



BOSTON ATHENÆUM

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Boston Athenæum Receives \$182,500 National Endowment for the Humanities Grant for Conservation Work

Funding received from the NEH Infrastructure and Capacity Building Challenge Grant Program will support conservation of works on paper

Boston, MA—January 21, 2020—The Boston Athenæum is delighted to announce a major grant award from the National Endowment for the Humanities. The funding will enable the library to extend a part-time paper conservator position to full-time, and provide equipment and supplies—partially covering costs for operating the new conservation lab, which is being built as part of [the library's expansion](#).

The Athenæum is dedicated to the long-term preservation of its collections. This grant will help support [the conservation lab's](#) mission to preserve the paper-based items in the collection, particularly prints and photographs. Works on paper naturally degrade over time. Conservation staff led by Chief Conservator Dawn Walus combat those destructive processes through customized, single-item treatments, collection surveys, and preventative measures, all based on their significant expertise.

Many of the items BA conservators care for are uniquely significant in the humanities, especially for the study of art, literature, and American, New England, and Boston history—for instance, historic maps, portions of George Washington's personal library, a large collection of contemporary fine press and artists' books, and photographs and other materials related to Boston neighborhoods, including immigrant and African American communities.

“We have a responsibility to care for our collections now and into the future, and share them with the public, said Mary Warnement, William D. Hacker Head of Reader Services at the library. “We continually host visitors—teachers, students, professional researchers, and lifelong learners—who seek out these materials. Our collections hold terrific resources for the study of US history, civics, and fine arts. Our own curatorial staff creates a series of exhibitions and installations that began in the 19th century, when the Athenæum was Boston's first art gallery. Our librarians provide individualized help and make it easy for people to schedule research appointments. When we're better equipped and staffed to take care of special collections items, we can feel confident both that the works will endure and that we can facilitate their display and study.”

Photos (Credit: Boston Athenæum)

- BA Chief Conservator Dawn Walus, in lab coat, and her team.

- Boston City Councilor Andrea Campbell and staffers examine a special collections item at the Athenæum.
- From the special collections, a 2002 fine press edition of *Five Poems* by Toni Morrison, with silhouettes by Kara E. Walker, designed by Peter Rutledge Koch.
- From the special collections, bound volumes of William Lloyd Garrison’s anti-slavery newspaper, *The Liberator* (1831-1865).

ABOUT THE BOSTON ATHENÆUM

Founded in 1807, the Boston Athenæum is located at 10½ Beacon Street on Beacon Hill. A distinguished membership library and cultural institution with a long history at the center of intellectual life in Boston, the Athenæum hosts events nearly every week of the year and supports a dynamic exhibition program. It desires to be a place that is welcoming to all, a place that nurtures a sense of wonder and delight in sharing the joy of physical books, maps, prints, and other works of art, and a place that fosters community and civil discourse as members and guests engage in face-to-face interactions.

The Athenæum’s collections are housed within a National Historic Landmark that is widely regarded as one of the most beautiful libraries in the world. The reading rooms—crowned by the silent, barrel-vaulted fifth floor—have served as a haven and inspiration to countless writers and researchers. The library maintains over 600,000 volumes with strengths in history, biography, and literature, as well as fine and decorative arts. Notable holdings include primary materials on the American Civil War; the largest portion of President George Washington's library from Mount Vernon; a first edition copy of Audubon's *The Birds of America*; a 1799 set of Goya's *Los caprichos*; one of the most extensive collections of contemporary artists' books in the United States; and numerous artworks, including portraits of notable Americans such as Hannah Adams, John Marshall, and Alexander Hamilton, and by artists such as Gilbert Stuart, John Singer Sargent, Allan Rohan Crite, and Polly Thayer Starr. Membership is open to all, and visitors are warmly welcomed Tuesdays through Saturdays. Learn more at bostonathenaeum.org.

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

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

GENERAL ADMISSION

Adults (ages 13 and up) \$10
 Students and Military \$8
 EBT Card to Culture \$2
 Children (ages 12 and under) Free
 Boston Athenæum Members Free

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