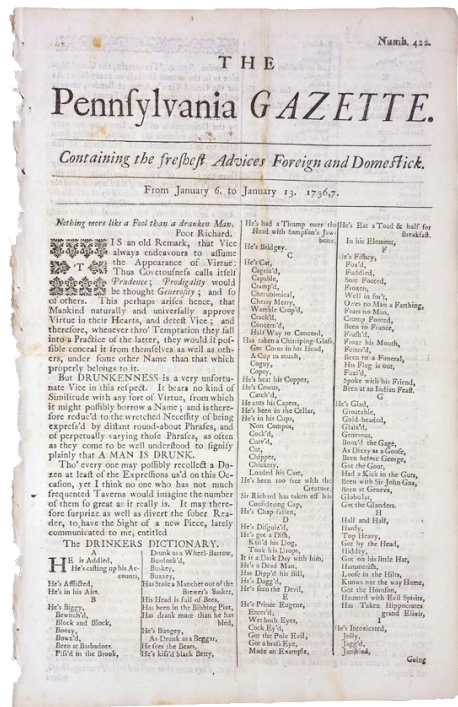


## EXHIBIT SITES

# Benjamin Franklin: In Search of a Better World

*Being ignorant is not so much a Shame,  
as being unwilling to learn.*—*Poor Richard's Almanack*, 1755



*The Pennsylvania Gazette*, no. 422,  
January 6-13, 1736/37  
Philadelphia: Benjamin Franklin, 1736/37  
Rare Book & Manuscript Library,  
University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia  
Photo by Peter Harholdt

*Benjamin Franklin: In Search of a Better World* is being displayed at 40 libraries throughout the United States. For a schedule of exhibition locations and display times, please visit <http://www.ala.org/publicprograms>; contact the American Library Association Public Programs Office, 50 E. Huron St., Chicago, IL 60611; or call 1-800-545-2433, ext. 5045.

*Benjamin Franklin: In Search of a Better World* is a national traveling exhibition for libraries organized by the Benjamin Franklin Tercentenary and the American Library Association Public Programs Office. It is based on a major exhibition of the same name mounted by the Benjamin Franklin Tercentenary to commemorate the 300th anniversary of Franklin's birth. The Benjamin Franklin Tercentenary is a nonprofit organization supported by a major grant from The Pew Charitable Trusts.

To learn more about the Tercentenary exhibition, please visit  
<http://www.benfranklin300.org/>

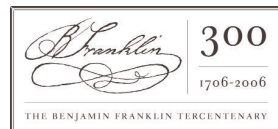
The traveling exhibition for libraries has been made possible by a major grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities: great ideas brought to life.

Any views, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this brochure do not necessarily reflect those of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

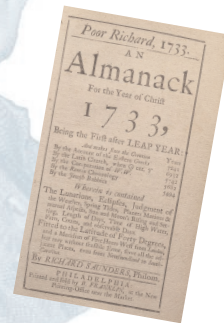
Curators: Rosalind Remer, Ph.D., and Page Talbott, Ph.D.,  
Benjamin Franklin Tercentenary, Philadelphia, PA

Design: Chester Design Associates, Chicago, IL

Tour Coordination: American Library Association  
Public Programs Office, Chicago, IL



NATIONAL  
ENDOWMENT  
FOR THE  
HUMANITIES



## DIPLOMAT

## SCIENTIST

## PHILOSOPHER

## PHILANTHROPIST

## HUMORIST

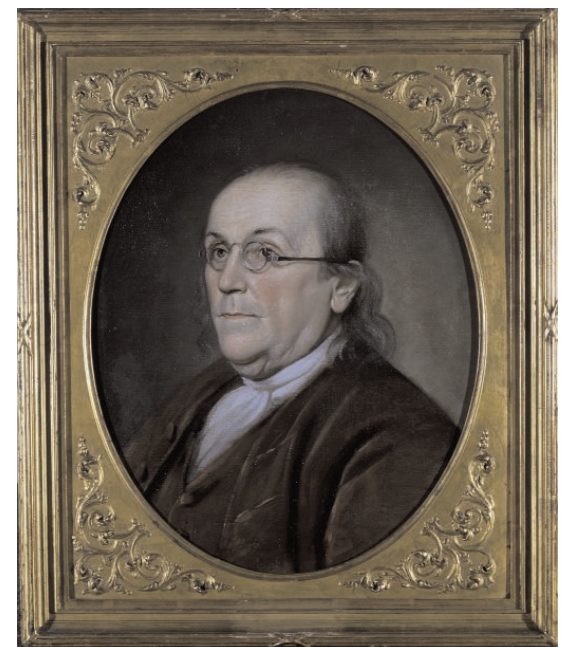
## ENTREPRENEUR




A Traveling Exhibition to America's Libraries



Portrait of Benjamin Franklin, 1787  
Charles Willson Peale  
Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia,  
bequest of Mrs. Sarah Harrison (The Joseph Harrison, Jr. Collection)  
Photo courtesy of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts



 Benjamin Franklin was one of the most remarkable and influential Americans of any generation. In his own time, he stood out in the distinguished company of George Washington, John Adams, Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson as a wise and pragmatic leader during America's move towards independence. Franklin was a diplomat, scientist, philosopher, philanthropist, humorist and entrepreneur who left us with an astounding array of achievements and writings through which we can come to know him better. His life was filled with many successes and some setbacks, but he undertook everything he did in order to be useful to himself and to society. In a letter to his mother, he once declared, "I would rather have it said, 'He lived usefully,' than, 'He died rich.' "

FRONT COVER

**Bifocals**  
Design suggested by Benjamin Franklin  
Frankliniana Collection  
The Franklin Institute Inc., Philadelphia

Seal of the Library Company, 1731–1733  
Philip Syng, Jr.  
Library Company of Philadelphia  
Photo by Peter Harholdt

**Glass Armonica (English), 1761–1762**  
Built by Charles James; owned by Benjamin Franklin  
The Frankliniana Collection,  
The Franklin Institute, Inc., Philadelphia  
Descended in the family of William Bache  
Photo by Peter Harholdt

*Constitution of the United States*  
[Philadelphia: Dunlap and Claypoole, 1787]  
Printed, with Benjamin Franklin's  
handwritten annotations  
American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia  
Owned by Benjamin Franklin  
Photo by Frank Margeson

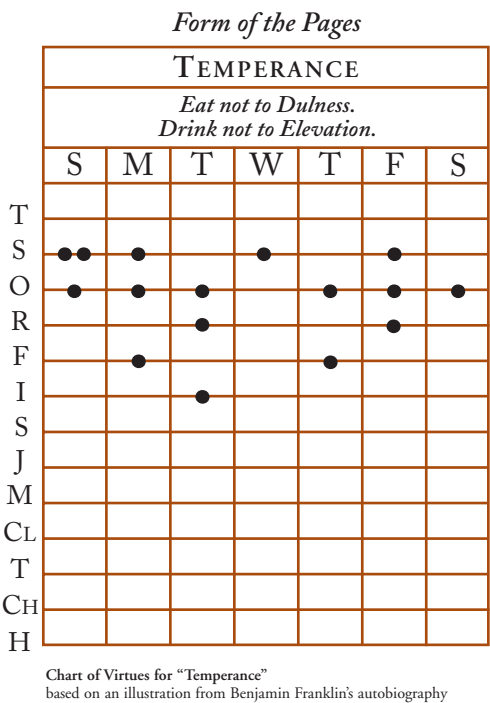
"Electrical battery" of Leyden jars, 1760–1769  
American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia  
Owned by Benjamin Franklin  
Photo by Peter Harholdt

*Benjamin Franklin, 1777*  
Engraving by Augustin de Saint-Aubin after  
Charles-Nicholas Cochin  
Collection of Stuart E. Karu  
Photo by Peter Harholdt

*Poor Richard, 1733*  
Philadelphia: Printed and sold by B. Franklin, [1732]  
Rosenbach Museum & Library, Philadelphia  
Photo by Peter Harholdt



## EARLY YEARS



Benjamin Franklin was born in Boston in 1706 into a Puritan family accustomed to hard work, thriftiness and self-discipline. Although he attended school for only two years, the young Franklin read extensively and worked hard to perfect his writing style, often imitating the essays of renowned authors. At age 12, he was apprenticed to his brother James, a printer, and began working in the trade that would later bring him great success. Intellectually precocious, Franklin was penning satirical essays for submission to his brother's newspaper, the *New-England Courant*, at the age of 16.

Franklin left Boston in 1723 and eventually settled in Philadelphia. Over the next 25 years, with the help of his wife, Deborah, he established a flourishing printing and stationery business and published *The Pennsylvania Gazette* and the renowned *Poor Richard's Almanack*. A sociable, witty and curious man, he built a large network of friends and business connections in Philadelphia and beyond, and became a leading citizen, but he was always proud of his roots as a tradesman and printer.

## A LIFE OF SERVICE AND STUDY

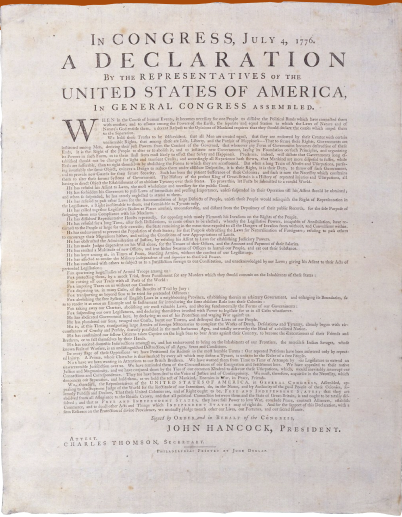
Throughout his life, Benjamin Franklin believed that overcoming society's challenges required mutual action, collaboration and generosity on the part of all citizens. He organized the Junto, a group of Philadelphia tradesmen committed to improving themselves through service to mankind. With their help, Franklin embarked upon public projects which benefited all citizens and served as models for other American colonies. In 1731, the Junto started the Library Company of Philadelphia, and five years later, the Union Fire Company, the first firefighting brigade in the city. Franklin and his fellow Junto members also founded the Pennsylvania Hospital, a fire insurance company and an educational academy which became the University of Pennsylvania.

Franklin's interest in science and in practical solutions to problems spurred him to develop many useful devices, among them bifocals, swimming fins, the Pennsylvanian Fireplace, also known as the Franklin stove, and a new musical instrument, the glass armonica. He is perhaps best known for his study of electricity, which included the legendary experiment with a kite and a key during a lightning storm. Appointed postmaster of Philadelphia in 1737 and deputy postmaster general of North America in 1753, Franklin plotted the best postal routes and set up new post offices to expedite mail delivery, even in the backcountry of America.

Odometer or Wayweiser (American or French), ca. 1763  
The Frankliniana Collection,  
The Franklin Institute, Inc., Philadelphia  
Owned by Benjamin Franklin  
Photo by Peter Harholdt



## STATESMAN AND PATRIOT



Declaration of Independence, June 1776  
Philadelphia: John Dunlap, 1776  
American Philosophical Society,  
Philadelphia

The latter part of Benjamin Franklin's life was devoted to diplomacy and to negotiations which helped to shape the future of the United States of America. He first rose to political prominence as a member, and later, Speaker of the Pennsylvania Assembly. Although Franklin was critical of British policies toward America, he wanted to avoid war with England. But he became a powerful force in the fight for independence when he realized conflict was inevitable, and he forged an alliance with France which was crucial in winning the Revolutionary War.

Franklin was the only person to have signed five of America's key founding documents: the Albany Plan of Union (1754), the Declaration of Independence (1776), The Treaties of Amity and Commerce with France (1778), The Treaty of Paris (1783) and the U.S. Constitution (1787). Three years before his death, Franklin became at age 81 the oldest member of the Constitutional Convention. In poor health, he nonetheless played a significant role in the "Great Compromise," which resulted in the legislature of two houses which is today the United States Congress. His last years were spent in writing his autobiography, which he did not complete, and in promoting the abolition of slavery.

Franklin biographer Walter Isaacson has written, "Franklin has a particular resonance in twenty-first century America....we would relate to the way he tried to balance, sometimes uneasily, a pursuit of reputation, wealth, earthly virtues, and spiritual values."

## RELATED READINGS

Brands, H.W. *The First American: The Life and Times of Benjamin Franklin*. (New York: Doubleday, 2000).

Franklin, Benjamin. *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*. Various publishers and dates.

Franklin, Benjamin. *Franklin: Writings*, edited by J.A. Leo Lemay. (New York: The Library of America, 1987).

Isaacson, Walter. *Benjamin Franklin: An American Life*. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2003).

Lopez, Claude-Anne. *My Life with Benjamin Franklin*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000).

Morgan, Edmund S. *Benjamin Franklin*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002).

Talbott, Page, ed. *Benjamin Franklin: In Search of a Better World*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005).

### ON THE WEB

<http://www.benfranklin300.org>  
The web site of the Benjamin Franklin Tercentenary.

<http://www.franklinpapers.org/franklin/>  
The Papers of Benjamin Franklin.

<http://www.librarycompany.org/BFWriter/>  
The Library Company of Philadelphia online exhibition, "Benjamin Franklin: Writer and Printer."  
<http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/treasures/franklin-home.html>  
The Library of Congress exhibition, "Benjamin Franklin in His Own Words."

Portrait bust of Benjamin Franklin, 1779  
Jean Antoine Houdon  
Philadelphia Museum of Art:  
Purchased with a generous grant from the Barra Foundation, Inc.,  
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Philadelphia Museum of Art, Marguerite and Gerry Lenfest,  
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Mr. and Mrs. William T. Vogt, and with funds contributed by individual  
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