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Announcement

The Athenæum will be closed Monday, May 25, in honor of Memorial Day.

Please note: the Athenæum will be open regular hours on the weekend of Saturday, May 23, and Sunday, May 24.

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Director's Letter

As magnolia tree blossoms litter sidewalks once impassable with snow, the Athenæum is busy with its own signs of spring and with preparations for a memorable summer, when we will feature a **major loan exhibition** exploring portrayals of the Marquis de Lafayette in American art.



We have repainted the fifth-floor lounge, and begun the vestibule project near the entrance: the reception desk is largely disassembled, and tasteful millwork lockers will be installed in the weeks ahead. New, more subtle picture lights are being installed in the first-floor Gordon Room, and certain paintings removed and returned as part of this process, timed to cause as few disruptions as possible to readers in that beloved space. Thank you for your ongoing patience and understanding as we complete this important work, intended to preserve and enhance the ambience of our extraordinary building for years to come.

Our programs this month include lectures about the online edition of the Loeb Classical Library of Greek and Latin literature and about the importance of such digital initiatives for the viability of libraries in the twenty-first century. One author's talk reveals the little-known biography of Proust's great translator, C. K. Scott Moncrieff; another spans the critical trajectory of poetry scholar Helen Vendler. A collaborative performance by musicians from the Berklee School of Music incorporates original songs by Andrew List, poetry, imagery, and expert commentary on bird behavior. Families with children may enjoy a puppet show of Jack and the Beanstalk, songs and stories, the Young Readers' Book Group, or a meeting of the Lego, Chess and Puzzle Club. Two Evenings with a Curator, Afternoon Tea, a Gallery Talk, and a New Member Reception round out our offerings in May.

If you haven't yet seen the exquisite marbles and plasters featured in the **American Neoclassic Sculpture** (or if you want to see the show again before the works are dispersed)

Children's Library

Exhibitions

Events Calendar

Featured Events

Please check the **calendar** or your booklet for the full winter schedule. If you find these events interesting, you may wish to browse these **books related to events**.

Book Talk: Jeffrey Henderson, **The Loeb Classics for a Digital Age**

Tuesday, May 5,
6:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.

Gallery Talk: David Dearing, **American Neoclassic Sculpture at the Boston Athenæum**,

Wednesday, May 6,
1:30 p.m.

Reception: **New Members**
Wednesday, May 6
6:00 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.

Book Talk: Helen Vendler, **The Ocean, the Bird, and the Scholar**
Thursday, May 7,
Noon - 1:00 p.m.

Lecture: John Palfrey, **Bibliotech: Why Libraries Matter More than Ever in the Age of Google**
Wednesday, May 13,
Noon - 1:00 p.m.

Book Talk: Jean Findlay, **Chasing Lost Time: The Life of C.K. Scott Moncrieff: Soldier, Spy,**

then be sure to plan a visit before the exhibition closes on Sunday, May 17, at 4:00 p.m.

With all of this on offer; new books, newspapers, magazines, and digital offerings arriving daily; the terraces open for the warm weather; and spaces of unparalleled beauty for reading, writing, and thinking awaiting you, we hope you'll feel inspired to visit and to use the Boston Athenæum. To borrow a metaphor from Richard Wilbur's memorable "**Seed Leaves**," this can be a season of intellectual and imaginative new life: a time for our minds, like the plants around us, to *ramify*.

Elizabeth E. Barker, Ph.D.
Stanford Calderwood Director

Credit for image above: Elizabeth E. Barker on the second floor spiral staircase (Mark Ritter, 2014)

New Staff Member

Please meet Tanitia Sello who was the search committee's first and best choice to become the Athenæum's Augusta Thomas Director of Finance. She previously worked as Director of Finance and Operations at Brown University's Graduate School; before that, she was at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.



Tanita attended Kent State for undergrad and the University of East Anglia in Norwich, England for her master's. Her favorite memories include taking the nature walks through the English countryside that were featured weekly in the local paper. Passing by the farms, poppy fields, and occasional Roman ruins on quiet Sunday summer afternoons stay with her today, and no doubt help her focus on spreadsheets.

Join us in welcoming Tanitia whose office is on the fourth floor.

Credit for image above: Tanitia Sello, Augusta Thomas Director of Finance (Emily Anderson, 2015)

and Translator

Thursday, May 14,
6:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.

Evening with a Curator:
John Lannon, **Maps & Atlases**

Monday, May 18,
6:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.

Afternoon Tea

Thursday, May 21,
3:00 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Concert: Berklee School of Music, **On the Wing: A Celebration of Birds in Music and Spoken Word**
Tuesday, Apr. 26,
6:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.

Children's Library

Family Story Time
Saturday, May 2, 9, 23, 30,
10:30 a.m.

Stories, Songs, & Activities
Thursday, May 7, 14, 21, 28,
10:30 a.m.

Puppet Show: **Jack and the Giant Beanstalk**
Saturday, May 16,
11:00 a.m. to noon

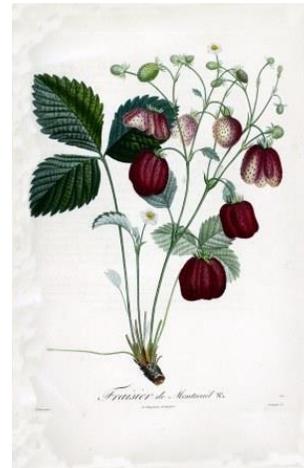


Young Readers' Book Group
Monday, May 18,
6:00 p.m.

Lego, Chess, & Puzzles
Saturday, May 30,

Now Online: Poiteau's *Pomologie française*

In honor of spring, members will now find online the color images from **Pierre Antoine Poiteau's *Pomologie française***. This collection of engravings features "the finest fruits grown in France" and was published in four volumes in Paris in 1846.



The Poiteau volumes were given to the Athenæum on February 4, 1854, by Francis Calley Gray who collected prints as well as natural history specimens. Gray served as President of the board of the Boston Athenæum from 1833 to 1836. On the second floor, members may see a marble bust of Francis Calley Gray by Hiram Powers.

Graham Skinner
Digital Programs Intern

Credit for image above: Pierre Antoine Poiteau, *Pomologie française*, vol. 2 (Paris: Langlois et Leclercq, 1846). Boston Athenæum, Gift of Francis Calley Gray, 1854

Print Council of America Reception

On April 29, the Boston Athenæum hosted the opening reception for the **Print Council of America's** annual conference. The Print Council's mission is to promote the appreciation and knowledge of "fine prints, old and new." Its elected membership is comprised of print curators, academics, and conservators from North America. Both Lizzie Barker, Stanford Calderwood Director, and Catharina Slutterback, Curator of **Prints & Photographs**, are members of the organization.



Athenæum docents Scott Guthery, Pam Ikauniks, Doriane Ruml, and Rosemary Walker volunteered to welcome and direct participants. At the reception, over a hundred Print Council members were treated not only to wine and hors d'oeuvres but to a special display of illustrated books, fine prints, and artists's books selected by Ms. Slutterback and Stanley Cushing, Anne C. and David J. Bromer Curator of **Rare Books and Manuscripts**. The reception was sponsored by Christie's Auction House and staff members from Christie's were also in

2:30 p.m.

Terraces Open

At last, spring has arrived in Boston. Soon leaves will burst open and the Granary Burying Ground will be lost to view from the vantage point above on the Athenæum's fifth-floor and second-floor terraces, which open to members on May 1.



Deadline Extended

The Boston Athenæum offers the **Mudge Teacher Fellowship** which is open to Boston-area public, parochial, and independent school teachers and librarians. This fellowship supports the use of Athenæum collections for research, publication, curriculum and program development, or other creative projects.

The fellowship carries a stipend of \$1,500 for a residency of twenty days (four weeks) and includes a year's membership to the Boston Athenæum. The deadline for applications has been extended to June 15. Please see the [website](#) for more details and how to apply online.

attendance.

Catharina Slutterback
Curator of Prints & Photographs

Credit for image above: Charles E. Mason Jr. Prints & Photographs Department (Mary Warnement, 2015)

From the Cataloging Trenches

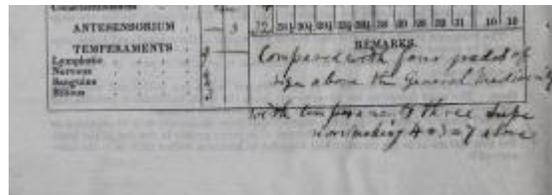
Visitors to the Athenæum's current exhibition, **American Neoclassic Sculpture**, on view until May 17, 2015, might pause an extra moment to consider the bust of John Quincy Adams by Horatio Greenough, one of the exemplars of the neoclassical portrait. Has Adams's brow an air of ambiguity? Does the base of his skull denote a mercurial tendency? Are we able to discern in the president's cranial features his character, thoughts, and emotions? When Greenough sculpted this masterwork, serious scientific inquiry was invested in the supposition that the measurements of the human skull revealed an individual's internal qualities.



The discipline, known as "phrenology," from the Greek phren (mind) and logos (discourse or knowledge), was largely championed by the German physician, Johann Gaspar Spurzheim. In espousing the cause of phrenology, Spurzheim traveled widely through Europe and eventually the United States, drawing large audiences eager to learn how phrenology might prove beneficial to society, especially in the field of education and the treatment of criminals and the insane. In the fall of 1832 Spurzheim was giving lectures in Boston, several of which were held at the Athenæum. By the end of October, however, he became ill and died on November 10 of what was termed a "continued fever." Boston mourned as if it had lost a favorite native son.

Although phrenology had lost its leading proponent, it continued to hold sway over segments of the scientific community and the general public, until later developments in the century concerning cerebral functions and psychology rendered it a pseudoscience. But phrenology had always had its critics, and ostensibly Adams numbered himself among them. In an anti-phrenological pamphlet published in 1839 by Dr. Thomas Sewall entitled *An Examination of Phrenology in Two Lectures*, the Hon. John Quincy Adams offers in the prefatory pages an emphatic endorsement for Sewall's

crusade against a system, "which I have never been able to prevail upon myself to think of as a serious speculation ... what no man in his senses can believe." As forceful as Adam's convictions against phrenology may appear in that publication, the Athenæum owns another small pamphlet that suggests that Adams might have secretly harbored a serious speculation toward phrenology after all. The cover of the Athenæum's copy of Rudiments of Mental Philosophy by Enos Stevens is adorned with Adams's bold signature and the date "Aug. 12, 1842." The phrenological chart within the pamphlet contains cranial measurements entered in a neat hand. One can only surmise that the chart records the measurements of the head of the former president and skeptic, Mr. John Quincy Adams.



Will Evans
Chief Rare Materials Catalog Librarian

Credit for image above: Horatio Greenough (1805-1852), John Quincy Adams, 1828-1829. Marble. Boston Athenæum, Purchase, 1829

Credit for image below: detail from Enos Stevens, Rudiments of Mental Philosophy, (Lampeter, PA: 1839). Boston Athenæum, Anonymous gift, 1902