

FAQ Sheet

What is the Library Company?

The Library Company houses over half a million rare books, manuscripts, pamphlets, broadsides, prints, and photographs relating to early American history. The collection is non-circulating and covers topics such as science, technology, medicine, economics, architecture, agriculture, education, natural history, and more. It also includes the libraries of Benjamin Rush and James Logan. Its research facilities, exhibitions, and public programs are open to the public free of charge. The Library Company is a nonprofit, member-supported independent research Library that makes these valuable materials available to the public for the purposes of education and enrichment.

How old is the Library Company?

The Library Company was founded in 1731 by Benjamin Franklin as a subscription library. Members pooled their financial resources so they would be able to afford a larger and finer library than any one of them could have amassed individually.

Does the Library Company offer any public programming?

The Library Company regularly presents exhibitions in its Louise Lux-Sions and Harry Sions Gallery, located off the lobby. The exhibitions are an easy way to discover some of the Library Company's many treasures. Aside from the exhibitions, the Library Company hosts an array of public events year-round, such as evening lectures, gallery talks, panel discussions, symposia, and receptions. Various groups and classes can also be accommodated. For a calendar of upcoming events, or to join the Library Company's mailing list, visit <http://www.lcpgraphics.org/events.htm>.

Whom does the Library Company serve?

The Library Company serves all readers who can benefit from the use of our collections. From high school students to senior scholars, from novelists to film producers, the Library Company offers comprehensive reader services Monday through Friday, 9:00am – 4:45pm.

Is the Library Company connected to either the Free Library or the Historical Society of Pennsylvania?

The Library Company is a non-circulating independent research library, separate from the city of Philadelphia's public library system. Though both are free and open to the public, they serve different purposes. For more information about the Free Library of Philadelphia, visit <http://www.library.phila.gov/>. Though they are separate institutions, the Library Company and the neighboring Historical Society have complementary holdings and many researchers utilize both. For more information about the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, visit <http://www.hsp.org/>.

Why do I need to register to use the Library Company's collections?

In order to maintain the highest standard of service and accessibility, the Library Company requires the retention of some specific information about its readers. The vastness of our holdings attracts a diverse audience; it is essential to understand individual needs as specifically as possible. In addition, since much of our material is rare or unique, special care must be taken in handling each item. Reader registration encourages cooperation in preserving our collections for use by future generations.

Can I make photocopies or take photographs of items from the collections?

Photocopy service is available if it can be done without damaging the material, at the discretion of Library Company staff. Requests to take photographs (without a flash) are considered for materials too fragile or large to photocopy. Professional photo-reproduction services are also available; fee schedules for these services are available at http://www.librarycompany.org/collections/rightsrepro/materials_fees.htm or you can call (215) 546-8229.

How can I access the collections off-site?

Both the Library Company's general catalog, WolfPAC, and its image catalog, ImPAC, can be accessed through the website <http://www.librarycompany.org>. In these catalogs you will find virtually all of the rare-book collection (excluding newspapers and periodicals), most of the reference and secondary literature collection, and approximately 40% of the graphic materials. The Library Company continues to add records for the remainder of the collections, and for new acquisitions.

What is a Library Company Fellow?

The Library Company awards approximately 40 fellowships for research in residence throughout the academic year. Academics ranging from graduate students to senior scholars from all over the world come for a month to as much as an academic year to use the collections as they work on dissertations, books, and other projects. For more information on Library Company fellowships, visit <http://www.librarycompany.org/fellowships/american.htm>.

What is the Cassatt House?

The Library Company fellows' residence is located next door at 1320 Locust Street. Built in 1883 for J. Gardner Cassatt by the architectural firm of Frank Furness and Allen Evans, it has recently been renovated to serve as a residential research center, with offices, study carrels, seminar and meeting rooms, public areas, living accommodations for several fellows, and kitchen and dining facilities for the staff, fellows, and others. For more information about renting rooms at the Cassatt House, visit <http://www.librarycompany.org/fellowships/cassatt.htm>.

How can I purchase a Library Company Publication?

The Library Company has about 60 titles in print, including many catalogs on past exhibitions, which can be purchased at the front desk or online at http://www.dianepublishing.net/category_s/459.htm. Library Company members receive a 20% discount.

What is a Library Company Shareholder?

A majority of Library Company members are shareholders who have purchased a share that has been passed through previous owners since the 18th century. The tradition of Library Company shareholding dates back to 1731, when fifty subscribers paid forty shillings each to purchase shares and ten shillings a year thereafter to buy books and maintain the library. Today, a share can be purchased for \$200. Along with a frame-ready share certificate, shareholders receive other membership benefits such as invitations to events, publications, and discounts. For more information about Library Company membership, visit <http://www.librarycompany.org/development/membership.htm>.

How can I help support the Library Company?

The Library Company has been connecting readers and rare books since 1731. With your help, our collection will continue to inspire, educate, and bring to light the relevance of early American history through our policy of free public access. To find out more about the many options for supporting the Library Company, please visit <http://www.librarycompany.org/development/basics.htm> or call Christina Deemer at (215) 546-3181 ext. 118.