

August 27, 2018

Dear Applicants:

Thank you for your interest in joining 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 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. We are writing to offer assurances about who we are and what we stand for as a Society, and to address any uncertainties you may have.

Members of the Committee on Diversity and Outreach (composed of Senior Fellows from diverse racial and class backgrounds across America who now work at museums and in public and private universities) have been coming to Rare Book School since the summer of 2013, originally as part of the Andrew W. Mellon Fellowship of Scholars in Critical Bibliography. We, as a committee, share the idea that many of the problems we face today—the fraying social fabric, widening of inequality, concentration of poverty, anxieties over immigration, the rise of male chauvinism and misogyny—raise alarms about the dangers of unchallenged homogeneity to both political discourse and social life. We believe that there is no better time than now for scholars to stress and reinforce the edifying effects of diversity in their research, learning process, and social interactions. 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 commitment is our core strength). We are unanimous and unwavering in our desire to continue to find thinkers and doers who want to build a free, safe, diverse, inclusive, respectful, and global community.

Since the Society's formation in 2017, the creativity, camaraderie, and possibilities of pushing our work in new directions grew infectious, and it continues to sustain our work. The resounding message our Committee members have 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. In the course of collaborations in the RBS community, the fellows have been connected to diverse groups beyond their own, both academic and professional. With these connections, they got to have early access to diverse, often contradictory, information and interpretations, which has given them a competitive advantage in seeing and developing good ideas. Advocating for diversity is an ethical commitment for us, but it is also something we recognize benefits all members in expanding their intellectual outlook and increasing their creative vigor. Besides achieving our original task—to revivify, deepen, and extend the field of bibliography, and to reanimate the study of the humanities via critical bibliography—the fellows of SoFCB have collectively seen our scholarly goals as reaching far beyond bibliography, and into new intellectual spaces. During the

Society's 2018–2019 application season, Senior Fellows will review applications for the purpose of inviting new colleagues into this 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 regardless of their immigration status and citizenship, 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 do 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>.*