

Report of the Council

APRIL 24, 2004

BEING FROM TEXAS, I am not averse to bragging, and when it comes to the American Antiquarian Society, there's a lot to brag about. In recent years we have taken what was a truly *great* research library—a *magnificent* institution—and have tried to make it even better. When I look back on all that has been accomplished in just the past four years—thanks to the herculean efforts of talented staff, generous supporters, and dedicated volunteer leaders—my emotions run the gamut from sheer elation to utter exhaustion. Consider only these high spots of what has been achieved in that relatively short span of four years:

We've installed an entire new computer network and digital telephone system that has literally transformed the way every person at AAS works and relates to each other and to the world beyond our 'generous dome.'

- We've launched an ambitious and ever-evolving AAS website, rich in up-to-date announcements of events, insightful essays on our collections and their use, helpful information about using the library, applying for fellowships, ordering publications, and much more.
- We've expanded the hours that the library is open each weekday, adding evening hours on Wednesday to accommodate undergraduate readers and those who work elsewhere from 9 to 5.
- We've transformed our venerable card catalogue into an easy-to-use, on-line search tool, which now contains more

than 355,000 records. (The old on-line catalogue, which was powerful but admittedly difficult for non-cataloguers to use, contained about 200,000 records.) Of the new online catalogue, a fellow recently wrote, it 'is the finest I have worked with, including [that of the] Library of Congress.'

- We've published the first volume of *A History of the Book in America* (with volumes 2, 3, 4, and 5 now poised to follow), as well as major bibliographies on freemasonry and newspaper carriers' addresses, a wonderful illustrated catalogue of our portrait collection, and an innovative on-line directory of individuals and firms involved in nineteenth-century children's book publishing.
- We've nurtured a lively online quarterly journal, *Commonplace.org*, that attracts, with its fresh take on American history, about eleven thousand readers per day.
- We've taken important 'first steps' with the digitizing of large collections of graphic arts, beginning with the website of the Farber Gravestone photographs, which was created through the generosity of AAS Councilor David Rumsey. [It was mentioned the day before yesterday in the pages of the *New York Times*, resulting in an immediate uptick in web 'hits.']
- In association with our commercial partners at NewsBank/Readex, we've developed and launched a highly successful, subscription-based digital edition of Early American Imprints (EAI, Series I), offering digital pictures of every page of every known title printed from 1639 to 1800 in what is now the United States and the ability to search those texts word-by-word and by subjects, genres, and names of persons and places. Now, in 2004, this 'Digital Evans' is being followed by digital editions of EAI II (1800-1819) and Early American Newspapers (1690-1876), which will bring the content of AAS holdings initially to campuses around the globe and eventually into the homes and offices of non-academic researchers. NewsBank/Readex shares with the Society a significant portion of the revenues from its sales,

thus providing a significant source of new support for our core activities.

- We've also planned, financed, and executed a nine-million-dollar building expansion and renovation plan, a project that required moving every book in the library at least once, and many staff offices as well. As a result of this project, we have gained peace of mind that the AAS collection is now well protected from the threat of loss by fire—a threat that has weighed heavily on the collective minds of Antiquarians for more than one hundred ninety years. We have also gained new shelf space sufficient to allow our holdings to grow to almost double their present size in the years to come.
- In the course of these past four years, the Society's curators and librarians have done their part toward achieving that doubling, but none with more enthusiasm and industry than the staff of the newspaper department. Through their work with other repositories, with dealers in historic newspapers, and with present-day newspaper publishers with office files that run well back into the nineteenth century, these curators have brought tens of thousands of additional issues of historic newspapers onto the shelves of the Society. And while the growth of the rest of the collection may not have been as dramatic in size, there have been other spectacular leaps with significant additions, such as the one hundred and fifty early American imprints from the Zinman collection, the largest single addition of such volumes to the Society since we acquired the Mather Library in 1814.
- This list of recent accomplishments would not be complete without mentioning our recently completed capital campaign. It was the most ambitious fundraising drive we have ever held—a \$12 million dollar goal—and in spite of difficult financial times and competition from almost every other charitable organization you can think of, we surpassed that total by 10 percent, raising \$13.2 million in total for our building, our acquisitions endowment, and to secure the future of our

many excellent outreach and educational programs. Our campaign included a successful Kresge challenge grant for the building, a successful National Endowment for the Humanities challenge grant for acquisitions endowments, and the first million-dollar-plus gifts the Society has ever received. You will soon receive in the mail a final report giving full details of what was raised, the many uses to which the funds are being put, and the many members, staff, and friends who contributed. But I won't apologize for repeating here the message that that published report will convey: *Thank you!* Thank you to all of you who gave so generously. Thank you to all of you who worked so hard on the campaign. And an extra big thank you to our vice-president for development, John Keenum, who was so effective in organizing and directing our fundraising efforts. John, you were the essential ingredient in our success.

- To cap off this four years of intensive work, the staff and Council took time last year to work together to craft a detailed work plan for the Society, which we expect will guide our efforts through the next five years and lay a solid foundation for where we want to be by the time of our bicentennial in 2012.

My purpose in reviewing these accomplishments is not in any way to suggest them as laurels upon which we should now rest. Instead, I offer them as a context against which we might consider the challenges that still lie before us. For purposes of illustration, I'll focus on just three areas.

In no area of the Society's endeavors are we feeling more challenged these days than in our cataloguing department. For the twelve experienced cataloguers on our staff, the powerful new online catalogue represents both an opportunity—to showcase the fruits of their labors at bringing bibliographical and intellectual control over our collections—and also a curse, underscoring, as any computer file does, any little inconsistencies in the catalogu-

ing records and the glaring absence of records for the collections that are not yet represented on-line. In order to estimate what percentage that might be, we have recently begun a massive collection assessment project, which entails the measurement and counting (often by sampling) of volumes on the shelves, on the one hand, and an analysis of the on-line catalogue on the other. In analyzing the catalogue, we are counting not only the number of records for each collection but also the quality of the records we find. Do the full records represent the highest standards of rare-book cataloguing? Or are they skeletal records from our retrospective conversion of the card catalogue, with little more than an author, title, and date transcribed from a faded, handwritten half-card, usually without even a call number? The assessment alone is a major undertaking, but it only begins to portend the work that lies before us. For example, the online catalogue now makes it possible for us to create, for the first time in almost two centuries, an ordered list of collections that can be compared against the holdings, shelf by shelf. By doing this, we are able to work systematically through the stacks to ensure that books and catalogue records are in synch with one another. The time required by our readers' services department to do that comparison is best estimated not in person-hours, but person-years. But such a shelf reading can be undertaken easily only for those collections in which items have been given unique call numbers; many AAS collections have not—they are shelved instead by author in some cases, or by date or place of publication in others. Assigning unique call numbers, then, is yet another task before us, and a massive one.

Moreover, our assessment of collection cataloguing begs the question of what is to become of those collections—like our miscellaneous pamphlets or our so-called 'nineteenth-century collection'—for which cataloguing has never been attempted. These organized accumulations stand as testimony to the simple fact that AAS has always acquired at a faster pace than it has catalogued. At present, all the experienced cataloguers at the Society

are at work on important projects such as the creation of detailed records for all books published between 1801 and 1820, a project essential for the success of our Digital Shaw-Shoemaker offering and one that is being supported by the National Endowment for the Humanities, which has just renewed its support with a \$240,000 grant (or \$290,000 in federal funds, if we can raise \$50,000 in private support). For these cataloguers, each uncatalogued book they pick up represents something of a mini-research project—identifying birth and death dates for authors, divining unstated dates and places of publication, assigning appropriate subject headings and verifying bibliographical details. Their acumen at doing that sort of research is a source of justifiable pride at AAS. But on a very good day—one without committee meetings or other interruptions—even the very fastest of our cataloguers can create only about six detailed records of that sort.

Recognizing that we needed to devise a new strategy to tackle the tens of thousands of items in the uncatalogued collections, last summer members of the AAS Council passed the hat among themselves and generously contributed a 'war chest' to give us the ability to experiment with new cataloguing approaches. The cataloguing department devised a new set of cataloguing rules for the creation of 'brief records'—records that are accurate in every detail, but that can be drawn directly from the item in hand without doing extra research. To test whether a person with basic keyboarding abilities but without any knowledge or experience in cataloguing could create these brief records with a minimum of handholding, vice president John Keenum volunteered his time on Wednesday nights. His work helped us improve our training and instructions and gave us a basis for estimating that on a good day this method can produce six records *per hour*, as compared with the six *per day* that I mentioned earlier. So to this end we have just hired four college students to work this summer at what we are calling 'Cataloguing Camp.' Two cataloguers have been assigned as 'camp counselors' to help with the training and supervision. If this all goes as well as we hope, this fall we'll begin to se-

cure funding to make the summer program an annual (if not year-round) activity. It's a new approach to an old AAS problem, and one that we are excited about.

We also have an exciting new solution for another old problem—lack of adequate space in our conservation lab—but this is one for which we don't yet have a necessary 'war chest' of funds to begin to solve. The present lab is only 550 square feet, barely adequate for our three conservators and all their specialized equipment and supplies, to say nothing of their need for oversized workspaces and paper storage cabinets. With a collection of our size and age, the need for additional conservation work is a given, but even when we have the prospect of new conservation funds, we must grapple with the reality of having no room to accommodate additional staff. An ideal solution would be to double the size of the present lab, which is in the basement of Antiquarian Hall, by taking over the adjacent staff lounge. Finding space for a new lounge, however, sets off a 'domino effect' involving the information technology department, the desire for space for small classes and meetings in the library, the need for more fellows' carrels, and, the possible relocation of our administrative offices. The good news is that the Society already owns—but isn't using—the house adjacent to the library at 9 Regent Street, which is appropriately zoned for institutional use. With an upgrading of its systems and limited modification for access, the house can readily accommodate all the non-collection based activities that are currently situated in the library building, thus freeing room for the expanding and reallocating of spaces we have identified as our first priorities, most especially the conservation lab. In the months to come we hope to be able to develop plans and estimates for the entire set of 'domino moves' and to begin to raise money to make them a reality.

An example of those new 'first priorities' that is exacerbating the crunch for office and workroom space in the library is a new high-speed, large-format sheet scanner, made possible by a recent generous gift to the graphic arts department by AAS member

Saundra Lane. Through its wizardry, we will soon be creating marvelously detailed digital copies of lithographs, maps and views, broadsides, and other illustrated materials up to four-and-a-half feet wide (Texas size!). Digitizing will allow us to make these images readily available for publication or facsimile reproduction and will facilitate our ability to lend the originals for exhibitions at venues outside the AAS, since we will have a high-quality reproduction for research purposes here while the original is traveling about. Of course, it will also be possible for us to make a reference copy of the image for posting on the web in support of teaching curricula or for study by advanced researchers. At first glance, digitizing seems so easy: not only does it enhance access to images, but it also improves preservation by obviating the need for repeated use and handling of originals; and the scanner does all the work, or does it? Once the digital files are created, they present management and preservation challenges of their own; just think, for example, about all those important files still saved on big floppy disks, now that all the machines that read those disks have been recycled. And although the old expression implies that a picture is worth a thousand words, the cruel irony of digitizing pictures is that each image requires words—cataloguing descriptions—if it is to be discovered and retrieved among the gobs of bits and bytes that abound in digital library storage vaults today. Furthermore, each image must be catalogued individually, rather than as a collection, thus putting us even further behind in our race to get everything in our vast collection properly catalogued.

Fortunately, we have a partner to help us in this marathon: RLG, the Research Libraries Group, an international consortium of research libraries, of which AAS has been a partner almost since the group's founding. By contributing copies of our digital images to RLG's Cultural Materials Initiative, we see them added to a growing on-line archive of research materials belonging to the leading research libraries around the world. Using powerful search and display tools, students, teachers, and researchers at universities

around the globe can have access to this treasure trove of cultural materials and can make free use of the images for educational purposes. Starting later this year, it will be possible for anyone surfing the web to discover these images using standard search engines such as Google. The image that is displayed in the search results will be of sufficient size and quality to identify it, but not really good enough for printing or display purposes. But from that search results page, those who want to purchase a better reproduction and obtain a license to use the image will be directed to a service provider who will gladly take their credit card information and deliver what they need. A portion of these use fees will make their way back through the supply chain and, for images that are used from our collection, back to AAS. Partnerships like this one with RLG—and like the one with NewsBank/Readex that I mentioned earlier—help us confront the technological challenges of digitizing collections that lie far outside our capacity as a small independent institution that must be ever mindful of its need to remain fiscally strong.

Indeed, it is appropriate that I conclude this report on the current state of the Society with a word about current resources. As is true of all institutions that rely significantly on endowments—and in the case of the American Antiquarian Society, support from endowments and trusts accounts for 60 percent of our annual revenue—we are very much feeling the impact of belt-tightening that become necessary as the investment markets have cycled through their most recent downturn. In every department and initiative, we are watching, more closely than ever, how and where we spend every penny. AAS has always run as a very lean organization, and so we find that there is precious little fat to trim. We shave here and slice there. Careful budgeting even required us to hold back this year on the rate at which we spent for acquisitions—that most essential of all activities for collecting institutions such as ours. Were it not for the fifty-seven book funds that were created or augmented by generous donors in our recent campaign, these cuts would have been even deeper and more

painful. Indeed, without the infusion of new streams of revenue, such as those we are developing with our commercial digitizing partnership, we would be cutting through our institutional muscle, if not all the way to bone.

The muscle of the AAS is our great staff. They have accomplished so much—not only in these past four very busy years, but also, in the case of many on our staff, over the course of decades of dedicated and exemplary service. And with our five-year plan—our road map—now in hand and our bicentennial looming as a destination ahead, one can sense how eager the staff is to use the technological tools now at their disposal to propel the Society forward and to achieve the ambitious goals we have set.

For muscles to do their work of changing energy to motion, they need fuel. Today, more than ever, the fuel that is keeping the Society moving forward is the annual fund contributions by our members and readers, our fellows and friends, and our staff. In spite of difficult economic times and competition from our capital campaign wrap-up, contributors to the 2003 AAS annual fund gave 10 percent more than they had in the previous year, and we are hoping that in 2004 they will generously repeat that performance. Each gift, large and small, is a vote of confidence in what our staff is doing to make this great institution that we all love so dearly even greater. On their behalf, I thank each of you for your support. I hope you are just as proud to be associated with the American Antiquarian Society as I am.

Ellen S. Dunlap

2004-2005 *ACADEMIC AND CREATIVE ARTIST FELLOWS
AND THEIR PROJECTS*

American Antiquarian Society-

National Endowment for the Humanities Fellows

Christopher J. Lukasik, assistant professor of English, Boston University, 'Discerning Characters: Social Distinction and the Face in American Culture, 1780-1850'; Martha J. McNamara, associate professor of history, University of Maine, 'New England Visions: Landscape Representation in History and Art, 1790-1850'; Manisha Sinha, associate professor of Afro-American studies and history, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, 'Redefining Democracy: African Americans and the Movement to Abolish Slavery, 1775-1865.'

Mellon Distinguished Scholar-in-Residence

David D. Hall, Bartlett Professor of New England Church History, Harvard Divinity School, 'A New History of Puritan America.'

Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow

Cornelia Hughes Dayton, associate professor of history, University of Connecticut, 'Frames of Distraction: Self and Sanity in Pre-Asylum New England.'

Mellon Post-Dissertation Fellow

Cindy R. Lobel, term assistant professor of history, Barnard College, 'Consuming Classes: Changing Food Consumption Patterns in New York City, 1780-1860.'

American Historical Print Collectors Society Fellow

Katherine Hajar, Ph.D. candidate, Johns Hopkins University, 'Sex, Violence, and Sport in American Popular Print Culture, 1820-1880.'

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

Jeffrey L. Pasley, associate professor of history, University of Missouri-Columbia, 'Jeffersonian Democracy Revisited: Popular Political Culture in Print, 1800-1828.'

Stephen Botein Fellows

James A. Secord, professor of history and philosophy of science, University of Cambridge, 'Nature as News: Reporting Science in the Antebellum American Illustrated Press'; Alexandra Socarides, Ph.D. candidate in English, Rutgers University, 'Lyric Contexts: Emily Dickinson and the Nineteenth-Century Extended Poetic Project.'

Drawn to Art Fellow

Kathleen Lawrence, lecturer in American studies, Boston University, 'Margaret Fuller's Aesthetic Transcendentalism.'

Christoph Daniel Ebeling Fellow

Katharina Erhard, Ph.D. candidate in American studies, University of Regensburg, "'An Empire in Many Respects the Most Interesting in the World": Choreographies of Empire in Early American Plays.'

Legacy Fellow

Robb Haberman, Ph.D. candidate in history, University of Connecticut, 'Magazine Production and the Economics of the Print Trade in Post-Revolutionary America.'

Kate B. and Hall J. Peterson Fellows

Jennifer L. Anderson, Ph.D. candidate in history, New York University, 'Nature's Currency: The Atlantic Mahogany Trade in the Eighteenth-Century'; Thomas E. Augst, assistant professor of English, University of Minnesota, 'The Sobriety Test: Temperance and the Melodramas of Modern Citizenship'; Peter C. Baldwin,

assistant professor of history, University of Connecticut, 'American Night: Transforming the Nocturnal City, 1800-1930'; Lynne Z. Bassett, independent scholar, 'American Whole-Cloth Quilts: A Study of Regional Innovation, Refinement, and Domestic Production'; Phyllis B. Cole, professor of English and American Studies, Penn State Delaware County, 'Feminist Writers and the Periodical Press in Antebellum America'; David N. Gellman, assistant professor of history, DePauw University, 'Liberty's Legacy: The Jay Family and the Problem of American Freedom'; Vicki Hsueh, assistant professor of political science, Western Washington University, 'Hybrid Constitutionalism: Negotiating Constitutions and Cultures in the Proprietary Colonies, 1625-1690'; Angela Pulley Hudson, Ph.D. candidate in American studies, Yale University, 'Indians, Slaves, and Surveyors on the Federal Road, 1790s-1840s'; Peter Leavenworth, Ph.D. candidate in history, University of New Hampshire, 'Confrontations of Taste: American vs. European Standards of Music Aesthetics in the Early Republic'; Katherine Stebbins McCaffrey, Ph.D. candidate in American studies, Boston University, 'Reading Glasses: American Spectacles from Benjamin Franklin's Bifocals to MITHril'; Christopher Phillips, associate professor of history, University of Cincinnati, 'South of North: The Civil War on the Middle Border'; Ilyon Woo, Ph.D. candidate in English and comparative literature, Columbia University, 'Mother against Mother.'

Reese Fellow

Hester Blum, assistant professor of English, Penn State University, 'The View from the Mast-Head: Antebellum American Sea Narrative and the Maritime Imagination.'

Joyce Tracy Fellow

Sara Fanning, Ph.D. candidate in history, University of Texas, Austin, 'The Promised Land: African Americans and Haiti from the Haitian Revolution to 1830.'

*American Antiquarian Society**William Randolph Hearst Foundation Fellows*

Martha Morss, writer and editor, Mount Vernon, Ohio, a biography of colonial printer Mary Katherine Goddard aimed at younger readers; Alyson Pou, visual and performance artist, New York City, 'A Slight Headache,' a solo performance that explores the relationship between a mother and daughter set in the mid to late 1800s.

Robert and Charlotte Baron Fellows

Joanne Dobson, novelist and scholar of nineteenth-century American literature, Brewster, New York, and writer-in-residence, Fordham University, research for a historical novel set in New York City, titled, 'Search for India'; James Thomas Stevens, poet, Dunkirk, New York, assistant professor of American Indian Studies and English, State University of New York College at Fredonia, research on the Stockbridge Indian community and school to write a long poem that splices historical texts with personal narrative.

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