

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

SPECIAL COLLECTIONS COMMITTEE CHARTER (DRAFT)

Purpose

The Special Collections Committee serves in an advisory capacity for a variety of matters, including the development, stewardship, and promotion of the Boston Public Library's exceptional Special Collections. These rare and culturally significant materials—collected from the earliest years of the library to present day—span a wide variety of periods, subjects and formats, including rare books, manuscripts, maps, archives, prints, photographs, music, works of art, and digital materials.

As a public institution, the Boston Public Library holds its Special Collections in public trust. One of the primary roles of this Committee is to bring broader public awareness to the activities and priorities within Special Collections. This will be achieved through regular reports on collection development, access and outreach efforts, major projects, stewardship work, support in building key collaborations and other initiatives as appropriate. Committee members are asked to advise on the library's ongoing strategic initiatives and priorities for Special Collections. They support and promote, these efforts among affiliate groups, external stakeholders, community organizations, and the broader public with the goal of aligning and leveraging advocacy for Special Collections to amplify the BPL's larger institutional mission, services, and strategic priorities.

Committee Composition

Library Trustees, individuals from the library and cultural heritage fields, representatives of library affiliate groups, members of the community at large, the President of the BPL, and the Director of Research & Special Collections serve on the Special Collections Committee.

Committee Responsibilities

- Offer community perspectives and input on relevant policies, projects, and processes that affect stewardship of and access to Special Collections.
- Provide recommendations to the BPL Board of Trustees on Special Collections matters requiring Board approval.
- Review regular reports on new acquisitions, initiatives, accomplishments, and strategic goals for Special Collections in conjunction with the overall BPL strategic priorities.
- Build awareness and foster connections among relevant local, peer, and philanthropic communities for greater support of the library's ongoing Special Collections stewardship, discovery, and outreach efforts.

Committee Engagement

The Committee shall meet three times annually and report annually to the Board of Trustees on its activities and progress toward goals supporting BPL's strategic priorities.

Collection Development Policy

DRAFT Version 6

Updated 3 April 2024

Special Collections Committee (4/11 mtg)

Introduction & Purpose

The Boston Public Library (BPL) is a department of the City of Boston and serves as the Library for the Commonwealth. The BPL collects physical and digital items that meet the educational, informational, recreational, cultural, and research needs of our users. We provide free access to collections and services to all Massachusetts communities and access to resources for millions more users online.

This Collection Development Policy defines our goals and principles for collection development for both library staff and the public. It guides staff in maintaining our collections and making responsible decisions when acquiring new materials. It also provides transparency to the public about the criteria we use in acquiring materials and how we make materials accessible.

This policy is informed by the BPL's institutional mission, racial equity commitments, and professional guidelines and ethics. This is a living document and will be reviewed regularly to ensure that it reflects up-to-date collection practices and concerns and the evolving needs of our user communities.

2 Collection Scope

The Boston Public Library holds extensive collections reflecting a wide diversity of subjects, cultures, geographic locations, time periods, and languages in both physical and digital formats. Although most resources are print based (books, periodicals, newspapers, and other published material), significant collections in other formats include manuscripts, photographs, archival collections, microform, works of art, maps, architectural drawings, sheet music, audiovisual material, sculpture, and other objects.

Our collections fall into three general categories:

- **Circulating:** Materials of high interest and popular demand to current user communities. These collections are easily replaced if lost or damaged and are durable enough to be used outside of library spaces. This category can include (but is not limited to) print books, periodicals, and audiovisual materials for all ages, across multiple languages.
- **Research:** Materials of interest to current and future research communities. These collections are accessed in designated library spaces due to their specialized content, replacement cost, limited availability, age, and/or format requirements. Research collections also include materials acquired through special agreements or partnerships (such as the Federal Depository Library Program).
- **Special:** Materials of rare, distinctive, and enduring value. These collections require mediated access in designated library spaces due to their cultural, artistic, and/or

historical significance; fragility; preservation needs; rarity; and/or uniqueness.

There may be overlap between materials collected and maintained within each category. As materials age, the category an item falls under may change due to intended use, fragility, rarity, and uniqueness of the material.

These collecting areas are supplemented with digital collections, which are licensed and/or hosted by third party vendors. These collections have their own collection development policies, which may change over time.

3 Goals & Guiding Principles

A. Our collections are for everyone.

We center public access in all collection development decisions. Our materials are available to all people regardless of their age, home language, ability, income level, education, race, sexuality, gender, nationality, religion, immigration status, or other identity categories.

B. We collect a wide variety of materials.

Our collections promote personal and scholarly growth through literacy, academic support, research, intellectual curiosity, career and job-related skills, creative and artistic pursuits, and the love and joy of reading and learning. We provide materials in formats and languages which span reading levels, abilities, and literacy skills. In support of this work, we purposefully collect material from various vendors, publishers, authors, creators, and collectors.

C. Our collection work centers equitable, diverse, and inclusive practices.

We commit to building collections that represent the diversity among and within our communities of users. Choosing what materials to collect is an exercise of power. As a historically white institution, we acknowledge the biases of the library profession. We recognize that the gaps and erasures present in historical records and publishing industries filter into library collections. To address these gaps, we strive to center the voices, histories, and lived experiences of historically marginalized groups in our selection of new materials.

D. We provide access to free and uncensored information.

We are responsible for ensuring all users have access to materials in our collection. We oppose attempts by individuals or groups to censor items. No materials will be excluded from BPL collections because of the origin, background, or viewpoint of those contributing to their creation.

E. All collection development decisions consider existing resources and ongoing needs.

We make acquisition and maintenance decisions that are consistent with budget allocations, strategic priorities, collection objectives, storage and space requirements, staff capacity, access needs, preservation considerations, and ongoing maintenance costs

and responsibilities. When we commit to the responsibility of owning and maintaining collections, we must ensure that resources are used wisely to serve and benefit the public.

F. Our collections are accessible, findable, and shared.

We prioritize cataloging, processing, and describing existing and future library collections to facilitate public discovery. We enhance public access to our extensive research and special collections materials by supporting a robust digitization program. We also share materials with users around the world by participating in interlibrary lending networks.

G. Patron and collection needs will continue to grow and evolve.

As we maintain the holdings that represent our past, we also continue to look to the future. We carefully evaluate new formats, modes of access, and subject matter as the needs of our communities evolve.

4 Collecting Criteria

Acquisition of collection materials is carefully evaluated due to the considerable investment of time, funding, space, staffing, and ongoing maintenance needs. Criteria for acquisition of all collections may include any of the following:

- Community interests, demand, and suggestions
- Alignment with the BPL’s mission, initiatives, and strategic plan
- Representation by and of diverse individuals and groups (including racial, ethnic, linguistic, religious, national, gender, and sexual identities; disability; veteran status; and education level)
- Significance and relationship to the City of Boston and Commonwealth of Massachusetts
- Representation of varied opinions and viewpoints
- Authority and qualifications of the creator(s), publisher(s), or producer(s)
- High-interest materials outside of mainstream publishing and reviewing journals
- Price and availability
- Anticipated viability and/or longevity of the format

For materials in languages other than English, additional criteria for acquisition include:

- Languages other than English most frequently spoken in the City of Boston
- Changing demographics and informational needs of Boston residents
- Patron and community demand
- Availability of titles for purchase

For Research and Special Collections, additional criteria for acquisition include:

- Historical, cultural, and/or artistic significance
- Connection to existing collecting areas at BPL to enhance their value in supporting research, learning, education, and exhibition
- Provenance, custodial history, and adherence to ethical collecting standards

- Freedom from permanent or overly prohibitive restrictions on public access or use
- Ongoing costs, including processing, conservation, reformatting, storage, and digitization
- Confirmation that the acquisition will not further ongoing oppression of the communities in which it was created, even when legally purchased or donated
- Current physical condition and preservation needs to support long-term public access

We encourage the public to suggest items and subjects to be considered for the collection.

5 Intellectual Freedom & Requests for Reconsideration

We respect the freedom of information for our users and follow the principles in the American Library Association's *Library Bill of Rights*, *Freedom to Read*, and *Freedom to View* statements.

We oppose attempts by individuals or groups to censor items in our collection. No materials will be excluded from BPL collections because of the origin, background, or viewpoint of those contributing to their creation. Individuals should form their own opinions about resources they choose to read, view, listen to, or otherwise access, and the BPL supports this by providing unrestricted access to materials when possible. Responsibility for the reading choices of minors' rests with their parents or legal guardians.

Library collections will be organized, marked, and maintained to help users discover the materials they seek. We will not use any system of coding, rating, or labeling to identify or segregate materials to limit discovery or access. Our selection of materials does not mean we endorse the contents or views expressed in those materials.

As a longstanding collecting institution, our holdings include historical collections that reflect the attitudes, ideas, and norms of the era and culture in which they were created or collected. As such, some materials and item descriptions contain imagery, language, or opinions that may be offensive or harmful to marginalized communities. We make these materials available because access to primary source materials is uniquely valuable to the research community at large.

We recognize that some Massachusetts residents may question the inclusion of materials in our collection. Individuals may submit a [Request for Reconsideration](#) of library materials. A written response explaining the decision to remove or retain the title in question will be provided to the requestor. No titles will be removed from the library collection while they are reviewed. We reserve the right to limit the number of times a title will be reconsidered within a designated time frame.

6 Donations & Gifts

In addition to purchase, additions to our collections may be made by gift, bequest, transfer, or exchange. Due to resource constraints and costs associated with processing additions, we can only accept a limited number of donations. All potential donations are reviewed on a case-by-case basis through the acquisition evaluation process, and all accepted donations must conform to the procedures and practices governing collection acquisitions in each collecting area.

Unsolicited donations sent to the library without prior approval by BPL staff are considered legally transferred to the BPL. We do not take responsibility for unsolicited donations and cannot guarantee that they will be added to the collection without restriction. Any unsolicited donations sent to us for consideration will not be returned to the donor and may be disposed of if we deem it appropriate.

We do not provide valuation on donated materials.

7 Collection Maintenance

We are committed to developing and maintaining collections that are relevant, accessible, engaging, and inclusive. Library materials are continuously reviewed and assessed for condition, age, accuracy, and relevance to library users. Factors considered when maintaining collections include changing community needs, collection demand, collecting scope, collection size, storage requirements, industry standards, donor agreements and other legal stipulations, and strategic priorities.

The acquisition of materials does not commit us to keep them in perpetuity. The periodic withdrawal of materials is necessary to allow us to add new items to the collection. These decisions are made carefully, follow established procedures, and are handled in accordance with applicable donor agreements.

8 Privacy considerations

As a public agency, we are bound by Massachusetts Public Records Law (G.L. c. 66, § 10). Public records include the contents of collections as well as records related to acquisitions. These, and other internal records, may be subject to the Freedom of Information Act (5 U.S.C. § 552) and the Massachusetts Public Records Law (M.G.L. c. 66, § 10).

We contract with third-party vendors to provide digital content and collections. These platforms have their own privacy policies and confidentiality practices. Lack of a publicly available privacy policy or failure to handle patron information in accordance with BPL policy may result in the cancellation of those vendors' services.

Donors of archives, manuscripts, and other original materials are responsible for reviewing items for sensitive or restricted information prior to donation and should consider their obligations towards the privacy of associated individuals.

9 Roles & Responsibilities

The overall responsibility for the Boston Public Library's collection rests with the Library President as authorized by the Library's Board of Trustees. Responsibility for the evaluation, selection, documentation, care, and provision of access of new library materials is delegated to experienced and qualified staff members.