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The Library Company of Philadelphia Receives Award from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to Support Scholarship in Early African American History Mellon Scholars Program Will Promote Diversity within Academic History

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania—April 17, 2013—The Library Company of Philadelphia was awarded a \$425,000 grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to strengthen the field of Early African American History over the next four years. “By encouraging expanded scholarship in African American History in the period before 1900 and by building bridges to young underrepresented scholars and others, the Mellon Scholars Program will build on our historic strengths in African American History to make an enduring contribution to the field,” says Library Company Director John Van Horne.

Designed to support scholars who lack traditional professional resources, the Mellon Scholars Program will combine internships, summer research workshops, and fellowships with ongoing community-building and outreach initiatives. As Program in African American History Director Erica Armstrong Dunbar explains, “the program aims to nurture and support the progress of promising scholars of Early African American History from their final undergraduate year through the duration of their careers of substantial scholarly contribution.”

The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation seeks to “build, strengthen and sustain institutions and their core capacities.” In the area of Higher Education and Scholarship—as in all other areas of the foundation’s grant-making activity—the foundation develops thoughtful, long-term collaborations with leaders in the field. The Library Company has previously been the recipient of numerous Mellon Foundation grants supporting the development of essential programs and initiatives.

Library Company Program in African American History

The Library Company houses the nation’s most important collection of African American literature and history before 1900. Comprising more than 13,000 titles and 1,200 images from the mid-16th to the late-19th centuries, the African Americana holdings include books, pamphlets, newspapers, periodicals, broadsides, and graphics documenting the Western discovery and exploitation of Africa; the rise of both slavery and antislavery movements in the new world; the development of racial thought and racism; descriptions of African American life, slave and free, throughout the Americas; slavery and race in fiction and drama; and the printed works of African American individuals and organizations.

The Program in African American History was created in 2007 with the support of the Albert M. Greenfield Foundation to formalize the Library Company’s pioneering contributions to the promotion of the scholarly study of African American history before 1900 and the dissemination of the scholarship produced to an engaged public. With incomparable collections, a stellar reputation in the world of research libraries, a distinguished network of fellowship alumni and advisors, and institutional relationships with a diverse range of educational and cultural institutions, the Library Company is uniquely placed to advance understanding of the lives of people of African descent living in the Americas from the 17th through the 19th centuries.

The Library Company of Philadelphia

The Library Company of Philadelphia is an independent research library specializing in American history and culture from the 17th through the 19th centuries. Founded in 1731 by Benjamin Franklin, the Library Company is America's oldest cultural institution and served as the Library of Congress from the Revolutionary War to 1800. The Library Company was the largest public library in America until the Civil War and includes the extensive personal libraries of such prominent early American bibliophiles such as James Logan. Open to the public free of charge, the Library Company houses an extensive collection of rare books, manuscripts, broadsides, ephemera, prints, photographs, and works of art, and the second largest holding of early American imprints. Particular strengths of the collection include economic history, women's history, African American history, history of medicine, history of philanthropy, and visual culture. To find out more, please visit www.librarycompany.org.

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