

## *Report of the Council*

APRIL 19, 2002

EVERY SIX MONTHS when I sit down to prepare this progress report to the members of the Society, I ask myself, 'So just what DID we accomplish in the past six months?' So much of what we do at AAS is, by its very nature, 'a work in progress.' Our work in acquiring collections, preserving them, arranging and cataloguing them, and making them available for study is never done. There are often milestones to be noted along the way—initiatives undertaken, major acquisitions to be celebrated, new grants to be announced—but the essential work of the Society is incremental: it is done day by day, book by book, program by program, reader by reader. Rarely do I have a single accomplishment to which to point and say in my report, 'There it is. That's what we've been working on so hard, and now it is complete.'

But for this report I can come pretty darn close to saying that. In April of last year, when we met in Philadelphia, our project to build a state-of-the-art addition for collection storage was just getting started, after five years of discussion and planning. One year ago today, we had fenced off the construction site and had taken down a few trees to make way for the relocated parking lot, but we had not yet even turned the proverbial spade. And now, as we are meeting in San Francisco, our colleagues back in Worcester have—this very day—put on the shelf the last volume of the collections slated to be moved into the new high-tech vault, while outside, the parking lot is nearing completion. The reading room, which was closed to general readers for ten weeks, reopened three

weeks ago, and the reference books have now been restored to their rightful places, as have the many portraits that watch over the readers as they work. Cataloguers—who for many years have had desks and workstations scattered throughout the library, in various corners of the stacks—are already settling into their handsome new workrooms, located on the balcony level above the reading room and filled with natural light. And we staff members who are here today hope to return to work on Monday to find that the workmen have laid the new carpet in the administrative office area, thus banishing from existence the last vestiges of the famous AAS orange carpet, a relic of the 1970s ‘mod era’ if ever there was one. When I drafted these remarks the other day I had said ‘It may be too much to hope that our bookcases, desks, and filing cabinets will be in place as well,’ but I learned just a few hours ago that that was all accomplished this morning. I continue to be amazed at the ability of our staff and contractors to get things done on schedule or ahead of it.

Now, let me not mislead you. There is still considerable work yet to be done, both inside the building and out. The stacks are still a beehive of activity: everywhere you turn there is someone hanging pipe or pulling wire for the fire suppression system, working on incorporating the old heating and air conditioning systems into the new, stringing cables for computers and telephones, and moving books, always moving books. As work is completed in each area of the old stacks, or I might well phrase it as ‘when the dust settles,’ that area gets a thorough cleaning as well, but in the meantime, as we continue to work each day in an active construction site, the phrase ‘quiet as a library’ has taken on new meaning. But the workmen—with their jackhammers, cellular pagers, and muddy feet—will all be off to their next job site by the end of next month, just in time for us to welcome a new crop of fellows for the busy summer months.

Because the contract for our project was undertaken on a ‘guaranteed maximum price’ basis, I have always felt confident—or at

least reasonably so—that we could bring the job in within the \$8.9 million we had budgeted. It has been our goal, therefore, to spend every dollar wisely and, wherever possible, to use savings realized in the basic work to get things on our long-standing ‘wish list’ done as well. So, while we had the scaffolding up in the reading room, we replaced all the lights in the dome and replaced the metal grill-work with more attractive frosted glass; we are very pleased with the results, as are the readers who work at the tables illuminated beneath. Lighting in the administrative work areas has also been modernized and made more energy-efficient. While we had the side yard dug up for the new water main to be installed, we planned for a little-used service door to be reconfigured as an attractively landscaped delivery entrance, so we’ll no longer have to use the Park Avenue entrance, which is no place for truck parking despite what the name of the street might imply. And I am most especially pleased that we will be able to give the exterior of the existing building a thorough washing as well. With years of accumulated grime removed from the 1910, 1924, 1950, and 1972 portions of Antiquarian Hall, the beautiful job that the masons did in matching the brick, granite, and marble of the new addition to the materials used in the old will be more immediately apparent. And that melding of old and new is an outward reminder of something that all of us on the inside of that building have known for some time. Our work today and our achievements tomorrow are made possible largely by all that was done by those who came before us in 190 years of yesterdays.

So while we are proud of our achievement in getting the addition done—heck, I’m even grateful to have survived the process thus far—our thoughts are already racing ahead to what lies before us. We are thinking about tomorrow—both near-term and long-range. The new vault is a substantial thing indeed, almost bunker-like in its structure, with tons of concrete having been poured to create thick walls, floors, and ceilings, and the whole then dressed in a sheath of handsome brick, granite, and marble.

But rather than be an anchor for the Society, I feel that the addition is giving us wings as an organization, drawing powerful winds into our sails, and giving us air to breathe and space to grow. It is a time of great anticipation throughout the staff, a time in which we see before us wonderful new opportunities. In just a few weeks we will welcome our new curator of newspapers and periodicals, Vincent Golden, who brings to the post an enthusiasm for collection-building that will continue the Brigham-McCorison-Martin tradition, a tradition of opportunity-taking and persistent hard work that has established the Society as the national repository of record for early American newspapers. In the next few weeks, staff in the cataloguing and acquisitions departments will begin to use the new on-line catalogue system, which promises to make the work of collection record-keeping much more efficient for the staff and the searching for collection materials much more easily mastered by readers, both in the reading room and—via the web—far beyond it. When the new system ‘goes live’ to the public in mid-summer, readers will have easy access to thousands and thousands of new records as a result of the project—in the works for more than five years now—to convert old handwritten records in the card catalogue to new electronic ones. And the AAS website continues to be enhanced with guides and other tools that bring awareness of our collections to a wider audience of readers each and every day. To enhance wider access, we are planning to open the reading room one evening a week beginning in the fall, not only to make it possible for those who cannot come between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. because of their own work schedule, but also to permit those, such as our fellows, who come from far distances to increase the number of hours each week during which they can access the collections.

More space means more opportunity for the Society to work with student interns and volunteers of all ages, to undertake projects that have been dreamed about for years and no longer must be deferred. And, most importantly of all, this space opens the possibility for acquiring collections—not only in our traditional

ways, but also through dynamic and forward-looking partnerships with other institutions with which we can cooperate. Technology is providing powerful tools for making collections available to remote users, but the powerful lure of technology is also underscoring the necessity that libraries work together collaboratively to insure the long-term survival of libraries of record ('last copy repositories') of the printed materials that stand behind the digital copies. Libraries throughout the world are beginning to turn their attention to this need for collaborative action, and the American Antiquarian Society is often pointed to as an example of how a single institution can make a commitment to preserve the printed record for a particular country within a stated time span and to do so comprehensively and professionally. As other libraries take on distinct responsibilities of their own, it is easy to see how more collections of American imprints through 1876 will come our way in Worcester. With shelves now in place to receive as many more volumes as we have in place today, we are in a great starting place as we look to the shape the future will take for libraries and the important role that AAS will continue to play. In 1820 the first Antiquarian Hall was one of the first buildings in the country to be built specifically with the preservation of historical library materials in mind. It is fitting that the current hall be recognized more widely as the foremost building in the country for that continued purpose.

I would be remiss in closing this report without giving you an update on the capital campaign, which has now passed \$11.2 million on the way toward a \$12 million goal, with more than eighteen months of fundraising yet to be undertaken. We continue to raise funds for the building under the terms of the Kresge Challenge Grant which will run through this summer, and under the terms of the NEH Challenge Grant for new acquisitions funds, which will remain active until September 2003. The response of donors has been very, very gratifying. Gifts, large and small, have all made a difference, and more are always welcomed. The steadfast leadership of our Council throughout the campaign and, most

especially, during the construction project, has been a mainstay of support for all of us on the front lines. How else could we be approaching a finish line at the end of such a long and grueling race and still be talking in terms of new winds filling our institutional sails? These are exciting times for us all, and we are grateful to each of you who are helping to make these dreams a reality.

Ellen S. Dunlap

2002–2003 FELLOWS AND THEIR PROJECTS

*American Antiquarian Society—  
National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowships*

Eliza Richards, assistant professor of English, Boston University, 'Hearing Voices: Lyric Representation in Nineteenth-Century America'; Nick Yablon, Ph.D. in history, University of Chicago, 'American Antiquities: The Aesthetics and Politics of the Ruin in Nineteenth-Century America.'

*Mellon Distinguished Scholar-in-Residence*

Robert A. Gross, Forrest D. Murden, Jr., professor of history and American studies, College of William and Mary, 'The Transcendentalists and Their World.'

*Mellon Postdoctoral Research Fellowship*

James Sidbury, associate professor of history, University of Texas at Austin, 'Conceptions of Africa in Early African-American Culture, 1760–1830.'

*Mellon Post-Dissertation Fellowship*

Bridget Ford, Ph.D. in history, University of California, Davis, 'American Heartland: The Sentimentalization of Religion and Race Relations in Cincinnati and Louisville, 1810–1870.'

*American Historical Print Collectors Society Fellowship*

Ethan Robey, State University of New York at Binghamton, 'The Art Galleries of Mechanics' Institute Fairs: Liaisons between Art, Commerce, and Technology in Nineteenth-Century Thought.'

*AAS—American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies Fellowship*

John Howe, professor emeritus of history, University of Minnesota, 'The Social Politics of Verbal Discourse in Revolutionary Boston.'

*Stephen Botein Fellowships*

Steven P. Harthorn, Ph.D. candidate in English, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, 'James Fenimore Cooper and the American Literary Market, 1838–1851'; Ann Johnson, assistant professor of history, Fordham University, 'Engineering Handbooks as Carriers of Knowledge into the Field.'

*'Drawn to Art' Fellowship*

Janet A. Headley, associate professor and chair of fine arts, Loyola College, 'Structuring Urban Space: Public Monuments in Boston, 1825–1897.'

*Legacy Fellowship*

Jason M. Opal, Ph.D. candidate in history, Brandeis University, 'Ambition and Democracy: Worldly Pursuits and Aspirations in New England, 1780–1830.'

*AAS—Northeast Modern Language Association Fellowship*

Glenn Hendler, associate professor of English, University of Notre Dame, 'Riot Acts: Gender, Race, and Public Violence in Nineteenth-Century American Literature.'

*Kate B. and Hall J. Peterson Fellowships*

Sargent Bush, Jr., professor of English, University of Wisconsin–Madison, 'The Type of the Good Hearer in Puritan Theory and

Practice'; Thomas M. Coens, Ph.D. candidate in history, Harvard University, 'The Formation of the Jackson Party, 1822-1829'; Philip F. Gura, professor in English, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 'Guitars for All America: C. F. Martin (1796-1873) and the Nineteenth-Century Music Trade'; Brandon Johnson, Ph.D. candidate in history, University of Chicago, 'Spirits on the Stage: Public Mediums, Spiritualist Theater, and American Culture, 1848-1893'; Rachel Chernos Lin, Ph.D. candidate in history, Brown University, 'The Rhode Island Slave Traders and Their Communities, 1750-1807'; Claire Lyons, assistant professor of history, University of Maryland, College Park, 'Mapping an Atlantic Sexual Culture'; Joycelyn K. Moody, chair of women's studies, Hamilton College, 'Silent Language: Enslaved Women and the Production of Literature without Literacy'; Honor Sachs, Ph.D. candidate in history, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 'The Best Poor Woman's Country: Women, Gender, and Politics in the Eighteenth-Century Kentucky Backcountry'; Reiner Smolinski, associate professor of English, Georgia State University, 'Authority and Interpretation: Cotton Mather's "Biblia Americana"'; Michael Vorenberg, assistant professor of history, Brown University, 'Reconstructing the People: The Invention of Citizenship during the American Civil War'; Carola Wessel, research librarian, Goettingen University, 'Bibliography and Editions of German Language Broadsides Printed in North America, 1700-1830.'

*Reese Fellowship*

E. Haven Hawley, Ph.D. candidate in school of history, technology, and society, Georgia Institute of Technology, 'American Publishers of Indecent Books, 1840-1890.'

*Sigety Family Foundation Fellowship*

Elisa Tamarkin, assistant professor of English, University of California, Irvine, 'American Anglophilia: Deference, Devotion, and National Culture, 1820-1865.'



*Joyce A. Tracy Fellowship*

Daniel Mandell, assistant professor of history, Truman State University, 'Images of Indians in Southern New England, 1760-1880.'

*AAS-Christoph Daniel Ebeling Fellowship*

Karsten Kummer, lecturer, department of English, University of Bremen, 'Eighteenth-Century German-American Texts: A Study of Intercultural Negotiations and Relations.'

*William Randolph Hearst Foundation Fellowships*

Deborah Muirhead, visual artist, Storrs, Connecticut, research for an artist book, 'The Conjuror's apprentice of the legend of Yellow Mary, a slave girl's tale of survival by her wit and extraordinary powers'; Ellen Wiener, painter, Southold, New York, 'New Book of Hours,' a cycle of twenty-four paintings on wood panels in oil, using imagery from medieval, contemporary, and nineteenth-century sources.

*Robert and Charlotte Baron Fellowship*

Britta H. Sjogren, filmmaker, San Francisco, California, 'A Chain of Windows,' a documentary film project exploring the legacy of American slave dwellings, their historical significance, and their place in cultural memory.

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