



# BOSTON ATHENÆUM

## **BOSTON ATHENÆUM DIRECTOR TO STEP DOWN THIS SPRING**

*Dr. Elizabeth Barker directed significant preservation and growth initiatives at historic Beacon Hill library and cultural center*

**(Boston, MA—February 8, 2019)** Dr. Elizabeth Barker has announced that she plans to step down as the library’s Stanford Calderwood Director on March 31st.

“The Boston Athenæum has been a wonderful organization to work for,” said Barker. “I’m proud of everything our team has accomplished together, and I’m confident that the people and plans are in place to realize our goals for the future of this extraordinary library. This is the right time for me to transition to the next chapter of my life, which will include writing and research, before returning to the world of art and education.”

Athenæum President John S. Reed expressed the Board’s appreciation for her dedicated service. “Lizzie has accomplished many things during her tenure,” said Reed. “She has increased membership, library usage, and discussion groups; grown annual giving; improved events; and run well-received panels on important topics of the day.”

Since coming to the Athenæum in October 2014, Barker has overseen and directed successful efforts to address multiple challenges affecting the library’s national historic landmark building, including safety and security improvements to the circulation desk and entrance areas.

During her tenure, the Athenæum expanded its use of technology to serve members and the public, making upgrades to the library catalog, and adding audio and video recordings of events and a catalog of the art collection to the website.

Barker supported curators in making important additions to the special collections, including the Richard W. Cheek World War II Graphic Arts Collection and the Jody S. Gill Collection of American Color-Printed Books, and in establishing the Polly Thayer Starr Curatorial Fellowship.

“Most importantly,” said Reed, “Lizzie has ably led the staff and Board of Trustees through a rigorous, complex process to analyze and shape a course of action to solve the Athenæum’s space challenges for improved special collections storage and accessibility, and for better member services.” The multi-year process culminated in the Athenæum signing an extended lease for substantial additional space in the adjacent building at 14 Beacon Street.

Barker came to the Athenæum in October 2014. She previously served as Director of the Mead Art Museum at Amherst College and as Associate Curator of Drawings and Prints at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. A graduate of Yale College, she earned a Ph.D. in art history and certificate in curatorial studies at N.Y.U.’s Institute of Fine Arts. She is the recipient of numerous fellowships and awards, including the American Library Association’s Outstanding Academic Title award and the New York State Historical Association’s Henry Allen Moe Prize.

The Athenæum will soon begin a national search for a new director. During the transition period, Chief of Staff Emily Cure will coordinate the internal management needs, working



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closely with the Standing Committee of the Board, supported by Trustee committee chairs linked with each of the Athenæum's key functions.

“We are grateful to Lizzie for leading us through this period of growth,” said Reed. “The library is in a stronger position today to accomplish its goals and serve its members because of her leadership. We wish her well.”

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## **ABOUT THE BOSTON ATHENÆUM**

The Boston Athenæum, one of the most distinguished libraries in the nation, opened its doors in 1807, expanding to its present location on Beacon Hill in 1849. Its members and readers have included some of America's greatest writers and thinkers, including Ralph Waldo Emerson, Louisa May Alcott, Francis Parkman, and Amy Lowell. An inspiring home for discussion and learning, the Athenæum cares for nearly half a million books that circulate to thousands of library members; special collections of rare books, artworks, and primary materials for research and enjoyment; soaring, architecturally stunning spaces for quiet reading and reflection; and meeting and lecture rooms that host lively events and discourse. The library opens its iconic red doors to visitors five days a week, offering exhibitions on its first floor and full-library tours in three languages.

Collection highlights include the King's Chapel Library collection, with its roots in the 17<sup>th</sup>-century settlement of Boston; rare publications in Native American languages; books from the personal library of George Washington; historic early printed works from Europe, including the celebrated Nuremberg Chronicle; and numerous works of fine art, including portraits of notable Americans such as Hannah Adams and Alexander Hamilton. An extensive collection on the art of the book includes examples of bookbinding, fine printing, and a significant collection of contemporary artists' books. The Athenæum is an unmatched cultural treasure, a refuge in the heart of Boston.

## **MISSION**

The mission of the Boston Athenæum is to engage all who seek knowledge by making accessible our library's collections and spaces, thereby inspiring reflection, discourse, creative expression, and joy.

## **VISION**

The Boston Athenæum aspires to spark conversations of critical importance, foster an engaged, diverse membership, and cultivate our library's dynamic collections for research and enjoyment.

## **OPEN TO THE PUBLIC**

Tuesday 12noon-8pm  
Wednesday-Saturday 10am-4pm

## **MEDIA CONTACT**

Maria Daniels  
Director of Communications and Patron Services  
Boston Athenæum  
[daniels@bostonathenaeum.org](mailto:daniels@bostonathenaeum.org)  
(617) 784-9488