



Friends of Salem's Phillips Library

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friendsofphillipslibrary@gmail.com

www.keephistoryinsalem.com

Welcoming the new director, Brian Kennedy, to Peabody Essex Museum

March 8, 2019

SALEM, Massachusetts—Friends of Salem's Phillips Library cordially welcome the new director of the Peabody Essex Museum, Brian Kennedy. For a museum that, by the circumstances of its formation and development, is about both art and history, the choice of an art historian to lead it seems eminently logical.

Kennedy arrives at the PEM at a moment of both triumph (a new wing about to open) and tribulation (escalating pressures to return the Phillips Library to Salem). The Massachusetts Attorney General's office has acknowledged that moving the library to Rowley violated the constitutional documents of the original institutions, and the PEM may face a challenge in probate court if it does not adequately address this.

We continue to believe that the eventual return of the Phillips Library to its original home is both the right thing to do as well as sound fiscal policy for the PEM. Salem is not just a historic city—it's a city whose history is nationally and even globally significant.

As the successor of the Essex Institute, the PEM is the main repository of Salem's history. As an institution of national and even global stature, the PEM is ideally equipped to interpret this history in new ways. All the elements of success are ready at hand. We look forward with optimism and renewed hope to Kennedy's leadership.

About the Friends of Salem's Phillips Library

The Friends of Salem's Phillips Library [formed in December 2017](#) after the Peabody Essex Museum announced it was moving the entire Phillips Library, Salem's largest and oldest archival collection, from its permanent home at Plummer Hall in Salem, Massachusetts, to a collections center 40 minutes away, in Rowley, Massachusetts. The group's founding principle is that the Phillips Library belongs in Salem, in the midst of the historical landscape that created its collections and within the community that cherishes it. As part of its resolve, the Friends group also seeks to provide support and guidance to PEM. For more information, visit <https://www.keephistoryinsalem.com>.

About the Peabody Essex Museum

Today's Peabody Essex Museum lays claim to being the country's oldest continuously operating museum. [Its history begins in 1799](#) with the founding of the East India Marine Society by Salem's sea captains. Over 200 years, through organizations and collections in Salem consolidating, two historic museums remained, the Peabody Museum of Salem and the Essex Institute, both with their own libraries named after Phillips family members. In 1992, these two institutions merged to create the PEM. Over the last 20 years, the Peabody Essex Museum has distinguished itself as one of the fastest-growing art museums in North America. Kennedy will assume his new role at PEM on July 15, 2019. For more information, visit <https://www.pem.org>.