

Report of the Council

IT HAS NOT BEEN THE CUSTOM to provide a report of the Council's January meeting, but this year is an exception.

When I spoke before the members attending the annual meeting my theme marked the transition of Council leadership from Jack Lapidus to Sid Lapidus. In preparing my remarks—a review of Sid's predecessors and highlights of the Society during their terms of office—I had scoured the archives for images and stories that documented the tradition of leadership from the Isaiah Thomas years to the present. And although the audited numbers in our financial report and the budget approved by the Council at its July meeting reflected the—well, comfortable—status quo of August 31, 2008, it was already clear by late October that this was not a time for optimism about the economy.

We are grateful to our members and friends who continued to give so generously to the Annual Fund by year end, but with endowment income falling, there would certainly be challenges ahead. As economic news unfolded between the October and January Council meetings, the senior managers and I took a hard look at the budget and the anticipated gap between revenue and expenses. Cuts had to be made. We were able to reassign some staff to existing grant projects. With input from staff with budget responsibilities, judicious cuts were made to align the budget with our resources by eliminating such items as meetings and conferences, travel, and preservation supplies and identifying purchases that could be postponed. Regrettably, we also found it necessary to reduce staff expense through a combination of layoffs, early retirements, and, selectively, decreased hours. In the area of communications and scholarly publications, the Council decided to suspend

the publication of the *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* and *The Book, The Newsletter of the Program in the History of the Book*. This is the last issue of the *Proceedings* that will be published, although we shall shortly announce a partnership that will result in digitizing the back issues so that their content will remain accessible to scholars. Some of the kinds of material that appeared in *The Book* will be included along with news of CHAViC (Center for Historic American Visual Culture) in a revamped *Almanac* that Vice President for Development John Keenum will continue to edit for us. To become even more effective in our use of the Internet, which we are already using to announce fellowships and other programs, we are also looking toward creating an e-newsletter.

As we were working on these plans to revise the budget downward, some good news arrived from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) renewing two grants and funding a third to keep essential fellowships and cataloguing services in motion. NEH will continue to support three to six fellows each year for periods of one or two semesters of research at AAS. Cataloguing of the collections on the North American Imprints Program, 1801-1820, will continue with the creation of 7,650 detailed records for imprints from the period. A new grant will support cataloguing and digitization of graphic arts material. "Prints for the Parlor: A Catalog of Engravings and Gift Book Illustrations, 1821-1876" will make some 600 separately published engravings and 2,700 engravings in gift books and literary annuals published from the 1820s through the 1870s more accessible. These grants are in addition to ongoing multiyear funding for outreach to K-12 teachers under the Department of Education's Teaching American History initiative. Expanding these programs is one of many bright spots on the horizon. Our digitization partnerships and fellowship programs will continue to insure that on the Internet and in Antiquarian Hall, the Society and its resources will be at the cutting edge of scholarship in American history and culture through 1876.

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