

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

### Lost Franklin Imprint Found!

The University of Pennsylvania Library recently acquired a copy of a work printed by Benjamin Franklin in 1750 but never seen by modern scholars. It is *The Friendly Instructor*, a conduct book in dialogue form for young boys and girls, and it is now on display at the Library as part of its Franklin Tercentenary exhibit, *Educating the Youth of Pennsylvania: Worlds of Learning in the Age of Franklin*.

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Philadelphia, PA - January 3, 2006 - University of Pennsylvania Library - Some books were not made to survive. Books for children and young adults have always been particularly vulnerable to loss since they have tended to be heavily used – and abused. Scholars have long known that Benjamin Franklin printed an edition of *The Friendly Instructor* in 1750 because he advertised it, as was his custom, in his own *Pennsylvania Gazette*. But no one in modern times had ever in fact seen a copy.

The book went through several editions in England before Franklin decided to bring out an American edition, so its popularity had been well-established across the Atlantic. It was a conduct book for young girls and boys, designed to teach them the fundamentals of proper Christian deportment: prayer, Sabbath observance, and the like. Books such as this were commonly produced by English Dissenting clergy as a way of bringing their brand of Puritanism to the people. In a colonial setting decisively shaped by the Dissenting tradition, the appeal of a book like *The Friendly Instructor* is evident.

Though published anonymously, *The Friendly Instructor*, comes with a preface signed by the Dissenting minister Philip Doddridge. Although the preface asserts that the text had been written by a woman, it would not be surprising if he himself were more than its editor.

The newly-discovered copy of *The Friendly Instructor* on display in the Penn Library is a perfect specimen of Franklin's work as a printer. Simple, fragile, and printed on inexpensive paper made in the Philadelphia area, it is clearly aimed at an audience of modest means. It retains its original leather binding, which is similar in nature and style to the bindings Franklin is known to have favored. It also contains a fulsome catalogue of works "recently published" by Franklin, and it bears with it several 18th-century inscriptions testifying to its earliest ownership and provenance. The first known owner, a young woman named Sally Bissell, was given the book as a present from a "mariner" in 1772. For scholars, these inscriptions will be invaluable in assessing how the book was originally received and used.

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*The Friendly Instructor* was acquired from an antiquarian bookseller who had discovered it in the possession of a private family. It was a gift to the Penn Library by Mr. Lawrence J. Schoenberg and the Library's Board of Overseers on the occasion of the Tercentenary of Franklin's birth.

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