

## *Report of the Council*

APRIL 22, 2006

AS I DO IN PREPARATION for each meeting of the Society, I have been giving thought to those activities, accomplishments, and challenges that have marked the Society since last I stood before the assembled members, six months ago. As an *aide-memoire*, I turn—as it seems that I turn for almost everything these days—to my computer. There I can find and quickly scroll back through all the meetings, appointments, and other calendar notations made for the period. Less quickly done, but even more useful in recalling the breadth and substance of the Society's work, would be for me to glance through all the e-mail that I exchanged, since that is certainly the preferred mode of communication for most of us at the Society today, whether dealing with a publisher halfway around the world, a Council member on an opposite coast, a colleague working from home or even one in the next office. It does not surprise me to discover that in the course of these thirty-six weeks, I have sent out some 3,728 messages, many going to multiple recipients. Some are just quick responses to news or queries from staff—'Wow,' 'Great job,' and 'Whatever you think best' being among my most frequent replies—but many others represent in just a single message many hours of effort—especially when one considers their associated attachments of documents, spreadsheets, and images. The volume of my outgoing mail, of course, is much dwarfed by the size of the deluge that comes in. Much of that is quickly dispatched with the delete key, but all the 'keepers' I try to file

away for future reference, either by topic or by the name of the staff member in whose capable hands the matter rests.

Indeed, as I look over my files, I am reminded of how well electronic communication serves as the glue that holds such an active and hard-working staff together as we advance our common cause, seizing upon opportunity and grappling with challenges large and small. Permit me to demonstrate by sharing snippets from just a few selected messages:

On March 17th, I wrote to the staff: 'It is my great pleasure to announce the appointment today of Thomas G. Knoles, long-time curator of manuscripts at the Society, as our next head librarian. Upon the retirement of Nancy Burkett on September 1st, he will assume her title of "Marcus A. McCorison librarian."' Tom has distinguished himself for this important post in many ways, including not only by his broad professional experience at the Society and his steadfast commitment to her traditional goals and ideals, but also by his progressive thinking on the prospects for her future and the respect he has earned as a true colleague to all. Personally, I'm very excited by the prospects of Tom's leadership of the library and look forward to working in close collaboration with him.' My message to the staff concluded with a line that is very appropriate to repeat here: 'Please join me in extending congratulations to Tom upon his appointment and in pledging our steadfast support for him in this important and challenging new post.'

Tom's appointment has been occasioned by announcements from two key staff members, John Hench, our vice president for collections and programs, and the aforementioned Nancy Burkett, both delivered by e-mail. Just before Christmas of last year, John wrote: 'Dear colleagues: I recently received the welcome news that I have been awarded a National Endowment for the Humanities fellowship to finish the research and to write my book on World War II book publishing. Under the terms of the fellowship, I must devote full time to these endeavors for the coming academic year. Therefore, I have decided that I will retire from active service

at AAS at the end of next August, after thirty-three years on the staff, (a bit more if one counts my part-time employment as a library page in the late 1960s). Leaving a job, an institution, and a staff that I have enjoyed and loved for so long will not be easy. Having the opportunity to jump right into my book project should, however, greatly ease my transition to a retired state. (As will having a bit more time for my grandchildren.)'

This news from John was delivered just as Nancy and Randall Burkett were sorting through their own future plans, as she explained in late January in an e-mail to the staff: 'I am beginning to plan my retirement. I am blessed to be in the enviable position of being excited about the prospect of a new pattern of life and sorry to be leaving the world of the library after so many rewarding years. Rand and I want to live in the same city. His Emory University stint, which was originally planned to be for two years, has now grown to nine, and thus we have decided to spend more time together in Atlanta, as well as in the retirement home we have in Hamilton, Mass., the town where I grew up. Once John received his fellowship award in December, Rand and I went into 'high gear' to sort through all the possibilities, a process made all the more complicated by my deep affection for and commitment to the Society and to my colleagues, with whom I work with such great pleasure. But after factoring it all, I am convinced that the Society will prosper by having both John's and my position open at the same time.' So while it was fate (and Marcus McCorison) that brought Nancy to work at the Society in 1973 in the very same week in which John was taking up his post, the fact that they will retire on the same day after all these decades is hardly happenstance. Rather, it is yet another example of how Nancy is the epitome of what makes the AAS staff so great—always putting first that which is best for the Society.

The sentiment that we all have felt in taking in this double-whammy of news was well expressed in an e-mail I received from AAS member Dan Tear: 'I have had a sense of loss ever since I learned that John and Nancy were leaving. Not only

their expertise but their ability to portray the warmth and enthusiasm of the Society to the public, the members and the users has been a hallmark of who they are and what the AAS is.' The many contributions that they have made to the Society will be celebrated in fine style as part of our 2006 annual meeting, and I hope all of you here today will not only mark your calendars to be in Worcester on Friday, October 20, for that occasion, but also will join me now for a rousing acknowledgement of these exemplary individuals—our friends—John and Nancy.

As I wrote in the message I sent to every member of the Society and to all our past fellows: 'We know there is no "replacing" Nancy or John, but we are keen to find successors who will bring the same spirit, dedication, and leadership to the Society for the years to come.' And thus we have embarked on the search to fill two new positions—Director of Research and Curator of Books—having crafted each position in ways that we hope will be attractive to the very best candidates in their respective fields, individuals who will grow and prosper at the Society for many years to come just as their predecessors have done. And in keeping with the theme of this report, I should note that applications for these positions are being accepted only by e-mail.

Indeed, looking through my e-mail archive of just the last few months, I can find any number of examples of messages that convey the essence of what the Society is all about. On December 8th, for example, Tom Knoles wrote of a visit to the Society by a couple from Rhode Island. 'She got in touch last week through the website saying that she is in the process of cleaning out a house of a step-uncle and wondered if we might be interested in what she had found. We agreed that they would come up to Worcester to see the library, and they came in yesterday morning with two armfuls of material. They described what they brought as a small sample, and she said there is a great deal more and that there are boxes she hasn't even opened yet. It looks like a really wonderful collection—most everything they brought was pre-1850 and looks like exactly the kind of material that gets

heavy use here. Two bags tucked into one of the boxes contained 100+ very good looking family letters from the 1840s. They had the usual questions about whether we would keep the things we took, whether the family would have access in the future, etc. They left reassured and happy, and I have an e-mail from her this morning saying that they will definitely give the collection to AAS. She said several times how impressed they were with the AAS website, by the way. It was a perfect send-off for my vacation. Yesterday I was struck once again by 1) how easy it is to make a sale when you have an outstanding product and 2) how satisfying it is to enrich the AAS collections while providing an a real benefit for the donors, who want to see their family papers find the kind of good home I sincerely believe we can provide.'

Another e-mail of note we received recently from a young German graduate student whose plans for a research sojourn in New Orleans to study free people of color in nineteenth century Louisiana had been interrupted by Hurricane Katrina and who had accepted our invitation to come to AAS as an alternative: 'I was quite surprised to find such a broad and wide-ranging collection of Louisiana newspapers at any other place outside of the state. Although I concentrated on New Orleans newspapers, I also used some of the rural Louisiana parish newspapers as well. The collection was particularly helpful for my project because the different newspapers represent the religious, ethnic, and political diversity of Louisiana in the 19th century (Catholic and Protestant papers, Spiritualist periodicals, English- and French-language papers, Creole and American, German papers, etc.) My research stay at AAS has been a fruitful and fulfilling experience. I was very impressed not only with the collection itself but especially with the helpfulness, commitment and friendliness of the entire staff which—compared to other archives which I have visited so far—were always willing to help and showed a great interest in my work. I am also very thankful for having been given the opportunity to live at the Goddard-Daniels House, which not only made my stay very easy but also provided me with many opportunities

for meeting American scholars and exchanging ideas (or just socializing). I hope to be back for some further research soon—and until then, I will spread the word in Germany about AAS and its vast possibilities for research!’

While acquiring great collections and making them accessible for research have long been everyday occurrences for the Society staff, so much of what we do now is either facilitated by digital technology or made possible by it. Some uses help us avoid problems and keep our collections safe: we now use digital recording surveillance cameras in our collection-use spaces; if trouble develops with our HVAC or fire-suppression systems, a computer detects it and our maintenance staff gets notified; and if the maintenance guys notice any problems in the course of their daily rounds through our four buildings that can’t be fixed by their traditional arsenal of hand tools, they are likely to whip out a new tool—a digital camera—to document the problem and to be able to communicate quickly what needs to be done to fix it, one e-mailed picture being worth so many, many words. In recent months, the conservation staff has also completed work—in partnership with cataloging and curatorial staff colleagues—on significant portions of a very large database project to record the conservation status on all our many, many individual collections, thus helping them track treatment and housing needs with much greater efficiency.

Other uses of digital technology are helping us extend our programmatic reach. The twenty-third issue of our quarterly online journal *Common-place* has just been published, attracting contributors and readers from a wide cross-section of those interested in history—academics, librarians and archivists, public historians, teachers, writers, to name but a few—and while there are more than 4,300 official ‘subscribers,’ many more each month find current and past-issue articles by searching the web. We are now pleased to be able to offer—in DVD and soon via the web—a new performance of our ‘Patriot-Printer’ program, thus making it possible for young people in classrooms far beyond the geographic

reach of our one-man performances to have their lessons on the American Revolution enlivened and enhanced by the engaging story of our founder Isaiah Thomas. And we have also been putting the finishing touches on another electronic legacy of Dr. Thomas's—a website that will record the vast amount of information the Society has gathered in recent years about his many, many descendants, including many photographs which have been shared with the Society by far-flung family members. In forthcoming reports I'll be telling more about on a new partnership we are just launching with Harvard University to digitize the Ward Family papers as a resource for exploring the history of the Ward Homestead in Shrewsbury, Massachusetts, which is managed by the University, as well as announcing the creation by AAS member Lucia Knoles of Assumption College of a new web-based presentation of the letters of Quaker sisters Sarah and Lucy Chase and their work with the freedmen's schools. Tremendous progress can already be reported in our partnership with Tufts University to digitize and make freely available on the web the massive archive of electoral data compiled over many decades by AAS staff member Philip Lampi, work that has been supported by a series of grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Indeed, there are so many exciting digital projects that we are undertaking—sometimes via partnerships with other institutions, but as often being taken on in-house by talented young people on the AAS staff—that I run the risk of becoming a 'virtual bore' on the subject.

So let me turn your attention, instead, to the digitizing project that is eclipsing all others in terms of its reach to new audiences, its impact on the Society, and—more significantly—its impact on the ability of researchers to explore and understand the past in new and exciting ways: our partnership with Readex in the creation of the Archive of Americana. Since my last report in October 2005, when we celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of our partnership, we have moved toward completing the digitization of all books and pamphlets printed in the United States through 1820,

launched a new module that features thirty thousand broadsides and pieces of ephemera, all carefully catalogued and full-text searchable, and announced the publication of the second and third series of the digital Early American Newspapers, called EAN. While many of the more than six hundred and fifty titles in *EAN, Series I* were printed in the eighteenth century, the historical newspapers in *Series II* and *Series III* are diverse chronologically and geographically, presenting more than three hundred and fifty newspaper titles from the eighteenth, nineteenth, and even twentieth centuries, the latter being sourced in part from libraries with holdings outside the scope of our own. Indulge me, if you will, while I read from just a few of the responses these new products have engendered:

- ‘The Readex *Archive of Americana* is an extraordinary family of digital research collections, indispensable to a solid program in early American history. *Early American Imprints* brings the mother lode of primary source material from colonial and Revolutionary America to one’s electronic fingertips.’ (Bruce Daniels, professor of history, University of Texas at San Antonio)
- ‘As a scholar I’ve largely gravitated toward research that demands a needle-in-a-haystack approach—both a delight and a curse. These new digital collections from Readex help remove that curse and open a world of resources for close textual analysis of elusive materials. And the remote access offered by the digitized *Early American Imprints and Early American Newspapers* makes the study of distant texts and contexts accessible in an astonishing and unprecedented way. Students too will profit, as they are empowered to do research—even from Oregon, three thousand miles from Worcester, Massachusetts—that will take them into the heart of early American life and letters. Teaching a course on the history of American patriotism, I had students do a simple search. They were astonished at what they turned up on ‘patriot’ and ‘patriotism’ for the colonial period and early republic—odd poems and elegies,

songs and sermons, antique disquisitions that seemed strangely prescient. If primary sources are the thing to excite students—as historians themselves have been excited since the beginning of history—then these resources are unbeatable!’ (Matthew Dennis, professor of history, University of Oregon)

And as these digital tools are reshaping history, so they are making it possible—and perhaps even necessary—for the Society to reshape itself. As more and more libraries are turning toward the digital resources, and fewer see the need or have the ability to preserve originals, they are turning to the American Antiquarian Society as a national repository of originals. This is especially true in the field of early American newspapers; in the last four years alone, we have added almost one hundred seventy-five thousand issues of newspapers to the collections. To keep these growing collections well-managed and accessible we are developing tools that will make it possible for remote users to query our online catalog not only to determine the newspaper titles that we hold, but also the exact issues for each. But it is also incumbent upon us to continue to develop the means for our staff to engage in partnership with this new, remote constituency that is emerging for our collections. Just as extraordinary service and access to expertise has long been a hallmark of the staff-reader experience at the Society, so should it be for those with whom the engagement is a digital one. These are exciting new challenges for us to address, and ones about which I know Tom Knoles is already thinking creatively.

With that nod toward future directions, I’d like to look back for a moment before I close this report. My tenure at AAS is still—at least by the standards of this institution—a relatively short one. Much tends to be made of the outreach to new audiences we have undertaken, but much note should be taken of the silver threads among our gold. There are many of you here today who have been steadfast in your support for the Society

during this time of great transition. Some have personally made the transition to the digital era with us, and some are quite happy to have had it all pass by without having to understand the difference between a megabyte and a pixel, a blog and a wiki. But to all of you who have been so generous in your support, so wise in your counsel, so abundant in your goodwill for our efforts, let me offer a heartfelt thanks on behalf of the fellows and other researchers in our reading room, the public school teachers and local undergraduates who participate in our seminars, workshops, and courses, the community folk who enjoy participating in one of the best public lecture series in the area, and most especially the staff. It is a great honor to serve this great institution.

Ellen S. Dunlap

2006-2007 ACADEMIC AND CREATIVE  
ARTIST FELLOWS AND THEIR PROJECTS

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

Robert Bonner, visiting assistant professor of history, Dartmouth College, 'Crossings to Freedom: Fugitive Slaves and the Completion of American Liberty'; Edward Larkin, assistant professor of English, University of Delaware, 'The Loyalist Origins of United States Culture'; Seth Rockman, assistant professor of history, Brown University, 'Self-Made and Slave-Made: Capitalism, Slavery, and the Rise of the Early American Economy'; Nancy Shoemaker, professor of history, University of Connecticut, 'The Whaling History of New England Indians.'

*Mellon Distinguished Scholar*

Philip F. Gura, Newman Distinguished Professor of American Literature and Culture, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 'The Club of the Like-Minded: A History of New England Transcendentalism.'

*John B. Hench Post-Dissertation Fellowship*

Jennifer Anderson, Ph.D. candidate, New York University, 'Nature's Currency: The Atlantic Mahogany Trade, 1725-1825.'

*American Council of Learned Societies Frederick Burkhardt Residential Fellowship for Recently Tenured Scholars*

Jeffrey Sklansky, associate professor of history, Oregon State University, 'The Rise and Fall of the "Money Question" in the Nineteenth-Century United States.'

*American Historical Print Collectors Fellowship*

Kenneth Cohen, Ph.D. candidate in history, University of Delaware, "'To Give Good Sport": The Making and Meaning of Sporting Leisure in Early America, 1750-1840.'

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

Hilary E. Wyss, associate professor of English, Auburn University, 'Native Literacy and Education in Early America.'

*Stephen Botein Fellowships*

Faith Barrett, assistant professor of English, Lawrence University, "'To Fight Aloud is Very Brave": American Poetry and the Civil War'; Hannah Carlson, Ph.D. candidate in American studies, Boston University, 'In the Company of Books: Reading the Pocket Companion.'

*Drawn to Art Fellowship*

Sarah Kate Gillespie, Ph.D. candidate in art history, City University of New York, "'One Thing New Under the Sun": The

Cross-Currents of Science and Art in the American Daguerreotype, 1839-1850.'

*Christoph Daniel Ebeling Fellowships*

Kristina Hinz-Bode, assistant professor of English and Romance Languages, University of Kassel, 'America's Cultural Deficits: A Transatlantic Debate and Its Reflection in American Literature'; Katja Kanzler, associate lecturer in American studies, University of Leipzig, 'Genre and Separate Spheres in Antebellum Women's Writing.'

*Legacy Fellowship*

William E. Wagner, Ph.D. candidate in history, University of California at Berkeley, 'Divided Landscapes: Geographic Literacy and the Mapping of Sectional Conflict in America, 1846-1865.'

*Northeast Modern Language Association Fellowship*

Dawn Coleman, assistant professor of English, University of Tennessee, 'Preaching and the Rise of the American Novel.'

*Kate B. and Hall J. Peterson Fellowships*

Ruma Chopra, Ph.D. candidate in history, University of California at Davis, 'Loyalist Persuasions: New York City, 1776-1783'; Polly Ha, research fellow in history, University of Cambridge, 'The Decalogue and Formation of Denomination'; Candice L. Harrison, Ph.D. candidate in history, Emory University, 'The Politics of Exchange in Philadelphia's Public Markets, 1770-1859'; James M. Lundberg, Ph.D. candidate in history, Yale University, 'Reading Horace Greeley's America, 1834-1872'; Natasha Lightfoot, Ph.D. candidate in history, New York University, 'Race, Class, and Resistance: The Aftermath of Emancipation in Antigua, 1831-1858'; Gabriel Loiacono, Ph.D. candidate in history, Brandeis University, 'The People and the Poor: Experiences and Ideas of Poverty in Rhode Island, 1780 to

1888'; Gesa Mackenthun, Institut für Anglistik/Amerikanistik, Universität Rostock, 'The Conquest of Antiquity: Geographical Discovery and Romantic Scholarship in the USA'; Eleanor H. McConnell, Ph.D. candidate in history, University of Iowa, 'A Scarce Plenty: Economics, Citizenship, and Opportunity in Revolutionary New Jersey, 1760-1820'; John G. McCurdy, assistant professor of history and philosophy, Eastern Michigan University, 'The Politics of Bachelorhood in Early America'; Robert Naeher, chair, history and social sciences, Emma Willard School, 'Puritan Prayer, Expressive Voice, and the Shaping of Identity'; Margaret A. Nash, assistant professor of education, University of California, Riverside, 'Higher Education for Women and the Formation of Gender, Class, and Race Identity in the United States, 1840-1875'; Martha Schoolman, assistant professor of English, Miami University of Ohio, 'American Abolitionist Geographies'; Eric Stoykovich, Ph.D. candidate in history, University of Virginia, 'Live Stock Nation: How Farm Animals Domesticated the Northern United States During the Early Republic, 1794-1876'; Catherine L. Thompson, Ph.D. candidate in history, University of Connecticut, 'From Autonomy to Dependency? Patient-Physician Relations, 1750-1850'; Nicholas M. Wrightson, Ph.D. candidate in modern history, Oxford University, 'Locating Philadelphia in the Print Culture of the British Atlantic World, 1730-65.'

*The Reese Fellowship*

Joanne van der Woude, graduate instructor in English, University of Virginia, 'Towards a Transatlantic Aesthetic: Immigration, Translation, and Mourning in the Seventeenth Century.'

*Joyce Tracy Fellowship*

Edward B. Rugemer, postdoctoral fellow in history, Boston College, 'The Problem of Emancipation: The United States and Britain's Abolition of Slavery.'

*William Randolph Hearst Foundation Fellowships*

Robert Sikoryak, New York City, cartoonist and illustrator, research for a comic strip adaptation of *Moby Dick*; Tess Taylor, Cambridge, Massachusetts, poet, research for a book of poems titled 'The Family Chest'; Kriota Wilbert, New York City, choreographer, research for an updated version of America's first musical theatre production, 'The Black Crook.'

*Robert and Charlotte Baron Fellows*

Robert Shuster, Yorktown Heights, New York, novelist, to research a nonfiction book titled 'The Indestructible Soldier: A Personal Account of Vicarious War'; Ginger Strand, New York City, nonfiction writer, research for a history of Niagara Falls.

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