

**Nothing is Written in Stone: The Collaborative Project administered by the Library Company of Philadelphia - Philadelphia on Stone**

A talk presented by Erika Piola, Project director, Philadelphia on Stone at the MARAC Conference Fall 2008

Corresponding power point slides  
<http://www.librarycompany.org/collections/prints/stone.htm>

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Confound Sinclair....I don't want anything to do with the business....I can do better things that I have been employed at....drawing at 1/2 price and lettering all the stones for S. when he whistles.

Working collaborations are not always easy, pleasant, or productive as these quotes by 1840s Philadelphia lithographer Matthias Weaver reflect.

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Lithography, a planographic printing process on stone invented circa 1798, often involved several persons. An artist who sketched the design, a lithographer who drew the image on the stone, and a printer who ran the stone through a lithographic press - not to mention the apprentices who ground the stones smooth, the artisans who lettered them, or the shop worker who made the printing ink.

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The Philadelphia on Stone project, unlike the unhappy collaboration between artist Weaver and printer Thomas Sinclair, has proven to overcome such disgruntled mumblings. The partnership between the Library Company of Philadelphia, local institutions, organizations, and researchers is forging new and strengthening old

professional relationships. It is creating opportunities for all the collaborating institution's to improve their ability to provide access and reference to their lithograph collections to scholars, artists, and genealogists.

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As the Project Coordinator of POS, until recently, I will address the background, collaborative work plan, and goals of the lithography project that is being administered by the Print and Photograph department at the Library Company. The three-year project involves the surveying, research, cataloguing, and digitization of 19th-century lithographs documenting Philadelphia and by Philadelphia artists at eight different Philadelphia and regional special collections repositories, including the Library Company. This catalog and research work will culminate with a book, exhibit, and on-line biographical dictionary. Contemporary artists and organizations, descendants of Philadelphia lithographers, and visual culture professionals have also been solicited as resources for the project. I will discuss the benefits of, pitfalls, and lessons learned during the past eighteen months of work on Philadelphia on Stone and hopefully provide insight on what to strive for and to try and avoid during such cooperative operations between institutions.

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The coordinating institution for the project for which I work is the Library Company of Philadelphia, the first subscription library in the country. The institution, founded in 1731 by Benjamin Franklin and his Junto, a discussion group of his fellow mechanics, was transformed in the mid twentieth century to a closed-stack research library. The Library

Company maintains nationally and locally significant collections of books, prints, manuscripts, and ephemera, with several subject strengths in Americana, including Afro Americana, economics, popular medicine, women's history, and visual culture. In 1971, a separate Print Department was conceived with a large number of its initial holdings formed from a collection of nineteenth-century lithographs documenting Philadelphia that were compiled by antiquarian Charles A. Poulson. These prints, which comprise part of one of the most extensive holdings of Philadelphia commercial lithographs known, are important primary sources in the collaborative project being administered by the Library Company - a project that can be said to have been 50 years in the making.

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The impetus for Philadelphia on Stone stems from the late Historical Society of Pennsylvania Director Nicholas Wainwright's seminal work published in 1958 - Philadelphia in the Romantic Age of Lithography. Wainwright utilized the collections of his home institution as a base to collate a history of Philadelphia lithography up until the Civil War.

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The book includes a descriptive inventory of over 475 lithographs documenting the built environment of the city in addition to a substantive introduction of thematic chapters. The chapters provide a chronology, based on the careers of early prolific and prominent artisans in the field of Philadelphia lithography, such as P.S. Duval, J.T. Bowen, Wagner & McGuigan, and Thomas Sinclair.

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Philadelphia on Stone differs and expands upon this early work by focusing on the first fifty years of commercial lithographic production in the city from 1828 (the establishment of the first successful commercial lithographic firm Kennedy & Lucas) to 1878. Unlike with Wainwright's book, the sources for the graphics are not only in Philadelphia. Nor are they only used to complement a single institution's known holdings. Instead the project seeks to create the most comprehensive bibliography of this genre of print. Our project takes a more democratic approach and attempts to highlight the lesser known and later lithographers as well, such as John Collins, Jacob Haehnlen, Eugene Ketterlinus, and George S. Harris & Sons, in an attempt to expand on the broader implications of this important local visual culture for graphics scholarship.

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The content of the prints that are of interest to the project mainly include the built environment of the city such as storefronts, churches, landmarks, celebratory and disaster scenes, and panoramas or views.

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Advertisements for Philadelphia lithographers, views of their print shops, and portraits of the artisans are also a focus of the survey.

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However, prints of interest that do not directly conform to these parameters, if related to Philadelphia by artist or content, have also been included as points of reference under the auspices of the project. American Sunday School Union moral lesson prints, advertisements with compelling genre scenes, a view of the 1884 Pennsylvania State Agricultural Society Fair, or lithographer's advertisements from the late 19th century are a few of these types of lithographs that inform and add continuity to the research goals of the project.

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The project, initially conceived as an updated book almost 2 decades ago, before the rise of the internet, had necessarily morphed into one utilizing web technology as a venue, beginning with the digitization over 10 years ago of our Wainwright lithographs. However, to fully implement Philadelphia on Stone, as often occurs in the administration of special collections, grant funding needed to be obtained, not only to fund the goals of the project, but to sustain current staff to complete the work. The Library Company has had a long and positive relationship with the William Penn Foundation and in the summer of 2007, the agency provided the library with the majority of the funding to undertake the three-year project. As proposed, a survey would be conducted of the graphics at the Library Company and seven other regional repositories known to hold substantial collections of 19th-century lithographs with Philadelphia content or by Philadelphia artists and printers.

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The institutions would include the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, the Atwater Kent Museum, the Athenaeum of Philadelphia, the Free Library of Philadelphia, the American Antiquarian Society, the Library of Congress, and the Smithsonian.

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The survey work would yield the content for near 800 catalog records attached to digital images of the prints; an on-line biographical dictionary of over 500 Philadelphia lithographers; a heavily-illustrated text of thematic essays by scholars about different aspects of Philadelphia lithography - including the careers of specific lithographers, depictions of commercial architecture, and lithographed news events - as well as an exhibit at the Library Company.

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The first phase of the project would entail the surveying and cataloging of the lithograph collections of the Library Company, followed by our sister institution the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, and the other Philadelphia institutions. The second phase would be a completion of the surveying at the out-of-town repositories and the start of in-depth research for the biographical dictionary, exhibition, and the book. The third phase would be the culmination of the work with an exhibit, the mounting of the on-line dictionary with digital illustrations, and the publication of the text for distribution during the exhibit in Spring 2010.

With funding in place, the work described in the grant proposal could proceed. But as nothing is written in stone, the time line initially proposed was soon realized to be unworkable. The quandary that we found ourselves in stemmed from the date of the exhibit that was chosen.

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The year 2010 was agreed upon in order for our exhibit to coincide with an international conference of contemporary printmakers organized under the auspices of the Philadelphia print artist's organization Philagrafika. Philagrafika would help publicize our exhibit in which they would receive a section for a display, and in return, we hoped to spark an interest in the history of lithography with a new audience. However, to meet the production deadlines of Penn State Press, our intended publisher of the book, the research at our partner institutions would need to be done within a year of the start date of the project, which was not feasible. Given the necessity of a near completed survey to provide the content of the vital introductory chapter that will explicate the new insights about Philadelphia lithography made during the project, we needed more time.

Consequently, William Penn and Penn State Press were amenable to a change of date of the publication from 2010 to 2011. This new production timeline, also prompted another change, for us to survey and catalog the lithograph collections at the partner institutions first, as opposed to focusing on the Library Company's. Flexibility is a key to a successful project, especially a collaborative one, and would be a continual theme as we progressed in our work.

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I have been focusing on the overall structure of POS, but what exactly encompassed my role as Project Coordinator. As the coordinator, my primary functions had been as surveyor, cataloguer, and scanner of the lithographic materials at all the participating institutions. In addition I continue to act as a researcher and writer for the biographical dictionary and as a contributor to the thematic text. On the most basic level, it was collaboration between me and Ms. Ambrose, the former Project director and Associate Curator of the Print and Photograph Department. In regards to the surveying aspect of the project, Ms. Ambrose had made the decisions of which institutions to visit when, the initial contacts with the proper personnel, as well as implemented some of the initial surveys to create a plan of action for my visits to the repositories. At this time, full or initial surveys have been completed at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, the Atwater Kent, the Free Library, and the Library of Congress with intermittent work with the Library Company's collection. My surveying involved locating lithographs cited in Wainwright, identifying lithographs not cited in Wainwright, but in the scope of the project, as well as making decisions about the "tangential" lithographs that inform the project or are deserving of being noted, but not cataloged.

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Once surveyed, the lithographs are MARC cataloged into our catalog module, Aleph, provided by Ex-Libris. The records include a "Philadelphia on Stone" note field, detailed descriptions beyond the scope of Wainwright's caption, bibliographic information,

subject and genre headings, and the call number of the prints. A note is also added to Library Company records with the call numbers of duplicates at the other collections. The records derived from the lithographs at our partner institutions are searchable in our on line catalog WolfPac during the project and will be exported at the completion of our work to the institutions for use in their own catalogs. The call numbers are amended with an identifying acronym for the partnering institution, such as HSP for the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

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Once an item is cataloged if it is of size to fit on a flat bed scanner, it is scanned in color, at 400-600dpi, and 24-48 bit color in Tiff. The Library Company's photographer, as well as individual institution's staff have also produced digital images for the project. An original and a back up copy are created. The digital file names are based on the call number of the print, the file name provided by our photographer, or the policy convention of the partnering institution. Each institution will receive copies of the digital images of the materials from their collections with the Library Company maintaining an archive of all the files. Thus, a comprehensive digital library of Philadelphia lithography will be maintained at one location – the Library Company.

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Given the large number of pertinent lithographs, convenient location, and cooperative relationship with the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, our literal neighbor, it made sense to begin the survey with their collections. Scheduled visits to survey the collections

were not necessary after an initial meeting with applicable staff to discuss the project. We knew given Wainwright's earlier cut-off date that we would locate additional prints not cited. We also thought that other lithographs documenting Philadelphia had probably been acquired by the society since the publication of the book in 1958. I already had privileges to page from their collections and could bring items to my desk to catalog and was able to scan smaller material on the Library Company scanner.

For the Historical Society, the records of the lithographs will form a core segment of the institution's small percentage of graphic records currently included in the society's on-line catalog. As the Historical Society does not have a separate graphics department, the records with digital images will definitely aid in graphic research at the society where, in about 6 months, I surveyed over 150 additional lithographs not cited in Wainwright to the over 100 cited, but not held by the Library Company.

One find was this ca. 1835 allegorical temperance print set in front of the Fairmount Waterworks, after the work of Thomas Birch, known for maritime paintings. A manuscript note is pasted on the verso that reads: The original sketch of this picture was made by Thomas Birch, about the year 1826. His daughter Mrs. Veacock, now (Aug. 1891) living at the age of 83 years remembers seeing her father working at the drawing. This copy was found in her garret where it had been for many years.

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The next longest survey conducted was at the Free Library of Philadelphia, the city's public library, where I used a laptop for internet access and to create descriptive notes. My surveying was under minimal supervision after the first few visits, which was greatly appreciated and aided in my efficiency. From Wainwright, we knew of about 20 lithographs unique to the library, but from conversations with the prints curator, we gathered that a cache of other lithographs pertinent to our research could be lurking, especially in their Philadelphiana collection.

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Again flexibility came into play as the Free Library wireless would not allow contact with the Library Company's on-line catalog, which I would use to check to see if a record already existed for a lithograph not cited in Wainwright. My visual memory is good, but not flawless. Nonetheless, I was able to circumvent this problem and my survey work at the library yielded over 70 lithographs that fell within the scope of the project, but were not cited in Wainwright.

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One gem discovered is this ca. 1850 advertisement for Philadelphia lithographer Augustus Kollner and printer Henry Camp, which comprises the 70 lithographer's advertisements identified so far from business directories, trade catalogs, and as trade cards and loose prints. As with the Historical Society, the catalog records provided by the

Library Company will be some of the first MARC visual material records included in the Free Library catalog.

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For the scanning of Free Library items, it was agreed out of practicality and for quality-control that I could use the flat-bed scanner in their scan lab for the digitization of the smaller items. Their Collection Care staff scanned the larger materials with their overhead digital camera. It was during the scanning part of the survey, where the old adage, it doesn't matter how much you plan.... reared its head.

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After my surveying was complete, I coordinated a block of visits for scanning, before which I described a plan of action via a few emails to the prints curator and scan lab supervisor. The plan included details about my paging and transporting the prints to and from the lab, the copying of the images for the Library Company, and creating a chart cross referencing the devised digital ids with the name and call number of the corresponding prints. Despite this preparation, a step desired by the Free Library curator went unmentioned— for me to record the digital ids on the print - until the end of more than a week of scanning. Initially it seemed I would need to re-page everything, but a compromise was found where I would annotate a collection of scrapbooks from which lithographs were surveyed and her staff would complete the rest of the notations.

Although initially frustrating, the good relationship that we had built through our mutual

respect for the importance of the project led to all parties making decisions based on practicality, efficiency, and flexibility.

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Digitization has proven to not only be at the tail end of my work at a collection, but also the initial step, such as in the case of the materials at Atwater Kent Museum, founded as the history museum of Philadelphia in the mid twentieth century. A “kill two birds with one stone” approach came about regarding the Atwater Kent’s graphics.

Our photographer, also the Atwater Kent’s, needed to shoot other material in their collection for a paper to be given by the Library Company’s P&P curator last fall. Ms. Ambrose wisely conjectured that given we needed digital files of the AK materials, regardless, for our catalog records, of which there were about 20 known Wainwright, it made sense for our joint photographer to shoot the those lithographs as well. I could and did catalog records by reviewing these digital files on my desktop. Later Ms. Ambrose met with the registrar of the Atwater Kent to further discuss the project and to complete the survey to identify any prints not described in Wainwright.

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As an outgrowth of the collaborative nature of the project, additional sources of primary materials for Philadelphia on Stone have been yielded through publicity and on-line research. The library’s Enews, and paper newsletter, in addition to my research for cataloging have brought the Levy Collection at John Hopkins University and a series of

Catholic Church views at the Philadelphia Archdiocesan (Archdieosin) Historical Research Center to our attention. A former Library Company staff member now employed at the research center has provided digital images of the Philadelphia churches that will be cataloged, while research on sheet music has led to the digitized Levy Collection at Johns Hopkins. I discovered a number of pieces of sheet music with a Philadelphia content, including one published in 1880 of bicyclists in Fairmount Park, that have added to our inventory of that genre of lithographs

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Worldcat has proven another unexpected means in aiding my location of prints cited in Wainwright and in forming collaborations. Through a subject search during research for my book chapter, a known Wainwright title unlocated at a partner institution was discovered at another regional repository, the Hagley Museum and Library in De, in the department under the supervision of a previous professional contact. As a result of our past working relationship, he provided me with a digital copy of the print that may have gone unsurveyed.

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The goal in the grand scheme in working with other institutions has been to make our project as comprehensive as possible for current scholarship of Philadelphia lithography, but on the smaller scale it is to create mutually beneficial relationships for the short and long terms. As coordinator I had to manage my work schedule in compliance with the

different administrations and policies of the institutions. Working at and with the various archives in a quasi-researcher/staff position cannot help but be a learning experience.

Obviously, all institutions do not operate the same, despite the existence of a set of guidelines for our profession. All repositories have their idiosyncrasies, priorities, and internal policies. Varying degrees of access to the collections from close supervision to surveying collections independently to utilizing digital media provided by the institution have been encountered in the survey work.

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As an itinerant archivist, one needs to be mindful of these differences and adjust their way of operating, especially when coming from a smaller institution where one has many responsibilities to a larger one where jobs are very specific. As Senior Curatorial Associate, until recently, in my non-grant funded role, I provided reference, cataloged, arranged and organized collections, and wrote and presented about our graphics materials. Ultimately, this multi-faceted role has been an asset to POS, but occasionally it has led me astray. At my institution, for example, policy decisions pertinent to the day to day functioning of a department are often made by that entity and many times since the staff is small and handles several responsibilities, one can make the decision independently for a project and it is not an issue.

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As a result, at the Free Library, when I made a decision based upon a self-evident method of creating digital id codes for the images that I was scanning, I did not assume other departments needed to authorize this decision. Through happenstance, I was made aware that I needed to gain approval from senior staff in different departments. Thus after a cycle of emails cc:ed to several relevant people, my id was approved. If I had not been guided through the proper channels by a perceptive staff, what I considered a minor decision may have caused a host of issues that I should have been more mindful given the multiple interdepartmental relationships of a large institution like the Free Library.

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My experience with the magnitude of the Free Library has also reiterated to me the benefit of my multiple-faceted position at the Library Company. At the start of each survey, there is a meeting with the staff with whom we will be working. At the Free Library, we met with 8 people from the IT Dept, Collections Care Department, Cataloging Department, Print Department, and Administration. It quickly became evident that Ms. Ambrose and I from having cataloging, scanning, and administrative experience from our positions at the Library Company understood all the dialogs about how the material would be cataloged, scanned, and exported. We knew MARC, were aware of the necessity of standardized digital ids in the linking of images and records, and could conceptualize atypical location headings for graphics collections. Whereas we could follow all the conversations, the FLP staff with their specialized roles concentrated on the parts of the project that affected them and the other conversations were inconsequential

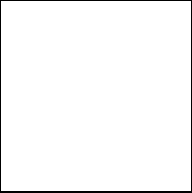
asides. This ability to understand all the technical logistics helped us to understand and address each department's concerns and questions without building an even larger bureaucracy.

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This collaborative work has also caused partner institution's staffs to reevaluate or indicate improvements that they wish to implement to their policies. For instance, the Library of Congress wants to work with us on the creation of name authority records for lithographers to be added to or edited in the Name Authority Cooperative - NACO. Often lithographic firms went through several incarnations and had several different names. Previous contributors of entries of lithographers' names to NACO have been too restrictive in their usage in determining a heading and have caused confusion with the conflation of several firms under one established name authority. In addition, the Historical Society's staff asked that we provide a statement about the condition of their prints to promote the re-housing of their graphics collections and the Free Library transferred prints from an artificial graphics collection in process to a more applicable, core collection.

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The project has also led to collaborative work with a contemporary lithographer, Liz Gross. She provided Ms. Ambrose with on-the-hands training in lithography through a series of classes over several months at her print studio. Several members of the Library Company staff, including the Director, also partook of an abridged half-day



demonstration of this print process that provided first-hand knowledge of the skill, complexity, and artistry needed by the 19th-century and today's artisans of lithography that cannot be fully grasped through written descriptions.

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Eighteen months into Philadelphia on Stone, over 400 lithographs, including over 200 non-Wainwright prints, have been surveyed, cataloged, and scanned from the collections at our partner institutions. Research for the biographical dictionary, exhibit, and book continues in earnest. The work on this collaborative project reiterates the fundamental that no matter how much you plan, the unexpected will happen and one needs to adapt to succeed. Along the way, the publication date of the book had to change and thus the original work plan. The Project director accepted a new position and I recently assumed administration of Philadelphia on Stone. We also discovered or were made aware of other sources of pertinent lithographs and have relied on our ability to be flexible to work productively within the purviews of the policies of other repositories. The generosity of the time, knowledge, cooperation and assistance of our fellow graphics collections professionals sustain and vitalize this work. Very few primary materials, other than the lithographs remain to document the lives of 19th-century lithographers. The print collections of our partnering institutions are vital in the analysis of the historical implications of Philadelphia lithography for graphic scholarship and are at the core of the continuing success of Philadelphia on Stone.

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