

Minutes

Board of Trustees Meeting for April 15, 2025

Location: Zoom

Attendees: Karen Kosko, Maria McCauley, Carson McGrath, Liz Werby, Michael Baenen, Irene Monroe, Risa Mednick, Jim Roosevelt, Alyssa Pacy, Gina Josette Rivera, and Raïssa Kamariza.

Boston Medical Library: Jim Donnelly, Beth Kilmarx, Valarie Kinkade, and Richard Pieters.

1. Public Comment: None

2. Boston Medical Library on the Tiedemann Collection

The Board of Trustees met with representatives of the Boston Medical Library to discuss the proposed move of the Tiedemann Collection from the Countway Library at Harvard University. President Richard Pieters opened by providing the group with background on the Boston Medical Library. He shared a summary of the mission and goals of BML. Its mission is “to be a Library for the dissemination of medical knowledge, the promotion of medical education and scholarship, and the preservation and celebration of medical history, and thereby to advance the quality of health and healthcare of the people.”

The Boston Medical Library has been a part of the process of transitioning the Tiedemann Collection out of the Countway Library. The Tiedemann Collection was compiled by Friedrich Tiedemann, a German anatomist and physiologist. After his death, the collection was purchased by Dr. Morrill Wyman, a Cambridge resident. The collection was donated to the Cambridge Public Library in 1893. In 1903, after his death, the library decided it needed the space the collection occupied and deposited the items with the BML.

The co-location agreement between the Countway Library and the Boston Medical Library was terminated at the end of 2021. The BML has been implementing arrangements to carry on a collaboration with the Lamar Soutter Library at the University of Massachusetts Medical School.

The Boston Medical Library expressed they are committed to providing excellent stewardship for the Tiedemann Collection as well as ensuring the preservation of materials and providing access to the citizens of Cambridge. As part of the transfer, the Boston Medical Library plans to update the Lamar Soutter Library catalog with materials from the Tiedemann Collection to allow researchers and Cambridge residents the access to search for materials online.

The BML opened the floor for questions.

Q: Where is the Collection today?

A: At this moment, the collection is still at the Countway Library. We are in the process of transferring assets; it is likely the collection will be transferred soon. The first destination of the collection will be a storage facility in Windsor, Connecticut. The facility specializes in book storage and has a reading room.

Q: Thank you for your presentation; you touched on many of our concerns. Where will the access to the physical materials be?

A: That is still a work in progress. It is possible for the collection to be available at one of three locations: the facility in Connecticut, the Reading Room at Lamar Soutter Library, or we can possibly make materials available at the Reading Room at the Cambridge Public Library.

We are going to have the collection accessible online. In terms of use, rare books do not normally travel. We will have to determine based on rarity, value, age and condition if books can be transported to the Lamar Soutter Library or the Cambridge Public Library.

Q: So, storage is going to be permanent in Connecticut and you plan to send books if they are able to be transferred for researchers?

A: Yes, that is the idea.

Q: How long do you anticipate it will take to catalog the collection?

A: All of the books have been accessible through the Countway Library's online searchable database. It is hard to give a timeframe right now, as we are still in the process of planning.

Q: Do you plan to digitize the materials as well?

A: This is one of our biggest questions. What is the outcome with digitization? It takes time, money, and resources. There has to be a reason for the book to be digitized. It would be a case-by-case decision.

Q: What is the name of the facility in Connecticut?

A: Meyer. The facility is of high-level security and climate controlled. We have other collections stored there as well. They have librarian professionals onsite and an internal database system for location of materials.

Q: All collections will live there and be brought on a case-by-case basis to the Lamar Soutter Library and digitizing?

A: Yes, that is the present intent.

Q: Has the Tiedemann Collection been used?

A: As the incoming library director, I do not have use statistics.

There has not been much call for this collection while at the Countway Library, as most of the collection is in Latin, German, and French. We do have some paper usage records and cannot find a single one for use of the Tiedemann Collection. There may be more uses on the internet archive.

Q: No one has used the collection while at Countway?

A: The usage that has been reported has been low.

Q: Are they enclosed stacks?

A: They are closed stacks at Countway. I am not sure if they have been loaned out.

Q: Who makes decisions on what gets preserved? Who analyzes the materials?

A: It will be supervised by Beth Kilmarx and our team, as well as the involvement of Myer staff when the time comes. It will be done onsite by Boston Medical Library staff.

Q: Is there a way you can document the process with a video we can use to make this a part of alerting residents to what is happening with the collection?

A: We need to think about something like that.

Q: Is there a rough timeline for the project?

A: No, we don't have the collection in hand yet. It has been a lot of back and forth and until we have physical custody of the collection, we cannot plan anything.

Q: Do you have funding for the work?

A: The Boston Medical Library has a substantial endowment.

Q: Has the Boston Medical Library always been an independent entity?

A: The BML is an independent entity and always has been.

Q: Would you ever be in the position to sell the collection?

A: I don't believe we've discussed that option.

Q: What does in-house mean?

A: To me, in-house usage is any item we can provide and use at the storage facility.

The members of the Boston Medical Library concluded their Q&A portion of the meeting and signed off.

Archivist Alyssa Pacy and the Trustees debriefed the conversation. Concerns were expressed on the collection moving further away and how it will impact access to Cambridge residents. Alyssa will connect with Countway on further usage statistics and what items may be the most popular to researchers.

3. **Approval of Minutes:** Chair Jim Roosevelt opened the floor for corrections or comments to the minutes from March 4, 2025. No corrections were made, and the minutes passed unanimously.
4. **Digital Equity with Gina Josette Rivera and Raïssa Kamariza**

Digital Equity Manager Gina Josette Rivera and Digital Equity Coordinator Raïssa Kamariza provided an overview of the Library's digital equity work. Raïssa started the overview by noting the Cambridge Public Library's Digital Equity initiative is "dedicated to making the library a beacon of digital empowerment, where every patron feels a sense of belonging." She then went into detail on the definition of digital equity and outlined statistics on Cambridge; about 3% of residents in Cambridge have no access to broadband internet and 2.13% of residents have no access to computers. In order to fully participate in civic and cultural life, digital equity is necessary. Through access, affordability, devices, and skills, the four elements of digital equity, Gina and Raïssa service patrons with programs such as basic tech classes and one-on-one tech help.

Next, the two went into further discussion on digital skill-building opportunities for CPL patrons. This includes weekly sessions offered at multiple branch locations on foundational digital skills such as Gmail Basics, Cybersecurity Basics, and Resume Building. Personalized help is also available through the digital equity team through one-on-one tech help that addresses individual questions and challenges. With a focus on enhancing digital access, Gina and Raïssa also noted that patrons have access to Chromebook laptops, chargers, and other devices for in-library use as well as CPL's take-out tech program with loanable Chromebook laptops available for up to two weeks. This enables patrons to connect digitally from home.

In 2025, the Cambridge Public Library received two grants from the Public Library Association: the PLA Digital Learning Grant and the PLA Digital Navigator Grant. Gina explained this funding will allow CPL to teach tech classes at all branches on eight specific topics as well as offer tech-help using content developed by PLA. The digital equity team is also partnering with Tech Goes Home on a non-cash partnership to offer 15 hours of basic tech training to 11 patrons at the Central Square Branch. After the training is complete, the patrons will receive a Chromebook and hotspot.

Lastly, Gina and Raïssa explained the Digital Navigator Pilot Program that aims to bridge the digital divide in Cambridge through additional one-on-one support and device distribution. Through the DN program, community members can receive devices such as a free laptop, hotspot, or home internet if they live in Cambridge, are low-income and are looking for job or career development classes. The program has a strong emphasis on workforce readiness for community members. Gina shared further data on the DN program, including the breakdown of patron's inquiry for support and the process of how the digital navigators interact with patrons. Most of the digital navigator support occurs in-person and over half of this support is tech support. As part of the DN program, digital navigators receive regional support and training through MassHire and the Massachusetts Association of Community Internet Resources (MACIR).

Q: If a young person came in and needed a computer, do they need parent approval?

A: During the pandemic, the government ended up getting computers for students in high school. The issue we see more in real life, is once a teen is done with school, they take that computer back. That is where the library can come in.

Q: Do you have any broad-brush sense of demographics and communities that are heavily served?

A: We respect autonomy and privacy at the library. We do get a lot of unhoused folks, folks in shelters as well, but we've seen the biggest number served is the older adult population.

Q: The support of the Digital Navigator program ends at the end of the year, do we have plans for extending the program?

A: We are concerned about this. This is an important program. We will be talking with City leadership and Human Services at the beginning of May on this program. We are also looking at grants or Foundation funding.

5. Library Updates:

Director Maria McCauley opened with providing the Trustees with another update on the most recent conversations between the Friends and Foundation working group on establishing a two-lane approach for the organizations. A working group of representatives from the Friends and Foundation met that morning with consultant Maureen Sullivan to review the final document outlining the two-lane approach. Maureen led the two organizations through review of each element of the document and addressed questions and edits. After, Maureen finalized the document based on the conversation and sent it to the group for a final review. On Friday, May 2, Trustees Liz Werby and Jim Roosevelt will join the working group members and Maureen to bring the conversations between the Friends and Foundation to a close. Each board will then vote to codify the two-lane agreement.

Next, Director McCauley said she would like to further discuss the principles around Foundation giving. She noted there are concerns on whether the Foundation should be funding possible auditorium fixes and stated it is the Library's role to determine funding needs. Maria seeks the Trustees guidance on this item in future meetings.

Lastly, Maria provided a few general Library updates including hiring a new Manager of Innovation and Technology. The Library also celebrated National Library Week April 6 – 12 by honoring staff and patrons. The O'Connell Branch held their first month of Digital Equity programs with tech help and internet basics in March. The Valente Branch is hosting a 12 week-long Tai Chi class series. The STEAM team hosted Spot, Boston Dynamics' agile mobile robot, as part of the iFp Lab program. The Youth Services team held its 2025 Curious George Lecture featuring award-winning author and illustrator Jerry Craft.

Maria shared a few save the dates with the group including a CPL Nature Club event Reading with Ducks at Valente on April 22, Space Week events held at the Main Library in

partnership with the Massachusetts Space Consortium April 24 – 26, and a class at the O'Neill Branch on April 24 to learn the ukulele.

To close out the meeting Director McCauley told the group about her recent trip to Korea to present at the International Library Forum in celebration of Library Day.

Jim raised a motion to adjourn the meeting, which was unanimously agreed upon.