

## The Library Company of Philadelphia Backgrounder

- The Library Company of Philadelphia is a public, member-supported, independent research library. Its collections document every aspect of the history and background of American culture from the colonial period to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.
- The Library Company holds a unique place in history. It was founded in 1731 by Benjamin Franklin and a group of his fiends as a subscription library, making it not only the first lending library on this side of the Atlantic, but also this country's oldest cultural institution.
- Throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, The Library Company actively collected the latest American, British and European books, periodicals, pamphlets and prints reflecting the varied interests of its learned and cosmopolitan clientele. The collection remains a dynamic one, continually augmented by gifts and purchases.
- The Library Company is open to the public free of charge. Its collections are used by a wide spectrum of researchers from high-schools students to well-established scholars.
- The Library Company actively interprets and provides access to its collections in a variety of ways. Exhibitions are mounted regularly, and printed exhibition catalogues are further guides to the collections. Public programs, including colloquia and lectures, are offered throughout the year.
- The Library Company is a consortium member of the Benjamin Franklin Tercentenary, the non-profit organization established to mark the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Benjamin Franklin's birth (1706-2006). Items from The Library Company's collection are currently traveling the world with the exhibition *Benjamin Franklin: In Search of a Better World*, which debuted in Philadelphia in December 2005.
- Running through December 22, 2006, The Library Company presents the exhibition, Benjamin Franklin, Writer and Printer which takes a fresh look at Franklin's dual relationship to the book as printer and author. The centerpiece of the Library Company's 275<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration, the exhibition is curated by Librarian James Green and University of Pennsylvania English Professor Peter Stallybrass.
- The Library Company is an active participant in the cultural community. It is a member of the Research Libraries Group (RLG) and one of the founding members of the Independent Research Libraries Association (IRLA), the McNeil Center for Early American Studies, and the Philadelphia Area Consortium of Special Collections Libraries (PACSCL).
- The Library Company is located at 1314 Locust Street in Philadelphia and more information can be found online at [www.librarycompany.org](http://www.librarycompany.org).

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