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GIVING

The Reform of American Library Philanthropy

INDREW CARNEGIE OCCUPIES A CRUCIAL place in the cultural history of the United States. On the one hand, his library philanthropy was informed by general trends in late nineteenth-century American culture, particularly its widespread concern for making library facilities available to the public free of charge. At the same time, Carnegie shared the late nineteenth-century conviction that men of wealth had a moral responsibility for providing these cultural institutions. Initially at least, he also favored buildings that reinforced the paternalistic role that sustained nineteenth-century philanthropy.

On the other hand, however, Carnegie also pushed these late nineteenth-century developments in new directions. Touched by the mania for efficiency that characterized the early twentieth century, Carnegie used the metaphor of the corporation to reform the practices of American philanthropy. In the process, he redirected the course of American library design and redefined the nature of library use.

Librarians vs. Architects

In the decades before the Civil War, it is difficult to speak of an American library building type at all. Only in the 1870s and 1880s were conditions right for the invention of an American library building type. In those years, widespread passage of public library laws (at least in New England) provided the legal apparatus for creating public libraries in great numbers, while postwar prosperity and the professionalization of both librarianship and architecture ensured that these new libraries were housed in permanent, professionally designed buildings.¹

Typically, late nineteenth-century library buildings were the product of local philanthropy, gifts of men grown wealthy during the war. While their middle-class contemporaries continued to support moral reform

movements (like the YMCA) as a means of encouraging social cohesion, very wealthy men who had pulled themselves up the social ladder tended to be less enthusiastic about social constraints imposed from above.² Instead, these self-made millionaires were attracted to libraries and other cultural institutions as a means for promoting individual development from within. George Peabody (a London-based financier), Walter L. Newberry (a Chicago real estate and railroad promoter), and Charles Bower Winn (who inherited the small fortune that his father had accumulated in the leather trade in Massachusetts) were among the wealthy men who financed library building in the second half of the nineteenth century.³

Despite geographical and temporal differences, each of these nineteenth-century library builders cast himself in the role of the patriarch of an extended family, while the recipients of his gifts played the parts of dependent relations. The philanthropist nurtured this illusion by extending his benevolence only to towns with which he had some sort of personal connection. If he shared Winn's inclination, he might also choose to invest his endowment with a memorial function, inviting citizens of the recipient town to share in his grief and giving them access to a level of intimacy usually reserved for family members.⁴ Although his gifts to Baltimore and to the Massachusetts towns of Danvers, North Danvers, and Newburyport did not fulfill a memorial function, Peabody expressed this familial relationship by referring to the educational mission of his gifts as "a debt due from present to future generations."⁵ Recipients of these gifts also participated in the metaphor when they welcomed Peabody to town with banners that read "One Generation Shall Praise Thy Works to Another."⁶

Although paternalistic philanthropy required both benefactor and recipient to address each other with exaggerated graciousness, the kind of fatherly protection offered by Peabody and others like him exacted a heavy price. At the Danvers parade in Peabody's honor, a battalion of pupils from the Danversport Grammar School carried banners that read, "We owe him gratitude; we will not repudiate the debt," reminding all present that Peabody's gift carried with it certain obligations.⁷ Nineteenth-century philanthropy, like parental love, imposed upon its recipients a debt of gratitude that they had not asked to incur and that, no matter how hard they tried, they could never adequately repay.

When it came time for these paternalistic philanthropists to house their benefactions, they consistently turned for advice to the new generation of professional architects trained either at home or abroad in the

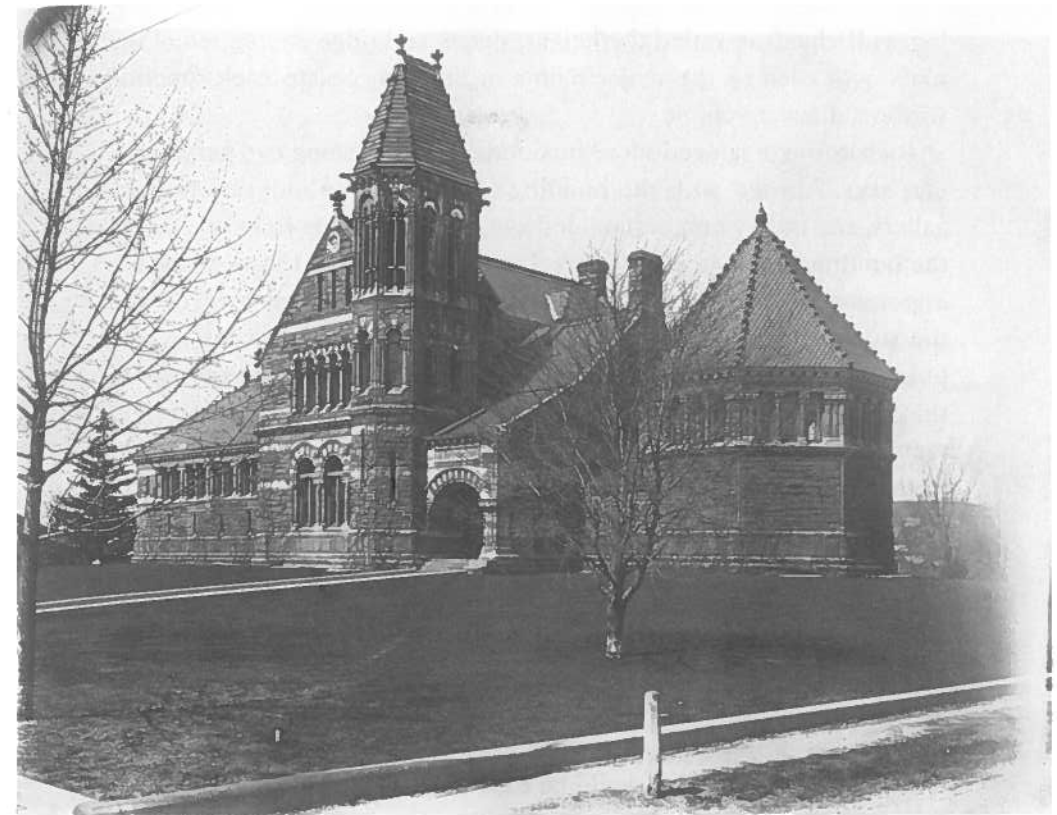


Figure 1.1 Henry Hobson Richardson, Winn Memorial Public Library, Woburn, Massachusetts, 1876–79. Photograph by Baldwin Coolidge, Courtesy of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities.

compositional principles of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. Chief among them was Henry Hobson Richardson, who designed multipurpose cultural institutions for four cultural philanthropists in eastern Massachusetts, almost single-handedly creating a building type that met the needs of these library founders.⁸

Begun in 1876, the Winn Memorial library in Woburn, Massachusetts, is a case in point. Drawing on the approach to architectural composition that he had learned in Paris, Richardson articulated each of the building's functions separately in both plan and elevation (figs. 1.1 and 1.2). The museum, for instance, was housed in an octagonal room at one end of the building. Variations in proportion and orientation distinguished the rectangular rooms of the picture gallery, reading rooms, and library proper. These distinctions were reinforced in the elevation of the build-

ing, as Richardson varied the height, shape, and ridge orientation of the roofs over each of the major rooms in order to isolate each function within a distinct volume.

Richardson organized these functional volumes along two perpendicular axes. Aligned with the building's long axis, the museum, picture gallery, and library proper provided a monumental vista from one end of the building to the other (fig. 1.3). Their orientation and scale reveal the importance that architect and patron alike assigned to rooms devoted to the storage and display of cultural or natural artifacts. In contrast, the public reading rooms were perceived as of secondary importance; thus, they sit on the building's cross axis (fig. 1.4). Unlike their more monumental counterparts, these rooms have an almost domestic scale, thanks to their alcoves, inglenooks, and lower ceilings. At the intersection of these two axes stood the delivery desk, staffed by the librarian who mediated, both literally and figuratively, the user's experience of the books.

Finally, Richardson clothed the building in a formal vocabulary borrowed from the Romanesque. This stylistic mode had two advantages. First, it seemed appropriate to the building type, given the library's predecessors in medieval monasteries. Second, a style that often juxtaposed elements of different sizes was well suited to a building in which so many different functions would be expressed on the exterior.

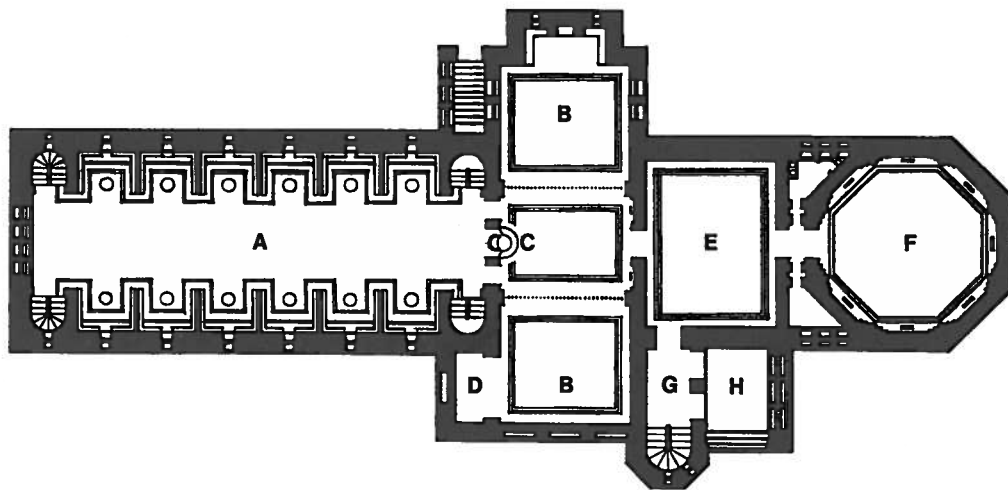


Figure 1.2 Winn Library, first-floor plan. A = book hall, B = reading rooms, C = librarian's desk, D = alcove, E = picture gallery, F = museum, G = vestibule, H = porch. Redrawn from M. G. Van Rensselaer, *Henry Hobson Richardson and His Works*, New York, 1888, 69.

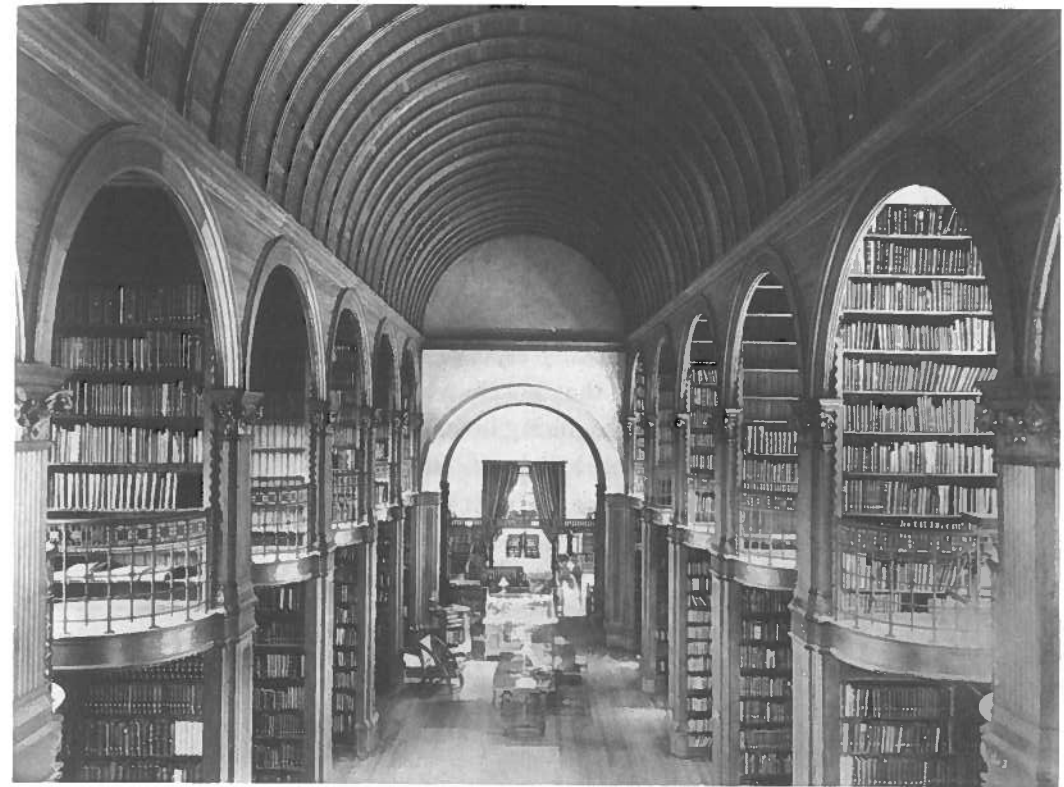


Figure 1.3 Winn Library, book hall. Courtesy of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities.

Yet, in the very years that Richardson was refining his library formula professional librarians emerged as another force in American library design. From the moment the American Library Association (ALA) was founded in 1876, librarians began using their collective voice to condemn the physical layout of libraries designed by architects. As early as 1879, librarian William Poole told an audience of his colleagues at the fourth annual ALA convention his rule of thumb for planning a library: "Avoid everything that pertains to the plan and arrangement of the conventional American library building."⁹

If architects took Poole's comments as a direct attack on their professional acumen, they did nothing more than interpret the spirit of his words. In fact, Poole's comments were only the opening shots of a long, intense battle between architects and librarians over which professional group should prevail in matters of library planning. By asserting their

particular aptitude in this area, librarians hoped to enlarge the body of knowledge in which they could claim expertise. In doing so, they sought to advance their struggle for professional recognition, even as architects were seeking to consolidate their own hold on professional stature.

Despite its competitive nature, the debate was firmly rooted in practical considerations of library administration. While it took several decades for librarians to settle on the ideal form for a small public library, they agreed from the start on the evils of the alcoved book hall.¹⁰ Unimpressed by a pedigree that extended back to sixteenth-century Europe, librarians complained about every aspect of this distinguished book-storage system. The alcoves, they noted, were impossible to supervise from a single vantage point, requiring libraries of this design to bar patrons from entering the book hall itself. Responsibility for retrieving books fell to a library clerk, who, in order to get a book from the upper



Figure 1.4 Winn Library, interior of reading room. Photograph by Baldwin Coolidge, Courtesy of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities.

level, had to cross the length of the hall, climb a precarious spiral staircase, locate the book at the upper level, and retrace his steps back to the librarian stationed at the delivery desk in the next room. As if exhausting the clerk were not bad enough, galleried book halls threatened the safety of the books as well. As librarians like Poole were quick to point out, it was impossible to heat the ground floor of a galleried book hall to a comfortable temperature without overheating the upper levels and damaging the books.¹¹

In addition to these specific grievances against the book hall, librarians took offense at the general state of affairs in which visual effect took precedence over the requirements of easy library administration. At the 1882 ALA meeting, for instance, Poole condemned Smithmeyer and Pelz's design for the new Library of Congress, not only because of its galleried book-storage system, but also because it would "make a show building" and would be "needlessly extravagant" in its search for "what is falsely called 'architectural effect'"¹²

Despite the time and attention that librarians devoted to the question of library planning in the last decades of the nineteenth century, they rarely had a chance to put their own ideas into practice. Whether clothed in its original Romanesque mode, in the Queen Anne style, or even in classical garb, the Richardsonian type equipped with the alcoved book hall served as the model for small public libraries.¹³

The question, then, is, Why was the Richardsonian type so popular? It is tempting to explain the phenomenon as the result of a childlike innocence on the part of library trustees. After all, many towns that received library buildings in this era had neither an existing library nor a resident librarian. In many cases, the trustees did not think about hiring a librarian until after the building was under construction.

Contemporary librarians were much less generous in their assessment of the Richardsonian phenomenon. Poole himself, at yet another ALA conference, painted the typical board of library directors as a group of dullards who tended "to look around for a library building which had galleries and alcoves, and to reproduce its general plan, and as much of its details as they could pay for. They usually copied its worst features."¹⁴ The tenor of his other comments make it clear that Poole and most of his colleagues harbored the suspicion that donors and architects alike shared a love of the monumental for its own sake.

While it is easy to imagine a donor relishing the comparison of his gift to one of the great European libraries of the past, the appeal of Richardson's library formula is more deep-seated than mere vanity.

Richardson's libraries were so popular because they were particularly successful at articulating the family metaphor that sustained nineteenth-century philanthropy. While the double-height book hall lent the building the monumental scale of a public place, the fact that users could not enter the hall reminded them that they had access to these fine library facilities only by the grace of the donor. At the same time, the reading room, with its inglenooks and its massive fireplace (typically with a portrait of the donor over the mantel), had a domestic scale and the coziness that played such an important part in the Victorian ideal of home. Library users were at once in a public institution and in the bosom of an extended family. In short, the architectural products of nineteenth-century philanthropy worked in tandem with the cultural assumptions that supported benevolent activities.

Andrew Carnegie Enters the Philanthropic Game

When asked to explain why he chose to channel his philanthropic energies into the building of public libraries, Andrew Carnegie (fig. 1.5) always told the story of Colonel James Anderson of Allegheny City, Pennsylvania. One day each week, in the years before the Civil War, Anderson had opened his personal library to the working boys of his

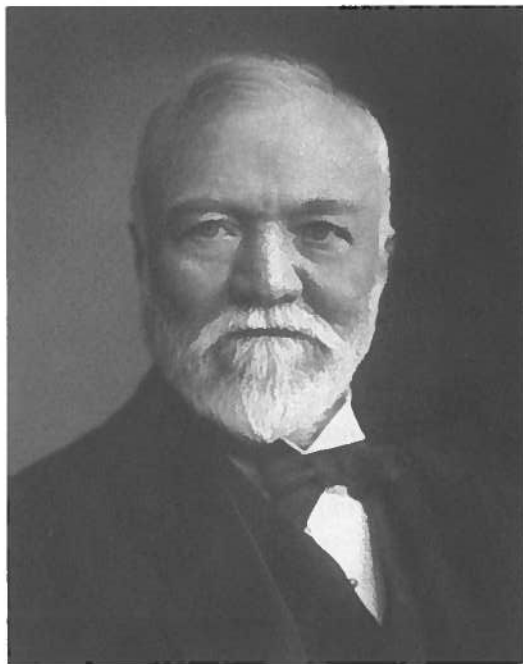


Figure 1.5 Andrew Carnegie. Courtesy of Carnegie Corporation Archives, and Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University. Copyright Davis & Sanford, New York.

neighborhood. As one of those boys, young Carnegie treasured the time he spent in the Colonel's library. In his *Autobiography*, he credited the library with instilling in him a love of literature, with steering him "clear of low fellowship and bad habits," and with opening to him "the precious treasures of knowledge and imagination through which youth may ascend."¹⁵ Since Carnegie understood this ascent in both spiritual and material terms, he felt he owed a great part of his undeniable material success to the education that Colonel Anderson's library had afforded him.

Carnegie's anecdotal explanation is often repeated, in large part because it fits so closely with the Carnegie myth. Propagated by Carnegie himself and perpetuated by a host of subsequent writers, the Carnegie myth closely resembles Horatio Alger's rags-to-riches tales. Starting with Carnegie's birth in Scotland in 1835, the myth emphasizes the dire straits of the linen weaver's family impoverished by the advent of the power loom. It follows thirteen-year-old Andrew's immigration to the United States with his family in 1848, and it stresses the inexorable quality of his rise to greatness. His promotions from bobbin boy in a textile factory to telegraph operator to railroad supervisor to millionaire steel manufacturer are presented as plausible and inevitable. In most accounts, the rags-to-riches myth ends in 1901, when Carnegie sold his steel company for \$480,000,000 to J. P. Morgan, who thereupon congratulated his long-time rival on becoming "the richest man in the world."¹⁶

The Carnegie myth is history of a highly subjective sort, the facts of Carnegie's biography manipulated in order to serve the story's rhetorical logic. The immigrant boy's poverty, for instance, is exaggerated in order to throw the steel manufacturer's wealth into bolder relief. At the same time, by attributing Carnegie's meteoric rise to his strength of character, the myth obscures Carnegie's considerable contributions to American business practices. One must read business history to discover that Carnegie invented cost accounting, pioneering the practice on the railroad and later using it in steel manufacturing to undersell his competitors without undercutting his profit margin.¹⁷

Despite these manipulations, the Carnegie myth is based on fact, and the young Scot's early interest in philanthropy is borne out by the historical evidence. Indeed, Carnegie was a young man of thirty-three when he first expressed his intention to use his surplus wealth for charitable purposes. An inveterate planner, Carnegie sketched out in writing a future for himself that included a few years' study at Oxford, followed by a well-ordered existence in London, "taking a part in public matters

especially those connected with education & improvement of the poorer classes.”¹⁸

In fact, Carnegie’s future did not correspond directly with this 1868 daydream. His study sojourn in Oxford never materialized, and he delayed another eighteen years before taking up philanthropy in earnest. Yet the date of the daydream, its London locale, and its educational emphasis are indicative of Carnegie’s familiarity with and respect for a man like George Peabody. Although Carnegie brought ideas of his own to his career in benevolence, his earliest philanthropic efforts were informed by the example of postwar philanthropists of Peabody’s sort.

Carnegie’s mature ideas about benevolence were first presented for public consumption in two articles published in the *North American Review* in 1889, “Wealth” and “The Best Fields for Philanthropy.”¹⁹ Aimed at the educated readership of the *Review*, these articles outlined lessons that Carnegie hoped his fellow millionaires would take to heart. In Carnegie’s own words:

The main consideration should be to help those who will help themselves; to provide part of the means by which those who desire to improve may do so; to give those who desire to rise the aids by which they may rise; to assist, but rarely or never to do all.²⁰

In short, Carnegie warned the philanthropist to protect himself against the risk of throwing away his money on someone without the strength of character to make the best use of it.

Going on to explain that “neither the race nor the individual is improved by almsgiving,” Carnegie hinted at the terrible results of an ill-spent philanthropic dollar. Not only did it risk the ruin of individuals, but it also threatened the inevitable progress of the age. The danger was particularly dire at the individual level, where indiscriminate charity would certainly “sap the foundation of manly independence” of the not-yet-deserving poor and destroy his chance of reaching the requisite stage of deservedness.²¹

Inherent in Carnegie’s statement was the contradictory idea that only those who did not need help were eligible to receive it. In Carnegie’s defense, he did not manufacture this contradiction; but inherited it from a long tradition of Protestant liberalism. Like his predecessors, Carnegie believed that wealth was a clear sign of the intellectual and moral capacity of the wealthy, whose natural role was to act as the stewards of their wealth for the good of the community.²²

If Carnegie’s concern with distinguishing the deserving poor from

their undeserving fellows would have been familiar to any of his nineteenth-century predecessors, his actions would have seemed equally conventional. Like Peabody and others, Carnegie began his philanthropic career by extending gifts only to towns with which he had some sort of personal connection. An 1881 gift to Dunfermline, Scotland, gave the poor weaver’s son a chance to flaunt his millions to the residents of his hometown. Over the next twenty years, Carnegie included the United States in his library benefactions, offering relatively large cash gifts to a handful of towns on both sides of the Atlantic. Five of the six American towns to receive Carnegie gifts in this period had played a significant role in the donor’s life.²³ Allegheny City, Pennsylvania, had been Carnegie’s first home in the United States, and in 1886 it became the first American city to receive a Carnegie library gift. The next gift went to Pittsburgh, the city just across the Allegheny River and the site of the headquarters of Carnegie’s steel empire. Subsequent gifts went to three other Pennsylvania towns: Johnstown, near the South Fork Fishing and Hunting Club, to which Carnegie belonged, Braddock, and Homestead, both sites of Carnegie steel works.²⁴

Having patterned his initial forays into philanthropy on the paternalistic model of the late nineteenth century, Carnegie adopted a similar attitude toward the architectural form of the libraries as well. This attitude is particularly apparent at the Carnegie Library of Allegheny City. There, responsibility for the building fell to a library commission comprising six members, half appointed by Carnegie and half appointed by the city. Fixing upon a competition as the best means of securing plans for the building, the commission invited seven architectural firms to compete.²⁵ Two of those firms had Richardsonian connections: Shepley, Rutan and Coolidge was Richardson’s successor firm, and C. L. Eidlitz had served as Richardson’s collaborator on the New York State Capitol in Albany. Their appearance on the list of invitees reveals the extent to which the library commission acknowledged Richardson’s town library designs as appropriate models for Allegheny City.

Another firm invited to compete was Smithmeyer and Pelz, whose principals were still involved in the design of the Library of Congress. This choice not only confirms the commission’s pretensions to grandeur; it is also revealing in what it says about the board’s attitude toward the library design controversy that was raging about them in the late 1880s. Perhaps the commissioners did not recognize librarians’ complaints about the book hall as an indictment of Richardson’s elegant buildings. It is impossible, however, to imagine that they misread Poole’s unequivocal

ocal condemnation of Smithmeyer and Pelz's Library of Congress design, published four years earlier in the ALA's *Library Journal*.

Was this a deliberate snub to librarians, or merely a product of the commissioners' ignorance about the current debate? Existing information about the program devised as a guide for the competitors suggests some of each. The program originally sent to competing architects in July 1886 no longer exists, but the requirements were murky enough to

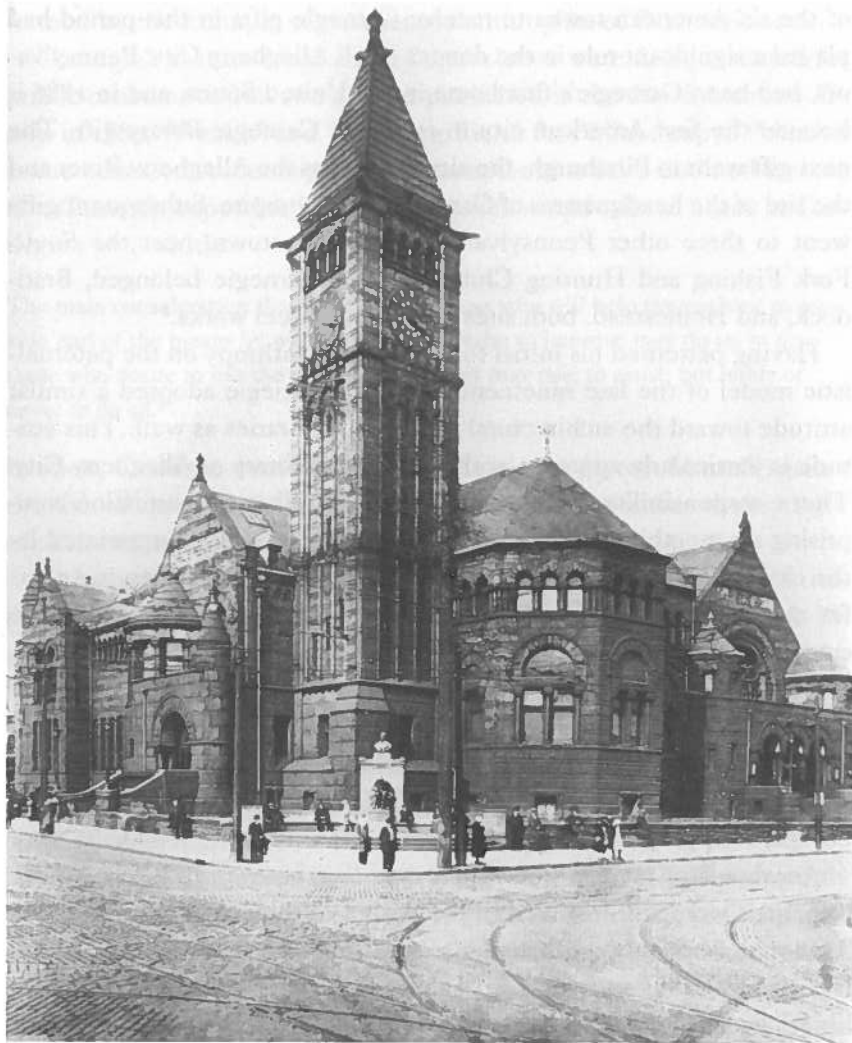


Figure 1.6 Smithmeyer and Pelz, Carnegie Library and Music Hall, Allegheny City (now Pittsburgh), Pennsylvania, 1886–90. Courtesy of Carnegie Library, Pittsburgh.

prompt a number of competitors to write for clarification.²⁶ In response, the commission resolved that “plans may provide for placing of books in alcoves or stacks, in whole or in part.”²⁷ The imprecise nature of the original program suggests that the commissioners were ignorant of the importance that librarians attached to the choice of a book-storage system. Their clarification, however, continued to allow the use of alcoves, mentioning stacks almost as an afterthought. The commissioners, it seems, were fundamentally unconcerned about the issues involved.

Despite lavish praise in the professional press for the “refined” French Gothic design submitted by the local architect W. S. Fraser, Smithmeyer and Pelz's design (figs. 1.6–1.10) received the unanimous approval of the building committee, and Carnegie's approval as well, in December of 1886.²⁸ As built, the building was an asymmetrical mass dominated by a clock tower and cloaked in a medieval vocabulary (see fig. 1.6). The entrance to the library proper was on the building's western side, facing Federal Street (see figs. 1.6 and 1.7). It gave directly onto the lobby dominated by a large marble stair (see fig. 1.9). To the south of the lobby, the small, square trustees' room enjoyed a prominent location in the base of the clock tower. To the east of the lobby lay the delivery room, the library's organizational core (see fig. 1.10). As originally planned, the rooms north of the delivery room were off limits to the public. On axis with the delivery room, the largest of these staff rooms was the bibliographic room, which gave access to three stack rooms and a repair room to the west.

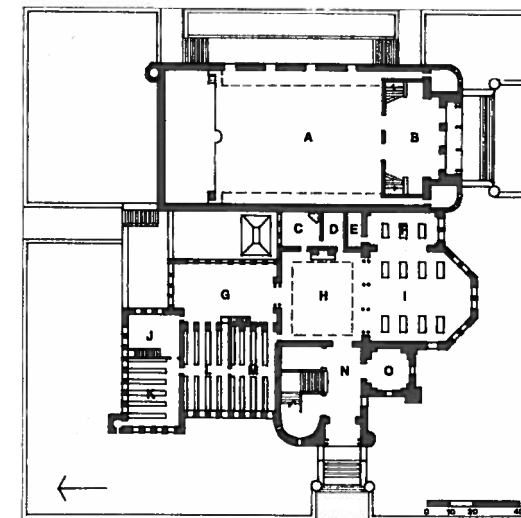


Figure 1.7 Carnegie Library, Allegheny City, first-floor plan. A = music hall, B = lobby, C = librarian's office, D = men's toilet, E = women's toilet, F = ladies' reading room, G = bibliographic room, H = delivery room, I = reading room, J = repair room, K, L, M = stack rooms, N = lobby, O = trustees' room. Redrawn from *Library Journal* 18 (August 1893): 289.

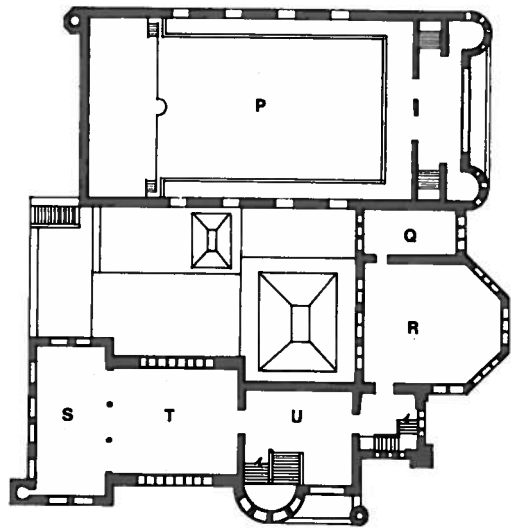


Figure 1.8 Carnegie Library, Allegheny City, second-floor plan. P = upper part of music hall, Q = apparatus room, R = lecture room, S = print room, T = art gallery, U = stair hall. Reconstructed from *Library Journal* 18 (August 1893): 289.



Figure 1.9 Carnegie Library, Allegheny City, lobby. Courtesy of Carnegie Library, Pittsburgh.

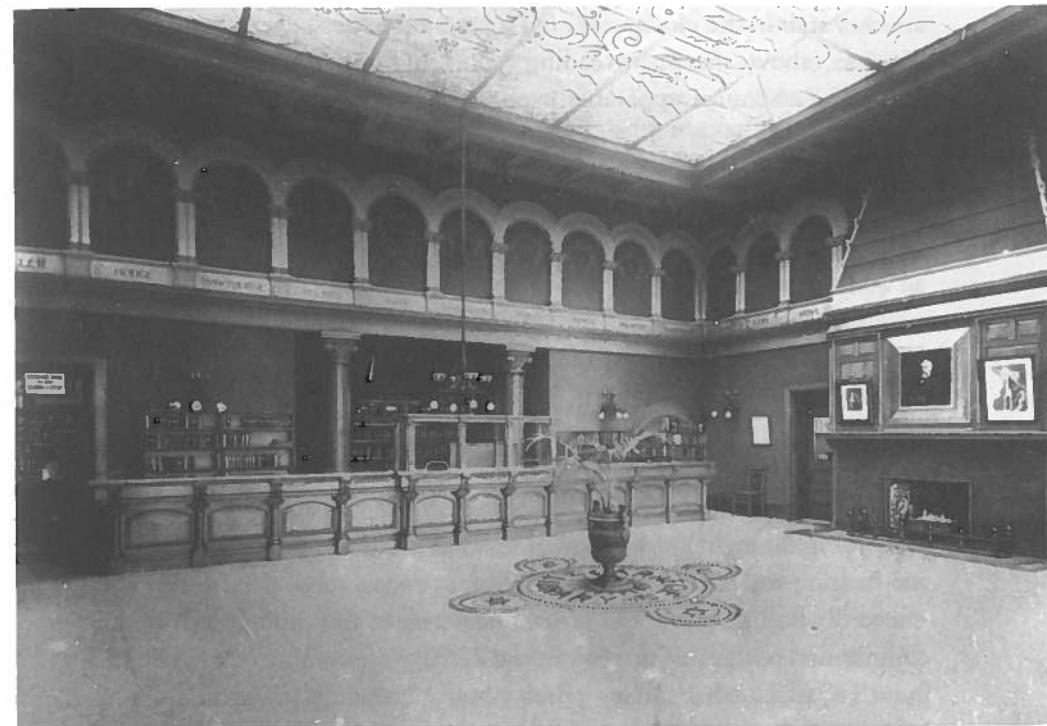


Figure 1.10 Carnegie Library, Allegheny City, delivery room. Although omitted from the original design, a delivery desk was installed soon after the building was opened and was in place by 1893. Courtesy of Carnegie Library, Pittsburgh.

The main reading room, ending with an octagonal bay, was south of the delivery room and on axis with it and with the bibliographic room. East of the reading room was the much smaller ladies' reading room, from which opened the ladies' toilet. East of the delivery room were the men's toilet and librarian's office. Since both the library commission and the architects assumed that librarianship would remain a male profession, these last two rooms communicated directly with one another, as well as with the delivery room.

The usable area of the library's second floor was limited by the skylight that illuminated the first-floor delivery room (see fig. 1.8). The principal rooms on the second level were north of the stair hall and included the art gallery (above the stack rooms) and print gallery (above the repair room). The area above the bibliographic room, not interior space when the building was first completed, was left available for subsequent expansion. South of the stair hall, above the trustees' room,

another stair in the clock tower led up to a room designated for scientific lectures (above the main reading room) and another set aside for the storage of chemical apparatus used during lectures (above the ladies' reading room).

Without interior communication with the library, the music hall had a separate entrance on Ohio Street. The lobby, with cloak room and ticket office, led into the music hall proper, where an organ (paid for by an additional Carnegie gift of \$10,000) loomed over the stage in the far wall. Cantilevered galleries provided a second level of seating, reached from stairs on either side of the lobby.

Despite the commissioners' initial nonchalance about library administration, the building constructed under their aegis corrected many of the worst errors of conventional nineteenth-century library design. Gone were the alcoved book halls dear to Richardson's heart. In their place, single-height stack rooms mitigated the damaging effects of central heating and saved the steps of library assistants sent to retrieve requested volumes. Even the official response of the professional library community, published in 1893 in the *Library Journal*, avoided the vituperative attack that many other library buildings elicited from librarians.²⁹

Credit for incorporating these innovations into the building belongs to Smithmeyer and Pelz, whose Library of Congress experience made them uniquely and acutely aware of Poole's ideas on library planning. Indeed, there are many similarities between the Allegheny City plan and an ideal plan for a small library that Poole had published in the *Library Journal* just nine months before the Allegheny City competition was announced (fig. 1.11).³⁰ In both schemes, the user came first into a lobby that gave access to the trustees' room and staircase. In both, the entrance was on the building's short axis, while the book-storage room, the delivery room, and the largest reading room (in Poole's plan, identified as the periodical and newspaper room) were organized on the long axis.³¹ In both, the delivery room was located at the intersection of these two axes. Finally, both Poole's scheme and the Allegheny City plan maintained the practice of gender segregation.³²

Despite these planning similarities, the Smithmeyer and Pelz plan departed from Poole's ideal in tone and character. In order to accommodate the complex relationship between the donor and the user, the Allegheny City library was more monumental than Poole's ideal. In the real building, for instance, an imposing stairway dominated the lobby (see fig. 1.9), instead of hiding demurely in a stair tower that would have

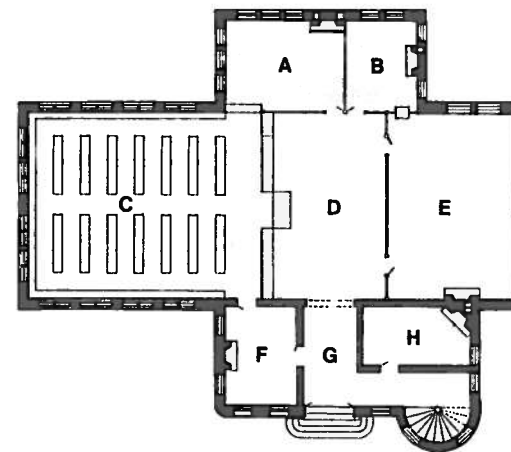


Figure 1.11 William Poole's plan of a small library building, 1885. A = reference room, B = ladies' reference room, C = book room, D = delivery room, E = periodical and newspaper room, F = librarian's office, G = lobby, H = directors' room. Redrawn from *Library Journal* 10 (September–October 1885): 253.

been all but invisible to anyone entering Poole's hypothetical plan. Likewise, the delivery room at Allegheny City was an imposing room with a high ceiling and ample proportions (see fig. 1.10); at thirty-six feet by forty feet, it was more than twice the size of Poole's. In addition, each surface was elaborately decorated: overhead was a skylight of stained glass; under foot were mosaic floors covered in "chaste arabesques surrounding the words . . . 'Carnegie Free Library,'" and on the walls was a friezelike blind arcade inscribed with the names of twenty-five American authors.³³ While Poole's delivery room was a void at the center of a centrifugally organized collection of rooms, the delivery room of the Allegheny City library focused inward on a massive fireplace. Above its mantel a portrait of Carnegie, donated by the commissioners from their personal funds, invited library users to pause and ponder their debt to Carnegie's liberality.

At the same time, the Smithmeyer and Pelz building was also more intimate and inviting than Poole's ideal. In the real building, the entrance to the delivery room from a door in the corner mitigated the ritualistic quality that might have resulted from a more formal, axial approach. The specially shaped reading room and the alcove that served as the ladies' reading room were also important physical reminders of domesticity, intended to convey a sense of hominess to the readers.

As built, the Allegheny City library reminded library users that they were near the bottom of a library hierarchy that started with Carnegie and descended through the trustees, to the male librarian, to the female library clerks, and only then to the library users. Even here, the social and spatial hierarchy favored male readers over female ones. Yet, at the

same time, the homey touches encouraged readers to think that the hierarchy was sustained not just by economic power but also by mutual love and respect, as in an extended family. Library users might then look upon Carnegie as a rich uncle, who deserved respect, obedience, and affection, and whose affection in return precluded any class resentment.

An anonymous article that appeared in the *Pittsburgh Bulletin* at the time of the library dedication reveals that contemporary observers interpreted the building's meaning in just this way. Although the bulk of the article is a straightforward description of the new building, scattered comments reveal the author's precise understanding of the building's spatial and social hierarchy. The trustees' room, for example, he described as "a high-wainscoted, dignified-looking apartment sacred to the one which its name implies," a room that "the light enters . . . in a dim religious way, through stained glass windows high above the floor." Likewise, when the writer called the book stacks "the Holy of Holies in this literary temple," he used religious terms to articulate the message that the building's design conveyed to users: mere mortals were not welcome in every part of this cultural institution.³⁴

The monumentality of the two main public spaces was not lost on the reporter from the *Bulletin*. He noted, for instance, that "the main staircase claims notice for its graceful sweep as well as its solidity and beauty." In the same vein, the delivery room (he calls it the "reception room") seemed to him "a lofty apartment, its ample skylight reaching from wall to wall."³⁵ From the even tone of the article, it is clear that the writer found these monumental elements completely appropriate to this type of public building.

Yet the writer used the same approving tone to comment on the library's cozy touches—the comfortable chairs, the electrical and gas fittings, the sanitary conveniences—that "make the place an ideal one for the enjoyment of a favorite author." In short, the writer was undisturbed that a public institution should also offer its patrons the "forgetfulness of care" that was usually relegated to the domestic sphere in the late nineteenth century. Commenting matter-of-factly that the open fireplace "greet[s] the visitor right cheerily from the base of a monster mantelpiece," the writer was evidently undisturbed by the brutal juxtaposition of monumental and domestic imagery. Deprived of its functional purpose by the building's system of central heating, the fireplace played a largely symbolic role; a shrine to the donor, it was the only appropriate

spot for Carnegie's portrait, "an object that must, on opening day and thereafter, attract the most roving attention."³⁶

By the end of this imaginary tour of the building, it seems clear that part of the article's purpose was instructive; the writer hoped to teach his readers how to think and behave appropriately in their new public library. Referring to the city with feminine pronouns, the writer closed his piece with an admonition. The building, he noted,

is something to assuredly make her hold in perpetual gratitude the man whose liberality has been so fittingly and nobly embodied. . . . Her people, as one man, must hope for the munificent donor, long years of health and prosperity, and the opening ceremonies must serve to give voice to this feeling, while the years to come must fail to dim the memory of the man whose heart prompted the gift, and fail to eradicate or weaken the sense of obligation which [Allegheny City] must feel toward Andrew Carnegie.³⁷

For this anonymous writer, the building was a success. More than a warehouse for books, it served to remind the citizens of Allegheny City of their undying, unpayable debt of gratitude, affection, and respect for the philanthropist who made it possible.

Carnegie's Reform of American Philanthropy

Within a few years of the library dedication in Allegheny City, institutional endowments came under close scrutiny as the popular press began to publish debates about the moral dimensions of accepting philanthropic gifts. The controversy began with "Tainted Money," an article in the *Outlook* written by Washington Gladden, the minister of the First Congregational Church in Columbus, Ohio.³⁸ Gladden's theme was a simple one. By accepting money which had been earned by illegal or unethical means, institutions of cultural and moral enlightenment "condoned the wrongs by which they [such funds] were obtained." Compelled "simply by the dictate of ordinary decency to refrain from criticizing the financial methods of the donor," the recipient church or "Christian" college completely dismantled both its authority and its ability to shape the moral consciousness of its members. In short, by accepting tainted money, such institutions undermined their *raison d'être*.

Although it was less than two pages long, Gladden's article brought about a fundamental shift in the terms in which philanthropy was dis-

cussed in the public arena. Philanthropy, of course, had been a topic of discussion for some decades, but such writings (including Carnegie's own article "Wealth") had always focused on the giver of the gift. Starting from the assumption that the poor would take any money offered them and always ask for more, these earlier writings had usually addressed the problems of "indiscriminate charity," and never considered the possibility that a gift might be refused. By approaching the issue from the opposite direction, by looking at it from the receiver's point of view, Gladden paved the way for the first fully articulated attack on philanthropic paternalism.

In many ways, Gladden's ideas were simply part of the distrust of big business that fueled many Progressive-era reforms and that brought about the transformation of American culture in the decades around the turn of the century. Indeed, Progressive reform movements provided both the personnel and the public forums in which the tainted-money controversy was addressed. Gladden himself had first begun to think out loud about this issue at the National Conference of Charities and Corrections in 1893.³⁹ Seven years later, Vida Scudder investigated the same theme in "Ill-Gotten Gifts to Colleges," an article published in the *Atlantic Monthly*. Cofounder of Hull House with Jane Addams, Scudder shared Gladden's apprehension about the moral implications of tainted money, but her settlement house experience prompted her to add a more pragmatic caveat: the acceptance of tainted money only served to undermine the public's confidence in "the integrity of [our] academic life," and to increase "the difficulty of understanding between class and class."⁴⁰ Graham Taylor, the editor of the Progressive magazine *The Commons*, disagreed with Gladden's conclusions. Yet, even as he argued that rejecting tainted money only served to create "vested funds for perpetuating wrong," Taylor discussed philanthropy in the very terms established by Gladden.⁴¹

Although neither Gladden nor Scudder mentioned Carnegie by name, his gifts were implicitly included in their attacks on tainted money. Indeed, Scudder's disdainful description of "Christian institutions of the land, which gratefully accept [tainted money] and rise to chant the paean of democracy triumphant," is only a thinly veiled reference to Carnegie's 1886 book, *Triumphant Democracy*.⁴²

More direct jabs at Carnegie and his philanthropic motives were delivered in a variety of other ways. Chicago-born journalist Finley Peter Dunne, for instance, used his fictitious Irishman, Mr. Dooley, to voice his criticism of Carnegie. According to Mr. Dooley, "The way to abolish

poverty an' bust crime is to put up a brown-stone buildin' in ivry town in the country with me name over it."⁴³

Carnegie also came under attack at the grass-roots level, as prospective recipients of his gifts cited moral reasons for declining his library offers. Detroit is a case in point. Although the city eventually accepted a sizable Carnegie gift (as we shall see in chap. 3), pressure from the Detroit Trades Council made it politically inexpedient for city officials to accept Carnegie's money when it was first offered in 1903.⁴⁴ Local headlines, like the *Detroit Evening News*' "DETROIT SPURNS CARNEGIE'S GOLD—Aldermen Couldn't Bring Themselves to Accept 'Tainted Money,'" make it clear that Gladden's campaign had an effect beyond the realm of mere ideas.⁴⁵

Carnegie's reaction to the tainted money controversy was two-fold. First, in 1901, he published a book entitled *The Gospel of Wealth and Other Timely Essays*.⁴⁶ Although the book included essays on subjects as diverse as "An Employer's View of the Labor Question" and "Democracy in England," the title piece of the collection was a reissue of his two earlier articles on philanthropy from the *North American Review*. Combined into a single article, these earlier essays were substantially unchanged from their first manifestation. Their appearance in 1900 is best interpreted as Carnegie's reassertion of the basic assumptions that supported his earliest endeavors in philanthropy. Rather than backing away from the idea that wealth (no matter how accumulated) marked a man as morally superior to his poorer neighbors, Carnegie argued that "superior wisdom, experience, and ability to administer" made the man of wealth the ideal "agent for his poorer brethren, . . . doing for them better than they would or could do for themselves."⁴⁷ At the same time, by retitling the essay, he called attention to the biblical rhetoric that had always been a part of the text.⁴⁸ In this way, Carnegie used Gladden's vocabulary of Protestant morality to present his own point of view.

Second, the tainted money controversy helped create the social climate which prompted Carnegie to take a critical look at the way philanthropy was practiced in the United States. In fact, Carnegie himself had long voiced serious objections to indiscriminate charity, warning particularly against the pauperizing effect of almsgiving. In a vivid demonstration of paternalism's failure to ease tensions between labor and capital, workers who lived in George Pullman's model town struck his Pullman Palace Car Company in 1894. Contemporary events such as this forced Carnegie to extend his censure to other methods of philanthropic practice as well.

Although he could not agree with all of Gladden's complaints, the criticism Gladden's article aroused stung Carnegie, who was particularly sensitive about his public image. In the late 1890s, it must have been hard for him to look at his philanthropic activities without acknowledging that he himself was guilty of the indiscriminate charity he abhorred. From that time on, Carnegie devoted what would become the second phase of his philanthropic career to reforming the methods which he and other millionaires could use to ease the burden of the stewardship of wealth.

By the turn of the century, Carnegie had taken steps to shift the direction of his own philanthropic activities. The most noticeable aspect of this shift was a huge increase in the number of Carnegie library gifts. In 1899 alone, Carnegie promised libraries to 26 cities, more than twice the total number of Carnegie-financed buildings built in the previous thirteen years. The numbers continued to grow, the peak coming in 1903 when Carnegie offered libraries to 204 towns. By 1917, Carnegie had promised 1,679 libraries to 1,412 towns at a cost of well over \$41 million.⁴⁹

Certainly, Carnegie had moved beyond the local level of giving that was characteristic of his nineteenth-century predecessors. In fact, throughout the second phase of his philanthropic career, Carnegie's approach to his charitable endeavors would have seemed strange indeed to a George Peabody or a Charles Bower Winn. In contrast to Peabody's sporadic method of philanthropy that depended so much on the patron's whim, Carnegie instituted clearly defined procedures that gave his dealings with individual towns the formality of a contractual agreement. For his part, Carnegie would give a library to any town with a population of at least one thousand, the amount of the gift usually set at two dollars per capita. Recipient towns were required to provide a site for the library building and to tax themselves at an annual rate of 10 percent of the total gift, the funds to be used to maintain the building, to buy books, and to pay the salaries of the library staff.⁵⁰

The advantages of this kind of philanthropic contract were numerous, at least from Carnegie's point of view. First, it helped assure him that the recipients of his gifts were willing to do their part toward supporting the library, or in the terms he himself had used in "Wealth," that he was helping only those who helped themselves. Second, it provided clear-cut policies for administering the library program, allowing Carnegie to turn over the drudgery of the day-to-day paperwork to his personal secretary, James Bertram.⁵¹

Indeed, Bertram seems to have been responsible for introducing many refinements to Carnegie's system of library philanthropy. Over the years, he put into place an easily administered procedure for dealing with requests. Upon receiving an inquiry, Bertram sent a schedule of questions to be answered by the town's officials. This form asked for the town's population and for information on the existing library (if any), including the number of books in its collection and the previous year's circulation statistics. It also asked how the library was housed (including the number and measurements of the rooms and their uses) and the state of the library's finances (including a breakdown of its receipts and expenditures). Finally, it asked the amount the town council was willing to pledge for annual maintenance if the town should receive a library, whether there was a site available, and the amount of money collected toward the new building.⁵²

If the population was large enough, the annual appropriation high enough, and the existing library facilities poor enough, the town had a good chance of securing a library offer from Carnegie. Bertram then sent a form letter, making an offer and stating that the funds would be available as soon as the recipient town submitted a copy of the resolution of council promising an annual tax levy for library purposes.⁵³ Once the resolution was in hand, Bertram contacted Robert Franks, treasurer of the Carnegie Steel Company, who established an account in the name of the town. Recipient towns received their Carnegie grants in installments, only after sending Franks an architect's certificate verifying that the sum requested corresponded with completed work.

These procedural changes reveal much about Carnegie's attitude toward his philanthropic activities in this period. Jettisoning the family model that had supported his earliest benefactions, Carnegie embraced the corporation as the driving metaphor for the entire philanthropic enterprise. Applying the principles of efficiency that he had developed for his railroad and manufacturing concerns, Carnegie centralized decision making, regularized procedures, and limited the possibilities for making mistakes. Instead of becoming personally involved with the administration of his philanthropies, Carnegie established procedures that allowed others to carry out his policies. Abstract, quantitative criteria (which could be applied by anyone) replaced subjective judgments (which could be made only by the philanthropist himself). What is more, these procedures included checks and balances that distributed responsibility and ensured that the smooth functioning of the system depended on no single person.



Figure 1.12 First Meeting of the Carnegie Corporation, 1911. *Standing, left to right:* Henry S. Pritchett, James Bertram, Charles L. Taylor, Robert A. Franks. *Seated, left to right:* William N. Frew, Robert S. Woodward, Elihu Root, Andrew Carnegie, Margaret Carnegie, Louise Whitfield Carnegie. Courtesy of Carnegie Corporation Archives, and Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University. Copyright Davis & Sanford, New York.

The legal acknowledgment of the corporate nature of Carnegie's philanthropic reforms came in 1911. In that year, in the music room of his Fifth Avenue mansion, in the presence of his wife and daughter, he presided over the first meeting of the Carnegie Corporation, the corporate body chartered to administer the library program (fig. 1.12). The date is less significant than the name. After all, Carnegie began reorganizing his philanthropic activities around 1899, and in the intervening years he had merely refined the system with Bertram's help. In establishing one of the first modern foundations, however, Carnegie did not have a term to distinguish a corporate body whose purpose was to make money from one whose purpose was to give it away. Thus, it was, and remains, the Carnegie Corporation.

Defining "The Modern Library Idea"

This reform of American library philanthropy virtually guaranteed that the Carnegie libraries built in the twentieth century would differ from their nineteenth-century predecessors. The corporate metaphor that sustained the new philanthropy was fundamentally at odds with the family imagery of nineteenth-century libraries influenced by Richardson's designs. What is more, Carnegie's philanthropic reforms, and particularly his insistence on public support for his gifts, changed the perception of these buildings in important ways. Elaborate structures were fine for a library built and supported by private funding, but a library maintained with funds drawn from public coffers had to convey its fiscal responsibility in its smaller size and more modest demeanor. The new formula for determining the dollar amount of each gift ensured that this new generation of Carnegie buildings would be smaller and less elaborate than their predecessors, while Carnegie's new program requirements (limiting the building's facilities to library functions and a small lecture hall) were also intended to help recipient towns stay within their more conservative budgets.

The timing of Carnegie's reforms is also significant in that it coincided with independent changes in the basic philosophy of library administration. The traditional understanding of the library as a treasure house, protecting its books from untrustworthy readers, was falling out of currency. Increasingly, the library profession sought to use the public library to bring readers and books together, rather than to keep them apart. According to librarian Arthur E. Bostwick, "the modern library idea" was characterized by public support, open shelves, work with children, cooperation with schools, branch libraries, traveling libraries, and library advertising.⁵⁴

Service to children was the first feature of "the modern library idea" to receive serious consideration. As early as 1876, librarian William I. Fletcher pointed out the inconsistencies between the library's claim to an educational function and the usual practice of barring children under twelve from public library use. Concern for the safety of the books, however, continued to outweigh the educational mission of the library for another ten years. Even in the 1880s, experiments in this area met with limited success. In New York City, a children's library established in 1885 was closed in the early 1890s when adult readers complained about the noise that children made as they climbed the stairs to their third-floor reading room.⁵⁵ The provision for free access to book shelves got

an even slower start. Condemned outright by Melvil Dewey in 1877, the practice was still the subject of lively debate at professional meetings a decade later.⁵⁶

The 1890s were the turning point in both these developments. Although an 1893 survey of 126 public libraries revealed that over 70 percent maintained a threshold of at least twelve years of age, the libraries that admitted children often made a special attempt to provide a place for them. The Hartford (Connecticut) Public Library established a corner of the main reading room for children's use in the early 1890s, while in Pawtucket, Rhode Island, a children's corner was specially fitted with low tables and chairs.⁵⁷ By 1897, a survey conducted by the editors of *Public Libraries* revealed that libraries in Boston, Brookline, and Cambridge, Massachusetts, Brooklyn and Buffalo, New York, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Detroit and Kalamazoo, Michigan, and Denver, Colorado, all provided separate children's rooms for their young readers; in at least four cases, these rooms had been opened within the previous two years.⁵⁸ By the turn of the century, most librarians regarded a separate children's room as a necessary component of the public library.⁵⁹

Although the question of free access to books was still hotly debated in the 1890s, large urban libraries joined the ranks of those institutions experimenting with open shelves. Of particular note was the Cleveland [Ohio] Public Library, which offered unrestricted access to all books at all hours beginning in 1890. Allaying fears about the wholesale theft of books, librarian William Howard Brett reported to the ALA that the practice had served to increase the library's circulation.⁶⁰

By the end of the decade, other writers expanded explicitly upon this theme. In 1897, John Cotton Dana argued that the substantial decrease in the cost of modern books made obsolete the conventional definition of the library as "simply a storehouse of treasures." Instead of using the delivery counter as a physical and symbolic barrier between the reader and the books, the new library should allow the reader to move among the shelves, to enjoy "the touch of the books themselves, the joy of their immediate presence." Comparing book selection to shopping, Dana implored his colleagues to treat readers with the same consideration and trust that ready-made clothing stores extended to their customers. The pleasure involved in the open library, Dana argued, would not only bring in more readers; it would also encourage "reading of a higher grade." Far from subverting the educational aims of the public library, open shelves would facilitate their implementation.⁶¹

Dana realized that his comparison of cultural and commercial institu-

tions constituted an abrupt departure from conventional ideas of library administration. Indeed, he emphasized the radical nature of this shift in his language, referring to the modern public library as "a book laboratory." At the same time, he drew on this analogy from the industrial world to suggest changes in library design. Moving beyond what had become a standard critique of "architectural effects, . . . imposing halls, charming vistas, and opportunities for decoration," Dana also explicitly rejected "the palace, the temple, the cathedral, the memorial hall, or the mortuary pile" as appropriate paradigms for library design. Dana suggested looking instead to "the workshop, the factory [and] the office building" as better models: for "the book laboratory." The attraction is easy to see: the architectural expression of these buildings was not based on older building types; it had been developed in conjunction with modern functional requirements. More forcefully than any of his contemporaries, Dana called for the modern library to break with the architectural traditions previously established for the building type.⁶²

Dana's more specific suggestions, however, point to the difficulty of forging new planning solutions, while rejecting what came before. Although Dana admired the exterior forms of industrial and commercial buildings, his ideal library did not follow the principles of open planning that characterized their interiors. Holding fast to the conventional idea of the library as a series of functionally specialized rooms, he called for a delivery room (with a delivery desk, information desk, and access to toilets and cloak rooms), a catalogue room, book rooms, a children's room with open shelves, a reference room, and the librarian's office, all in close proximity to one another. In addition, there were to be resting rooms for assistants, class rooms, mending and binding rooms, and periodical and newspaper rooms. Although these rooms could be situated farther from the delivery room, they were to be located near the reference room.⁶³ Since no illustrations accompanied his article, it is impossible to know how Dana would have arranged these rooms to meet his demands for efficiency. Dana's progressive ideas may indeed have made the library more responsive to the public's need; yet, in expanding the range of services offered by the modern library, his ideas also exacerbated the problems of library design.

Designing the Modern Library

The debates of the 1890s affected library architecture at the turn of the century. Whether financed with Carnegie funds, with money donated

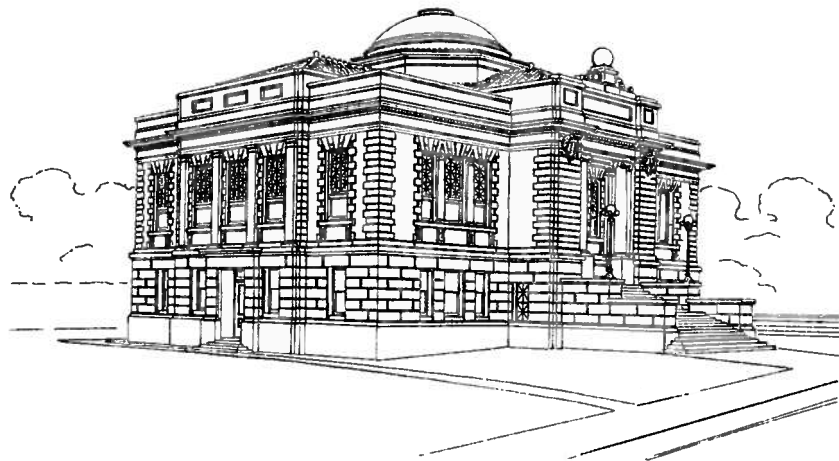


Figure 1.13 Smith and Gutterson, Carnegie Library, Ottumwa, Iowa, opened 1902. *Architectural Review* 9 (January 1902): 30.

by philanthropists working on the paternalistic model, or from public coffers, American public libraries reflected the unresolved conflicts over the function of the public library.

In general, public libraries of this era were stylistically more consistent (fig. 1.13; and see figs. 1.14, 1.16, and 1.18 below). In the *Architectural Review*'s 1902 compilation of the best modern library design, a full fifty-seven of the sixty-seven public libraries included were classically detailed, while only five employed the Romanesque mode popularized by Richardson.⁶⁴ Dana and subsequent writers on library design attributed this wholesale shift to classicism to the influence of the *Ecole des Beaux-Arts* and the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago.⁶⁵ While many eminent library architects were trained in the principles of the *Ecole*, that training was chiefly concerned with an approach to planning and composition; it did not promote classicism per se. Richardson's Romanesque Revival library designs, for instance, were the product of the *Ecole*'s teaching. The shift toward classicism is more accurately explained as the *Ecole des Beaux-Arts* response to the new emphasis on the public nature of the library. Classical elements had long been part of the *Ecole*'s means of expressing the *caractère* of a public building and had enjoyed an early association with such pioneering public libraries as the Bibliothèque Ste.-Geneviève in Paris and the Boston Public Library (see fig. 3.1 below). The classical mode also offered more specific symbolic opportunities; many classical libraries were graced with a dome

that literally and figuratively transformed the centrally placed delivery desk into the locus of public enlightenment.

Even in buildings with similar classical detailing, however, library planning was anything but consistent. At the Parsons Memorial Library in Alfred, Maine, for instance, the perfect symmetry of the front facade disguised the fact that the interior arrangements were essentially those of a Richardson library; the delivery desk served to keep readers out of the double-height, alcoved book hall, while the reference area with its fireplace and flanking window seats provided a cozy reading space distinct from the large reading room (figs. 1.14 and 1.15).

Other plan types proved more adaptable to new ideas. The Reyerson

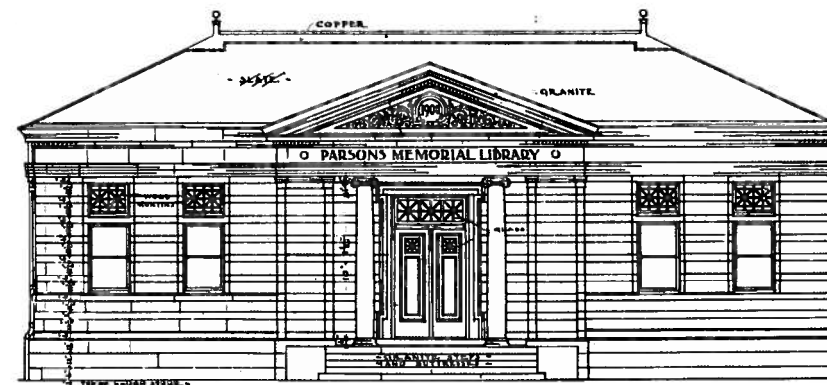


Figure 1.14 Hartwell, Richardson, and Driver, Parsons Memorial Library, Alfred, Maine, opened 1903. *Architectural Review* 9 (January 1902): 54.

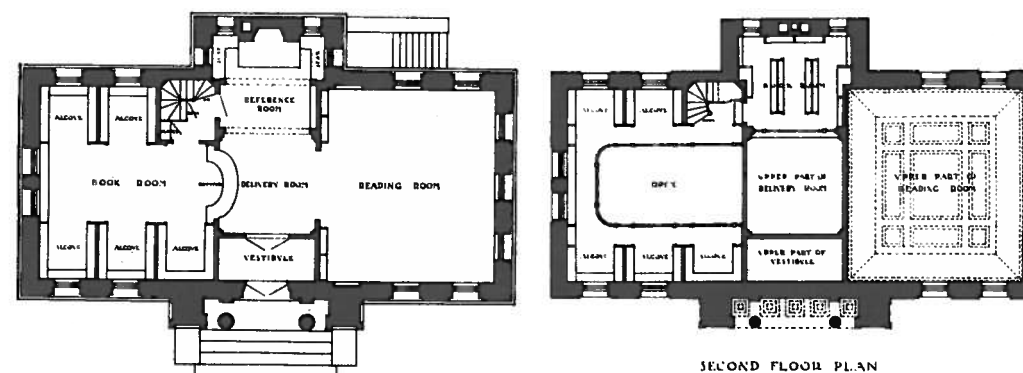
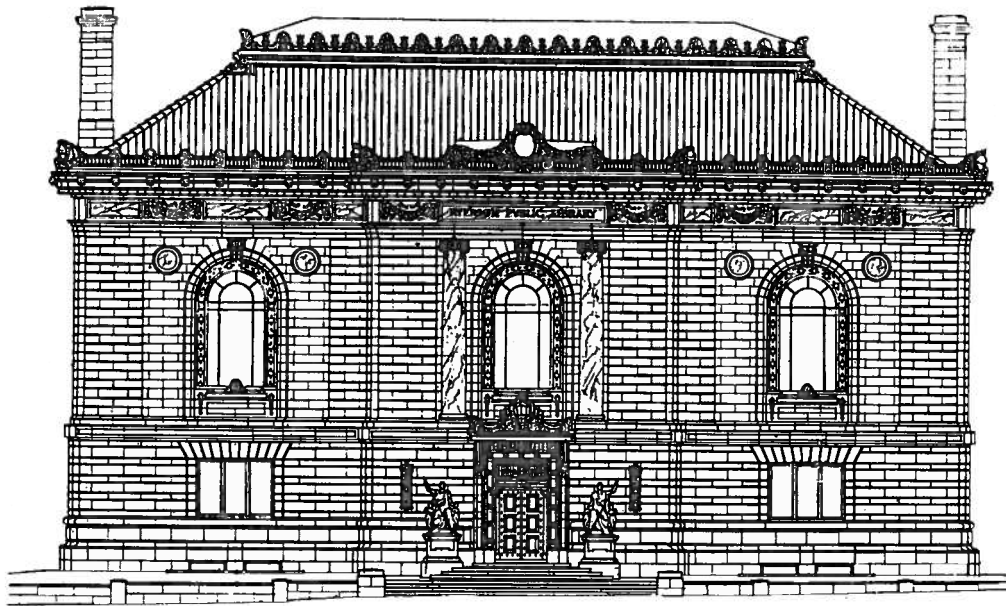


Figure 1.15 Parsons Library, (left) first- and (right) second-floor plans. *Architectural Review* 9 (January 1902): 54.



1.16 Shepley, Rutan and Coolidge, Ryerson Public Library, Grand Rapids, Michigan, opened 1904. *Architectural Review* 9 (January 1902): 45.

Public Library in Grand Rapids, Michigan, for instance, was planned around a central hall that led to reading rooms on either side and to a small stack room at the rear (figs. 1.16 and 1.17). Although the T-shaped arrangement had been popular since the 1880s, Shepley, Rutan and Coolidge used it in the Grand Rapids Library with greater sensitivity to current library debates, including a children's reading room equal in size to the periodical reading room.⁶⁶ Juvenile readers, however, did not have free access to books; like their adult counterparts, they were required to request their reading material at the delivery desk opposite the main entrance. A variation of this scheme replaced the rectangular book storage room with a radially arranged, open shelving area, allowing readers supervised access to books (figs. 1.18 and 1.19). Designers of many other libraries at the turn of the century followed no established type, experimenting instead with unique planning solutions (fig. 1.20).

The variety of approaches to library planning illustrated in these examples is evident in American public libraries generally at the turn of the century.⁶⁷ To be sure, late nineteenth-century debates had made some impact on library design; over 85 percent of the public library plans included in the *Architectural Review* survey followed Bostwick's ad-

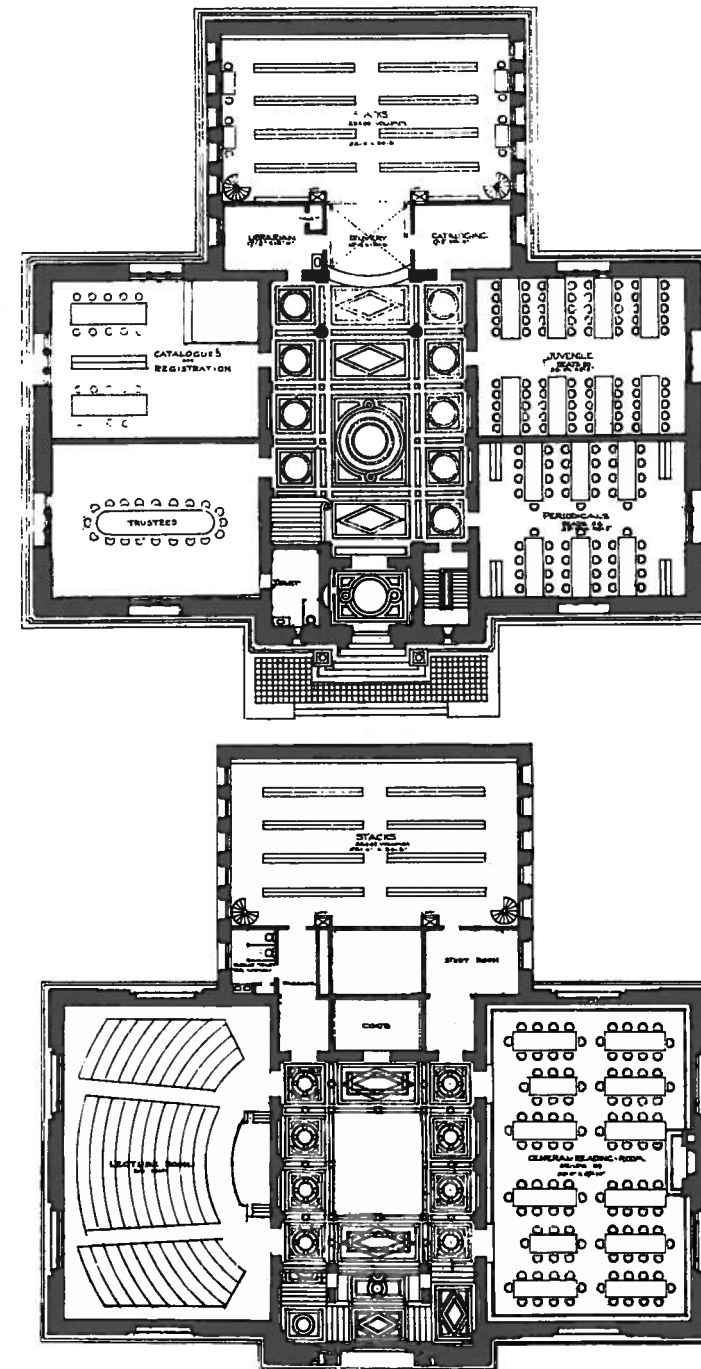


Figure 1.17 Ryerson Library, (upper) first- and (lower) second-floor plans. *Architectural Review* 9 (January 1902), 45.

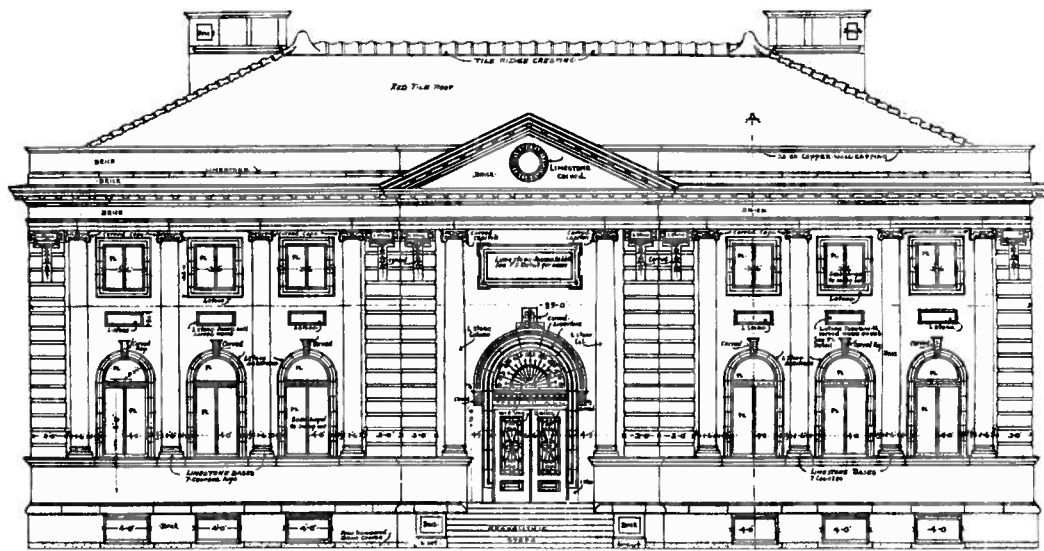


Figure 1.18 Penn Varney, Free Public Library, Schenectady, New York, opened 1903. *Architectural Review* 9 (January 1902): 34.

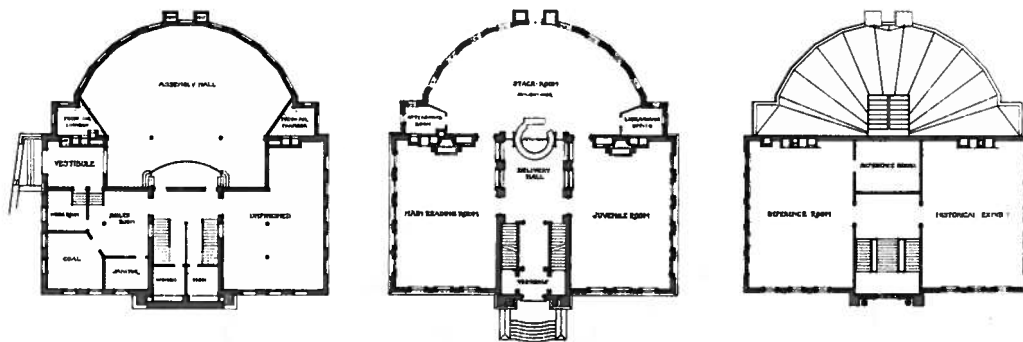


Figure 1.19 Public Library, Schenectady, (left) basement, (center) first- and (right) second-floor plans. *Architectural Review* 9 (January 1902):34.

vice and provided reading rooms for specialized materials (including newspapers, maps, historical literature, and other unspecified special collections), and over 75 percent included a fully-fitted children's room. Yet the debates of the 1890s had resulted in consensus on few other planning issues. The question of public access to books remained particularly problematic at the turn of the century. Only about a quarter of the libraries surveyed followed Dana's call for completely open access to their book collections. Over half of the sample maintained completely

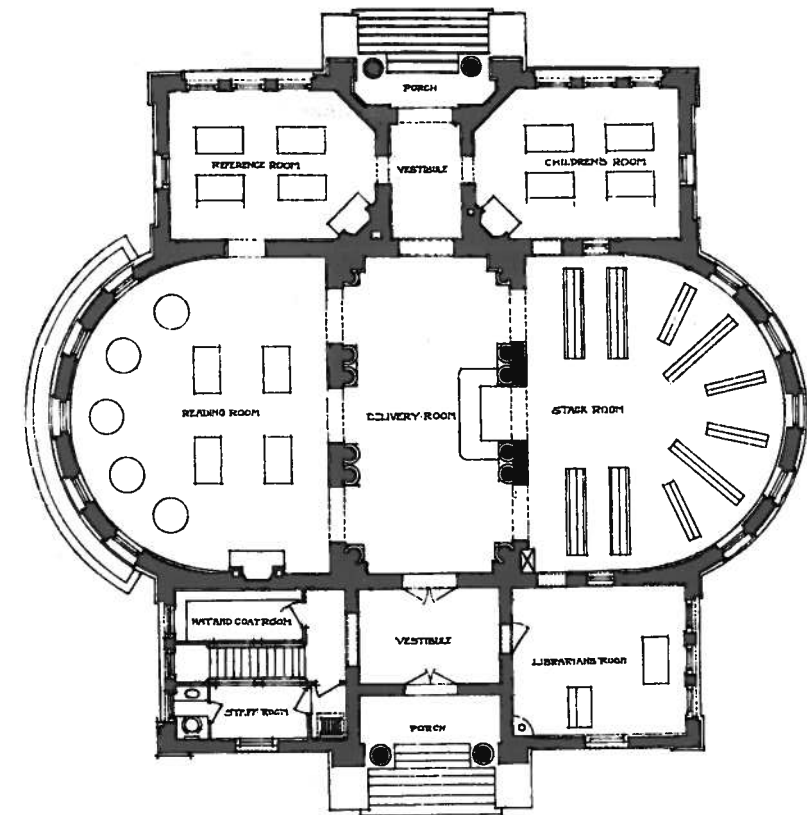


Figure 1.20 Edward L. Tilton, Carnegie Library, Mt. Vernon, New York, 1903, first-floor plan. *Library Journal* 29 (July 1904): frontispiece.

closed stacks, while another 15 percent provided open access to only a small portion of their collections. There was also no agreement about the use of separate rooms for reference reading, for cataloguing and for trustees' meetings: only 58 percent of the libraries surveyed included these rooms. Other room types catering to uses not directly associated with the book collection (rooms for group study, exhibition rooms, lecture halls, and club rooms) appeared in fewer than a third of the libraries in the sample.

Carnegie's Reform of American Library Architecture

This somewhat confusing pattern of library design holds true for Carnegie libraries as well. Indeed, since Carnegie libraries account for over 40 percent of the 1902 *Architectural Review* sample, they played a significant role in defining the general tendencies outlined above.⁶⁸ A direct com-

parison of the plans of Carnegie and non-Carnegie libraries, however, reveals that Carnegie-financed buildings tended to put greater emphasis on rooms devoted to public service. Carnegie libraries, for instance, were more likely to include children's rooms, reference rooms, and lecture halls, and less likely to reserve a room for the use of their trustees than libraries funded in other ways. Particularly interesting is the issue of public access to their books. Like libraries funded from other sources, more Carnegie libraries had closed stacks than had open access to all books; yet the preference was statistically very small, with only 44 percent using closed stacks, while 40 percent allowed open access. In comparison, a true majority (68 percent) of non-Carnegie libraries maintained closed stacks. All told, the Carnegie libraries in the 1902 survey were 25 percent more likely to provide free access to the books than their non-Carnegie contemporaries.

Despite these progressive tendencies in Carnegie libraries at the turn of the century, a clearly articulated policy toward Carnegie library design developed only gradually over the first decade of the century. Ironically, the original impetus behind these developments had to do more with economy than with a fully developed sense of public service. As Bertram later described the situation, "almost every community which received a donation from Mr. Carnegie in years gone by to erect a library building, came back with the plea that they had used the money in the building and had no money left to purchase bookshelves and furniture."⁶⁹ Additional gifts to cover such exigencies had, of course, been a regular part of American philanthropy when donors had thought of their relationship with their beneficiaries in familial terms. Under the tightly defined rules of corporate philanthropy, however, such requests constituted a breach of the new philanthropic contract. Starting about 1904, Bertram began reviewing the plans for buildings that ran over budget.⁷⁰ By 1908, Bertram's approval was required on the plans of all buildings constructed with Carnegie money.⁷¹

The advice that Bertram passed on to the recipients of Carnegie's gifts was hardly new, and certainly not of his own devising. Rather, it was based directly on ideas about library administration that librarians had espoused in the previous twenty years. Drawing on the writings of Poole, Dana, and others, as well as on his conversations with Cleveland's librarian, William Howard Brett, Bertram began to see that cost overruns were the result of inefficient library planning, rather than the product of inept financial management. The planning principles espoused by the

library profession became Bertram's catechism, and the spread of what he called "effective library accommodation," his holy mission.⁷²

With the intensity of a religious convert, Bertram internalized not only the librarians' dogma but also their prejudices. Long considered the natural enemy of the librarian, the architect became Bertram's personal *bête noire*. With Poole's admonition to "avoid everything that pertains to the plan and construction of the conventional American library building" ringing in his ears, Bertram suspected even the best-intentioned architects of leading their clients astray in matters of library planning. Bertram's attitude was succinctly expressed by Mrs. Percival Sneed, the librarian of the Carnegie Library in Atlanta, who did her best to explain the situation to the editor of the *Ocala (Florida) Banner*. As Sneed put it,

I would like to straighten out the complete misunderstanding as to the attitude of the Carnegie Corporation in the matter of plans. . . . The whole matter of plans with them hinges on the fact that they wish the towns to get the best value for their money and they know, as all trained librarians know, that there are almost no architects who are competent to draw the interior of a library so that its administration will be easy and economical, unless the architect has the advice of an active librarian. . . . It is impossible that any person would [*sic*] have a grasp of what the plan should be unless that person has actually administered a library and has done work in it. This fact is unquestionable and perfectly well known to all members of the library profession.⁷³

Sneed left no doubt that Bertram had decided to put Carnegie's support behind librarians in their battle with the architecture profession.

At first, Bertram spread the gospel of "effective library accommodation" on a case-by-case basis, but eventually he took steps to circumvent the inefficiency of this system. In 1911, in the same year that the Carnegie Corporation was chartered, Bertram compiled the collective wisdom on progressive library planning into a pamphlet entitled "Notes on the Erection of Library Buildings." Repeatedly revised and expanded over the next eight years, the "Notes" grew from a single page of text, to a version that included one and one-half pages of text and four schematic plans, to a version that included two pages of text and six schematic plans.⁷⁴ In fact, the production and printing history of this pamphlet is somewhat murky; architect Edward L. Tilton, a New York architect specializing in library design, may have had a hand in producing the schematic plans, while a number of librarians were invited to critique both plans and text before the pamphlet was issued.⁷⁵ In its various

forms, the "Notes" accompanied all formal offers of library gifts from 1911 on.⁷⁶

In its six-plan version, two of the pamphlet's four pages were given over to text. Mustering what tact he could, Bertram began by explaining why the pamphlet was necessary. Library committees were ill prepared to select an appropriate library design, he explained, because they "are frequently composed of busy men who [lack] time or opportunity to obtain a knowledge of library planning." Architects, he warned, were equally unreliable since they "are liable, unconsciously, no doubt, to aim at architectural features and to subordinate useful accommodation." Library boards and their architects would do well to remember the following rule of thumb: "Small libraries should be planned so that one librarian can oversee the entire library from a central position."⁷⁷

The text goes on to explain how the Carnegie Corporation determined the amount of the gift, with the admonition that "there will be either a shortage of accommodation or of money if this primary purpose is not kept in view, viz.: TO OBTAIN FOR THE MONEY THE UTMOST AMOUNT OF EFFECTIVE ACCOMMODATION, CONSISTENT WITH GOOD TASTE IN BUILDING." According to the text, the usual mistakes stemmed from giving too much space to the entrance area, delivery room, cloak rooms, toilets, and stairs.⁷⁸ The new philanthropy encouraged neither the large expenditure nor the complex symbolism that served to impress Allegheny City's library users with the donor's generosity.

Conspicuously lacking in Bertram's "Notes" is any mention of style or any discussion of beauty—in short, any of the traditional concerns of the architect. True, the insistent symmetry of the plans and the reference to "good taste in building" suggest that Bertram may have had in mind a restrained version of the classicism that had been popular in public libraries since the turn of the century. At the same time, one of Bertram's major reasons for writing the pamphlet was to pressure communities into forgoing the high domes, classical porticoes, and monumental stairs that had graced those earlier buildings. After years of struggling with architects who encouraged their clients to go over budget, Bertram had understandably begun to equate architecture with extravagance. In the pamphlet's single paragraph on the design of library exteriors Bertram acknowledged the need for "the community and architect [to] express their individuality," but he immediately warned against "aiming at such exterior effects as may make impossible an effective and economical layout of the interior."⁷⁹ Architecture, Bertram

implied, was most apt to get in the way of effective library planning and could be avoided completely with no ill effects.⁸⁰

By maintaining this distinction between *architecture* as the expressive, stylistic elements on the exterior of a building, and *building* as the practical accommodation of heating, lighting, and structural soundness, Bertram revealed that his ideas about architecture were highly conventional. Bertram, however, reversed the usual nineteenth-century hierarchy that assigned greater importance to the expressive qualities of *architecture*. Echoing the *Library Journals's* 1891 statement that "it is far better that a library should be plain or even ugly, than that it should be inconvenient," Bertram insisted that practical matters take precedence over artistic expression.⁸¹

The planning ideas Bertram espoused were presented in the "Notes" both in text and in schematic drawings. The ideal Carnegie library was a one-story rectangular building with a small vestibule leading directly to a single large room; where necessary, this room was subdivided by low bookcases that supplemented the bookshelves placed around its perimeter to hold the library's collection. In addition to book storage, this room provided reading areas for adults and children and facilities for the distribution of books. The basement had a lecture room, a heating plant, and "conveniences" for staff and patrons. Bertram even went so far as to suggest ceiling heights (nine to ten feet in the basement; twelve to fifteen feet on the first floor) and the placement of windows (six feet from the floor, to allow for shelving beneath).

Six plans accompanied the final version of the text (figs. 1.21 and 1.22). Diagrammatic in nature, they gave no indication of wall thicknesses or window placement. Although Bertram claimed that these plans were "suggestive rather than mandatory," he warned in the same breath that "those responsible for building projects should pause before aiming at radical departures."⁸² Variations in the plans accommodated differences in size and site. Plans A and B were closest to Bertram's ideal—a simple rectangular building with a central entrance on the long side. The next two responded to unusual sites. Plan C was meant for a site that was deeper than it was wide, while Plan D sought to adapt the same arrangements to a corner lot. Plans E and F used an off-center entrance and a single reading room to provide accommodations for very small libraries. Despite these differences, each plan followed Bertram's planning rule of thumb, allowing a single librarian to oversee the entire library.

These plans are telling of Bertram's debt to late nineteenth-century

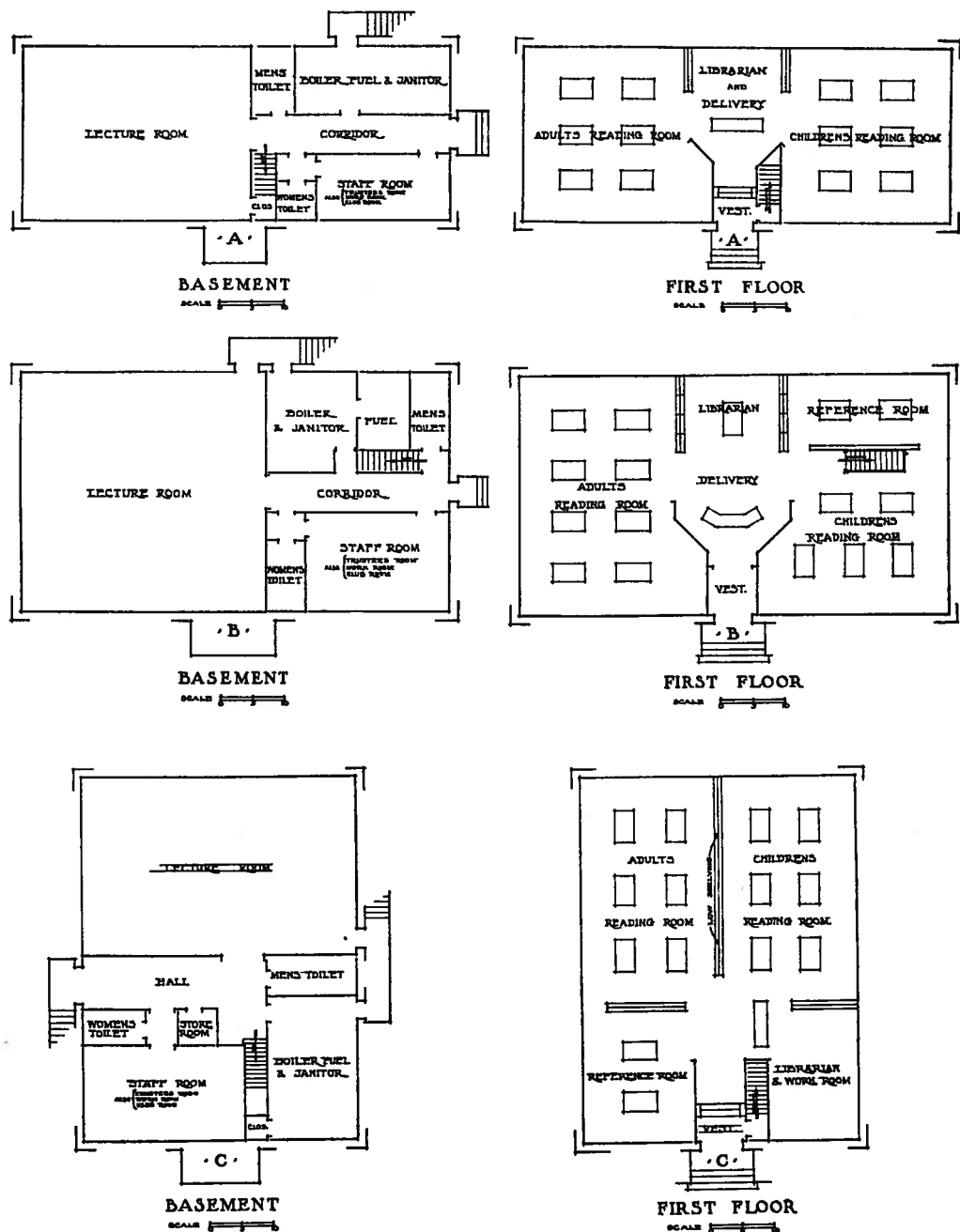


Figure 1.21 [James Bertram], "Notes on the Erection of Library Buildings," version 3, c. 1915, schematic plans A, B, and C. Courtesy of Carnegie Corporation Archives, and Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University. Copyright Davis & Sanford, New York.

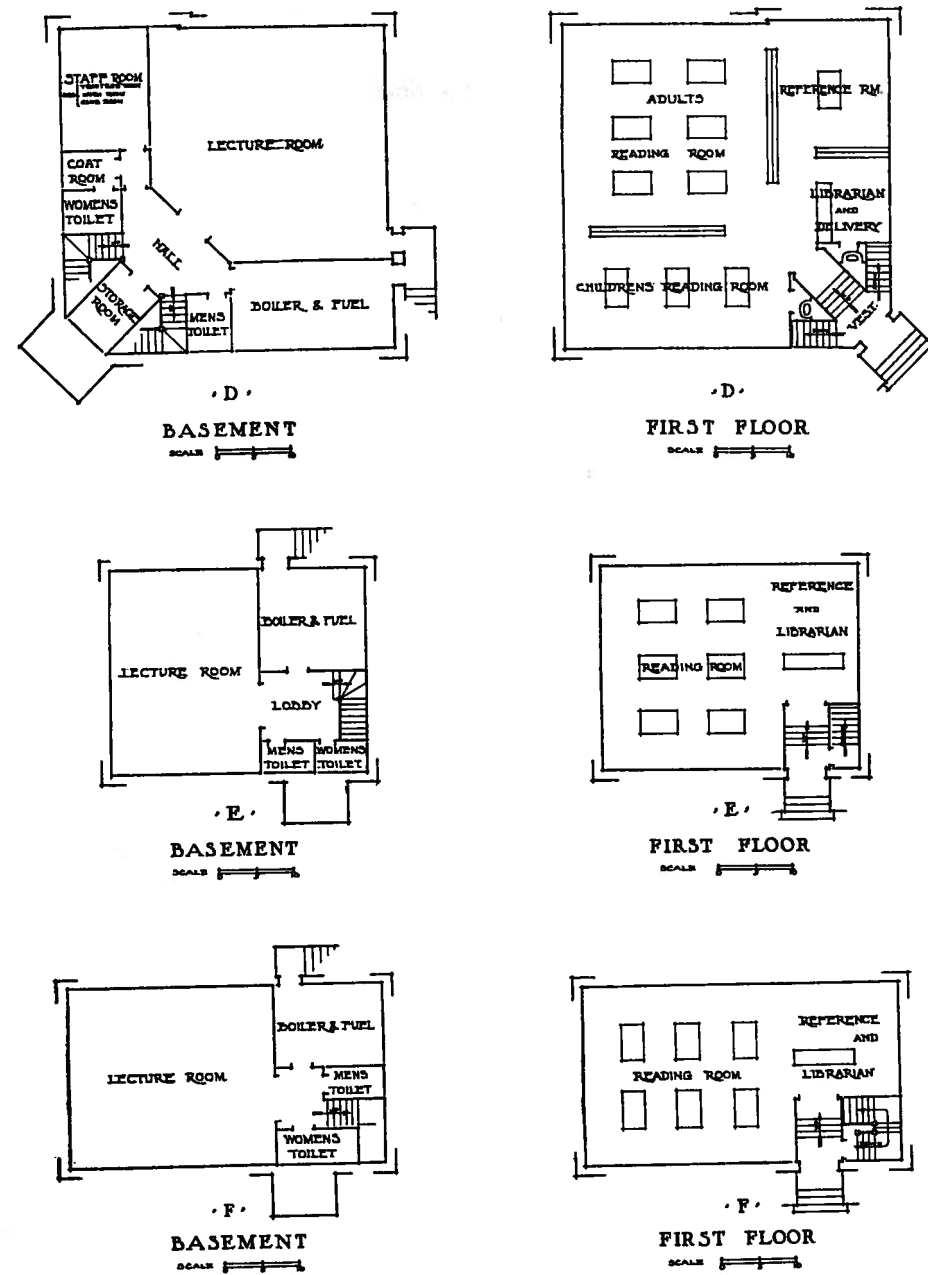


Figure 1.22 [James Bertram], "Notes on the Erection of Library Buildings," schematic plans D, E, and F. Original caption: Elevations of plans submitted for approval should clearly show the floor and ceiling lines of basement and main floor, and the natural and artificial grade lines. Floor plans should show, clearly designated, all roof supports and similar obstructions of the accommodation. Courtesy of Carnegie Corporation Archives, and Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University. Copyright Davis & Sanford, New York.

debates about library planning. The unwavering commitment to open access to all the books in the collection and the emphasis on a children's reading room equal or nearly equal in size to the reading room for adults were, after all, ideas first employed in the 1890s. Perhaps the greatest contribution of the "Notes" was to translate the rhetoric of the 1890s into graphic forms that could be adapted to a wide variety of circumstances.

At the same time, however, Bertram's pamphlet went beyond the writings that inspired it, pursuing the implications for planning that were left unexplored in the library literature of the 1890s. In 1897, Dana had suggested the factory and the office building as appropriate models for the modern public library building. Although Dana hoped for a similarly fresh approach to library design, his more conventional understanding of planning prevented him from advocating any radical changes in the arrangement of library interiors. Only in 1911 did Bertram and the others involved in writing the "Notes" apply Dana's analogy to the realm of planning. Subdivided only by low bookcases, with glass partitions to buffer sound without interfering with visual command of the interior space, the six plans included in the "Notes" all used open plans like those already in place in department stores, factories, and skyscrapers. Having already made the connection between philanthropy and corporate organization, those associated with the Carnegie program were in a good position to see a similar connection between library design and the buildings designed for corporate, commercial, and industrial use.

Redefining the Nature of Library Use

The architectural forms advocated by the Carnegie Corporation were intended to improve library efficiency. Yet they also suggested fundamental changes in the way that people experienced the library, whether they were librarians, library board members, or readers. Through these plans, Carnegie, the corporate philanthropist, encouraged activities different from the ones encouraged by Carnegie, the paternalistic philanthropist. In the paternalistic library, the donor himself had occupied the apex of a pyramidal social structure, followed by the trustees, the librarian, and the library assistants, with male and female library users at the very bottom. Bertram's ideal plans reveal a different set of priorities. They offered a spatial blueprint for a re-sorted social hierarchy that minimized the differences among the several parties.

In the reformed library, for instance, the donor's presence was sub-

stantially less palpable. Unlike their predecessors in Allegheny City, later recipients of Carnegie gifts were not required to inscribe the donor's name on the building's exterior.⁸³ When recipients did opt to acknowledge Carnegie's contribution, they typically chose to include his name in an inscription in the building's classical frieze. Set in a classical framework high overhead, these words provided only the most abstract reminder of Carnegie's role in library affairs. Inside the library, the donor was all but invisible. By deleting all fireplaces from his ideal plans, Bertram neatly removed the temptation to transform the hearth into a shrine to the benefactor.⁸⁴ In the reformed library, there was no donor's portrait, gazing intently down on the reader.

As the donor's lieutenants, the trustees were also made less visible. Deprived of a separate room reserved exclusively for their use, the trustees were obliged to meet in a room that did quadruple duty, serving as a work room, a staff room, and club room as well. In contrast to the place of honor the trustees' room had received in Allegheny City, the basement location of this room was a literal translation of the trustees' figurative drop in the library's social scale.

The librarian (by 1911, more likely to be a woman than a man) found herself in an ambiguous position. The open plan offered her a spatial situation comparable to that of the manager of a factory or an office building. From her post at the delivery desk, the librarian was at the center of library activities. Not only did she survey the entire first floor, but she herself was always in view as well. In their basement meeting room, the library board maintained a central role in establishing library policy, but the librarian upstairs personified the institution for most library users on a daily basis.

Despite the librarian's rise in status relative to the library trustees, these gains were undercut by other aspects of the Carnegie Corporation's ideal plans. The basement location of the staff room, for instance, suggests that the library staff had dropped lower in the library hierarchy, with respect to library users, both physically and symbolically—a demotion that was reinforced by the multipurpose nature of the staff room. Instead of reigning over an inner sanctum of their own, members of the library staff had to share their room with the trustees and local clubs.

For library patrons, male and female, young and old, the new library offered a pleasant surprise. From the outside, the emphasis on symmetry helped identify the building as a public one; readers could enter freely, secure in the knowledge that they were welcome. Inside, the architectural experience had been evened out. Ceilings were of a uni-

form height, and rectangular rooms were evenly lit from windows that started six feet from the floor. Gone were the specially shaped reading rooms with their aura of Victorian domesticity. Gone were monumental vistas into large public rooms. If the experience was less dramatic, it was also less intimidating.

Library users were confronted with neither a glimpse of a sumptuous trustees' room nor a shrine to the donor. The physical boundaries that in earlier libraries separated them from the library staff had disappeared. Most important, they were allowed to fetch their own books directly from the shelves lining the walls that surrounded them. They had entered into a relationship of trust with those in power.

For women and children, the new library offered unfamiliar freedom. Women were no longer segregated into ladies' reading rooms, or treated differently from their male contemporaries. And, whereas earlier libraries had been exclusively adult affairs only the smallest of the new libraries failed to provide a special reading room for the use of children. Young readers found in the children's reading room a portion of the public landscape that catered directly to their needs.

Conclusion

The changes that Carnegie wrought in the direction of American philanthropy and American library design were mutually supportive. Old-style philanthropy that cast the recipients of the gift in the role of perpetually grateful dependent relations found its parallel in unreformed libraries where users were forever reminded of their place at the bottom of the library's social hierarchy. The reformed library, a single room dominated by a centrally placed circulation desk and lined with book shelves, was the physical embodiment of the contractual arrangement between the philanthropist and the beneficiaries of his gifts, an agreement that specified and limited the recipients' obligations.

If Carnegie was confident that his reforms had improved the quality of American library design, the other actors in the library-building process were often less enthusiastic about them. Sometimes differing social agendas were at issue. Indeed, the middle-class people who served on local library boards were often more interested in providing urban amenities for their own class than they were in aiding the aspiring poor. Professional librarians of a Progressive bent were more sympathetic to Carnegie's goals, but rarely shared his deep-seated distrust of working-

class readers. Thus, they were often eager to provide buildings that would encourage readers to feel more at home.

At other times, the question hinged on different attitudes toward the design process itself. As we will see in the next chapter, the challenge of designing a library that could accommodate divergent social agendas prompted many professional architects to organize their businesses in new ways.

In short, Carnegie did not succeed in dictating a new library type for American society; there were simply too many other forces at work. Nonetheless, his library philanthropy did prompt various groups to articulate their opinions about libraries and their proper use. Ultimately, Carnegie's importance lay in initiating substantive discussion about the role that culture should play in modern America.