

FOUR

The Library Company of Philadelphia

These Libraries have improv'd the general Conversation of the Americans, made the common Tradesmen and Farmers as intelligent as most Gentlemen from other Countries, and perhaps . . . contributed in some degree to the Stand so generally made throughout the Colonies in Defence of their Privileges.—A 72

FRANKLIN SPENT MORE TIME AND CARE on the Library Company than any other civic project. He founded it, attended its meetings faithfully as a director from 1731 to 1757, acted as the librarian in 1733 and 1734, served as the secretary from 1746 to 1757, became its book agent in London from 1757 to 1762, served again as a director from 1762 to 1764 and again as its London book agent from 1765 to 1775. No other project involved so much of his time and energy for so long, and no project pleased him more to write about in the *Autobiography*. Franklin loved books. The friends he formed in Philadelphia at age seventeen were “Lovers of Reading” (A 27). Returning from Boston in 1724, he brought back his early book collection. When the ship stopped in New York, the captain told New York’s governor William Burnet about the young man with the large library. Burnet, son of the author Bishop Gilbert Burnet, knew the English literary world intimately. He asked Franklin to call, “treated me with great Civility, show’d me his Library, which was a very large one, and we had a good deal of Conversation about Books and Authors” (A 33). In London (1725), Franklin lived next door to the bookseller John Wilcox, who “had an immense Collection of second-hand Books,” which Franklin arranged to borrow “on certain reasonable Terms. . . . This I esteem’d a great Advantage, and I made as much Use of it as I could” (A 43).

Back in Philadelphia, Franklin keenly missed the Boston and London bookstores. “There was not a good Bookseller’s Shop in any of the Colonies to the Southward of Boston. In New York and Philadelphia the Printers were indeed Stationers, they sold only Paper, etc., Almanacks, Ballads, and a few common School Books. Those who lov’d Reading were oblig’d to send for their Books from England” (A 73). Since the Junto members all owned books, Franklin proposed about 1729 that they combine together the books they could best spare. By then, the Junto had stopped meeting at Nicholas Scull’s Indian Head Tavern and had rented a room at Robert Grace’s house (site of the present 131 Market Street). Franklin reasoned that “since our Books were often referr’d to in our

Disquisitions . . . it might be convenient to us to have them all together where we met, that upon Occasion they might be consulted.” Franklin also reasoned that by “clubbing our Books to a common Library, we should, while we lik’d to keep them together, have each of us the Advantage of using the Books of all the other Members, which would be nearly as beneficial as if each owned the whole” (A 71). By uniting with others in a common cause, one could accomplish more than one could possibly do alone.

The members liked the proposal, “and we fill’d one End of the Room with such Books as we could best spare.” Franklin was disappointed, however, for “the Number was not so great as we expected.” And though the Junto members used the books in their discussions and though they benefitted from borrowing them, a few disappeared and others were hard-used and damaged. The experiment failed. Franklin reported, “some Inconveniences occurring for want of due Care of them, the Collection after about a Year was separated, and each took his Books home again” (A 72).

ORGANIZED

The failure inspired Franklin. How could he establish a book collection that would not have the “inconvenience” of the owner’s disgust at finding his books missing or misused? He probably proposed the subscription library to the Junto in the spring of 1731. Each subscriber would pay forty shillings to join the library and ten shillings a year as an annual contribution for buying more books. The Junto members evidently agreed. “I drew a Sketch of the Plan and Rules that would be necessary, and got a skilful Conveyancer Mr. Charles Brockden to put the Whole in Form of Articles of Agreement to be subscribed.” The subscribers would annually elect ten directors and a treasurer, and the directors would elect a secretary. The “Instrument of Association” for the Library Company of Philadelphia was dated 1 July 1731. Franklin recalled nearly fifty years later that “when we were about to sign the above-mentioned Articles, which were to be binding on us, our Heirs, etc. for fifty Years, Mr. Brockden, the Scrivener, said to us, ‘You are young Men, but it is scarce probable that any of you will live to see the Expiration of the Term fix’d in this Instrument.’” Franklin happily noted, “A Number of us, however, are yet living” (A 74).

As a printer, Franklin worked with iconology in watermarks, on paper currency, and coats of arms for bookplates and other purposes. He displayed his own creative iconographic talent in designing a seal for the Library Company: “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.*”¹ He also no doubt wrote the motto: “To pour forth benefits for the common good is divine.” He used the motto in the 1741 *Catalogue* of the Library Company, in the book labels of the company, and in his introduction to a plan for benefitting the New Zealand natives on 29 August 1771. Philip

Syng, goldsmith and a Junto member, made the original die, which is extant at the Library Company.

According to the Library Company's articles of association, Franklin named the ten directors, the treasurer, and the secretary. They would serve until a meeting of the subscribers, which would take place on the first Monday in May, when the officers for the following year were to be elected. Thereafter, annual elections would be held. Franklin appointed as the first directors Thomas Hopkinson, William Parsons, Philip Syng, Thomas Godfrey, Anthony Nicholas, Thomas Cadwalader, John Jones, Jr., Robert Grace, Isaac Penington, and himself. In addition, he appointed William Coleman, Jr., treasurer, and Joseph Breintnall, secretary. Parsons, Godfrey, Grace, Coleman, Breintnall, and Franklin had been original Junto members. Hopkinson, Syng, and Nicholas had probably become Junto members before 1731. Altogether, at least nine of the first appointed twelve officers belonged to the Junto; the three exceptions were Cadwalader, Jones, and Penington. Dr. Thomas Cadwalader (1707–79) was later a member of the American Philosophical Society; John Jones, Jr., was a Quaker shoemaker who became a Freemason in 1737; and Isaac Penington (1700–1742), farmer, became a justice and sheriff of Bucks County. All were young men; most were artisans. The wealthiest were probably the merchants William Parsons and Robert Grace. The two professional men were Hopkinson, a lawyer, and Cadwalader.

The articles of association specified that each member after the first fifty must be approved by the directors, sign the articles, and pay the subscription. Admitting new members and selecting new books were the directors' ordinary duties. Franklin interjected a comment on vanity and psychology into his reminiscence about organizing the Library Company: "The Objections and Reluctances I met with in Soliciting the Subscriptions, made me soon feel the Impropriety of presenting one's self as the Proposer of any useful Project that might be suppos'd to raise one's Reputation in the smallest degree above that of one's Neighbours, when one has need of their Assistance to accomplish that Project." Franklin soon learned how to avoid this difficulty. He presented himself merely as a spokesperson: "I therefore put my self as much as I could out of sight, and stated it as a Scheme of a *Number of Friends* [Franklin punned], who had requested me to go about and propose it to such as they thought Lovers of Reading. In this way my Affair went on more smoothly, and I ever after practis'd it on such Occasions; and from my frequent Successes, can heartily recommend it. The present little Sacrifice of your Vanity will afterwards be amply repaid. If it remains a while uncertain to whom the Merit belongs, someone more vain than yourself will be encourag'd to claim it, and then even Envy will be dispos'd to do you Justice, by plucking those assum'd Feathers, and restoring them to their right Owner" (A 74–75).

Franklin invested hundreds of hours annually in the fledgling institution. "So few were the Readers at that time in Philadelphia, and the Majority of us so



Figure 6. *The Library Company seal, drawn by Nian-Sheng Huang from the impression made by Philip Syng's die. Franklin created numerous original emblems, but the Library Company's seal was perhaps his earliest. Franklin described the design as "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, with a motto circumscribing the whole, Communiter bona profundere deum est." The motto may be translated: "To pour forth benefits for the common good is divine."*

Franklin's design is intriguing. Books often represent knowledge and the traditions of culture. Being "encompass'd with glory" usually represented divinity, and "beams of light" (if they can be distinguished from "glory") may also (like books) suggest enlightenment and knowledge. Water is an archetypal symbol of fertility and in this context implies ever-increasing knowledge. The passing from one urn into many emphasizes the theme of fecundity, the continual enrichment of knowledge and tradition through books. The motto "Communiter bona profundere deum est" reinforces the suggestions of divinity and fecundity and emphasizes that learning and knowledge are for the common good of humanity and that to multiply them is to imitate the divine. The original die made by Philip Syng sometime before 24 April 1732 is at the Library Company. The impression of Syng's die is courtesy of the Library Company of Philadelphia.

poor, that I was not able with great Industry to find more than Fifty Persons, mostly young Tradesmen, willing to pay down for this purpose Forty shillings each, and Ten Shillings per Annum” (A 74). But by Monday, 8 November 1731, he had come up with fifty subscribers and notified Joseph Breintnall, secretary. Breintnall thereupon called the first meeting of the Library Company directors for 5 p.m. at Nicholas Scull’s Bear Tavern. Treasurer William Coleman gave his bond then. Franklin proposed that the treasurer should attend one evening later in the week at Scull’s to begin receiving the subscriptions, and that one-third or more of the subscribers should be notified to bring in their money. Further, the treasurer should attend at Scull’s another evening to receive the subscribers who lived out of town or were not as likely to have their money ready. At that first meeting, Franklin and the other directors optimistically expected that they could soon send off a book order to England, but they found that funds came in slower than pledges—and some persons who had pledged changed their minds. Franklin probably printed the “Subscription Receipts” for the Library Company the following day, Tuesday, 9 November.

EARLY MEMBERS

Treasurer William Coleman was to be at Nicholas Scull’s Bear Tavern on the following Thursday, 11 November, from six till nine to receive subscriptions. The messenger, however, mistakenly told the subscribers 10 November. The treasurer and the secretary learned of the mistake and attended at Scull’s that evening, when ten persons paid their forty shillings: Robert Grace (share no. 1), Thomas Hopkinson (share no. 2),² Benjamin Franklin (share no. 3), John Jones, Jr. (4), Joseph Breintnall (5), Anthony Nicholas (6), Thomas Godfrey (7), Joseph Stretch (8), Philip Syng, Jr. (9), and John Sober (10). Thomas Cadwalader (11) had paid but had not signed the oath before leaving the province.³ It was a disappointing turnout: all but John Sober and the latter Joseph Stretch, who later became a Pennsylvania assemblyman, were officers. The library now had eleven paid-up members.

Twelve more persons paid the following night: Joseph Wharton (share no. 12); Nicholas Reddish (13); Richard Standley (14); Samuel Hale (15); merchant David Bush (16); Francis Richardson (17); John Nicholas (18); John Roberts (19); Charles Read, Jr. (20); Evan Morgan (21); Thomas Edwards (22); and Alexander Paxton (23). Though the minutes record that John Tomkins sent in his subscription by a proxy on 11 November, he did not take the oath until 14 November 1733, so his share (no. 56) was dated then. Including Tomkins, the Library Company now had twenty-four members—less than half of those who had promised to join.

Franklin notified the remaining library subscribers to come to Owen Owens’s tavern to pay their subscription on Monday, 29 November. Only one additional member came, Rees Lloyd (share no. 24). On 13 December, Monday, the directors met at Nicholas Scull’s. Franklin said he would ask Charles Brockden

what he would charge for drawing up an instrument of partnership in the Library Company and whether he would accept a certificate instead of cash toward it. The next day Benjamin Eastburn (share no. 25) paid his subscription. The directors met on 8 January, 10 January (the time of the regular monthly meeting but only six persons turned up, “the weather being exceeding cold”), and 20 March, when Franklin agreed to print a short note to send to all delinquent subscribers. They were asked “to appear without Fail, either to pay or relinquish; that it may then be known who are, and who are not concerned” (1:230).

The directors met at Scull’s that following Saturday night, 25 March, to receive subscriptions. New shareholders were: Josiah Rolfe (share no. 26); Thomas Potts, Jr (27); Jacob Duché (28); William Maugridge (29); Nicholas Cassell (30); James Fox (31), who sold his share to Edward Evans on 11 December 1732; Benjamin Paschall (32); Thomas Green (33); William Parsons (34); and Louis Timothée (35), who sold his share to Joshua Richey on 28 January 1734. Ephraim Andrews and Isaac Brown relinquished their shares. Later in 1732, but before the election on 1 May, Nicholas Scull (share no. 36), an original Junto member, paid his subscription; so did Henry Pratt (share no. 37); Isaac Penington (38), who sold his share to Anthony Benezet on 17 August 1734; and Hugh Roberts (39), another Junto member and good friend of Franklin. These were the founding members of the Library Company.

At a directors’ meeting on 29 March 1732, Thomas Godfrey reported that James Logan had “let him know he had heard of their Design and approved of it and would willingly give his Advice in the Choice of the Books. Upon this Information he was desired to return the Thanks of the Committee to Mr. Logan for his generous offer—And the Committee esteeming Mr. Logan to be a Gentleman of universal Learning, and the best Judge of Books in these Parts, ordered that Thomas Godfrey should wait on him and request him to favour them with a Catalogue of suitable Books against tomorrow Evening.” The next day Godfrey and Franklin called on Logan at Stenton and stayed with him until late. By the time they returned, the directors waiting at Scull’s had adjourned until the next evening. That night, Friday, 31 March 1732, they revised the list supplied by Logan⁴ and gave it to Thomas Hopkinson (who was about to leave for London), together with Robert Grace’s note for £45 drawn on the London merchant Peter Collinson. The exchange marked Franklin’s first known connection (albeit an indirect one) with Collinson, who gradually became a close friend.

The amount of the bill, £45, might suggest that only 25 persons had subscribed and that only £50 pounds had been raised, but the subscriptions were in Pennsylvania currency, and the £45 note was in sterling. Since £1 sterling was worth approximately £1.6 in Pennsylvania currency, the bill represented over £72 in Pennsylvania currency, or the initial subscription for more than 36 persons. In fact, Treasurer Coleman paid £74.5 Pennsylvania currency for Grace’s £45 sterling note. Charges for insurance and shipping were additional, so the

initial cost for the books would have required subscriptions from more than forty persons. Furthermore, most if not all of the 56 titles in 141 volumes (including two titles that Peter Collinson generously donated) arrived unbound; that was common, since many persons preferred to have their own binding. The directors had resolved on 8 January 1731/2 to have the books covered with sheathing paper and arranged to pay the bookbinder Stephen Potts, who was currently living and boarding with Franklin, for it.

Charles Brockden presented the Library Company with the instrument he drew for them, and for his work the directors on 24 April 1732 voted him a present of his payment as a subscriber and also sixteen years freedom of the company—that is, he was excused from paying the yearly payment during that time. (In the list of subscribers, his share, no. 54, is dated the following year.) Their attention having been called to the extraordinary services performed by some members, the directors asked Joseph Breintnall, Philip Syng, and Benjamin Franklin to present charges for their time and efforts. All three “generously declined,” but the directors, “other than the said B. Franklin and Philip Syng in their own Cases,” insisted they accept the following: “Vizt, Joseph Breintnall for his Time Trouble and Expence as Clerk to Mr. Brockden, in taking down the rough Draught of the Library Instrument and engrossing it, Six Years Freedom of the Company, Philip Syng for making and engraving the Company’s Seal, two Years like Freedom of the Company, and B. Franklin for printing Certificates Advertisement &c. two Years Freedom also.” Since the annual dues were ten shillings, Franklin and Syng were each paid twenty shillings for their extra work.

ELECTION, 1732

On Monday, 1 May 1732, Franklin missed the monthly Freemasons’ meeting (paying a shilling for his absence) in order to attend Nicholas Scull’s tavern for the Library Company’s first election. The subscribers chose the following directors: Franklin, William Parsons, Thomas Godfrey, Anthony Nicholas, Robert Grace, John Jones, Jr., John Nicholas, Hugh Roberts, Henry Pratt, and William Maugridge. William Coleman was elected treasurer, and the directors appointed Breintnall secretary. Since Franklin was listed first, he probably had the most votes (or tied for the most) and acted as the executive officer. Philip Syng asked not to be elected a director that year, Thomas Hopkinson and Dr. Thomas Cadwalader were both in England, and Isaac Penington, the Bucks County farmer, lived too far away to attend. Two of the four new directors, Maugridge and Roberts, were Junto members. Hugh Roberts subscribed on 1 May (evidently just before being elected a director) and paid his subscription a week later on 8 May. The silversmith Henry Pratt and the carpenter John Nicholas were the other new directors. During the 1732–33 year, Franklin evidently attended every directors’ meeting, though two meetings did not record attendance.

Books

At the end of October 1732, the ship *Molly*, Captain Samuel Cornock from London, brought the Library Company's first order of books, together with a catalogue and notes by Thomas Hopkinson.⁵ He informed the directors that Peter Collinson had been of great assistance and had donated two titles: *A View of Sir Isaac Newton's Philosophy* (London: S. Palmer, 1728) by Franklin's former London acquaintance Henry Pemberton, and Philip Miller's *Gardeners Dictionary* (London, 1731). The boxes of books were taken to Grace's house in Jones Alley, now Pewter Platter Alley, behind 47 Market Street. The most expensive volumes were the eight folios: Andrea Palladio's two-volume *Architecture* (London: Darby, 1721); the two-volume *Works of Tacitus*, translated by Thomas Gordon (London: Woodward and Peele, 1728–31); *The Historical and Chronological Theatre of Christopher Helvicus* (London: M. Flesher, 1687); Thomas Wood, *An Institute of the Laws of England* (London: Nutt and Gosling, 1728); Algernon Sydney, *Discourses Concerning Government* (London: Darby, 1704); Samuel Puffendorf, *Of the Law of Nature and Nations* (London: Walthoe, 1729); Nathaniel Bailey, *Dictionarius Britannicum: Or a More Compleat Universal Etymological English Dictionary Than Any Extant* (London: T. Cox, 1730); and Thomas Stanley, *The History of Philosophy* (London: Battersby et al., 1701).

The Library Company purchased far less theology than most eighteenth-century libraries and more science and literature.⁶ Although James Logan was probably responsible for a number of titles in the first order, especially those in the classics (in the best English translations), the following seem to show Franklin's influence: eight volumes of *Plutarch's Lives* (London: Tonson, 1727); Xenophon's *Memorable Things of Socrates* (London: J. Batley, 1722); Daniel Defoe's two-volume *Complete Tradesman* (London: Rivington, 1732); four volumes of the Port Royal *Moral Essays* (London: Parker, 1724); eight volumes of Addison and Steele's *Spectator* (London: Tonson, 1726); four volumes of Steele's *Tatler*: i.e., *The Lucubrations of Isaac Bickerstaff* (London: Nutt, 1728); two volumes of Steele's *Guardian* (London, 1729); three volumes of Addison's *Miscellaneous Works* (London: Tonson, 1726); James Greenwood's *Essay Towards a Practical English Grammar* (London: Bettesworth, 1729); and John Brightland [i.e., Charles Gildon], *A Grammar of the English Tongue* (London: Roberts, 1721). Franklin had read most of these but evidently thought they should be in the Library Company. Of the nine titles ordered but not secured in the first purchase, I suspect Franklin was responsible for John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon, *Cato's Letters* (4 volumes); and for Pierre Bayle's *Critical Dictionary* (five volumes). Both were supplied later. So the subscribers could know what books the Library Company had, Franklin printed a broadside short title list (not extant).

For his own satisfaction, Franklin made a subject breakdown of the first books. He divided them into the following categories: History, Architecture,

Mathematics, Morality, Geography, Physick, Anatomy, Natural Philosophy, Botany, Politicks, “*The Compleat Tradesman*” (no category), Animals, Chronology, Logics, Philology, “*Wood’s Institutes*” (no category), and catalogues. “History” had the most titles with nine; “Morality” was second with seven, and “Philology” was third with six (counting “Homer’s *Iliad & Odyssey*” as one title). The titles he listed under “Morality” were “Spectators, Guardians, Tatlers, Puffendorf’s *Law of Nature &c*, Addison’s *Works* in 12mo, *Memorable Things of Socrates*, and the *Turkish Spy*.”

Collinson’s generosity demanded an acknowledgment. Though Joseph Breintnall as secretary signed the letter to him of 7 November 1732, the minutes show that Franklin wrote it. The concluding paragraph said, “Every Encouragement to an Infant Design, by Men of Merit and Consideration, gives new Spirit to the Undertakers, strengthens the Hands of all concern’d, and greatly tends to secure and establish their Work; Hence, as well as from the noble Knowledge communicated in the Books you have given us, will arise the lasting Obligation we shall find ourselves under to Mr. Collinson. We wish you every kind of Happiness and Prosperity, and particularly that you may never want Power nor Opportunity of enjoying that greatest of Pleasures to a benevolent Mind, the giving Pleasure to others.”

On 14 November 1732 the directors met for the first time in “the Library Room.” What satisfaction they must have felt with their small but valuable treasure trove of useful books. The first order of business was finding a librarian. The logical person was Louis Timothée. He was renting Robert Grace’s house, where the Junto met—and where the Library Company’s books were now installed. Timothée agreed to keep attendance in the library room on Wednesdays from two to three and on Saturdays from ten till four. At the end of three months, he would be paid three pounds plus whatever further allowance should be thought reasonable. Excepting James Logan, only Library Company members could borrow the books. Each book or set of books had the length of time for which it could be borrowed marked in it. Members could borrow only one book or set at a time and had to sign a promissory note for its return “undefaced.” If the book was not returned in good condition, they were required to pay double its value.

The prime mover in the Library Company, Franklin, donated occasional gifts of printing and books to it. At the 11 December 1732 meeting, the directors asked Franklin his charge for printing a short title catalogue. He replied that he designed the catalogues as presents. Unfortunately, no copy of this broadside catalogue survives, but Edwin Wolf 2nd, has reconstructed its probable contents and suggested that Franklin used the Library Company’s motto on the broadside.⁷ Two months later on 19 February 1733, Franklin presented six books to the Library Company: Languet du Fresnoy, *A New Method of Studying History Geography and Chronology* (2 volumes, 1730); [John Locke,] *Two Treatises on Government* (1698); *A Collection of Several Pieces of Mr. John Locke* (1720; it in-

cluded Locke's "Rules of a Society which met once a Week for the Improvement of useful knowledge," a model for the Junto); *Essays of Michael de Montaigne*, v. 1 & 3 (1685); *Burgersdicius's Logic* (1697); and *Logic, or The Art of Thinking by Messers Port Royal* (1717). The last had been one of his childhood books, mentioned in the *Autobiography* (A 15) and bears his early signature (illustrated in Volume 1, Figure 5.)

A stranger offered to sell Amedée Francois Frezier's *Voyage to the South Sea and along the Coasts of Chile and Peru* to the library, and the directors made this first additional purchase on 3 March 1732/3. At the 12 March meeting the new member William Rawle, who operated a ferry to New Jersey, presented Edmund Spenser's six-volume *Works*, which included *The Faerie Queen*.

The membership receipt (share no. 44) dated 20 January 1732/3 of the pacifist Quaker James Morris, a Philadelphia County assemblyman from 1739 to 1749, is the earliest one extant. Printed by Franklin, the receipt is signed by William Coleman as treasurer. In the book of shares, Morris's share was recorded on 14 December 1732. After the initial members joined, there were three stages in the admission process: first, the members voted to allow a person to join (that action was generally recorded in the minutes); second, the nominee paid the fee; and third, he signed the articles. Not infrequently, after a candidate was admitted, months passed before he paid (which could be done by sending in the money) and then subscribed (which had to be done in person).

ROUTINES

The directors began meeting in 1731 at Nicholas Scull's Bear Tavern on the southwest corner of Market and Third Streets. After the books arrived, they were put in the "Library Room" in the house that Louis Timothée was renting from Robert Grace. The directors met there, from 14 November 1732 until 8 April 1734, when they began meeting at John Roberts's coffeehouse, located "in High Street near the Market."⁸ In early April 1739, Roberts moved to Second Street. He died later that year, but the directors continued to meet at the Widow Roberts's coffeehouse until 1745. That year Breintnall opened a tavern, the Hen and Chickens, on Fourth Street between Market and Chestnut, and the directors met there. After his death on 16 March 1746, they continued to meet at the Widow Breintnall's.

On Monday, 7 May 1733, the subscribers were asked to bring in their first annual payment of ten shillings "at the House of Mr. Louis Timothée, where the Library is kept, in the Alley next the Boar's-Head Tavern, at Two in the Afternoon." They then had their second election. The directors chosen were Franklin; Junto members William Parsons, Thomas Hopkinson, Hugh Roberts, Thomas Godfrey, and Robert Grace; tavern-keeper Henry Pratt, who had been elected a member of St. John's Masonic Lodge with Franklin; Dr. Thomas Cadwalader, whose *Essay on the West-India Dry-Gripes* Franklin printed in 1745; William Rawle; and the cordwainer John Jones, Jr., who became a member of

St. John's Lodge in 1737. William Coleman was reelected treasurer, and the directors again chose Joseph Breintnall as secretary. Dr. Thomas Cadwalader and William Rawle replaced Anthony Nicholas and John Nicholas. On 10 December, Anthony Nicholas was elected a director in the room of Robert Grace, who had sailed to Barbados. During the year 1733–34, Franklin attended all but two meetings: visiting New England in the fall of 1733, he was absent on 10 September and 8 October.

No doubt hoping to encourage the chief proprietor to make a contribution to the Library Company, Franklin proposed an address to Thomas Penn, who had come to Pennsylvania the previous August. He prepared the letter with Hopkinson, Coleman, and Breintnall on 15 May 1733. Since Franklin chaired the committee, he presumably wrote the draft. Though some Quaker directors wanted a plainer style, the committee's document was adopted. The fair copy was dated 16 May and signed by Breintnall as secretary. It began by welcoming Thomas Penn to the province and praised Pennsylvania and its inhabitants: "Your Province of Pennsylvania, Sir, happy in its Climate and Situation, and in the Constitution of its Government, is thought to be no less happy in the Native Genius of its People; prone as it is to Industry, and capable of every kind of Improvement." Like the Maryland poet Richard Lewis, Franklin echoed Francis Bacon on the development of civilization:⁹ "But when Colonies are in their Infancy, the Refinements of Life, it seems, cannot be much attended to. To encourage Agriculture, promote Trade, and establish good Laws must be the principal Care of the first Founders; while other Arts and Sciences, less immediately necessary, how excellent and useful soever, are left to the Care and Cultivation of Posterity. Hence it is that neither in this, nor in the neighbouring Provinces, has there yet been made any Provision of a publick generous Education." The Library Company was a small beginning. "And when on this Account we address a Son of the great and good, and ever memorable William Penn, we are persuaded than [*sic*] an Endeavour, however small, to propagate Knowledge, and improve the Minds of Men, by rendring useful Science more cheap and easy of Access, will not want his Countenance and Protection." Franklin closed with an apostrophe expressing the *translatio studii* ideal: "May your Philadelphia be the future Athens of America."¹⁰ The Library Company's best-known members—the well-to-do Robert Grace; the founder, Franklin; William Rawle; attorney Thomas Hopkinson, Esq.; and Dr. Thomas Cadwalader—presented the address to Thomas Penn on 24 May. The address and Penn's brief reply appeared in the 31 May *Gazette*.

On 28 May the directors completed a new list of books to order. They agreed to a fine of "One pint of Wine" for absence and set the meeting time at or before 9 p.m. The books arrived by 2 November and Franklin said on 12 November that he would print a new list of all the books. About that time, Timothée left for Charleston as Franklin's printing partner, and Franklin assumed his duties as librarian. At the 10 December 1733 meeting, Franklin mentioned that Timothee

had “been serviceable to him, & that he was willing to officiate for him as Librarian until his current Year should be expired.” Franklin served as librarian until 11 March 1733/4. The month before, on 11 February, he pointed out that borrowers rarely came on Wednesdays. He proposed, and “a proper Majority of the said Directors” agreed, that the library hours should be on “Saturday & from Four in the Afternoon until Eight. That the Librarians Salary for his Service & finding a Fit Room for the Books shall be at the Rate of Six pounds per Year.” The Library Company directors determined on 11 March 1734 that Timothée was owed six pounds for two quarters. Then William Parsons was chosen librarian, and on 14 March the directors took his bond. Parsons served as librarian until 1746. Franklin printed blank promissory notes for the librarian to complete when books were borrowed.

Among the new members in 1733–34 were George Boone (share no. 53), the uncle of Daniel Boone; and Franklin’s workman Stephen Potts (55), who sold his share the following year. In 1734–35, the new members were James Hamilton (57), future governor and son of Andrew Hamilton; Franklin’s friend William Plumsted (58); Dr. John Bard (60), who was probably Franklin’s physician before moving to New York in 1746; Samuel Morris (62), who served as a director from 1742 to 1762; Samuel Norris (64), who also served as a director from 1742 to 1762; and John Mifflin (no. 65), a director from 1746 to 1758. The new members were no longer mainly artisans but doctors, lawyers, merchants, and other members of Philadelphia’s middle class.

FORMATIVE YEARS, 1734–40

The Library Company was successful in part because of its stable and dedicated officers. Throughout the seven years 1734–40, Franklin, William Coleman, Thomas Hopkinson, Hugh Roberts, and Philip Syng were directors; and for six of the seven years, Dr. Thomas Cadwalader and William Plumsted were also. In 1734 James Morris was elected treasurer, replacing Coleman, who was elected a director. Throughout these years, Morris served as treasurer and Breintnall continued as secretary. In 1738, with the election of William Allen and Reverend Richard Peters as directors, a majority of the Library Company officials were merchants or professional men. After the annual election of new directors on the first Monday in May, the minutes usually recorded the persons with the most votes sequentially. The report for 1734–35 was an exception, for William Rawle’s name appeared first; however, when John Mifflin was admitted to the Library Company on 27 August 1734, Franklin’s signature came first, suggesting that he was still the chief executive officer. In 1734–35 (the Library Company year ran from May to May), he missed only one meeting, 21 October 1734.

Franklin’s attendance provides information for his biography. In 1735 the printer suffered his second major sickness. Like his 1727 illness and the malady that finally killed him, it was pleurisy. Franklin was sick for “six or seven weeks” during 1735; he reported that illness in his pamphlet *Some Observations on the*

Proceedings against the Rev. Mr. Hemphill (2:38). Though advertised on 12 June, it did not appear until mid-July. Attendance at the directors' meetings, however, reveals that the July recovery was only temporary. Franklin missed the directors' meetings on 12 May, 9 June, 11 August and 8 September 1735, and 12 January 1736. Evidently he was sick from May through September, with a brief period of recovery in July. And perhaps he was not entirely well until February 1736. In 1736–37, Franklin missed only two meetings, 9 August and 13 September 1736, when he was in New Jersey, printing its paper currency. The following year, 1737–38, Franklin attended all the directors' meetings; in 1738–39, he missed only the 12 March 1739 meeting; and in 1739–40, he again attended all the directors' meetings.

After the death of James Merrewether (share no. 71), a shopkeeper whose obituary Franklin wrote, the directors agreed on 10 May 1742 that Elizabeth North, "Niece and Devisee of James Merrewether deceased, be allowed to take out Books, conformable to the Rules of the Company." Elizabeth North was the first woman to belong to the Library Company and was a second cousin of Deborah Franklin.¹¹ Three years later, she transferred the share to her husband Daniel Benezet on 13 May 1745.

After the younger proprietor John Penn (sometimes called "The American" because he was born in America) arrived from England, the directors requested on 13 October 1734 that Franklin and Coleman draw up an address to him. But Franklin was pressed. On 21 October, Coleman presented "a rough Drought of an Address, in which B. Franklin had not had Leisure to assist, but desired Time either till next Monthly Meeting or if they could complete it sooner then to inform" Breintnall, who would call a meeting. The directors decided at the 9 December meeting that since the address to John Penn had been delayed for so long, they might as well wait till the election in May, when the whole company of subscribers could vote. On 14 April 1734/5, the directors requested Franklin, Coleman, Hopkinson, and Breintnall to prepare the address to John Penn. It was to be presented by James Hamilton, William Plumsted, William Rawle, Thomas Cadwalader, Franklin, Thomas Hopkinson, and Joseph Breintnall. With a few small alterations, the directors approved it. The *Pennsylvania Gazette* of 5 June 1735 explained that "the Proprietors being out of Town, it was not presented till last Week" (31 May). Like the earlier address to Thomas Penn, it celebrated William Penn and the government of Pennsylvania, but it was not so striking as the earlier address. Perhaps Franklin did not write it. He was ill and did not attend the presentation ceremony on 31 May.

Like all librarians, the directors were concerned not only with adding to the collection but keeping track of what was in it, of where on the shelves the books were, and of whether they were currently borrowed. In the two years since Franklin printed the first catalogue, the Library Company's collection had more than doubled, and more books were expected. At the 13 January 1734/5 meeting, the directors asked Franklin to print a new library catalogue. At the February

meeting, the directors agreed that he should wait to print the new catalogue until the new books had arrived. Franklin reported that James Logan sent the directors his kind respects and promised a handsome present of books, two folios of which “Mr. Logan had already delivered him.” The directors returned their thanks. A group of directors gathered at the library on 18 April 1735 to open the trunk of new books. When Breintnall visited the Library Company on Saturday, 26 April, he found Franklin poring over the new shipment. Shortly after this time Franklin evidently printed a new brief catalogue of the books, but no copy survives. It was probably another short-title list, arranged by the size of the books. A year later on 12 April 1736, Franklin presented his bill for it.

That same day, Parsons charged the Library Company two shillings for moving the books to his home “from Timothee’s & Liquor for the Workmen at putting up the Boxes.” At the last 1736 meeting, 13 December, the directors asked that “B. Franklin print a number of copies of the company’s constitution, that each subscriber may have one, and our friends a few.”

A DEGREE OF SUCCESS

When Franklin wrote an address to Thomas Penn from the Library Company in 1733 and when the directors composed another in 1734 to John Penn, they hoped that the proprietors would contribute land or money to the endeavor. Several years later the proprietors did. They inquired on 12 December 1737 about the trustees for a Library Company property. The directors named William Allen, Benjamin Franklin, William Plumsted, and James Hamilton. All but Franklin were Proprietary Party members and wealthy Philadelphians. On 1 May 1738, Thomas Penn gave a lot for the building site (until the Library Company had a charter, the lot had legally been given to the four individuals just named), and John Penn, who had sailed for London on 21 September 1735, sent the Library Company an air pump, an expensive scientific machine for removing or compressing air, accompanied by his letter dated London, 31 January 1737/8. The *Pennsylvania Gazette* noted on 4 May: “Monday last the Library Company of this City had their Yearly Meeting, for the Choice of their Officers, paying their Annual Subscription, &c., when they were acquainted, That the Hon. Proprietary Thomas Penn, Esq; had presented the Company with a large and commodious Lot of Ground, whereon to build an House for their Library; and also that the last Ship from London had brought them a valuable Present from the Hon. John Penn, Esq; consisting of an Air Pump, and other curious Instruments of great Use in the Study of Natural Knowledge. Both which Donations were exceedingly agreeable to the Company, not only with respect to their Value, but as they shew a Disposition in our greatest Men to encourage the Design of Promoting useful Learning in Pennsylvania.”

With a group of close friends, a celebratory occasion, and a little wine, Franklin no doubt had a major role in what Joseph Breintnall called “a facetious agreeable conversation” on 8 May 1738, when the Library Company directors

celebrated the gifts. They gathered at Thomas Mullen's tavern, having invited Mr. Samuel Jenkins, who brought the air pump; proprietor Thomas Penn; Mr. Freame, the proprietor's brother-in-law; the merchant Alexander Forbes; Captain Norris; Robert Grace; the merchant Charles Willing; and James Hamilton. The proprietor Thomas Penn was supposedly engaged (as we will see in Volume 3, he did not approve of the Library Company), but all the other gentlemen, together with all the directors of the Library Company, the treasurer, and the secretary, met for dinner. Before dinner, the directors "ordered that B. Franklin, Hugh Roberts, and Alexander Graydon meet at the Library tomorrow in the Afternoon and inspect the condition of the Books, to see which ones wanted binding and repairing, and to count the whole number belonging to the Library." They also appointed Franklin, William Coleman, and Richard Peters to draw up addresses of thanks to the proprietors.

Though the air pump must have come with a serviceable frame (or else it could not work), on 15 May 1738 the directors asked Franklin, Philip Syng, and Hugh Roberts to "get a Frame & Case made with Glass Lights in the Door to receive & preserve the Air Pump with its Appendages, and to look ornamental in the Library Room." The committee asked the joiner John Harrison to prepare an "ornamental" case for it. The directors adopted a letter thanking John Penn for the air pump (8 August). At the 8 January 1739 meeting, the air pump was brought to the library room. Hopkinson and Syng, two co-experimenters with Franklin on electricity in the late 1740s and early 1750s, evidently became the local experts on the pump. On 7 May 1739 Hopkinson was paid 16 shillings "for Quick Silver, Leather, Bladders, Oil, a Spunge &c for the Air pump"; and the silversmith Syng received 20 shillings "for cementing Air pump Glasses and for two Keys with other necessaries towards making Experiments with the Pump." Harrison finished the elaborate case and was paid £10 on 20 September 1739. It more than fulfilled the directors' hopes for an "ornamental" case. It is the best-known early example of Palladian Revival woodwork made in the colonies.

On 22 May 1738, the directors agreed to meet at 8:30 p.m. through August, then at 8 p.m. through October, and at 7 p.m. from November through May. They learned on 11 September that Dr. Walter Sydserfe of Antigua had donated to the Library Company the money owed him by William Alexander of Maryland. When Alexander was in Philadelphia on 2 October, he renewed the bond, promising to pay £34.6.3 sterling "on or before the 2nd day of April next with interest." On 9 October 1738, the directors requested Franklin and Richard Peters to write a letter of thanks to Dr. Sydserfe. The directors sold the bond to William Allen, but Sydserfe's gift proved difficult to collect. Three years later, Alexander had still not paid. The directors heard on 9 March 1741 that Allen intended shortly to return the bond to the Library Company. At the 11 May meeting, the directors resolved to repay Allen and to put William Alexander's bond into suit. Consequently on 20 May they ordered James Morris, treasurer, to pay Allen £51.13.6, Pennsylvania currency, "in full of his demand against the

Library Company of Philadelphia.” The next meeting, 8 June, Franklin sent Alexander’s bond to the Annapolis lawyer Daniel Dulany for legal action. On 14 October 1741, William Alexander finally delivered bills of exchange discharging the bond; and thereupon Franklin wrote Dulany to send it back with the costs of the suit. At the 9 November meeting, the directors ordered the treasurer to reimburse Franklin £3.15.10 for having paid Dulany.

When innkeeper John Roberts moved from High (Market) to Second Street in April 1739, the Library Company directors began meeting at his new location. On the occasions when Roberts evidently did not have a separate room available for them, the directors met at David Evans’s inn (e.g., 30 April, 28 August, and 29 October 1739) at the Sign of the Crown on the south side of Market Street, two doors below Third Street.

In the minutes, Breintnall added at the end of 1738 a comment on his personal pleasure with the thriving state of the Library Company after its first seven years:

The Library Affair has hitherto been many ways fortunate. The books sent for to England have always come safe and without Damage; very few of the Books have been lost or carelessly defaced; a good agreement has for the most part subsisted in the Company, and all the Officers have proved faithfull in their several Trusts, as far as hath yet been discovered; the Library has received Benefactions from several Gentlemen and well-wishers; and increases in its Reputation. And not one Subscriber is deceased (that I have heard of) except Joseph Growdon who died the 22nd of May last. I have presumed to make this Note without Direction, because I think it will not be disapproved of, and may prove useful. Another seven years, as successful as the foregoing must shew the Library Company in a very flourishing Condition, and to be more publickly known and esteemed.

During the spate of 1739 June meetings (11, 18, and 21), the Library Company directors decided which books to purchase next. They changed their London bookseller from William Meadows to William Innys on 9 July. Peter Collinson remained their agent and dealt with the booksellers without charging the Library Company for his services. The librarian, William Parsons, demanded on 8 October that the directors raise his salary or take the books from his house and appoint another librarian. The directors valued Parsons but also thought it would be desirable to have a room for the books that was not in someone’s home. Franklin promptly petitioned the Pennsylvania Assembly, “praying (for the better Security of their [the Library Company’s] Books from Fire) Leave to deposit them in a Room over one of the Offices of the State-House, till such Time as the Publick have Occasion to use the same.” On 18 October the House considered the petition and granted permission. At its next meeting, the directors discussed the forthcoming move, including the need for new, sturdier shelves. On 7 April 1740, the Library Company moved from Parsons’s home “to

the Upper Room of the Westernmost Office in the State House.” The State House (Independence Hall) remained the Library Company’s location until 1773. After Parsons’s ultimatum, in addition to moving the books the directors raised his salary, and he remained librarian for another seven years.

FRANKLIN’S LOSS OF POPULARITY

As the founder, Franklin received or tied for the most votes as a Library Company director until 1740, though by the late 1730s a few others were putting in almost as much time and energy as Franklin. At the ninth annual election on 5 May 1740, held in the library room of the State House, Franklin’s popularity waned and he came in fifth. The directors chosen were Hugh Roberts, Thomas Hopkinson, William Coleman, Philip Syng, Franklin, Phineas Bond, Evan Morgan, Samuel Rhoads, Israel Pemberton, and Joseph Stretch. James Morris was reelected treasurer, and the directors continued Breintnall as secretary. Dr. Phineas Bond, the Quaker merchant Israel Pemberton, and Joseph Stretch were new directors; the cooper and merchant Evan Morgan, who became an assemblyman, had previously been a director (1735–37); and Alexander Graydon, William Plumsted, Robert Grace, and William Allen were replaced.

My interpretation of the election return may well be questioned. The only early meeting for which we have the actual vote was for 6 May 1754. On that occasion, five persons tied for the most votes. As secretary, Franklin recorded the voters and the officers elected. The members voting were Dr. Richard Farmer, Franklin, Joseph Stretch, John Mifflin, Michael Hilligas, Daniel Williams, Evan Morgan, Jonathan Evans, William Parsons, Samuel Shoemaker, John Smith, Hugh Roberts, Samuel Rhoads, and William Coleman—a total of fourteen. The directors chosen were Samuel Rhoads, with 14 votes; Joseph Stretch, with 14 votes; Richard Peters, 14; Thomas Cadwalader, 15; Samuel Morris, 15; Evan Morgan, 13; Philip Syng, 14; Amos Strettell, 15; John Mifflin, 15; and Benjamin Franklin, 15. Treasurer William Coleman received 14. Other persons voted for as director included Hugh Roberts, 1 vote (he also received 1 vote as treasurer); Charles Norris, 1; Samuel Sansom, 1; and Thomas Bond, 1. Evidently one member came late, after two directors (Rhoads and Stretch) had been chosen. One hundred forty-eight votes were cast for the 10 directors. If 15 voters had been present throughout the voting, 150 votes should have been cast. Whoever came late voted for only 8 of the 10 directors. If we assume that whoever came late would also have voted for Rhoads and Stretch, then 7 members would have tied for a position as director.

Indirect evidence shows that other elections were close. In the 1738 election, a number of votes must have been cast for directors who did not quite win. That fall, when director William Coleman went on a voyage, the other directors consulted the votes for the past election, found that Samuel Rhoads had the next highest number, and appointed Rhoads a director in Coleman’s place (11 December 1738). Further, the 1740 voting, where Franklin came in fifth, elected

four new directors (an unusual one-third turnover in leadership), whereas in some years (e.g., 1735 and 1736, and 1742–45), the same directors were continued in office. The Library Company's leadership had a major change in 1740.

Despite the lack of absolute proof, it makes sense that Franklin suffered a loss of popularity with many Library Company members in 1740. There were four good reasons, each of which will be discussed in its context elsewhere, but I will enumerate them here. First, Franklin had recently opposed the Quaker pacifist position in the assembly and organized a petition for a militia (1 January 1740). Pacifist Quakers had reason to oppose him, and most of the Library Company subscribers were Quakers, many of them pacifists. Second, the Proprietary Party had recently censured Franklin (25 January) for not printing in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* the governor's reasons for rejecting a bill. Therefore, strong Proprietary partisans, like Richard Peters, Lyndford Lardner, James Hamilton, and William Allen, probably opposed him. His close friends Thomas Hopkinson and William Parsons, though stalwart Proprietary Party members, were probably exceptions. Third, the "gentlemen" among the Library Company members were angry with Franklin for the newspaper exchange on closing the Dancing Assembly (1 May). And fourth, the tanners (especially Samuel Morris) resented his 1739 attempt to clean up Philadelphia's environment by moving the tanyards from the area around Dock Street. Altogether, a number of Library Company members had reasons in 1740 not to vote for Franklin.

The founder was nevertheless voted a director and attended all the 1740–41 meetings. At the 8 December 1740 meeting, the directors asked him to "get made a Dozen of Sheep skin Covers or Cases for Folio Books to be put on them when they are lent out." At the tenth annual election, 4 May 1741, the directors remained the same as the previous year, but Franklin moved from fifth to second in the listing. At the 1742 election, Franklin was listed first, but at the 1743 election, Thomas Hopkinson was. Thereafter, in all recorded elections to 1757 (by which time Franklin knew he was going to England on Pennsylvania Assembly business), Franklin was listed first. I conclude that Franklin was the executive officer of the Library Company from its founding in 1731 to 1740, and from 1744 to 1757.

The directors agreed on 11 May 1741 to appoint the meeting time at 8:30 p.m. through August, then at 8 p.m. until November, and at 7 p.m. from November until May. William Plumsted, who had recently returned from London, delivered on 8 June 1741 a camera obscura and a double microscope, presents from proprietor John Penn. On 13 July the Library Company directors "Ordered that Wm. Coleman, Benj. Franklin and Thos. Hopkinson be a Committee to write a Letter of Thanks to the Honorable John Penn, Esq." for his gift. These gifts, like his earlier donation of the air pump, showed that John Penn had an interest in science and knew that his Philadelphia friends like Thomas Hopkinson also did. What Penn, along with everyone else, did not know, was the extraordinary scientific ability of Franklin.

THE 1741 CATALOGUE

Though the librarian kept a list of the books the Library Company owned, it was convenient for the members to have a copy. The last printed list had appeared in 1735. On 9 June 1740 the Library Company directors asked Franklin to print a new catalogue. Evidently they discovered that the librarian's list of books was either confusing or incomplete. They asked on 11 August that "William Coleman, Hugh Roberts, F. Hopkinson,¹² & Franklin be a Committee to make & complete a Catalogue of the Books belonging to the Library." On 13 April 1741, the directors requested Franklin to print two hundred copies before the election on 4 May. Either he did not have the time to do it by then or the manuscript catalogue was not yet ready because the request was not fulfilled. At the 13 July meeting, Franklin read a paper containing a brief account of the library, which he said he wrote to fill up a blank page at the end of the catalogue he was printing; the other directors approved. It concluded: "a Share which at first was worth but 40s is now valued at 6.10s. But for this small Sum which laid out in Books would go but a little Way, every Member has the use of a Library now worth upwards of £500. Whereby Knowledge is in this City render'd more cheap and easy to be come at, to the great Pleasure and Advantage of the studious Part of the Inhabitants." Perhaps Franklin did not realize that the price of admission was becoming so high that it was excluding the kind of young artisans who, a decade earlier, had organized the library.

By the 10 August directors' meeting, Franklin had printed the 1741 *Catalogue*. As was often the case, he was an innovator. He gave more publication information and longer titles than appeared in most earlier library catalogues. For the times, it was a book man's catalogue. It contained 375 titles, with a single title sometimes representing numerous volumes. The major subjects continued to be history, literature, and science, with fewer volumes in theology and in foreign languages than other colonial American libraries. Though the directors purchased the standard dictionaries and grammars in Latin and modern European languages, as well as a Bible in Latin, they had purchased only four other non-English books: Cervantes' *Don Quixote* in Spanish; Grotius's *De Jure Belli* in Latin; Pascal's *Lettres provinciales* in French; and Plautus's *Comoediae*.¹³ (All other non-English books were gifts.) Franklin, "ravished" by Pascal when a boy, was no doubt responsible for its purchase.¹⁴ Since we know he read Cervantes and taught himself to read Spanish, he probably wanted the Library Company to purchase *Don Quixote* (A 97, 134). Though Franklin was one of the best linguists among the early members, he supported the decision to select books in English. He wrote in 1789 that "in the Scheme of the Library I had provided only for English Books."¹⁵

While printing the *Catalogue*, Franklin annotated several entries. Of John Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (2 volumes), he wrote: "Esteemed the best Book of Logick in the World." After the entry for *Spectator* (8

volumes), *Tatler* (4 volumes), and *Guardian* (2 volumes), he added: “Written by some of the most ingenious Men of the Age, for the Promotion of Virtue, Piety and good Manners” (*Catalogue* [1741] 30, 46). Most comments are descriptive, though some are implicitly appreciative: Of *The Practice of Perspective: Or, An Easy Method of Representing Natural Objects According to the Rules of Art*, Franklin noted, “A Work highly necessary for Painters, Engravers, Architects, Embroiderers, &c” (*Catalogue* [1741] 16). The inclusion of “Embroiderers” in that list may be a minor example of Franklin’s proto-feminism. Copies of the catalogue were given to every Library Company member, and the directors voted to present a copy to each member of the General Assembly, to Peter Collinson, and to John Penn. Were the gifts to the assembly members in gratitude for allowing the library to use a room in the state house? Was it an attempt to enlist members from the assembly? It seems unlikely that the Library Company directors could hope for any funds from the legislature.

The titles of the books in the Library Company document the Whiggish influences on Franklin as well as on early American political thinking. They reinforce the impressions made by Franklin’s quotations from *Cato’s Letters* in Silence Dogood and by his references to Algernon Sydney and John Trenchard in the Obadiah Plainman series (1740). Most Whig classics were in the library by 1741. Surprisingly, Henry Care’s compilation, *English Liberties*, was not. Franklin advertised copies in the *Gazette* on 21 March and 5 September 1734 (the latter an especially long, descriptive book advertisement); 25 November 1736; and 18 and 22 January 1739. Perhaps so many members owned their own copy that it was not greatly desired.¹⁶ John Locke’s *Two Treatises of Government*, and *A Collection of Several Pieces*, both given by Franklin, were there. Locke’s *Works* in a folio edition of three volumes (including of course the *Two Treatises*), like *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* and *An Essay upon Education of Children*, had been purchased by the company. Even the translations from foreign-language histories, including the five titles of René Vertot’s histories of other countries, “dealt with revolution and the subversion of established monarchies.”¹⁷

The collection of English literature was among the best in the colonies in 1741. In addition to the major English periodicals, the Library Company owned the works of Joseph Addison, John Arbuthnot, Francis Bacon, William Congreve, Anthony Ashley Cooper (third earl of Shaftesbury), Abraham Cowley, John Dryden, John Gay, Matthew Prior, Nicholas Rowe, Edmund Spenser, Richard Steele, Jonathan Swift, and Edmund Waller, as well as Butler’s *Hudibras*. Lesser contemporary litterateurs, like John Pomfret, Richard Blackmore, Samuel Garth, and Henry Needler (to select only those on page 50 of the *Catalogue*) were found throughout the collection. The only colonial American libraries that I am sure contained more belletristic literature were those of the Virginia litterateurs William Byrd of Westover (d. 1744) and John Mercer (d. 1768).

THE CHARTER AND, FINALLY, THE LAND

Thomas Penn's gift of a plot of ground could not be formally presented to the Library Company until it had a charter. The Reverend Richard Peters informed the directors on 21 June 1739 that the proprietors would grant a charter. The directors drafted one on 20 July 1741 and called a special general meeting to consider it on 3 August. One clause provoked dissatisfaction. It said that the members had the power to make laws for the company but that no law would be binding unless notice had been given to all members and unless one-fifth of all members were present. After one-fifth was changed to one-fourth, the draft was approved. The directors drew up a letter of thanks to the proprietors. On 8 March 1742, Israel Pemberton reported that the members who had reservations "now declared themselves satisfied." On 15 March the directors considered minor revisions to the prospective charter. They sent off the charter to Governor George Thomas, who signed it on 25 March. At the next general meeting on 3 May 1742, fifty-three subscribers showed up or sent in their proxies to sign the charter.

Franklin, Hopkinson, and Coleman were named a committee at the 10 May 1742 directors' meeting to draw up an address of thanks to the proprietors. At the next meeting, 14 June, the directors read and approved it. The address was engrossed and signed in July. The sentiments of the concluding paragraph reflect Franklin's opinions: "The Powers and Privileges now granted us will, without Doubt, very much conduce to the Increase and Reputation of the Library; and as valuable Books come to be in more general Use and Esteem, we hope they will have very good Effects on the Minds of the People of this Province, and furnish them with the most useful kind of Knowledge, that which renders Men benevolent and helpful to one another." Surprisingly, the directors also referred to the political controversy between the governor and the Quaker-dominated assembly over appropriations for the war between Great Britain and Spain: "Our unhappy Divisions and Animosities, of late, have too much interrupted that charitable and friendly Intercourse which formerly subsisted among all Societies in this Place; but as all Parties come to understand their true Interest, we hope these Animosities will cease, and that Men of all Denominations will mutually assist in carrying on the publick Affairs in such manner as will most tend to the Peace and Welfare of the Province."

On 9 August 1743, John, Thomas, and Richard Penn acknowledged the thanks of the Library Company. The directors agreed on 14 November that "the Addresses lately sent to the Proprietors, together with their Answer, should be printed, and Evan Morgan was desired to get Copies from the Secretary and deliver them to Mr. Franklin for that Purpose." At the 12 November 1743 meeting, Franklin was asked to have the title to the property on the south side of Chestnut Street transferred from the four individuals (Franklin, Allen, Plumsted, and Hamilton) to the Library Company. Thomas Penn, however, did not

make out the official patent for the lot until 12 January 1760, and the Library Company finally received it on 12 April 1762.

STABILITY

At the annual election on 3 May 1742, the subscribers chose Benjamin Franklin, Evan Morgan, Hugh Roberts, Philip Syng, Joseph Stretch, Thomas Hopkinson, Samuel Rhoads, John Jones, Jr., Samuel Morris, and Jacob Duché as directors. William Coleman, the first treasurer (1731–33), returned to the job, replacing James Morris, who had served from 1734 to 1742. The directors reappointed Joseph Breintnall secretary. Jones, Morris, and Duché were new directors, replacing William Coleman, Phineas Bond, and Israel Pemberton. In a remarkable showing of continuity, the same 1742 slate of officers was reelected for the three following years, 1743–45.

At the 1742 annual meeting, in addition to approving the charter, the subscribers passed a series of laws confirming the company's practices. For example, they voted that "no Person shall be admitted a Member, without the Approbation of the Directors, and paying the Value of a Share, of which a Certificate is to be given, and a Record made." A new law specified that the subscribers would have to pay a "Penalty of Five Shillings for every three Months Default of making the annual Payments." At the meeting, the tenth annual payment was made.

Perhaps responding to the Library Company's gift of its catalogues, the assembly ordered Franklin on 13 September 1742 "to deposit one of the new Pennsylvania law books in the Library." Franklin attended all the directors' meetings in 1742–43. The following year, he missed one (13 June 1743) while visiting New England. In 1744–45, Franklin missed the 9 July 1744 meeting. In 1745–46, he attended them all.

The directors noted on 11 October 1742 that some glasses of the air pump had been broken "but no one knew how or why." They appointed Franklin, Thomas Hopkinson, and Samuel Rhoads "to have the Care & Management of the Air pump & what belongs to it, & the keeping the Key of the Press." Franklin presented fossils on 13 December that the botanist John Bartram had collected in the Allegheny Mountains, "in which were Shells, & Impressions of Shell fish." The fossils heightened Franklin's interest in paleontology and the age of the world. Franklin also told the directors that when he was "lately at Stenton, Mr. Logan expressed a Desire of seeing the Company's Charter & their Laws; & the Directors consented the Book should be sent him, belonging to the Library, in which the said Charter & Laws were recorded." At the same meeting, Hopkinson said that he, Franklin, and Rhoads had inspected the air pump and its apparatus and taken an account of its glasses.

On 28 April 1743, Franklin "exhibited his Account (from August 1741) for printing Advertisements, Blank Notices and Notes, and Catalogues, and for Paper, Parchment &c. amounting to £12.12.6." At the same meeting Breintnall presented Peter Collinson's letter of 24 February, in which he "begs a Favour of

the Gentlemen of the Library Company that they will admit his Friend John Bartram (of whose Desert he speaks warmly) an honorary Member, without any Expence, and to have a free Access to the Library.—The Directors immediately agreed, that as Mr. Collinson had been a Constant Benefactor to the Company (never charging them with any Commissions, and had presented them with several valuable Books) and as Mr. Bartram was also in their Esteem a deserving Man, he should have free Access to the Library.” With this vote, the directors of the Library Company of Philadelphia, who had begun in 1730 as primarily a group of young artisans, assumed the role of patrons of learning and culture. Of course the botanist Bartram had already, through Franklin, presented the Library Company with fossils from his expeditions.

As the gifts of fossils and an air pump show, the Library Company in its early years contained a cabinet of curiosities as well as scientific instruments. Franklin added to the latter by giving a magnifying glass twelve inches in diameter to the library on 9 May 1743.

GIFTS AND BUSINESS

Throughout its history, the Library Company of Philadelphia had benefitted from gifts, beginning with the books that Peter Collinson added to the first order in 1731 (though if one included time, effort, and money spent, Franklin would come first). The greatest eighteenth-century gift of books, however, was James Logan’s library. He had decided to leave his great private library to the citizens of Philadelphia. Like Franklin, Logan was a genius who independently studied and mastered various fields. Unlike Franklin, he was a classical scholar and owned the finest private collection of classics in colonial America. He was also a superior student of higher mathematics, annotating and occasionally correcting errors in all three early editions of Newton’s *Principia Mathematica*.¹⁸ In the areas of science and the classics, his collection was unrivaled in America before 1750. He drew up a deed of trust on 8 March 1745, appointing Israel Pemberton, Jr., William Allen, Richard Peters, and Benjamin Franklin trustees of his library. It opened as a separate institution in 1760 but became part of the Library Company in 1793. The *Library of James Logan* (1974) by Edwin Wolf 2nd is perhaps the greatest catalogue of any colonial American library.

Though the English merchant and botanist Peter Collinson gave many gifts of considerable value to the Library Company, his most important gift arrived in the fall of 1745. It was a six-pence pamphlet. The price was so little and its importance was at the time judged so negligible that it was not mentioned in the Library Company minutes, nor recorded in the 1746 *Additions*¹⁹ to the Library Company *Catalogue* of 1741. With the pamphlet, Collinson presented a glass tube to the Library Company. These two presents started Franklin, Ebenezer Kinnersley, Thomas Hopkinson, and Philip Syng on their electrical experiments, which will be described in Volume 3.

After the fourteenth annual election on 6 May 1745, Franklin presented his

charge of twenty shillings “for printing Notices of the general Meeting for 1744 & 1745 and blank Receipts in those two Years.” At the 8 July 1745 meeting, Franklin was asked to get from Breintnall a copy of the 1741 catalogue either “printed or in Manuscript, to help the Directors in a new Choice of Books to be sent for.” At the 11 and 14 November meetings, they decided what books to order. When the directors met on 13 January 1745/6, Franklin, Hugh Roberts, and William Coleman “were appointed a Committee to revise the Rules for lending Books &c and report to the next Meeting of the Directors, what Alterations they think necessary to be made in them.” On 14 April, the directors asked Franklin “to draw from the Minutes an Account of the Pamphlets that ought to be in the Library.” No such account survives.

The meeting venue changed during 1745. The 14 October meeting was the last at the Widow Roberts. Beginning with the 11 November meeting, the directors gathered at Joseph Breintnall’s coffee house at the Sign of the Hen and Chickens on Chestnut Street. After Breintnall committed suicide on 16 March 1745/6, Franklin took over as secretary for the next decade. The directors continued meeting at the Widow Breintnall’s. At the 5 May 1746 meeting, they “took into Consideration, that Joseph Breintnall, late Secretary, had faithfully served the Company Yearly, without any adequate Recompence for the same, in Gratitude for which, they unanimously voted a Present of £15 to his Widow for the Use of his Family; and that his Son George shall have the free Use of the Books in the Library during Life; but that, during his Minority some Person approved by the Directors sign Notes for him.” After the election of 1746, the directors learned that former director Samuel Norris had left the Library Company £20 in his will, the organization’s first legacy.

From May 1746 to May 1748, Franklin attended all the recorded meetings (the record only goes through September 1747) except those on 10 November and 8 December 1746 when he was visiting New England. Franklin informed the directors on 5 May 1746 that the Reverend Hugh Jones, who lived nearby in Maryland, had presented a valuable book titled *Reliquiae Bodleianae* and another titled *Catalogue Universalis Librorum in omni Facultate Linguague insignum & rarissimorum &c.* in two volumes. Joseph Breintnall’s widow presented several unique gifts: two manuscript volumes he kept containing records of the weather for the previous several years, a manuscript titled “Remarks on Grafting and Inoculating,” and a large collection of nature prints of leaves of plants growing near Philadelphia.²⁰

THE 1746 CATALOGUE

On 8 July 1745, the Library Company directors requested that Franklin print the charter and a catalogue of the books added since 1741, which would be supplied by librarian William Parsons. Ten months later, on 12 May 1746, the directors again asked Franklin to print the company’s charter. Robert Greenway was directed on 14 July 1746 to furnish Franklin “with a Copy of the Charter, for the

Press.” Since librarian Parsons still had not compiled the list, John Sober and Lynford Lardner were appointed to compile it. On 13 October, the directors asked that the laws of the company be printed with the charter. Perhaps after the rest of the pamphlet had been set in type, the directors requested on 9 March 1747 that the rules be added. The resulting imprint was *The Charter of the Library Company of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: Franklin, 1746 [1747]). Franklin charged the Library Company £7.10. for “Catalogues” on 1 January 1746/7.

The 1746 catalogue contained more complete title entries than had the 1741 catalogue. Altogether, 187 new titles appeared, 41 folios, 13 quartos, 106 octavos, and 27 duodecimos, with many titles representing multiple volumes. Added to those in the 1741 catalogue, the Library Company now had 562 titles. Pamphlets were not listed. Franklin annotated four entries: after *An Universal History, from the Earliest Account of Time to the Present* (2nd ed., 7 volumes [London, 1740]), he wrote, “Esteemed a very judicious, elaborate, and learned Collection” (p. 4); of Jonathan Swift’s two-volume *Gulliver’s Travels* (London, 1726), he said, “Being a severe Satyr and Ridicule upon the Follies, Infirmities, and Vices of particular Nations, and the Human Race” (p. 12); after Sir Joshua Childe, *A Discourse on Trade and Money, with Its Use* (London [n.d.]), he commented, “esteem’d the clearest and best Treatise extant upon those Subjects” (p. 27); of Herodotus, translated by Dr. Littlebury (2nd ed. [London, 1720]), he wrote, “Esteemed one of the first Authors who raised his Stile and Method above common Narration, to the Dignity of History” (p. 13). Surprisingly, the Library Company had two copies of it. The catalogue (p. 27) recorded that Franklin gave the company an incunabulum, the *Magna Charta* (London, 1556).

As usual, the catalogue was arranged by the size of the books. The 41 folios contained a larger proportion of law books than had the 1741 catalogue. The folios concluded with two volumes of bound newspapers: “*The American Mercury*; from its first Publication in 1719, to the Year 1746. 6 v.”; and “*The Pennsylvania Gazette*; from its first Publication in the Year 1728, to 1747. 5 v.” Both were gifts of Thomas Hopkinson. *The Laws of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: Franklin, 1742) was given by the legislature. Franklin would have been especially interested in the revised and enlarged edition of Bayle’s ten-volume *Dictionary* (London, 1734).

Franklin was probably responsible for ordering at least four of the thirteen books in quarto: *The Koran or Alcoran of Mohammed* (London, 1734); the three-volume *Philosophical Works of . . . Robert Boyle* (London, 1738); *An Enquiry into the Morals of the Antients* (London, 1737); and *A Course of Experimental Philosophy*, by J. T. Desaguliers (London, 1732).

Of the 106 books in octavo, those with special significance for Franklin included John Pointer, *A Rational Account of the Weather [with] the Cause of an Aurora Borealis* (2nd ed. [1738]); the four-volume *Works of the Hon Robert Boyle* (1699); Benjamin Martin’s *New and Compendious System of Opticks* (London, 1740); Père du Halde’s four-volume *History of China* (London, 1741); Humphrey

Bland's *Treatise of Military Discipline* (London, 1740), which Franklin excerpted in his *General Magazine* in 1741, and which he partly reprinted as a pamphlet in 1746 and again in 1747; Sir John Floyer's *History of Cold Bathing, Antient and Modern* (London, 1732); Bishop Fleetwood's *Chronicon Pretiosum; or an Account of English Gold and Silver Money* (London, 1745); Henry Baker's *Microscope Made Easy* (London, 1742), and Baker's *Attempt towards a Natural History of the Polype* (London, 1743), which Franklin used in his article on the microscope in *Poor Richard* for 1751. One entry contains three works by James Logan that Franklin printed: M. T. Cicero's *Cato Major* (Philadelphia: Franklin, 1744); *Charge Deliver'd from the Bench to the Grand Inquest* (Philadelphia: Franklin, 1736); and *Cato's Moral Distichs, Englished in Couplets* (Philadelphia: Franklin, 1735).

Among the twenty-seven books in duodecimo there were Joshua Gee's *Trade and Navigation of Great-Britain Consider'd* (London, 1738), which Franklin cited in the 5 January 1731 *Gazette* (it was first published in 1729); and an English translation (hopefully not the "poor one" he read as a boy) of his childhood favorite, Pascal's *Les Provinciales; or the Mystery of Jesuitism* (2nd ed. [London, 1658]). In addition to these volumes, the scientific works and the Americana would especially have appealed to him. Among the latter was an imprint by his South Carolina partner Lewis Timothy, *A True and Historical Narrative of the Colony of Georgia* (Charlestown: Timothy, 1741). One puzzle in the 1746 catalogue is *An Account of the Shipwreck of Robert Barrow, and Others, on the Coast of Florida, and Their Deliverance; by Jonathan Dickenson [sic], One of the Persons Concern'd* (Philadelphia, 1730). This is an edition of Jonathan Dickinson's *God's Protecting Providence* (1699), but no 1730 edition is known. Franklin reprinted it in 1736. No copy of that edition is extant, but the advertisement (1 April 1736 *Gazette*) used the standard title *God's Protecting Providence* and called it "The Second Edition." Had there been a previous "second edition" published in Philadelphia, Franklin would have known it. The date 1730 is probably an error for 1736, and the title in the 1746 *Catalogue* described the exciting contents instead of reproducing the actual title. The entry probably refers to the lost Franklin 1736 imprint.

LATER HISTORY

The Library Company of Philadelphia inspired the founding of similar institutions in Philadelphia, the surrounding area, and other colonies. John Bartram reported to Peter Collinson on 21 June 1743 that another library had started in imitation of the Library Company in Darby, Pennsylvania.²¹ In 1747 the Redwood Library in Newport, Rhode Island, and the Union Library Company in Philadelphia were founded. Two more Philadelphia libraries started in 1757, the Association and Amicable Libraries. All these and other colonial American libraries were inspired by the Library Company, and the three additional Phila-

delphia libraries (the Union, Association, and Amicable) merged with the Library Company in 1769.

When the Philadelphia libraries merged, the Library Company gained an influx of new members. They were welcome because membership in the Library Company had not been increasing. The founding members paid £2 to join and every year thereafter paid ten shillings. To match what the existing members had paid, the price to new members went up by ten shillings every year, reaching £10 in May 1748. The increasing cost of admission meant that fewer persons could afford to join. That was the primary reason that three new libraries started in Philadelphia during these years. By 1765, admission was £20, and no new members had joined in four years. The 1765 directors realized that the high price hindered the company's growth, and they voted to cut the cost of admission in half. Within a few months, the Library Company gained fourteen new members. In the future, as the cost of admission grew, the directors voted further reductions.

Franklin was continuously voted a director from 1731 to the 3 May 1757 election. By then he knew he was going to London during the following year; therefore the election of 1756 was the last time he stood for office. He had been a director for a quarter of a century. For his last year in office (1756–57), the other directors, together with their terms of office, were the following: Philip Syng (24 years as director); Evan Morgan (19 years); Samuel Rhoads (18 years); Samuel Morris and Joseph Stretch (both 15 years); Thomas Cadwalader (12 years); John Mifflin (11 years); and Richard Peters and Amos Strettell (both 7 years). It was William Coleman's eighteenth year as treasurer, Benjamin Franklin's eleventh as secretary, and Robert Greenway's twelfth as librarian. The stability of the directors, secretary, treasurer, and librarian was a major reason for the Library Company's success.

THE LIBRARY COMPANY IN THE *AUTOBIOGRAPHY*

The paper upon which Franklin wrote the holograph manuscript of the *Autobiography* provides evidence concerning his literary intentions and his 1771 feelings about the Library Company.²² He wrote the manuscript on folio sheets (each folded to make four pages) through manuscript page 84. He was at the end of his stay with Jonathan Shipley, the bishop of St. Asaph, and had to return, probably the next day, to London, where he would not have time to continue writing the story of his life. So he took up a single leaf (one half of a folio sheet, containing only two pages). Evidently he planned to conclude his writing within two pages. (An alternative but unlikely explanation is that he had used up all the full sheets of paper on hand and had only half leaves left.) The last full sheet he had written described his hardships and gradual success as an independent printer in Philadelphia. At the very end of page 84, he introduced the next topic, his marriage to Deborah Read. He probably hoped to deal with it in one page and with the following topic, the Library Company, in one more page. These

two topics appear in sequence in the “Outline” for the autobiography (A 203), and they conclude part 1 of the book. It was a logical place to stop writing, not only because his time had run out but also because he had brought his biography through his youth and early manhood, through all his most formative years, and to the point where he was established in life with a wife, a business, and his first public project.

But Franklin was not quite finished when he exhausted the space on manuscript page 86, the end of the half leaf of paper. The concluding sentence was “his was the Mother of all the N American Subscription Libraries now so numerous.” He wrote “It” and then took up another leaf (not another full sheet) and finished the sentence: “is become a great thing itself, and continually increasing.” He added a dash or flourish—a symbol that he often employed at rhetorical conclusions in his manuscripts.²³ Evidently he intended, if only for a second, to end part 1 of the autobiography there. He was, however, unsatisfied with that closing, and so he added another sentence about the significance of the libraries: “These Libraries have improv’d the general Conversation of the Americans, made the common Tradesmen & 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 Privileges.”

These words conclude part 1. The final sentence opened up the focus and provided a definite sense of an ending. Franklin had shifted his perspective from the nitty-gritty details and particular circumstances (which characterize the usual point of view in the *Autobiography* and are part of the sense of texture and dense Lockean reality the book conveys)²⁴ to a time-spanning and world-spanning view recalling the Stamp Act and subsequent and ever-growing tensions between America and England. Though the story of his life has only been brought down to his twenty-fifth year, 1731, the references in the final sentence bring the situation down to the present time in which he was writing (1771) and to the great, unresolved, and ever more threatening conflict between Britain and its colonies.

The last sentence was also a fitting closure because of the explicit and implicit attitudes conveyed. Franklin began by implying that Americans have benefited from the libraries and that the improvement was reflected in their “general conversation.” The philosophy underlying the statement implied that the majority of people will “improve” in ideas and learning if they have the opportunity. It conveyed an egalitarian and a positive, even optimistic, view of humanity. Second, he said that the libraries have made the “common Tradesmen & Farmers as intelligent as most Gentlemen from other Countries.” The Americanism is anti-aristocratic and egalitarian.

The use of the word *intelligent* is especially interesting, for its primary meaning is not knowledge of books and ideas (listed only third in the unabridged *Oxford English Dictionary*) but instead “having the faculty of understanding.”

Franklin, a literary genius sensitive to denotations as well as connotations of words, was asserting that no difference existed between the “common Tradesmen & Farmers” in America and “most Gentlemen” in other countries. The America that Franklin portrayed in the *Autobiography* was comparatively classless. The reality, of course, was different. In America, as in England and Europe, the social structure was hierarchical. Gentlemen sent for laborers and craftsmen (including printers like Franklin) when they had business for them. Ordinary people were automatically supposed to defer to gentlemen (for example, to step off a narrow paved path into the mud when they met). But times were changing, especially in America—and even more so in the imagination of Franklin. Wealth and family had been attacked and discredited as the basis for social distinction. What remained for most thoughtful students of social organization in the eighteenth century was not just acquired ability but a profound difference in the degree of ability. The faculty of intelligence was supposed to distinguish the upper from the lower classes.²⁵

Franklin, however, attacked the supposed distinction. There is no difference in ability, in fundamental intelligence, he says, between the “common Tradesmen & Farmers” and “most Gentlemen.” Thus he annihilated the basis of social hierarchy as it commonly existed in the Enlightenment—and in the beliefs of almost all of his fellow members of the Third Realm. In a letter to Lord Shelburne, England’s prime minister during the peace treaty negotiations in 1782, Franklin’s friend Benjamin Vaughan explained his radical attitudes toward class and intellectual differences: Franklin “thinks that the lower people are as we see them, because oppressed; and then their situation in point of manners, becomes the reason for oppressing them.” Jefferson’s advocacy of a natural “aristoi” in his letter to John Adams of 28 October 1813 was more typical of the members of the Third Realm. Franklin, however, implied that America is the land of democracy and achieved opportunity because the “common” Americans have reached the intellectual level achieved by “most Gentlemen” in England or Europe. Franklin’s visionary Republic of Letters was a world more democratic, less elitist, than Hume’s or Jefferson’s. Franklin’s Third Realm became, of course, the wave of the future, though it may perhaps never be entirely fulfilled.²⁶

The difference between Americans and the English people reminded him of their political differences and of the Americans’ revolutionary stand from the time of the Stamp Act “in Defence of their Privileges” to 1771. The sentence suggested that republican principles are synonymous with knowledge. Learning will naturally convince the student that the rights and liberties (or “Privileges”) of the people are fundamental principles that must be defended and upheld. Learning, Franklin implied, will necessarily lead to belief in a democracy.

Thus the conclusion of part 1 achieves the sense of an ending not only by enlarging the perspective from a confined, limited, Lockean reality in place and time to a global perspective, but also by making the final sentence resound with meanings, significance, and implications. Had Franklin never been able to re-

turn to the *Autobiography*, part 1 alone would have survived as a consummate work of art.

CONCLUSION

According to Franklin, the Library Company was responsible for major changes in American society and thought: “The Institution soon manifested its Utility, was imitated by other Towns and in other Provinces, the Librarys were augmented by Donations, Reading became fashionable, and our People having no publick Amusements to divert their Attention from Study became better acquainted with Books, and in a few Years were observ’d by Strangers to be better instructed and more intelligent than people of the same Rank generally are in other Countries” (A 74). Franklin’s friend Jean Baptiste Le Roy wrote Abbé Claude Fauchet after Franklin’s death about the influence of the Library Company, pointing out that similar ones were formed in imitation of it, and concluded that Franklin was “not only . . . the founder, but, as it were, the schoolmaster of American independence.”²⁷

Franklin believed that the Library Company was a major factor in his own development, affording him “the Means of Improvement by constant Study, for which I set apart an Hour or two each Day.” He thereby managed to make up “in some Degree the Loss of the Learned Education my Father once intended for me.” Reading and study were his only recreations. He recorded that he “was in debt for my Printing-house, I had a young Family coming on to be educated, and I had to contend with for Business two Printers who were establish’d in the Place before me. My Circumstances however grew daily easier: my original Habits of Frugality continuing.” Franklin cited his father’s frequent quoting of Solomon: *Seest thou a Man diligent in his Calling, he shall stand before Kings, he shall not stand before mean Men*, thereby attributing the virtue of industry not only to his father but also to the Christian tradition (A 75).

The literary historian Larzer Ziff has called “the *social* advantages that adhere to the possession and reading of books” a prominent theme in the *Autobiography*. He claimed that books were Franklin’s “passport to social and thence to commercial and political advancement.”²⁸ I agree, though I would place greater emphasis on the connection that Franklin makes between books, learning, and egalitarianism. The social advantages were a by-product. The availability of books and the possibility of self-education meant that the common man did not automatically have to be satisfied in the roles he found himself by birth and early training. Franklin hoped that education could transform the hierarchical world in which he had been born into one where persons could create themselves. He wrote in his *Autobiography* that the availability of self-education through books made the American “common Tradesmen & Farmers” as intelligent as most Gentlemen from other Countries. He also linked education with a belief in political rights, adding that the availability of books “perhaps . . . con-

tributed in some degree to the Stand so generally made throughout the Colonies in Defence of their Privileges” (A 72).

For Franklin, education would characterize the future American society; until that time, however, the ambitious individual could educate himself. Benjamin Vaughan knew Franklin’s oral stories of his self-education, and thus private study was among the themes that Vaughan expected the *Autobiography* to contain. In urging Franklin to go on with it, Vaughan said it would “give a noble rule and example of *self-education*,” showing that it was possible by one’s own effort for “many a man” to achieve success (A 186).

Like the Junto, Franklin founded the Library Company partly as a means of self-education and partly as a means to spread education among his friends. Unlike the Junto, it was meant to be a useful means of self-education for others in the future. Later, when he wrote of his ideas in starting the Academy of Philadelphia, he recalled that the books in the Library Company were in English and were meant to be useful. Like the Academy of Philadelphia, the Library Company was intended to be an educational institution for the future.

The Library Company of Philadelphia was a manifestation of Franklin’s belief in democracy and egalitarianism. Though the leaders of the Library Company gradually changed from the young artisans who founded it in 1730 to include many of Philadelphia’s most successful merchants and elite intellectuals, such as William Allen, John Smith (James Logan’s son-in-law), and John Dickinson, the early members like Franklin, Philip Syng, and Hugh Roberts had also become wealthier and more established members of society, as had the young founding professionals such as lawyer Thomas Hopkinson and early members Drs. Thomas and Phineas Bond. Thus, the gradual gentrification of the Library Company came both from the addition of Philadelphia’s gentry to membership and from the rise in status of its founding “Artificers.”

When asked for an inscription for the cornerstone of the 1789 building that would house the Library Company, Franklin chose to emphasize its working-class origins: “Be it remembered, / In honor of the PHILADELPHIAN Youth, / (Then chiefly Artificers) / That in MDCCXXXI / They cheerfully / INSTITUTED the PHILADELPHIA LIBRARY / which tho’ small at first, / Is become highly valuable, / And extensively useful.” After “cheerfully,” the 1789 directors added, “At the Instance of BENJAMIN FRANKLIN / One of their Number.” And at the end the directors further added, “And which the Walls of this Edifice / Are now destined to contain and preserve. / The first STONE of whose FOUNDATION / Was here placed / The thirty first Day of AUGUST / An: Dom: MDCCLXXXIX.”

The Library Company of Philadelphia remains today a premier collection of more than half a million books, in great part from the eighteenth century, making it a scholarly research library of national and international importance. It continues to be what Franklin wanted it to be—a useful and valuable addition to the culture of Philadelphia and the United States.