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## **Benjamin Franklin Traveling Exhibition Comes to EIU's Booth Library**

*Jan-07-2011*

Eastern Illinois University's Booth Library invites the public to the opening reception and program for the exhibit "Benjamin Franklin: In Search of a Better World."

The event will begin at 7 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 12, in the Marvin Foyer. Following opening remarks, join Benjamin Franklin, as portrayed by Fred Krebs, in "An Evening with Benjamin Franklin" in the West Reading Room.

The exhibit, "Benjamin Franklin: In Search of a Better World," tells the remarkable story of the man who began his life as a poor printer's apprentice and ended it as a revered elder statesman known throughout the world for his wisdom, wit and resourcefulness. Franklin's achievements in diplomacy, science, philanthropy and other fields profoundly influenced the path of a new nation and continue to inspire us more than 300 years after his birth.

"Franklin has a particular resonance in 21st-century America," biographer Walter Isaacson has written. "We would relate to the way he tried to balance, sometimes uneasily, a pursuit of reputation, wealth, earthly virtues and spiritual values."

Although Franklin excelled at nearly everything he attempted, his first priority was to use his talents for the greater public good. He refused to seek a patent on his numerous inventions, believing that they should be universally available. As co-founder of a number of civic institutions, including America's first public hospital and first lending library, and Philadelphia's first firefighting brigade, Franklin continually encouraged his fellow citizens to collaborate in useful projects for the community.

"We are pleased to have been selected as a site for this exhibition," said Allen Lanham, dean of Booth Library. "Benjamin Franklin's life is the quintessential American success story. His dedication to the welfare of the community, and his belief that overcoming society's challenges required mutual action, collaboration and generosity on the part of all citizens, offers us inspiration as we face many difficult issues in contemporary American society. Benjamin Franklin has much to say to 21st-century Americans."

Franklin was the only American political figure to have signed five of his country's key founding documents: the Albany Plan of Union (1754), Declaration of Independence (1776), Treaties of Amity and Commerce with France (1778), Treaty of Paris (1783) and U.S. Constitution (1787). His last years were spent in writing his autobiography, the most widely published memoir in history, and in promoting the abolition of slavery. In 1787, three years before his death, Franklin became the oldest member of the Constitutional Convention. Although he was in poor health, he played a significant role in the "Great Compromise," which resulted in a legislature of two houses which is today the United States Congress.

Organized by the Benjamin Franklin Tercentenary, Philadelphia, in cooperation with the American Library Association (ALA) Public Programs Office, "Benjamin Franklin: In Search of a Better World" was made possible by a major grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH): great ideas brought to life. The traveling exhibit is based upon a major exhibit of the same name, developed by the Benjamin Franklin Tercentenary, which has traveled to major cities in the United States and abroad (<http://www.benfranklin300.org>). The Benjamin Franklin Tercentenary is a nonprofit organization established through a major grant from The Pew Charitable Trusts to educate the public about Franklin's enduring legacy.

"Benjamin Franklin: In Search of a Better World" draws upon original documents in the collections of the American Philosophical Society, The Franklin Institute, the Library Company of Philadelphia, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, and the University of Pennsylvania, other museums and libraries, and private collectors. Photographs of handwritten and printed documents, objects owned by Franklin, maps, paintings and drawings provide a colorful background for Franklin's story. The traveling exhibition was curated by Rosalind Remer, Ph.D., executive director of the Benjamin Franklin Tercentenary, and Page Talbott, Ph.D., associate director of the Benjamin Franklin Tercentenary and chief curator of the original "Benjamin Franklin: In Search of a Better World" exhibition.

The library is sponsoring free programs and other events for the public in connection with the exhibition. Contact Jocelyn Tipton, head of Reference Services, at 217-581-7542 or [jtipton@eiu.edu](mailto:jtipton@eiu.edu) or visit <http://www.library.eiu.edu> for more information.

"Benjamin Franklin: In Search of a Better World" will be on display at the library until February 25, 2011.