



THE 210TH ANNUAL REPORT 2024-2025



WELCOME TO THE ATHENÆUM

As one of the nation's oldest and continuously serving member-supported libraries, The Athenæum of Philadelphia is one of the most vibrant and exciting intergenerational cultural organizations in the heart of this historic city.

It's a Philadelphia-centered place with global connections; a historic center where the past, present and future blend for a rich legacy. Our Board and staff welcome our community to share our resources, which include a strong collection of books, a renowned architectural collection, engaging programs, fascinating members.

Members and friends of The Athenæum gather in our National Historic Landmark building to connect while nurturing their innate curiosity. More than just a library, TheAthenæum is a third space for many where creativity is sparked, friendships are built and knowledge is shared. Read more about how we fulfilled our mission this year in our 210th Annual Report.



QUICK LINKS MENU



VISIT THE
PEOPLE PAGE



VISIT THE
COLLECTIONS PAGE



VISIT THE
READING ROOM



VISIT THE
COMMUNITY PAGE



VISIT THE
LEGACY PAGE



VISIT THE
FINANCIALS PAGE



BOARD PRESIDENT'S AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Dear Athenæum Shareholders, Subscribers, Young Friends and Student members,

This past winter, The Athenæum community joined in mourning the death of Dr. Roger W. Moss, Jr. Hailed as a visionary, energetic and erudite promoter of scholarly research and the historic preservation of Victorian design and architecture, Roger led The Athenæum of Philadelphia as its Executive Director from 1968 – 2008. During this remarkable tenure, he transformed a somnolent membership library into a primary center for the collection and study of pre-1950 Philadelphia architecture and 19th century material culture. As the result of his leadership and foresight, this remarkable and ever-growing collection has become an instrumental source for research conducted by preservationists, scholars, students and the interested public. Just as Dr. Moss helped re-envision this organization to respond to the particular zeitgeist of the day, so the Board and staff, with the enthusiastic support of the membership, have harnessed the bountiful resources of The Athenæum – its history, its building and space, its location, its circulating and research collections – to uphold its foundational ethos as a haven for intellectual inquiry, wonder and delight in knowledge, beauty, friendship and connection.

Since 1814, The Athenæum, like other historic libraries, has relied on the support of its members to provide intellectually stimulating reading material, special collections access and programming to its community. While Shareholder-level members hold a special spot in The Athenæum's history as bearers of our ongoing legacy, annual Subscribers, Young Friends and Student members also nurture The Athenæum as a learning hub and cultural anchor. In fiscal year 2025, we welcomed 686 new members to our multifaceted organization. Whether you are a recent or long-standing member, we are thankful that you are a part of this special space where we nurture curiosity and strengthen community through learning and discourse.

The vibrancy of The Athenæum is palpable. In FY2025, monthly visitation averaged 1,500. Circulation of books remained at FY2024 highs. Research visits and interactions with our archival collections increased. Many of our lectures, discussion groups, films, concerts, workshops and courses entertained full rooms. The Reading Room sustained a quiet energy from members of all ages working, reading and finding inspiration, while in the Member Lounge new friendships emerged, pieces clicked in puzzles and members enjoyed the newspaper over coffee.

At the Annual Shareholders Meeting last April, the Board recognized the fabulous contributions of four outgoing Directors: F. Scott Donahue, Michael Gary, Matt Rader and Robert Morris Steiner. Although they have served their terms, each of these gentlemen continue to enrich the work of The Athenæum in countless ways. The Shareholders elected Pierce Buller, Pamela Harper, Trina Gary, Alison Lazerwitz and Zoë Pappas as new Directors. We are grateful to all of them for agreeing to serve and are energized by the skills, wisdom and commitment of our full Board as we plan and prepare for the opportunities and challenges we expect in 2026 and beyond.

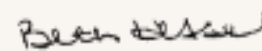
It is with pleasure that we present to you the 210th Annual Report illustrating the accomplishments of the 2024-2025 fiscal year.

With appreciation,

Jeffrey Cooper
Board President



Beth Shalom Hessel
Executive Director



ATHENÆUM'S PEOPLE

The heart of The Athenæum is our people: our members (whether Shareholders, Subscribers, Young Friends or Students), our Board of Directors, our staff and interns and our many volunteers.

THE BOARD

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Adele Gorrilla, Vice President
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Lynn Schwartz, Secretary
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Pierce Buller*, Chair, Governance & Nominations Committee
Veronica Chapman-Smith, Chair, External Relations Committee
Jeffrey Cohen, Chair, Collections Committee
P. Justin Detwiler
F. Scott Donahue**
Michael Gary**
Trina Gary*
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Mary Hawkesworth, Chair, Circulating Library Committee
Alison Lazerwitz*
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Nancy Moses, Chair, Development Committee
Zoë Pappas*
Matt Rader**
Bernard M. Resnick
Ralph Rosen, Chair, Literary Awards Committee
David B. Rowland
Robert Morris Steiner**
Lucy Strackhouse

KEY: *ELECTED FOR FIRST TERM APRIL 2025 **ROTATED OFF BOARD IN FY2025



OUR STAFF

Beth Shalom Hessel, Executive Director
‘Pemi Aguda, Front Desk Assistant
Patricia Altman, Director of Programs and Engagement
MeiXing Hunt-Babcock, Digital Imaging Special Projects Assistant
Jim Carroll, Imaging Specialist – RDIC
Christina Doe, Building Supervisor
Leigh Gallagher, Front Desk & Membership Assistant
Jill LeMin Lee, Librarian
Liam Mulshine, Development Database Administrator
Alexa Perillo, Development & Membership Manager
Brice Peterson, Associate Archivist Librarian
Lois Reibach, Resource Description & Access Librarian
Valerie Roche, Front Desk & Member Assistant (substitute)
Megan Cross Schmitt, Assistant Librarian
Kristina Wilson, Gladys Brooks Curator of Architecture



OUR INTERNS

Between July 1, 2024–June 30, 2025:

Greyson Daniels (Post-graduate, Winter/Spring 2025) Library & Archives Intern

Lydia Hessel-Robinson (Wellesley College, Spring/Summer 2025), Archives Intern

MeiXing Hunt-Babcock (Drexel University, Fall 2023 & Spring/Summer 2024), Archival & Digital Imaging Intern

Oli Oski (Drexel University, Fall/Winter 2024), Archival & Digital Imaging Intern

Lena Tran (Drexel University, Spring/Summer 2024) Events & Membership Intern

Brooke Quigley (Drexel University, Spring/Summer 2025), Digital Archives Intern

Erin White (Drexel University, Spring/Summer 2024), Archival & Digital Imaging Intern



OUR VOLUNTEERS

COMMITTEE VOLUNTEERS

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Peter Blair
Kevin Block
David Breiner
David Brownlee
John Cassidy
Emily Cooperman
Karie Diehorn
Susan Felker
Jane Fischer
Jonathan Friedan
Ann Goslin
Michael Guttman
Anthony Hennen

David Hollenberg
Ed Jakmauh
William Jantsch
Matt Krissel
Michael Lewis
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Sandra Markham
Robert Mitchell
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Darl Rastorfer
Franklyn Rodgers
Rebecca Roland
Kathy Moses Shelton
Ned Scharff
Kera Sloan
Maria Thompson
Lynnie Wachman

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Greyson Daniels
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Lynn Mandarano
Lisa Rosner

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Daryl Chen
Francine A Cohen
Lynn Davidman

Randall Drain
Jesse Ferrino
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Nathan Gorenstein
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Wyatt Leopold
Lisa Marks
Margaret Meigs
Amy Michael
Robert Mitchell
Christine Pickup
Lucille Pilling

Lisa Rosner
Nils Van Ammers
Lynn Alison Wachman
Melinda Wu

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Lisa Rosner

A/V & Building

Zelda Madrigal
Perry Maiorana
Nils Van Ammers

Docents

Mira Gohel
William Jantsch



ARCHITECTURAL ARCHIVES

The Architectural Archives at The Athenæum tell the story of the built environment of Philadelphia and the surrounding counties primarily from the 19th century until approximately 1945.

Collections of local architects who also designed buildings around the globe add an international component to the archives. Trade catalogs, architectural drawings, maps, photographs and other material are a treasure trove to historic preservationists, home owners, architects and scholars.



RECENT ACCESSIONS

All collections accepted by The Athenæum go through a vetting process to make sure that they fall into our collecting scope and enhance the collection in some way.

As a whole, the archival collection tells a story that The Athenæum has charged itself with growing, keeping and sharing for years to come. The Athenæum works closely with the staff at The Architectural Archives of the University of Pennsylvania.

Guided by Curator Kristina Wilson, Executive Director Beth Hessel and a Collections Committee composed of many of the most knowledgeable scholars of Philadelphia's architectural history, The Athenæum accepted 16 new accessions in fiscal year 2025. These recent accession highlights hint at the diversity and richness of our extensive collections:

Paul Cret/H2L2: Photo albums 1920s-1960s.

Irving Sharrow collection: Portfolio of design, interior design and architectural renderings; original drawings and draftings; blueprints; original photographs; related documents.

St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Chestnut Hill: 34 drawings, 1900-2023.

Colonial Village development in Wayne, 1926: One large plan and five tracing paper renderings of proposed dwellings.

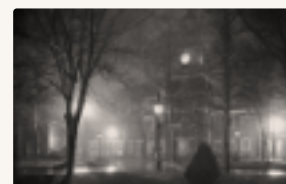
Keyser Brothers Iron Works collection: Drawings, sketches, blueprints, ephemera belonging to the Iron Craftsmen and Keyser Brothers.

Karen Nagel collection: Impact Studies, Reports of Findings, and Inventories & Histories of historically significant properties, mainly in and around the Main Line.

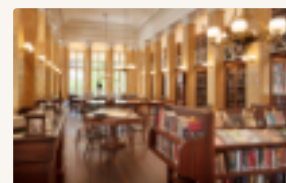
Dilworth House: Scrapbook/photos.



360k
ARCHITECTURAL
DRAWINGS



300k
PHOTOGRAPHIC
IMAGES



60k
VOLUME
LIBRARY



16

NUMBER OF
ACCESSIONS
SINCE OCT 2024

318

RESEARCH
REQUESTS

46

IMAGE USE
REQUESTS

28

ONSITE
RESEARCH
VISITS

13

TOURS OF
THE ARCHIVES

150+

BOXES SENT TO
'LIBRA' OFFSITE
STORAGE

INITIATIVES IN COLLECTIONS CARE

The Athenæum prioritizes keeping everything in our vast and varied collections stored in a safe, climate-controlled environment.

Thanks to The Athenæum's resource sharing agreement with the University of Pennsylvania, we can utilize their offsite storage facility LIBRA to house any materials, especially oversized drawings, for which there is no room onsite.

For years, the Athenæum has kept rolled, oversized drawings in an office storage facility in Delaware, using large, multicellular cardboard boxes custom-built for our collection materials. To maintain better

physical and intellectual control of these offsite items, we have been recalling boxes from Delaware, rehousing the drawings in individual tubes, and transferring them to LIBRA, all while ensuring that the metadata describing these items are accurate, up-to-date and synchronized across our various digital platforms.

As this process continues, we hope that it will become even easier for researchers to navigate our collections online, using both PAB and Find, while also streamlining the process by which staff recall offsite materials for in-person use.



Lynn is a retired sociology professor who describes The Athenæum as a warm and stimulating learning community. She visits The Athenæum several times each week and volunteers regularly at our front desk. Her favorite memory from The Athenæum this year was our Volunteer Appreciation Lunch, where she was awarded the “Front Desk Volunteer of the Year” award!

Lynn Davidman, Member since 2023

BUILDING PA ORAL HISTORY

The Athenæum received a \$5,000 grant from the Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission to support “Keystones: The Building Pennsylvania Oral History Project.”

With these funds, The Athenæum will create a digital archive of 33 oral history interviews of senior design professionals in the greater Philadelphia area conducted by Hyman Myers and Bruce Laverty in the 1990s and early 2000s. The grant will also allow us to train a new cohort of oral historians to conduct further interviews to grow the archive.

The oral history interview subjects include internationally recognized architects like Laurie Olin, Bernard Cywinski, Vincent Kling, Eugene Kohn, as well as leaders in interior design, lighting design, architectural photography and structural engineering.

COLLECTIONS ACCESS

Philadelphia Architects and Buildings (PAB)

351K

PAGE VIEWS

104K

USERS

9.3K

REPEAT VISITORS

Geohistory

349K

PAGE VIEWS

39K

USERS

7.8K

REPEAT VISITORS

ARCHIVES SPACE

The Athenæum has added ArchivesSpace, an archival software program, as a research tool to search existing and new accessions. In an ongoing effort to broaden access to all users, more finding aids to our collections will be made available through ArchivesSpace’s public portal over time.

ArchivesSpace will exist alongside Philadelphia Architects and Buildings as a research hub, serving as an additional resource for collections found at The Athenæum of Philadelphia. Together, the two sites will offer a comprehensive view of everything The Athenæum has to offer!

200 COLLECTION LEVEL RECORDS ADDED



READING ROOM

The Reading Room offers a haven from the “bustle and strife” of the world, a visual feast and a repository of countless worlds in the volumes on its shelves. Our members appreciate the beauty and inspiration offered by this historic space. Last year, book circulation averaged seven books per member, and at least 15 people per day sat down to read, write or study. The tables supported a bounty of food at post-talk receptions, where conversations sparkled and soared.



BOOKISH PURSUITS

The Reading Room remained a popular space for members to escape the world around them with thousands of books to choose from, old-world charm and 21st-century amenities. Members use the space for a multitude of reasons – including as a space for study, research, remote work, quiet reflection and reading.

Each month, library staff created themed displays to simplify browsing and discovery of interesting books. Monthly highlights included New York Times 100 Best Books of the 21st Century, Banned Books, Black Philadelphia, Celebrating Roger W. Moss and Ireland and Irish Authors.

4,840

**READING ROOM
TOTAL USAGE
FOR THE YEAR**

4,408

**CIRCULATION
DESK USERS**

291

**NEW
DOWNLOADABLE
CLOUDLIBRARY
TITLES**

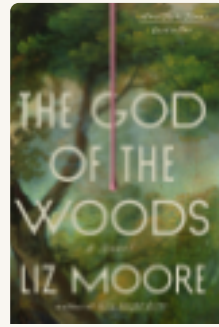
The first event Kirk attended at The Athenæum was Member Monday, where he quickly formed friendships that have thrived beyond the library. Now a daily visitor to the Member Lounge and Reading Room, Kirk attends as many programs as possible and enjoys spreading the word about our institution's many offerings. He's especially keen on helping everyone enjoy the social side of The Athenæum, especially new members.

Kirk de Gooyer, Member since 2023



MOST POPULAR PHYSICAL BOOKS

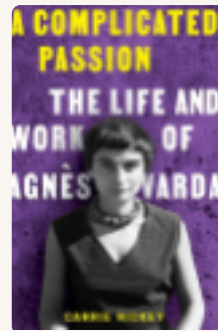
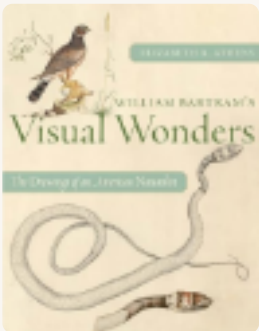
The Athenæum's avid readers favored stories by Philadelphia-based authors, though these stories often took them to places far beyond the city limits.



2024 LITERARY AWARD WINNERS

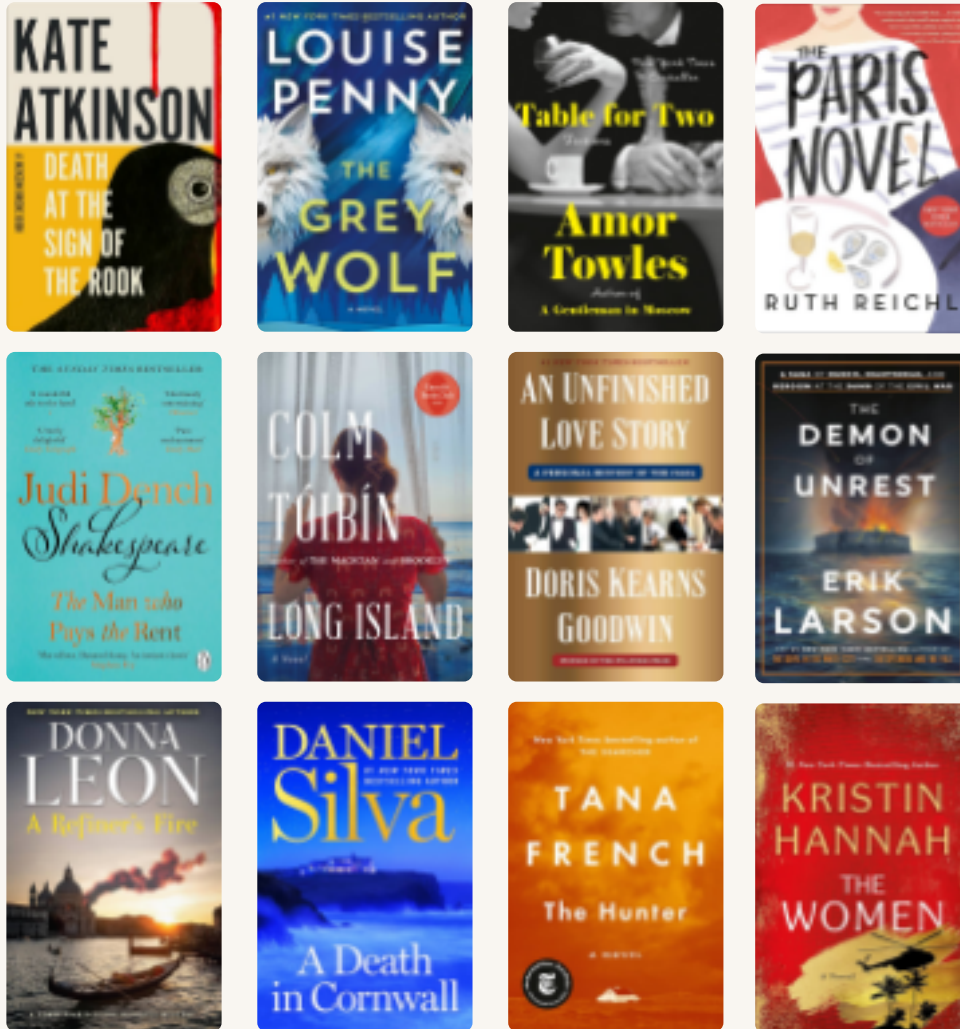
Established in 1950, The Athenæum Literary Award recognizes books of literary excellence by local authors and/or works that examine and reflect life in the greater Philadelphia area.

The award is given each year and includes a cash prize and an invitation to give a public lecture at The Athenæum that is supported by the Charles Wharton Stork endowment fund. The books under consideration must have been published during the calendar year. In FY2025, the Literary Awards Committee considered sixty books for the award. In February 2025, the committee announced their shortlist. The committee awarded the prize to Elizabeth A. Athens' *William Bartram's Visual Wonders: The Botanical Drawings of an American Naturalist* for non-fiction and Emma Copley Eisenberg's *Housemates* for fiction. The awards were announced at the 2025 Annual Shareholders' Meeting in April. Athens and Copley Eisenberg will present their public lectures this fall at The Athenæum.



MOST POPULAR DIGITAL BOOKS

The Athenæum's eBook and audiobook collection, hosted by CloudLibrary, is a convenient way for members to check out books from afar. Whether the member lives in another state or country, or simply doesn't feel like leaving the comfort of their own home, they can access a wide variety of titles sure to stimulate their imagination.



ATHENÆUM'S COMMUNITY

Athenæum members and neighbors gathered as a community more than ever before in FY2025.

PROGRAMS

Our most popular programs highlighted local voices with topics and stories that were based in Philadelphia and beyond.

LIZ MOORE: 'THE GOD OF THE WOODS'

In July, the Reading Room was full of excitement as members and friends attended Liz Moore's book launch for her newest novel *The God of the Woods*.

REMEMBERING HISTORY: JAPANESE AMERICAN INCARCERATION

Later in the year, Executive Director Beth Hessel and Brad Pearson hosted a conversation about the federal government's incarceration of 120,000 Japanese Americans during World War II.

THOMAS SULLY: PORTRAITS OF PHILADELPHIA

In the spring, we welcomed former Executive Director Peter Conn for a lecture exploring Thomas Sully's portraits as visual documents of the people, institutions, and events that shaped Philadelphia from the Revolution until the 1840s.



LEARNING & COMMUNITY GROUPS

We've continued to expand small-group learning experiences, many of which have been created by our members, building communities of learning.

- Expanded **Spanish Conversation Group** with additional meeting times
- Introduced **French Conversation Group**
- **Socrates Café** – tackling life's big questions
- **Salon** – learning about issues affecting Philadelphia
- **Young Friends "Bring Your Own Book Review" Club** - sharing recent reads
- **Fiction Writing Courses** led by Leigh Gallagher

PARTNERSHIPS & COLLABORATIONS

Our partnerships helped us reach new audiences and strengthened both The Athenæum and our fellow institutions.

- **Philadelphia Film Society:** Film screening of *Party Girl* (1995) with Q&A featuring writer/producer Harry Birkmayer
- **Collage Philadelphia:** 3-month celebration featuring two exhibitions, monthly collage workshops for all ages, and a two-day Symposium with talks by Alex DaCorte & Kensuke Koike
- **Ongoing multi-year partners:** African American Children's Book Project, Allegro Music Consultants, Opera Philadelphia, Philadelphia Classical Guitar Society, PI-Philly & Italian Consul
- **BalletX:** Conversation with Rehearsal Director Keelan Whitmore & choreographer Jennifer Archibald ahead of *Maslow's Peak* premiere

168

TOTAL
PROGRAMS

5,763

IN-PERSON
ATTENDANCE

842

VIRTUAL
ATTENDANCE

143

THE GOD OF
THE WOODS
BOOK LAUNCH

100

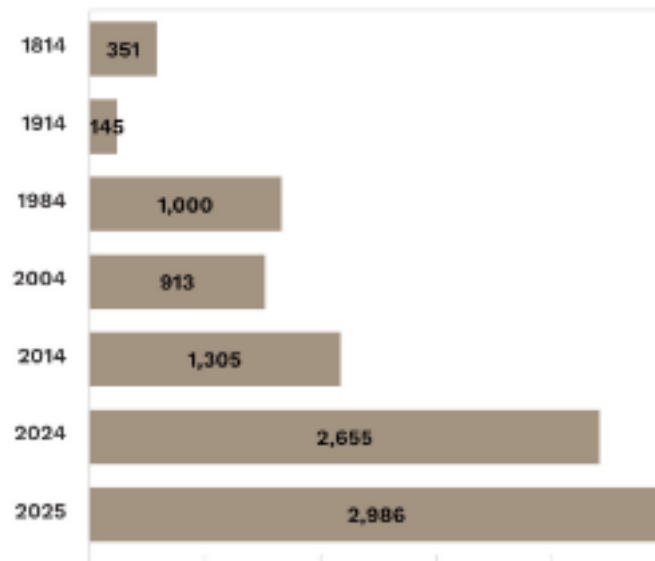
JAPANESE
AMERICAN
INCARCERATION
REMEMBRANCE

100

THOMAS SULLY'S
PHILADELPHIANS
BOOK LAUNCH

From intimate small-group gatherings to major artistic collaborations, 2024 was a year of learning, creativity and connection for our community.

GROWTH BY YEAR



MEMBERSHIP

The Athenæum's membership has continued to grow steadily this year, a trend we have seen over the past five years.

By the end of FY25, The Athenæum had 2,986 members as part of our community, a 12.5% increase over FY24. We surpassed the 2,500 member mark in November 2024. Thanks to our unprecedented growth, The Athenæum is more lively than it has been in many years. 25% of The Athenæum's membership is currently under the age of 35.

We can attribute much of our membership growth to our current members. We hear time and time again that a new member joined because they heard of The Athenæum through a friend, colleague, or neighbor. Thank you for your commitment to The Athenæum!

WHAT IS MEMBERSHIP?

The Athenæum was founded at a time before the free library system existed.

Membership was used as a way to raise funds so that those outside of university and college systems could have access to books and useful knowledge. Much like when we were founded, the funds from membership go towards keeping our historic library running. This includes the purchase of books and other resources, maintenance on our beloved building, and providing stimulating programs to our members and the public. Members of The Athenæum are a part of a unique community that values intellectual curiosity. Historically, members have included Shareholders and Subscribers. In more recent years, The Athenæum has added Young Friends and Student categories of membership.



ATHENÆUM'S LEGACY

The Board of Directors and staff of The Athenæum of Philadelphia are grateful to the many individuals, businesses and foundations whose generosity supports our operations, programs and National Historic Landmark library.

This list reflects cumulative pledges, gifts and grants above membership dues to the annual fund, special sponsorships, bookcase restoration campaign and our endowment received between July 1, 2024 and June 30, 2025. Every effort has been made to produce an accurate and complete list of contributors. If an error or omission has been made, please call the development team at: **215-925-2688**.

\$5,000-\$25,000+

Anonymous
The Bergman Foundation
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The 1814 Society represents those who support The Athenæum of Philadelphia with gifts of \$1,000 or more each year.

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KEY: *BOOKCASE RESTORATION **ENDOWMENT ***GRANTS



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\$500-\$999

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\$1-\$499

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KEY: *BOOKCASE RESTORATION **ENDOWMENT ***GRANTS



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OUR HISTORIC BUILDING

A distinguished historic building with robust usage demands consistent attention and care. Under the leadership of Building Superintendent Christina Doe and a stellar Building Committee that includes architects, preservationists and engineers, The Athenæum receives a professional level of focus on repairs, restoration and preventative maintenance to keep her happily humming along. Even as the staff and committee paid attention to maintenance issues and the impacts of the Dilworth House building project on our building, we also looked at big-picture, longer term needs.

Most notably, we devised a plan to make much needed repairs to the historic bookshelves in the Reading Room. The shelves are in various states of disrepair, including cracked plaster, broken glass, and latches that won't stay closed on their own. Our initial goal was to raise \$33,000 in order to repair the first three bays. In the spring we fundraised with great success, raising a total of \$88,485. This outpouring of support has enabled us to work with local craftsmen and artisans on a restoration project we hope to have completed within the next year.

“The Athenæum weaves together many threads: an unparalleled architectural history collection, an inspiring space for focused work and programs that have drawn me and my family in evenings and Saturdays. My only regret is not joining sooner!”

Justin Spivey, Member since 2023

KEY: *BOOKCASE RESTORATION **ENDOWMENT ***GRANTS

FINANCIALS POSITION

In our era of uncertain economics and the ongoing loss of important cultural landmarks in Philadelphia, we are so grateful for the committed generosity of so many members and friends. The Athenæum ended fiscal year 2025 with a slight surplus that we moved into our reserve funds, even as we feel the uncertainties facing arts and culture nonprofits in the current fiscal year. Careful planning and spending kept costs down, while increases in membership and donations helped us meet budget.

“The Athenæum is many things. It’s a source of knowledge and discovery, especially about Philadelphia’s built environment but about many other areas of interest as well. It’s a place to meet and get to know interesting people. And its building is unusually beautiful and important, which I find thrilling and inspiring.”

Paul Steinke, Member since 2003



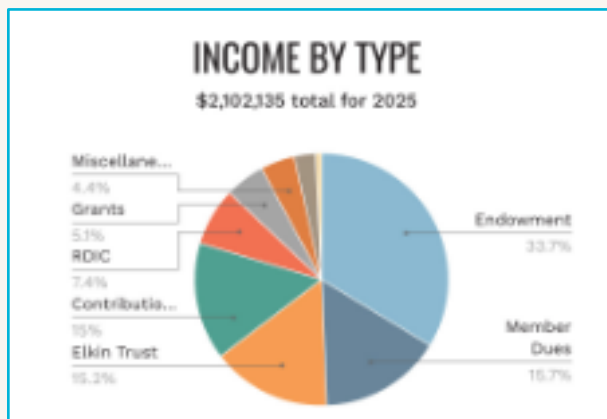
JULY 1, 2024 – JUNE 30, 2025

An on-target budget allowed staff to launch a special Spring Appeal to Restore our Bookcases. Member and public support blew past our initial goal to raise \$33,000 to restore three bays of bookcases in the Reading Room.

With the enthusiastic help of individual member crowdfunding efforts to fund memorial shelf and/or bay restoration efforts, The Athenæum received gifts totaling \$85,185. Restoration efforts have begun, one bay at a time.

During the year ended June 30, 2025, the Board and staff undertook a review of historic gift agreements for our nearly 100 separate funds. As a result, a transfer of \$209,964 from the board-designated net assets to the donor-restricted endowment funds occurred. In addition, a number of the board-designated funds were consolidated into the Book Purchase Fund and the Gift & Bequest Fund based on the original board designation of the respective funds. These moves ensure the proper use of donor-restricted funds and more flexible allocation of unrestricted funds.

The Athenæum Board and staff continue to practice conservative, mission-aligned budgeting projection each year. Doing more with less has meant that The Athenæum’s annual budget, when adjusted for inflation, is more than \$7,000 less than its budget 25 years ago. This continuous belt-tightening allows us to nurture curiosity and strengthen a growing intergenerational learning community. It also challenges us to identify new sources of funding to offer the level of programming, space and staff that our members and the broader greater Philadelphia community desire.



ENDOWMENTS

Creating a Sustainable Library for Future Generations

A strong and well-invested endowment provides a nonprofit with some breathing space. At The Athenæum, our endowment has been growing slowly but steadily for nearly 150 years. The annual 5% draw supports the purchase of books, the offsite storage costs of our architectural collections and specific programs like the Roger Moss Symposia, the annual Literary Award, the William Strickland lecture and the Charles Peterson HABS prize and research fellowships through donor-restricted gifts. Unrestricted funds help defray the cost of programs, exhibitions, building maintenance and staffing.

In fiscal year 2025, The Athenæum relied on its endowed funds for 39% of its expenditures; another 17% came from the Lewis Elkin Trust, of which we are one of five beneficiaries.

We are grateful to an anonymous supporter who made a legacy gift of \$500,000 to our endowment to support Athenæum lectures and programs. The annual draw from this gift will increase the budget funds that allow us to create stimulating and thoughtful programs.

Of course, an endowment is a huge boost. But we could only do a small part of all we accomplish each year without member dues, contributions and program revenue, which accounted for 51% of our income this past year.

\$1.83
PROGRAMMATIC
EXPENSES OF
\$1,833,851

\$2.1
TOTAL INCOME
OF \$2,102,135

\$85K
WE RECEIVED
GIFTS TOTALING
\$85,185

