



The Library Company OF PHILADELPHIA

FOUNDED IN 1731 BY BENJAMIN FRANKLIN  CELEBRATING 275 YEARS

January 4, 2011

Emily Cronin, Program Coordinator
Hurford Humanities Center
Haverford College
Haverford, PA 19041

Dear Emily,

Please find the Library Company's proposal for the Haverford summer internship program enclosed herewith.

In previous years, we have designed projects that principally involved the study of portraits of American women. This year we propose a project with a somewhat different scope, related to a collection of woodblocks that were used to print illustrations of animals in 19th-century American children's books. The intern would add electronic records to our digital collections catalog for a set of 101 woodblocks, and thus make them accessible to scholars working on many topics, and especially the use of animals in 19th-century American pedagogy.

We consider ourselves fortunate that we have had the opportunity to work with Hurford interns in the last six summers. Thanks to them, we have resources that we would not have had the time to develop. Each of them has brought intelligence and creativity to their work here. We hope they have found it rewarding as well, at a pivotal point in their academic careers.

Do let us know if you wish any further information.

Sincerely,

John C. Van Horne
Director

Internship at the Library Company of Philadelphia

Project summary: The intern will contribute to the Library Company's publicly-accessible electronic resources by adding records for woodblocks depicting animals to our digital collections catalog, ImpAC, and will also develop an understanding of the workings of a research library.

The Institution: The Library Company of Philadelphia was founded in 1731 by Benjamin Franklin and his friends. Today, it is a major center for scholarship on American history and culture from the colonial period through the end of the 19th century. Scholars from around the country, as well as abroad, have produced pathbreaking studies based on the library's collections of rare books and graphics. The whole community of staff and readers participates in lively discussions related to all aspects of American history, often with special emphasis on race, gender, and class.

The Project: In 2009, the Library Company received approximately 6,500 woodblocks as part of the S. Robert Teitelman Collection of American Sunday-School Union Woodblocks and Imprints. Based in Philadelphia, the Union was the most prolific publisher of children's books in 19th-century America. Their extraordinary distribution system flooded America with inexpensive children's literature. The publications both reflected and reinforced the cultural, religious, and social dominance of Protestantism in American culture. The woodblocks, used to print the illustrations in the books and periodicals, represent the work of skilled artist-engravers, notably George Gilbert (fl. 1818-1836), Alexander Anderson (1775-1870), and John Warner Barber (1798-1885). Commissioned by the Union, the woodblocks provide a remarkable record of both the images and the technology of print production.

For the project, we have chosen 101 woodblocks depicting animals, which the donor himself assembled as a set. The intern will scan images and add records for this set to our digital collections catalog, ImpAC (<http://lcpdigital.org>). The records will be of use to scholars working in many areas: children's literature, art history, the history of religion, and media studies. Obviously the woodblocks inform the study of childhood instruction in natural history in 19th-century America. They also relate to one of the central topics of human existence – the relationship of human beings to (and in) the natural world. We see the persistence of aspects of the medieval view of nature as a collection of symbols from which human beings could learn Christian doctrine. (The housefly, for example, teaches us that life is short.) We see evidence of the perpetuation and development of this anthropocentric view of the world from the Early Modern period – defining a special status for human beings that justified domination and exploitation of (other) animals. We see the influence of the 18th-century Enlightenment, which brought a new objectivity to the study of nature. We also see the influence of the English Romantic poets, who considered an appreciation of the wonders of nature an important aspect of spiritual life. From the then-contemporary 19th century, we can trace the origins of concern regarding cruelty to animals, protection of wild animals, and conservation of the environment generally. This small set of material shows quite dramatically how the cheap productions of a culture can provide great insight into its workings, and especially the persistence of older beliefs alongside newer ones.

The ImpAC records will contain scans of the woodblocks, descriptions of the animal(s) depicted, and topical subject headings. For this part of the work, the intern will work closely with Cornelia King, Chief of Reference, and Sarah Weatherwax, Curator of Prints and Photographs. The project

will help the Library Company meet one of its primary goals: to make its collections more accessible through the use of digital technology, especially for those who cannot come to the Library Company in person.

If time permits, the intern will develop an exhibition for the Library Company's website on a topic related to the study of the woodblocks. (For example, see the exhibition completed by the 2010 Hurford intern at the Library Company: <http://www.librarycompany.org/extraordinarywoman/>)

The intern will be based in the main reading room, Monday through Friday, from 9 a.m. to 4:45 p.m. S/he will assist in the day-to-day work of moving materials in and out of the reading room from the library's closed-stack collections. The intern will balance activities such as paging, shelving, and photocopying with the main component of the internship, the woodblock project. In a library setting, the ability to balance a number of duties, some challenging and some mundane, is an important skill to develop. S/he also will attend the colloquia at which researchers present their projects for discussion with staff and other scholars. To gain a fuller understanding of the workings of the Library Company as a whole, s/he will also be given introductory sessions in the other departments (the print room with its separate reading room, the conservation laboratory, and the cataloging unit).

Special Skills: Through this experience, the intern will gain an understanding of the process of creating electronic access to digitized images, as well as an introduction to the field of special collections librarianship. S/he will also learn to:


- Synthesize information into cataloging records for visual materials in the Library Company's digital collections catalog, ImPAC.
- Handle rare materials in a special collection context.
- Scan material for archival purposes; process the image for viewing in ImPAC.
- Finally, if time permits, the intern will design an exhibition that develops a topic related to the study of the woodblocks. (Or create more records in ImPAC.)

Challenges and Rewards: For the intern, the greatest challenge will be to describe visual materials concisely, within the structure of the Library Company's digital collections catalog. The intern will also benefit from the preparation of an exhibition, thus developing skills in exhibition design and writing on historical topics for a general audience. An additional reward to the intern will be a fuller understanding of the career paths represented in the Library Company community, where many staff members as well as readers have advanced degrees in history, literature, and/or library science. The reward of the woodblock project will be experience with an unusual set of objects that provide direct understanding of 19th-century illustration technologies and pedagogy. The reward for the Library Company will be the increased access to the woodblocks through the Library Company's digital collections catalog. The exhibition preparation will provide material for an online exhibition, which will help make the Library Company's collections better known beyond our walls.

See next page for sample record in ImPAC.



Click the thumbnail to view a larger copy of this image, and to see any other images that may be attached to this record.

Digital object(s)	 ASSU Illustration 5244 - Complex Object (369 K)
Title	ASSU Illustration 5244
Alternate title	Woodblock for printing an illustration of a quadruped in the cat family, possibly a leopard.
Date	[s.a.]
Physical description	1 wood block ; 5.7 x 7.6 x 2.3 cm.
Notes	<p>Block numbered in at least one place: 5244.</p> <p>Image of an unidentified wild feline crouching in a natural setting.</p> <p>Back of block partially obscured by pasted-down paper.</p> <p>Partially illegible inscription on side of block: Book of</p>
Subject	<p>Leopard.</p> <p>Panthera.</p> <p>Felidae.</p> <p>Animals.</p>
Genre	<p>Wood blocks (Printing blocks)</p> <p>Wood engraving (Process)</p> <p>End-grain blocks.</p>

Associated
name American Sunday-School Union, former owner.