

Letter to Attorney General, April 2018

“The geographical restriction was imposed because of the nature of the materials donated and the clientele they were intended for. All of the donated materials were to be made easily available to the residents of Salem as part of their cultural heritage, for their edification and amusement. Such printed and manuscript materials as literary papers and publications; business records; church records; the archival materials of local institutions and organizations; local photographic records of properties and people; maritime records of many kinds; records of local and regional events (like the Great Salem Fire); birth and death records along with other genealogical materials; and much more are eminently useful and instructive to the residents of Salem, and they should not be removed from the residents’ immediate access. The original creators and donors of these materials understood the importance of an informed populace, and their gifts of the materials that went into the collections of the Essex Institute were specifically made to meet that goal of supplying needed information to the people of Salem. Removing the materials, especially to a town as far away as Rowley, with the great difficulty there is to get to that town, is in immediate violation of that original intent.”

Sidney Berger

former Ann C. Pingree Director of the Phillips Library at the Peabody Essex Museum