



Annual Report of the Providence Athenæum

July 2022 - June 2023



2023 was a year when we saw the COVID-19 pandemic finally recede. The period between 2020 and 2022 was a period of constant adaptation at the institution. Thanks to the goodwill of our members, and the dedication of our board and staff, the Athenæum came through that difficult period stronger than ever. The library welcomed more members than it had ever served before, it invested greatly in the physical plant, and it dramatically expanded its programs and services.

After the desolate pandemic years, the Athenæum was once again filled with people. Our Visitor Center welcomed tens of thousands of guests. Members were finally able to see the staggering new additions to the library's collections, and hear from speakers that included a United States Senator, internationally best-selling authors, and world-class historians. Hundreds of new student members filled our alcoves. New partnerships brought new audiences to the Athenæum, and the place felt, once more, like the bustling community hub it has always been.

We ended the year with our seventh consecutive budget surplus, even as we expanded the staff, invested in our people, and cared for our beloved building. We tackled our most ambitious preservation project in decades - replacing our antiquated heating system and substantially tightening the building envelope. This project, while almost invisible to visitors, was long overdue, and it ensures the Athenæum will warmly welcome guests for decades to come.

We are deeply grateful to all our members and supporters who made this year possible, and for the dedicated work of our staff and board.

Thank you.

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*Resigned in FY23

FY22-23 Snapshot

53,453

*Patrons & visitors served
by the library*

2,002

Total memberships

PROGRAMS

216 adult events

9,304 adult event attendees

36 children's events

538 children's event attendees

38 building & collections tours

LIBRARY SERVICES

174,163 items in collection

1,325 acquisitions

24,918 total items circulated

6,726 digital items circulated

IN EARLY MAY 2023, THE ATHENÆUM CLOSED ITS DOORS TO BEGIN THE HEATING SYSTEM REPLACEMENT PROJECT, BUT CONTINUED TO OFFER CURBSIDE PICKUP OF MATERIALS. THE LIBRARY REOPENED TO MEMBERS IN A LIMITED CAPACITY IN JUNE.



Programs

9,304 people attended an Athenæum event this year, in which we welcomed Andrea Wulf, Robert Gross, Gordon Wood, Roosevelt Montás, Sheldon Whitehouse, Hanif Abdurraqib, Susan Orlean, Crystal Williams, and Nicole Eustace, among many others. The Athenæum offered more than a dozen reading groups on a broad range of topics, facilitated by excellent leaders from our communities.

Programs were curated by our Program Working Group, which consists of members of the Athenæum's staff, board, and the larger community, and its charge is to develop diverse, high-quality humanistic events that align with our mission: to enrich the mind, inspire the spirit, and elevate the public discourse.

Athenæum programs engage viewers from around the world, and were presented live at the Athenæum and available online via simulcast and archived recordings. Partnerships this year included the Providence Clemente Veterans Initiative, the John Carter Brown Library, Poetry Out Loud, the Public's Radio, and others.

After a two-year hiatus, children's programs resumed at the library and welcomed over 500 attendees. Offerings included weekly story times, the Little Pumpkins Halloween party, the Providence Children's Film Festival, craft kits, and more. Longtime member Sally Strachan donated the Madeline doll from the window of her home on Halsey Street, and Madeline will be a fixture in the Children's Library for years to come.

LEFT: Executive Director Matt Burriesci in conversation with Roosevelt Montás

Collections

The Athenæum presented five exhibits this year, including *Weird Providence* (August – September 2022); *The Susan Jaffe Tane Collection of Emerson & Thoreau* (September – December 2022); *Scraps of History* (January – February 2023); *Arsenic & Old Books* (March – April 2023); and *Timothy S. Philbrick: Studio Furniture Maker* (April 2023).

The library welcomed several notable items to the special collections, such as:

- *William Strickland's Lithographic Drawing of the Ancient Painted Ceiling in the Nave of Peterborough Cathedral*. Peterborough: published by the author, W. Strickland; London: George Bell; Cambridge: E. Meadows, 1849. [Hayden Fund]
- Seaweed album, c. 19th century. Scrapbook with specimens. [Hayden Fund]
- *An Appeal in Favor of that Class of Americans called Africans*, by Lydia Maria Child. New York: John S. Taylor, 1836. [Wallace Fund]
- *Houdini's Book of Magic and Party Pastimes*, selected by Houdini. New York: Stoll & Edwards, 1927. [Levin Fund]
- *Madeline's Christmas*, by Ludwig Bemelmans. New York: McCall's, 1956. [Levin Fund]

The Athenæum also conserved and restored six folios from the Providence Library Company. The library's disaster plan was updated, and staff were provided with additional training. Circulation declined this year (~8%), which is largely attributable to the closure related to the heating project.

LEFT: Exhibition poster for *Timothy S. Philbrick: Studio Furniture Maker*

TIMOTHY S. PHILBRICK STUDIO FURNITURE MAKER

LOANS FROM
DR. JOSEPH A. CHAZAN
CLAUDIA PHILBRICK

CO-CURATORS
PROF. R. TRIPP EVANS,
WHEATON COLLEGE
KATE WODEHOUSE,
THE PROVIDENCE ATHENÆUM

THE CHARLES & DEBORAH
PHILBRICK RARE BOOK ROOM
AT THE PROVIDENCE ATHENÆUM

APRIL 2023



Buildings & Grounds

Much of the year was dedicated to planning for and executing the replacement of our heating system. The Athenæum's single-zone gravity heating system was first installed in the 19th century, and its massive, gas-fired boiler was at least 50 years old. The engineers and contractors who investigated the system often had to consult ancient manuals to understand how it even functioned.

Although it was a durable marvel of engineering, the system had been in a state of failure for years, and its replacement was identified as our most urgent priority. The prohibitive cost of the project (nearly \$1 million) was only matched by the massive disruption its replacement entailed. Thick steel pipes, more than a century old, needed to be removed throughout the entire building. Many of these pipes were buried underground or hidden behind cyclopean blocks of granite that were impossible to remove. The chimney, which originally serviced a coal-fired furnace, jogged more than 20 feet at a 45-degree angle. Walls needed to come down, new pathways needed to be created, and additional electrical service needed to be installed to service modern equipment. The entire rare book area needed to be protected from floor to ceiling and its environmental conditions closely monitored throughout the summer.

And when it was over, it needed to appear as if nothing had changed.

In May and June, much of the interior of the building was entirely dismantled. Because we could have no open flames in the building, pipes needed to be sawed by hand and taken out in segments. Once cut, pipes had to be capped at both ends to prevent a century of sludge from damaging the floors, bookcases, and furnishings.

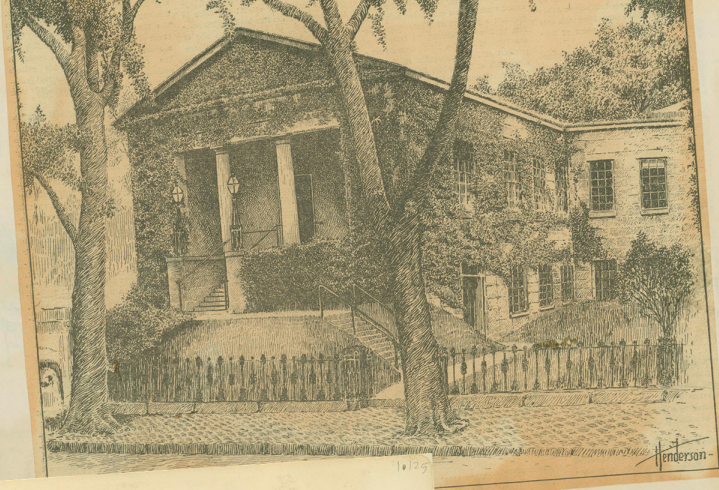
All through July and August, the new system was slowly installed, as pipefitters carefully threaded new pipes through stubbornly narrow cavities. Gradually, the system began to take shape and form. The millwork was repainted and replaced, and some of it was deliberately worn, as it had been from the start, so it would not draw undue attention to the changes that had been made. Next to a functional heating system, the preservation of the Athenæum's unique character was our highest priority.

Testing began in September, and the new system worked perfectly – and most importantly, quietly. For the first time in the Athenæum's history, we can now control the temperature at multiple points, and the building is serviced by a state-of-the-art hydronic heating system. It is much more efficient and sustainable, and the system is even redundant, with two small boilers shouldering the heating load for the building. A new glass vestibule was installed off the College Street entrance to tighten the building envelope and prevent heat loss. Modern radiators were installed in the Isham Wing, where master carpenters designed elegant casings to conceal their anachronistic look and feel. Walls were put back and repainted, the floors were refinished, and the Athenæum was as good as new.

We are so grateful for the patience of our members. This was an important project, and although disruptive, it was worth it.

RIGHT: Construction during the heating system project
FOLLOWING: Pages from recently digitized Athenæum scrapbooks





Feb. 1926. K.B. AC. MD. CBM. AM.
STAFF.
CLARA BOWRY
ANNIE S COGGESHALL (COOKE)
KATHARINE JP BURLINGAME
MINNIE E. JAVIES
HELEN JAY
Arlis L. MURKIE



The "Helen" of Edgar Allan Poe's Love and Song

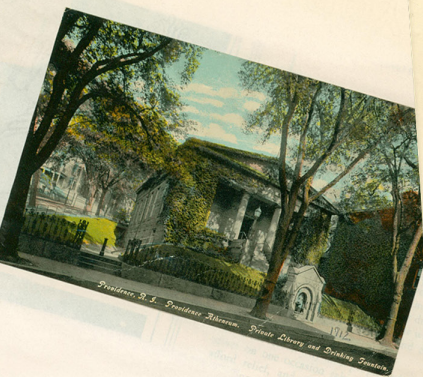
SARAH HELEN WHITMAN

...of her death. Today is the anniversary of her death.

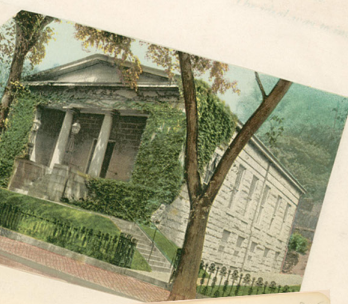
June 24, 1928

Mrs. Whitman the 'Helen' of Poe's Love and Song

Boston Post



The Providence Athenaeum
Copied from a photograph made for a
stereoscope by Manchester Bros.
73 Westminster St. Providence R.I.
owned by Jane M. Stiers,
Probable date 1872?

[illegible]

Treasurer's Report

The Athenæum ended its 2022-23 fiscal year in a healthy financial position. The organization showed a small operating surplus and ended the year debt free. That this was achieved during uncertain economic times and while the Athenæum successfully completed its largest and most disruptive construction project in decades is a tribute to the dedication and competence of its staff, the loyalty of its membership, and the continuing generosity of its donors.

Revenues. Total operating revenues increased by 43% to \$1,997,540 due in large part to the generous one-time bequest from the Eunice Burr Clafin Family Trust and the return to a full endowment draw. (In the prior fiscal year, the endowment draw was reduced because of the receipt of significant COVID-related government funding.) Membership revenue increased by 2% despite a month's closure of the library during the heating system replacement construction. Fundraising increased by 7.9% thanks to the ongoing support of donors and the success of the Visitor Center. Facility rental revenue was down by 32%. The comparison suffered because of the disruption caused by the heating system construction and the absence of revenues generated by a film shoot that occurred in the prior fiscal year.

Expenses. Total operating expenses increased by 30%, but most of this increase is attributable to the heating project, which can be found in the Capital Projects Expense line. Investments were made in Buildings & Grounds, where a 41% increase is attributable to the completion of a landscape plan, emergency HVAC repairs that were necessary prior to the completion of the heating project, and work done to right the listing granite walls in the garden and front of the building. Personnel expenses increased a modest 3.8%.

Conclusion. The Athenæum registered its seventh consecutive operating surplus. Despite the economic

uncertainties, the financial demands of caring for a building that is almost two hundred years old, and the necessity of providing adequate compensation and benefits for the staff, the Athenæum, with the ongoing support of its community of members and donors, is well positioned to fulfill its charge to “enrich the mind, inspire the spirit, and elevate the public discourse.”

Thomas Bryson
Treasurer

BELOW: Executive Director Matt Burriesci in conversation with U.S. Senator Sheldon Whitehouse



Income Statement

REVENUE	FY23	FY22
Membership	\$234,140	\$229,506
Fundraising	\$424,966	\$393,994
Capital Projects Funding	\$417,545	\$74,281
Facility Rental	\$36,650	\$53,800
Bequest	\$210,000	\$0
Trust Funds	\$44,681	\$42,315
Miscellaneous	\$43,443	\$232,169
Investment Income for Operations	\$586,115	\$375,000
TOTAL REVENUE	\$1,997,540	\$1,401,064
EXPENSES		
Personnel	\$902,261	\$868,854
Library Materials	\$51,990	\$48,950
Library Services & Management	\$38,413	\$37,625
Programs	\$63,123	\$50,492
Communications & Marketing	\$9,707	\$13,897
Membership & Development	\$34,363	\$37,653
Building & Grounds	\$96,228	\$68,269
Capital Projects Expense	\$417,545	\$74,281
General Office & Admin.	\$122,394	\$134,155
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$1,736,024	\$1,334,176
CHANGE IN NET ASSETS	\$261,516	\$66,888

Note: the financial information above presents only unrestricted operating activity before fixed asset capitalization or depreciation. Revenue and expenses for special projects are included only as net assets are released from restrictions. Further details are published in the audited financial statements available through the accounting department.

Balance Sheet

ASSETS	FY23	FY22
Cash	\$1,202,510	\$1,042,137
Endowment	\$11,529,090	\$10,772,945
Receivables	\$29,053	\$97,528
Prepaid Expenses	\$20,087	\$30,775
Inventory	\$16,433	\$9,810
Fixed Assets*	\$2,263,837	\$1,910,795
TOTAL ASSETS	\$15,061,010	\$13,863,990
LIABILITIES		
Accounts Payable	\$51,401	\$60,659
Accrued Expenses	\$38,665	\$33,801
Deferred Revenue	\$25,475	\$14,200
TOTAL LIABILITIES	\$115,541	\$108,860
EQUITY		
Unrestricted	\$12,043,479	\$10,793,537
Temporarily Restricted	\$1,406,632	\$1,468,309
Permanently Restricted	\$1,495,358	\$1,493,284
TOTAL EQUITY	\$14,945,469	\$13,755,130
TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY	\$15,061,010	\$13,863,990

*Fixed assets are listed here net of accumulated depreciation.



Supporters of the Athenæum

The Athenæum is deeply grateful to the following friends for their generosity & support. These pages are a tribute to the people, businesses, & foundations who gave cash & in-kind contributions to the library between July 1, 2022 & June 30, 2023.

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Kathryn & Cornelis de Boer	Sarah Gleason, in memory of Tom Gleason	Hasan Khan & Karen Longeteig, in memory of Margaret Nell Longeteig	Natalie & Christopher Morris	Kathryn L. Gann	Ellen Taylor
Raymond Deacon & Kimberly Northup	Mary Anne Golda	Boyd & Joanne King	Carolann Morrissey, in honor of Robin Wetherill	Amy Remensnyder	Carol Terry & James Janecek
Carol DeBoer-Langworthy, in honor of Myrtle DeBoer	Kathryn & Brian Gollub	Michael King & Martha Bellows	Patrick & Marina Morrissey	Alexandra Reynolds	Ellen Bruzelius
Elizabeth Debs	Elizabeth Goodspeed	Anne Kirby & David Cashman	Carol & Burleigh Morton	Ken & Kim Rickler	Nathaniel N. Tobey
Maria DeCarvalho, in honor of Elizabeth Bakst & Lindsay Shaw	Vidya Gopinath	Elizabeth Kennedy	Joseph E. Mullaney III	David T. Riedel	Gregory Todd & Misako Litt
Anthony DeCristoforo	Jason Graff	Hasan Khan & Karen Longeteig, in memory of Tim Philbrick	Katherine Murphy, Katherine C. Murphy Gift Fund, Fidelity Charitable	Deborah Ring & Michael Simoncelli	Frances & Peter Trafton
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Ann Diver	Peter & Robin Gross	Donna Kucharski	Rita Nenonen	Timothy Rivinus & Judith Parker	Beau Vanderlaan
Timothy & Mary Margaret Donovan	Michelle Grove	Steven & Diana Lackey	Susan & Bill Newkirk	Tina Rizack & Christopher Langlois	Charles & Kavita Vansant
Carla Dowben	Ashtyn Gunderman & Daniel Berkowitz	Rosalind Ladd	Mildred Nichols	Thomas Roberts	Victoria Veh
Carrie Drake & Cranston Paull	Alexandra Hahn	Elizabeth K. Landers	Elena Nicoletta	Tracey Rogers, in honor of Robin Wetherill	Ellis & Debbie Waldman
Viki & John Duff, Jr.	Deborah Hale	Julia Fry Landstreet, in memory of Tim Philbrick	Martha Nielsen	Karen T. Romer	Mike & Marcia Walsh, in honor of the Levin Family
Andrea Marth & Don Duhadaway, in honor of Stephanie Ovoian	Steven Hamburg & Sarah Barker	Duncan & Donna Lang	Darek Niklas	Robert & Elaine Sandy	Laura Ward
Toni & Fritz Dumville	Charlotte & Seth Handy	Robert & Cornelia Lanou	Mina Nikolovien	Robert Santurri, Jr.	Liz Pannell & James Watkins
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Norine Duncan	Susan Hardy	Christopher Lawrence	Ken & Laura Nordstrom	Julie Roth & Jeremy Giller	Michael White
	Bill Harley & Debbie Block	Alan Lawson	Kathleen O'Connell	Hillary Salmons	Inge Wimmers
	Jamie Harrower	Barbara Legg	Richard & Audrey Olmsted, in memory of the Rev. Dr. Robert Penberthy	Faith F. Sandstrom & Frederick H. Sandstrom	David & Carolyn Wood
	Sibley Hawkins	Levi L. Leland	Molly Olver & Tom Breeding	Robert & Elaine Sandy	Timothy Wynne
	Jessica Hayes	Mary Lennon	Lauri & Christopher Ontso	Robert Santurri, Jr.	Alan Yuspeh
	Karie Hayes	Lucky Leone & Jocelyne Prince	Dan & Stephanie Ovoian	Paul & Sylvia Sapir	Connie Zeigler
		Megan Lessard	Allison Pace, in memory of Marianne Pace	Corey Satti	Robert Zielinski
		Mark & Kathleen Lomazzo	Cristina Pacheco	Elaine Brousseau & Mark Sawtelle	Stephen & Anne Ziobrowski
		Margaret Lorraine		Paul Schierenbeck & David Mann	Ann Zwickler Kerr
		Kate Losman, in honor of Ruth & Mark Guyer		Susan Schmidt	

Committee Volunteers

Lyn Johnson, *Finance*
Deming Sherman, *Finance*

Program Working Group

Mary-Kim Arnold
Matt Burriesci
Tina Cane
Kyleen Carpenter
R. Tripp Evans
John Stephenson
Robin Wetherill
Kate Wodehouse

Reading Group Leaders

Robert Allio, *The Examined Life*
Kip Brott, *A Passion for Fashion*
Lenny Cambra, *Dialogues of Plato*
K Chess, *Reading Like a Writer*
Bonnie Clayton & Jonathan Migliori, *Spooky Action at a Distance*

Stephen Coon, *Outsiders; London in British Film*
Mare Davis, *The Big Three*
Victoria Forsberg-Lary, *Eco-Feminist Science Fiction*
Erin Perfect, *Other Minds*
Samanthe Sheffer, *What's Going On?*
Tom Sojka, *Festivity*
Kathleen Spencer & Jan Erie, *New York Times Bestsellers*
Ian Steller, *Stoicism*

Volunteers

Jennifer Becker
Ed Cabral
Tripp Evans
Carl Farmer
Faith Fogle
Lucia Huntley

Jennifer Kiddie, *program volunteer coordinator*
Lucy Ann Lepreau
Nancy Evans Lloyd
Iveta Madden
Doug Morse
Elsie Morse
Mary Murphy
Alex Reynolds
Cynthia Shattuck

Student Workers

Sophie Ganz
JoAnna Hernandez
Jessica Perkins
Acadia Stevens

Athena Society

The following individuals have generously provided for the long-term financial health of the library by including the Athenæum in their will or estate plans.

Anonymous (2)
Anonymous (2)*
Candy Adriance
Alex Aho
Kqantu Pareja Bennett
Garrett Bliss
Thomas & Antonia Bryson
Eunice Burr* & William H. Claffin*

Stephen & Melanie Coon
R. Tripp Evans
Dean Hantzopoulos
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Lynne Hoppin-Fazzi
Mary Louise Kennedy
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Cathy Lund & Peter Karczmar
Doug & Elsie Morse

Timothy* & Claudia Philbrick
Rich Rudert
Gardiner & Cynthia Shattuck
Deming & Jane Sherman
Jim Sunshine
Vicki Veh

*deceased

This report highlights the operational and financial activities of the Providence Athenæum and reflects gifts made to the Athenæum over the 12-month period July 1, 2022 - June 30, 2023.

*We are grateful to the photographers who contributed to this report:
Ryan Cobb, Cat Laine, Mary Murphy, Nat Rea, and Joshua Wright.*

RIGHT: A Christmas Carol marathon reading





THE
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ATHENÆUM

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