

WHAT'S NEW

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VMFA AWARDED \$610,000 NEH CHALLENGE GRANT THAT WILL STRENGTHEN ITS ART HISTORY LIBRARY



VMFA head librarian Dr. Suzanne Freeman (left) and VMFA American arts curator Dr. Elizabeth O'Leary check a reference work. VMFA has received a challenge grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to strengthen its 136,500-volume art history library. (Photo by Travis Fullerton, © 2006 Virginia Museum of Fine Arts)

The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts has received a \$610,000 challenge grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities that will be used to strengthen its 136,500-volume art history library, which is the largest museum library in the Southeast.

The grant, which is contingent on the museum raising \$2.44 million in matching funds, will be used to endow the positions of head librarian and assistant librarian; for the acquisition of books for the core and rare-books collection; for archival and preservation materials; and for maintenance of climate controls.

The VMFA grant was among 171 grants and matching-funds awards worth \$24.8 million announced recently by the NEH. Scholars and institutions in 43 states and the District of Columbia received NEH support.

"VMFA is extremely fortunate to have this splendid support from NEH. We are forming a library endowment fundraising committee to raise the match, and we expect this combined funding to have a very favorable impact on our library's services to the public," says Peter Wagner, vice president for development of the VMFA Foundation.

"This NEH grant marks a truly transformational moment for VMFA and its library, enabling the realization of our mission to become a major resource facility for art historical and humanities research," says Dr. Suzanne H. Freeman, the museum's head librarian.

NEH awarded 11 challenge grants worth nearly \$5.7 million. All must be matched either 3-1 or 4-1. NEH grants are awarded competitively. Experts not on the NEH endowment staff and members of the National Council on the Humanities consider all applications and advise NEH of the quality and significance of each proposed project.

Among other museums who received challenge grants similar in size to that awarded to VMFA are the Asian Art Museums of San Francisco, the National Museum of Women in

the Arts (Washington, D.C.), The Old York Historical Society (York, Maine), Pace University (New York City and Westchester, N.Y.) and the American Philological Society (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania).

The holdings of the VMFA library, a non-circulating facility, provide significant primary and secondary resources for the study of the history, criticism and theory of art in its 136,500 volumes, including 82,000 monographs, 45,000 auction catalogues, 4,000 bound periodicals, 3,500 rare books and rare serial holdings, approximately 40,000 files on artists and VMFA history, and museum scrapbooks dating back to 1936, the year the museum opened.

The library is open to the public by appointment: telephone 804.340.1495. The library's catalog is available online at www.pandora.vmfa.museum.

Areas of specialization include African art, American art (Mr. and Mrs. James W. McGlothlin American Art Collection), American and English silver (Rita Gans Collection), Asian art (Weedon Collection; John and Adrienne Maxwell East Asian Collection), British art before 1850 (Paul Mellon Collection), the decorative arts, including Arts and Crafts, Art Deco, and Art Nouveau (Sydney and Frances Lewis Collection; Carol Brandt Collection), Fabergé, German Expressionist art (Anna Fischer Collection), Indian art, numismatics (St. George Tucker Collection), and Western European art (Pinkney Near Collection).