

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**DR. RICHARD S. NEWMAN APPOINTED TO SUCCEED JOHN C. VAN HORNE AS
DIRECTOR OF THE LIBRARY COMPANY OF PHILADELPHIA
Benjamin Franklin's Library Gets a New Leader**

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania – December 12, 2013 – We are delighted to announce that Richard S. Newman has been appointed to succeed John C. Van Horne as the Edwin Wolf 2nd Director of the Library Company of Philadelphia. A distinguished historian with research specialties in Early American, African American, and Environmental History, as well as Print Culture and New Media, he is currently Professor of History at Rochester Institute of Technology. Dr. Newman has a long association with the Library Company, beginning with the award of a research fellowship in 1995. Says Trustee and Search Committee Chair Charles B. Landreth, “We believe Rich has the rare combination of scholarly authority, commitment to public engagement, and passion for our mission that will enable him to bring the Library Company to new prominence.”

Richard Newman is the author or editor of five books—including *The Transformation of American Abolitionism*, a finalist for the Organization of American Historians’ Avery Craven Prize, and *Freedom’s Prophet: Bishop Richard Allen, the AME Church, and the Black Founding Fathers*, winner of *ForeWord Magazine’s* Gold Medal for Biography—and numerous scholarly articles. He is also co-editor of the book series “Race in the Atlantic World,” published by the University of Georgia Press and the Library Company.

As an educational and museum consultant over the past decade, Dr. Newman has worked with research archives, public history sites, and teacher training programs on a variety of outreach initiatives. He has been an educational consultant to the Strong Museum in Rochester, contributed to digital projects at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, participated on a major site review team at Independence National Historical Park, and collaborated on the Library Company’s Black Founders exhibition. He is currently a Distinguished Lecturer for the Organization of American Historians and serves on the advisory councils of both the Society for Historians of the Early American Republic (SHEAR) and the Gilder Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance, and Abolition at Yale. He received his BA and PhD in American History from SUNY-Buffalo and an MA from Brown University.

Dr. Newman is interested in exploring ways that the Library Company can use the documents in its collections to empower people in their civic lives and careers—something he has been intimately involved with as the leader of five National Endowment for the Humanities-funded Summer Seminars for School Teachers on the Abolitionist Movement here, as well as co-director of three SHEAR-Mellon summer undergraduate research seminars—and he sees this as a vital way to connect the institution with Benjamin Franklin’s founding ambitions for the nation’s first successful lending library and now its oldest cultural institution.

John C. Van Horne, who will step down after more than 29 years at the helm on May 30, 2014, has presided over dramatic transformations in the world of research libraries. During his tenure the operating budget has grown from \$500,000 to \$2.5 million, the endowment has grown from \$5 million to nearly \$30 million, programs and collections have grown dramatically, and the Center City "campus" now includes a residential research center and a third building to provide for future collection storage

and programming space needs. He is equally proud of the fact that the collections and programs at Benjamin Franklin's library are still available to the public free of charge.

President B. Robert DeMento expresses the gratitude of the Board of Trustees by observing that "John Van Horne has made a profound contribution to the history of this nation, both through his dedicated stewardship of irreplaceable collections of rare early American books and prints and through his devotion to supporting the scholarship of others and, particularly, increasing access for young researchers. He has certainly put his stamp on this institution," continues DeMento, "and the Board is gratified to have identified a leader who is capable of building on John's legacy to take us into the next phase."

The Library Company of Philadelphia

The Library Company of Philadelphia is an independent research library specializing in American history and culture from the 17th through the 19th centuries. Founded in 1731 by Benjamin Franklin, the Library Company is America's oldest cultural institution and served as the Library of Congress from the Revolutionary War to 1800. The Library Company was the largest public library in America until the Civil War and includes the extensive personal libraries of such prominent early American bibliophiles such as James Logan. Open to the public free of charge, the Library Company houses an extensive collection of rare books, manuscripts, broadsides, ephemera, prints, photographs, and works of art, and one of the world's largest holdings of early American imprints. Particular strengths of the collection include economic history, women's history, African American history, history of medicine, history of philanthropy, and visual culture. To find out more, please visit www.librarycompany.org.

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