FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 24, 2012

Contact: Meg McSweeney
(215) 801-8876
mcsweeney@dlar.org

David Library Fellows Nominated for Prestigious Book Prize

WASHINGTON CROSSING, PA -- Since 2005, the George Washington Book Prize honors the best new book of the year on George Washington or his times that stands above the others and has the potential to advance broad public understanding of American history. Past winners include Ron Chernow for *Alexander Hamilton*, Stacy Schiff for *A Great Improvisation: Franklin, France, and the Birth of America*, Annette Gordon-Reed for *The Hemingses of Monticello: An American Family* and Richard Beeman for *Plain, Honest Men: The Making of the American Constitution*.

Two of the three finalists for the 2012 prize are Fellows of the David Library of the American Revolution in Washington Crossing.

The George Washington Book Prize is co-sponsored by Washington College in Chestertown, Maryland; the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History in New York City, and George Washington’s Mount Vernon in Alexandria Virginia. The winner of the $50,000 prize will be announced June 4 at a black-tie dinner at George Washington’s Mount Vernon Estate & Gardens in Virginia. Finalists were selected by a jury of distinguished historians who reviewed some 50 books before narrowing the competition down to three.

The two David Library Fellows are John Fea, Chairman of the History Department at Messiah College in Grantham, PA, and Benjamin H. Irvin, Associate Professor of History at the University of Arizona.
Adam Goodheart, who is the Hodson Trust-Griswold Director of Washington College’s C.V. Starr Center for the Study of the American Experience, which administers the prize, said in a statement, “This prize is, of course, about history that happened 200 years ago, but it’s also about the present. From the Tea Party movement to this year’s presidential debates, Americans still refer to the nation’s founding era when they talk about current events. This year’s finalists reflect on some of these enduring questions, including the role of religion in politics, the relationship between politicians and the general public, and the fate of dissident minorities.”

John Fea is nominated for Was America Founded As A Christian Nation?: A Historical Introduction, a book in which he asks – and answers – one of the most controversial questions of contemporary public debate. The Washington Prize jury praised the book for its “balance and nuance” and “real, even pressing, contemporary importance.” Fea has written extensively for both scholarly and popular audiences and blogs about the intersection of American history, politics, religion and academic life. He is also the author of The Way of Improvement Leads Home: Philip Vickers Fithian and the Rural Enlightenment in Early America and co-editor of Confessing History: Explorations in Christian Faith and the Historian’s Vocation published last year by Notre Dame Press. At the David Library in 2008, Professor Fea researched Presbyterian patriots such as Elias Boudinot and William Livingston, examined letters of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, and searched British and American military records for references to Presbyterianism in the American Revolution. Professor Fea has lectured twice at DLAR in recent years, and presented an informal talk during his fellowship about Philip Vickers Fithian.

Benjamin H. Irvin’s nomination is for Clothed in Robes of Sovereignty: The Continental Congress and the People Out of Doors. In the jury’s words, it is a “well-researched and imaginatively-conceived work” that “provides a lively narrative and a fascinating window onto the relationship between America’s political leaders in the Congress and the people.” Professor Irvin was a David Library Fellow in 2000 while a graduate student at Brandeis University to research his dissertation, a cultural history of the Continental Congress, and an early version of his nominated book. He has taught at the University of Pennsylvania, where he held an Andrew W. Mellon Postdoctoral Fellowship at the McNeil Center for Early American Studies. He is the author of the young
adult biography, *Samuel Adams: Son of Liberty, Father of Revolution*.

The third finalist for the George Washington Book Prize is Maya Jasanoff, an Associate Professor at Harvard and the author of *Liberty’s Exiles: American Loyalists in the Revolutionary World*.

The David Library of the American Revolution is a private non-profit specialized research library dedicated to the study of American history in the era of the American Revolution. Although its vast collections of primary source materials are available to interested individuals of any level of academic experience, the Library awards a number of residential research fellowships each year to doctoral-level in support of academic work that will advance scholarship in the field. David Library Fellows live on the Library’s 118 acre campus and enjoy unlimited access to the archive.

According to William P. Tatum III, Sol Feinstone Scholar of the David Library, “Our fellowship program exists to foster the sort of scholarly excellence in American history that the George Washington Book Prize recognizes. With their acclaimed volumes, Professors Fea and Irvin have recognized the potential that we see in each of our research fellows, whom we select annually from a global pool of applicants.”

The David Library reading room is open to the public Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10AM to 5PM; the Library also offers a range of educational programs to the general public. For more information, visit www.dlar.org.  

###