Why George Washington’s Library Is Not at Harvard

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INTRODUCTION

In 1991, at the opening of an exhibition to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of Houghton Library, Roger Stoddard related “How Harvard Didn’t Get Its Rare Books and Manuscripts”—why Harvard has no library of medieval manuscripts, no major European literary archive, and no early library. Most of us in what is now Houghton Library’s Edison and Newman Room were saddened to learn that Harvard almost came into possession of the Si Thomas Phillipps collection of manuscripts, a major European literary archive, and a sixteenth-century library.¹

Yet another collection that Harvard almost acquired is a portion of George Washington’s own library, which is housed instead across the river at the Boston Athenæum. Although the Harvard-connected scholars who took the lead in negotiating for the library first turned to Harvard to acquire it, their major goal was to keep the books in the United States. Andrews Norton (1786–1853) and Jared Sparks (1789–1866) feared that the books of the “Father of the country” would be sold to the library of the British Museum (now the British Library), and Boston was then, in 1848, the only viable American alternative.

Harvard’s library could not buy the Washington books from its own funds, for the library was impoverished. The library’s Subscribed Fund of 1842, which had amounted to nearly $17,000, had been spent,² and President Edward Everett (1794–1865) did not take up requests from Norton and Sparks to undertake a campaign.³ Sparks and Norton, especially Norton, were not deterred. They began their own subscription campaign, with the disposition of the books to

I am grateful to Terry Belanger for a careful reading of a version of this essay and his many helpful editorial suggestions.

³ Hereafter, all letters referenced are located in an album in the Washingtoniana Collection of the Boston Athenæum: “Subscribers for the Purchase of a Section of Books Most of Which Formerly Belonged to Washington” (Boston, MA, ca. 1848), Wa 48.112 (v. 1), unless otherwise cited.
be determined later by the subscribers. The possibility other than Harvard was the Boston Athenæum, an institution more broadly cultural and more widely accessible.

Norton and Sparks printed a four-page appeal for subscriptions of $50 and sent it to their list of possible donors, basically the Boston area’s elite. The number of subscribers was disappointing, and many on the list declined outright. In the end the Boston Athenæum put up some money, while the bookseller Henry Stevens accepted somewhat less than his asking price. The subscribers voted to place Washington’s library at the Athenæum.

An economic recession in 1848 may account for a small part of the difficulty in raising funds, but a detailed look at those to whom the circular had been sent suggests more complicated reasons. The subscription approach to fund raising, with its direct appeal to particular individuals, reveals that those who most actively participated in the governing of libraries and those who were professional users of books were not particularly supportive of the subscription campaign. Instead, it was businessmen and others unconnected with libraries who were moved by the emotional appeal to bring to Boston the library of the Father of the country.

To write that these books belonged to the “Father of the country” is to suggest that these copies partake of the numinous, that is, of the holy. The books of George Washington can inspire awe, and we can imagine the general himself reading one of them on a military campaign or, peaceably, in front of the fireplace at Mount Vernon. We can even imagine the boy George poring over one of those books. Those very objects helped form the man who, refusing to be a king or a president for life, returned to Mount Vernon to farm. Through those books we can connect emotionally, not just intellectually, with George Washington.

Each of the books of George Washington is what in a more recent era have come to be called a “rare book,” an appellation that is applied to a book of some scarcity often because it evokes an emotional response sufficient to make the physical book an object of desire. The emotion varies; often it is aesthetic, but almost always it is something other than absolute rarity. Age and rarity, even uniqueness, do not always matter. It is the desire for a book that determines

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4 Every work printed, for example, in the fifteenth century will command a certain price, no matter how insignificant the text, but the premium will be modest in comparison with an important work of more recent times that is in original condition.
its monetary value, a process that partakes of Jean Baudrillard’s description of the collected object as being “divested of its function and made relative to a subject.”

The book that is not “divested of its function” is the book seen as a tool, a text to be used, even used up. Such a book may be marked up, perhaps, if in paper covers, even cut apart with only a chapter or two filed away. But, of course, some people cannot bring themselves to underline even a newly published book. To some people books are seldom or even never seen solely as functional tools. Most of us stand on a continuum, with at one end books functioning only as tools and at the other end books treasured as emotion-laden objects of desire.

Where an individual stands on the continuum also shapes that person’s priorities with respect to library collecting. The supporter of libraries may not necessarily value rare books and may even be opposed to acquiring them. Harvard indirectly owes its Houghton Library to just such a person. At a meeting of the Overseers’ Visiting Committee to the Library in the late 1930s, Charles Warren’s dismissive attitude to rare books so infuriated Arthur A. Houghton, Jr., that Houghton resolved to build a rare book library for Harvard. Charles Warren did, however, greatly value books and learning, and he bequeathed millions to further the study of American history, partly through support of library acquisitions.

What in the past was not considered appropriate for a library can rarely be definitively determined, but in the case of George Washington’s library, it can be. Harvard did have the opportunity to buy it, but chose instead not to, nor to raise funds for the acquisition. That is documented in detail, as is the fundraising that resulted in the library’s acquisition by the Boston Athenæum, which has preserved documents relating to the purchase. Among these is an annotated list of the 236 men (they were all men) who were asked in 1848 to subscribe to the purchase of George Washington’s 444 volumes. Each man was asked to donate $50. Just being on the list suggests he was able to afford that sum, at least in good times, and information from other sources generally supports that assumption. Approximately 80 men, including a few not on the list, did subscribe for a share. We also know who explicitly declined to subscribe and who simply did not respond. Their connection with both Harvard and the Boston Athenæum—as

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donors and library officers—can be determined; and since they were among the elite of the Boston area, other biographical information about them is also available.

We can examine the characteristics of those who did not subscribe and those who did consciously support acquisition of rare books in this country, perhaps the first to do so. The data is historical, but some may find that it casts light on attitudes to rare books and libraries today.  

I. HARVARD AS A POTENTIAL BUYER

The basic facts have long been known, as related by bookseller Henry Stevens in an 1887 account. He purchased the Washington books in April 1848 for $3,000. He claimed, in the single paragraph devoted to the episode, to have wanted especially the volumes signed by Washington in order to sell them to that great collector of Americana James Lenox, of New York; the others he intended to sell to the British Museum. Lenox, he wrote, declined them, and, given the “great hue and cry raised in Boston against my sending them out of the country,” Stevens then sold them to “a parcel of Bostonians.” That “parcel of Bostonians,” “after passing that old Boston hat round for two or three months” had raised only $3,250, plus $500 contributed by the Boston Athenæum. Stevens had, however, already spent the first payment that had been made (he was in a tight financial situation), and he had to let the library go for less than $4,000.

The language of his account shows that he did not recall the transaction of 1848 with pleasure—and for good reason. He did not make the profit he anticipated. That “old Boston hat” that the “parcel of Bostonians” had passed around had not been filled; Stevens had wanted $5,000. Stevens’ language shows that behind the list of subscribers, many of them bearers of prominent Boston names, is a drama—that in fact it was difficult to raise the money.

In writing of a “great hue and cry” against selling the books abroad, Stevens further conveys that he was mistreated, suggesting that, if not under pressure to sell in Boston, he was at least lured into doing so. Such was not the case, or at least the pressure was of his own making. There was a brief press account, but it simply related the expectation that the library would be

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7 I will not cover Washington’s reading, the history of the disposition of his books, or the history of the books once they were acquired by the Boston Athenæum. Those topics have been covered in a gracefully written and well-researched essay by Michael Wentworth that introduces Stanley Ellis Cushing’s The George Washington Library Collection (Boston: The Boston Athenæum, 1997), 9–26. I am indebted to that work.


9 Ibid.
sold abroad: “We are not informed what disposition Mr. Stephens [sic] intends to make of these sacred relics of the Father of his country. . . . Understanding that he will not on any condition allow the library to be broken up and separated, we presume he intends it for some European library, perhaps the British Museum.”

No popular movement in Boston lay behind the effort to purchase the library; it began with an inquiry by one man, Andrews Norton, who had been librarian of Harvard College from 1813–1821 and Dexter Professor of Sacred Literature from 1819–1830. In 1848, he was what is known today as an independent scholar, who had become noteworthy as an opponent of Transcendentalism. On April 10, Norton wrote to Stevens:

I am very desirous that should the British Museum decline to take the Library of Washington it should be secured complete for some public Institution here for instance the University at Cambridge. It seems to me to have a peculiarly American interest. I regret that the possibility of keeping it here should be so small. My object in writing to you now is to request you to inform me what price you would take for the Collection should the Museum leave it on your hands, & to ask of you the refusal of it for a week or ten days after you get the decision of the Museum (should that decision be unfavorable to taking it).

Stevens, not above softening up the potential customer, replied on the 13th that he could not “definitely now promise . . . the first refusal of it after the Museum” because he had already had several requests. Then, he backtracked, stating that he expected nothing would come of them and that Norton could have first refusal. He said he would be in Boston on Thursday the 20th and that they could talk then. The letter reached Norton on Saturday evening, and on the Sunday morning of the next day, April 16, Norton wrote to Jared Sparks, editor of the twelve-volume *Writings of George Washington*. Norton wrote that he could “think no holier work could be done to-day than any which may tend to prevent the country from being deprived of such memorial of Washington, – memorials with which personal recollections of him are so intimately associated.” He proposed that Sparks write to gentlemen connected with the British Museum to say that as a courtesy they should not “attempt to remove [the library] from that land to which history has left no inheritance more precious than the memory of Washington.” So far as George Washington’s books were concerned, Norton was at the end of the continuum that reads “desire.”

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The next day Norton wrote to Harvard President Edward Everett, asking Everett to “take the lead in the business.” It sounds as if he were suggesting that Everett approach potential donors. Jared Sparks, who was to succeed Everett in 1849, had some doubts, and on the same day, he wrote two letters, one to Norton and one to Everett. In the letter to Norton, he referred to raising the funds by subscription and expressed concern that so many subscription drives had already been undertaken for the College that many might think they had done enough for Harvard. “I suppose,” he wrote, “the College Library the best place for it; others may think differently.” In short, rather than a campaign focused on buying the library for Harvard, Sparks was urging that the ultimate destination of the books should be left up to the subscribers. That implicitly meant the Boston Athenæum. It was the only other possible Boston institutional home for the books, since the Boston Public Library did not then exist.

Sparks was pessimistic that Harvard would even have a chance to buy the library. Although he could not conceive, he wrote to Everett on the 17th, that the “directors of the British Museum would be willing to pay an exorbitant fancy price merely because the books belonged to Washington,” he thought that Antonio Panizzi, the British Museum Library’s Keeper of Printed Books, would grasp at it, “both as adding glory to his great hobby, (the Museum) & as a symbol of his adored Liberty.” For Sparks to sneer at the “adored Liberty” of the Italian expatriate who was transforming the British Museum suggests he scorned the books as a “symbol,” or, at least, sympathized with those who would be put off by the “exorbitant fancy price.” Sparks was clearly closer toward the books-as-tools end of the continuum.

It seems that Andrews Norton took in what Sparks had written about fundraising, because he wrote to Everett a second time on the 17th. He softened his suggestion that Everett take the lead by indicating that he would be happy to work with him and “others disposed to make an effort to keep General Washington’s library in the Country”—the country, not Harvard—and he also added a reason for pessimism, namely that Stevens was “so much a money-making man” that it would be hard to deal with him.

The next days were apparently spent waiting to hear from Stevens, but then on April 24, the less fervent Sparks wrote to Andrews Norton that it was necessary first of all to ascertain “the absolute character of the books.” A new wrinkle had also arisen, in that Sparks had learned of a resolution in Congress instructing the Library Committee to “inquire whether Washington’s Library is for sale, & the expediency of purchasing it for the government.” He added: “Had you
not better write to Charles by the next post … to take the refusal immediately, if not [already]
done?” “Charles” was Charles Eliot Norton, a recent graduate of Harvard College (1846) who
was in New York at the time, in the care of Mrs. Cleveland of the New York Hotel. On April 26,
at noon, Andrews Norton did indeed write to his son. In his letter, Andrews Norton showed that
his priority was that the books remain in the country, not that they necessarily be at Harvard.

In the event, Stevens was not pleased about the Congressional resolution; he wrote to the
collector Peter Force that the “Committee on the Library have no right to detain or even to look
at it.”11 He also neither arranged for Charles Eliot Norton to examine the books at that date nor
gave the right of refusal. Two weeks later, on May 7, Stevens stated that if Norton would plan to
arrive by Thursday morning, Stevens would give him a note for “Mr. Gilman” (Daniel Coit
Gilman), “who has the books & who will no doubt allow you to examine them as much as you
please.”12

Stevens gave the right of first refusal for a period of two weeks from May 15, 1848.
Stevens was in ever greater a hurry; he needed the money to settle financial obligations in
London. On the 19th, he wrote that he was going to contact the great Americana collectors James
Lenox and John Carter Brown and offer the library to them, either in whole or in two parts, in
case “the College” did not buy it. It is clear that Stevens still thought that Harvard was to be the
buyer. In that letter of May 19, he even wrote of printing a catalog that would be out “by the time
the library is fairly lodged in the College Library ready for inspection.” And he added, “Of
course the collection as sold by me is to go entire to the College Library—Is that not so?” It was
not so, but the effort to get Washington’s library in Boston continued.

11 Wyman W. Parker, “Henry Stevens Sweeps the States,” Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America 52
12 Gilman, later librarian of Yale, president of the University of California, and then founding president of Johns
Hopkins University, was engaged to list the books because of his “remarkably clear and rapid handwriting,”
according to Fabian Franklin, The Life of Daniel Coit Gilman (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1910), 7. It
would seem that he obtained the job because his father’s mercantile house was handling for Stevens the business
side of the Washington Library, that is, arranging for payment and for shipping. William Charles Gilman was,
however, more than a bystander. He wrote to Athenæum librarian Charles Folsom on June 9, 1848: “I am
exceedingly glad the Washington Library goes to Boston—of all places on the earth in my estimation the most
appropriate for its safekeeping—and I am also gratified to know that for the time being at least it will be under your
own eye…. We probably feel a greater personal interest in it than any one else can have out of Boston, as we have
seen it from day to day without the privilege of any thing more than holding every syllable of it in trust.” Library
II. GOING PUBLIC FOR THE LIBRARY

The next public step taken ensured that the library was unlikely to end up at Harvard. Andrews Norton drafted a circular asking recipients for $50. Sparks edited it lightly, and they both signed it; Norton most likely also drew up the list of those who were to receive the circular. The editing and printing seem to have taken a week. The printed circular came off the press on May 24, “so wet from the press, that it is necessary to dry them by the fire before they can be written upon,” Sparks wrote. A total of 350 copies were printed, and they were distributed to at least 236 individuals and the editors of 6 newspapers. The first three pages of the circular focused on the desirability of purchasing the library and stated that the subscribers would decide where to place it; a fourth page provided details about the books.

The circular reads:

A collection of books, most of which formerly belonged to Washington, is now on sale by Mr. Henry Stevens. The greater number contain his autograph. All which are so distinguished, and, next after them, those which were presentation copies to him, and, next to them, those which contain his book-plate, or can in any other way be proved to have been in his possession, would be regarded even in Europe as curiosities of great interest and value, and would command prices which might seem incredible to one unacquainted with the sums given for objects associated with the memory of highly distinguished men.

But by an American the collection should be differently estimated. To no country has its history left so valuable a legacy as we have inherited in the character of Washington. He stands alone among the great men of the world, – preëminent for his services to his countrymen, for his freedom from all sordid and selfish motives, for his elevation above ordinary human weaknesses, and for his thorough integrity and completeness of character. He rises higher in our estimation the better we become acquainted with history and with human nature. Throughout the civilized world, unanimous honor has been paid to him by those most deserving of honor themselves; and with us his name is a central point of union for all patriots and all lovers of virtue. No other country can look back to a man who has left an example so excellent and so weighty, – so adapted by its influence to promote all that is good.

Of such a man all the relics should be venerated; – and there can be few of more interest than the books which have been in his hands, and which are marked by his handwriting. Every tribute of respect paid to him is a tribute of respect to moral excellence, and a lesson to our posterity teaching them our sense of its worth.

Believing, Sir, that you share in these sentiments, we take the liberty of addressing you on the subject of the purchase of this collection by subscription. The price
put upon it is $4,500; but some other expenses must be incurred, which render it advisable to raise the sum of $5,000.

It is proposed to raise this sum by a hundred shares of $50 each; – every subscriber taking one or more shares, at his pleasure. But as many persons may be desirous of paying this tribute of respect to the memory of Washington, and more shares than a hundred may consequently be subscribed for, the surplus may either be returned to the subscribers in proportion to the original amount of their subscription, or disposed of otherwise, as they may hereafter direct.

In order to prevent any disappointment, it should be understood, that the price to be paid for the collection bears no relation to the market value of the books, supposing them divested of their associations with Washington. Thus, when, at a late sale in England of some remains of Gray, a hundred pounds were given for the sheet of paper on which he had written a copy of his Elegy, there was no reference to any other consideration than its interest as a memorial of the poet. Some more particular account of the collection is subjoined.

A subscription book will be placed in the office of [J. Ingersoll Bowditch Esq.,] the American Insurance Company. When the subscription is completed, a meeting of the subscribers will be called, to choose a treasurer, and to settle all matters relating to the business; – especially to determine the place of deposit for the collection, in some public institution, and the conditions on which the deposit shall be made. It is proposed that each subscriber shall have one vote for every share subscribed for by him, and may vote by proxy.

Having by accidental circumstances been put forward as representatives of the feelings of many individuals, we address to you this communication; and we are, Sir,

Very respectfully,

Your obed’t serv’ts,

[signed]

Jared Sparks

Andrews Norton

The fourth page, “Account of Books in the Collection,” recorded 240 titles with Washington’s autograph, except for some with Mrs. Washington’s; 15 with a bookplate only; 37 presentation copies without an autograph; 61 with neither an autograph nor bookplate “but from

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13 Inserted in manuscript.
their character and appearance probably Washington’s”; and one with the autograph of his father, for a total of 374 volumes. Fifty-eight others ostensibly included the autograph of Bushrod Washington or that of William Augustine Washington; 10 feature Richard Henry Lee’s autograph; one, the autograph of Timothy Pickering; and one with the autograph of Daniel Jenifer, for a grand total of 444 volumes. Of these, 37 are tract volumes, containing 290 separate titles, many of which have Washington’s autograph. Also present in the collection were several hundred loose pamphlets belonging to either George Washington or Bushrod Washington.

The circular was a rare book appeal, expressing the hope that others shared the sentiment that the books were “relics,” that they were to be “venerated,” and that the price was justified as a “memorial.” It was holy work to strive to keep the books in this country, as Andrews Norton had earlier written to Sparks, and that sentiment lay behind the circular. The “Account of Books in the Collection” gave no detail about specific books or topics covered in the collection, nothing to appeal on terms other than emotion.

Recipients of the circular must have raised questions. Charles Eliot Norton, the only person who had examined the books, took up his pen in an effort to make them appear to be interesting for reasons other than their provenance. The Boston Daily Advertiser appended his statement, unsigned, to its publication of the circular on May 29. It reads:

Washington by his will left to his nephew, Bushrod Washington, all his books and papers, and during his life they remained at Mt. Vernon. Upon his death, in 1829, it is understood that the collection was divided, a portion of the books being kept at Mt. Vernon, and the remainder passing to a nephew of Judge Washington’s. It is this latter portion of Washington’s library which it is now proposed to purchase by subscription, to be deposited in some public institution.

The books, for the most part, relate to those subjects in which Washington was particularly interested. Many of them are military works, a still larger number are on agricultural subjects; there are also many of the political publications of the times, and a considerable number of books of travels, and works on religion.

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15 The statement is unsigned, but Charles Eliot Norton is the only one who could have written it. It appears on p. 2 of the newspaper. Since the Boston Daily Advertiser had not yet published the circular, it could be that the editor, recognizing the inadequacy of the circular’s “Account,” had asked for details. A paragraph based on the circular, which concludes by stating “we should regret to see [Washington’s library] lost to New England,” appeared in the Boston Evening Transcript, May 26, 1848, p. 2. The circular itself, without the addition, was published in the Boston Courier, May 27, 1848, p. 2. I did not find mention of the subscription in the Boston Post.
One of the most interesting volumes in the collection is a book by the Bishop of Exeter, on “The sufficiency of a standing revelation,” &c. &c., published in London in 1717. It has two autographs of Washington in a school-boy’s hand, on the title page, and there is in it a manuscript note by Colonel George C. Washington, as follows: “This autograph of General Washington’s name is believed to be the earliest specimen of his handwriting, when he was probably not more than 8 or 9 years of age.”

There are several volumes in the collection which from a comparison of the autograph in them with the fac-simile given by Mr. Sparks in the second volume of his Life and Writings of Washington, must be judged to have belonged to him when a very young man; among them are a copy of the Guardian, of Sir Roger L’Estrange’s Translation of Seneca’s Morals, and of Ray’s Wisdom of God manifested in his works of creation.

Of the books which he possessed a few years later we find a copy of Beverley’s rare History of Virginia, in which is written, “Geo. Washington, 1769, cost sterl’g. 5s.” and Father Charloix’s [sic] Travels through Canada and Louisiana.

But the books of a later period possess perhaps a still greater interest. Among them is a copy of Arthur Young’s “Annals of Agriculture,” from 1784 to 1798, in 30 volumes. In the first is written, “To General Washington, in testimony of the veneration I feel for so great and good a character. Arthur Young.” The first twenty-one volumes of this set have Washington’s autograph; seventeen of them have also his book-plate, with the motto, “Exitus acta probat” [“The end is the test of the deed”], than which none could be finer or more appropriate. The last five volumes have the autograph of Martha Washington, with the date 1800.

Among the books relating to the political questions of the time, are John Adams’s “Defence of the Constitution;” the “Debates of the Convention of Massachusetts at Boston, 1788, for ratifying the Constitution recommended by the Federal Convention” Lloyd’s “Congressional Register” of the first Congress, and more interesting than all, a collection of his own Speeches, with the replies to them, published in a duodecimo volume, by order of Congress, on the title page of which is the autograph George Washington.

Two of the volumes presented to him are a copy of “Brutus,” the tragedy which Alfieri dedicated to him, above the dedication of which Washington has written his own name, and a volume entitled “Description du Monument qui vient d’être erige a Rheinsberg. Avec quarte [sic] planches. 1791” [Description of the monument which has been erected in Rheinsberg, with four plates]. In this volume is the following manuscript note in the handwriting of Chief Justice Marshall. “Mr. Marshall has the honor of sending to the President of the United States, an exemplar of a monument erected by Prince Henry of Prussia to the memory of the officers who distinguished themselves in the wars between Prussia and the house of Austria. Mr. Marshall is directed by his Royal Highness
to request the President’s acceptance of this as a testimony of the great respect and esteem he feels for his character.”

But among the most valuable of the books are about forty volumes of pamphlets which Washington had bound for preservation, many of them have become exceedingly scarce, and are of peculiar interest in themselves, besides their interest from having belonged to him.

A collection like this should not be suffered to leave the country or to be dispersed among individual purchasers. If it is not secured by subscription this alternative awaits it. It is earnestly to be hoped that the effort which is now making to retain it here will be successful.

This article, which mentions subjects and specific important titles, also emphasizes those connected with Washington’s early life and the books with his signature. It was an appeal to readers on either end of the book continuum and must have resulted in an increase in the number of subscribers, but as of the end of the month there were still too few.

On May 31, George Livermore (1809–1865) of Cambridge, a merchant and collector of rare books, wrote to Charles Eliot Norton, stating his dismay upon hearing that a “sufficient number of subscribers had not been obtained”: “My feelings, – I cannot say whether of patriotism or pride – have been somewhat aroused by the thought of the possibility [sic] of losing the collection to our vicinity. These books must come to Boston. They must not be separated [sic], or go abroad.” He did not see a possible institutional buyer outside of Boston: the Library of Congress was not yet at this point seen as a national library, and the great municipally-supported public libraries of the future had not yet been founded. Academic libraries, including Harvard’s, had only tiny financial resources.

Although passionately desirous to have the Washington library in Boston, it is possible that in mid-1848 Livermore was not optimistic about finding more individual subscribers. One reason may have been that a recession that had begun in late 1847 was still running its course. It did not end until late in 1848 and may have affected subscriptions, as David Sears put it in a letter to Charles Eliot Norton on June 5:

Your note of Saturday last relative to the Washington Books somewhat surprised me. Generally in matters where the contributions are small, and the object of universal

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interest, there has been no difficulty in obtaining the sum required—but perhaps at the present moment, the usual contributors to all things find themselves so much pressed that they are positively obliged to hold their hand.

Livermore, in his May 31 letter, may well have sought to meet to obtain Norton’s approval for urging that the Athenæum itself provide $500, most likely with the proviso that he and Norton would continue to seek subscribers. Livermore did in the future obtain crucial subscriptions,¹⁷ and decades later, Norton wrote that the library’s acquisition was largely due to the efforts of George Livermore.¹⁸

By June 6, only $3,700 had been raised, an amount that presumably included the $500 pledge of the Athenæum.¹⁹ At 11:30 that morning, Livermore wrote to Norton that Stevens had just left his office, that he refused to accept less than $4,000, and that the Bostonians had until 3:30 to decide whether to purchase the library at that price. Livermore suggested drafting a proposal to divide the difference, and proposed that Norton meet him at Bowditch’s office, the site of the subscription book, at 1:30 that afternoon.

In the end Stevens accepted less than $4,000, although the exact amount is somewhat uncertain. He insisted on keeping back several books, but even on this matter he ultimately got less than he wanted. He had no choice. He was about to sail for London, and he needed the money. Stevens was not pleased, but neither was Sparks. He “declined,” wrote Charles Eliot Norton on June 15, “to have any farther reference made to him in the matter.”

The subscribers met on June 10 and voted “unanimously” to place the Washington Library in the Boston Athenæum. That same meeting left it up to Norton, Livermore, and Athenæum librarian Charles Folsom to “procure a suitable case for the books and prepare a suitable descriptive catalogue.”

¹⁷ Ten subscriptions were obtained after the summer of 1848, as late as 1855. One can definitely be traced to Livermore, that of his neighbor and fellow bibliophile Zelotes Hosmer. Norton was out of the country from May 29, 1849 to January 18, 1851, during which time Livermore can be credited with obtaining the subscriptions (Turner, Liberal Education, 67, 100).
¹⁸ William Coolidge Lane, “Introduction,” to A Catalogue of the Washington Collection in the Boston Athenæum: Compiled and Annotated by Appleton P. C. Griffin (Boston: Boston Athenæum, 1897), viii, states that Charles Eliot Norton had written in September 1887 that “the acquisition of the books . . . was, finally, in largest measure due to the efforts of the late George Livermore, one of the most public-spirited, generous, and modest of men.”
¹⁹ On July 17, 1848, Edward Wigglesworth wrote a note “for the Standing Committee of the Trustees” to Josiah Quincy, Jr., treasurer of the Athenæum, asking him to pay $500 to Charles Eliot Norton, in his capacity as treasurer of the subscribers for George Washington’s library. The note added that the books had been received (Library Letters, 1848 [UAIII 50.8]). No record of the money being appropriated has been found in the minutes of the trustees.
III. THE LIBRARY COMES TO THE ATHENÆUM

The difficulty in raising sufficient funds to meet the agreed-upon price invites inquiry into fundraising in Boston, especially since so many of those appealed to were capable of contributing the entire amount, or certainly more than $50. Appealing to a large number of potential donors for subscriptions had been the common method of raising funds at Harvard and at the Boston Athenæum. The historian Ronald Story has documented those at Harvard. He recorded eight subscription drives at Harvard between 1805 and 1846, to which may be added the library’s so-called Subscribed Fund of 1842, which actually began in 1841. The targets of the drives were, respectively: 1805, natural history; 1817, 1826, and 1829, the Divinity School; 1838, scholarships; 1841, the Divinity School; 1841, the Library; and, in 1842 and 1846, the Observatory.20 The Athenæum had subscription drives in 1822, 1823, 1824, 1826 (4 times), 1831, 1832, 1835, 1836, 1837, and 1847.21

These subscription drives were not, however, all the same. For one thing, they differed in the amount of money sought: either a fixed amount or as large a donation as possible. The most successful subscription drive was Harvard’s 1805 campaign for natural history, which raised $31,333. The drive that brought in the least was the second campaign for the Observatory, in 1846, which raised $5,000.

While it seems that Harvard had no drives for a fixed amount, such were common at the Athenæum, where fundraising through authorizing new shares was in effect a subscription drive for a fixed amount; and at $300 a share, the amount could be substantial. In 1821, a hundred new shares were authorized; in 1826, there were 50 more. Two hundred thirty-eight shares were issued in 1844 and 1845, an odd figure suggesting that the effort had not reached its goal. The shares issued in 1826 were part of a major effort to transform the Boston Athenæum, and were authorized over four separate fund drives. The first seems to have consisted of passing the hat among only a small number of men known to be builders and/or supporters of libraries—Nathaniel Bowditch, Thomas Wren Ward, James Perkins, Thomas Handasyd Perkins, Israel Thorndike, Francis Calley Gray, and George Ticknor—who together contributed $1,650 for

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21 *The Athenæum Centenary: The Influence and History of the Boston Athenæum from 1807 to 1907, With a Record of Its Officers and Benefactors and a Complete List of Proprietors* ([Boston]: The Boston Athenæum, 1907).
purchasing “Transactions of Foreign Societies.” The largest of the four subscription drives was to match two contributions of $8,000 each by Thomas Handasyd Perkins and James Perkins in 1826. It raised $10,240, and with the revenue from new shares, the large gifts were more than matched. Two other drives brought in $6,015 for scientific publications. All four subscription drives may be regarded as a single drive that gave multiple opportunities for support.

Generally, however, subscription drives at the Boston Athenæum were reserved for works of art. The smallest sum collected was $104 by 104 men for a bust of George Washington in 1824. The largest drive, in contrast, was for Gilbert Stuart’s portraits of George and Martha Washington, for which $1,500 was collected by 22 men. The 1848 campaign for funds to purchase Washington’s library thus fit into the Athenæum’s practice of drives for specific amounts for a particular purpose.

Drives also differed in whether donors were asked to contribute a specific amount or to choose among various sums. The early subscription drives were not like the university campaigns of the twentieth century. Instead of being for multiple purposes, those of the early nineteenth century were always for a narrow, even if not highly specific purpose. The Athenæum campaign of 1826 that was meant “for the general uses of the Corporation” was unusually broad.

Just as the purpose of most subscription campaigns was restricted, the range in size of anticipated gifts was also limited. Thus, the subscription book for the Harvard Library’s Subscribed Fund of 1842 was divided into sections. The first was headed “Subscriptions of $1000 and upwards.” Other sections had headings for subscribers of smaller amounts. Although John Welles, Harvard Overseer from 1810–1844, subscribed for $2,000, this method of recording subscriptions almost always had the effect of limiting the size of gifts to the amount asked for. Even when no amount was set, as in a campaign for the Harvard Library in 1858, the fact that the initial subscribers signed for $10 set the standard to which most kept. This drive did not have a book; subscribers signed the last page of the printed circular. Writing down one’s name, literally “sub scribing,” meant the individual was performing a public act, open to the scrutiny of others.

22 The printed letter and sheets recording subscriptions are in Records of the Harvard University Library, 1698, 1698. Harvard University Archives,UAIII 50.28.78PF, l. 47. http://id.lib.harvard.edu/alma/990006042690203941/catalog
Subscription drives also differed in whether they were directed at a few, select individuals or to a large number. The 1826 Athenæum drive for “Transactions of Foreign Societies” would seem to be an example of the former. The drive for Washington’s library represents the latter, but it points up a difference among drives with a large number of subscribers. The individuals could all be connected with the institution, as the Athenæum drives were, or the drive could also be directed at individuals outside the institution.

The Washington library drive, of course, sought funds from those outside the Athenæum as well as Athenæum proprietors. Indeed, it differed from all the other drives of either Harvard or the Boston Athenæum—and probably elsewhere—in that it was not institutionally sponsored. At the same time, despite the circular leaving open the ultimate destination of the library by its explicit statement that the donors would decide where to place it, the ultimate repository was never in doubt.

Size was not the reason. Excluding the student society libraries, in 1851 Harvard had 74,200 volumes (College Library, 56,000 volumes; Law Library, 14,000 volumes; Theological Library, 3,000; Medical Library, 1,200). The Boston Athenæum was reported as having 50,000 volumes, plus 20,000 pamphlets and 400 to 500 volumes of engravings, so the libraries were roughly equivalent in numbers.23

The Athenæum was more broadly useful. Charles Coffin Jewett, compiler of the important 1851 survey of public libraries, was not without cause when he stated of the Athenæum: “The library is hardly surpassed, either in size or in value, by any other in the country; and its regulations are framed with the design that it shall answer the highest purposes of a public library.”24 In writing this, he had in mind not just the collections, with their special strength in the publications of the European learned societies, but also the library’s accessibility. The Harvard Library, though visitors were permitted, had shorter hours, and the collections consisted to a considerable extent of gifts of unwanted books. The Harvard Library of the eighteenth century, along with others established in colonial times, has been characterized as

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23 Charles C. Jewett, Notices of Public Libraries in the United States of America (Washington, DC, Printed for the House of Representatives, 1851), 19–24, 31–36. The student society libraries, with 12,500 volumes, were not generally available.
24 Ibid, 22.
“unused warehouses of the discarded books of previous generations.” Its growth continued to depend on gifts, and donors did not tend to give away books in constant use.

To be sure, the Harvard Corporation did from time to time make funds available for purchases, and donors could contribute valuable material. Israel Thorndike paid $6,500 in 1818 for the Americana collection of Christoph Daniel Ebeling, and Samuel Atkins Eliot paid $5,000 in 1823 for the Americana library of David Bailie Warden. The Subscribed Fund of 1842, or the Donation Fund of 1842, as it was variously called, amounted to $21,008 from 34 donors. It had been spent largely on filling gaps of older publications, and by 1848 the fund had been largely depleted, leaving the Harvard College Library to rely on the very modest income from its endowment, approximately $450 a year. That was not nearly a sufficient amount to keep up with the increasing output of publishers.

The Athenæum, founded in 1807, also had inadequate book funds, with relatively little left over for books after other expenses. It did, however, have enough to acquire many current scientific materials, and it received a donation of $25,000 from John Bromfield in 1846. As a result, the Athenæum was in a much more secure position to buy what it wanted than was the Harvard Library.

The record of charitable donations in Boston between 1800 and 1860 also reveals the importance of the Boston Athenæum—literally so and in the eyes of Bostonians. Harvard—the institution overall—topped the list, with $1.18 million, closely followed by the Massachusetts General Hospital/McLean Asylum, with $1 million; but the Boston Athenæum came third, with $320,000, making it the recipient of far more than the Harvard Library. The Boston Public Library, authorized in 1848 by an act of the Massachusetts legislature and opened in 1854, had by 1860 already received donations of $74,000, more than Harvard had in the preceding 12

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26 Jewett, Notices, 32. The subscription book, in the Harvard University Archives (UA III.50.28.41.2) shows a smaller amount, as reported in Carpenter, First 350 Years of the Harvard University Library, 80. Since the figure in Jewett was supplied by the librarian, it should be taken as more accurate. For a reproduction of the initial page of the subscription book, see Carpenter, 81; “Paid” is not written beside the names of Perkins and Cushing, though it is by the others.

years. The days of Harvard as an institution for the creation of knowledge, with a library adequate to that purpose, were in the future. The library of an institution where undergraduate learning was often by rote would have seemed to many a less appropriate repository than the Athenæum, which, with its public lectures and its art exhibitions, was a broadly cultural institution.

Rational reasons existed for the subscribers to choose the Boston Athenæum over Harvard, but so did reasons of the heart. A large proportion of those to whom Norton and Sparks sent the subscription circular, 126 of 236, were neither Harvard graduates nor otherwise connected with Harvard. Only 45 of those solicited, however, were not Athenæum proprietors. Of the subscribers, 44 had a Harvard connection, but 54 were Athenæum proprietors. Some proprietors had, of course, a Harvard tie as well, but only five of the Harvard men were not also proprietors of the Athenæum, three of whom were Sparks and the two Nortons. It was membership in the Athenæum that increased the likelihood of contributing to purchase George Washington’s library. They had in the past donated to it—for books, for art, or for building purposes. They were men of affairs, those who were shaping the nation economically, politically, and culturally. Nothing was more natural than that they should have chosen to place the books of the nation’s first president on the shelves of the Boston Athenæum.

Although the Athenæum was the logical place for Washington’s library, with the decision to place it there an inevitable outcome of a large subscription drive, it was not a foregone conclusion that the drive would be successful. Andrews Norton, certainly, and Jared Sparks, possibly, had no doubt that Bostonians would subscribe in adequate numbers; but, as has been indicated, the Washington library is in Boston because the seller had little choice but to accept less than the agreed upon sum. Why, then, was it so difficult to raise the money?

Any thought that the 236 men on the list might have had trouble with contributing $50 should immediately be dispelled. Seventy of them were among the 200 wealthiest Bostonians in 1848; as measured by the assessment records, they each owned property worth more than

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29 The numbers may not be fully accurate. The circular list of men approached does not give full names; and especially if only one initial is given, more than one person might have the last name and initial. Also, the same name might apply to more than one individual. The difficulties apply both to determining a Harvard connection and Athenæum proprietorship. A number of the men did become proprietors after 1848, but they are not here counted as proprietors.
$100,000. Those records underestimated wealth, as Ronald Story found through his search of probate records. Some recorded by assessors as possessing $100,000 to $250,000 in wealth could, according to the probate records, have possessed $1 million or more. Nor do the Boston assessments provide information on individuals who lived outside of Boston, as in Cambridge or Brookline. Samuel Batchelder, for example, who was living in Cambridge as of 1847, was a Boston Associate, a term applied to those who in the early nineteenth century invested in the textile industry and who were linked by family, philanthropic, and political ties, as well as economic ones. He was surely among the wealthiest in the Boston area, though he is not recorded by those who have focused on Boston. Even allowing for the fact that some of those recorded as being among the area’s wealthiest were committed to supporting particular causes, $50 would not have been a prohibitive amount.

The difficulty in raising $4,500 stemmed in part from the very fact of trying to do so by subscription, particularly by a subscription for one set amount. To be sure, the circular noted that “every subscriber . . . [may take] one or more shares, at his pleasure,” but no one did so. A subscription book was a public document, in this case available to subscribers at the American Insurance Company, which was the office of J. Ingersoll Bowditch. There seems to have been an egalitarian ethos that came into play with subscriptions for a fixed sum, one that would have made a subscription of multiple shares a flaunting of wealth.

Individuals did give large sums in certain subscription drives—Ronald Story states that large donors were responsible for an increasing portion of the total amount raised in them—but the number of gifts larger than those obtained in subscription drives was increasing. Up through the 1840s, the number of individual donations to Harvard of $5,000 or more increased, both in the size of gifts and in the quantity. Thus, from 1811 to 1836, there were 14 individual grants, but 13 during the 1840s alone. Andrews Norton, Jared Sparks, and Edward Everett had all come of age in the era of the subscription drive, but their choice of that mode of fund raising increased the difficulty of raising the requisite amount. Moreover, the Boston Athenæum was perhaps even more wedded to subscription drives than was Harvard. Not only did it owe its very

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32 Story, Forging of an Aristocracy, 26–29.
existence to subscribers, but subscriptions also helped to make a cohesive group out of the Boston elite. Note above all the 104 gentlemen who each contributed one dollar for the bust of Washington in 1824.\textsuperscript{33}

Andrews Norton anticipated easy success in raising the needed funds, and Stevens’ account indicates that he also expected that the passed hat (an expression confirming the pattern of communitarian fund raising) would be filled; but Norton’s feelings about George Washington’s books were not universal. Valuing books for what they represent, not just for their texts, is not a universal emotion. Often it is an individual’s “unruly passion,” or perhaps “gentle madness,” an effort to seize and hold as one’s own a part of the world, that leads to collecting and rare book philanthropy.\textsuperscript{34} The question about the subscription drive to purchase Washington’s library could be seen as having two sides, not only why it attracted so few donors but also why so many contributed.

Exactly one half of the 236 men to whom the subscription circular was sent did not respond at all. Fifty-five recipients—nearly 25 percent—explicitly declined, and 63 subscribed, two of them for $25, rather than the $50 requested. The \textit{Athenæum Centenary} records 77 subscribers. Of those, 17 individuals are not on the manuscript list and seven who are recorded as subscribers on the list are not subsequently recorded as donors. Four of the individuals not on the list but recorded as being subscribers are absent for obvious reasons; they are Andrews Norton, Charles Eliot Norton, Jared Sparks, and Harvard president Edward Everett. The \textit{Athenæum Centenary} records that the subscription amounted to a total of $3,750, with 73 contributions of $50 and four of $25.

Some of the subscribers who were not sent the circular may have responded to newspaper accounts. Some may have subscribed after a personal appeal, most likely from George Livermore; but the existence of the circular list enables us to examine the backgrounds of a large group who were considered to be potential subscribers—and then to see whether those who subscribed differ from those who did not. The numbers are not precise. One reason is that no information can be found on a few of the men. It is possible that in some cases two people of the

\textsuperscript{33} \textit{Athenæum Centenary}, 76–77. Only somewhat less striking was the drive for funds for a portrait of James Perkins, to which 46 gentlemen subscribed $285 in 1822.

same name may have been confused. In addition, existing information may be misleading in certain ways. A law degree, for example, is no guarantee that the individual practiced law. Or, as was not unusual in Boston, men sometimes withdrew from business after amassing funds they considered sufficient.

Despite lack of precision, some patterns are clear. Most surprising is the finding that being a supporter of libraries, as evidenced either by donations to Harvard (Appendix A) or service as an officer of the Boston Athenæum (Appendix B), decreased the likelihood of subscribing for the purchase of George Washington’s library.

Six men who subscribed to the Harvard College Library’s Subscribed Fund of 1842 also subscribed for Washington’s library. Four who received the circular declined, and four did not respond. Yet several of these men, besides their contribution to the Subscribed Fund of 1842, subsequently supported libraries in other ways. Francis Calley Gray, who collected prints, left his collection to Harvard, and William Hickling Prescott bequeathed to Harvard his books, some of which would today be considered rare books but which were tools to him. Thomas Wren Ward left $5,000 each to Harvard and the Athenæum. The later generosity of these men suggests that the decision not to contribute for Washington’s library was a statement about their priorities.

In the case of Athenæum officers, the overwhelming majority did not subscribe to the fund to purchase George Washington’s library, and two of the men subscribed only after the 1848 drive, which suggests that they did so more as a means of helping the Athenæum than of acquiring Washington’s library. Members of the Library Committee of the Athenæum during the 1840s, some of them also trustees, overwhelmingly did not subscribe. Twenty-three were asked; only five subscribed.

One probable reason is that those intimately involved in the library knew that the crucial need was funds to purchase new publications. Those most knowledgeable about libraries, or at least about the Boston Athenæum, appear to have seen the subscription campaign for Washington’s library to be a diversion from the primary need of funds—endowed funds—for new books. For example, John Bromfield’s gift of $25,000 to the Athenæum in 1846, which

35 Some men who contributed to the Subscribed Fund, and could have been subscribers in 1848, were not on the list to receive the circular, perhaps merely an oversight. See Appendix A for those who were on the list.
came with the proviso that one-fourth of the income should each year be added to the principal, was an early expression of the need for endowments to make possible ongoing purchases. For Harvard, Thomas Greaves Cary, who declined to contribute in 1848, was a leader of an 1858 effort to raise funds to satisfy the “pressing want of means to keep up with the advance of the age.” Cary’s effort was not successful, but a year later in 1859, William Gray (who declined to support the subscription drive) promised Harvard $5,000 a year for five years, explicitly for new publications.\(^37\) And, a decade later in 1870, Charles Minot of the class of 1828 left Harvard $60,000 explicitly for “new books.”\(^38\)

Given the growing awareness of the need for ongoing purchases of new books, it is not surprising that to be a college professor, a scholarly lawyer, a physician, or another kind of professional user of books decreased the likelihood of subscribing. With the exceptions of Everett and Sparks, who had to contribute, only one Harvard College professor did so, the German-born Charles Beck (see Appendix C), though a number of Law School and Medical School faculty members did so. Beck was the exception, since five of his colleagues in Harvard College did not subscribe (see Appendix C). Likewise, an overwhelming proportion of lawyers, judges, clergymen, physicians, etc., did not contribute (Appendix D). To the professors and other learned professionals, books were tools, the hammers and saws of their daily life. They, like the supporters of libraries, either as donors or officers, would have been aware of the inadequacy of the libraries of Harvard and the Boston Athenæum. To them, it would not have been sufficient that these libraries were among the best in the country. Members of these groups were particularly conscious of the fact that there was no library for research in the United States, no library comparable to the leading libraries of Europe. They knew that libraries badly needed money for books, and George Washington’s library was not for such men a priority.\(^39\)

The subscription drive succeeded because a greater percentage of businessmen contributed (roughly 34 percent, or 53 of 153; see Appendix E) than did those in other categories; and the proportion of businessmen among the subscribers was roughly equal to the proportion of businessmen among those to whom the circular was sent. And among businessmen, those who were not actively involved in libraries were the group with whom the

\(^{37}\) Carpenter, *First 350 Years of the Harvard University Library*, 90-91.

\(^{38}\) Ibid, 98.

circular of Andrews Norton most resonated. George Livermore is the best exemplar of that group: a wool merchant, he was also a bibliophile and particularly a collector of Bibles, the book that above all need not be purchased at a high price in order to have a reading copy. Andrews Norton, who drew up the circular, spoke above all to the George Livermore, to people who were not on the-books-as-tools side of the continuum. The theologian could write of the books as “relics [that] should be venerated.” To purchase the library was to pay a “tribute of respect to moral excellence.” Norton’s reference to the “character of Washington,” which “we have inherited” could have been read as apotheosizing Washington. In psychological terms, it was elevating the father, right at the period when a younger generation was wanting to loosen the grip of the earlier generation. Norton was expressing a sentimentalism that had at that point gone out of style. The newer generation did not want to emphasize the founders as models of character or the nation as a family. The founding fathers had acted their part, but times had changed. The founding fathers could not save the nation; the men of 1848 had to do that.

In the 1850s, sentimentalism did revive, even strengthen, as the symbol of Washington was used in an effort to hold the nation together. In this new period, which the historian George Forgie places primarily between 1848 and 1855, though it lasted longer, a leading exponent was the former Harvard president Edward Everett. Washington as a symbol of unity was not, however, the tack taken in the drive for the library. Instead, the emphasis was on Washington as an object of veneration, the books a relic that would serve as a memorial to him. Memorials are, however, reminders. Relics recall for the faithful the holy deeds, and the Protestant theologian sought those books out of his emotional certainty that in honoring the man they would also shape the character of the American people. Those books were not “useful knowledge” in the sense of containing the practical. They were useful in a grander way, as a

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40 Livermore did become active in libraries, at the Boston Athenæum, the American Antiquarian Society, and the Massachusetts Historical Society, but in 1848 he was only a new member of the Harvard Overseers’ Committee to Visit the Library, appointed in 1847. Livermore also became a public advocate of research libraries. His “Remarks on Public Libraries,” which was also offprinted from the North American Review in 1850 and disseminated as a pamphlet, was a clear exposition of the weakness of America’s libraries and a powerfully cogent appeal for building strong collections. Another bibliophile who contributed for Washington’s library was George Ticknor, whose advocacy of the Boston Public Library can be seen, in the context of the 1850s, as a recognition that it was the best hope for creating the research library that he had long desired.


42 Forgie, Patricide, 185–90.
“lesson to our posterity.” In this Andrews Norton went beyond the year 1848. He was an early exemplar of the attitude that some books serve a higher purpose than learning.

Sometimes, this has been expressed in terms of a dichotomy between “useful books” and the “curious, rare, and ornamental specimens of literature and of printing,” as the annual report of Baltimore’s Peabody Institute put it in 1875. To refer to the “curious” was, however, to use a word that earlier was common; it was also in the Sparks and Norton appeal. More modern—for the late nineteenth century—and more in line with Andrews Norton was the Astor Library annual report of 1885. In commenting on Mr. Astor’s gifts of rare books, the report expressed satisfaction about the library doing “its important part in raising and refining the character of the country.” In the twentieth century, William L. Clements, in writing about his great collection of research materials on American history at the University of Michigan, continued in this tradition. Although keen to emphasize that his library would be for “advanced research,” Clements also wrote in his remarks at the dedication of the Clements Library:

- Frequently, even among scholars, the aesthetic or sentimental value of a book counts for naught. The book, to those who lack this appreciation, is worth merely what it expresses in sentences. That any man or library should buy a Gutenberg Bible and pay its auction price when a facsimile is at hand, is to these persons an indication of mental feebleness. Such a man fails to appreciate the significance of the original. He fails to mark it with all its meaning in the history of civilization.

Clements held to both sides of the continuum—books as tools and books as objects having cultural value—but his fear was that the books-as-tools end of the continuum would result in the destruction of his books, in ending their cultural value. On July 10, 1923, he expressed this to George Parker Winship, Librarian of the Harry Elkins Widener Collection. The two men had extensive correspondence, and Winship, though present at the dedication, had not actually delivered remarks at the formal proceedings. He had, though, spoken at the luncheon on behalf of Clements’ friends. Clements wrote about the remarks: “Your remarks as made at the

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43 Eighth Annual Report of the Provost to the Trustees of the Peabody Institute of the City of Baltimore (Baltimore: Wm. K. Boyle & Son, 1875), 8.
46 An account of the actual dedication is in “The Clements Library; a Real Treasure-House,” The Michigan Alumnus 30, no. 393 (May 1, 1924), 848.
luncheon, of which you have sent me a typewritten copy, put exactly the light upon the whole proposition that I wish others could see but which I feel sure they will not see. That we are not running the ordinary type of library with open shelves and free access to every book and document in it is hard for many people to understand. . . .” Then he went on: “Off hand, I do not see many corrections and it voices in a rather homely fashion but forcibly the idea that is spoken about in the first part of this letter. I am referring particularly to the aesthetic value of the Library rather than the historical. That there is the greatest need for such a valuable there is not the slightest doubt.”

CONCLUSION

The subscription circular, signed by Norton and Sparks, was a precursor of the Astor statement and of William L. Clements’ and Winship’s remarks on the Clements Library. After praising Washington “for his freedom from all sordid and selfish motives, for his elevation above ordinary human weaknesses, and for his thorough integrity and completeness of character,” it goes on to state that the collection will be a “lesson to our posterity.” That goal was not appropriate to the Harvard of 1848. For students the goal was to get high marks in the daily recitations of lessons. For the faculty the need was for more books as “tools.” The library had almost no money for books, and not until 1859 did it have a fund for buying current books. It is not surprising that Washington’s library was not acquired by Harvard.

It is also not surprising that so many persons familiar with the finances of the Boston Athenæum failed to become subscribers, while others, who were not professional users of books, did subscribe and unanimously saw the Athenæum as the appropriate home for the library. It was. The Athenæum was a cultural institution, with art as well as books, and in its early years some had even aspired for it to become the nation’s greatest library.48 Thanks to the passion of Andrews Norton, the Boston tradition of raising money by subscription, the wealth of so many


Bostonians, and the existence of an appropriate home for the library, it is across the river in Boston and not scattered or abroad.

*Kenneth E. Carpenter, who retired at the end of 2000 as Assistant Director for Research Resources in the Harvard University Library, was editor of Harvard Library Bulletin from 1980 to 2000. He has written extensively on the history of American libraries, including on the early history of the Boston Athenæum.*
APPENDIX A

Harvard College Library Subscribed Fund of 1842 Donors49

Below are the names of those who subscribed to the Harvard College Library Subscribed Fund of 1842, with the amount they subscribed to that fund. This list of Harvard library supporters is divided into three categories: those who subscribed for George Washington’s library; those who explicitly declined to contribute; and those who did not respond in any way to the circular.

Subscribers for GW’s library:

John Welles, $2,000
William Appleton, $1,000
John Perkins Cushing, $1,000
Abbott Lawrence, $1,000
Thomas Handasyd Perkins, $1,000
David Sears, $1,000
Nathaniel Silsbee, $500
Francis Cabot Lowell, $200
John Eliot Thayer, $200
William Pickman, $100

Declined to contribute:
George C. Shattuck, $1,000
Robert Gould Shaw, $500
Francis Calley Gray, $500
William Hickling Prescott, $500

Did not respond to circular:
Samuel Appleton, $1,000
Ebenezer Francis, $1,000
John Amory Lowell, $1,000
Thomas Wren Ward, $1,000

APPENDIX B
Boston Athenæum Officers

The list below encompasses men who, before 1849, served the Athenæum in one or more roles: trustee, secretary, treasurer, vice-president, president. Some of the donors did so subsequently.

Subscribers for GW’s library:
Samuel Austin
Samuel Lawrence (in 1850)
Thomas Handasyd Perkins
Henry Tuke Parker (in 1851)
Josiah Quincy, Jr.
David Sears
George Ticknor

Declined to contribute:
Thomas Greaves Cary
Charles Pelham Curtis
Francis Calley Gray
Thomas Wren Ward
Thomas Wigglesworth

Did not respond to circular:
Nathaniel Ingersoll Bowditch
Edward Brooks
Henry Codman
J. Coolidge
Franklin Dexter
Thomas Buckminster Curtis
Samuel Atkins Eliot
John Lowell Gardiner
Dr. George Hayward
Henderson Inches
Amos Lawrence
John Amory Lowell
George Theodore Lyman

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50 The Athenæum Centenary.
Samuel May
Josiah Quincy
William Sturgis
Edward Wigglesworth
Subscribers for GW’s library:
Charles Beck, German-born professor of Latin
Francis Bowen\(^5\)
Edward Everett, president of Harvard
Dr. George Parkman
Theophilus Parsons, professor at Law School
Jared Sparks, professor of history
Dr. John Ware
Dr. John Collins Warren

Declined to contribute:
None

Did not respond to circular:
Cornelius Conway Felton, professor of Greek
Asa Gray, professor of Natural History
Joseph Lovering, professor of Mathematics
Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, professor of Belles-Lettres
Josiah Quincy, president of Harvard, 1829-1845
Dr. George Cheyne Shattuck, Jr. (he did not become a professor until 1855)
James Walker, professor of Natural Religion, Moral Philosophy, and Civil Polity

\(^5\) Although Bowen in 1848 was editor of the *North American Review*, he is included here because he taught at Harvard between 1835 and 1839, and then from 1853 to 1889.
APPENDIX D

Professional Users of Books: Lawyers, Judges, Clergymen, Writers, Physicians

Subscribers for GW’s library:
Rev. George Edward Ellis
Richard Fletcher – judge
Benjamin Daniel Greene – student of natural history
Dr. George Parkman
Josiah Quincy, Jr. – mayor of Boston
George Ticknor – collector of rare books; scholar; supporter of libraries

Declined to contribute:
James Brown of Little, Brown
Benjamin Robbins Curtis – lawyer, subsequently a member of the U.S. Supreme Court
Charles Pelham Curtis – lawyer
George Ticknor Curtis – close friend of George Ticknor; author of a novel; lawyer who argued for the freedom of Dred Scott
George Barrell Emerson – educator
Francis Calley Gray – print collector
Charles Coffin Little of Little, Brown
Rev. Dr. Parkman (Francis Parkman?)
William Hickling Prescott – historian
Dr. George Cheyne Shattuck

Did not respond to circular:
Rev. Cyrus Bartol
Nathaniel Ingersoll Bowditch – lawyer
Richard Henry Dana, Jr. – novelist
Franklin Dexter – lawyer, who taught at Harvard Law School in 1848–1849
Rev. Dr. Nathaniel Langdon Frothingham, who translated much from German and Italian
Rev. John Singleton Copley Greene
Dr. George Hayward
William Powell Mason – lawyer, court reporter, secretary and treasurer of Boston Social Library
Rev. Samuel May
Dr. Samuel Parkman
Dr. George Cheyne Shattuck, Jr.
Lemuel Shaw – judge
Dr. William Johnson Walker
Rev. Dr. Alexander Young
APPENDIX E52

The Subscribers for George Washington’s Library

Nathan Appleton – Boston Associate
William Appleton – Boston Associate
Samuel Turrell Armstrong – bookseller and politician
Rev. Daniel Austin
Edward Austin – merchant
Samuel Austin – merchant
Daniel Carpenter Bacon – merchant
Francis Bacon – businessman (in insurance)
George Middleton Barnard – not in Boston directory
Samuel Batchelder – Boston Associate
Charles Beck – college professor
William Henderson Bordman – merchant
Jonathan Ingersoll Bowditch – businessman (in insurance)
Stephen Hopkins Bullard – merchant
William Story Bullard – merchant
Theodore Chase – merchant
Jonas Chickering – piano manufacturer
J. Coolidge – probably Joseph Coolidge, Harvard 1817, d. 1879; no occupation given in Boston directory
John Perkins Cushing – merchant
James Davis, Jr. – businessman (Revere Copper Co.)
John James Dixwell – merchant and banker
Edmund Dwight – Boston Associate
Edmund Dwight, Jr. - ? – only one Edmund Dwight in Boston directory
Rev. George Edward Ellis – clergyman
William Tappan Eustis – businessman (treasurer of a railroad)
Edward Everett – Harvard president
Richard Fletcher – judge
Ozias Goodwin – Boston Associate
Moses Grant – businessman (paper)
John Chipman Gray – inherited wealth
Benjamin Daniel Greene – naturalist

52 The Athenæum Centenary.
Zelotes Hosmer – businessman (hardware); book collector\textsuperscript{53}
Joseph Iasigi – merchant
George Horatio Kuhn – merchant
Abbott Lawrence – Boston Associate
Amos Lawrence – Boston Associate
Samuel Lawrence – merchant
Henry Lee – merchant
Henry Lee, Jr. – merchant
George Livermore – merchant
James Lloyd – Boston Associate
Israel Lombard – merchant
Francis Cabot Lowell – Boston Associate
John Amory Lowell – Boston Associate
George Williams Lyman – Boston Associate
Charles Henry Mills – Boston Associate
James Kellogg Mills – Boston Associate
Nathan W. Neal – ? – not in Boston or Cambridge directory
Andrews Norton – intellectual
Charles Eliot Norton – East India merchant in 1848, but an inadequate characterization
Henry P. Oxnard – merchant
Daniel Pinckney Parker – Boston Associate
Henry Tuke Parker – lawyer
Dr. George Parkman – physician
Francis Peabody – businessman
George Peabody – businessman
Edward Newton Perkins – son of James Perkins
Thomas Handasyd Perkins – Boston Associate, merchant
William Perkins – lawyer
Jonathan Phillips – merchant and state legislator
Clarke Gayton Pickman\textsuperscript{54}
D. Pickman – ? – not in Boston or Cambridge directory
William Pickman – ? – not in Boston or Cambridge directory
Josiah Quincy, Jr. – mayor
James Read – merchant


\textsuperscript{54} The Pickmans were a Salem family, but it is likely that these Pickmans were not all living in Salem; in fact, Gayton C. [sic] Pickman is recorded as living in Cambridge, boarding at Dana St. (no occupation given).
Nathan Rice – merchant
Edward Hutchinson Robbins – businessman (textile manufacturing)
David Sears – Boston Associate
Robert G. Shaw Co. – businessman
Nathaniel Silsbee
Jared Sparks – college professor
William Gordon Stearns – not in Boston or Cambridge directory
John Eliot Thayer – broker
George Ticknor – author
Thomas Beale Wales – Boston Associate
Dr. John Ware – physician
Dr. John Collins Warren – physician
Thomas Wigglesworth – merchant

55 It cannot be determined whether this is Nathaniel Silsbee, merchant and politician (1773–1850) or Nathaniel Silsbee, Harvard 1824 (d. 1881), treasurer of Harvard from 1862–1876.