

TRUSTEES OF THE PUBLIC LIBRARY OF THE CITY OF BOSTON

Meeting of the Trustees Special Collections Committee Wednesday, February 2, 2022, at 8:30 a.m. Held via Zoom

MINUTES

A meeting of the Boston Public Library Trustees Special Collections Committee held virtually on Wednesday, February 2, 2022, via Zoom at 8:30 a.m.

Present at the meeting included: Committee Chair Ben Bradlee, Committee Vice Chair K. Matthew Dames and Committee members: Jabari Asim, Joe Berman, Juan Enriquez, Jeff Hawkins, Lillie Johnson, Alan Leventhal, and President David Leonard. Committee member Grace Fey was absent.

Also, present were Boston Public Library staff including Beth Prindle, Head of Special Collections and Clerk of the Board Pamela Carver, Chair of the Board Priscilla Douglas, and members of the public.

Mr. Ben Bradlee presiding called the Meeting of the Trustees Special Collections Committee (“Committee”) to order at 8:36 a.m. The Committee Chair read the welcoming reaffirmation statement of the Trustees. A roll call was taken and determined there was a quorum. Everyone was reminded that the meeting was being recorded and to sign up for Public Comment.

The first matter of business was approval of meeting minutes of December 15, 2021. With no comments or edits, the minutes were approved via a roll call vote.

Mr. Bradlee congratulated Committee member Alan Leventhal on his impending appointment to Ambassador to Denmark. Mr. Leventhal thanked them all for their support. He noted if his appointment was finalized, he would have to step down from serving on the Committee.

Mr. Bradlee read the Draft Special Collections Charter and Principles for review and discussion. The Committee offered a few edits for better clarity around the affiliate partnerships. A revised charter would be presented for the Committee to accept at the next meeting.

Next, Beth Prindle, Head of Special Collections, gave updates on the Rare Books renovation. She noted that seven miles of shelving was nearly complete. She explained that each item had to be tracked and barcoded to a shelf. She congratulated her team for their diligent work making this process run seamlessly. The environmental systems would be tested to ensure they were responding appropriately. They were on track to open to later this year and dates would be proposed as they neared completion.

Ms. Prindle continued by noting a few key staff members were hired. Kathleen Monahan has been recently hired as Special Collections Public Services Librarian. One of Kathleen’s primary responsibilities will be to establish the public service model for the new special collections reading room and to oversee implementation of the technology of the new materials tracking system Aeon.

Ms. Prindle would be offering tours to key stakeholders to view the space in the coming months.

Mr. Leonard noted that the City Council created a commission to celebrate some exciting upcoming anniversaries. There were forty-five members, and the BPL President was specifically requested to serve on this commission. He was thrilled to be a part of this and participate in telling the BPL stories to bring our collections alive.

Mr. Leonard referred to item C on the agenda of the Leventhal Map and Education Center’s (“LMEC”) report. He explained there was a 10-year agreement with the LMEC and appreciate and experience them

as a department within the Central Library. He introduced their President, Garrett Dash Nelson and Emily Bowe, Assistant Director.

Mr. Nelson noted he would review what they have in the Center but also some of the key work they do that point in the direction of the Special Collections and the future.

The LMEC began in 2004 inspired by the collecting and philanthropy of Norman B. Leventhal which led to an independent map center in 2007 and the signed ten-year MOU with the library in 2019.

The center employs eight full time staff and educators. It has an independent Board of Directors, a Board of Review, and an Education Committee. Their operating budget runs off an endowment set up by its namesake, Norman B. Leventhal. One third of it comes from self-driven fundraising efforts and other funding comes from grants, contributions, and joint fund raising with the BPL Fund.

Mr. Nelson clarified that the acquired maps in the collection are the possession of the BPL and not the LMEC. He explained the various maps in the collection and where they came from including some from digitized collections available through our digital partners.

Mr. Nelson reviewed the ways in which the Map Center is used to support research and education. (Noting the lesson plans that they teach for educators in the K-12 classrooms).

They engage the public via their exhibits and programs. Their gallery is in the McKim Building and the next exhibit would be opening in mid-March. Mr. Nelson noted that they were rethinking how to teach and exhibit in a post pandemic world.

The Committee had an engaging discussion asking questions about the LMEC. Mr. Leventhal noted that when the public thinks of the LMEC, they think of the Library. The BPL's success reflects on them and vice versa.

Mr. Bradlee asked if there was any New Business and Public comment for which there was none. With no further discussion, the meeting adjourned at 9:53 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Pamela R. Carver, Clerk of the Board

Boston Public Library
Special Collections Committee Charter

BPL Mission Statement: “The Boston Public Library provides educational and cultural enrichment, free to all, for the residents of Boston, Massachusetts and beyond, through its collections, services, programs, and spaces.”

Composition: Individuals from the community at large, the President of the BPL and Trustees or designee will serve on the Special Collections Committee consistent with our goal of increasing governance transparency and the breadth of citizen input. The appointment of committee members and the selection of committee Chair and Vice Chair are made by the Chair of the Board. The President of the Library will be a voting member of the committee. Additional staff roles will be appointed as non-voting ex-officio members.

Purpose:

1. To advocate for BPL’s special collections, their long-term care and activation and for their centrality in the execution of the BPL’s overall mission.
2. To review and advise on all relevant policies that affect stewardship of and access to special collections.
3. To receive reports on and recommendations for issues affecting special collections and comment as appropriate.
4. To work to foster and enhance alignment between special collections, library services, and the needs of BPL’s communities of users.
5. To support and promote greater access to and engagement with special collections in accordance with approved BPL strategy.
6. Provide recommendations to the Board of Trustees on special collections matters requiring full board approval.
7. To advise of potential new funding and/or partnership opportunities in support of special collections stewardship and outreach.
8. To acknowledge and foster affiliate and strategic partnership relationships that have a focus on advancing the library’s priorities for and work with Special Collections.
9. To support the development of a long-range strategic plan for the Special Collections Departments, consistent with the library’s overall strategic planning documents and processes.
10. To advocate for and support capital project initiatives in service of the Special Collections.

Process requirements:

The Committee shall report at least once annually to the Board of Trustees on its activities.

The work of the Committee is intended to guide the Library’s Special Collections work and related activities only in matters of governance, policy, and strategy.