

TRUSTEES OF THE PUBLIC LIBRARY OF THE CITY OF BOSTON

Meeting of the Trustees Special Collections Committee Wednesday, November 8, 2023, at 8:30 a.m. Via Zoom

DRAFT MINUTES

A meeting of the Boston Public Library Trustees Special Collections Committee was held on Wednesday November 8, 2023 at 8:30 a.m. Via Zoom.

Present at the meeting included: Committee Co-Chairs Joe Berman and Elliot B. Davis. Also, Committee members: Ben Bradlee, Charles Cooney, Juan Enriquez, Lillie Johnson, David Leonard, and Beth Prindle. Committee members Jeff Hawkins and K. Matthew Dames were absent.

Also, present were Clerk of the Board, Pamela Carver, Chair Priscilla H. Douglas, BPL staff, and members of the public.

Mr. Joe Berman and Ms. Elliot B. Davis presiding called the Meeting of the Trustees Special Collections Committee (“Committee”) to order at 8:31 a.m. The EDI statement was read. Roll call was taken and determined there was a quorum. Everyone was reminded that the meeting was being recorded and how to sign up for public comment.

The first matter of business was approval of meeting minutes of November 8, 2023. With no comments or edits, the minutes were approved.

Ms. Davis reviewed the upcoming meeting schedule for February and April 2024 noting that the meetings will only be for 75 minutes moving forward.

Next, Ms. Davis introduced Beth Prindle to review the overview of the Special Collections Department.

Ms. Prindle, Director of Research and Special Collections reviewed her division. The departments included: Archives, Arts (prints, photos, fine arts, music), Conservation & Preservation, Rare Books and Manuscripts, and maps (Leventhal Map & Education Center “LMEC”).

The Archives Department was the newest team which is comprised of four staff members. They manage groups of over 500 named collections stored throughout the institution, across the spaces and buildings.

The Arts department contains over 130,000 prints and drawings and over 1.5 million photographs. There are over 100,000 music scores and 150,000 books, manuscripts, archives, and correspondence related to music.

They are actively looking to hire a Curator of Prints and hope to have the position filled by the end of the calendar year.

Ms. Prindle noted that the BPL holds museum quality collections, but they are part of the library’s working collections and our access to these pieces can vary. We look at them as teaching collections.

The Conservation and Preservation team collaborates with BPL curators, archivists, librarians, facilities staff, and others to identify sustainable actions for the long-term care of collections. Made up of a staff of five members, they have to balance managing the reading room as well.

The Rare Books and manuscripts Department is made up of seven staff. They are housed in the \$19 Million renovation. Led by Jay Moschella, their area is equivalent to seven miles of collections. They operate this space with careful tracking with a bar code system. Houses approximately 235,000 books and hundreds of thousands of manuscripts and archival materials.

Prindle reviewed the LMEC who steward the library's map collection. It is a private/public partnership. They steward the BPL collection of over 200,000 maps, 5,000 atlases, and other cartographic materials through exhibitions, programs, and a website of digitized maps.

The acquisition process determines how items are brought into our collections by considering their enduring value. All collecting efforts were on hold during the recent renovation. This allowed us to do much needed inventory efforts. Which we did not have the capacity for prior. There were sixteen staff who were not part of our team until the last couple of years. She reviewed a snapshot of several new acquisitions and the open houses that highlight various collections.

Ms. Prindle noted the importance of understanding what our peers are collecting. We don't have to collect the same things we have finite capacity for, and we can collaborate. Institutions choose their niches.

The Committee had a discussion regarding Ms. Prindle's presentation. It was noted that the committee will offer synergy to the Special Collections department. The Committee will be stakeholders in the strategic planning process to examine what it means to be a modern-day urban library.

Next, they reviewed the Committee Charter and Role. The purpose was shown along with outlining the committee responsibilities and engagement. They opened up for discussion.

They suggested adding the word "digital" under formats. They noted their approval of the three activities mentioned in the purpose which show the legs of work: stewarding, discovery, and outreach efforts.

They asked the Clerk to circulate the revised charter to the Committee prior to the next meeting.

Elliot Davis reviewed the year ahead for the committee. Year one 2023-2024 would focus on Collection Development Policy update, updates on the strategic planning process, and the committee composition. Years two and three will focus on the McKim Capital Project updates and related Special Collections Committee priorities as well as updates on acquisitions and other initiatives.

Ms. Berman called for any New Business. Mr. Leonard noted that the intention of one of the upcoming meetings would be to spend them with some physical acquisitions.

Ms. Douglas thanked Ben Bradlee for his service as Chair of the committee. She noted it will now be co-chaired by Joe Berman and Elliot Davis. She welcomed the new trustee, Porsha Olayiwola as the newest member of the committee. She noted the upcoming LMEC exhibit: Heaven and Earth.

There was no public comment. With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:37am.

Respectfully Submitted,

Pamela R. Carver, Clerk of the Board

