

**The Van Gorden-Williams Library and Archives at the National Heritage Museum:  
Cataloging the Rare 19<sup>th</sup> and Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century Foreign Language Masonic Books**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Van Gorden-Williams Library and Archives at the National Heritage Museum, in Lexington, Massachusetts, proposes to catalog its unique and rare collection of 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century foreign language Masonic books. The Van Gorden-Williams Library and Archives, one of only six major Masonic libraries in the United States, holds an extensive collection of material on Freemasonry and fraternal groups from around the world. This endeavor will enhance worldwide scholars' and local patrons' use of the Van Gorden-Williams Library and Archives by providing access to materials that are mostly underrepresented in American libraries. The Library requests \$111,863.50 in funding for a 22-month period in 2011 for this project.

**THE VAN GORDEN-WILLIAMS LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES  
AT THE NATIONAL HERITAGE MUSEUM**

The Van Gorden-Williams Library and Archives (VGWLA), housed within the National Heritage Museum, is located in Lexington, Massachusetts. The facility is situated on a hill just one mile from the historic Lexington green where the first shots of the American Revolution were fired. Founded in 1642, Lexington remains a quaint, colonial town with just over 31,300 residents (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). The town's annual Patriots Day celebration commemorates the historic events of the Battle of Lexington and provides a window on history

with the re-enactment of Paul Revere's ride and the Lexington Militia's confrontation with the British. Visitors are welcomed year round by organizations in the area focused on American history, including the National Heritage Museum and VGWLA.

The Museum and Library, which opened in 1975, are supported by the Scottish Rite's Northern Masonic Jurisdiction, which is headquartered on the same campus as the Museum. This fraternal group serves over 200,000 members in the fifteen states that make up the Northern Jurisdiction (Supreme Council, 33<sup>rd</sup> Northern Jurisdiction, 2011). Because of the institution's close affiliation to Freemasonry and its location among historic Lexington, the Museum and Library seek to serve both Masonic and American history audiences. The Museum houses a remarkable collection of over 16,000 items and six exhibit spaces that illustrate the history of American Freemasonry and fraternalism and artifacts related to Lexington around the time of the American Revolution. The Museum and VGWLA are open to anyone, not just members of Freemasonry, and offer free admission. Please visit the Library's website:

<http://www.nationalheritagemuseum.org/Library.aspx>

### *Mission Statement*

The VGWLA supports the mission statement of the Museum:

...to engage and inspire, through its exhibits, programs, and collections, a knowledge and appreciation of America's history, heritage, culture, and traditions with a focus on the nation's formative years, Freemasonry, and fraternalism. It will build interest and support for its mission by emphasizing themes of liberty, patriotism, and personal and civic virtues. (Van Gorden-Williams Library and Archives, 2008)

*Collection*

The VGWLA is a non-circulating research collection that supports of the National Heritage Museum. Its collections pre-date the founding of the Museum and were formed from the archives and library holdings of the Scottish Rite's Supreme Council. As a whole, the library's collections reflect the scope of Freemasonry, fraternalism, and American history and support research on the museum's object collections as well as exhibitions.

The library's entire permanent collection comprises approximately 60,000 books and 1,600 serials titles, with approximately 2,000 cubic feet of archival materials (Van Gorden-Williams Library and Archives, 2008). In addition, the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts has placed on extended loan an extensive collection containing over 11,000 objects and archival pieces. Walgren (2003) categorizes the VGWLA as one of the six major Masonic libraries in the United States.

Since its founding in 1975, the library has continued to enrich its holdings through purchases and donations, including the acquisition of several notable libraries. Today the library's holdings on Freemasonry total approximately 45,000 volumes (National Heritage Museum, 2011), making it one of the world's most comprehensive collections on the subject. In January 2010, the VGWLA also received the distinction of being the first, and currently the only, Masonic library to add its bibliographic records to the OCLC WorldCat database. WorldCat provides access to more than 10,000 library catalogs worldwide (WorldCat, 2011).

What distinguishes the VGWLA from the rest of the major Masonic libraries is its strong development of special collections. Newbury and Williams (1987) state that while a Masonic library is not hard to start due to a surplus of new Masonic books being published, it is hard to complete as "older Masonic books are scarce and difficult to acquire." Despite this difficulty,

the VGWLA has a history of collecting early, rare Masonic works. Among many treasures, its collections contain a first edition of the first known published Masonic book *The Constitutions of Free-Masons*, published in Newbury London in 1723, as well as the first American edition of the same title printed in Philadelphia by Benjamin Franklin in 1734 (Davis, 2002).

### *Patrons*

Unlike some of the major Masonic libraries, the VGWLA is open to the public and the catalog is available on the internet. The entire collection is available to visitors in the reading room, and the Gage collection, a small collection of 700 circulating Masonic books, has a lending period of one month to Masons in the area. A number of user groups frequent the library. Museum staff as well as members of its parent organization, the Scottish Rite Northern Masonic Jurisdiction are among this group. Graduate-level researchers and independent scholars take advantage of the unique collection to research Freemasonry. Undergraduate and school age children, as well as the general public, often use the VGWLA to gather information mainly pertaining to Freemasonry, fraternalism, the American Revolution era, and genealogy. A substantial portion of the patron base are members of Freemasonry organizations in the area. Lexington has two local lodges and Middlesex County contains 55 lodges (Massachusetts Freemasons, 2011).

### *Circulation*

With its increased presence on the Internet, especially through the OCLC WorldCat database, and connections made with Freemason scholars throughout the United States and world, VGWLA continues to increase its reference requests, circulation, and number of visitors.

## VGWLA Circulation Data 2009-2011

|                         | <i>Reference Requests</i> | <i>Circulation</i> | <i>Visitors</i> |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| <i>Fiscal Year 2009</i> | 703                       | 1,099              | 3,802           |
| <i>Fiscal Year 2010</i> | 751                       | 2,024              | 4,016           |
| <i>Fiscal Year 2011</i> | 823                       | 2,187              | 4, 221          |

*Staff*

The library has two full-time professional staff. Jeff Croteau, librarian and Manager of the library, has over twelve years of experience in special libraries. He began his tenure with the VGWLA in 2006 and has since been advancing the library's presence through its website and added holdings to the OCLC WorldCat. Croteau is also an active researcher of fraternalism and Freemasonry, presenting at conferences around the world, and contributes regularly to *The Northern Light*, the magazine of the Scottish Rite's Northern Masonic Jurisdiction.

Catherine Swanson serves as the library's archivist. Swanson has a long history with the VGWLA. She began her tenure in 1995 and has a commanding knowledge of the extensive archives collection. She contributes regularly to *The Northern Light* and has been instrumental in the library's outreach to those wishing to preserve their Masonic valuables. Her brochure, *Caring for Your Masonic Treasures*, is available through the library as well as the Masonic Library and Museum Association (MLMA). Professional affiliations of staff members may be found on individual resumes located in the Appendix.

The library also relies on dedicated volunteers and interns to help support its mission. This volunteer corps is comprised of residents in surrounding communities, area colleges, and members of Freemasonry. The volunteers and interns assist with processing incoming serials and recent acquisitions, collection preservation, and research. A small number of volunteers

provide specialized skills such as MARC record verification and translation services of rare foreign language materials.

The VGWLA is governed by the Executive Director of the museum as well as the museum's Board of Trustees. The library also has an active Advisory Committee comprised of four community members, one parent organization member, and five museum staff. The Committee meets every two months.

### **STATEMENT OF NEED**

Materials about Freemasonry, especially primary sources, are actively sought by both domestic and international researchers. The VGWLA, which maintains one of the leading Masonic collections in the United States, prides itself on its access to special and rare collections. It currently holds a particularly unique collection of uncataloged 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century rare foreign language Masonic books. This collection of approximately 375 books contains texts written and published in French, German, and Spanish. This uncataloged collection is of great value to scholars.

Foreign published Masonic materials are not well represented in the United States. Currently, of the six major Masonic libraries in the United States, only one has a comprehensive international collection. The Scottish Rite Supreme Council Library of the Southern Jurisdiction, located in Washington D.C, has 4,000 volumes from 68 countries (Supreme Council 33<sup>^</sup> Southern Jurisdiction, 2011), however only a small portion of this collection is considered rare. The rare materials consist mostly of photographs and objects, not books. Additionally, these

items can only be searched through the library's online catalog; holdings are not available in the OCLC WorldCat.

In 2002, Trevor Stuart completed a survey of 269 academic papers from the 1980's and 1990's analyzed the contribution that Freemasonry made to European history. His results indicate the recent emergence of research into Masonic phenomenon and activities by scholars who are not freemasons. At the time the survey was completed, Stuart claimed, "Freemasonry is beginning to be appraised critically by European scholars and others who use primary source materials of various kinds."

The VGWLA's collection of 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century rare foreign language Masonic books lack documentation in its online catalog, making them targets for loss and theft. Any loss of material would be a detriment to domestic and international researchers wanting to study Freemasonry. Yakel (2005) cites a 1998 study by the Association of Research Libraries claiming 15% of print materials in research libraries are uncataloged, therefore making them "hidden." These hidden collections are at an increased security risk. In their current uncataloged state, the VGWLA's collection of 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century rare foreign language Masonic books pose this security risk.

Unfortunately the value of the rare foreign language Masonic book collection at the VGWLA is unknown to scholars and patrons. It remains uncataloged and therefore invisible. In its 2009 Statement on Access to Research Materials in Archives and Special Collections Libraries, the Association of College and Research Libraries, stated "It is the responsibility of a repository (1) to make available original research materials (2) in its possession on equal terms of access." Scholars and patrons will have a more complete view of the VGWLA's holdings after the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century rare foreign language Masonic books are cataloged. Upon

completion of this project, the holdings of rare Masonic materials in the library's online catalog will increase by 18%.

### **PROPOSED INITIATIVE**

By cataloging the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century rare foreign language Masonic holdings, the VGWLA will be able to offer both domestic and foreign researchers and patrons greater access to its collection. Library and information science research indicates a necessity for access to special and/or rare collections in libraries (Heaton, 2003; Taraba, 1992; Whittaker, 2006; Yakel, 2005).

#### *Project Goal and Expected Outcomes*

The VGWLA proposes to catalog its complete collection, approximately 375 volumes, of 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century rare foreign language Masonic books. Access to the catalog will be available through the VGWLA website and the OCLC WorldCat. A library's catalog is a key element of its service to its users. By expanding the VGWLA's current catalog, researchers and patrons will have greater access to unique materials. Without an adequate catalog, the rare holdings of the VGWLA will "remain untapped and under-used" (Heaton, 2003).

Upon the completion of this cataloging project, the VGWLA expects three outcomes. First, an increase in inquiries and/or research requests of this rare collection. Second, we expect an increase in visits to both the Library's website and online catalog. Finally, the VGWLA also expects and increase in access of these holdings on the OCLC WorldCat.



*Required Resources*

Because the staff at VGWLA is small and lack the needed foreign language skills, it is necessary to contract the services of an independent professional cataloger. The American Library Association's publication (1995) on outsourcing cataloging identifies numerous reasons for doing so, including to "eliminate a backlog [and] cataloging materials for which the library lacks in-house expertise." Cataloging the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century rare foreign language Masonic collection requires a special skill set. The contracted cataloger must be able to read French, German, and Spanish; have a working knowledge of the Boyden Classification scheme used in the VGWLA to classify Masonic material; and be familiar with the subject of Freemasonry.

The professional cataloger will be responsible for inventorying the collection. S/he will create records, either through original cataloging or copy cataloging if possible, and then convert them to MARC records. The records will then be imported into both the VGWLA online catalog and the OCLC WorldCat. The VGWLA staff will be available for assistance or guidance. Jeff Croteau, Library Manager, will dedicate 10% of his time and Catherine Swanson, Archivist, will contribute 10% of her time to the cataloging project. The contracted cataloger will also have unlimited access to VGWLA volunteers.

*Proposed Implementation Schedule*

The VGWLA cataloging project will take place over a period of 22 months. The project will begin with the candidate search process for an independent professional cataloger. We will also purchase necessary materials and supplies to house and catalog the collection. We calculate the project will proceed according to the following schedule.

*Month One:*

- Advertise and review resumes for a professional cataloger
- Library prepares for professional cataloger by establishing evaluation criteria and checklist of tasks

*Month Two and Three:*

- Hire a professional cataloger
- The contracted cataloger will become familiar with the 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> century rare foreign language Masonic holdings
- Inventory holdings
- Purchase necessary supplies

*Month Four through Twenty-two:*

- The collection will be systematically cataloged
- An average of 20 titles will be completed per month and added to the catalog
- The completed collection will be added to OCLC WorldCat and a collection list will be created and visible to patrons on WorldCat

*Evaluation of the Project*

The VGWLA will gauge the success of the project by three factors—local online access, number of research requests, and access in WorldCat. Each form of evaluation will be conducted by Jeff Croteau, Library Manager, after the project is completed. Within the first year of completion, the VGWLA projects a 10% increase in traffic to its website and online catalog. Numbers will be tabulated monthly. Also within the first year of completion, the VGWLA projects there will be between 20 to 30 inquiries and/or research requests for this collection. Requests will be recorded and calculated monthly. Finally, the VGWLA projects that within one year of completion, a 15% increase in traffic to its holding in the OCLC World Cat will occur. Access will be tracked monthly through WorldCat.

The VGWLA will publicize the newly cataloged 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century rare foreign language Masonic collection in numerous ways. The collection will be featured on the Library's main website, the subject of a Library and Museum blog post, and featured in an article

published in *The Northern Light*, which is delivered quarterly to 200,000+ domestic subscribers and distributed world-wide to other Supreme Councils and subscribers. Additionally, the collection will be announced on the Masonic Library and Museum Association's (MLMA) website and in the Freemasonry Listserv which reaches an audience of 160 academic members largely from Europe.

### PROPOSED BUDGET

#### *Salaries*

|  |                      |
|--|----------------------|
| Library Manager @ 10% of \$104,500<br>(salary for 22 months) | \$ 10,400.00         |
| Archivist @ 10% of \$123,500<br>(salary for 22 months)       | <u>\$ 12,350.00</u>  |
| <b>Subtotal</b>  | <b>\$ 22,750.00</b>  |
| Benefits @ 25% of subtotal                                   | <u>\$ 5,687.50</u>   |
| <b>Total Salaries &amp; Benefits</b>                         | <b>\$ 28,437.50*</b> |

#### *Contract Employee*

|                                    |              |
|------------------------------------|--------------|
| Independent professional cataloger | \$ 80,000.00 |
|------------------------------------|--------------|

#### *Supplies*

|                                    |             |
|------------------------------------|-------------|
| Rare book slips                    | \$ 126.00   |
| Perma/Dur acid free envelopes      | \$ 200.00   |
| Adjustable rare book storage boxes | \$ 1,600.00 |

#### *Other Costs*

|                 |             |
|-----------------|-------------|
| Internet Access | \$ 1,100.00 |
| Office supplies | \$ 400.00   |

**Total** **\$ 111,863.50**

#### *\*Contributed Income*

|  |                |
|--|----------------|
| In-kind contributions of volunteers' time<br>(10 hours/week for 22 months) | (\$ 11,880.00) |
|--|----------------|

## CONCLUSION

In his article on cataloging special collections, Gray contends:

Every library should have a goal of providing access to all the materials in their institution in as convenient and as complete a manner as possible, to the widest possible audiences. Otherwise, their libraries' rarities—the resources that make their collections special—will be lost as if the library had discarded them. (Gray, 2005)

The VGWLA's proposal to catalog its 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century rare foreign language Masonic collection addresses this goal. This unique collection will better serve the VGWLA patrons and academic scholars worldwide. With an enhanced catalog featuring these rarities, the VGWLA will continue to be one of the premier Masonic libraries in the United States.

## APPENDIX

- A. Resumes for key project personnel
- B. Staff list (including volunteers)
- C. Letters of support from Scottish Rite Supreme Council members, Northern Jurisdiction
- D. Library's annual report

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