

Provost and Academic Vice President



January 8, 2018

Mr. Dan L. Monroe
 The Rose-Marie and Eijk van Otterloo Director and CEO
 Peabody Essex Museum
 East India Square
 161 Essex Street
 Salem, MA 01970

Dear Mr. Monroe:

I write today as the Chief Academic Officer of Salem State University – Essex County’s only four-year public institution of higher education – to acknowledge PEM’s decision “to unify the Museum’s renowned art and culture collection with the Phillips Library collection at [the] new 112,000-square-foot Collections Center located in Rowley.” I write also to express concern regarding this decision, with a concomitant offer of support and assistance.

Removing the Phillips Library collection from Salem will impede public and scholarly access to a vital and valued resource for so many in Essex County and beyond. Indeed, I note that the move of the materials from Salem to Peabody, in a location not easily reached by public transportation, has been reported to have had an adverse impact on the work of Salem State scholars and students. Moreover, I would respectfully argue that demand for the collection – which PEM has argued to have waned in past years – is inextricably linked to the extent to which it can be readily visited and directly accessed by patrons. It follows that the planned move to Rowley would further exacerbate an already infelicitous situation. As such, I heartily endorse efforts to make the materials *more* accessible by ensuring that they remain “close to home,” are appropriately curated, and are governed by sound access policies.

Physically detaching the collection from its historic home will also erode the public trust placed in today’s PEM, a trust inherited from the Essex Institute as established in its articles of incorporation (1848). Given the Phillips Library’s *de facto* status as the City of Salem’s historical society, any decision regarding how and where the collection is housed – much less a move to extract the collection from Salem – should be taken in thoughtful collaboration with all relevant stakeholders. From what I have learned about this matter, including the information included in and with your December 8, 2017 “Statement Regarding PEM’s Phillips Library” (<https://www.pem.org/press-news/statement-regarding-pems-phillips-library>), I have concluded that PEM’s decision, though well-intended, would benefit from additional input from the community, including the community of scholars at Salem State University.

Despite the historical differences that gave rise to our two institutions, PEM and Salem State have much in common, chief among these being a commitment to the community in which we operate. This shared commitment is grounded in the trust that the citizens of Salem, Essex County, and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts place in how we steward our respective resources. To freely paraphrase from PEM’s website, *as people-centered institutions, PEM and SSU are dedicated to providing compelling and meaningful experiences to diverse audiences. PEM and SSU aim to make a lasting and positive difference in the lives of the public we serve.* (Adapted from text found at <https://www.pem.org/about-pem/mission-vision>.) In realizing our mission as the region’s sole public “teaching university,” Salem State deploys a variety of resources, including the academic skills and intellectual curiosity of our faculty as well as the infrastructure provided by other academic operations, such those housed in the Frederick J. Berry Library and Learning Commons, with its recently-constructed archive facility and its publicly available reading

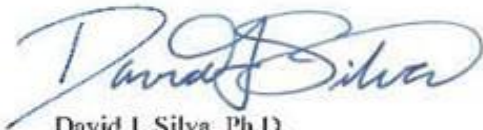
and research spaces. We here at Salem State are prepared to enter into discussion about how our two institutions might partner to address some of the concerns raised by members of the community. On this matter, I am encouraged by your December 2017 statement from which I infer that plans regarding access to the Phillips Library materials are not yet fully formed: "... Additionally, the museum is exploring ways to transport requested Phillips Library collection materials to the Saltonstall Reading Room for Salem-based researchers to have enhanced access." I conclude that there remains room for further consultation about the future of the collection and its relationship to the city and the university.

It is thus with a collegial spirit that I offer for consideration the resources of Salem State University in service to charting a community-informed plan for the Phillips Library collection. To this end, I and many of the university's faculty are planning to attend the upcoming public meeting at 6:00 PM on Thursday, January 11, so that we may learn more. I also look forward to meeting other community partners at the event, so that the university might connect with other self-identified stakeholders in this matter. It is my hope that I will come away with a better sense of how we might serve our community's desire to balance thoughtful, responsible stewardship of the region's archival heritage with thoughtful, responsible access to the same.

I recognize the vital role that PEM plays in the cultural and intellectual life of the community, and, in my role as the university's Provost, offer special thanks for the ways in which PEM has supported Salem State faculty and students for many, many years. In furthering our mission as a teaching university, we here at Salem State routinely turn to PEM, with its vast collection, dedicated staff, and innovative programming. I value our relationship, which I believe we can strengthen by working together.

I close by reflecting on the banner displayed on the PEM Director's Welcome page: "This is your museum! Welcome." I can think of no better mantra to guide our collective discernment regarding the future of the Phillips Library collection, a cherished part of our shared heritage.

Respectfully yours,



David J. Silva, Ph.D.
Provost and Academic Vice President
Salem State University
(provost@salemstate.edu)

cc: Lynda Roscoe Hartigan, The James B. and Mary Lou Hawkes Deputy Director, PEM
John D. Childs, Chief of Collection Services and the Ann C. Pingree Library Director, PEM
John D. Keenan, President, Salem State University
Elizabeth McKeigue, Executive Director, University Library, Salem State University