

## FACT SHEET

### Purpose

- The Library Company of Philadelphia is a nonprofit, independent research library with collections documenting every aspect of the history and background of American culture from the colonial period to the Civil War. A rare book collection of national importance, its holdings number more than 500,000 books, over 75,000 graphics, and 160,000 manuscripts.

### History

- The Library Company was founded in 1731 by Benjamin Franklin and fifty other Philadelphians as a subscription library. It is the only major colonial American library that survives virtually intact.
- The Library Company received its charter from the Proprietors of Pennsylvania—the brothers John, Thomas, and Richard Penn—on March 25, 1742.
- When the Continental Congress, the Constitutional Convention, and the United States Congress met in Philadelphia from 1774 to 1800, the Library Company was the *de facto* Library of Congress.
- The Library Company was the largest public library in North America through the middle of the nineteenth century.

### Facts

- The Library Company has an unparalleled collection of primary research materials. The following subjects receive particular attention: Afro-Americana; American science, technology, architecture, agriculture, natural history, education, philanthropy, economy and medicine; German-Americana; American Judaica; Philadelphia-area history; the history of printing, book collecting, and reading; the women's rights movement; household and family life; and printmaking, mapmaking, and photography in Philadelphia.
- As Benjamin Franklin's friends did 270 years ago, Library Company memberships may be purchased. Call (215) 546-3181 for more information.
- The Library Company highlights its collections through interpretive public exhibits and publications. *The Hook and the Book: The Emergence of Crochet and Knitting in American Popular Culture, 1840-1876* will be on view from January 22, 2001 until September 28, 2001.
- The Library Company is free and open to the public from 9 a.m. until 4:45 p.m., Monday through Friday. For more information, visit our webpage: [www.librarycompany.org](http://www.librarycompany.org)

### Contacts

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