At the Instance of Benjamin Franklin: A Brief History of The Library Company of Philadelphia

On July 1, 1731, Benjamin Franklin and a number of his fellow members of the Junto drew up "Articles of Agreement" to found a library. The Junto was a discussion group of young men seeking social, economic, intellectual, and political advancement. When they foundered on a point of fact, they needed a printed authority to settle the divergence of opinion. In colonial Pennsylvania at the time there were not many books. Standard English reference works were expensive and difficult to obtain. Franklin and his friends were mostly mechanics of moderate means. None alone could have afforded a representative library, nor, indeed, many imported books. By pooling their resources in pragmatic Franklinian fashion, they could. The contribution of each created the book capital of all.

Tin Suggestion Box, ca. 1750

Fifty subscribers invested forty shillings each and promised to pay ten shillings a year thereafter to buy books and maintain a shareholder's library. Thus "the Mother of all American Subscription Libraries" was established. A seal was decided upon with the device: "Two Books open, Each encompass'd with Glory, or Beams of Light, between which water streaming from above into an Urn below, thence issues at many Vents into lesser Urns, and Motto, circumscribing the whole, Communiter Bona profundere Deum est." This translates freely: "To pour forth benefits for the common good is divine." The silversmith Philip Syng engraved the seal. The first list of desiderata to stock the shelves was sent to London on March 31, 1732, and by autumn that order, less a few books found to be unobtainable, arrived. James Logan, "the best Judge of Books in these parts," had assisted in the choice, and it was a representative one.

Were one to draw up a list of the works most commonly found in colonial American - and probably provincial English - libraries, the early selection of the Library Company could serve as a pattern. In the earlier ecclesiastical and collegiate libraries of British America the choice of books was superimposed from without for theological or educational purposes and reflected the formal learning of donor or teacher. In the Library Company the desire for the book stemmed from the prospective reader.
Gifts in kind and in cash began to increase the book and financial resources of the library, as indeed they have continued to do to this day. In February, 1733, Librarian Louis Timothée, Secretary Joseph Breintnall, and Franklin presented a number of volumes, including A Collection of Several Pieces, by John Locke; Logic: or, the Art of Thinking, by the Port Royalists Arnauld and Nicole which Franklin in his autobiography said he had read at the age of sixteen; Plutarch's Morals in the translation of Philemon Holland; Lewis Roberts' Merchants Mappe of Commerce, and others. A bit later William Rawle added a set of Spenser's Works to the collection and Francis Richardson gave several volumes, among them Francis Bacon's Sylva Sylvarum. That same year the Proprietor Thomas Penn sent a print of an orrery to the infant institution "where it was fram'd &

hung up at our late annual Election of Officers, when the Presenter was frequently named with just Gratitude." Much more Penn bounty was hoped for.

In the spring of 1735 a florid address was delivered to John Penn, then in residence at Pennsbury, which concluded: "That Virtue, Learning & true Religion may increase and flourish, under the Encouragement and Protection of your honourable House, is our earnest and hearty Endeavour." Penn acknowledged the Library Company's thinly veiled request for patronage with thanks. More generous was the unsolicited gift of £34 sterling which arrived in the summer of 1738 from Walter Sydserfe, Scottish-born physician and planter of Antigua, who had heard of the establishment of the library from John Sober, one of its original directors. A good start had been made.

By the time the library issued its earliest surviving printed catalogue of 1741, the general mix of its collection was established for over a century. Excluding gifts, historical works broadly defined accounted for approximately one-third of the total holdings. These included geographical books and accounts of voyages and travels, which latter category the Library Company emphasized until comparatively recently. Literature - plays and poems mostly - comprised a little more than twenty percent, approximately the same proportion as science. Theology accounted for only a tenth of the titles. This was in marked contrast to the earlier libraries of Harvard and Yale, but a harbinger of other popular libraries which were founded later. Such a diminution of printed religiosity was a characteristic difference between a theological seventeenth century in the British colonies and a Deistical eighteenth century. To conclude the selection, it should be noted that philosophy matched theology in numbers, and that economics and such social sciences, the arts, linguistics, and the indefinables accounted for the rest. Bought for many years through the agency of the Quaker mercer-naturalist of London, Peter Collinson, this was and long remained the basic weighting of book selection until the decline of the proprietary libraries in the last half of the nineteenth century.

The Library Company flourished because it adopted a purchasing policy responsive to the needs of its intellectually alert, economically ambitious, but non-elite membership. Its successful example was quickly copied along the Atlantic seaboard from Salem to Charleston. It was Franklin's opinion that "these Libraries have improved the general Conversation of Americans, made the common Tradesmen and Farmers as intelligent as most Gentlemen from other Countries, and perhaps have contributed in some Degree to the Stand so generally made throughout the Colonies in Defence of their Priviledges." The Library soon became not only an increasing collection of books but also a full-fledged cabinet of curiosities in the Renaissance mode. Donors deposited in its rooms antique coins, fossils, fauna pickled in spirits, unusual geological specimens, tanned skins, and other oddities. In accordance with its role as an all-embracing cultural institution, the Library Company also participated in the increasingly popular scientific experimentation of its day.

At first housed in a room in the librarian's lodgings, the burgeoning accumulation became too much for private quarters. When John Penn sent an air-pump to the quasi-learned society, the directors had to take a major step to house it properly. The instrument arrived

early in 1739. A handsome cabinet was commissioned for it. That glass-fronted case survives as the earliest extant example of American-made Palladian architectural furniture. Arrangements were promptly made to move the books, schatzkammer, and air-pump press into rooms on the second floor of the newly finished west wing of the State House (now Independence Hall). It was there that Franklin and his associates performed their first experiments in electricity. Exactly when Collinson sent over a hollow glass tube to the Philadelphians which introduced them to the intriguing phenomenon of static electricity is not known. There is a record of the arrival of a "Trunk of Books, Glass Tubes &c." in the summer of 1742, but Franklin, reminiscing later, gave other dates for the beginning of the experiments. They must have been well under way by 1747 when "a compleat Electrical Apparatus" was received from Thomas Penn.

Suitably settled, the library could turn its attention to making known its holdings. Although broadsheet catalogues of the Library Company's books may have been issued in 1733 and 1735, no copy of either survives. An existing small octavo of fifty-six pages, printed by Franklin and issued in 1741, lists the 375 titles then in the library. As eighteenth-century catalogues go it was a good one, the first American library catalogue to give titles at some length as well as place and date of publication. Franklin wrote "A Short Account of the Library" to fill a final blank page. No waste, no want. Franklin noted that the library was open Saturday afternoons from four until eight o'clock. Members could borrow books freely and without charge. Nonmembers could borrow books by depositing their value as security "and paying a small Acknowledgment for the Reading." In the early days this latter fee was apparently either never collected or discontinued; it does not appear as income in the first financial reports.

With a catalogue available, the books shelved in the State House wing, regular orders of books sent to the volunteer agent Collinson, and annual shipments received from London, the Library Company again sought the patronage of the proprietors of Pennsylvania. What the directors really wanted was a handsome benefaction in books or cash. They did get a plot of land for a hoped-for building of their own, and on March 24, 1742, a charter from John, Thomas and Richard Penn, issued in their name by Governor George Thomas. By it, since the members had "at great expense, purchased a large and valuable collection of useful books, in order to erect a library for the advancement of knowledge and literature in the city of Philadelphia," there was created "one body corporate and politic in deed." The charter was printed in 1746, together with the by-laws and a supplementary catalogue.

The first librarian, Louis Timothée, or Timothy as he became, left after a short tenure to become Franklin's printing partner in Charleston. For a very brief period Franklin himself took on the bibliothecal responsibility. He was succeeded by the erstwhile shoe-maker and self-trained surveyor William Parsons, who served from 1734 to 1746. He was followed as librarian by Robert Greenway, who remained in office for seventeen years.

The more important functionary of the institution was the secretary, at first the scrivener and amateur botanist Joseph Breintnall. He kept the minutes and wrote the letters ordering books to Collinson, who faithfully carried out the Library Company's requests for over a quarter of a century. After Breintnall's death in 1746 it was Franklin who performed the secretarial duties. Despite his mythical reputation as the careful methodical "Poor Richard," he was careless about the Library Company's records. When he went to England in 1757, first the schoolmaster Francis Alison and then young Francis Hopkinson served as secretary. When the latter took custody of the Library Company's box which Franklin had left with his wife, he found that the notes of minutes taken on separate pieces of paper during the printer-politician's years in office were scattered and imperfect. To create a permanent record Hopkinson copied into a book all the minutes of the Library Company from the beginning, although lacunae exist for some periods in the 1740s and 1750s.

The books which flowed regularly across the Atlantic from the London book shops were in subject matter the same mix as in the first shipments. There were recent works of history and travel, some poems, plays and novels, and standard vademecums and popularizations in the field of practical arts and sciences. Franklin wrote that "in the Scheme of the Library I had provided only for English Books." Likewise in his College of Philadelphia he provided only a good English education. Although Provost William Smith stressed a classical education more than Franklin had hoped, the members of the Library Company, with little Latin and less Greek, bought very few books not in English.

Treasures-to-be came in 1755 and in 1758 in the boxes from Collinson in the form of his own copies of a score of seventeenth-century accounts of the newly established British colonies in America, among them such classics of colonization as Strachey's Lawes, Mourt's Relation and John Smith's Generall Historie of Virginia. New catalogues were issued in 1757 and 1764. At the same time the museum aspect of the Library Company and its role as a scientific institution were not neglected. In 1752 a surprise gift of a collection of Roman coins came from Charles Gray, a Tory member of Parliament from Colchester, who later voted against the repeal of the Stamp Act. Two years later Charles Swaine deposited in the Library Company's room some tools and Eskimo parkas which were the only tangible fruits of the abortive Philadelphia-financed expedition to seek a Northwest Passage. In the care of Francis Hopkinson, Benjamin West sent over the hand of a mummified Egyptian princess. The institution's microscope and telescope were frequently requested for use by various scientific investigators. The latter at one time had to be sent to the London instrument-maker James Short to be repaired, and in 1769 it was used by Owen Biddle to observe the transit of Venus from Cape Henlopen.

Among those who guided the destinies of the Library Company in the years before the Revolution were the silversmith Philip Syng, Dr. Thomas Cadwalader, the schoolmaster Francis Alison, the builder-architect Samuel Rhoads, secretary Richard Peters of the Governor's Council, and a bit later the merchant-patriot Charles Thomson and John Dickinson, the "Pennsylvania Farmer." On May 9, 1769, Sarah Wistar became the first woman to be voted a share.

The library kept growing in part by absorbing some of its own progeny. The Union Library, founded in 1746, into which had been incorporated the much smaller Association Library and Amicable Library, was merged in 1769 into the Library Company. Duplicates - alas, any edition of the same title - were sold. The holdings and members of the two institutions were consolidated. A new printed catalogue with 2,033 entries was prepared and published in 1770. On this occasion the books were renumbered by size, beginning an accession series which is continued to this day.

In 1772 the library having "become large & valuable, a Source of Instruction to Individuals and conducive of Reputation to the Public," and much too crowded in its State House rooms, the directors petitioned the Pennsylvania Assembly for permission to build on the State House Square. The request was turned down. After much consideration and no alleviation of the space problem, agreement was reached with the Carpenters' Company in 1773 to rent the second floor of their new hall off Chestnut Street near Fourth. "The Books (inclosed within Wire Lattices) are kept in one large Room," Franklin then in London was informed, "and in another handsome Appartment the [scientific] Apparatus is deposited and the Directors meet."

It was a historic move. On September 5, 1774, the First Continental Congress met on the first floor of Carpenters' Hall. John Adams reported that the site committee had taken "a View of the Room, and of the Chamber where is an excellent Library." In anticipation of the meeting the Library Company had ordered that "the Librarian furnish the Gentlemen who are to meet in Congress in this City with the use of such Books as they may have occasion for during their sitting taking a Receipt for them." The first day it met Congress recorded the credentials of the delegates. On the second day it formally expressed its thanks for the Library Company's courtesy.

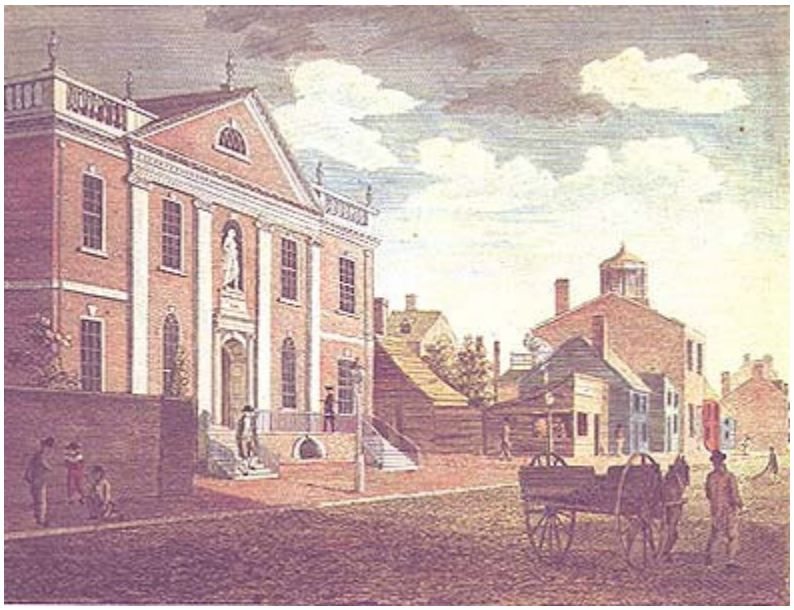
The offer of the use of the collections was renewed when the Second Continental Congress met the following spring, and again when the delegates to the Constitutional Convention met in 1787. In fact, for a quarter century, from 1774 until the national capital was established in Washington, D.C., in 1800, the Library Company, long the most important book resource for colonial Philadelphians, served as the de facto Library of Congress before there was one de jure. Unfortunately, no circulation records for the period exist, so we can never know which delegate or congressman borrowed or consulted what work. But virtually every significant work on political theory, history, law, and statecraft (and much else besides) could be found on the Library Company's shelves, as well as numerous tracts and polemical writings by American as well as European authors. And virtually all of those works that were influential in framing the minds of the Framers of the nation are still on the Library Company's shelves. It was said, although the records of neither Congress nor the Library Company contain any information to corroborate the story, that the colossal bust of Liberty made by Giuseppe Ceracchi, which stood behind the chair of the Speaker of the House in the late 1790s, was given to the Library Company as a token of thanks when the government left the city.

In 1775, at the time he had joined with Dr. Johnson in opposition to the actions of the colonies, the evangelical preacher John Wesley sent some books to the library - of a religious nature, not political polemics. In the months of growing turmoil the directors tried to continue normal procedures. Just when the news of Lexington and Concord reached Philadelphia, a supplement to the 1770 catalogue was delivered by Robert Aitken, who later also printed the "Bible of the Revolution." Nonetheless, the affairs of the Library Company were overwhelmed by events. On July 9, 1776, only two directors showed up for a meeting and "no business was done." At the end of the year it was announced that books had to be obtained from the librarian's house, because the first floor of Carpenters' Hall was being used as an infirmary for sick soldiers. The occupation of the city by the British also interrupted the routine; the directors did not meet between October 1777 and March 1778, but then things seem to have gone on smoothly. Just before the British left, the Tory bookseller of New York, James Rivington, sent the library "all the Books to be procured at present in this place." Insofar as the Minutes reflect what was going on, the Library Company seemed insulated from the trials and successes of the new nation.

During the war years, importation of books from abroad had ceased. With the peace in 1783 a flurry of orders went to London agents Joseph Woods and William Dilwyn. The seriousness of purpose of the library was reiterated when the directors told their correspondents that "tho we would wish to mix the Utile with the Dulce, we should not think it expedient to add to our present stock, anything in the novel way." It was with presumably unspent book funds that the Library Company in 1785 made what has proved to be the most valuable purchase in its history. At the sale of the effects of the Swiss-born would-be historian of America, Pierre Eugene Du Simitière, the Library Company was the main buyer, securing most of his manuscript collections and almost all the volumes of broadsides, prints, and pamphlets offered at the auction. Du Simitière, with an eye to the future, had picked up ephemera from the streets. An unbelievably high percentage of the printed items he gathered is today unique, illuminating the Revolutionary era as only the informal productions of a period can.

When the Reverend Manasseh Cutler visited Philadelphia in 1787, he paid his respects to the institution which had "become the public library of the University and City": Every modern author of any note, I am told, is to be met with here, and large additions are annually made. The books appeared to be well arranged and in good order. . . . I was pleased with a kind of network doors to the book-shelves, which is made of a large wire sufficiently open to read the labels, but no book can be taken out unless the librarian unlocks the door. This is a necessary security from any persons taking books without the knowledge of the librarian. . . .

From the Library we were conducted into the Cabinet, which is a large room on the opposite side of the entry, and over the room where the Mechanical models are deposited [by the American Philosophical Society]. Here we had the pleasure of viewing a most excellent collection of natural curiosities from all parts of the globe.



William Birch, *Library and Surgeon's Hall,* Fifth-street. Engraving, from the City of Philadlephia, 1800.

Although the contents of the museum and the scientific instruments of the Library Company remained in its possession for some time, gifts to the cabinet fell off. There is no record of the disposal of any of the items, but only a very few of them have survived.

There was an upsurge of optimism after the government was established under the Constitution. Growth had continued and the library's rented quarters became inadequate. Negotiations with the legislature for ground and with the American Philosophical Society for some jointure of interest fell through. In 1789 the Library Company bought a piece of land on Fifth Street near Chestnut across from the State House Square. A competition for the design of a building was held. An amateur architect, Dr. William Thornton, won it with plans for a handsome Palladian red-brick structure with white pilasters and a balustrade surmounted by urns. A curving double flight of steps led up to the frontispiece over which, under a pronounced pediment, was an arched niche. This was filled by a gift from William Bingham, a statue of Franklin classically garbed in a toga - with his permission - carved out of marble in Italy by Francesco Lazzarini. The cornerstone, composed by Franklin except for a flattering reference to him, was laid on August 31, 1789. He did not live to see the building finished. The new quarters were opened on New Year's Day, 1791. For the new library Samuel Jennings, an expatriate Philadelphian living in London, painted a large picture, "Liberty Displaying the Arts and Sciences."

When the new library was in operation, conversations were held seeking an arrangement with the Loganian Library, housed on Sixth Street across the State House Square. James Logan, who had come to Pennsylvania as William Penn's secretary in 1699 and in the course of years occupied many of the highest political and judicial offices of the province, was a Bookman all his life. A linguist of competence in a bewildering number

of languages, a classicist who in the margins of his books crossed swords with greatest European editors, and a scientist who described the fertilization of corn by pollen, understood and used the new inventions of calculus, wrote on optics, and made astronomical observations, the Quaker virtuoso brought books to feed the wide-ranging appetite of his mind. By the time he died in 1751, Logan had gathered over 2,600 volumes, chiefly in Latin and Greek, which was the best collection of books in colonial America.

In his later years he had decided to leave his books for the use of the public and established a library, an American Bodleian. He designed and commenced the building to house it on Sixth Street and wrote an elaborate codicil to his will setting up and, with the rents of a property in Bucks County, endowing the institution. The original trustees had included his son-in-law Isaac Norris, Jr., but as a result of a disagreement with him, Logan canceled the codicil. In spite of his intention to frame another instrument, illness prevented him from perfecting it. Nonetheless, after his death his heirs carried out the old man's wishes. The Loganian Library was created in 1754 as a trust for the public with Logan's sons, William and James, his son-in-law John Smith, Benjamin Franklin, Richard Peters, Israel Pemberton, Jr., and William Allen as trustees. A second deed of trust, almost identical with the earlier one, was dated March 25, 1760.

A printed catalogue of the Bibliotheca Loganiana, prepared by Lewis Weiss, an educated German immigrant, was issued in 1760 in which year the library was opened. Although Franklin in his promotional tract for the establishment of a college in Philadelphia had described Logan's library as a valuable book resource available to professors and students, use was seldom made of the scholarly works in the collection. In the eighteenth century there was furthermore little interest in the classics and advanced mathematical sciences on the part of merchants and artisans in Philadelphia. Moreover, two factors that made Logan's library unique contributed tcreatureo its unpopularity; it included few English works of belles-lettres and, at the opposite pole, almost no polemical theology or politics.

In 1758 Dr. William Logan, a physician of Bristol England, and the younger brother of James, died without issue and left much of his estate including his library to his nephew William Logan of Philadelphia. Dr. William Logan's books included a high proportion of medical works, and in pre-Revolutionary days it may have been the largest and best - albeit somewhat old-fashioned - such collection in the colonies. When the American William Logan died in 1776, he left from his inheritance such books as did not duplicate titles in the Loganian Library to that institution and the duplicates to the Library Company.

When the handsome Library Company building began to rise across the square from the Loganian Library, James Logan, Jr., the sole survivor of the original trustees, asked the General Assembly of Pennsylvania to vest the trust in the Library Company in order to make his father's benefaction more useful. By an act of March 31, 1792, the books and assets of the Loganian Library were transferred into the custody of the far more active institution. An addition to its just completed building was quickly erected as an east wing.

There were almost 4,000 volumes in the Loganian Library which, after it was moved into new quarters, were listed in a new catalogue published in 1795. The weightiness in pounds and in contents can be judged from the fact that almost one-quarter of the total number of volumes was in folio size.

A succession of functionaries of brief incumbency, including John Todd, Jr., the first husband of Dolly Madison, handled the operation of the library until Zachariah Poulson, Jr. became the librarian in 1785. Poulson was a printer, newspaper publisher, and excellent keeper of books and records. He compiled and printed an indexed catalogue in 1789, kept admirable accounts of books borrowed, and set up "A Chronological Register" of shares which retrospectively listed the original and successive owners of each share from 1731 on. The register has been kept up and is still in use. Each librarian was held personally responsible for the integrity of the collection, and inventories were taken when one resigned or was replaced to determine how much should be charged him for loss during his incumbency. This amount was sometimes waived; it was frequently uncollectible.

The number of shareholders had reached 100 in 1763 and remained at that level until the merger with the Union Library in 1769, when it jumped to 400. To pay for the Fifth Street building, 266 shares in 1789-1793 were sold or given to the carpenters, bricklayers, and others in partial payment for work done. The cost of a share was increased in 1793 from £20 fluctuating Pennsylvania money to $40 in good Hamiltonian currency, and the annual dues were set at $2. Thereafter growth was gradual, the membership rising to over 800 in the 1820s. Both members and nonmembers paid a fee for taking out books, but anyone was permitted to read in the library without charge. Penalties were levied for keeping books out overlong.

Poulson, who was responsible for getting the operational affairs of the institution on a workmanlike basis, served as librarian for over two decades. On December 3, 1801, in appreciation of the director's commendation of his services up to that time, he gave the library ten folio, thirty-seven quarto, and four octavo volumes of miscellaneous pamphlets, chiefly of the seventeenth century. These added over 1,000 titles to the Library Company's holdings. The number in itself was important, but it was far outweighed by the comparatively recent discovery that all these volumes once belonged to Benjamin Franklin. Poulson's gift represents almost half of the 2,150 titles on the Library Company's shelves that once belonged to Franklin.

The library's role in the life of Philadelphia was maintained. It was, and remained until late in the nineteenth century, "the City Library" or the "the Philadelphia Library." Men of prominence were its members. Nine signers of the Declaration of Independence - Benjamin Franklin, Benjamin Rush, Francis Hopkinson, Robert Morris, George Clymer, John Morton, James Wilson, Thomas McKean, and George Ross - owned shares, and some of them served as directors. At the turn of the century those most active in the management of the Library Company were Richard Wells, Benjamin R. Morgan, William Rawle, Joseph Parker Norris, Robert Waln, and Samuel M. Fox, all of whom were leaders or participants in the civic and philanthropic activities of the city. They saw that

the finances of the library were properly managed and that orders for books were sent regularly to London agents and, after the semiannual shipments were carefully checked, paid for. Local booksellers and publishers were also patronized, but it was the important works from abroad - novels by Sir Walter Scott and Charlotte Smith, poetry by Lord Byron, accounts of Napoleon and his wars and descriptions of travels into the still "new worlds" of Africa and Asia - for which the Library Company was justly renowned. Philadelphia printers borrowed the English importations and used and abused them to such an extent that a by-law was passed in 1805 declaring that printers would be sued if they took the Library Company's books apart in the course of reprinting the work. The same problem recurred in the second half of the twentieth century.

In addition to gifts of their own works by member-authors such as Charles Brockden Brown, a number of interesting accessions flowed into the library. In 1788, as secretary of the Pennsylvania Society for the Abolition of Slavery, Tench Coxe, later Hamilton's assistant in the Treasury Department, placed in the Library Company a handful of antislavery pamphlets sent the Society from England and France, remarking that he knew of no depository "so proper" for such material.

The directors were surprised in March 1799, to receive as a gift from a stranger, Henry Cox of Ireland, a black box containing a number of books, manuscripts, and printed records. They had come down to him from his grandfather, Sir Richard Cox, Lord Chancellor of Ireland in 1703-1707, who had appropriated them. When William Hepworth Dixon, a British historian, saw the manuscripts in Philadelphia in 1866, he recognized them as part of the official Irish archives and suggested that they were of such paramount importance that they should be returned to Great Britain. The directors agreed and formally offered to Lord Romilly, Master of the Rolls, several of the manuscripts containing correspondence between James I and the Privy Council of Ireland, orders of the Council, and the diary and letterbook of the Marquis of Clanricarde, Lord Deputy of Ireland. The offer was gratefully accepted. In return the Library Company was given several series of British government publications of an antiquarian nature. Of greater import, however, was the discovery thirty years later of the "Mayflower Compact," which was generously sent back to Massachusetts by Queen Victoria's officials. The Times noted: "The precedent of the Library Company of Philadelphia . . . has unquestionably played a considerable part in determining the action of the Consistory Court." Inexplicably, the directors did not return a number of other valuable documents from the same source, including James I's original instructions of 1614 to his Lord Deputy of Ireland, Sir Arthur Chichester, and some dozens of unique Irish seventeenth-century broadsides.

A far larger gift came as the bequest in 1803 of the Reverend Dr. Samuel Preston, rector of Chevening in Kent. It is not known exactly why he chose the Library Company to be the recipient of his book bounty. In 1783 Preston, an ardent Whig, had written to the directors congratulating them on the exploits of their fellow countrymen and wishing the Library Company well in the days to come, and in 1784 he sent the Library Company a copy of the two-volume folio Hebrew Old Testament prepared by the erudite Benjamin Kennicott because, he said, of the "high regard I have ever entertained for the People of

America, particularly those of the Province of Pennsylvania." Preston may have met Franklin during the latter's visit to Chevening in August 1774. Nicholas Biddle later related that the American artist Benjamin West, who painted Preston's portrait in 1797, "induced Preston to give his valuable library to Phila." In any event, the Preston bequest consisted of over 2,500 volumes, the lifetime accumulation of a well-to-do, cultured gentleman cleric with an appropriate proportion of theological works, but rich in handsome and expensive works of geography, history, and the fine arts. When the books arrived in America, Congress refused to remit the duties, which were begrudgingly paid.

The next major accession of the library was in 1828 upon the death of the Philadelphia merchant William Mackenzie. Little is known of the man except that he was wealthy, generous, and a true bibliophile. Mackenzie was the first American to collect books for the sake of their rarity, their age, or their beauty, gathering them together from every part of Europe and America. He was, in short, America's first rare book collector, who acquired such "collectors' items" as Jacobus de Voragine's Golden Legende printed by Caxton in 1438, Jenson's 1476 Italian Pliny on vellum, and many French books, from romances of chivalry to Oudry's rococo masterpiece La Fontaine's Fables Choisies (Paris, 1755-1759). In addition to rarities, among them dozens of pamphlets of the period of the Revolution and other extremely valuable pieces of Americana, Mackenzie purchased the books of his day as they were published, and he bought heavily when important libraries were dispersed locally. As a result he was a major customer of the bookseller Nicholas Gouin Dufief in 1801-1803 when the collections of Benjamin Franklin and of William Byrd of Westover were broken up and sold piecemeal. By his will Mackenzie left all his books before 1700 to the Loganian Library (which since 1792 had been consolidated with the Library Company) as well as another 800 volumes which the Loganian trustees could select from his French and Latin works. These amounted to 1,519 volumes; an additional 3,566 volumes were purchased on most favorable terms by the Loganian trustees from Mackenzie's executors. At the same time the Library Company acquired 1,966 volumes, mostly books in English. Thus Mackenzie's entire collection of over 7,000 books found its way into the Library Company.

In 1832 two other large libraries were added to the book resources of the Library Company. After the death of Zaccheus Collins, an amateur naturalist and longtime director of the library, the administrator of his estate offered his books for sale. For $1,200 the collection, rich in works of botany and other fields of natural history, was purchased for the Loganian Library. Collins's books complemented the Library Company's already significant holdings in the field of natural history, for the Library Company was founded just as the Linnean revolution was inspiring the first systematic classification of new American species of plants and animals. Many of the early naturalists were associated with the Library Company - John Bartram, James Logan, Peter Collinson, Joseph Breintnall - and many other members at least dabbled in this exciting new field. One of the first books placed on the shelves of the library was Philip Miller's Gardener's Dictionary, the gift of Peter Collinson. Mark Catesby's Natural History of Carolina, the first great color plate book of American natural history, was snapped up when a new edition was published in 1771.

The second major collection to come to the Library Company in 1832 was that of James Cox. He was an artist who had emigrated from London shortly after the Revolution. By chance, near his house on Almond Street in Philadelphia, he met a woman who came from his own native village in England and who befriended him and made him her heir. When the lady died, Cox came into a modest fortune, enabling him to buy books and more books which he did to the exclusion of all but the essential necessities of life. An eccentric bibliomaniac, he filled his house to overflowing with an accumulation of about 6,000 volumes, chiefly of a literary nature, including a first edition of Keats's Poems which he seems to have bought when it was first published. A solitary octogenarian, overwhelmed by the size of his collection, Cox agreed in 1832 to give it to the Library Company in return for an annuity of $400. Two years later Cox died; his library proved to be a most unusual bargain.

In 1806 Zachariah Poulson resigned as librarian and was succeeded by George Campbell, who remained in office until 1829. These were the days of printed catalogues. Supplements came out regularly; a new "complete" listing was published in 1803; a Loganian supplement was issued in 1828; and then, of course, the addition of the Mackenzie books called forth another catalogue. In the spring of 1829 John Jay Smith was elected librarian. He was a man of broad culture and considerable energy, with a host of extracurricular activities such as the editing of a periodical, the promotion of Laurel Hill Cemetery, the practice of landscape gardening, and the collection of family and other early Pennsylvania manuscripts which he eventually gave to the Library Company. He was a descendant of James Logan through Logan's daughter Hannah and was proud of his ancestry. Through no fault of his, the only fire in the long history of the Library Company occurred early in Smith's incumbency. On January 6, 1831, heat from the fireplace in the Loganian room kindled a wooden beam hidden beneath a veneer of masonry. Before it was extinguished some of the contiguous woodwork caught fire, and a clock, the portrait of Logan, a bust of Penn, and some books were destroyed. The loss, covered by insurance, was not so great as had been feared at first. Few books were a total loss; some had their edges scorched; 1,403 volumes were rebound because their spines had been damaged.

A major catalogue of the Library Company's books, arranged by subject, was issued in 1835, followed two years later by one of the Loganian Library. These, with their supplements of 1856 and 1867, remained the basic finding aids of the library for over a century. Statistics were then printed showing that in the two collections there were 25,684 works in 43,884 volumes. In 1845 Smith noted that the number of books in the building had doubled in the sixteen years of his administration, and "with the rapid multiplication of books in America, importations from England & the Continent, &c." he foresaw another doubling in the next twenty years. A new building was considered in 1846, and John Notman actually drew plans for it, but nothing came of that. Growing pains continued. When Charles Jewett published the first comprehensive survey of American libraries in 1851, the Library Company was one of only five institutions with as many as 50,000 volumes. The others were Harvard and Yale (both inclusive of their specialized graduate school collections), the Library of Congress, and the Boston

Athenaeum. Only Harvard had more than the Library Company's approximate count of 60,000 volumes.

After more than two decades as librarian, John Jay Smith resigned in 1851 and his son, Lloyd Pearsall Smith, succeeded him. He was more of a classicist than his predecessors and was known for his wit and his judicious spicing of conservation with Latin tags. "Custos librorum nascitur, non fit," he once wrote - "trans?". Lloyd Smith was also the first to look upon librarianship as a career.

The library continued to grow. Smith noted in 1856 that the majority of the 18,000 volumes added since the appearance of the 1835 catalogue had been purchased with the annual payments of the members. The quality and comprehensiveness of the library acquisitions were maintained, a little bit of the best of everything, but an emphasis on history, biography, and travel, with a slowly increasing incursion of novels onto the shelves. American and foreign bestsellers, fiction and nonfiction, were ordered as a matter of course, but it is doubtful that any other library had the imagination - or the boldness - to buy when they were first published the then-little-regarded Moby Dick and Leaves of Grass. The Library Company did. Concern about the inadequacy of the Fifth Street building increased in pace with acquisitions. "Subscriptions for the erection of a Fire-Proof Building for the Library" were sought. The destruction of much of the Library of Congress made many institutions fire-conscious. By 1869 a substantial fund, including a legacy of almost $50,000 from Joseph Fisher, had been raised; some lots were purchased in an attempt to assemble sufficient ground at the corner of Juniper and Locust Streets.

One of the Library Company's treasures came to it in 1857 as a gift from George Mifflin Dallas, then American minister at the Court of St. James. "One of the members of Parliament in looking over the rubbish of a City curiosity shop" brought him a

Peter Cooper, *The Southeast Prospect of the City of Philadelphia.* Oil on canvas, ca.1720. Gift of George Mifflin Dallas. Th earliest painting of a North AMerican city, found in a London Curiosity Shop in 1857.

view of the southeast prospect of Philadelphia painted by Peter Cooper about 1720. He sent the "antique daub" back to its place of origin, deprecating its value except as a curiosity. The Cooper view, now restored and framed, is one of the most valuable of all Philadelphia paintings, the oldest surviving canvas of any American city.
Shortly before the Cooper view arrived, loss by theft had been noted. Books belonging to the Library Company were discovered at an auction, with the "labels partially erased or concealed," where they had been consigned by William Linn Brown. The book thief was

the son of the author Charles Brockden Brown. The directors promptly ordered that he be excluded from the library.

During the Civil War the struggle of the nation made the operation of the library of secondary importance. When the Confederate Army under Lee threatened Pennsylvania in 1863, Lloyd P. Smith joined the Germantown Company of volunteers, leaving the servicing of books in the hands of fifteen-year-old George Maurice Abbot, who had just joined the staff, and Smith's now aged father. A map was set up in the reading room with colored pins to show the changing positions of the armies as campaigns ebbed and flowed. When the Great Central Fair was held in 1864 on Logan Square, the Library Company lent such historic items as William Penn's desk and clock and some of its rarest books for exhibition. With money scarce, prices high, and many of the members in the army, it took all of Smith's ingenuity to maintain the currency of the book purchases which were increasingly being dominated by a demand for novels by such popular, now almost-forgotten authors as Ellen Price Wood, Lady Blessington, and Mayne Reid, as well as French texts of the prolific Alexandre Dumas and George Sand.

In 1869 Dr. James Rush died. He was the son of the physician-patriot Benjamin Rush and husband and heir of Phoebe Ann Ridgway Rush, who had inherited a portion of her father Jacob Ridgway's immense fortune and had predeceased her husband. They were childless. In accordance with his will as presented to the directors of the Library Company by Henry J. Williams, Rush's brother-in-law, sole executor, and long-time director of the Library Company, Rush left an estate of nearly a million dollars to the Library Company - under certain conditions. The original will had been drawn up in 1860, and in the remaining years of his life Dr. Rush added codicil upon codicil until he succeeded in obscuring his own somewhat eccentric wishes in a fog of words and admonitory clauses.

His original intention was clear. With his money the Library Company was to purchase a plot of adequate size "situate between Fourth and Fifteenth and Spruce and Race Streets" and there build a "fire-proof building sufficiently large to accommodate and contain all the books of the Library Company of Philadelphia . . . and to provide for its future extension." He did not want anything fancy. Matters, however, were not permitted to rest there. In his second codicil Dr. Rush authorized his executor, at his discretion, to do whatever he thought fit. Mr. Williams asserted that on his deathbed Dr. Rush had expressed his specific desire that the library be built on a lot at Broad and Christian Streets toward the purchase of which he had made a payment. The executor announced his intention of carrying out the testator's last oral wishes.

Dr. Rush, who was a studious, somewhat misanthropic, and definitely eccentric gentleman, set forth a number of curious stipulations and precatory provisions in his will, but he had a clear idea of what he wanted the Library Company, where hehad spent many quiet, happy hours, to be. He wrote:
I know that an ostentatious library to keep up with the progress of our country, collecting too many books, may be like an avaricious man who accumulates money to the ruin of both his modesty and his intellect.

Let [the library] rest in a modest contentment in the useful quality of its volumes for the benefit, not the amusement alone of the public, nor let it over an ambitious store of inferior printed paper, flap its flimsy leaves, and crow out the highest number of worthless books. Let it be a favor for the eminent works of fiction to be found upon the shelves; but let it not keep cushioned seats for time-wasting and lounging readers, nor place for every-day novels, mind-tainting reviews, controversial politics, scribblings of poetry and prose, biographies of unknown names, nor for those teachers of disjointed thinking, the daily newspapers, except, perhaps for reference to support, since such an authority could never prove, the authentic date of an event. In short, let the managers think only of the intrinsic value of additions to their shelves

While such a Catonian opinion of the printed word would not have reflected the tastes of the membership at large and while other stipulations were somewhat aggravating, it was Williams's firm decision to build the new library in South Philadelphia, both physically and psychologically removed from the homes and businesses of the members, which aroused the most opposition. At a meeting in October 1869, the membership voted to "accept the legacy of Dr. James Rush according to the terms expressed in his will," with 378 of the 969 members abstaining, 298 voting in favor of the resolution, and 293 voting against it. The members, however, voted down a purely polite corollary motion expressing their gratitude for the bequest and their willingness to unite with Mr. Williams to carry out Dr. Rush's philanthropic intentions. A subsequently passed vote of thanks did nothing to placate Mr. Williams.

The directors of the Library Company were torn between a desire to benefit from the million-dollar bequest and their disapproval of Williams's plans for the site and the building. After several years, much bitterness, and a number of lawsuits, the huge Parthenon-like structure designed by Addison Hutton was erected at Broad and Christian Streets. In 1878 the Library Company reluctantly accepted the impressive edifice, named the Ridgway Library in honor of the original source of the funds which made it possible, and the Rush bequest. The reader-members, however, had no intention of going down to South Philadelphia to browse or pick up the latest novels and biographies bought for the library.

By the time the Ridgway Library was completed, plans, energetically forwarded by Henry Wharton, William Henry Rawle, and John S. Newbold, were well advanced for another building at Juniper and Locust Streets, a location more central and more convenient for most of the members. Indeed, 692 of the 950 members were then living in town west of Tenth Street. It was decided to use the Ridgway Library as a kind of storage house, although it was never so crudely phrased. The directors proceeded to relieve the crowded shelves on Fifth Street by moving to Broad Street "such books as, if destroyed by fire, could never be replaced" as well as all the Loganian books included in the 1837 catalogue. Frank Furness, a popular architect who favored the use of bricks to create his individualistic kind of Victorian eclecticism, designed the in-town library where more modern books would be housed and the main lending aspect of the Library Company

could be conducted. On February 24, 1880, the new Juniper and Locust Street library opened its doors. Soon afterward the Fifth Street property was sold.

In acknowledgment of the increasing number of women who became members throughout the nineteenth century, the plans for the Juniper and Locust Street building included a ladies' sitting room. The Library Company also hired its first woman librarian, Elizabeth McClellan, who had charge of the Women's Room (and attended exclusively to the wants of female readers) from 1880 until her death in 1920. (Because of the separate accommodations at the Juniper and Locust Street building, attendance records were kept by gender. They indicate that in the late nineteenth century, attendance of female and male shareholders was almost equal.)

Lloyd P. Smith, in whose home the plans for the first meeting of the projected American Library Association took place, was proud of his two "fire-proof" buildings. As one of the leaders in the new movement to professionalize librarianship, he wrote articles for the Library Journal, gave papers at meetings of the association, went with his peers to an international meeting in England, and developed a classification system for the shelving of the books in the two new buildings. The system used A for theology, E for jurisprudence, I for science and arts, O for literature, U for history and biography, and Y for bibliography, with lower-case letters and numerals for divisions and subdivisions of the categories. Within these subject classifications the books were shelved by size - folios, quartos, octavos, and duodecimos - and then by accession number.

This might have presented no problem had not the holdings of the Library Company been fragmented. The Library Company's old books were housed in the north wing of the Ridgway Library; the Loganian Library's old books were ranged on the balcony which ran around the huge, open reading room; the Library Company's new books were in the uptown library. Each collection was arranged separately according to the Smith system, and as new collections came into the library each of those was also separately arranged. Duplicate catalogues and accession books had to be maintained for the two sites, for only the accession numbers appeared in the printed catalogues and on the handwritten paper slips which were used after 1856. The method was ponderous, but for the 100,000 volumes which the Library Company had, according to a government survey of 1876, it worked. Although a new shelving method was introduced in 1953, some of the library is still arranged according to Smith's system.

The first considerable new accessions after the occupation of the Ridgway Library were the library and papers of Dr. James Rush which were part of his bequest. These included almost all the books of his celebrated father Benjamin Rush (probably the largest and best medical collection in the United States at the time of his death in 1813) and the manuscripts of many of his writings and lectures, notebooks, ledgers, medical records, and letters received. James Rush's own books and papers were far from inconsequential. His interests ranged from the valuable reference material that he had accumulated for the studies he wrote on the human voice and the human intellect to expensive, illustrated books on art, architecture, and antiquities.

After the Civil War, the position of the Library Company and of similar American subscription libraries was gradually but inexorably altered. The challenge came first from the mechanics' libraries, which provided reading material for workingmen, and then from the universities and the newly organized free public libraries which grew rapidly in size, displacing the private subscription libraries as a community's principal repository of books. The Library Company noticed that far more nonmembers than members were beginning to use its resources. Subscribers without voting privileges could pay a fee for the right to borrow books. It was a recognition of the changing times which impelled Dr. S. Weir Mitchell, author and physician, to suggest in 1886 that a study be made "to consider whether it may not be possible to make of the Philadelphia Library a Library free to all." Certainly the historian of the inquisition, Henry C. Lea, had that concept in mind when he gave $50,000 to enlarge the library building, conditioning his gift upon the Library Company's agreement "not at any future time to abridge the privileges heretofore so liberally extended to the public."

At the same time the potential scholarly resources of the library grew impressively. In 1884 the chess library of Professor George Allen - said at the time to have been the fifth finest collection of its kind in the world - was bought. Late that year Margaretta A. Dick donated a collection of books, chiefly Americana and many editions of the Book of Common Prayer, which she had purchased for $1,000 from the estate of John McAllister.

A year and a half later his son, John A. McAllister, owner of the city's leading optical supply house and an incorrigible magpie, gave the Library Company his comprehensive pickings of a lifetime. He mounted these in dozens of folio scrapbooks of prints, photographs, playbills, political cartoons, paper currency, song-sheets, broadsides, newspaper clippings, letters, and memorabilia of all kinds. The Civil War period was covered exhaustively; the directors, expressing appreciation of the gift, commented that the collection "cannot fail to be of interest to the student of this period of the history of our country." To McAllister is owed the preservation of many once little valued printed trifles of the nineteenth century.

A not dissimilar collection came as the result of the foresight of the librarian, Lloyd P. Smith. In 1885 he presented the library with 400 bound volumes of pamphlets, and after his death in 1886 his widow sold about as many volumes again to the trustees of the Loganian Library for $300. Covering the political, social, economic, and philanthropic life of the country - but naturally richest in local publications - these illuminated many facets of the half-century 1830-1880.

In 1886, Mary Rebecca Darby Smith, another descendant of James Logan and a cousin of Lloyd P. Smith, bequeathed her library of over 600 volumes, consisting mainly of literature and history, to the Loganian collection. Most of the volumes were presentation copies from their authors. Her autograph collection of nineteenth-century celebrities was also part of the gift. Anne Hampton Brewster, nineteenth-century fiction writer and one of the first female foreign correspondents to American newspapers, made the Library Company the beneficiary of her will in 1892. Brewster, a member of the Library Company for forty-one years and a friend of Lloyd P. Smith, left her entire library of

approximately 2,000 volumes, as well as manuscripts, journals, notebooks, newspaper clippings, and all of her apartment furnishings. Brewster's library consisted mainly of European histories, and her personal papers chronicle the life of an unmarried professional woman as well as the lives of the American expatriates in Rome on whom she reported for eighteen years.

Two bequests added specialized collections. Albert G. Emerick, a pioneer American musicologist, left his books to the Library Company in 1896, and in 1904 the library received from Charles G. Sower, a descendant of the country's first German printer, a family collection rich in Pennsylvania-German imprints.

With two buildings to operate, Lloyd P. Smith had at first divided his time between the Locust Street and Christian Street libraries. George Maurice Abbot, who had been hired as a boy to help in the old Library Hall, was soon sent down to supervise the Ridgway Library. J. Bunford Samuel was taken on as a stack boy and messenger there. Smith's successors - James G. Barnwell from 1887 to 1907 and the patient Abbot from 1907 to 1929 - emigrated as soon as they could to the more socially rewarding milieu of Locust Street. Few of the directors and few of the members gave much thought to the dusty vastness of the gray Greek temple in which James and Phoebe Ann Rush were entombed and, it sometimes seemed, in which the books were entombed also. They were satisfied to have Samuel take over the curatorship of the Ridgway Library.

Bunford Samuel was not a professional librarian nor a formally educated scholar, but he loved the books in his care. While others depended on catalogue entries to know what books were on the shelves and where to find them, Samuel over the years built up a memory bank more efficient than the scattered arrangement and the separate catalogues. He was more like the European librarians of his day than his contemporaries of the American Library Association; he was primarily a defender of the books in his care. The curiosity-seeker did not find Samuel very helpful; the serious scholar received his serious attention. The survival almost intact of the old books in the Library Company is due, in no small measure, to Samuel's concern for half a century.

On the other hand, the main concern of the directors and the head librarian was seeing that the members were supplied with the most recent books for their leisure-time reading. After the Free Library of Philadelphia opened its main building on Chestnut Street in 1895 and later moved to 13th and Locust Streets, the Library Company was destined to drift, its members resigned to seeing it an institution of undistinguished gentility. It was recorded in 1895 that fewer persons had used the library and fewer books were taken out than usual. "The library facilities of the city have become so much enlarged during the past few years," the directors reported to the shareholders in 1903, "that a library of the character of your institution cannot hold the same position that it formerly did, when libraries were fewer in number." As an afterthought they added that, however, as "a library for the student and the thoughtful reader" its position remained preeminent. This statement summarized the library's history for the first part of the twentieth century. In his brief history of the Library Company published in 1913, Abbot noted that the number of books in its collections was 237,677, divided equally between the two buildings, and

that there were 909 members and "many subscribers." Regular purchases, chiefly of popular works of fiction and nonfiction, buttressed with a considerable number of solid biographies and monographs on American history, continued to increase the library's holdings.

In 1929 Austin K. Gray became librarian. A gentle, cultured Englishman and literary historian, he attempted to rouse the library from its lethargy with lectures and exhibitions. However, he was unable to prevent the Library Company from inching toward bankruptcy as the depression deepened. The real-estate holdings of the Rush Estate, mostly in a deteriorating section of the city, melted away. Income from dues ($8 a year) and from a small endowment failed by a wide margin to meet expenditures; capital was invaded to pay bills. The publication of a history of the Library Company, written and considerably romanticized by Gray, sparked a gallant fund-raising effort and membership campaign which managed to keep the institution afloat until the situation became too desperate for palliative measures - this despite the efforts of the Women's Committee, which was credited in the Annual Report for 1934 with extending the membership and activities of the Library Company.

In 1935, under the leadership of Owen Wister, then president of the Library Company, the directorsurged that the Juniper and Locust Street building be given up and all the books concentrated in the Ridgway Library. They recommended "a policy whereby the Library, from being a general circulating library of current and ephemeral books, becomes a Library dedicated to the care of and making additions to its remarkable collections of valuable books." If such a policy did not please the majority of the shareholders, it was inevitable that such a policy would prevail. Under the will of Arthur K. Lea in 1938 the Company received $50,000 "as a means towards a more aggressive administration of its library, so that said library may occupy a more conspicuous part in the educational facilities of the city and perform a more useful service than it has done in the past."

A further thrust in the direction of change was given by a grant from the Carnegie Corporation to recatalogue and reshelve the library so that its scholarly resources would be more readily available. Unfortunately, the program carried out with WPA (Works Progress Administration) help was not well conceived or executed. The old printed catalogues, the paper slips of the nineteenth century, and current cards were consolidated into a single author card catalogue. However, the entries were simply copied from the original entries. None was checked against a book on the shelf, and the whole was never edited to provide uniformity or to correct errors. Furthermore, the shelf location was not placed on the main card but had to be found by reference to a second catalogue arranged by serial numbers only. These cards went to the National Union Catalogue in Washington, D.C., and are the only record there, inaccurate and incomplete as they are, of the Library Company's holdings. At the time, no one looked upon the results of the Carnegie grant as anything but strengthening the status and stature of the Ridgway Library and its research materials.

At the annual meeting on May 1, 1939, the members unanimously agreed that the directors be given authority to sell or lease the Locust Street property. A small circulating library was to be retained in the center of the city for the convenience of the members. During the following year all the books were moved to the basement of the Ridgway Library under the supervision of Barney Chesnick. He had been hired to assist Samuel at Broad and Christian Streets and succeeded him in charge of the old collections then being used by a comparatively few discerning and imaginative scholars. Chesnick was Samuel's spiritual successor as well; he matched his preceptor in concern for the books in his care and in his computer-like knowledge of their whereabouts. The labyrinthine arrangement of the shelves was made even more confusing by the expedients used to house the books from the uptown library. That building, empty, was torn down; the land was leased as a parking lot. The two-centuries-old Library Company was at the nadir of its fortunes.

About this time, two studies - one by Robert H. Downs, then librarian of New York University, and the other by the Bibliographical Planning Committee of Philadelphia under Charles W. David - looked at the Library Company's holdings and operations. They came to similar conclusions: that the circulation of modern books to members and subscribers was an obsolete service, and that the Library Company should become a research library, preferably in association with one of the city's other institutions.

This required long-term planning. For the moment, the rent from the parking lot and income from endowment funds were not sufficient to pay for all the library's operating expenses. This situation, World War II, and Austin Gray's resignation as Librarian impelled the directors in 1943 to make arrangement with the Free Library of Philadelphia whereby that institution became the corporate librarian of the Library Company, responsible (for a fee) for the administration of the library. The Free Library also opened a branch in the Ridgway Library. With Barney Chesnick in the service, the scholarly aspects of the Library Company were entrusted to the young historian John H. Powell, who at the same time was a research assistant with the Free Library. He wrote several monographs on the collections, including a survey of the large archive of the diplomat John Meredith Read, and he compiled a calendar of the papers of John Dickinson which the Library Company received as a gift from Robert R. Logan. The latter, with the drafts of such significant state documents as the Continental Congress's first and second addresses to the King and Dickinson's annotated copies of the printed preliminary drafts of the Constitution, is a treasure house of prime historical importance. At about the same time the Library Company's endowment funds were reorganized and brilliantly reinvested by Moncure Biddle, who in concert with the treasurer, W. Logan Fox, began to build a solid financial base for the institution.

The resurgent feeling that "something should be done" had been repressed during the 1930s and 1940s because the financial difficulties of the Library Company precluded any constructive change. During the war some of the Library Company's most valuable treasures had been placed in the custody of the Free Library, and informal thought was given to the possibility that the old institution might become the Free Library's rare book collection. However in 1952, the exigencies of the past having been relieved by an increasing flow of income from the parking garage that had been erected on the Locust

Street property, the directors found themselves in a position to plan for the future and do something about it. They sought the advice and guidance of a number of experts. First, Edwin Wolf 2nd, formerly with the rare book firm of Rosenbach, was engaged to make a survey of the collections, to assess their scope, size, and importance, and to suggest means to improve their care and usefulness. Then, four eminent librarians - Lloyd A. Brown of the Peabody Institute, William A. Jackson of Harvard, Paul North Rice of the New York Public Library, and Clifford K. Shipton of the American Antiquarian Society - were invited to inspect the Library Company and consult with the directors about its future.

Unanimously the experts agreed that the Library Company's greatest strength lay in its rare books and manuscripts, and that its greatest contribution to society would be as a scholarly research library with special emphasis on American history and culture. There was no doubt that the rare books and manuscripts were far more numerous and more valuable than had been generally believed. The first and immediate step the consultants urged was a program of rehabilitation. The most valuable books should be taken from the scattered locations, recatalogued, repaired, and temporarily reshelved in a room to be refitted and air-conditioned. Then the experts recommended that the Library Company reduce and refine its mass of late-nineteenth- and twentieth-century books, keeping only those which would supplement as reference works the basic historical collections.

These steps were, however, considered preliminary to a decision to move out of the Ridgway Library. That structure, once considered fireproof, was judged instead to be a fire-trap. Furthermore, the roof leaked, the basement was damp, and the building's location in the city was unfortunate. The consensus was that the Library Company should move to modern quarters in or adjacent to another compatible library as soon as possible. Meanwhile, it was recommended that the best be made of the physical facilities and work begun on rehabilitating the books and replacing the inadequate WPA catalogue. In January 1953, Wolf was appointed curator to carry out the program of revitalization.

As the shelves began to be searched, the richness of the collection became apparent to a greater degree. While it was in bibliographical circles known that the Library Company possessed American, and particularly Philadelphia and Pennsylvania, rarities, the quantity and quality of these had never been adequately judged. It had not been known how extensive were the holdings in the mathematical sciences, botany, and medicine, in architecture and the useful arts; how many of the volumes had provenances of distinction - scores of books from the libraries of Benjamin Franklin, William Byrd of Westover, Isaac Norris II, John Dickinson, and Benjamin Rush, and, surprisingly, others which had belonged to Ben Jonson, George Sandys, and Henry Vaughan; what unexpected, isolated treasures of English literature and history there were; and what a potential source of funds lay in the hundreds of duplicates. In these years during which all pre-1700 books and eighteenth-century American imprints were scrutinized and recatalogued on a priority basis, hardly a day went by when some exciting find did not surface: two copies of Thomas Jefferson's first published work with his manuscript corrections; books printed by the early Parisian printer, Antoine Vérard; a history of Louisiana which Lewis and

Clark took with them across the continent; and almost all Isaac Newton's writings in their first printings.

By 1955, with income from the parking garage increasing, the Library Company could stand on its own feet. In December of that year the arrangement with the Free Library was amicably terminated. Wolf became Librarian. As he wrote in his first Annual Report for the year 1955, the old library was a phoenix reborn. He shared the excitement of rediscovery and revitalization with an audience of bookmen - librarians, collectors, booksellers, and, of course, members of the Library Company - through his paradoxically light yet scholarly essays in the Annual Reports. When duplicates were first identified as such and sold, the directors agreed that all moneys received from book sales would be used solely for the purchase of rare books to strengthen the permanent research collections and for binding pamphlets. Wolf blended the announcement of significant acquisitions by purchase and by gift with news of the Library Company's latest finds on its own shelves. One of the most significant of the latter-day acquisitions was a large portion of the Americana collection of W. Logan Fox, which came as a gift in 1962-1964. Over the years the Annual Reports of the Library Company have been widely circulated at home and abroad and still remain the chief medium through which the institution makes itself and its books known.

The experts' primary recommendation - to move from the totally inadequate and unsuitable Ridgway Library - had not been forgotten. Conversations took place and preliminary studies made of the practicability and advantages of locating in the vicinity of the University of Pennsylvania, the American Philosophical Society (which had just recreated for its own use the Library Company's eighteenth-century building on Fifth Street), or the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Eminent rare book librarians and historians were again turned to for advice. Of the eleven consulted, ten favored a location next to the Historical Society; only one preferred another site. Consequently, at the annual meeting of the Library Company on May 2, 1960, urged to do so by the president, Nicholas B. Wainwright, and the directors, the members voted overwhelmingly to authorize the directors to petition the Orphan's Court for permission to sell the Ridgway Library and to erect a new library on Locust Street adjacent to the Historical Society.

The steps necessary to bring the plan to fruition were interlocking and complicated. Fortunately, at the critical time the City of Philadelphia made a satisfactory offer for the building and land. An elaborate, lengthy legal brief, justifying the sale and the move, was presented to the Orphan's Court which according to the Rush will had to approve all sales of real estate. After a full-dress hearing the Library Company was given permission to make the sale and also to use such other funds as were part of the Rush estate to build the new library. Three nineteenth-century brownstone houses, owned by and contiguous to the Historical Society, were purchased and torn down. Plans for a modern eight-story building were drawn by the architectural firm of Carroll, Grisdale, and Van Alen, and construction began in 1964. Meanwhile, in order to carry out another of the original recommendations concerning the future of the Library Company and to avoid moving unwanted books, a sweep of the shelves was undertaken. With formal authorization from the directors and the membership as a whole, Wolf culled and disposed of such works

printed after 1880 as were deemed not germane to the Library Company's main collections. Perhaps as many as 100,000 volumes were removed and sold, the largest segment by far consisting of novels. One of the most unusual events in the process of relocation was the transfer of the remains of James and Phoebe Ann Rush from a crypt at the Ridgway Library to a crypt beneath the Locust Street building.

With the Library Company's holdings down to an estimated 375,000 volumes, the Library Company was ready to return to the center of the city. The new building was completed by the end of 1965. The difficult transfer of the books nevertheless provided an opportunity to revamp the shelving arrangement and gather together subject classes which the space problems in the old building had fragmented. Because approximately two-thirds of the funds for the new library derived from the Rush estate, the building, like its predecessor, was named the Ridgway Library. The building was opened to the public in April 1966. A reciprocal arrangement was reached with the neighboring Historical Society whereby its rare books are shelved and used by readers in the Library Company, and the latter's manuscripts are shelved and used by readers in the Historical Society.

With the transfer of the collections to the new Ridgway Library, the goals set in 1952 by Wolf and the other consultants had been achieved. In an amazingly short time, the venerable circulating library had been utterly transformed into a research library specializing in American history and culture and its European background up to roughly the Civil War. Before 1860 this had been the largest public library in America, and the collections were already strong in all areas. It had become apparent, however, that the Library Company's decline in the 1860s and 1870s had resulted in a much spottier collection. The post-1880 materials had largely been deaccessioned. The exchange of books and manuscripts with the Historical Society committed the Library Company to remaining primarily a collection of printed materials. Thus the mission of the library was defined.

This mission implied a blueprint for future growth based on the principle of building to strength. The opening of the new building was marked by an exhibition in 1966 called Bibliothesauri: Or, Jewels from the Shelves of the Library Company of Philadelphia; included were new acquisitions as well as rarities discovered in the course of recataloguing and rearranging the collections for research. The new acquisitions resonated with the core collection in ways which articulated its complex and distinctive character. Wolf's conception of the collection, and hence the types of books he added to it, had been evolving for a decade and was to change considerably in the decade to come.

From his first visit as a consultant, Wolf focused on the older collections and on the era of the library's foundation. Here was the only major colonial library to survive nearly intact; what could it reveal about the intellectual world of the eighteenth century? From 1954 to 1956 Wolf published several articles about the selection of books in the early years of the Library Company, as well as a facsimile of the 1741 catalogue printed by Franklin. His first new acquisitions were replacements for books that had been listed in the early catalogues but were no longer on the shelves. Many a book that had cost five shillings in the 1750s was bought for the same price two centuries later. He also bought

first editions of important works of early science and erudition where the Library Company had only later editions or none at all, in order to round out this ideal enlightenment library.

This same interest in eighteenth-century intellectual history led Wolf in 1956 to begin the reconstruction of three colonial private libraries which had been partly or wholly incorporated into the Library Company - those of James Logan, Benjamin Franklin, and William Byrd of Westover, Virginia. He published a definitive catalogue of Logan's library in 1974. The other two libraries had been scattered by 1800, but he was able to locate substantial parts of them on the Library Company's shelves and in other collections across the country. (An exhibition of books owned by Franklin, based on Wolf's still unpublished card file, was mounted in 1990 as Poor Richard's Books.)

The study of provenance gave new meaning to the Library Company's collections. Books owned by a host of other colonial and early national figures were located on the shelves or were received as gifts over the years. In 1959 Wolf published a catalogue of the Library Company's holdings of books that were in (or omitted from) Wing's Short Title Catalogue of British books, 1641-1700; he indexed the provenance of all 4,000 titles, thus uncovering complex patterns in the movement of seventeenth-century British books through eighteenth-century American private libraries. The only public collection of books in the city before the Library Company's founding was the parish library at Christ Church, which included some 800 books given in 1700 by the English philanthropist Thomas Bray. It still survived, and shortly after the move to Locust Street it was placed on deposit in the Library Company. Meanwhile Wolf began privately to accumulate data about who owned what books in colonial Philadelphia, and to assemble a collection (which he donated in 1989) of the books most commonly owned. All this data was methodically presented in his 1985 Lyell Lectures in Bibliography at Oxford University, published as The Book Culture of a Colonial American City.

This vision of the Library Company as a microcosm of eighteenth-century American book culture embraced only the older part of the collection and did not account for the Library Company's later development. During the 1960s recataloguing proceeded chronologically, and the wealth of the nineteenth-century collections emerged. For the first time the Annual Reports began to mention a few early nineteenth-century acquisitions. In the 1960 Annual Report Wolf somewhat daringly predicted that some day a speech by Daniel Webster or a memorial by Dorothea Dix would be sought out by rare book libraries. In 1963 he published a catalogue of the thousands of song sheets from 1850 to 1870 in the McAllister scrap books. Soon he was buying nineteenth-century books in quantity.

The widening scope of acquisitions went hand-in-hand with new ways of seeing the collections and presenting them to the world. In 1969 Wolf mounted an exhibition called Negro History: 1553-1903. The preface to the catalogue began with a manifesto: "Everybody is talking about Negro history, so we decided to do something about it." The exhibition was so successful that the entire collection was culled in the following three years, with the help of a Ford Foundation Grant, and everything relating to African

American history was catalogued: early European accounts of Africa and the Atlantic slave trade, the economy of slavery, antislavery and abolition literature, apologies for slavery, the antebellum politics of slavery, slave narratives, documents of urban free black communities (especially in Philadelphia, the largest), materials relating to Reconstruction and the "Negro question," and literature by and about black Americans. Most of this material had been classified in other ways: travels, politics, autobiography, etc. By seeing this material in a new way, by recovering the common thread that linked these diverse books, a subject collection of surprising strength was formed. Afro-Americana, 1553-1906, with 16,500 entries, appeared over the imprint of G. K. Hall in 1973. It immediately became a standard bibliography of the subject, and has remained so even though it has been out of print for many years. Since then another 2,000 books have been added to the collection. It has attracted more scholars from greater distances than any other collection in the Library Company.

In the following years other "special collections" were uncovered in the general collection. In the late 1970s, with a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the collections were again culled and catalogues were published in four areas: American education, philanthropy, agriculture, and natural history, all before 1860. These were all areas in which existing bibliography was weak, scholarly interest was intense, market prices were low, and the Library Company's collecting had historically been outstandingly strong. The catalogues included the collections of the Historical Society and the American Philosophical Society, thus sowing the seeds of future interlibrary cooperation, and making it easy to acquire more books in those areas without unnecessary duplication. As with the Afro-Americana collection, these catalogues reunited bodies of literature which crossed several disciplinary boundaries. For example, the education and philanthropy catalogues are in effect bibliographies of voluntary organizations, even of a broad movement of social reform which permeated every aspect of antebellum society.

Comparing the Library Company's holdings with already-published subject bibliographies uncovered still more collections of surprising strength in areas such as technology, Judaica, household and cookery books, courtesy books, gift books, and architecture. The 1974 exhibition Women, 1500 to 1900 was as pioneering as Negro History; though no full catalogue of the collection was ever compiled, a card file of women's history books has been kept ever since, and it is one of the most active collecting areas. In 1983 the Library Company became headquarters for Werner Tannhof's compilation of a bibliography of German-American imprints through 1830. The Sower Collection mentioned above had been supplemented by huge collections of German-Americana purchased from George Allen in 1959 and Wilbur Oda in 1961. Together with the collection of the Historical Society on deposit with the Library Company, this turned out to be by far the largest collection of German-Americana when the first two volumes of the bibliography were published by the Gottingen University Library in 1989 as The First Century of German Language Printing in the United States of America.

In the process of strengthening and extending the Library Company's core collection, unnecessary or expensive duplication of the holdings of other local libraries was always avoided. This principle was applied not only to individual books but to whole areas of collecting. For example, the Library Company's core collection of American medicine is superb up to about 1820, but thereafter it yielded responsibility for collecting in that area to the College of Physicians. The bequest of Benjamin Rush's library by his son James further enriched the pre-1820 collection. Austin's bibliography of American medical imprints up to 1820, published in 1961, revealed the Library Company's strength. Today no attempt is made to collect medicine after 1820, but the earlier collection has been developed vigorously, to the point that it is difficult to find anything to buy. In the same way children's books and Western Americana are left to the Free Library, and manuscripts to the Historical Society. The vast field of American literature is easily shared with the University of Pennsylvania without expensive duplication; the Library Company's collection is smaller but is currently growing faster, in response to scholarly interest in popular and non-canonical writing.

Marie Korey, who came to work as Curator of Printed Books in 1972, played a major role analyzing the Library Company's strengths and choosing new subject areas to open up for development. She left to become head of the rare book department at the Free Library of Philadelphia in 1983. Her successor, James Green, has continued to build the collections in the main areas marked out by Wolf and Korey, as well as in other areas not previously cultivated so intensively, such as economics, philosophy, popular fiction, popular medicine, photographic literature (in support of the Print Department), books by women, and illustrated books. All acquisitions still build on the core collection acquired between 1731 and 1880, as described incidentally throughout this volume. The collection is constantly growing and adapting to new currents in scholarship, but its essential character has not changed. In the past forty years, over 30,000 books have been added to the rare book collection, including gifts as well as purchases, and as many more to the reference collection. The total holdings approach half a million volumes.

The Library Company's increased visibility has attracted gifts of major significance. In 1976 Jean Hoopes Epstein presented the European books of science and technology collected by her father, Penrose R. Hoopes. The next major gift came in 1980 when Librarian Wolf presented his extensive collection of early American Judaica consisting of manuscripts, books, and broadsides printed in America from 1718 to 1875. In 1982 the Chew family formally turned over to the Library Company the books at Cliveden, their handsome Georgian mansion in the Germantown section of Philadelphia. The volumes include the law library of Benjamin Chew, colonial chief justice of Pennsylvania, as well as books and vast quantities of pamphlets owned by his son Benjamin, William White Chew, and William Tilghman, a relative by marriage and later chief justice.

More recently the Library Company received the spectacular collections of ornithological plate books of Louise Elkins Sinkler and Francis R. Cope, Jr. Mrs. H. Lea Hudson contributed numerous pamphlets and books written or published by Mathew Carey, as well as a portrait of Carey by John Neagle. And Mrs. Robert R. Price, Jr., a descendant of the Rittenhouse family that established the first paper mill in America along the banks of

Wissahickon Creek near Germantown in 1690, presented to the Library Company the archive documenting that early industry.

Important collections have also arrived as long-term deposits by institutions that recognize the Library Company's ability to provide care for such collections. Among those deposits are the historical libraries of Christ Church, St. Peter's Church, Girard College, and the Wagner Free Institute of Science.

The move to the spacious, pleasant quarters of the new Ridgway Library proved fruitful for the print collection of the Library Company as well. With the appointment of Stefanie A. Munsing as curator of prints in 1971, the Print Department was born and quickly became a center of activity. A vast task faced the new curator of reorganizing and cataloguing the accumulation of Philadelphia views, portraits, American political cartoons, and early photographs. When Munsing moved on to the print collections of the Library of Congress in 1975, Bernard Reilly moved from the Reading Room to the Print Department. It was during his tenure and due to his initiative that the Library Company's remarkable collection of nineteenth-century Philadelphia photographs began to be appreciated.

In 1977, when the Library of Congress lured Reilly away, Kenneth Finkel took over the Print Department. Under his aggressive and imaginative curatorship from 1977 to 1994 the collection increased at a phenomenal rate. With the exhibition and simultaneous publication in 1980 of Nineteenth-Century Photography in Philadelphia, the Print Department became the center for the study of early photography in Philadelphia. A massive archive of photographic negatives and manuscript notebooks of pioneer aerial photographer William Nicholson Jennings was brought together in the Library Company in two separate purchases in 1978 and 1981. Miss Elizabeth G. Coates generously donated seven motion studies by Thomas Eakins in 1982. A substantial portion of the work of painter-photographer George Bacon Wood, a contemporary of Eakins, came as the gift of his granddaughter, Elsie Wood Harmon, the same year. Through the generosity of Wawa, Inc. and its president, Richard D. Wood, Jr., twenty-eight daguerreotype portraits by some of the city's leading photographers were acquired. The Library Company had much to celebrate in the 1983 exhibition and catalogue, Philadelphia ReVisions. As a direct result of ReVisions, Virgil Kauffman gave a collection of almost 4,000 glass negatives, representing pictures taken in the Philadelphia area by his Aero Service Corporation.

Conservation of the ever-growing collections grew in importance over the years. A bindery was first set up at the Library Company in 1954 by the German master bookbinder Fritz Eberhardt to repair and rebind in chronological order the vast collection of pamphlet Americana. After Eberhardt left in 1957 to work on his own, Kaspar Reder was hired to continue the work. The care of the print collection was taken up in 1971 with the bindery staff working under the guidance of Curator of Prints Stefanie Munsing, who had some training in conservation from Winterthur. Under Chief of Conservation Jennifer Woods Rosner, who came to the Library Company in 1980, the staff has begun to move systematically through the entire rare book collection, and its range of treatments has

widened to include making protective boxes, reattaching covers detached from leather bindings, repairing cloth bindings of the 19th century, and replacing old library bindings with new ones made of high-quality archival materials.

That exhibition program became more formalized with the move to Locust Street. Jointly with the Historical Society and the American Philosophical Society an exhibition was held during the Bicentennial year, A Rising People: The Founding of the United States, 1765-1789, drawing upon the resources of the three historic institutions. In 1983 Germantown and the Germans, a major exhibition and catalogue produced jointly by the Historical Society and the Library Company, celebrated the 300th anniversary of the founding of Germantown and the beginning of German settlement in America.

The climax of the new emphasis on exhibitions and public programs was the "Quarter of a Millennium" celebration in 1981, a symposium on "The Intellectual World of 1731" brought speakers not only from across the U.S. but from the People's Republic of China, West Germany, Italy, and England to bring to life the era in which the Library Company was born. Representatives from some thirty national and university libraries throughout the world that had been founded before 1731 attended the events as the guests of the Library Company, while a host of members and friends participated in the reception, lectures, lunches, and banquet dinner that made up the celebration. A superb exhibition and its magnificently produced catalogue displayed 255 books, manuscripts, maps, prints, drawings, paintings, and furniture selected from the Library Company's 250-year accumulation of riches.

Under the direction of Librarian Wolf the Library Company assumed a leading role in the cultural and intellectual community of Philadelphia and established a reputation of scholarly service both locally and internationally. Wolf often referred to himself as Dinosaurus Bibliothecarius, a librarian of an antediluvian genus now all but extinct. There were profound changes in the way libraries were run in the 1960s and 1970s, and the Library Company was independent enough to be able to pick and choose which trends to follow and which to ignore. Franklinian common sense, with a dash of thrift, was its guide, as befit a library struggling to be reborn. It remained, to use another Wolf metaphor, a mom-and-pop library with a supermarket stock.

Wolf retired at the end of 1984 and was succeeded by John C. Van Horne, who came to the Library Company from the American Philosophical Society, where he was an editor of The Papers of Benjamin Henry Latrobe. Under Van Horne's guidance the Library Company struck out in several new directions. It became a member of the Research Libraries Group and began the long and arduous task of recataloguing its rare book holdings into RLG's computerized bibliographical database, known and RLIN. The Library Company also began to attract more scholars to the collections by instituting an endowed research fellowship program in 1987 that provides modest stipends to enable graduate students and senior scholars to travel to Philadelphia to work in the Library Company. The Library Company also created a revolving Publication Fund that supports the publication of a variety of works, usually carrying the joint imprint of the Library Company and a commercial or university press co-publisher. These books are generally

based on the collections or relate to special projects or programs. For example, Cornell University Press published in 1994 THE ABOLITIONIST SISTERHOOD: WOMEN'S POLITICAL CULTURE IN ANTEBELLUM AMERICA, a collection of essays that grew out of a symposium on the Anti-Slavery Conventions of American Women of 1837-1839; and Madison House published in 1995 The Library of William Byrd of Westover, a reconstruction of one of the greatest colonial American libraries based on a manuscript catalogue in the Library Company's collection. See our Publications web page for a complete list, prices, and order form.

Heeding Franklin's admonition to "join, or die," the Library Company has over the years confederated with many other institutions for various purposes. In 1972 the Library Company was one of the founding members of the Independent Research Libraries Association. Now a consortium of more than a dozen member institutions - such as the Huntington, Folger, Morgan, and Newberry Libraries and the American Antiquarian Society - IRLA brings its directors together each year to discuss the common problems and needs of independent, privately-supported research libraries, from fund raising and relationships with foundations and federal agencies to the conservation of library materials and the support of scholarship.

In 1985 the Library Company took a leading role in the formation of the Philadelphia Area Consortium of Special Collections Libraries. The first project of PACSCL was the ambitious 1988 exhibition Legacies of Genius: A Celebration of Philadelphia Libraries, which was displayed in the galleries of the Library Company and the Historical Society. This major exhibition featured treasures selected from the collections of the sixteen member institutions. PACSCL, at first an informal cooperative association, subsequently became a non-profit corporation with twenty member institutions and is engaged in various collaborative undertakings.

In the early 1990s a major renovation of the nearly thirty-year-old building took place. The Print Department, which had been expanded in 1984 to keep pace with the rapid growth of the collection, was again doubled in size. The Lazzarini statue of Franklin was restored and once again became part of the façade in a new glass-fronted, street-level niche. The lobby and Reading Room were revamped to make them more inviting. A fire-suppression system and a new state-of-the-art security system were installed. Lastly, the nearly worn-out climate control system was largely replaced with equipment that will maintain constant temperature and humidity throughout the building reliably and economically. These changes in the physical plant will ensure the preservation and continued usefulness of the collections.

In the second half of the twentieth century, the Library Company has been utterly transformed from a dusty mausoleum filled with books that were deteriorating from heat, damp, and dust, to a busy and vital center for research and education of national importance. Attractively arranged exhibitions interpret different aspects of the collections to the general public in provocative ways. Frequent public programs and scholarly publications reach large audiences. The Reading Room is a comfortable and dynamic environment in which to conduct research. The staff shares its extensive knowledge of

the collections with visitors and learns from them in turn. The Library Company remains open and free of charge to any serious scholar, but the collections are now housed in closed stacks, and no rare materials circulate except as loans for exhibition in other institutions. The collections are constantly and vigorously expanded and enriched, and they are fully accessible through card catalogues and other in-house finding aids. Finally, the new computer catalogue holds out the promise of vastly superior access not only for those who visit the library in person, but also for scholars in their own offices and libraries throughout the world.

All these changes have been made in order to carry out the Library Company's new mission as articulated in the 1950s: to collect, preserve, and make available books, graphics, and other primary source materials for the study of American history and culture up to the closing years of the 19th century. Much has changed and will change, but one thing remains constant: the collections are the focus of all the library's energies, and the reason for its existence. Future generations of scholars will doubtless be as comfortable with computers as with books. Indeed, some speculate that the book as it has been known for more than half a millennium is on the road to extinction, soon to be replaced by the so-called "virtual library" and its promised electronic access to the cumulative wisdom of mankind. But surely in such a world the book as object will gain in stature and intellectual value not only as the recognized source and vessel of that wisdom, but also as the essential source for its more ephemeral electronic cousins. In such a world institutions like the Library Company of Philadelphia that have been providing excellent stewardship of the nation's intellectual heritage and resources will continue to be indispensable.