

# LAWRENCE PROPERTIES UPDATE

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## How to Television in 2006 and Beyond

So your old TV and even older VCR are expiring and you've been meaning to replace them. Even get modern and add a DVD player. You go down to the local electronics store to have a look. Except when you get there the sales staff is speaking in initials like HD, CRT, LCD and DVR. Besides this language barrier, there's also a bewildering forest of offerings some with price tags higher than what you paid for your first car. Maybe, you decide, you can live with your old television after all.

We ran an informal poll recently to see why people watch television and how important it is to them. We found that it is very important. Not surprisingly, we learned that most people put their sets on the moment they come home and leave it on until they go to bed. Generally it was listened to as one would listen to the radio. Particularly for the weather and news. They watched only when focusing on a favorite show. The television became a form of company.

So, if you are looking to replace your well-played companion and want to find one that suits your viewing needs, technical expertise and budget, the following information should be of help.

### Let's begin with the TV sets themselves.

Television has certainly changed since the last time you bought one. It's going digital whether

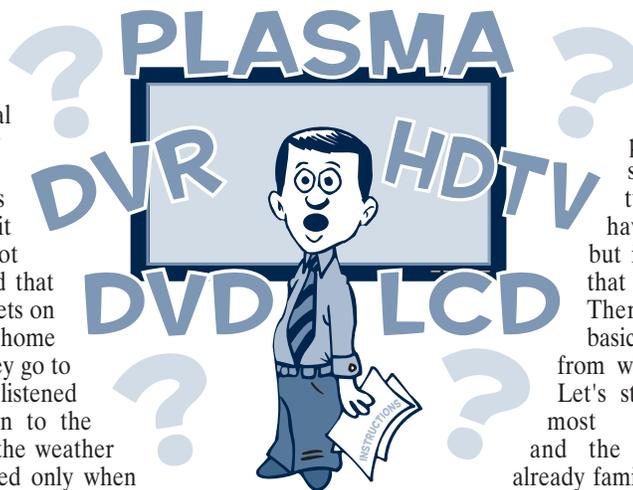
you're ready or not. Digital technology will bring you a better picture and clearer sound. It's what puts the crispness or definition in **High Definition (HD) TV**. Right now there are several kinds of digital high-definition television (HDTV). They represent the majority of what's available today but you will find that there are alternatives. What follows is a brief guide to what's gotten into your set.

TV sets come bigger, flatter and promising the sharpest pictures. Yes, you have choices but it's really not that complicated. There are three basic technologies from which to pick. Let's start with the most conventional and the one you're already familiar with, the

CRT, or the picture tube.

**Picture tube sets. Cathode ray tubes, or CRTs,** use the same basic picture tube technology as standard TVs and share the same boxy shape and curved screen as the old analog sets. CRTs still produce the blackest blacks and most accurate color, and many of the new high-def CRTs are a bargain at \$300-\$900. They have a history of being reliable. The main drawbacks are bulk and weight, which limit the practical size of a CRT screen to 40 inches. Performance and price still make them big sellers.

**Rear-projection.** Larger CRT viewing is also available in the form of rear-projection. They are lower priced for today's large sets but their picture is not as clear as some other bigger screen TV types. And the picture will diminish as you move from the center. They are behemoths and unless you want to turn your living room into a television shrine or are living spaciouly in a wide open loft, the sheer size and weight of rear projection televisions makes them impractical for New York apartments.



### LINA SHAPIRO Bookkeeper Not Just by the Numbers



Photo by Bob Newmy

If success is the sum of details, as tire magnate Harvey Firestone famously said, then bookkeeper Lina Shapiro is a tremendous success.

Her thoroughgoing, detail-oriented nature has helped Mrs. Shapiro excel throughout her career. "For the most part mistakes can be avoided by being very meticulous and inquisitive," Mrs. Shapiro says. For instance, Mrs. Shapiro doesn't just go by the numbers in a balance sheet; she checks the sources of those numbers too.

Lina Shapiro is part of a team of bookkeepers at Lawrence Properties and the commercial division, Bernstein Real Estate. "I'm one of seven bookkeepers that comprise the accounting department," explains Mrs. Shapiro. "Each one of us is assigned a group of buildings for which we are responsible."

Before coming to Lawrence Properties Mrs. Shapiro worked for another real estate management firm in New York. A friend who works at Bernstein Real Estate told Mrs. Shapiro of an opening. "She thought that I would be a good fit for it," recalls Mrs. Shapiro. "I decided to take her advice and came in for an interview. To make a long story short, that is how I came to know of Lawrence Properties. I have been an employee here for the past nine years."

## In this issue...

- How to Television in 2006 and Beyond* ..... 1
- Bookkeeper Lina Shapiro* ..... 1
- Ask Anton* ..... 2
- Such Interesting People* ..... 3

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued on page 3)

# Ask Anton

Not a day goes by that Lawrence Properties doesn't respond to our residents with answers to real-life, day-to-day household operating questions. Anton Cirulli, our Director of Operations, provides the answers.



Photo by Bob Henney

## Question:

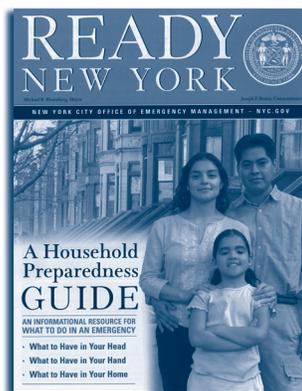
I know I should have a plan in case of an emergency, but I don't know where to begin. What are other people doing in other buildings that you manage?

## Anton responds:

We have found that most people are in your position—feeling lost. We took the initiative and organized an emergency preparedness program for our buildings and their residents that's as simple as planning ahead. It was designed to help provide a measure of confidence in the face of disaster.

Beginning with the buildings, we are educating all superintendents with a mandatory, all inclusive, four-hour safety and security awareness course developed and conducted by Local Union 32BJ and the New York Police Academy.

Focusing on the residents. We are giving a copy of "**Ready New York: A Household Preparedness Guide**" to everyone that lives in a building that we manage. This 16-page book



offers important and practical information on how to prepare and respond in the many emergencies that could affect New Yorkers. It details what every house-

hold should have on hand, provides checklists, and even instructions for pet owners. It covers everything from weather and natural disasters to terrorism and disease.

This is such an important document, we felt that every one of our residents should have it. **If you haven't gotten your copy of the guide, call Sheila Hopkins at 212-868-8320, Ext 219 and she will make sure you get one.**

## How to Television in 2006 and Beyond (continued from page 1)

### Flat panels.

The apartment dweller's darling. Flat panels come in two technologies. **LCD** or **Plasma**. Both have the streamlined profile. Your choice will be dictated by size.

**LCD, liquid crystal display**, TVs have come to dominate the smaller image areas. Measuring between 13 and 45 inches diagonally. Light in weight and about three inches thick, most of today's apartment dwellers (and decorators) opt for this. They are easy to mount for that artwork on the wall effect. Or, will fit into existing cabinets. They are great for those who watch TV in bed. The image is bright with a good picture quality. Prices for LCD screens range from \$600 for a 12-14 inch screen to \$2,000 or more for units 32 inches or larger.

**Plasma**. You've heard the word plasma. It has a life force sound to it. Plasma screen televisions are hot (as in status) and pricey. Proponents claim that plasma (named for the gas trapped between layers of glass that creates the picture) has the highest resolution and is best for conveying fast-moving images like sports. The size of plasma screens runs from about 32 inches, measured diagonally, to 102 inches. For larger sets weight is a factor that must be considered. It's slim, but heavy. A large plasma screen will require a special bracket bolted into the wall studs, or a dedicated stand. The cost of plasma screens runs from about \$2000-\$20,000.

### Think HD

If you're a serious TV or DVD watcher, *Consumer Reports* in their 2006 Buyer's guide "strongly recommends an HDTV, especially if you are looking for a big screen set." They remind, "Even if there isn't yet enough HD programming right now, it's likely there will be during the life of the TV."

**A word of caution.** If you want a new digital, high-definition television make sure what you get says that it in fact is an HDTV with a built in digital receiver or tuner. "HDTV ready" and "HDTV compatible" TVs will not have them built in. And, just because the TV has a flat screen doesn't mean it will be digital or have a better picture.

### Cable? Dish?

Now that you've chosen a TV with a terrific picture, what are you going to watch? The age of rabbit ears is dead. Roof antennae are not far behind. It seems that what you see and how well you see it these days depends on where you live and what you're willing to pay for.

For city dwellers, the selection of cable services is limited: **Time Warner** owns most of the wires in this town. Time Warner's website (<http://www.timewarnercable.com>) details their offerings. You can call them at: **212-222-5388**. The only competitor they have is RCN, a fiber-optic megaband network that offers

phone and internet packaged services along with its TV cable reception. (**1-877-726-7000** or <http://www.rcn.com>). To learn what cable providers service to your neighborhood see <http://www.connectmycable.com/>.

In the New York area, the **Dish Network** and **DirecTV** provide high-definition digital satellite programming. Location isn't an issue with the satellite services -- you just need a clear view of the sky to set up a dish. And, in some cases permission from your building. See <http://www.directv.com> (**1-888-777-2454**) or <http://www.dishtv.com> (**1-888-825-2557**) for more information.

### But, HDTV isn't everywhere, yet.

Your TV may be up-to-date but cable and dish programming are behind. Currently all of the network stations in New York City are broadcasting a high-definition digital signal. Whereas most cable and satellite services only provide a portion of their programming in high definition. Although most broadcasting will be digital by 2010. See <http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/consumerfacts/digitaltv.html/> for more info.

Even with this limited programming, you will have to pay extra for the HD service.

On average, high-definition subscriptions cost about \$5 to \$10 more per month than standard cable or satellite subscriptions.

### Recording for dummies.

Never mastered your VCR timer? Here's technology designed for you.

Time Warner also offers a **digital video recorder (DVR)** along with its digital cable feed. The DVR performs much the same function as your old VCR (video cassette recorder), except that the DVR records programs to a hard drive, whereas the VCR used a removable cassette.

Offering a similar kind of simple DVR recording capability is the independent company, **TIVO**. You purchase a box, pay for a monthly service and can take advantage of their many home entertainment features. Call: **212-551-1156**. See <http://www.tivo.com/>.

If this article has whet your appetite and given you the courage to want to know more about buying a new TV, stop by your local newsstand to peruse some of the magazines devoted to this field. Titles like **Electronic Home**, **Sound and Vision Magazine**, and **CE Lifestyles** all have lots of helpful information for the novice.

On the Internet check out **CNet** ([www.cnet.com](http://www.cnet.com)) or a buyer's best advisor, **Consumer Reports** ([www.consumerreports.com](http://www.consumerreports.com)) for product reviews and explanations.

But, if for the moment you find shopping for a new TV all too exhausting why not pick up a book instead. You'll find this newsletter's celebrity interview with the legendary Strand bookstore's owner filled with inspirational options.



# SUCH INTERESTING PEOPLE

Such interesting people live in Lawrence Properties-managed buildings. We thought you might like to meet some of them, so each issue we introduce someone we think you'd like to know. This issue, meet:

## *Between the Covers with the Strand's Nancy Bass*



Great cities tend to breed great bookstores. Especially the stores that deal in used books. They are the repositories of the city's hopes and dreams, enthusiasms and desires, fascinations and fears. London has Fisher & Sparr's book emporium, Paris has Gibert Jeune and New York is fortunate to have the Strand.

The Strand is the last vestige of New York's old book district, Fourth Avenue. "The area along Fourth Avenue was known as Book Row," explains Nancy Bass, co-owner of the Strand. "The Strand started on Book Row. There were 48 booksellers along Fourth Avenue from Union Square to Astor Place."

Benjamin Bass, Nancy's grandfather, started the business in 1927. He named the Strand after the famous publishing street in London and an old literary magazine. Benjamin Bass saw the business through thick and thin before passing it to his son Fred. Fred Bass moved the Strand to Broadway and 12th St., its present location, a few years after he took over in 1956. It seemed inevitable that his daughter, Nancy, would one day come to run the Strand with him.

"I saw how much my grandfather and father loved it and I love books. I started working here when I was 16," recalls Nancy. "It was a cheap form of labor." Nancy Bass is a pretty forty-something blonde with a steady gaze and a quick, dazzling smile. After earning her MBA

from the University of Wisconsin at Madison, Bass spent three years at Exxon before returning to the family business.

In the years she has been running the Strand with her father, the business has grown and changed. "We've doubled the size of rare books and we added the second floor, which is mostly art books," Bass explains. "We bought an art book store, transferred the stock and combined it with ours to make up the art floor. We expanded all the sections." They are even considering adding a café to keep their long-browsing customers happy. "Everything really has to change to survive, Bass says, "You've got to keep growing."

That combination of innovation and catering to a loyal clientèle has helped the Strand thrive where other independent bookstores have vanished. "A lot of the independents closed and a lot of the smaller ones became specialized," Bass says. "What we have that's different from Barnes & Noble is a whole spectrum of books. Whereas, they only have books that are in print."

Another change for the old bookstore is the addition of e-commerce. The new Strand website (<http://www.strand-books.com>) is well organized and comprehensive. "The Internet is 22 percent of the business now and it keeps climbing," Bass notes. "But we are also on Amazon, which has been really great for us." Many of the out-of-print books that Amazon sells come from the Strand.

The Strand has also developed a niche in rare and antiquarian books. The third floor has been given over to the Strand's substantial collection of rare books. Among the volumes in stock are a first edition of Huck Finn, a second folio of Shakespeare (priced at \$125,000), a first edition of *Gone With the Wind* and a commentary on the Psalms printed in Cologne, Germany, in 1480. "The ways we get books are estates, private libraries -- when people are moving -- or people bringing their books to us," Bass says. "We also get reviewers copies."

If the rare books section caters to customers who add to their libraries one precious volume at a time, then the Books By the Foot program is for customers who need their libraries built right away. Nancy Bass came up with the idea for the innovative service. "It all started when I was working on the main

## Lina Shapiro (cont'd from page 1)

Lina Shapiro has become a major asset to the buildings she is assigned to. Ever diligent, she noticed a discrepancy in the books of one of her buildings. "I was just checking some financial paperwork," Mrs. Shapiro explains, "and it was just not making sense that some buildings received escrow and others had not." So she looked back through the records of several buildings, compared the results, and then contacted the bank once she was sure. "In two weeks we received a check for \$113,000," Mrs. Shapiro says.

Prior to coming to New York, Mrs. Shapiro was an estimator in the Soviet Republic of Moldova. She and her family emigrated from the Soviet Union in 1989. "I have a degree in civil engineering and economics," Mrs. Shapiro says. "I was an estimator back in Russia and I'm good with numbers." An estimator reads the draft plans for building projects and estimates the materials needed and their likely cost. "You have to have a good memory for that," notes Lina. "Upon immigrating to the US, I thought bookkeeping would be the best career option for me to pursue. I completed the required coursework and have been in this field for the past 15 years."

The Shapiros chose New York because they had family here. Mrs. Shapiro still remembers her first impression of the city. It was December and the holidays. "There were lights and decorations in the streets, in the shops and on the houses. There were celebrations of Christmas and Chanukah everywhere," she says. "It was so bad at that time in Russia. There was no food and there were lines for everything. We could not celebrate the season. I felt that I had come to a Wonderland."

"I love New York" she smiles as she says it. "You can have an accent here and people will not only understand you, but find you interesting. I lived in Texas for a while and in Pennsylvania, but being raised in a city as a child, I responded to the vitality of New York. And, the ease with which you can do things. I didn't need a car to take my children to the library. We all walked. New York City represents freedom of another kind."

When she isn't crunching numbers, Lina Shapiro likes to go to museums, art galleries, Broadway shows, stand-up comedy performances and musical concerts. She also practices yoga.

Lina is the mother of fraternal twin girls. One of the girls is in her third year of medical school and the other daughter is currently working as a business analyst. She has a very close relationship with both of them.

*(Continued on page 4)*

### Such Interesting People (cont'd from page 3)

floor," she explains. "When somebody would come in and I saw that they were buying a lot of books, I would run right over and say, 'Can I help you?' So I kind of got used to doing people's libraries and learning what they wanted. Then I just decided to make it easy with Books By the Foot."

Before assembling a private library, Bass quizzes individuals on their likes and dislikes. "I make it personal," she says. In addition to measuring the shelf space that needs to be filled, Bass takes into account the library's location and setting. For instance, when the director Steven Spielberg was furnishing his library in the Hamptons, Bass provided a selection of books on nautical themes. But the Books By the Foot program has found its greatest success in film and television productions. Set designers have come to the Strand to get the right literary backdrop for films like *The Interpreter*, *The Manchurian Candidate* and *Cider House Rules*. Television productions like *Saturday Night Live*, *Law and Order*, *The View* and *The Today Show* have also purchased Books By the Foot. Typically, movie productions rent the books and television series buy

them.

Despite seemingly annual predictions of the demise of reading, great bookstores like the Strand continue to grow and thrive. Bass attributes this to the city's vast stock of readers. "New readers are coming in with the colleges every autumn," she says. "Recently the New York Times reported that more people are buying books than are buying DVDs or going to the movies. Also, I think the more you read, the more you want to read. Our customers are very smart and very well read. They have a lot of interests."

Readers of wedding announcements may have noticed that Nancy Bass married Senator Ron Wyden (Democrat from Oregon) Saturday, September 24. As fate would have it, they met in a bookstore -- Powell's, Portland's renowned bookshop.

Generally, Bass approves of the Senator's reading habits. "As you'd expect, he has to read stuff to keep up-to-date," she says. "So for instance he's reading Thomas Friedman, things about nuclear disarmament -- all that light stuff."

### LAWRENCE PROPERTIES WELCOMES OUR NEW MANAGEMENT ASSIGNMENT



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