

## *Report of the Council*

APRIL 22, 2005

WANTING TO KEEP this Report of the Council brief and to the point, I began by looking for one word to serve as a point of departure. As I thought about where we find ourselves at the American Antiquarian Society today—along the trajectory of our ambitions and hopes on the one hand and the financial realities facing organizations of our sort on the other—the one word that came most readily to my mind was ‘relieved’ and gratefully so.

In all honesty, when we began last spring to look in detail at the fiscal picture we expected to be facing in FY2005, it was not a pretty sight. Spiraling costs of utilities, facilities maintenance, and personnel benefits were being compounded by a continuing decline in available endowment revenue as ‘bubble numbers’ were replaced with ‘trough numbers’ in our trailing-average spending rate formula. Moreover, we found that with the closing out of the major grants that had covered our initial investment in a new technology infrastructure, we were left without a source of funds to continue the maintenance and enhancement of that infrastructure, which had already become an essential part of our operations at every level. And while the future prospect of expanded streams of revenue from our digitizing partnership with Readex was strong, it was not yet assured. Having absorbed painful budget cuts the previous year, our organization was already very lean, with many departments operating at minimal staffing levels. All of us on staff were struggling valiantly to ‘do more with less’ in covering our traditional assignments, while at the same

time finding it necessary to devote more time to the work of committees formed to address challenges and opportunities that lay outside of our individual bailiwicks. Just your typical not-for-profit 'perfect storm.'

So when in July 2004 we came to that point in our annual budget-making cycle where we would traditionally finalize the budget for the fiscal year that begins in September, we decided instead to give ourselves three additional months to begin repositioning the organization so as better to ride out that approaching storm. It was agreed that by the October Council meeting, however, the FY05 budget would be balanced, one way or the other. And thus we began a two-pronged attack on the problem: (1) the search for continued cost savings and more vigorous fundraising, especially for unrestricted gifts and for budget relief; and (2) a reexamination of our internal decision-making and staffing mechanisms.

In looking at those mechanisms carefully, we found a number of compelling reasons for reengineering them. We had created the Department Heads Forum as a useful gathering to encourage collaboration and deliberation across the organization, but many felt it had grown too unwieldy for effective decision making, and furthermore, certain key staff members were not included or represented in that body simply because they were not supervisors. More importantly, we found that our existing department structure resulted in a degree of organizational rigidity that would be difficult to overcome if we were successful in making incremental additions to the staff as we hoped our fundraising would eventually permit us to do or, taking the worst case, if further contraction were required. We wanted, instead, to create an organization that would be straightforward in its structure—as the system of departments had been—but a bit more nimble in responding to changes in staffing needs and funding opportunities. Thus we evolved the concept of the 'cluster'—a group of key staff members who are charged to monitor, evaluate, and be accountable for a specified area of operation—as a means of 'getting the right

people at the table' to discuss issues and make decisions and to focus staff attention and efforts most productively.

For example, the Collection Development Cluster—charged with overseeing acquisitions and deaccessions, gifts, subscriptions, and exchanges—consists of all the collection curators, including those, such as the curator for children's literature, who have no staff to supervise. The Collection Preservation Cluster includes the building superintendent—who maintains the environment—as well as those responsible for direct collections care. The concerns now assigned in a coordinated way to the Collection Management and Access Cluster were previously dispersed among curators, cataloguers, and readers' services staff. The Programs Cluster oversees group activities, such as seminars, programs, teacher training, lectures and concerts, without making a distinction between those emanating from the library or the former programs division; the Onsite Services Cluster addresses the needs of individual readers. The Offsite Services Cluster brings together for the first time a wide variety of activities—such as electronic and print publications, loans, traveling exhibitions, rights and permissions, newsletters, website, digital projects—which have more in common with each other than might have been suspected at first glance. The seventh cluster concerns itself with our technology infrastructure—which seems, increasingly, to be the glue that holds us together as an organization and gives us the traction to get jobs done.

Clusters meet together with other clusters and with senior managers as they see fit to address issues that transcend their own parameters. This has proven to be particularly helpful to the senior managers as we determine priorities for staffing assignments, for now it is the case that staff members are assigned not to departments, per se, but are deployed as needed, each according to his or her specific skills. Six months into this reorganization, I am pleased to report that clusters seem to be proving an effective organization model for Society's staff. Each cluster has developed a list of priorities for staffing and funding that reflects the most

strategic needs in their area of responsibility and in many cases, it has been possible to identify where resources and staff can be shared to meet these needs most cost-effectively.

Pursuing the other prong of our attack—an aggressive fund-raising effort to help meet the immediate financial challenges of the organization—has proven to be equally effective, I am pleased to report. To give ourselves a target at which to aim, we picked a figure of \$350,000 in current year funding, with the expectation that the first \$100,000 secured would go to making certain the budget that would be adopted in October was a soundly balanced one and any funds above that threshold might go to restoring some of the capacity of the Society that had been reduced in the budget balancing of prior years. First to the plate were our Council members, who contributed more than \$85,000 to be put wherever it could be of most use in plugging budget holes and/or leveraging other dollars. So my first thanks goes to them. Indeed, we asked all members of the Society to increase their annual fund donations to the extent that they were able this year, and to date the fund is 24 percent ahead of where it was this time last year, adding another \$36,000 to our budget relief total. More thanks are due, and equally heartfelt. It is gratifying to see so many members responding personally to this important appeal, especially knowing that we are not the only organization asking for increased support at this difficult time.

In October the Council approved a balanced budget for FY06 of \$3.7 million. Moreover, as I reported in October, we were successful in securing a number of important grants from foundations and government entities that will have an immediate and positive impact on our current finances—\$100,000 from the Save America's Treasures program for collection conservation, \$150,000 from the Mellon Foundation for our fellowship program, and \$200,000 from the National Endowment for the Humanities for the early electoral records project, which is now entering the web-publication stage. Since that report, we have also learned that NEH has renewed funding in the amount of

\$307,000 for a very important project we now have underway—the cataloguing of the Shaw-Shoemaker titles that are currently being digitized through our Readex partnership. The cataloguing records constitute an important element to the commercial success of the product as it is sold to other research libraries.

While the great majority of the funds in these grant projects go to supporting the direct expenses of the project, continuing to fund these projects contributes to the ability of the Society to retain highly trained staff and provides a modest level of support for overhead costs.

I am also pleased to report that we have now experienced six months wherein we benefited from our partnership with Readex through ongoing sales of three digital products—Evans Digital, Shaw-Shoemaker Digital, and Early American Newspapers Digital—and look forward to the next fiscal year when a fourth digital product—American Broadsides and Ephemera—will be going into production. Sales of cataloguing records to support Evans Digital have also been strong. Thus we now estimate with some certainty that our total receipts in the current fiscal year—in royalties and tape sales combined—will exceed the figure that we were able to budget on back in October by approximately \$210,000. I think by now you are beginning to understand why the word ‘relief’ has been coming to my mind of late.

I am also very pleased—indeed, mightily relieved—to announce today owing, in part, to the success of the business model we have been able to develop with Readex, we have been able to secure further support for our technology and digitization efforts. Support this time comes in the form of a multiyear grant from a private foundation intended to help us build our organizational capabilities in technology. The grant will support existing positions—such as that of our network administrator and our on-line services librarian (who is also our webmaster) as well as new positions, such as our digital assets librarian, in-house scanning personnel, and staff to provide logistical support for our Readex partnership. The grant will help us buy and pay for the maintenance of much

needed new equipment and software, such as a program that will allow for online registration and payment for events and services. Cataloguing staff additions will be supported, and new projects, such as the creation of holdings records for our two million plus newspaper holdings—a massive undertaking—will begin, at last. All told, this generous grant will make available \$425,000 to the Society, and because of the fine planning work of the clusters, we are confident that we will be investing it wisely—in those projects that are most strategic for building a robust and sustainable technology plan for the Society.

So while the perfect storm of endowment take-outs and health insurance increases and out-of-control oil prices may continue to howl unabated, we feel that we have done what we can in recent months to batten down our hatches and secure our larders and getting a crew in ship shape to work well together through it all. The confidence you have shown in the staff with your continued support has been essential to our preparatory efforts, and for that confidence and your generosity this captain offers you her best salute.

Ellen S. Dunlap

2005–2006 ACADEMIC AND CREATIVE ARTIST FELLOWS  
AND THEIR PROJECTS

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

Kenneth Banks, visiting assistant professor of history, University of North Carolina–Asheville, ‘Slow Poison: French Contraband in the Early Modern Atlantic Economy, 1660–1800’; Patricia Crain, associate professor of English, University of Minnesota,

'Spectral Literacy: Children, Property, and Media in the Nineteenth-Century United States'; Sara Crosby, recent Ph.D., University of Notre Dame, 'The Female Poisoner and Popular Print Media in New England, 1640-1860'; Catherine S. Manegold, James M. Cox, Jr., professor of journalism, Emory University, 'In an Office Built by Slaves'; Joshua Rothman, assistant professor of history, University of Alabama, 'Slavery and Speculation in the *Flush Times*: The Heart of Jacksonian America.'

*Mellon Distinguished Scholar-in-Residence*

Richard W. Fox, professor of history, University of Southern California, 'Lincoln's Body, Lincoln's Blood: The Death and Life of the Savior President.'

*Mellon Post-Dissertation Fellowship*

Joseph F. Cullon, assistant professor of history, Dartmouth College, 'Colonial Shipwrights and Their World: Men, Women, and Markets in Early New England.'

*American Historical Print Collectors Society Fellowship*

Jennifer Ann Greenhill, Ph.D. candidate in art history, Yale University, 'The Plague of Jocularly: Art, Humor, and the American Social Body, 1863-1906.'

*American Antiquarian Society-American Society for  
Eighteenth-Century Studies Fellowship*

David J. Silverman, assistant professor of history, George Washington University, 'Brothertown: American Indians and the Problem of Race.'

*Stephen Botein Fellowships*

Michael Steven Carter, Ph.D. candidate in history, University of Southern California, 'Mathew Carey and the Public Emergence of Roman Catholicism in the United States, 1789-1839'; Coleman Hutchison, Ph.D. candidate in English, Northwestern University, 'Occasioning Verse and Volume.'

*'Drawn to Art' Fellowship*

Ross Barrett, Ph.D. candidate in art history, Boston University, 'Rendering Violence: Riots, Strikes, and Class Conflict in Nineteenth-Century American Art and Visual Culture.'

*American Antiquarian Society—Christoph Daniel Ebeling Fellowships*

Thomas Clark, assistant professor of history, University of Kassel, 'Toquevillian Moments: Transatlantic Visions of an American Republican Culture'; Kerstin Vogel, Ph. D. candidate in American studies, University of Mainz, 'Looking-Glass Legacies: The Writings of William Apess.'

*Legacy Fellowship*

Sara Babcox First, Ph.D. candidate in history, University of Michigan, 'The Mechanics of Renown: Culture and Celebrity in Nineteenth-Century America.'

*Northeast Modern Language Association Fellowships*

David Anthony, assistant professor of English, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, 'Shylock on Wall Street: Market Passion and the Capitalist Jew in Antebellum Sensationalism'; Lydia Fisher, lecturer in English, University of Pennsylvania, 'Domesticating the Nation: American Literature, Exceptionalism, and the Science of Cultivation.'

*Kate B. and Hall J. Peterson Fellowships*

Maria Alessandra Bollettino, Ph.D. candidate in history, University of Texas at Austin, 'Slaves and Slavery in the Seven Years' War'; Susan Graham, Ph.D. candidate in history, University of Minnesota, 'Female Dorrites and Antebellum Partisanship'; Timothy Wade Helwig, Ph.D. candidate in English, University of Maryland, 'Race, Nativism, and the Making of Class in Antebellum City-Mysteries'; Nian-Sheng Huang, associate professor of history, California State University, Channel Islands, 'The Poor in Early Massachusetts, 1630-1830'; Elizabeth A. Johnston,



teaching assistant, Harvard College, 'Choosing Freedom, Risking Slavery: African Americans, Antislavery Advocates, and the Courts in Massachusetts, 1830-1860'; Kathryn Koo, assistant professor of English, Saint Mary's College of California, 'In the House of God: Cotton Mather and the Making of Puritan Slavery'; Jennifer Manion, Ph.D. candidate in history, Rutgers University, 'Women's Crime and Penal Reform in Early Pennsylvania, 1776-1835'; Marina Moskowitz, lecturer in history and American studies, University of Glasgow, 'Seed Money: The Economies of Horticulture in Nineteenth-Century America'; Anthony Szczesiul, associate professor of English, University of Massachusetts, Lowell, 'Reconstructing "Southern Hospitality": Print Culture and the Invention of a Cultural Fiction'; Wendy Warren, Ph.D. candidate in history, Yale University, 'African Slavery in New England, 1638-1700'; Daniel C. Wewers, Ph.D. candidate in history, Harvard University, 'Divisible Under God: American Religion, Politics, and the Idea of Secession, 1783-1833'; Matthew Wittman, Ph.D. candidate in American culture, University of Michigan, 'American Popular Culture and the Pacific World in the Nineteenth Century'; Wendy A. Woloson, curator, Library Company of Philadelphia, 'Underground Economies: People, Markets, and Used Goods in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century America.'

*Reese Fellowship*

Kyle B. Roberts, Ph.D. candidate in history, University of Pennsylvania, 'Writing the Evangelical Subject: Religious Periodicals and Biographies in New York City, 1830-1860.'

*Joyce A. Tracy Fellowship*

Michael C. Cohen, Ph.D. candidate in English, New York University, 'Poetic Discourses in America, 1870-1915.'

*William Randolph Hearst Foundation Fellowships*

Camille Dungy, poet, Lynchburg, Virginia, for a collection of poems about free and enslaved African Americans in Philadelphia

between 1815 and 1845; Nancy Stuart Rubin, New York, New York, writer of nonfiction, for a biographical study of Mercy Otis Warren.

*Robert and Charlotte Baron Fellowships*

Amy Brill, fiction writer and television producer, New York City, for a novel about a female astronomer living on Nantucket in the mid-nineteenth century; Charles Hirshberg, journalist, New York, New York, for a biography of Thomas Wentworth Higginson, a resident of Worcester from 1852 to 1863.

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