

## *Report of the Council*

APRIL 11, 2003

I have come to think of these semiannual reports that I deliver each spring and fall—in which I attempt to cram six months of details on the Society's activities and accomplishments into just twenty minutes—as something like time capsules. My challenge, of course, is to select a few emblematic items for inclusion—anecdotes, personalities, statistics, images, testimonies—that will be of interest to you, the contemporary audience watching me load the capsule, but also instructive to those who might stumble upon it years from now, curious about what it was like at the American Antiquarian Society long ago in the first years of the twenty-first century.

Given that I have spent the last third of the twentieth happily ensconced in libraries and archives, it will come as a surprise to no one that I'm attracted to the notion of picking a *document* or two to 'encapsulate' in my report this time around. There are hundreds from which I might choose; they are piled upon every surface in my office and, occasionally, overflow to the floor. Perhaps I should pick one that is succinct and straightforward, yet speaks volumes about the Society, past, present, and future. The mission statement of the Society—exhorting us to collect, preserve, and make widely accessible the early historical record of our nation—has stood us in good stead for more than 190 years now, remarkable indeed in these days when organizations (and even individuals) are forced to redefine or reinvent themselves regularly, trying to remain relevant in changing times. But we still collect vigorously (because we don't yet have one copy of each

item printed before 1877 in what is now the United States); we preserve carefully (as is our obligation as stewards of this great patrimony); and we catalogue rigorously (although the collecting continues to outpace the preserving and cataloguing). To this copy of our mission statement is here appended a recently drafted statement of the ideals to which we aspire, dotted with phrases such as 'striving for excellence' and 'achieving consensus' and noting that relationships among staff, members, Councillors, and readers are characterized by 'openness, collegiality, generosity, and hospitality.' But, our reputation as 'simply the best place in the world to do history research' is so widely recognized that it hardly needs to be written down and locked away in a time capsule. Let's search further.

I have long maintained that much can be understood about any organization by taking a careful look at its operating budget, but the thick sheaf of papers labeled 'AAS annual budget, FY03' is pretty daunting, despite its rainbow of pretty colored papers. That green sheet, for instance, traces the trajectory—perhaps arc would be a more apt term—of the Society's endowment in recent years as it rose to a peak of \$52.7 million in mid-2000 and now has settled back down to the levels we were at in 1998. These market-value figures are used in calculating the 5 percent we take out from the endowment each year, an essential stream of revenue that supports 62 percent of the annual operating costs of the Society. You'll notice that another 23 percent of the budget—a budget that stands at \$3.8 million in total—is covered by gifts and grants from members, foundations, and government agencies. The remaining 15 percent is considered 'earned income,' and, as we can see from the purple sheets that compare this year's budget projections with previous years' results, earned income constitutes a growing stream of support for AAS. Although we do not charge for access to our collections nor admission to most of our programs, we have a long tradition of packaging and selling for reuse the fruits of our bibliographical labors—published bibliographies and compilations and reproductions of early imprints and

newspapers; even the bibliographical records created by our cataloguers are sold to other libraries because they are recognized as the cataloguing 'gold standard.'

The significant rise in earned income for the current year is traced almost entirely to library subscriptions of Digital Evans, a path-breaking new project we have undertaken with our partners of long standing at Newsbank/Readex. Even as we speak, 2.4 million frames of microfiche are being scanned, converted, indexed, and mounted on the web where subscribers can gain unparalleled access to the titles and texts of all known seventeenth- and eighteenth-century American imprints, all searchable in remarkable ways from the convenience of one's own office or home. This product is about to revolutionize—or should I say, re-revolutionize—scholarship in the field, as we claimed the first revolution when we started making reproductions of Evans titles available on opaque microprint cards back in the mid-1950s. The success of Digital Evans will also make it possible for us to undertake more projects of this kind—such as the digitizing of hundreds of microfilm reels of early American newspapers we have produced with Readex over the years. More importantly, this new stream of revenue is bolstering and expanding our financial capacity, just at a time when the stock market is not.

Looking further into the budget folder, we find scores of yellow pages—one for each department, project, and grant—detailing estimates in every category of expected expense: professional services, fellowships, speakers, buildings and grounds, office and library operations, insurance, computer operations, printing, programs, and—of course—collection purchases, the last constituting almost 10 percent of operating expenses for the year, before special donations to support acquisitions are counted. Flipping through these budget papers one can get a true sense of the work that is being undertaken at the Society today—cataloguing projects, outreach initiatives, ongoing technology endeavors, special publications, and continued success in attracting the best in our field to Worcester with our many research fellowship offerings.

The budgets detail 'what' is being done, but they only hint at 'who' is making it all happen—although almost every budget page shows a line for 'staff costs' and taken together they total 65 percent of annual expenses for the Society.

Perhaps a clearer sense of the Society could be had if one were to study the nuances of this staff organization chart. At this time we have some sixty-five staff positions—fifty full-time equivalents—and operate a rather lean, efficient institution. For instance, our development department—which is just wrapping up a successful \$12 million capital campaign—consists of but two full-time persons. Our outreach department manages our public programs, our programs for K-12 teachers, our fellowships for artists and writers, and our publicity and press relations, while administering our scholars' residence—the Goddard-Daniels House—all with only a staff of four, multitalented though they each are. It has been suggested that our efficiency lies in the straightforward way in which we are organized—thirteen small departments, each charged with responsibility for a key function, and coordinated not only by a 'department heads forum' that meets monthly but also by virtue of the fact that all department heads report to a pair of dedicated vice presidents who work closely with each other: John Hench (vice president for collections and programs) and Ed Harris (vice president for administration). We adopted this structure two years ago out of a firm belief that our audiences, fellows, and readers could be best served by removing the traditional bureaucratic distinction that had separated the so-called 'collections' or 'library' departments—acquisitions, conservation, cataloguing, readers' services, manuscripts, graphic arts, and newspapers—from the so-called 'programs' functions, such as fellowships, publications, and seminars. At a place such as AAS, collections take a rightful place at the heart of everything, and programs remain a dynamic way of sharing access with our broad constituency. Our dual reporting structure, therefore, helps us harness the innate tension that arises in any library between the need for preservation and

the desire for access and, we hope, helps us direct that energy in productive and creative ways.

Calling attention to our straightforward organizational structure is a way to underscore one of the real strengths on which the AAS reputation for superb service is based. Whether one approaches the organization as a reader, a fellow, a member, a seminar participant, or just 'someone with a question about early American [fill in the blank],' at the Society one can quickly have access to collections and—as importantly—to expertise in American history and culture through 1876. Ask a challenging question about early American lithography, for instance, and you'll likely find yourself talking directly with expert Gigi Barnhill herself. Inquiring about early American children's books will bring Laura Wasowicz to your aid. A mention of amateur newspapers gets you Dennis Laurie, and I could cite other examples as well. If the expert isn't on our staff, he or she is surely to be found among our national membership or in the far-flung network we have developed among our former fellows. AAS plays a significant role in bringing people with important and interesting questions together with a remarkable array of collections and expertise alike. Perhaps, then, the one document I should pick as emblematic of the Society is the directory of our staff? That of our members? Or the directory of our fellows? Of course, my search for a key *document* is quickly challenged by the fact that our directory of fellows exists as a web-based resource, as is now the case with our guides to collections, and indeed with the collection catalogues themselves. Now that I'm thinking in that vein, it comes to mind that the most *essential* record of what AAS is all about today is not in these piles of paper in my office, but in the giga-bites of archived e-mails exchanged among staff and the communities of scholars, collectors, readers, teachers, students, genealogists, and others that we serve. Even an organization that wears the badge of antiquarianism as proudly as we do is no longer immune from the challenges of electronic archives.

A year ago—without hesitation—I would have directed our search for institution-defining documents to the growing mountain of paper that was then accumulating in my office around the construction of our new state-of-the-art storage vault and extension of fire-suppression and improved HVAC systems throughout the existing building. Happily, all those reams of specs, rolls of plans, and files of field reports are now in the archives. For the benefit of those here today who haven't already heard me point this fact out a jillion times over the last year, I'd like to mention that our \$8.5 million project was completed on time and under budget, and—given the travails of the economy and other distractions in our lives, I would add—'just in the nick of time.' In fact, with our new building now providing the shelf capacity for us to almost double the collections we have assembled over the past two centuries, we feel that time is on our side and that those who succeed us, and those who succeed them, will see the collections at AAS move from being merely 'the most comprehensive known' to being 'truly comprehensive.'

No, with the avalanche of construction documents now cleared away, the pile of paper in my office that has grown at the most prodigious rate over the past six months is one labeled 'FYP,' our in-house acronym for a process that has occupied all of us—staff and Council alike—in the exploration, conversation, and negotiation of a Five-Year Plan for AAS. In my report at the annual meeting last October, I mentioned that we had begun the planning process, previewed the wide range of questions to be considered, and promised that 'we will have a clear work plan to set before you' when we met together again on April 11, 2003. Well, that would be today, and while the plan is not finalized quite yet, it does indeed exist in a sixty-five-page 'second draft' which articulates some thirty-four goals (large and small) under six headings or themes. The first of these headings invites consideration of AAS as a research library and how our position as a leading library can be further advanced. The second looks at AAS as a learned society, while the third sets goals relating to the Society

as a unique, diverse, and nationwide community of individuals interested in early American history—in other words, AAS as a membership organization. The plan then considers in its fourth section AAS as a work environment—the Society from the point of view of the staff, if you will—in the fifth section, the management of the organization, and—of necessity—in the final part the funding of the Society. As I mentioned, under the various headings the plan posits a plethora of goals—some thirty-four in all—in which we would like to see continued improvement and/or growth over the course of the next five years, along with a total of 125 strategies or steps to be taken toward those ends. It is, as the jargon goes, a fairly *granular* plan. I think it is also important to point out what it is not: it is not a strategic plan that suggests that we should radically change what we do, but more of a tactical one that outlines ways in which every staff member, every volunteer, every Councillor, and—indeed, by extension—every member can be engaged in the advancement of the Society and its important mission.

To me the process by which we reached this plan is almost more important than the detailed recommendations themselves. Each member of the staff and Council was assigned to one of eleven working groups, each with a broad topic such as ‘programs,’ ‘space,’ ‘technology,’ or ‘planning and evaluation.’ Groups were encouraged to think across department lines, which was easy for those assigned to ‘revenue and resources,’ ‘institutional culture,’ and ‘constituent relations’ and probably a bit more difficult for those whose topics—such as ‘publications,’ ‘cataloguing,’ and ‘collection development’—have traditionally been the purview of a particular department, but they too did some ‘out-of-the-box’ thinking. The final group was assigned to think about the Society’s bicentennial in 2012, and to develop a timetable to guide our planning for its celebration. Thus, a number of working groups found themselves grappling with similar or closely related problems, but took the opportunity to view them—and to suggest solutions—from different vantage points, thus strengthening the plan.

Moreover, by working in small groups, Councillors—many of whom travel from across the country to participate in quarterly Council meetings and don't have time or opportunity to interact with the entire staff—had the opportunity to look at the issues facing the Society from the staff perspective—that is, close in, everyday, long-term. Without exception, Councillors have reported that it was an important perspective for them to gain. Likewise, many staff who have had little opportunity in the past to work closely with the Council have told me how much they value what was accomplished and learned in these teams and how eager they are to continue the organization-wide effort to meet the goals of the plan. In other words, I think that engagement has bred a sense of joint ownership, which will be of great benefit as we move forward to execute the plan.

With the cocktail hour drawing nigh, you'll be relieved to hear that I don't intend to review the 125 strategies or even mention the thirty-four separate goals. In fact, I dare say that many of the initiatives we will be taking on will be nearly invisible to most outside viewers, but it is our hope that even without knowing what is being done behind the scenes to tweak internal workings of our operation, each constituent of the Society—every reader and fellow, every program participant, indeed every member and supporter—will soon become aware that AAS is working even smarter, accomplishing even more, and enjoying even greater success.

If I may address the members of the Society in the audience this afternoon, I'd like to suggest ways in which you may see these changes become manifest. Without making pests of ourselves, we hope you will notice that you will have greater opportunity to interact with the Society. We may be in touch with you more frequently about areas in which we share interest and concern. We hope to have more programs in your geographical region, while at the same time planning programs in Worcester—and promoting them far enough in advance—so that you might well be enticed to participate. We want to see folks take greater advantage



of our new Wednesday evening hours, if not to do research, then just to become more familiar with the Society and its collections. For those with research interests—and that may include academics, K-12 teachers, students, collectors, and dealers alike—we hope that you will want to take advantage of the new seminars and programs that we are planning—not only to gain access to collections that may be new to you, but also to learn from one another about ways they may be explored, utilized, and appreciated. If you are already a frequent reader at AAS, we hope you will soon find improved working conditions in Antiquarian Hall, more study carrels available, and a wider range of reproductions possible from the collections. Within two years, you will find that your copy of the *Proceedings* is arriving within weeks of the publication date, not years after it, and we also hope that you will find the newsletters we send to you to be more engaging of your interests and even more worthy of your attention. You will see our website ([americanantiquarian.org](http://americanantiquarian.org)) continue to expand in content and in usefulness—with the addition of digitized collections, improved finding aids and guides, and access to unique research tools. We hope to do a better job of orienting and welcoming new members into the Society upon their election and to streamline—or should I say, demystify somewhat—the process whereby individuals are nominated, elected, and gathered into our ancient and honorable company.

Many of the 125 steps will be taken with little or no additional cost—other than the not-inconsequential investment of staff and Council time. Given the predicaments faced by all organizations these days, and most notably by those of us supported largely by endowments, these affordable solutions are most certainly ‘good news.’ But we also count as ‘good news’ that the planning process has helped us sharpen our thinking on how best to approach those problems and opportunities for which outside funding will be required. As we go forward in the coming years with a much-needed expansion of our conservation lab, with enlarging our cataloguing staff, with undertaking new projects that will improve

bibliographical access to collections, and with making more efficient use of space in adjacent properties that we own, we will—without question—be turning again to foundations and individuals who have long supported AAS as well as to many ‘new friends’ we have been successful in reaching. The thought and creativity that has been devoted over the past nine months in developing our comprehensive plan will help us ensure that the further investments we will be asking them to make in the future of AAS will be money well and smartly spent. To all who have brought us to the brink of the completion of a great capital campaign and have helped us make our dreams of adequate collection space a wonderful reality, I give my renewed thanks. As we go forward in building an even better and stronger Society, we will remain ever in your debt as will be all those who for generations to come will marvel at what has been collected and preserved for their use and be grateful to those who made it possible.

Ellen S. Dunlap

2003–2004 ACADEMIC AND CREATIVE ARTIST FELLOWS  
AND THEIR PROJECTS

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

Leon Jackson, assistant professor of English, University of South Carolina, ‘The Business of Letters: Authorial Economies in America, 1780s–1840s’; Eldrid Herrington, assistant professor of English, University College Dublin, ‘Civil War, Revision, and Self-Representation’; Michael Jarvis, assistant professor of history, University of Rochester, ‘“In the Eye of All Trade”: Bermuda and the Atlantic World, 1612–1815.’

*Mellon Distinguished Scholar-in-Residence*

Karen Ordahl Kupperman, Silver Professor of History, New York University, 'The Founding of Jamestown in Its Atlantic Context.'

*Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow*

Meredith L. McGill, associate professor of English, Rutgers University, 'Poetry in Motion: Lyric Circulation in the Antebellum United States.'

*Mellon Post-Dissertation Fellow*

Molly A. McCarthy, Ph.D. candidate in American history, Brandeis University, 'A Page, A Day: A History of the Daily Diary in America.'

*American Council of Learned Societies-Frederick Burkhardt Fellow*

Mark A. Peterson, associate professor of history, University of Iowa, 'Boston in the Atlantic World, 1630-1860.'

*American Historical Print Collectors Society Fellow*

Linzy Brekke, Ph.D. candidate in history, Harvard University, 'Fashioning a Republic: Consumption, Clothing, and American Culture, 1776-1836.'

*AAS-American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies Fellow*

David J. Hancock, associate professor of history, University of Michigan, 'Oceans of Wine, Empires of Commerce: Madeira Wine and the Self-Organization of the Atlantic Market Economy, 1640-1815.'

*Stephen Botein Fellows*

Richard J. Bell, Ph.D. candidate in history, Harvard University, 'Newspapers and the Cultural Significance of Suicide in America, 1760-1830'; Susan Scott Parrish, assistant professor of English, University of Michigan, 'Colonial and Early National American Almanacs.'

*American Antiquarian Society**'Drawn to Art' Fellow*

Christopher J. Lukasik, assistant professor of English and American studies, Boston University, 'Discerning Characters: Social Distinction and the Face in American Literary and Visual Culture, 1780-1870.'

*AAS-Christoph Daniel Ebeling Fellow*

Bernd Herzogenrath, lecturer in English, University of Cologne, 'Cotton Mather's Conception of the Body.'

*AAS-Northeast Modern Language Association Fellow*

Martha Elena Rojas, Ph.D. candidate in English, Stanford University, 'Diplomatic Letters.'

*Kate B. and Hall J. Peterson Fellows*

Jill E. Anderson, assistant editor, Thomas Jefferson Foundation, "Nothing Done!" The Poet in Early Nineteenth-Century American Culture'; Shelby M. Balik, Ph.D. candidate in history, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 'The Religious Frontier: Evangelical Culture in Northern New England, 1750-1830'; Thomas J. Brown, associate professor of history, University of South Carolina, 'The Reconstruction of American Memory: Civic Monuments of the Civil War'; Matthew J. Clavin, Ph.D. candidate in history, American University, "Men of Color, to Arms!" Remembering Toussaint Louverture and the Haitian Revolution in the American Civil War'; Erika Gasser, Ph.D. candidate in history/women's studies, University of Michigan, "The Afflicted Grew Presently Well": Witchcraft and Possession in Old and New England'; Ellen Gilbert, independent scholar, 'St. Wulstan Society Papers'; Nancy Isenberg, associate professor of history, University of Tulsa, 'The Sexual Politics of Aaron Burr'; Brian P. Luskey, Ph.D. candidate in history, Emory University, 'The Marginal Men: Clerks and the Meanings of Class in Nineteenth-Century America'; Rebecca McNulty, Ph.D.

candidate in history, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 'Education for Empire: Manual Labor, Civilization, and the Family in Nineteenth-Century America'; Scott A. Miltenberger, Ph.D. candidate in history, University of California-Davis, 'All Gotham's Creatures: Animals and the Middle Class in New York City, 1783-1898'; Katherine K. Preston, associate professor of music, College of William and Mary, 'Against the Grain: English-Language Opera Companies in Late Nineteenth-Century America'; Matthew Pursell, Ph.D. candidate in American civilization, Brown University, 'English Liberty, American Bondage: Servitude in the British Atlantic, 1630-1780'; Beth B. Schweiger, assistant professor of history, University of Arkansas, 'Reading Slavery: Southerners and Their Books'; Renée M. Sentilles, assistant professor of history, Case Western Reserve University, 'Tomboys and Other Nineteenth-Century Girls.'

*Reese Fellow*

Michael J. Everton, Ph.D. candidate in English, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 'Moral Vampires and the Blood of Genius: Vocational Ethics in Early American Literary Culture.'

*Joyce A. Tracy Fellow*

Faye E. Dudden, professor of history, Colgate University, 'The Favored Hour: Politics, Culture, and the New York Women's Movement, 1860-1870.'

*William Randolph Hearst Foundation Fellows*

Ruth Lopez, writer of nonfiction, Chicago, Illinois, to do research in the McLoughlin Brothers archive for a social history of the artists who helped create children's literature in America; Lavonne Mueller, playwright, Chicago, Illinois, research for a collection of short, one-person plays about six notable American women: Abigail Adams, Dolly Madison, Sacagawea, Lucy Stone, Harriet Tubman, and Martha Washington.

*Robert and Charlotte Baron Fellows*

David Roderick, poet, Palo Alto, California, for 'Blue Colonial,' a collection of poems on the cultural interaction between the colonists and the Wampanoag tribe in the early seventeenth-century; Britta Sjogren, filmmaker, San Francisco, California, for research on 'A Chain of Windows,' a documentary film exploring the legacy of American slave dwellings.

Copyright of Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society is the property of American Antiquarian Society and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.