Restaurant in Baltimore for a hands-on Regency cooking class. The six-dish menu included white soup, a stew, some excellent boiled potatoes, blueberry scones, Welsh rarebit, and apple tarts.



Yoon Sun Lee’s talk

Massachusetts

In September, we gathered at the Charles River Museum for a lecture by Yoon Sun Lee of Wellesley College on “Equality, Gratitude, and Exchange in Austen’s Novels.” Lee explored how Austen’s works question the ways in which society determines value.

Michigan, Eastern

The highlight of our Box Hill picnic in July was a show-and-tell by Cynthia Ann Hurt, who has amassed an incredible 225 editions of *Pride and Prejudice*! She brought about 30 of the books to the event and spoke about the various volumes and the evolution of her collection.



Cynthia Ann Hurt



Western Michigan Secretary Bev Sobolewski; Jan Carpenter, JoAnn Yochim, Virginia Swindell, Bill Sobolewski, Andrea Becker, Bev Sobolewski, Sara Claybaugh, violinist Haijin Choi, and Megan Johnston at Sunday Strings

Michigan, Western

In July, former JASNA President Joan Klingel Ray Zoomed with us for a close look at *Pride and Prejudice*; some members danced in a promotional video for the Diamond Regency Ball of the Southwest Michigan Symphony Orchestra; and we gathered at RC Karenleigh Overmann’s home for the 30th anniversary of *Clueless*.

In August, we had tea before enjoying period chamber music by Sunday Strings at Frederik Meijer Gardens and Sculpture Park. Led by member Susan Coombes, we spent September on a slow read of *Emma*, honoring its 210th anniversary. We discussed Emma’s meddling throughout Highbury society and Austen’s juggling of the satiric and realistic.

Minnesota

In June, we spent a picturesque afternoon at Panola Valley Gardens. Craft day in July had us embroidering handkerchiefs



Minnesota members

and sewing reticules. August brought our annual Tea at the Arboretum event, featuring flavorful curries, traditional scones, and cute little hedgehog cakes. We wrapped up September with a talk from author Claudia Gray and an outing to see a performance of Kate Hamill’s *Pride and Prejudice*.

Missouri, Metropolitan St. Louis

In September, members enjoyed a presentation on *Emma* screen adaptations with Gina Dankel, Jamie Wilger, and Ellen Kunkelmann discussing what makes the novel both a joy and a challenge to adapt for TV and film. The event featured clips from 1972, 1996, 2009, and 2020 screen adaptations as well as *Clueless*.

New Jersey

In July, we met over Zoom to discuss the novel *Austen at Sea* by Natalie Jenner. In September, we met at Battleview Orchards in Freehold to do some seasonally appropriate apple picking (instead of strawberry picking) for our annual Box Hill excursion. We later dined at a lively local restaurant.



North Carolina members

North Carolina

In April, we welcomed JASNA President Mary Mintz for her presidential talk, “Jane Austen in American Periodicals: Highlights of the First Hundred Years.” In May, our virtual book club discussed Susan Allen Ford’s book, *What Jane Austen’s Characters Read (and Why)*, and were thrilled to welcome the author for a Q&A.

Later in May and in early June, we held regional movie outings to see *Jane Austen Wrecked My Life*. Our June meeting was our annual Tea & Miscellany event, where we enjoyed conversation about the 2025 Jane Austen Summer Program, our May movie outings, and *Miss Austen*.

Oregon, Southern

In July, we celebrated long-serving RC Linda Thomas with a special tea table and presented her with a gift certificate. Following these festivities, we enjoyed a presentation on Collins Hemingway’s latest book, *Jane Austen and the Creation of Modern Fiction: Six Novels in a “Style Entirely New.”* Thanks to Sherri Forbes, we also enjoyed a video excursion on her self-navigated narrow boat canal trip. Our book reports included Abigail Bok’s “obsession” with Austen’s unfinished novel *The Watsons*. Bok has collected 13 of 16 completions by other authors.



Southern Oregon members Abby Harris, Sherri Forbes, Jenni Presley, Collins Hemingway, and Deb Rossi

In September, we enjoyed the 2024 AGM presentation of Hilary Davidson’s *Jane Austen’s Wardrobe: What the Writer Wore*. We also enjoyed a video of Hugh and Sheila Kindred’s talk about how Austen’s siblings fed the author’s knowledge of and interest in the British navy. Abby Harris shared insights from her visit to the exhibit “A Lively Mind: Jane Austen at 250” at the Morgan Library in New York City.

Oregon/Southwest Washington

In July, we traveled to the Longview home of region co-founder Paula Stepankowsky, who is also co-founder of the Burney Society, an international literary society



Paula Stepankowsky



Arnie Perlstein

dedicated to the study of Frances Burney—Jane Austen’s literary predecessor. Stepankowsky presented “Jane Austen and the Sisterhood of the Pen,” which addressed the books that Austen read and how they influenced her. Stepankowsky showed her vast collection of more than 50 first editions by contemporary women writers of Austen’s era and 70 original, framed Gillray and Rowlandson cartoons.

In September, we met at the historic Irvington home of Arnie Perlstein, our assistant treasurer and an independent scholar, who led an interactive discussion in his garden on “Jane Austen’s Deeply Ambiguous Narrative Voice.” A detailed handout of puzzles to solve from the novels preceded the discussion.

Greater Philadelphia Region

The Eastern Pennsylvania Region has been renamed the Greater Philadelphia Region to better reflect its geographic reach, which includes members in southern New Jersey and northern Delaware.

South Carolina

In September, we gathered at the Charleston County Public Library main branch to discuss the female authors Jane Austen would have read. Deb Barnum presented “A Quill of Their Own.”



Deb Barnum

Tennessee, East

In July, we met at Co-RC Reneé Rios Weber’s house for a lively discussion of Rebecca Romney’s book *Jane Austen’s Bookshelf*. In August, we met with Knoxville’s Lark in the Morn



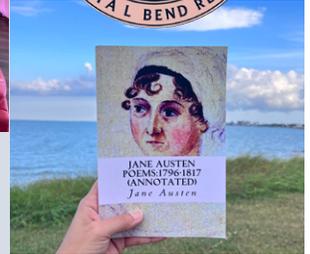
East Tennessee members at the July meeting; Co-RC Reneé Rios Weber and Zoe Andrews at *Sense and Sensibility*



English Country Dancers to enjoy some dances from Austen’s time. In September, 17 members and friends attended a production of *Sense and Sensibility* by the University of Tennessee’s theater department.



First meeting of the Coastal Bend Region; Coastal Bend logo; poetry day event



Texas, Coastal Bend

RC Betty Torres held the region’s inaugural meeting at Corpus Christi’s La Retama Central Library in July and is building momentum for the group. The region also held a poetry day by the water.

Texas, North

More than 500 people enjoyed a little Austen and danced at a ball at the Dallas Public Library’s “An Evening at Pemberley” event in July. Our region was well-represented as we sold jewelry, met other Janeites, and shared information about JASNA. Seventy-seven people signed up to win a free, one-year membership that we gave away as an incentive for receiving more information about our organization.



Roxanne Milton and RC Baronda Bradley, raising funds for the North Texas Region



Matt Balthenberger, Claire Swanson, and Erin Balthenberger at “An Evening at Pemberley”

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In Memoriam



Kathryn Louise Stephens

Greater Sacramento

JASNA lost a dear friend too soon when Kathryn Louise Stephens suddenly passed away in April. The Greater Sacramento Region's first official member, she attended nearly every regional program and activity. She especially loved the AGMs. Originally from Cleveland, she had double the fun at the 2024 AGM in her hometown. Professionally, Stephens was an interior designer for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Sacramento District. Region members will forever be grateful for the time spent with her and the indelible mark she left on the organization that so many cherish.

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Utah

In July, our book club met at the home of Fauncy DalCanto for tea and a discussion of John Mullan's book *What Matters in Jane Austen?* In August, we held "JASNA Utah Goes to the Matinee" at a local library. Member voting whittled 12 film options down to one—the 1996 Kate Beckinsale *Emma*—to view on the big screen. Our book club met again in September at the home of Glenda Thomas on the topic of *Sense and Sensibility*. Facilitator Heather Ipson turned the gathering into a debate with two groups arguing the values of sense and sensibility in Austen's character plotting.

Virtual

Our region's podcast, *Austen Pod Squad*—and hosts RC Marcia Johnson, Sherry Lockwood, and Jen Mulsow—welcomed Devoney Looser to discuss her new book, *Wild for Austen*.

Virginia, Central

In July, members attended a performance of *Sense and Sensibility* at the American Shakespeare Center in Staunton. Afterward, we were treated to a talkback session with director Jemma Levy and the cast. Members also attended a ballet performance of *Pride & Prejudice*, choreographed by member Amelia Anderson, at the McGuffey Art Center in Charlottesville. Anderson began working on the project when she was a student at Goucher College. Region members assisted in funding costuming for the production and we look forward to a repeat show to be held on Austen's birthday.



Central Virginia members at the *Sense and Sensibility* performance; cast of the *Pride & Prejudice* ballet, with Amelia Anderson (center)

Washington, Eastern/Idaho, Northern

In July, we met online to discuss "Austen's 'What a Man Ought to Be.'" We asked registrants to vote for their favorite hero: 34 percent named Mr. Knightley and 30 percent opted for Mr. Darcy. For the least favorite hero, 52 percent chose Edmund Bertram and 20 percent said Mr. Tilney. We examined the good qualities—and flaws—of Austen's heroes. At our "Possible Futures for Austen's Heroines" online event in September, we explored how the novels portray single women and widows. We also discussed which marriages might serve as role models—and which should be considered warnings.

Wisconsin

Inspired by an AGM presentation, our membership chair, Merri Cvetan, developed a library/nonprofit outreach program called "10 Things You Didn't Know About Jane Austen." It mixes fun facts with an overview of Austen's novels, highlights our region's events, and includes information on JASNA membership plus a QR code linking to how to join. The best part is that it can be adapted and presented by other members across the state (as well as other regions). Cvetan's presentation at Wauwatosa Public Library drew 47 attendees, and she has also given the talk at a small residential facility for Catholic religious sisters living with dementia.



Merri Cvetan

JASNA

Jane Austen Society of North America
3750 N. Country Club Road, #45
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Call for Papers: Meet Emma at the Arch

In her masterpiece *Emma*, Jane Austen explores multiple journeys of self-discovery and transformation. Austen's longest novel remains a wellspring of thought and amusement two centuries after its composition. Its complicated characters and relationships afford fertile ground for discovery during the 2027 Annual General Meeting (AGM) in St. Louis, Missouri.

Austen centers her narrative on Emma, perhaps the most flawed of her heroines. Austen applies her skills to trace Emma's journey with sharp humor and perception, while closely examining the personalities and relationships of a dozen characters gathered in the small community of Highbury. In the process, Austen illuminates her world as well as our own.

You are cordially invited to submit breakout-session proposals for the 2027 AGM in St. Louis, to be held Oct. 22–24, 2027, on the theme "Meet Emma at the Arch."

Specific areas to explore may include, but are by no means limited to:

- Secrets, mysteries, and confidences
- Entertainments: music, dance, art, or games
- Wealth, status, class, and property
- Authorial experimentation
- Faults, self-discovery, and transformation
- Hypocrisy, satire, and humor in Highbury
- Manly duty and masculinity in Regency society

Successful proposals will engage primarily with the novel *Emma*—the text and Austen's creation of this work—rather than with more general topics relating to Austen's world. Proposals related to the treatment of *Emma* by later writers, filmmakers, and others are also welcome.

Each year, one first-time AGM presenter is recognized as the AGM New Voices Speaker, garnering a complimentary AGM registration and travel grant. The New Voices application consists of a presentation abstract and a brief speaker biography, as well as a short personal statement describing how the applicant's selection would support JASNA's diversity goals.

The deadline for submission of a breakout-session proposal and application for a New Voices Speaker grant is Nov. 30, 2026. The forms will be posted in early 2026 on jasna.org.