



**The American Antiquarian Society**  
Seeks nominations and applications for the position of:  
**President**

*"The past is never dead. It's not even past."*  
— William Faulkner

**The Role of President**

The primary responsibilities of the President of the American Antiquarian Society (AAS) are to serve as the principal representative, spokesperson, and executive for the organization. The President provides communication and outreach to public and inter-organizational strategic partners; exercises leadership in achieving a shared vision with the Council and staff; develops and implements, in consultation with the council and staff, the overall strategic direction of the AAS; and supports the financial sustainability of the Society through fundraising and sound financial management. The President possesses oversight of all AAS operations.

**Responsibilities and Authority**

- The President is the chief executive officer of the Society. Under the authority of the Council, the President assumes responsibility for the organization's fidelity to its mission.
- The President reports to the chairman of the Council and implements policies established by the Council.
- The President is a voting member of the Council and works in partnership with the Council to advance the work of the Society and to protect and enhance the collections upon which that work is based.
- The President guides the Society in achieving its financial objectives.
- The President directs the operations and administers the facilities of the Society, and manages all staff and volunteers.

## **Key responsibilities of the president include:**

### **Promoting the Society**

- Representing and promoting the Society, its collections, programs, and goals, to its various constituencies – from scholars and collectors to the general public.
- Maintaining and enhancing relationships with the Society’s elected members and increasing their engagement with and support of the Society’s work.
- Establishing and maintaining beneficial relationships with advisors, funders, peer institutions, scholarly and research organizations, community groups, and relevant government agencies.
- Expanding and diversifying the audience for AAS programs. Recruiting and sustaining excellent and diverse communities of fellows, interns, and researchers.

### **Setting strategic direction**

- Managing internal and external assessment of the Society’s collections, programs, and services to maintain and improve their quality and effectiveness.
- Guiding the Society through the financial, political, and technological challenges confronting research libraries and learned societies.
- Providing leadership, with the Council and staff, in planning the long-range advancement of the Society’s mission.
- Assuring that the Society makes consistent and timely progress in the accomplishment of its stated goals and objectives.

### **Raising funds**

- Working actively with staff and Councilors to support all aspects of fundraising, including sustaining the current funding base, building new national development relationships, and the solicitation and stewardship of gifts and grants.
- The AAS is currently completing a \$20mm capital campaign. The next President will likely help to determine the timing, scale, and focus of the AAS’s next campaign.

### **Managing the staff**

- Ensuring excellent human resource practices with regular performance evaluations, open avenues of communication, and clear plans for succession.
- Encouraging staff and volunteer development and education.
- Maintaining a climate that attracts, keeps, and motivates a diverse and talented staff.

### **Managing the finances**

- Working with staff, the Finance Committee, and the Council to prepare the annual budget and seeing that the organization operates within budget guidelines and maintains sound financial practices.
- Securing the gifts and program revenues that help the Society to carry out its work.

### **Supporting the work of the council**

- Seeing that the Council is kept fully informed, on a timely basis, about the assets, activities, and condition of the Society and major developments, including opportunities and any potential risks.
- Attending all meetings of the Council and, when possible, its committees, and providing good counsel in its deliberations.
- Developing policy and planning recommendations for consideration and action by the Council and committees.
- Presenting a report to the members on the Society's activities and plans at each annual and semiannual meeting.
- Creating (with other officers, as appropriate) and maintaining official records and documents of the Society, and ensuring compliance with federal, state and local regulations.
- Assisting in the selection, orientation, and evaluation of Councilors.
- Assisting in the cultivation, selection, and orientation of new members of the Society.

## **Desired Qualities and Attributes**

To be most successful, the next President will demonstrate or possess many of the following:

- A strong record leading, inspiring, and empowering an organization or team with multiple constituencies including staff, members, institutional partners, and government agencies;
- A deep commitment to pre-twentieth-century American history with the ability to be a vigorous advocate for the relevance of the historical period and the vital importance of its primary sources;
- Experience building and maintaining new, diverse audiences and constituencies;
- Exceptional written and verbal communication and interpersonal skills;
- Success garnering grants and gifts from public and private sources, individuals, corporations, and foundations;
- A record of achievement in furthering diversity, equity, and inclusion;
- Strong budget management acumen, including experience overseeing investments and diverse revenue streams;
- A transparent and accessible “roll-up-your-sleeves” leadership style, with the ability to resolve conflicts and maintain productive relationships;
- Highly collaborative and adept at building and managing productive external relationships and partnerships; and
- An impeccable reputation for integrity and the highest standards of ethical behavior.

## **Organizational Overview**

The American Antiquarian Society is both a learned society and a major independent research library. The AAS library houses the largest and most accessible collection of books, pamphlets, broadsides, newspapers, periodicals, sheet music, and graphic arts material printed from the colonial period through 1900 in what is now the United States, Canada, and the West Indies. The AAS collections also contain manuscripts and a substantial collection of secondary works, bibliographies, and other reference materials related to American history and culture before the twentieth century. The library contains more than two-thirds of all known imprints (including newspapers) created in America before 1821, making it the single greatest repository of such materials in the world. Additionally, the Society’s holdings of all American printed materials dating from 1821 through 1876 are among the strongest anywhere. The AAS

collection and reputation for scholarly collaboration attract historians, writers, and researchers from around the world.

As a learned society that elects members with distinction in a range of fields, AAS sponsors a broad range of programs for constituencies ranging from schoolchildren and their teachers through undergraduate and graduate students, postdoctoral scholars, creative and performing artists and writers, and the general public, and offers more than 40 fellowships annually on a competitive basis.

The Society was the recipient of the 2013 National Humanities Medal, the first independent research library to be so honored. The citation for the award says: To the “American Antiquarian Society . . . for safeguarding the American story. Through more than two centuries, the Society has amassed an unparalleled collection of historic American documents, served as a research center to scholars and students alike, and connected generations of Americans to their cultural heritage.”

AAS is headquartered in [Worcester, MA](#). New England’s second-largest city, Worcester has a rich history and is in the midst of a decade-long Renaissance. The city has been a New England cornerstone for more than two centuries. The roots of its European settlement date to 1673. Its inhabitants overthrew British rule in 1774, a year before the start of the American Revolution, and the case that rendered slavery unenforceable in Massachusetts was decided in Worcester in 1781. Today it is shaping a new legacy around modern-day revolutions in biotech, higher education, health care, and the arts. The city found its footing as a manufacturing giant and has since evolved into a hub for eclectic cultural offerings and dynamic professional opportunities, enriched by the presence of higher education institutions such as WPI, the College of the Holy Cross, Clark University, the University of Massachusetts Medical School, and Worcester State University.

## **Collections**

The AAS library contains approximately four million items, all housed in the Society’s home, Antiquarian Hall, in Worcester. The Society is the holder of record for all these items, always preserving the original artifacts even when digital facsimiles are created. Highlights of the AAS collection include:

- Printed materials from all 50 states, Canada, and the British West Indies, including 680,000 books and pamphlets.
- Approximately 60,000 books and pamphlets printed before 1821.
- The largest single collection of almanacs and yearbooks (15,000 titles) printed in the United States between the years 1656 and 1876, as well as almanacs from Canada, Mexico, and the West Indies.
- The finest collection anywhere of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century American newspapers—more than two million issues published throughout the United States, Canada, and the West Indies, taking up seven miles of shelves and including more than

- 20,000 bound volumes from more than 16,000 newspaper titles.
- A sheet music collection with 70,000 pieces of instrumental, vocal, secular, and religious music from American and European composers, along with more than 5,000 volumes of hymnals and other sacred music collections.
- A juvenile literature collection with approximately 24,000 titles, including works of both fiction and pedagogy as well as 1,500 titles published by the McLoughlin Brothers publishing firm (ca. 1850-1899).
- The largest collection of American cookbooks printed through 1860.
- More than 300,000 graphic arts and ephemera items including political cartoons, maps, lithographs, portraits, photographs, paintings, and all but two of Paul Revere's engravings.
- An ephemera collection that includes such diverse items as menus, broadsides, trade cards, watch papers, currency, valentines, merit awards, diplomas, tickets, playbills, and calendars.
- More than two million manuscript items in 1,500 separate collections, with principal strengths in four areas: American book publishing and collecting; New England diaries; papers of prominent early New Englanders; and papers and records of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Central Massachusetts families, voluntary associations, and businesses.

#### **Selected Rarities**

- A copy of *The Whole Booke of Psalmes* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1640), commonly referred to as the Bay Psalm Book, the first book printed in British North America.
- A manuscript poem by Phillis Wheatley, "To the University of Cambridge," 1767. Wheatley is considered the first African American woman to publish her work.
- The only surviving copy of *Pamela*, by Samuel Richardson, printed by Benjamin Franklin in 1742 and the first modern novel published in America.
- The only known copy of an 1804 political cartoon entitled *A Philosophic Cock*, which lampoons Thomas Jefferson for his affair with his slave Sally Hemings.
- Three copies of the *Daily Citizen* from Vicksburg, Mississippi, for July 2 and 4, 1863, all printed on the back of different pieces of wallpaper because of the paper shortage in the Southern states during the Civil War. Vicksburg succumbed to General Grant's northern army on July 4, 1863; this, and the battle of Gettysburg on the same day is considered the turning point of the war.
- A complete run of the *Cherokee Phoenix*, 1828-1834, the first newspaper published by Indigenous peoples in the United States.
- The first Bible published in North America, an edition printed by Reverend John Eliot in 1663 in the Algonquian language of the Natick Indians.
- A collection of more than thirty rare engravings of views, portraits, maps, and flora produced by students at the Lahainaluna Seminary on the island of Maui, 1834-1844.

## Research

AAS collections serve a worldwide community of scholars, teachers, historians, bibliographers, students, artists, and authors. Virtually any subject concerning pre-twentieth-century American history and culture can be investigated using AAS resources. Distinguished individuals who have produced award-winning works through research at AAS include Lisa Brooks, Christine DeLucia, Jennifer Anderson, Peter Wirzbicki, Dwight McBride, Jean O'Brien, Jessica Lepler, Daniel Rood, Bridget Ford, Emily Pawley, Melanie Kiechle, Ken Burns, Jill Lepore, David McCullough, Nathaniel Philbrick, Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, Alan Taylor, Gordon Wood, and the late Cindy Lobel.

Since 1972, the Society has provided fellowships for professional scholars and graduate students to conduct research in the AAS library. Since then, more than 1,000 fellows from around the world have come to AAS for periods of uninterrupted research lasting from one month to a year. In 1996, the Society added visiting fellowships for creative and performing artists and writers; since that time AAS has awarded more than 100 fellowships. Each year, the Society offers approximately 40 fellowships to academic and independent scholars and another five fellowships to creative and performing artists and writers.

AAS also offers the John B. Hench Post-Dissertation Fellowship for a recent PhD. recipient to spend a year at AAS revising their dissertation for publication. The Mellon Distinguished Scholar-in-Residence Fellowship provides funds for a senior scholar to spend an academic year at AAS pursuing research and acting as mentor to other scholars in residence. Mellon Distinguished Scholars have included Patricia Cline Cohen, John P. Demos, Robert A. Gross, David D. Hall, Karen Halttunen, James and Lois Horton, Karen Kupperman, and Margareta Lovell.

Hundreds of important works have been written from research carried out at AAS and many have been selected for major awards, including Pulitzer Prizes for Debby Applegate's *The Most Famous Man in America: The Biography of Henry Ward Beecher*, for Kenneth Silverman's biography *The Life and Times of Cotton Mather*, and for Alan Taylor's book, *William Cooper's Town: Power and Persuasion on the Frontier of the Early American Republic*. The same books by Silverman and Taylor won the Bancroft Prize as did John L. Brooke's *The Refiner's Fire: The Making of Mormon Cosmology, 1644-1844*, Jill Lepore's *The Name of War: King Philip's War and the Origins of American Identity*, and David Blight's *Race and Reunion: The Civil War and American Memory*. The filmmakers Laurie Kahn-Leavitt (*A Midwife's Tale*) and Katrina Brown (*Traces of the Trade*) are among the many artists whose work has been supported by AAS fellowships.

## Access to AAS Collections

The library is open to all serious researchers, free of charge, five days a week and until 7 p.m. on Wednesdays. On all legal holidays the library is closed. Complimentary public tours have

been held on Wednesdays at 3 p.m. in the past; suspended during recent construction, they will resume in 2020. AAS also has a robust social media presence.

The Society was an early pioneer in providing photographic reproductions of the materials in its collections. In 1955, AAS began working to microfilm nearly all the non-serial materials published in this country from 1639 to 1820. This series, entitled *Early American Imprints*, contains the full text of approximately 90,000 books, pamphlets, almanacs, and broadsides. Since then AAS has continued to partner with vendors to provide innovative digital resources that share its collections via other research libraries and institutions.

An acknowledged leader in working with partners to digitize its collections, the AAS has more than 12 million digitized pages of AAS content accessible to the public; 7,500 libraries around the globe subscribe to one or more of the Society's digital databases. These digital partnerships, once a considerable source of earned income for the Society, continue even as the income they generate is gradually tapering off. AAS also digitizes collection items for open access on its website and provides digitization on demand for a fee.

### **Programs**

The Society sponsors a wide range of symposiums, lectures, performances, workshops, seminars, and conferences on topics dealing with American history and culture in general as well as the history of printing, publishing, and reading in America.

Programs include:

- The Program in the History of the Book in American Culture (PHBAC), which began in 1983, sponsors scholarly activities including a series of annual lectures, workshops and seminars, conferences, publications, and residential fellowships. These center around the history and bibliography of printing, publication, and dissemination of books and other printed materials in the geographical areas that became the United States and Canada. The five-volume *A History of the Book in America* is a product of this program.
- The Center for Historic American Visual Culture (CHAViC), established in 2005, provides opportunities for educators to learn about American visual culture and resources, promotes awareness of AAS collections, and stimulates research and intellectual inquiry into American visual materials. CHAViC sponsors fellowships, exhibitions, conferences, seminars, and workshops.
- Every autumn semester, AAS sponsors an undergraduate seminar in American Studies. Students from five Worcester colleges participate in this course held at AAS, which is taught by a visiting professor.
- AAS also sponsors programs for the general public. These include lectures, dramatic presentations, musical concerts, and reading and discussion groups.

- The Society is committed to enhancing the quality of K-12 education by sponsoring teacher-training workshops and seminars. AAS also collaborates with educators to make primary source material from the collection usable in the classroom.
- The Society has been active as a publisher since its earliest years and continues to publish bibliographies and scholarly texts. Additionally, the Society currently co-sponsors the online journal *Common-place* ([commonplace.online](http://commonplace.online)) with the Omohundro Institute. *Commonplace.online* is a cross between a scholarly journal and a popular magazine about early American history and culture.

### **Current Operations**

The American Antiquarian Society is a private, nonprofit, tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization with an annual operating budget of \$5 million and an endowment of more than \$70 million. The Society is governed by a [Council](#) that currently numbers 16; Councilors appoint the president and oversee the Society's policies and programs. The [staff](#) currently numbers 45 full- and part-time employees. Income from the endowment supports approximately half of the annual operating budget. AAS therefore depends on contributions from its members, friends, foundations, and state and federal government agencies.

### **Membership**

AAS members—who currently number over one thousand individuals—are elected by their colleagues in recognition of their eminent works of scholarship, artistic endeavors, or public engagement in pre-twentieth-century American history and culture. Additionally, people are also elected for their broad support of cultural institutions, manifest interest in bibliographical and collecting matters, or distinction as community or national leaders in humanistic affairs. The membership includes scholars, educators, publishers, collectors, cultural administrators, civic leaders, journalists, writers, and filmmakers, as well as lay persons with an interest in the field of American history. Fifteen [presidents of the United States](#) have been members, and AAS members have been awarded over eighty [Pulitzer Prizes](#) and over sixty [Bancroft Prizes](#) for their work. Members have been elected from every region of our nation and from thirty-three foreign countries.

### **AAS Campus**

The Society is located in Worcester, Massachusetts, and possesses five buildings on a five-acre campus. Antiquarian Hall, the main library building at 185 Salisbury Street, was constructed in 1909 and extended in 1924, 1950, 1972, 2001, and 2019. This Palladian structure contains the library collection stored on 25 miles of shelving and a large-domed reading room for researchers. Antiquarian Hall also features Isaiah Thomas's original printing press "Old Number One," an extensive collection of Staffordshire pottery, and various other historic artifacts such as a vial of tea from the Boston Tea Party, Cotton Mather's childhood high chair, and John Hancock's desk with its secret compartments. Antiquarian Hall was designated a national

historic landmark in 1968 and is the anchoring structure of the Massachusetts Avenue Historic District.

Designed by leading library and museum architect Sam Anderson, renovations to our main building include our recently opened state-of-the-art conservation lab; a fully equipped media room to facilitate links to institutions and people around the nation and the world; and completely revamped climate control systems to protect our collections well into our third century. \$14 million of the nearly \$20 million raised was dedicated to the latter.

The Society also owns three buildings to house visiting scholars: Montvale Cottage on Montvale Avenue, 4 Regent Street, and Reese House at 9 Regent Street, named in memory of member and councilor Bill Reese. The 1906 Goddard-Daniels House on the corner of Salisbury Street and Park Avenue holds the offices of the president and other administrative staff as well as program meeting spaces.

### **Brief History of the Society**

Founded in 1812, AAS is the third-oldest historical society in the United States and the first to be national, rather than local or regional, in the scope of its collections and the residencies of its members. AAS's founder, the patriot-printer Isaiah Thomas, chose Worcester as home for the Society because it would be safe from the guns of British warships then threatening the American coast in the War of 1812.

Thomas (1749-1831) smuggled his press out of Boston before the British authorities could shut it down in 1775. He reestablished his newspaper, *The Massachusetts Spy*, in Worcester. In the first issue—the first item printed in Worcester—he recounted the battle of Lexington and Concord under a banner that proclaimed “Americans! Liberty or Death! Join or Die!”

After the Revolution, Thomas became the leading printer, editor, publisher, and bookseller in the United States enabling him to accumulate one of the largest fortunes in the country. Upon his retirement in 1802, Thomas began collecting the records of the nation he helped to create. His keen interest in material that described the lives and thoughts of common people led him to collect all forms of print. In his search for historical sources, he purchased the complete office files of many Revolutionary-era newspapers and amassed a large collection of printed ballads. These collections, including Thomas's own library of 8,000 volumes, form the nucleus of the present collection.

During much of the nineteenth century AAS was involved in a wide range of activities including archaeological excavations and the establishment of a museum. Starting in 1849 and for the next 160 years, the Society published a semiannual learned journal, entitled the *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*. By 1910, the Society had become a library exclusively, concentrating its efforts on preserving and collecting the printed record of early American culture. AAS thus abandoned active archaeological work and dispersed its museum collections to other institutions.

## Information for Candidates

Please send all nominations, inquiries, and expressions of interest, in confidence and electronically, to:



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*The Society has a policy of promoting inclusiveness and its staff, councilors, and volunteers reflect diversity in order to enrich its programmatic effectiveness. The Society takes meaningful steps to promote inclusiveness in its hiring, retention, promotion, councilor recruitment, and constituencies served. The American Antiquarian Society is an equal opportunity employer in accordance with applicable federal and state laws.*