

September 1, 2017

Dear Applicants:

Thank you for your interest in joining the inaugural cohort of Junior Fellows in the Andrew W. Mellon Society of Fellows in Critical Bibliography (SoFCB) at Rare Book School (RBS). As you consider becoming part of this dynamic and growing network of scholars dedicated to the study of textual artifacts, you may be asking how the recent events in Charlottesville during the summer of 2017 might shape your experience, both inside the classroom at Rare Book School and on the Grounds of the University of Virginia. You may be wondering—as many of us have over the years—whether your unique intellectual perspective and life experiences will be embraced by an institution with a long and complicated racial and class history, whether your ideas will be welcomed, whether you will feel safe in the South, or whether you even belong in Charlottesville.

The Committee on Diversity and Outreach (composed of Senior Fellows from diverse racial and class backgrounds across America who now work at museums, in research libraries, in public and private universities, and in the tech industry) have been coming to Rare Book School since the summer of 2013, originally as members of the Andrew W. Mellon Fellowship of Scholars in Critical Bibliography. We are writing to offer assurances about who we are and what we stand for as a new Society, and to address any uncertainties you may have. When the initial idea to form a new Society of Fellows was first proposed, some of us lovingly joked “Does academia really need another ‘Society?’” but as the sixty founding members began to discuss over the course of 2016–2017 what we would envision for our rapidly expanding community, we realized our original task—to revivify, deepen, and extend the field of bibliography, and to reanimate the study of the humanities via critical bibliography—was only the beginning. Collectively, we saw our scholarly goals as reaching far beyond bibliography, and into new intellectual spaces. As the Society began to form, the creativity, camaraderie, and possibilities of pushing our work in new directions grew infectious.

In May 2017, we attended an All-Fellows Meeting in Charlottesville. The resounding message our Committee members heard again and again was that individual members who felt their scholarly work didn’t quite “fit” at their home institution had a place at Rare Book School. Rare Book School invited many of us who felt intellectually isolated into a community that was rich and sustaining through multiple stages of our professional and educational development. As a group, we value nothing more highly than the open, tolerant, and respectful global team we have built. We are dedicated to helping each other regardless of what stage we are at in our careers (in fact, that diversity is our core strength). The Society’s 2017–2018 application season will be the first time that former Fellows will be able to review applications and invite new colleagues into our community ourselves, and we are unanimous and unwavering in our desire to find thinkers and doers who want to build a free, safe, diverse, inclusive, respectful, and global community.

The Society of Fellows in Critical Bibliography is firmly committed to supporting diversity and to advancing the scholarship of outstanding persons of every race, gender, sexual orientation, creed, and socio-economic background, and to advancing the diversity of the professions and academic disciplines it represents, including the professoriate, museums, libraries, archives, public humanists, and the humanist academic disciplines. We will not tolerate any form of prejudice, bigotry, or harassment (subtle or overt), and we have begun putting measures in place to make sure every member of our Society has places to turn if they need help. The Society is also committed to the principle that one’s current or past institutional affiliations are not a reliable

indicator of one's intellectual promise or capability, and invites applicants from all eligible institutions. Moreover, the Society holds that diversity is constituted not only in the experiences, identities and background of its members, but also in the fields of study and methods they pursue, including methods not traditionally identified as “bibliography.” We encourage applications from scholars whose experiences, perspectives, and work will expand and enrich the Society, the Rare Book School community, and the academic professions broadly conceived.

While filling out the application, if you have questions about which courses you might benefit from in Rare Book School's existing catalog, if you would like to talk to Senior Fellows about their experiences, if you are not sure whether your work makes you a good intellectual fit for the Society, or if you would like to view videos of the workshops and colloquia that members of the Society have hosted, we invite you to reach out to us and we will do our best to help. We look forward to hearing from you!

Sincerely,

*SoFCB Diversity & Outreach Committee*

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*The Andrew W. Mellon Society of Fellows in Critical Bibliography at Rare Book School particularly encourages applications from members of under-represented ethnic and racial groups, those committed to digital humanities and public engagement, academics working in libraries and those pursuing non-traditional career paths, faculty working at teaching-intensive and minority serving institutions, veterans, and individuals with disabilities. Rare Book School will make reasonable accommodations for qualified individuals with known disabilities.*

*Rare Book School requires that all of its faculty, staff, students, and guests abide by the University of Virginia's policy for preventing and addressing discrimination and harassment. The University's policy appears at <http://eocr.virginia.edu/policies>.*