

New Exhibition at the BPL's Norman B. Leventhal Map Center

'Charting an Empire: The Atlantic Neptune' features Atlantic Canada and the Eastern Seaboard of Colonial America

BOSTON – May 1, 2013 – The exhibition [Charting an Empire: The Atlantic Neptune](#) opened at the Norman B. Leventhal Map Center at the Boston Public Library on May 1. Part I is subtitled *Atlantic Canada* and is on display through July 27. Part II of the exhibition is subtitled *Eastern Seaboard of Colonial America* and is open August 1 through November 3, 2013.

Using nearly 30 objects, including nautical charts, navigational instruments and ship models dating from the 18th century to the present, the exhibition examines the importance of accurate charting of the new empire; defines how Britain put her mark on the land; and explores the complex processes of marine surveying and nautical chart production. The Norman B. Leventhal Map Center's [website](#) also features 150 charts from *The Atlantic Neptune*, including digital images from the Library of Congress and the Richard H. Brown Collection. Images will be added throughout the exhibition's run.



"The Atlantic Neptune truly features something for everyone; this exhibition was designed to appeal to visitors of all interest levels, from schoolchildren to ardent map enthusiasts," said curator Stephanie Cyr.

The period following the French and Indian War (1754-1763) was a time of change and discovery in North America. Through a display of charts, views, and maritime objects, the exhibition focuses on the decade following the war, when Britain set out to accurately chart the coast and survey the inland areas of their new resource-rich empire in Atlantic Canada, as well as the eastern seaboard extending from New England to the West Indies. The resulting charts were published collectively by Joseph Frederick Wallet Des Barres in *The Atlantic Neptune*, a maritime atlas which set the standard for nautical charting for nearly half a century.

The development of nautical chart making is described throughout the exhibition, and is illustrated in a number of examples. The exhibition also examines the artistic marvel that is *The Atlantic Neptune*, and shows the processes involved in the production of such an atlas, from surveying to engraving.

The Leventhal Map Center exhibition gallery is located in the BPL's Central Library in Copley Square, 700 Boylston Street. The gallery is open Monday – Thursday: 10:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m.;

Friday – Saturday: 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.; and Sunday: 1:00 – 5:00 p.m. Sunday hours are in effect October through May.

About the NORMAN B. LEVENTHAL MAP CENTER AT THE BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

The Norman B. Leventhal Map Center is ranked among the top 10 map centers in the United States for the size of its collection, the significance of its historic (pre-1900) material, and its advanced digitization program. It is unique among the major collections because it also combines these features with exceptional educational and teacher training programs to advance geographic literacy among students in grades K-12 and enhance the teaching of subjects from history to mathematics to language arts. The collection is also the second largest in the country located in a public library, ensuring unlimited access to these invaluable resources for scholars, educators, and the general public. The Leventhal Map Center, created in 2004, is a nonprofit organization established as a public-private partnership between the Boston Public Library and philanthropist Norman Leventhal. Its mission is to use the Boston Public Library's permanent collection of 200,000 maps and 5,000 atlases and a select group of rare maps collected by Mr. Leventhal for the enjoyment and education of all through exhibitions, educational programs, and a website that includes thousands of digitized maps at maps.bpl.org. The map collection is global in scope, dating from the 15th century to the present, with a particular strength in maps and atlases of Boston, Massachusetts, and New England.

About the BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

Boston Public Library has a Central Library, twenty-five branches, a literacy center, map center, business library, and a website filled with digital content and services. Established in 1848, the Boston Public Library has pioneered public library service in America. It was the first publicly supported municipal library in America, the first public library to lend books, the first to have a branch library, and the first to have a children's room. Each year, the Boston Public Library hosts thousands of programs and serves millions of people. All of its programs and exhibitions are free and open to the public. At the Boston Public Library, books are just the beginning. To learn more, visit www.bpl.org.

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Prepared by the Boston Public Library's Communications Office.

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