

# **Shelf Space & Reading Room**

A Spatial History Of The New York Public Library

by

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I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

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# ABSTRACT

The New York Public Library's Central Building, constructed just over a century ago, is in the midst of a major renovation. The Library's trustees have asked the architects at Foster + Partners to imagine the space currently occupied by the research collections' closed book stacks as a new, publicly accessible, circulating library. The administration's public relations strategy glosses over the meaning of this architectural reinterpretation, selling the renovation plan with only carefully selected historical facts and opinions that show support for the project. However, this narrative is deceiving; it oversimplifies the issues at stake. Both the broader New York Public Library system and Central Library in particular have an incredibly complex history. The influences that shaped the decision to build the 42nd Street building, its design and construction, and subsequent adaptations over the past century demonstrate an important relationship between the objectives of the institution and the Central Library's architectural form. Therefore, beneath the rhetoric of the renovation, beyond the positive inclusion of a main circulating branch in the central building, lies the decision to remove a large portion of the circulating collection from the center of the stronghold built to house it. This decision undermines the unique structure of the New York Public Library as one of the world's premier research institutions, removing the heart of the building.



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299 081. FRIDAY

Composite image by Author based on:

Instagram Images tagged #NYPL posted on Friday. Accessed via Statigram website October 27, 2013. (<http://statigr.am/viewer.php#/tag/nypl/>)

Book Request Slip, Rose Main Reading Room. Photograph by Author.

The Manhattan Cocktail Classic 2013. Photograph by Filip Wolak. Accessed November 1, 2013. (<https://www.manhattancocktailclassic.com/gallery.html>)

201 082. SATURDAY

Composite image by Author based on:

Instagram Images tagged #NYPL posted on Saturday. Accessed via Statigram website October 27, 2013. (<http://statigr.am/viewer.php#/tag/nypl/>)

Research Material, Rose Main Reading Room. Photograph by Author.

Craig + Jessie, A Sophisticated Library Wedding. Photograph by Dave Robbins Photography. Accessed November 3, 2013. (<https://www.theknot.com/weddings/photo/ceremony-in-the-library-142963>)

203 083. THE HAPER ESTABLISHMENT OR HOW THE STORY BOOKS ARE MADE

Photograph by Author.

205 084. SUNDAY

Composite image by Author based on:

Instagram Images tagged #NYPL posted on Sunday. Accessed via Statigram website October 27, 2013. (<http://statigr.am/viewer.php#/tag/nypl/>)

Victoria Beckham, Fall/Winter 2012. Photograph by Beбето Matthews. Accessed November 3, 2013. (<http://www.cbsnews.com/news/new-york-fashion-week-fierce-fitted-looks-and-military-elements-emerge-as-trends/>)

Research Material, Rose Main Reading Room. Photograph by Author.

**PAGE** **FIGURE**

231 085. RENOVATION

Diagrammatic floor plans and rendering of Foster + Partner's initial design proposal for the stack renovation, unveiled December 19, 2012. Accessed via the New York Public Library Website. (Since removed). (<http://www.nypl.org/help/about-nypl/capital-projects>)

238 086. SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN

"The New York Public Library." *Scientific American* 104, no. 21 (May 27, 1911): Cover.

240 087. THE DAY AFTER TOMORROW

Roland Emmerich and Jeffrey Nachmanoff. *The Day After Tomorrow*, directed by Roland Emmerich. Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation, 2004.





*The skeleton of a bookcase that will hold 3,500,000 volumes—without exception the largest bookcase in the world—that is what one may see to-day back of the great central hall of the majestic marble structure that is slowly rising in Bryant Park.*

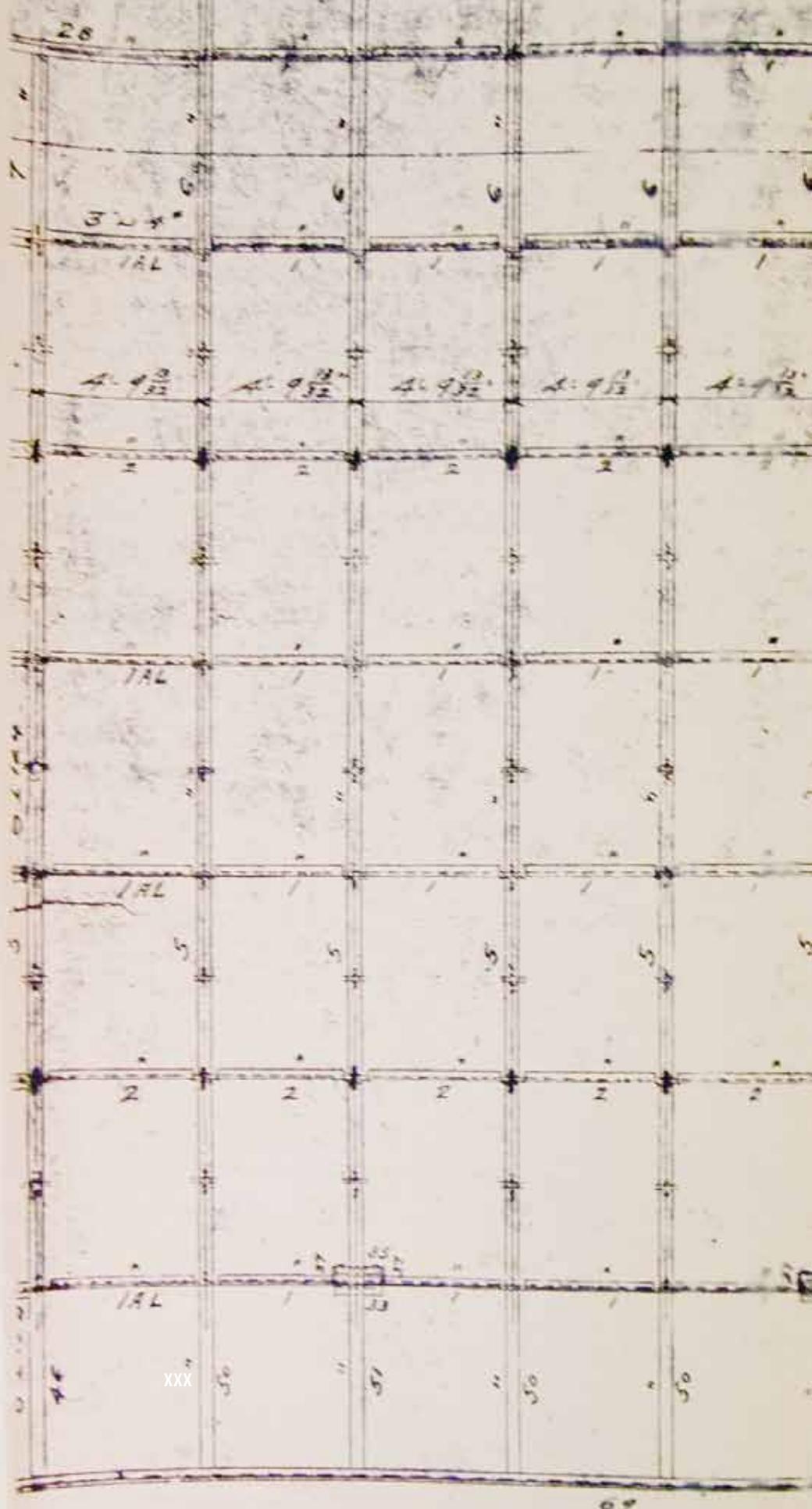
*It is just completed, this marvelous network of steel bars and uprights, and exemplifies the very latest methods and appliances for the shelving of books. There is nothing like it in the great libraries of the Old World. ... In the Congressional Library... the modern steel bookcase is in use, but not in the solid, impressive mass, distinguishing it over all others, that is shown in the New York Public Library. ...Above it will be placed the spacious reading room of the library, on either side the various halls, offices, and exhibition rooms. Thus surrounded, this monster bookcase becomes, architecturally, the heart of the whole structure, the treasure for whose protection this marble palace is built...*

*Even now, with this maze of steel laid bare, it is difficult to appreciate its immense capacity for the shelving of books. A bookcase holding three and a half million volumes means a series of shelves that if laid together, end to end, would measure over eighty miles.”*

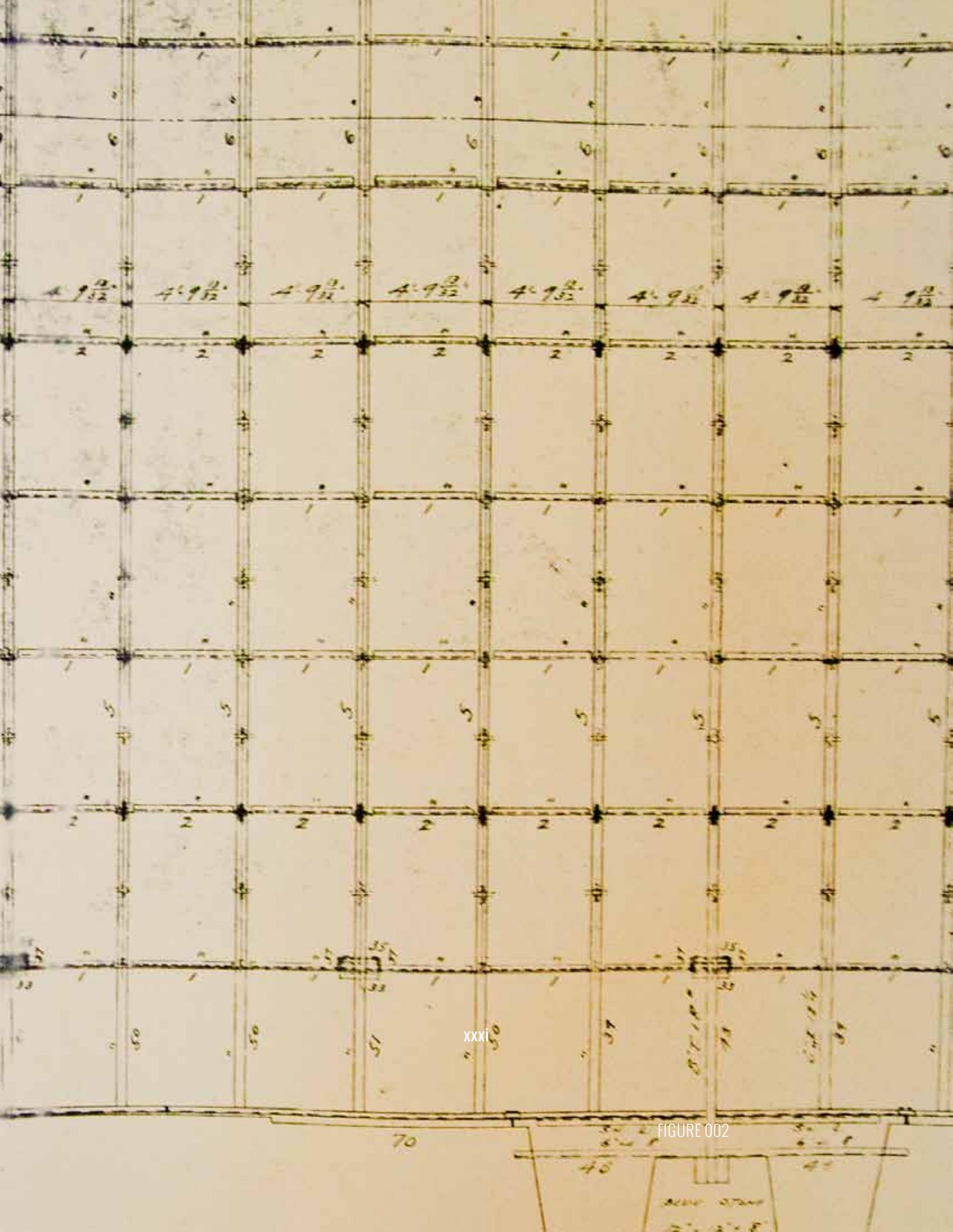
—NEW YORK TIMES, OCTOBER 1, 1905  
NEW YORK'S GREAT PUBLIC LIBRARY NEARING COMPLETION:  
A HUGE BOOKCASE TO HOLD 4,500,000 VOLUMES







XXX

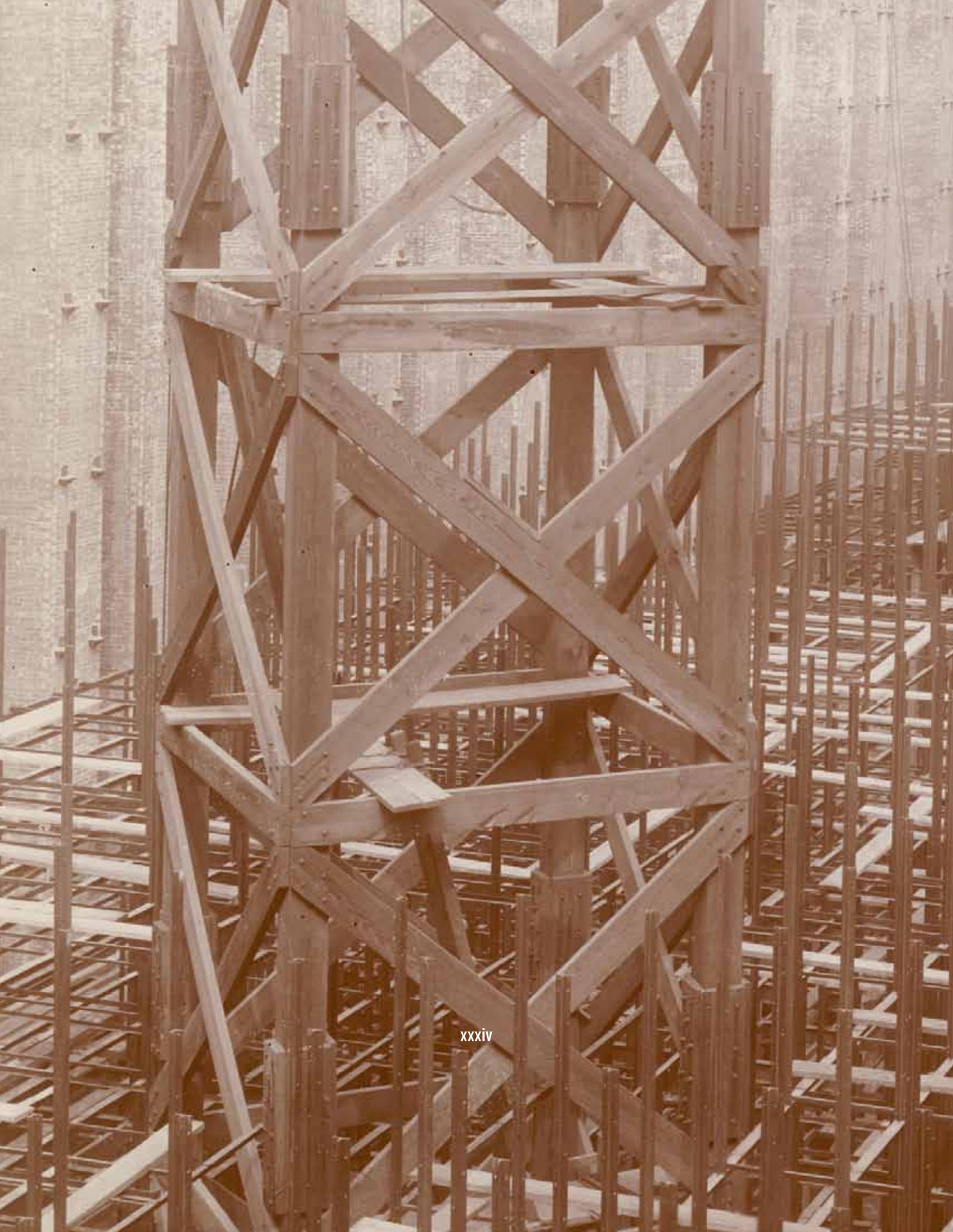


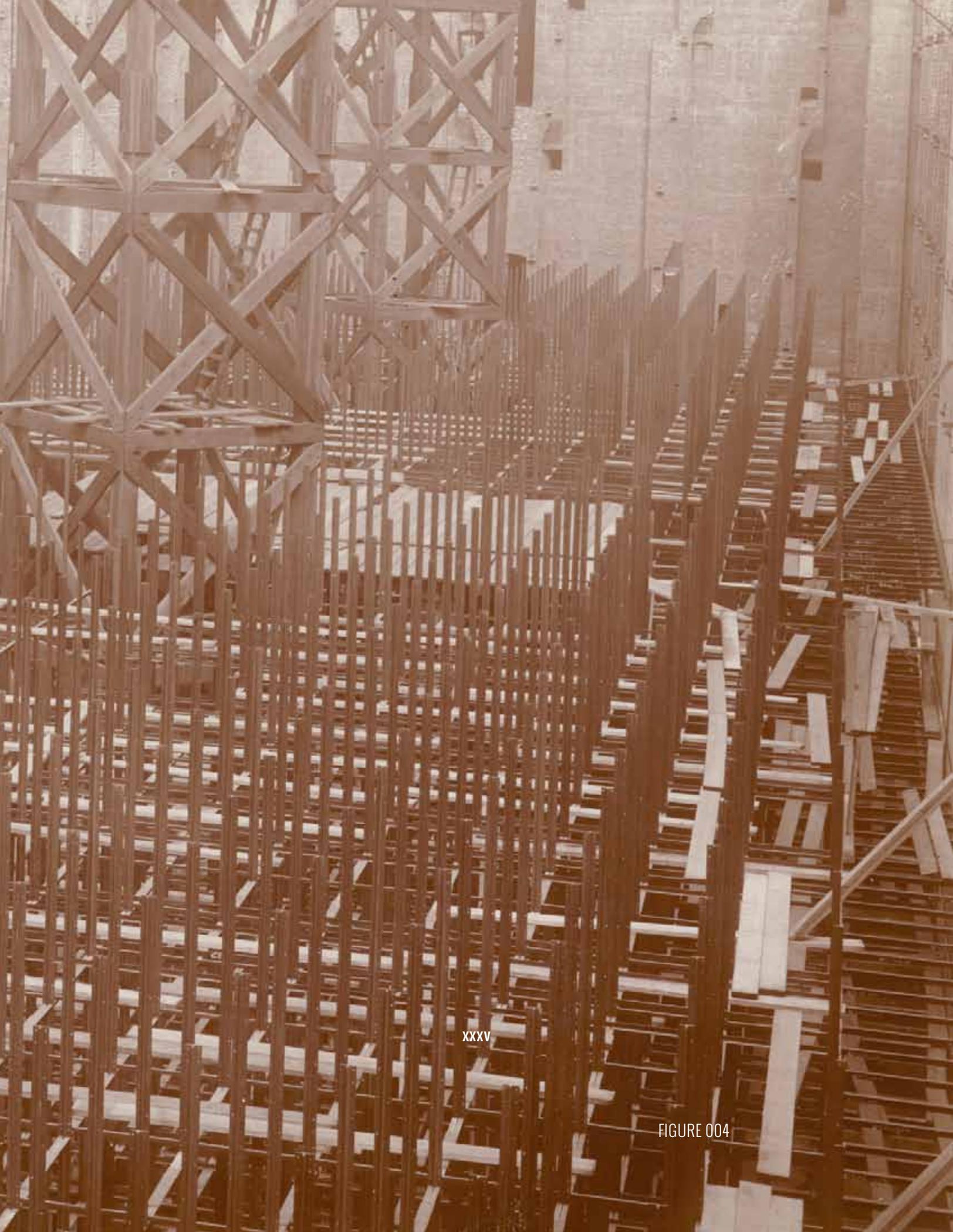




xxxiii

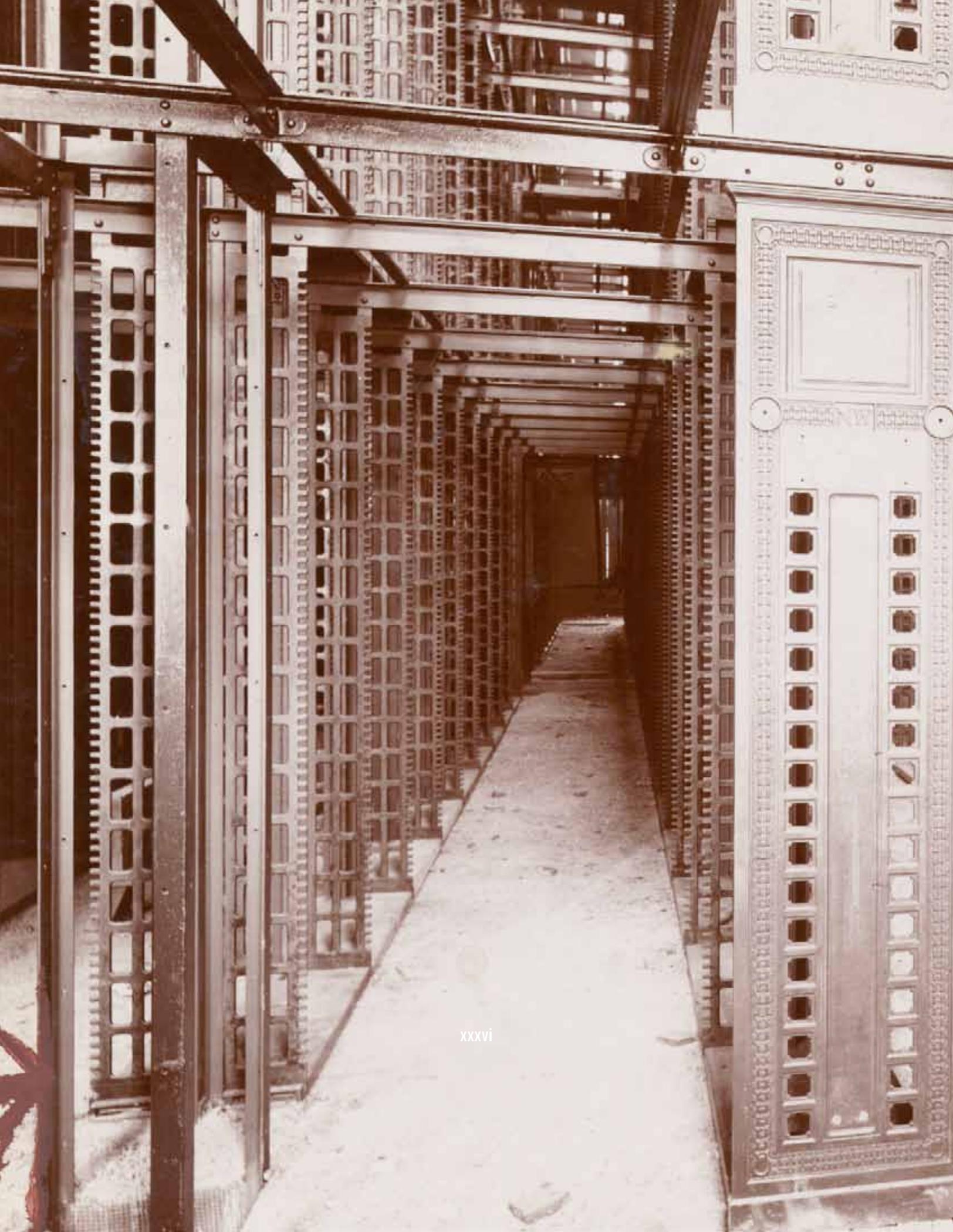
FIGURE 003





XXXV

FIGURE 004

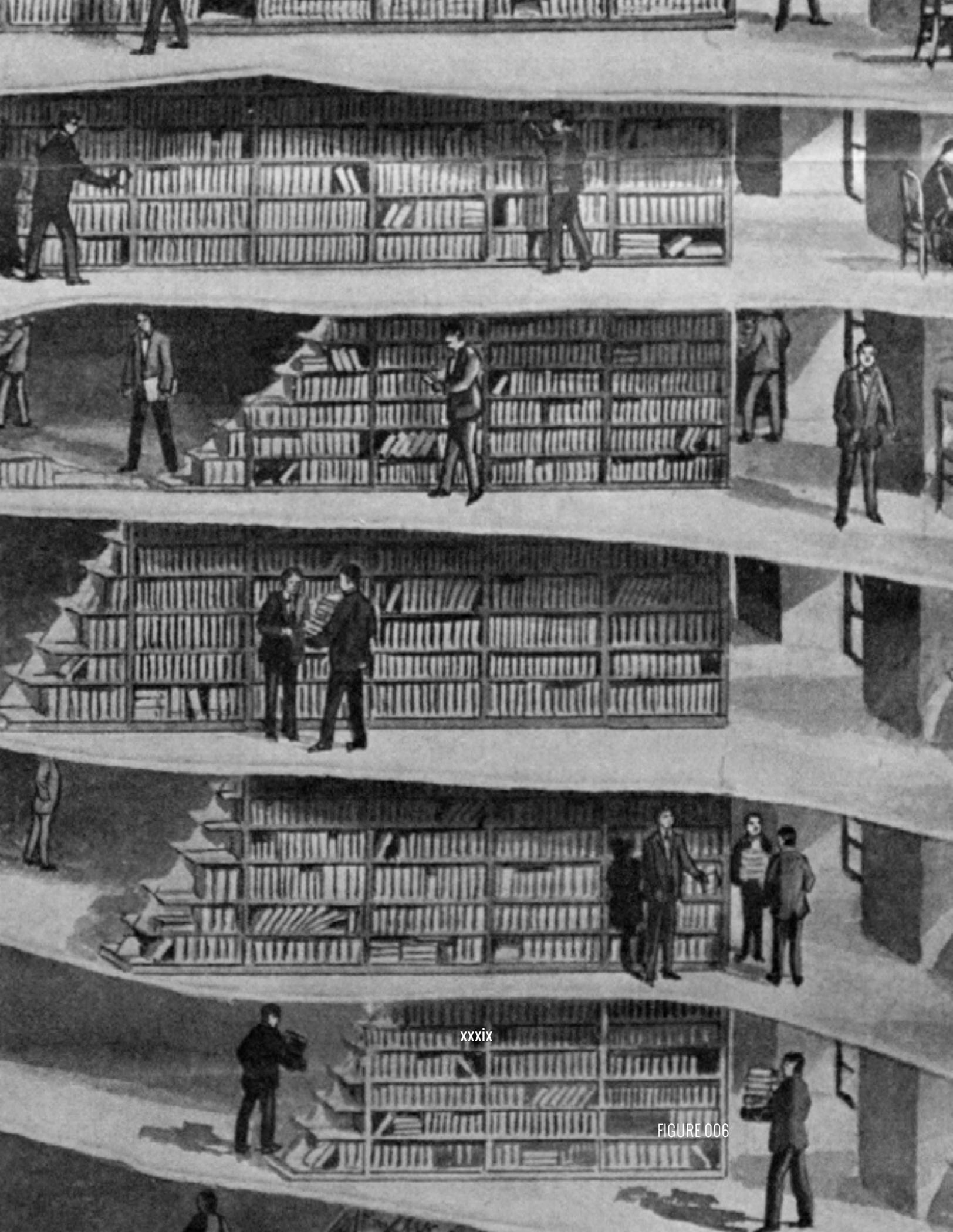




xxxvii

FIGURE 005

























xlix

FIGURE 011



NO SMOKING

The Robert M. Johnson Collection

→  
←  
←







FIGURE 013





*This is a plan devised out of a profound ignorance of or willful disregard for not only the library's original concept and design, but also the folly of altering its meaning and mission and compromising its historical and architectural integrity. You don't "update" a masterpiece. "Modernization" may be the most dangerously misused word in the English language.*

*Buildings change; they adapt to needs, times and tastes. Old buildings are restored, upgraded and converted to new uses. For architecturally or historically significant buildings with landmark protection, the process is more complex; subtle, subjective and difficult decisions are often required. Nothing, not even buildings, stands still.*

*But there are better options than turning the library into a hollowed-out hybrid of new and old. The radically different 21st-century model deserves a radically different style of its own, dramatically contemporary and flexible enough to accommodate rapid technological change.*

— ADA LOUISE HUXTABLE, WALL STREET JOURNAL, DECEMBER 3, 2012  
UNDERTAKING ITS DESTRUCTION





# INTRODUCTION

Ada Louise Huxtable—first architectural critic at the New York Times, first recipient of the Pulitzer Prize in criticism, and venerated voice of popular architectural discourse in New York City—wrote in 1971 of her “continuing love affair” with the 42<sup>nd</sup> Street Library. She described her journey through the building, “past Mr. E. C. Potter’s lions of 1911, through the Corinthian columns of the triple vaulted entrance and the rich, bronze doors to the noble foyer, up the monumental stairs into the half-acre vastnesses of the reading rooms.”<sup>1</sup> While Huxtable recounted her personal experience of the building as a student and a professional, she also wrote about the changing critical perception of the Library:

Some turn-of-the-century commentators thought the library forfeited claims to architectural greatness because its classical grandeur had been fitted to function as the designers’ primary concern, with some sacrifice of approved monumental formulas. Later it was fashionable to admire only the rear of the building, where plain vertical slit windows light the stacks and lighten the structure’s mass with proto-modern simplicity. How temporal are the standards of critics!<sup>2</sup>

To Huxtable, the Library was an invaluable New York City landmark, regardless of changing architectural fashion. This article was written only a few years after the destruction of Penn Station, another monumental building constructed at the turn of the century. At this time, the Library was forced to use its capital endowment to fund operating costs—posing a threat to the building’s survival through neglect. In her words, “it is not for nostalgia or memorabilia that I sometimes detour to Fifth Avenue. It is for substance, style and quality in a city and world that are hard put to provide such commodities today and hardly know how to evaluate them. I am not weeping for the past; I am concerned for the future.”<sup>3</sup> Four

decades later, Huxtable once again had cause for concern. Her last piece of writing was published a month before her death in January 2013; fittingly, it was a critique of the New York Public Library's renovation plan entitled "Undertaking its Destruction."

The New York Public Library is replacing its seven level book stack, the storage system designed to house the research collection, with a new publicly accessible circulating library incorporating a book collection, expanded group work space and greater computer access. Located in the former stack space, the initial renderings released in late December 2012 showed the complete dismantling of the existing stacks and the creation of several mezzanine levels and a new central staircase, all oriented towards Bryant Park.

Before a single drawing had been released, controversy defined the proposed renovations to this landmark building: feature articles, angry blogs, petitions signed by hundreds, discussions in the popular press, and letters to the editor. Much of the press coverage has focused on the fate of the books currently residing in the stacks. While many of the books will stay at the 42nd Street site thanks to a private donation, many more will have to be re-located to an off site storage facility. The concept of annex storage is not new to the Library however the New Jersey location of the facility, which will be shared with Princeton and Columbia, is a departure from other annex properties that were conveniently located in Manhattan within a few blocks of the Library.

The discussion has recently shifted from the fate of the books back to the book stacks themselves. Huxtable reminded the public that the stacks are an "engineering landmark"<sup>4</sup>—literally holding the reading room up. More than just a place to store books, beyond the traditional relationship of "servant and served", the book stacks at the New York Public Library have functioned for the past hundred years as the physical and programmatic support of the building; its unconscious. While inaccessible to both readers and tourists alike, the space the stacks occupy permeates the experience of

the building. Each stair climbed to reach the Rose Main Reading Room on the top floor of the library marks the height of the stacks. Each book delivered has traveled up through their depths. In the original design of the library, the book stacks and their relation to the reading room were of utmost importance; the location of the stacks was already a consideration in John Shaw Billings' pencil sketch of the general plan of the building before the architectural competitions were even called. The tall narrow windows facing Bryant Park telegraph the location of the book stacks within the building. Beyond the façade, the stacks themselves form the fundamental structure supporting the Rose Reading Room; seven layers hold up the activity of the researchers above, both physically and through the way in which books are "simply drawn directly up through the floor from the mine of human knowledge beneath."<sup>5</sup>

The new circulating branch will consolidate two libraries that were initially located in the 42<sup>nd</sup> Street Library. The Mid-Manhattan Library, located diagonally across Fifth Avenue from the Central Library, was opened in the early seventies to give readers a central circulating library in the city. Located a few blocks south on Madison Avenue, the Science, Industry and Business Library consists of research collections that were originally part of the Central Library, alongside targeted circulating collections. The sale of these two midtown locations will help to fund the renovation process, however selling midtown property, Library assets, is also a point of concern for many of the critics of the Central Library Plan.

As a New York City landmark, the Library appears static. Built just before the development of the skyscraper typology that now defines Manhattan's skyline, the mass of the building seems to defy change. It was literally carved from stone while the rest of the city continues to grow up around it. Images of the Library—the facade, the great marble atrium, the reading room—taken at almost any point over the building's century long history are almost interchangeable, excepting changes in the transportation and fashion of the patrons. These images deceive; the building is in a constant state of

change, restoration, and renewal. While the current renovation proposal is a particularly ambitious change to the building, it is not the first. The building has been constantly adapted to meet the changing needs of the Library. This process of adaptation is the life of a building:

Buildings have lives in time, and those lives are intimately connected with the lives of the people who use them. Buildings come into being at particular moments and in particular circumstances. They change and perhaps grow as the lives of their users change. Eventually—when, for whatever reason, people no longer find them useful—they die. The artistry of the designers of buildings is exercised in the context of that life, as well as the context of a life that art itself may have.<sup>6</sup>

Evaluating the New York Public Library's current decision to renovate the building requires stepping beyond the controversy to examine the context of the decision: the daily routine of the library and the major events in the course of its history.

In his influential book *The Shape of Time: Remarks on the History of Things*, art historian George Kubler discusses the difference between our understanding of history and time as a relationship between permanence and change:

Our actual perception of time depends upon regularly recurrent events, unlike our awareness of history, which depends upon unforeseeable change and variety. Without change there is no history; without regularity there is no time. Time and History are related as rule and variation: time is the regular setting for the vagaries of history.<sup>7</sup>

French author Georges Perec comes to a similar conclusion while spending three days observing and recording the activity at Place St-Sulpice in Paris. The routine passes by unnoticed, while change or disruption attracts awareness. In *An Attempt at Exhausting a Place in Paris* Perec makes this comment while watching the traffic, cars and buses driving through the square:

What difference is there between a driver who parks on the first go and another (“90”) who only manages to do so after several minutes of laborious efforts? This provokes attention, irony, the participation of an audience: to see not just the rips, but the fabric (but how to see the fabric if it is only the rips that make it visible: no one ever sees buses pass by unless they're waiting for one, or unless they're waiting for someone to come off of one, or unless the Paris City Transport Authority pays them a salary to count them...)<sup>8</sup>

This thesis takes into account the difference between the history—the “unforeseeable change and variety” or “rips”—and the daily experience—the “regularly recurrent events” or “fabric”—of the building.

The history establishes the factors and events that culminated in the founding and consolidation of the New York Public Library, documents the construction of the building, and tracks the Library’s adaptation over time. These are the “rips” that both create and change the physical composition of the building. The experience of the building is recorded as a series of observations that document the “fabric” of the place. Some of these observations are drawn from my own experience, from my first visit as a tourist years ago to my time spent as a researcher in the library. Some are drawn from the experience of others, through news articles or images, posts and opinions drawn from the Internet. Finally, the press releases and news articles gathered in the last section of this thesis documents the renovation process from the initial announcement in 2008; they are current observations about a definite rip in the fabric of the New York Public Library.

Every effort has been made to present a comprehensive picture of the building, to find the links and connections that have shaped the design decisions embodied in the Central Library. But, this thesis is by no means an exhaustive history. There were limitations on the information I could reasonably access during the short time I spent at the Library. One of the main issues surrounding the renovation has been the opaque way that the New York Public Library has approached the process; a trait not particularly helpful when attempting to establish the facts and reasoning behind the decisions being made. Finally, the ban on access to New York Public Library records less than twenty years old made it difficult to know the immediate history surrounding the call for the renovation.

The current re-imagining of the building is part of a much larger process with roots beyond the stacks. It is not just that the stacks were incapable of fulfilling their original function as a book storage system, but rather

that the storing of the research collection is no longer seen by the library administration as the best possible use of that particular space. Historically, the intentions of the organization have shaped the building therefore the trustee's decision to undermine the very structure of the research library by removing the book stacks, severely reducing the functionality of the world-class collection at the Central Library implies a new direction for the Library moving forward. To quote from the opening paragraph of Ada Louise Huxtable's "Undertaking Its Destruction":

There is no more important landmark building in New York than the New York Public Library, known to New Yorkers simply as the 42<sup>nd</sup> Street Library, one of the world's greatest research institutions. Completed in 1911 by Carrere and Hastings in a lavish classical Beaux Arts style, it is an architectural masterpiece. Yet it is about to undertake its own destruction.<sup>9</sup>

## NOTES

1. Ada Louise Huxtable, "Library As Friend," *The New York Times*, January 24, 1971.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*
4. Ada Louise Huxtable, "Undertaking Its Destruction," *The Wall Street Journal*, December 3, 2012, accessed February 8, 2013, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424127887323751104578151653883688578.html?KEYWORDS=new+york+public+library>
5. Bernard R. Green, "Planning and Construction of Library Buildings," *Library Journal* 25 (1900): 681.
6. Patricia Waddy, *Seventeenth Century Roman Palaces: Use and the Art of the Plan* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1990), pg xi.
7. George Kubler, *The Shape of Time: Remarks on the History of Things* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1962), 71-2.
8. Georges Perec, *An Attempt at Exhausting a Place in Paris*, trans. Marc Lowenthal (Cambridge MA: Wakefield Press, 2010), 33-4.
9. Huxtable, "Undertaking Its Destruction."

The New York  
Public Library Call number:

Author or  
Periodical:

Book Title: **FIRST IMPRESSIONS**

Date/Vol. No.

**Correct and Legible Name and Address Required** Indicator No./  
Seat No.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

School or Business \_\_\_\_\_

ACCESS Card Required for Material

Form 29b

PLEASE PRESS FIRMLY



© Sam Levy 2011

GOOGLE IMAGE SEARCH: NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

FIGURE 015

My first encounter with the New York Public Library was in person, by chance. As a tourist, the Library seemed to appear magically out of the city fabric. While I appreciated its grandeur, I more clearly remember walking into the building with a profound sense of relief. The Library provided respite from the cold, a quiet and orderly place to sit, and was equipped with amenities like internet access and public washrooms, all for free. The use was both familiar and completely alien. It was a library, complete with helpful volunteers and colourful signs advertising events and programs, but it was unlike any library I had ever visited. Where could all the books be?

Ten years later, having completed a degree in architecture and with the distinct intent of visiting buildings related to books, I returned to the Library. I began my visit weeks before arriving in the city, using the tools I had available to locate the building, and begin to build an informed background.

First Impressions, can come from a range of sources: google searches and books, pop culture sources and academic resources. These sources shape how we approach the building, influence opinion and create a virtual presence for this physical entity. Through these virtual translation, an understanding of the physical nature of the building begins to form. Repetition of certain images emphasize certain ideas, while other aspects of the building remain hidden.

**New York Public Library**  
[new york public library](#)  
[new york public schools](#)  
[new york public transportation](#)  
[new york public radio](#)

**Welcome to The New York Public Library**  
[www.nypl.org](#)  
 The mission of The New York Public Library is to inspire lifelong learning, advance knowledge, and strengthen our communities.

**Locations**  
 Stephen A. Schwarzman - Science and Industry - 5th Street Library  
 New York Public Library Catalog Home - Using the Library - Locations and Hours - Find ...  
 NYPL Digital Library Collections Collections provided by the New York Public Library covering ...  
 More results from [nypl.org](#) »

**NYPL Digital Gallery**  
 NYPL Digital Collections - Subjects - Library Divisions - ...

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 eBooks, Digital Images & More eBooks, Digital Images & More. Download eBooks, audiobooks ...

**Stephen A. Schwarzman Research Collections - Map & Collections - Exhibitions - ...**

**public library near New York, NY**

**New York Public Library**  
[www.nypl.org](#)  
 4.5 4.8 4.9 4.9 5.0 Google reviews  
 475 5th Ave  
 New York  
 (212) 275-6875

**5th Manhattan Library**  
[www.nypl.org](#)  
 4.5 4.8 4.9 4.9 5.0 Google reviews  
 455 5th Ave  
 New York  
 (212) 240-0863

**Hudson Park Library**  
[www.nypl.org](#)  
 3 Google reviews  
 66 Lenox St  
 New York  
 (212) 243-6876

See results for new york public library on a map »

**News for new york public library**

 Vinyl Store in action over New York Public Library's record sale  
 NBC News - 3 days ago  
 Vinyl fans are flocking to New York's Public Library for the Performing Arts in search of hidden gems and great bargains.

 New York Public Library holds marathon vinyl LP sale, charging \$1 each for 2 -  
 Greenfield Daily Reporter - 6 days ago

**New York Public Library - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia**  
[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New\\_York\\_Public\\_Library](#)  
 The **New York Public Library (NYPL)** is a public library system in New York City. With nearly 53 million items, the **New York Public Library** is the second largest ...

**New York Public Library Main Branch - Wikipedia, the free ...**  
[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New\\_York\\_Public\\_Library\\_Main\\_Branch](#)  
 The **Stephen A. Schwarzman Building** of the **New York Public Library**, more widely known as the **Main Branch** or simply as "**The New York Public Library**," is the ...

**The New York Public Library - New York, NY - Library | Facebook**  
[https://www.facebook.com/newyorkpubliclibrary](#)  
 The **New York Public Library**, New York, NY 10026 likes - 5420 talking about this - 44726 were here.

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 This page contains a list of public libraries in New York. If you do not see a listing to your local branch library, please check out the library system site or main ...

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[www.youtube.com/user/NewYorkPublicLibrary](#)  
 The **New York Public Library's** mission is to inspire lifelong learning, advance knowledge, and strengthen our communities.

**In-depth articles**



Map for new york public library

**New York Public Library**  
 670,136 followers on Google+  
 The New York Public Library is a public library system in New York City. With nearly 53 million items, the New York Public Library is the second largest public library in the United States, behind only the Library of Congress.

**Recent posts**

 **Historical, Women's Rights Past and Present - August 2011** marks the 100th anniversary of the March on Washington. Join us for a discussion on recent changes! ... 7 hours ago

Feedback · More info

**See results about**

 **New York Public Library Main Branch**  
 The **Stephen A. Schwarzman Building** of the **New York Public Library**. More widely known as the **Main** ...

FIGURE 016

Google Search: New York Public Library. Accessed 2013-08-15. The search leads to the official site, a map and description of the building with links to Google+, news results and top internet hits. The search combines results for the NYPL as a system and as the Main Branch.



FIGURE 017

Google Maps: Link from Google search opposite. Accessed 2013-08-15. At this scale major public buildings—Grand Central Station, Macy’s department store, the New York Public Library—are illustrated using ground floor plans, reminiscent of the 1748 Noli map of Rome.

## INTRODUCTION

THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY, with its Main Research Library and its many branches, is very much part of the city. In fact, it is impossible to think of New York without it. This is especially true of the great building on Fifth Avenue, between 40th and 42nd Streets, whose presence is that of some great natural fact. It would appear to have always been there. For that reason, for the purpose of this book, the Library is the magnificent structure. Visibly, you might say triumphantly, it is the city's great treasure house and resource.\*

It is not easy to grasp that the institution, with its association with the building, has a history. However thin its past may have been, the institution reaches back a century and a half. The clue is on the front of the building. There, on the attic wall over the central portico between freestanding statues, are incised inscriptions bearing the names, reading from left to right, John Jacob Astor, James Lenox, and Samuel Jones Tilden.

\*For all the importance of the New York Public Library, its Main Research Library building went into partial eclipse beginning in the 1930s, with the shift in fashion in the arts away from the classical tradition. Therefore, it was something of a novelty when Classical America, the society founded to encourage the classical tradition in the arts of this country, obtained permission to sponsor a Sunday visit to the building in 1970. Leading the tour were the late John Harrington Bayley, designer of the new wing of the Frick Collection and the first president of Classical America, and the author. The visit's success resulted in several more sponsored by the society and in the Library's instituting the program of weekly tours of the building that are now so popular. Much as it preoccupied the Library's users, the 1972 visit is at the origin of this book.

*COURTESY, John Shaw Billings' sketch of the plan for the first floor of the Library, 1897. Courtesy Rare Book and Manuscript Division, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.*

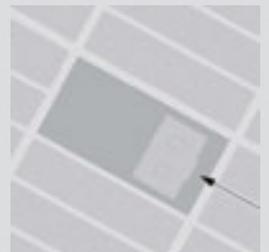
FIGURE 018

Book: *The New York Public Library* by Henry Hope Reed, 1986. Page 3. (Reissued 2011). Introduces the library system, the main building and alludes to the history of the institution. Also prominent is the relationship between the Classical America and the interest in the public tours of the building.



FIGURE 019

Book: *The New York Public Library* by Henry Hope Reed, 1986. Page 34. Fifth Avenue Facade as seen from 41st Street, the two blocks leading to the library entrance renamed Library Way in 2002. The unique scale and beaux art detailing of the library are juxtaposed by the towers framing Library Way.



# New York Public Library Main Branch

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia Coordinates: 40°45′12″N 73°58′56″W﻿ / ﻿40.75333°N 73.98222°W﻿ / 40.75333; -73.98222

The **Stephen A. Schwarzman Building** of the New York Public Library, more widely known as the **Main Branch** or simply as "**the New York Public Library**," is the flagship building in the New York Public Library system and a prominent historic landmark in Midtown Manhattan. The branch, opened in 1911, is one of four research libraries in the library system. It is located on Fifth Avenue at its intersection with 42nd Street.

The Library's famous **Rose Main Reading Room** (Room 315) is a majestic 78 feet (23.8 m) wide and 297 feet (90.5 m) long, with 52-foot (15.8 m) high ceilings. The room is lined with thousands of reference works on open shelves along the floor level and along the balcony, lit by massive windows and grand chandeliers, and furnished with sturdy wood tables, comfortable chairs, and brass lamps. It is also equipped with computers providing access to library collections and the Internet as well as docking facilities for laptops. Readers study books brought to them from the library's closed stacks. There are special rooms named for notable authors and scholars, many of whom have done important research and writing at the Library. But the Library has always been about more than scholars; during the Great Depression, many members of the general public, out of work, used the Library to improve their lot in life, as they still do.<sup>[3]</sup>

The building was declared a National Historic Landmark in 1965.<sup>[2]</sup>

**Contents** [hide]

- 1 The building
- 2 History
- 3 In film and television
- 4 In literature and poetry
- 5 See also
- 6 References
- 7 Further reading
- 8 External links

**The building** [ edit source | edit meta ]

**New York Public Library**

U.S. National Register of Historic Places  
U.S. National Historic Landmark



Often simply called "The New York Public Library", the official name of the main branch is the "Stephen A. Schwarzman Building"

**Location:** 5th Avenue & 42nd Street, New York, NY

**Coordinates:** 40°45′12″N 73°58′56″W﻿ / ﻿40.75333°N 73.98222°W﻿ / 40.75333; -73.98222

**Built:** 1897–1911

**Architect:** Carrère and Hastings

**Architectural style:** Beaux Arts

**Governing body:** Local

**NRHP Reference#:** 65000546

**Significant dates**

**Added to NRHP:** October 15, 1965<sup>[1]</sup>

**Designated NHL:** December 21, 1965<sup>[2]</sup>

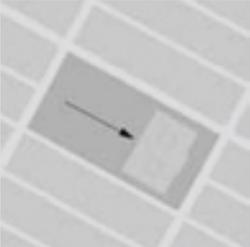
FIGURE 020

Wikipedia Entry: New York Public Library Main Branch. Accessed 2013-08-13 through a hyperlink on the main NYPL entry. In addition to specific data, the entry begins with items of contemporary importance, like internet access, miss-information about the “special rooms,” and opinions.



FIGURE 021

Wikimedia Commons. Description: The City Pond skating rink in Bryant Park, Manhattan, New York City, with the rear of the main building of the New York Public Library in the background. Date: 2011-11-02. Author: Beyond My Ken.



**New York Public Library** Add to trip

476 5th Ave New York, NY 10018, New York City, NY 10018 (Manhattan)  
 212 930 0800 Website E-mail Update attraction details



Ranked #20 of 762 attractions in New York City  
 1442 Reviews  
 Certificate of Excellence 2013

Type: Libraries, Landmarks/ Points of Interest, Museums, Architectural Buildings  
 Activities: Shopping

Description: Two marble lions mark the entrance to this Beaux Arts masterpiece, a National Historic Landmark containing more than six million books.



414 visitor photos

1,442 reviews from our community Write a Review

Visitor rating

Excellent	518
Very good	460
Average	49
Poor	4
Terrible	2

1,442 reviews sorted by Date Rating English first

**"A must see"**  
 Reviewed August 18, 2013 view

Beautiful architecture and painted ceilings. Gift shop had some great books and souvenirs. It is a great place to find some peace in the big city!

Was this review helpful?  Problem with this review?

See 2 more reviews by CJK17 for New York City

Senior Contributor  
 40 reviews  
 13 attraction reviews  
 Reviews in 22 cities  
 7 helpful votes

**"Beautiful building but not a must see."**  
 Reviewed August 18, 2013 view

I hadn't been here since childhood but we stopped in briefly on our most

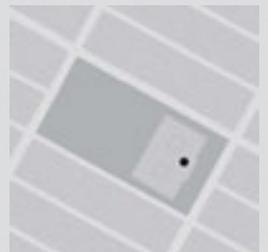
FIGURE 022

Tripadvisor Entry: New York Public Library. Accessed 2013-08-20. The NYPL ranks 20th on the Tripadvisor recommended attractions list, following the Tenement Museum and the Highline. The reviews are as varied as the contributors who submit them.



FIGURE 023

Trip Advisor Visitor Photos: Public Library, from Review “Tempio della cultura”. Author: Lido M, Follonica Italy. Visited October 2012, Reviewed: 2012-10-03. Main entrance hall, complete with LEGO imitations of the library’s stone lions, Patience and Fortitude.



# Welcome to the Stephen A. Schwarzman Building



Since its opening in 1911, The New York Public Library's flagship building has become known as the People's Palace, a fount of knowledge and inspiration, its vast collections, services, and beautiful, bustling public spaces free and open to everyone.

Recognized as one of the world's great public libraries, the Schwarzman Building holds more than 15 million items, from the first words ever carved into stone to Columbus's letter announcing his discovery of the New World, to precious manuscripts illuminated by hand and experimental works that seek to redefine literacy in the digital age.

#### CREDITS

Photographs by: Maria Abu, Jonathan Blum, Steven Brooke Studios, Marc Bryer-Brown Photography, Peter Foley, Tina Heerens, Joel Klein, Herb Schen, Sarah Shatz, Benwolf Sheehan | Reginald Marsh drawing © 1911, The New York Magazine, Inc.

## Don't Miss These Highlights

**Free exhibitions** on the First and Third floors

The **Rose Main Reading Room** on the Third Floor, almost as long as a football field!

The first **Gutenberg Bible** to cross the Atlantic

The original **Winnie-the-Pooh stuffed animals** in the Children's Center on the Ground Floor

**Free laptop loan** with your Library card in the Edna Barnes Salomon Room on the Third Floor

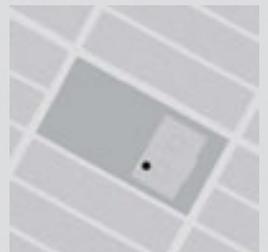
FIGURE 024

Library Pamphlet: Discover the New York Public Library Stephen A. Schwarzman Building. © The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations, 2012. Acquired 2013-06-05. While ostensibly true at time of printing, The "15 million items" most likely no longer reside in the Schwarzman Building.



FIGURE 025

Library Pamphlet: Discover the New York Public Library Stephen A. Schwarzman Building. © The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations, 2012. The Deborah, Jonathan F.P., Samuel Priest, and Adam R. Rose Main Reading Room, as long as a football field.



CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK

## In Renderings for a Library Landmark, Stacks of Questions



Robert Wright for The New York Times

The New York Public Library is planning a new design by the architect Norman Foster. [More Photos](#)

By MICHAEL KIMMELMAN

Published: January 29, 2013 | [215 Comments](#)

None of New York's great buildings embody the spirit of the city more than the New York Public Library, the cherished century-old Beaux-Arts landmark in the heart of Midtown Manhattan. But cities change — New York all the time — and even the greatest buildings may need to change with them. So it was that more than four years ago the library announced a \$250 million plan (since revised upward to \$300 million and still rising). Norman Foster, the celebrity architect, was enlisted to revamp and modernize the 42nd Street building.

The plan gave New Yorkers plenty to fight about: Would it cripple

Multimedia

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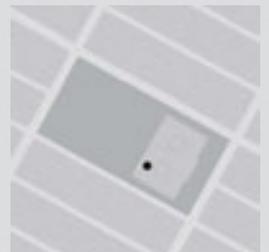
FIGURE 026

Online Newspaper Article: “In Renderings for a Library Landmark, Stacks of Questions” by Michael Kimmelman. Published January 29, 2013. Critique of plans released by Foster + Partners for the renovation of the stack space. Several New York City papers featured critiques of the renovation plans.



FIGURE 027

Online Newspaper Article: "In Renderings for a Library Landmark, Stacks of Questions" by Michael Kimmelman. Published January 29, 2013. The accompanying digital "slide show" featured renderings of the proposed renovations to the stack space, showing the complete dismantling of the existing stacks.



Especially in today's digital culture, we rarely experience something new without "googling" it first. Just determining the best route to the building introduces a privileged plan view, highlighting the relationship between the library and its surroundings. Other's opinions can shade our experience positively or negatively; seeing a friend's reference over social media or reading a critical travel review. The library's website provides additional interpretations, linking the physical location with a vast digital infrastructure. Upon visiting the building, brochures, guidebooks and the interpretive panels installed along the buildings second floor corridor add further context and depth to the experience of the space. Sometimes references come when we are least expecting them. The opening scene of a hollywood film, a print advertisement showing a distinguished location, the backdrop of a fashion show can all serve as an introduction to the building.

These quick searches, additional layers of information, and unexpected moments of exposure influence how we approach the building; they lead to the multiple dimensions and interpretations that shape the space. In David Harvey's essay *Space as a Key Word* he describes space as a matrix, drawing on this multiplicity. In his definition space can be absolute but is also simultaneously experienced, conceptualized and lived across relative and relational time. The New York Public Library is a marble, brick and steel structure beside Bryant Park, an absolute space. It is also a physical representation of the institution of the library, both for New York City, and in relation to "the library" as an archetypal space. It is a new experience and a memory of its former self with every visit.

The New York  
Public Library      Call number:

Author or  
Periodical:

Book Title:      42<sup>ND</sup> ST & 5<sup>TH</sup> AVE

Date/Vol. No.

**Correct and Legible Name and Address Required**      Indicator No./  
Seat No.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

School or Business \_\_\_\_\_

ACCESS Card Required for Material      Form 25b

PLEASE PRESS FIRMLY

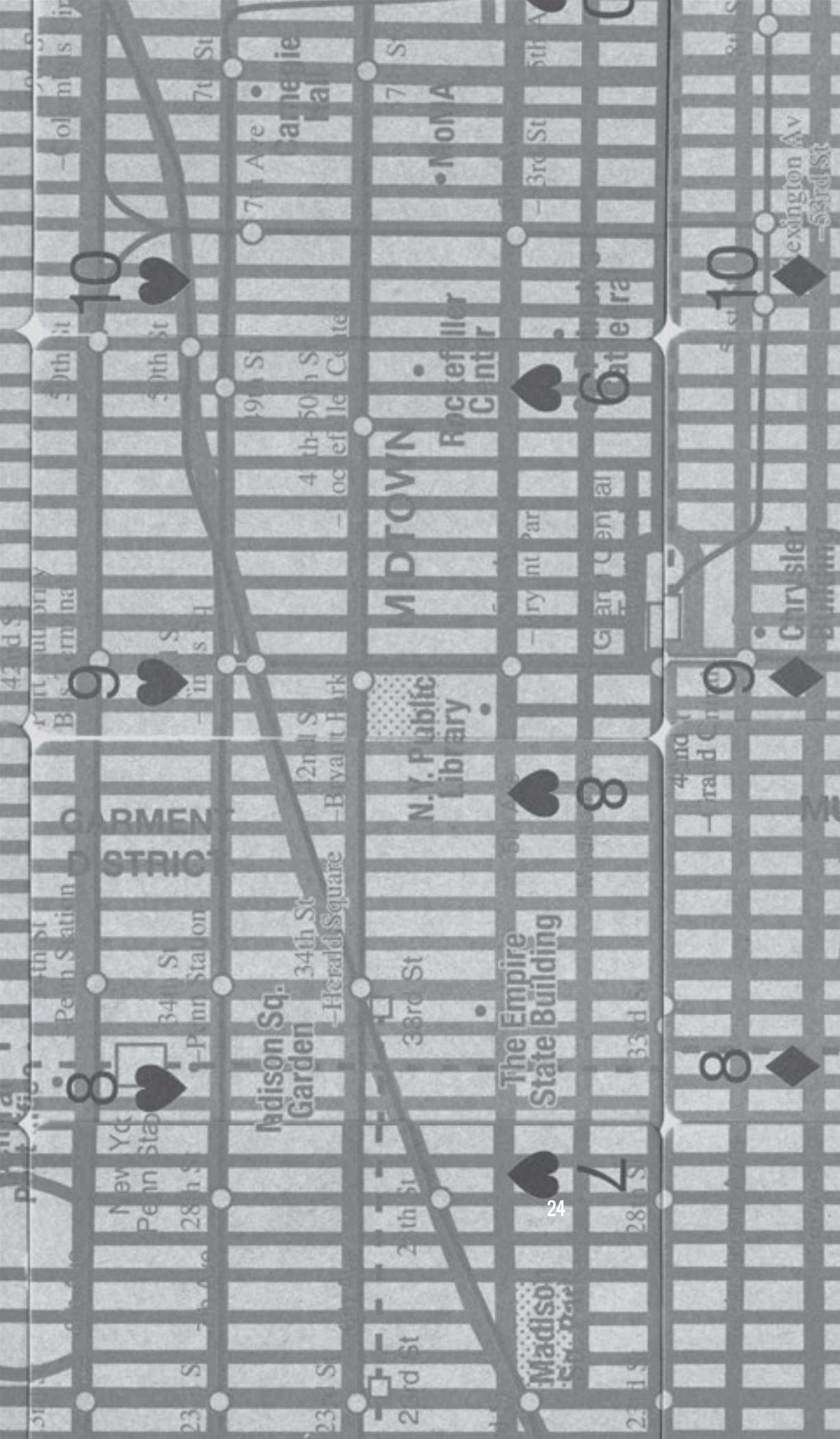


FIGURE 028

PLAYING CARDS DESCRIBING THE MAP OF NEW YORK INCLUDING THE STREETS, NEIGHBORHOODS, TRANSIT AND MONUMENTS

The island of Manhattan is geographically divided; Uptown, Midtown and Downtown, East Side and West Side. The city North of 14th Street is characterized by the ubiquitous Manhattan Grid. The twenty-three square miles of land area are further defined as a collection of distinct neighbourhoods. New York City is home to one of the most well used public transit systems in the world. The densely packed fabric of the city is pinpointed with monuments, landmarks in the midst of the Grid. Small parks and squares, often fashioned from the bits of the city the grid could not reconcile, are beloved and cherished. These physical characteristics begin to define Manhattan, as observed and described by urban theorists over the past few decades.

The New York Public Library is a prominent public building in the city, sitting within Bryant Park in Midtown Manhattan. Grid, neighbourhood, circulation, monument and network form the site, the canvas, and the context for the building.

# GRID

*The Grid is, above all, a conceptual speculation.*

*In spite of its apparent neutrality, it implies an intellectual program for the island: in its indifference to topography, to what exists, it claims the superiority of mental construction over reality. The plotting of its streets and blocks announces that the subjugation, if not obliteration of nature is its true ambition.*

*All blocks are the same; their equivalence invalidates, at once, all the systems of articulation and differentiation that have guided the design of traditional cities. The Grid makes the history of architecture and all previous lessons of urbanism irrelevant. It forces Manhattan's builders to develop a new system of formal values, to invent strategies for the distinction of one block from another.*

*The Grid's two-dimensional discipline also creates undreamt-of freedom for three-dimensional anarchy. The Grid defines a new balance between control and de-control in which the city can be at the same time ordered and fluid, a metropolis of rigid chaos.*

*With its imposition, Manhattan is forever immunized against any (further) totalitarian intervention. In the single block—the largest possible area that can fall under architectural control—it develops a maximum unit of urbanistic Ego.*

*Since there is no hope that larger parts of the island can ever be dominated by a single client or architect, each intention—each architectural ideology—has to be realized fully within the limitations of block. Since Manhattan is finite and the number of its blocks forever fixed, the city cannot grow in any conventional manner.*

—REM KOOLHAAS  
DELIRIOUS NEW YORK | PG.20



FIGURE 029

Map: New York City GIS. Buildings and Open Space. Images: Google Maps Accessed 2013-08-28. The Library and Bryant Park break the rigid system of the Manhattan grid; they represent difference in the prevailing pattern of blocks in Midtown Manhattan. Koolhaas describes the Grid as a catalyst based on limitations, however this block stands as an example of contradictory growth. This superblock in combination with the gracious setback of the library building reorients 5th Avenue at 42nd street.

# NEIGHBORHOOD

*If the only kinds of city neighbourhoods that demonstrate useful functions in real-life self-government are the city as a whole, streets, and districts, then effective neighbourhood physical planning for cities should aim at these purposes:*

*First, to foster lively and interesting streets.*

*Second, to make the fabric of these streets as continuous a network as possible throughout a district of potential sub city size and power.*

*Third, to use parks and squares and public buildings as part of this street fabric; use them to intensify and knit together the fabric's complexity and multiple use. They should not be used to island off different uses from each other, or to island off subdistrict neighbourhoods.*

*Forth, to emphasize the functional identity of areas large enough to work as districts.*

—JANE JACOBS  
THE DEATH AND LIFE OF GREAT AMERICAN CITIES | PG 168

*When suitably differentiated within, a district can express connections with other city features. The boundary must now be penetrable: a seam not a barrier. District may join to district, by juxtaposition intervisibility, relation to a line, or by some link such as a mediating node, path or small district.*

—KEVIN LYNCH  
THE IMAGE OF THE CITY | PG 104

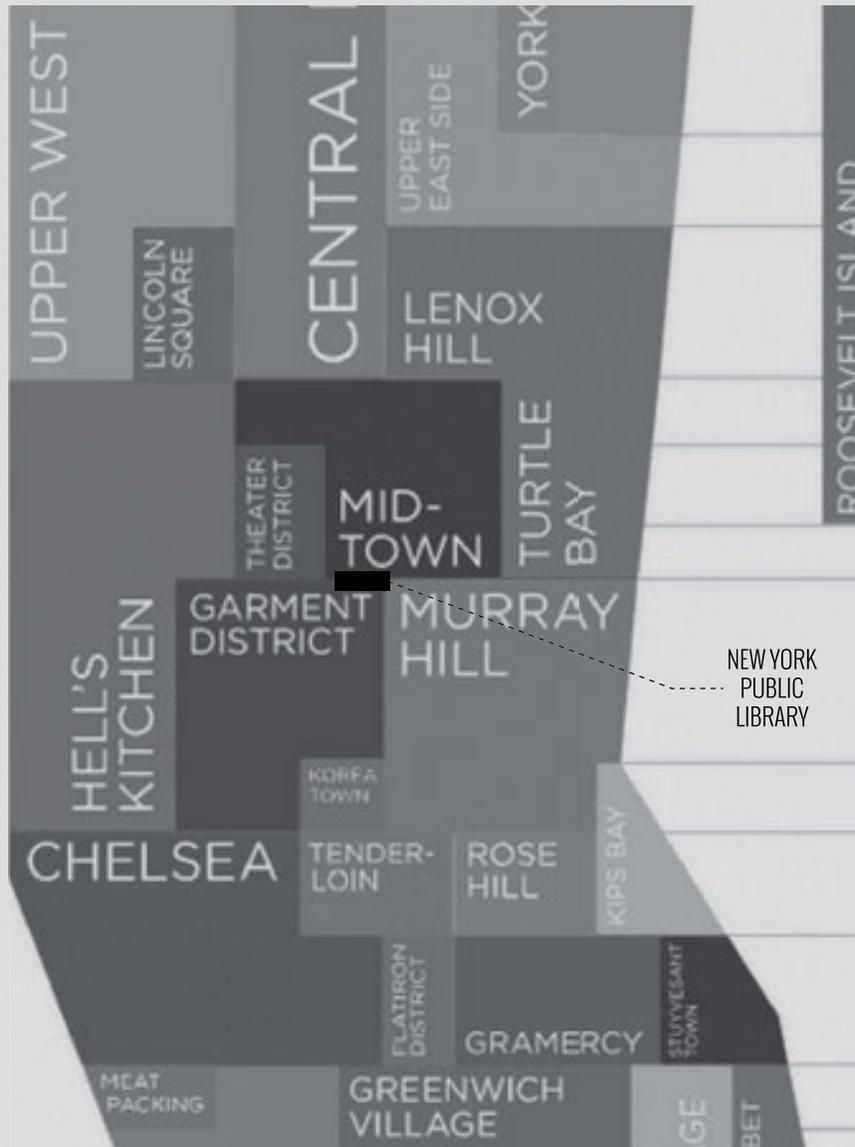


FIGURE 030

Map: The Neighborhoods of New York by Alexander Cheek. Four neighborhoods pinwheel around the New York Public Library: Midtown and the glitz of 5th Ave, sitting between Bryant and Central Park; The Theatre District, with the lights of Broadway and Times Square located along 42nd Street; Historic Murray Hill; and the Garment District, centre of American fashion. The Library and the Park “mediate” between these neighborhoods, adopting the characteristics of each from theatre to store to stage

# CIRCULATION

*... New York has seldom prompted unalloyed praise. It is too big, too harsh. As one who knows only smaller cities intimately, I continually underestimate its expanse and wear myself out on distances, just as I do by car in Los Angeles. But I admire Manhattan: the synchronized beehive dance of Grand Central Station, the fast pace people set on the long grid of streets, the jay-walkers, the slower strollers in the squares, the dark-skinned nannies pushing pallid babies before them through the gracious paths of Central Park. Wandering without a clear purpose or sense of direction, I have often disrupted the fast flow of passersby intent on some clear errand or commute, as though I were a butterfly strayed into the beehive, a snag in the stream. Two-thirds of all journeys around downtown and midtown Manhattan are still made on foot, and New York, like London, remains a city of people walking for practical purposes, pouring up and down subway stairs, across intersections—but musers and nocturnal strollers move to a different tempo. Cities make walking into true travel: danger, exile, discovery, transformation, wrap all around one's home and come right up to the doorstep.*

—REBECCA SOLNIT  
WANDERLUST: A HISTORY OF WALKING | PG 188

*Paths are the channels along which the observer customarily, occasionally, or potentially moves. They may be streets, walkways, transit lines, canals, railroads. For many people, these are the predominant elements in their image [of the city.] People observe the city while moving through it. And along these paths the other environmental elements are arranged and related.*

—KEVIN LYNCH  
THE IMAGE OF THE CITY | PG 47



FIGURE 031

Map: MTA New York City Subway Map (The Map), Updated January 2012. The street grid above ground and the subway lines beneath each influence the built fabric of the city. As circulation, these systems converge to distribute people though the city, concentrating areas of desirability. As infrastructure, the streets and subway limit building areas. While the block is defined by streets, a subway line lies across northwest corner of Bryant Park, limiting the underground stack storage capacity in the Stack Extension.

# MONUMENT

*A monument stands at a center. It is usually surrounded by building and becomes a place of attraction. We have said that it is a primary element, but of a special type: but it is special because by virtue of its form its value goes beyond economics and function.*

*Thus, even if all the monumental structures of the city have a meta-economic character, they are also outstanding works of art, and they are characterized above all by this aspect. They constitute a value that is stronger than environment and stronger than memory. It is significant a city has never intentionally destroyed its own greatest works of architecture; the Pazzi Chapel or St. Peter's has never needed defending.*

—ALDO ROSSI  
THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE CITY

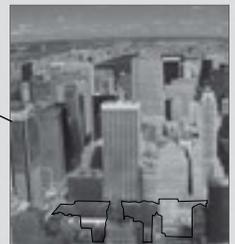
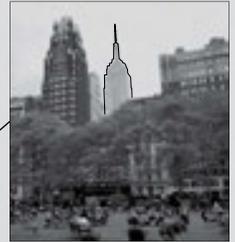


FIGURE 032

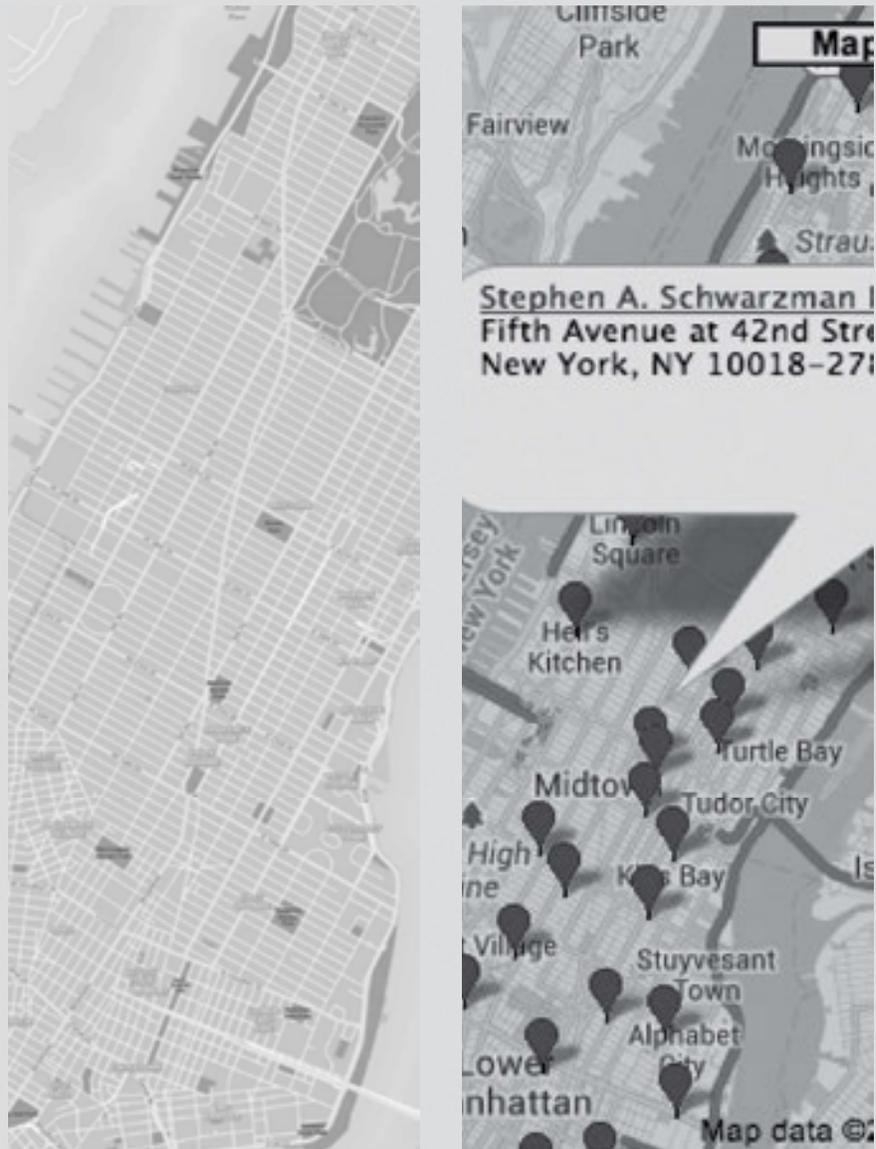
Map: Manhattan Tourist Map. Outlining important cross streets and highlighting neighborhoods and parks this tourist map also highlights important buildings in Midtown Manhattan. The three dimensional diagrams emphasize the relative importance of these buildings. This block is an ideal location to visually connect with the other monuments in Midtown; there are clear sight lines to the Empire State building and Chrysler Building, not normally seen across blocks because of the density of the city fabric.

# NETWORKS: PART I

Re: Urban Outdoor Space

*There are two fundamentally different kinds of outdoor space: negative space and positive space. Outdoor space is negative when it is shapeless, the residue left behind when buildings—which are generally viewed as positive—are placed on the land. An outdoor space is positive when it has a distinct and definite space, as definite as the shape of a room, and when its shape is as important as the shape of the buildings which surround it.*

—CHRISTOPHER ALEXANDER  
A PATTERN LANGUAGE | PG 518



**Stephen A. Schwarzman I**  
**Fifth Avenue at 42nd Street**  
**New York, NY 10018-271**

FIGURE 033

Map Left: NYC Parks Interactive City Map. There are three types of parks in Manhattan: Central Park, the dominate feature of uptown, linear parks, which following geographic features both natural and, recently, man made. The third type of park is concentrated and urban. Map Right: Library Location Map. The Library is part of a system of branches. There are four research branches and 81 circulating branches; 35 are in Manhattan, 34 are in the Bronx, and 12 are in Staten Island

# NETWORKS: PART II

*The notion of a city as a self-sufficient organism — as it had remained throughout history — has lost its validity. The simple solutions of earlier periods no longer apply to the complicated living requirements and related phenomena of contemporary urban life. Differentiation of occupations, industrial organization, and traffic demand a complex interrelationship of functions and a great increase of scale.*

—SIGFRIED GIDEON  
SPACE, TIME AND ARCHITECTURE | PG 858



FIGURE 034

Map: Google Map. Fifth Avenue at 42nd Street, New York, New York to 400 Forrestal Road Princeton, New Jersey via I95: 50.4 Miles, 1Hr1Min with tolls. The Research Collections and Preservation Consortium (ReCAP) high density book storage facility is located on the Forrestal campus of Princeton University and is used by Princeton, Columbia University and the New York Public Library. Pick-up for delivery to New York City is made ever morning at 4:00 am.

Grid, Neighborhood, Circulation, Monument, Network. Each of the systems at play on the site gives shape or has been shaped by the Library. They are concepts at work across the island of Manhattan, forming a particular urban context.

What is clear from the physical characteristics of the site is the lack of space available for growth. Each layer, from the grid and circulation infrastructure to the Library's roll as a monument within the city, restricts the possibility for expansion. Network: Part II, the Google map between the Library and the ReCAP facility in Princeton, shows the distances now needed to accommodate the institution, beyond the local networks of parks and libraries in New York City, beyond 42nd Street and 5th Ave. This warehouse and delivery system is more reminiscent of online retailers like Amazon than a library. However, online retailers are working to decrease the amount of time it takes for their product to reach consumers—offering same day delivery to stay competitive—opposite of the libraries current strategy, which has steadily increased the delivery time.

# FOUNDATION



FIGURE 035 NEW YORK, 1855. LINEENGRAVING BY WILLIAM WELLSTOOD SHOWING THE VIEW FROM THE LATTING OBSERVATORY SOUTH.

The New York Public Library officially opened in 1911, but that is not the beginning of the story. Rather the library is rooted in the previous century. It was shaped by the growth and maturation of the city and the permeating pattern of the all-pervasive Manhattan grid. It grew from the trading empire of John Jacob Astor, from the personal collection of James Lenox and from the fortune of Samuel Tilden. The individual contributions of these three men were consolidated in 1885 to form the New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations. It responded to the needs of the population, providing free access to the exponentially increasing amounts of printed material. It addressed current architectural fashion, changing construction practices and developments in technology. The New York Public Library is not the result of a singular vision or planned system; it would have been impossible to predict the form of the library as it opened in 1911. Examining the pre-history of the Library—the establishment of a site, the priority of the founders, the state of publishing, trends in libraries, and developments in engineering and architecture—is essential to understanding the institution the New York Public Library has become.



*...they shall have and possess exclusive powers to lay out streets roads and public squares, of such width, extent, and direction, as to them shall seem most conducive to public good...*

—LAW OF 1807, CHAPTER 115, NEW YORK STATE LEGISLATURE  
AN ACT RELATIVE TO IMPROVEMENTS, TOUCHING THE LAYING OUT OF  
STREETS IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

## LOCATION

Western settlement in New York City began at the very southern tip of the Island of Manhattan, shifting gradually northward as the population grew. While the city was a Dutch colony, known as New Amsterdam, a wall and ditch defined the northern edge of the city; Wall Street marks the location of this fortification today. The edge of the city continued pushing northward as the British took control of the colony and immigrants fleeing persecution in Europe migrated to the city. During the Revolutionary War, British troops occupied the city, leading to several major shifts in the population. At the beginning of the war, those loyal to the British empire arrived while the patriots and dissenters fled. This trend reversed after “Evacuation Day” November 25th, 1781 when the British troops departed and Washington triumphantly entered the city.<sup>1</sup>

Following the Revolutionary War, New York was both rebuilt and greatly expanded. The first stock exchange opened on Wall Street in 1793, and the city’s shipping exports and the population of Manhattan tripled from 1790 to 1810. The Common Council, the city government at the time, decided that such rapid growth called for long term planning. They commissioned a survey of existing ownership conditions and a plan for future growth. The resulting document, the 1811 Commissioners’ Plan—a rational grid system extending the city north from its current edge at Canal Street—was implemented in principle over the next 60 years and continues to define the urban context of the city.

The 1811 Plan, drawn with a scientific attention to detail and no decoration or embellishment, extends the city rationally using two grid patterns. The street widths create the first pattern. Each avenue, traversing North and South down the length of the island, is 100 feet across. The majority of the streets running East and West across the width are 60 feet across. Several major cross streets were also established by the 1811 Plan; these streets measure 100 feet across and are located at slightly irregular intervals. The blocks define the second pattern. All the blocks laid out by the plan are 200 feet wide, while the block lengths were chosen to divide equally by 20 or 50 feet, the sizes of individual lots for resale. The lengths of the blocks are not equal across the island. The western most blocks, those between Twelfth Avenue and Sixth Avenue, are 800 feet long. The blocks between Sixth Avenue and Third Avenue are 920 feet long, following the historic dimensions of the Common Lands, land owned by the city and rented to farmers and others under long leases. The blocks on the east side of Manhattan are much shorter, each between 620 feet and 650 feet long.<sup>2</sup>

Before the Commissioners' Plan, the area to the north of the city was mostly rural, dotted with farms, country estates, and a few villages. Manhattan, derived from the Lenape name Mannahatta, means "Island of Many Hills." According to Randel, the surveyor who was responsible for the decade long process of surveying the existing conditions in Manhattan, 573 hills covered the island, from Washington Heights, estimated to have reached 270 feet above sea level, to the Ramble, now located in Central Park, to Murray Hill.

Execution of the plan was slow, taking years to implement legally and physically. The legal process involved establishing new property lines, assessing levies based on the foreseen benefits for property owners. The physical construction process required several stages. The land needed to be surveyed, laying out the streets and avenues. The cartesian grid was being superimposed on a varied landscape, the streets were graded through excavation and infill as needed<sup>3</sup>; 98 rock outcroppings were marked by Randel and his team of surveyors for destruction, all using 19th century technology<sup>4</sup>.

1835

Street Grid

*Perceived edge of future development*

155th

145th

135th

125th

116th

106th

96th

86th

79th

72nd

62nd

57th

42nd

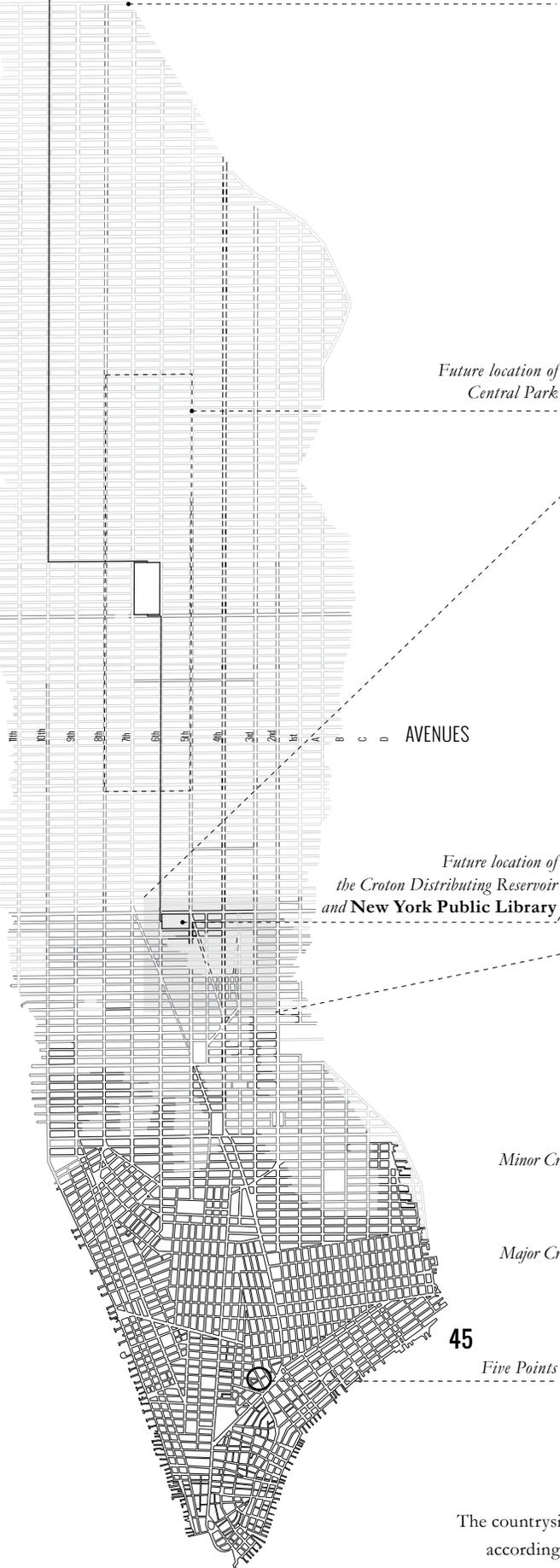
34th

23rd

14th

MAJOR CROSS STREETS

MAJOR CROSS STREETS



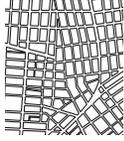
### STREET CONSTRUCTION PROGRESS



PLANNED  
STREETS



CONSTRUCTED  
STREETS



BUILT  
CITY

### MURRAY HILL STREETS, GARDENS + TOPOGRAPHY



AVENUES

*Future location of  
the Croton Distributing Reservoir  
and New York Public Library*

### GRID PATTERNS

#### STREET WIDTHS

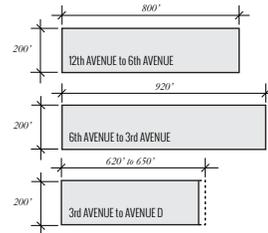
*Minor Cross Street*



*Major Cross Street*



#### BLOCK LENGTHS



45

*Five Points*

### MANHATTAN STREET GRID | FIGURE 036

The countryside to the north of the historic city center was developed over sixty years according to the grid patterns established in the 1811 Commissioner's Plan for the City of New York.

Fifth and Sixth Avenue, 40th and 42nd Street, which now surround the New York Public Library, were constructed before 1835. At that time, Murray Hill was a small settlement outside of the city, replete with farms and gardens, and 42nd Street—currently a central cross street in Manhattan—formed the outer edge of street construction. It became a “superblock”, following the construction of the Croton distributing reservoir in 1842; 41st Street was built over between 5th and 6th Avenues, forming a break, an anomaly, in the grid.

New York City’s growth did not slow. While the form of the city was established with the Commissioner’s Plan, essential services were required for a newly urban population. Trade increased dramatically with the opening of the Erie Canal in 1825, which the *Times* of London predicted would make New York “the London of the New World.”<sup>5</sup> But as the rich prospered, working class living conditions were quickly becoming unbearable. Poorer neighbourhoods, like the notorious Five Points, were overcrowded and under serviced. The need to live within walking distance of work in the city kept the population captive in these squalid locations. Access to water was scarce, restricted to individual wells and an inadequate, undersized wood pipe water system constructed decades earlier. What little water that did reach the inhabitants was dangerous to drink, drawn from aquifers below the city polluted by excrement and other soluble waste.

Two incidents forced the Common Council to act on the need for a consistent supply of fresh water: first, the cholera epidemic reached the city in 1832 killing thousands, and second, fire. In 1835, the most devastating fire in the city’s history swept through thirteen acres in the commercial district, destroying over 600 buildings. The existing water system was not sufficient to help put out the blaze. Instead the fire department resorted to the demolition of a line of buildings to halt the spread of the fire, keeping it contained within the downtown commercial district. Unlike the cholera epidemic, which primarily affected the city’s poorer inhabitants, the



**CROTON DISTRIBUTING RESERVOIR, MURRAY HILL**  
*future site of the New York Public Library*



RESERVOIR CAPACITY: 20 MILLION GALLONS

Hudson River

Manhattan Valley

SECTION

Receiving Reservoir

Distributing Reservoir

**CROTON WATERSHED, AQUADUCT & RESERVOIR | FIGURE 037**

The Croton Distributing Reservoir stood on Murray Hill at 42nd Street and 5th Avenue from 1842 until the construction of the New York Public Library, the tallest point to the north of the built city.

Great Fire of 1835 severely affected the mercantile class and resulted in the closure of almost all insurance companies. Several changes to the city occurred in the rebuilding over the next year: the old narrow streets were widened and regularized, and the city government had the support of the mercantile class to provide a reliable water source, both for drinking water and fire suppression.<sup>6</sup>

Providing enough water for the city into the foreseeable future was a construction and engineering project monumental in scale. Water from the damned Croton River in Westchester County to the north of New York City was transported via aqueduct to a receiving reservoir in present day Central Park and then on to a distributing reservoir located on Murray Hill.

Located at Fifth Avenue and 42nd Street, the site for the distributing reservoir was geographically important. In combination with a location at very northern edge of the city, the surface elevation of the reservoir, at 117 feet, was approximately ten feet taller than the highest point in the city at that point.<sup>7</sup> Completed in July 1842, the Croton distributing reservoir, was built with 7.6 metre thick granite walls, in a style reminiscent of the base of a pyramid. The reservoir functioned as a piece of city infrastructure; the fifteen metre tall structure contained twenty million gallons of fresh drinking water. It was also a public space; a constructed rectangular lake in the city, the walls encircling the reservoir were topped by a promenade, with views to the city and the water below.

In providing the basic functional requirements for its population, as demonstrated in the construction of the street grid and water systems, New York could soon progress and develop additional services. The scale and ambition of these infrastructure projects are present throughout the transformation of New York from a colonial settlement to a world-class city. The Croton distributing reservoir was decommissioned only forty years after its construction, the needs of the city far surpassing its capacity. But in its place now stands the New York Public Library, the central building of a system with hundreds of branches across Manhattan, the Bronx and Staten Island, dedicated to distributing not water, but knowledge.

As New York continued to prosper, the historic centre became crowded with warehouses, offices, and shipping agents, “the tide of fashion began to set steadily northward.”<sup>8</sup> Fifth Avenue, from Washington Square through Central Park, became one of the most fashionable addresses in the city during the gilded age, from about 1870 through the end of the century. Some of the wealthiest New Yorkers built mansions and hotels along 5th Avenue, including those built along “Vanderbilt Row” from 50th to 59th Street and the Waldorf Astoria Hotel at 34th Street.

When a group of influential New Yorkers needed a site for a Crystal Palace exhibition hall to rival that of Joseph Paxton’s Crystal Palace from London’s Great Exhibition in 1851, they chose the four acres beside the Croton Distributing Reservoir. Opened in 1853, for five years this building drew thousands of visitors daily from across the country. Described by a young Samuel Clemens as a “perfect fairy palace—beautiful beyond description,”<sup>9</sup> New York’s Crystal Palace was a glass and wrought iron structure, with the highest dome in the country at the time, showcasing the technical advancements of the age.

The population shift northwards, started by the wealthy during the gilded age continuing through the next century with the establishment of the transit system, reoriented the city. 42nd Street was no longer the age of the city, but rather central, defining “Midtown.” The Crystal Palace marked this area as a locus within the fabric of the City of New York, though it only stood five years before a fire literally melted the entire building to the ground. By then the block between 5th and 6th Avenue, between 40th and 42nd Street—which remained the property of the city—had been established as a gathering place and a landmark in New York City. Today, the New York Public Library benefits tremendously from this central location.

## NOTES

1. Eric Homberger, *The Historical Atlas of New York City: a Visual Celebration of Nearly 400 Years of New York City's History* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1994), 50-1.
2. Hilary Ballon, ed., *The Greatest Grid: The Master Plan of Manhattan 1811-2011* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 33.
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4. Sanderson, *Mannahatta*, 77.
5. Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace, *Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999) 450.
6. Burrows and Wallace, *Gotham*, 589-98.
7. Gerard T. Koeppe, *Water for Gotham: A History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000) 161.
8. Homberger, *Historical Atlas*, 90.
9. Burrows and Wallace, *Gotham*, 670.

*With eight thousand dollars I can buy eighty lots above Canal Street. By the time your lot is worth twelve thousand dollars, my eighty lots will be worth eighty thousand.*

—JOHN JACOB ASTOR  
THE RICH MEN OF THE WORLD, AND HOW THEY GAINED THEIR WEALTH, 45.

## FOUNDERS

Born in 1763, John Jacob Astor immigrated to the United States in 1784, making his living trading furs. He established himself as a key figure in international trade in the following decades, with routes between New York, China and Europe. He became a landholder in New York City, with property to the North of the city. Although vocal in his concern about the subdivision of property and the assessment of fees, Astor saw the potential that lay in the growth of the city; he foresaw that previously undeveloped land would continue to increase in value as the system of roadways was developed. After purchasing some property from Astor near Wall Street in 1810, the new owner remarked that this property near the centre of town would just increase in value; its eight thousand dollar worth would foreseeably double in a few years. To this Astor responded, “but now you will see what I will do with this money. With eight thousand dollars I can buy eighty lots above Canal Street. By the time your lot is worth twelve thousand dollars, my eighty lots will be worth eighty thousand.”<sup>1</sup> This foresight proved true. First through trade, then real estate speculation, Astor became one of the richest men in the United States.

In the years before his death, John Jacob Astor began looking for ways to leave a legacy in the city he had helped to build. In 1838, he met Joseph Green Cogswell, a teacher visiting the city from North Carolina. In a letter written to his friend, Cogswell explains what he had been doing in New York City.

Early in January Mr. Astor consulted me about an appropriation of some three or four hundred thousand dollars, which he intended to leave for

public purposes, and I urged him to give it for a library, which I finally brought him to agree to do, and I have been at work ever since, settling all the points which have arisen in the progress of the affair. It is now so nearly arranged that he has promised me to sign the last paper to-day... Had I not foreseen that this object would never have been effected unless someone had been at the old gentleman's elbow, to push him on, I should have left New York long since. It is not made public at present, but I think it will be in a week or two. In the mean while, say nothing about it.<sup>2</sup>

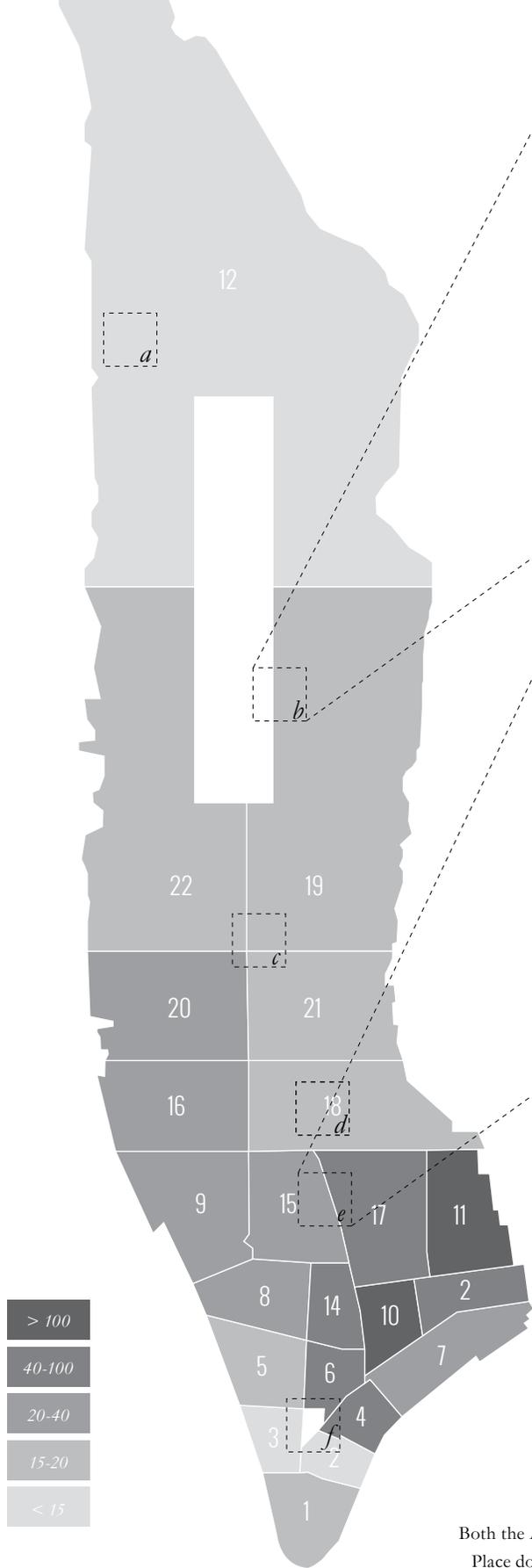
Cogswell could not convince Astor to begin construction of the library while he was still alive, and he so stayed on as Astor's secretary for the next several years, continuing to discuss plans for the library. John Jacob Astor, the wealthiest man in North America, died in March 1848. The bulk of his fortune went to his second son, William Backhouse Astor Sr., \$25,000 went to the German Society of the City of New York, he left \$50,000 for a poorhouse and orphanage in his hometown of Waldorf, Germany, and \$400,000, his largest philanthropic donation, was left for the establishment of a public library in New York City.

The Astor Library was established as a research institution, with a collection that included many works not otherwise accessible to American citizens. Cogswell's wrote in an 1854 report to the trustees:

It is important that the character of this institution should be fixed at the beginning. Every measure in connexion with it has been taken on the ground of its being a library for reference and consultation, and not a lending one or a miscalled popular one. It is equally free to the poorest and to the wealthiest for the use to which it is adapted.<sup>3</sup>

With the nature of the library established, Cogswell made several book-buying trips to Europe. He purchased rarities and collections for the Astor library. His acquisitions include everything from a copy of Shakespeare's first folio purchased on his first trip in 1849, to a mathematical library of three thousand volumes purchased in Berlin in 1852. With such a rarified research collection, it was fixed from the beginning that books were not to leave the library building.

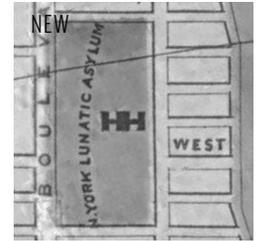
As the board of trustees of the Astor Library were determining the direction of that institution, James Lenox, the second of the New York



LENOX LIBRARY  
5th AVE at EAST 70th ST



ASTOR LIBRARY  
ASTOR PLACE



*a* Columbia University  
Morningside Heights

*b* Lenox Library  
5th Ave at East 70th St



*c* Croton Distributing Reservoir  
5th Ave at 42nd St



*d* Tilden Property  
15 Grammery Park South

*e* Astor Library  
Astor Place



*f* City Hall  
Broadway & Chatham

ASTOR, LENOX AND TILDEN FOUNDATION LOCATIONS | FIGURE 038

Both the Astor and Lenox Libraries were constructed on land owned by their founders, at Astor Place downtown and on 5th Avenue, across from Central Park uptown respectively. These and other sites were considered thoroughly when choosing the location for the consolidated library.

Public Library founders, was creating the foundation for his library. Lenox was born in 1800 and studied law at Columbia and Princeton. His father died in 1826 leaving both his wealth and import business to his son. Lenox ran the business for several more years, retiring in 1840 to concentrate on his passion: rare books. An exacting collector he purchased every possible edition of John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* and all known editions of Milton, working with several London booksellers to develop his collection. In 1847, he paid 500 British pounds sterling at a Sotheby's Auction for a copy of the Gutenberg Bible, the first to be brought to North America. The fourth richest man in New York at the time of Astor's death, Lenox did not catalogue or sort his collection, but stored his books in piles in the otherwise empty rooms of his estate. When scholars were interested in accessing a particular volume, he would deliver the book to the Astor Library where the librarians would monitor its use.

James Lenox decided to create a purpose built library where the public—specifically serious researchers—would have access to the collection in a controlled setting. His library would also house a permanent art collection. A portion of the building opened while still under construction in January 1877, though at that time only the rooms containing statuary and paintings were available to the public. There were several delays in opening the library itself. The first was the requirement of actually cataloguing the entire collection, which now consisted not only of the books donated by Lenox, but the collections of several other prominent New Yorkers. The second major difficulty was determining exactly who should be allowed to access the books. The Act of Incorporation of the Lenox Library mandated that “the library shall be accessible at all reasonable hours during the day, for general use, free of expense to persons resorting thereto, subject only to such control and regulations as the Trustees, from time to time, may exercise and establish for general convenience.”<sup>4</sup> Though the general intention was to establish free public use of the collection, the Trustees were given the power to regulate that usage. One of their main concerns was that, given the rarity and delicate nature of the collection, use would need to be both limited and

carefully monitored to ensure the collection's preservation. The precedent for the regulation of use of the collection was not the Astor Library or the Library of Congress, but rather the Reading Room of the British Museum. To use that library, potential readers had to make a request in writing to the principal librarian stating they had met three qualifications: they were at least twenty-one years old, had a specific purpose in accessing the material, and were respectable. Additionally, potential British Museum readers had to either provide a reference letter, or else the contact information of a reference. Once approved, the reader received a non-transferable ticket. Following this model, the Lenox Library hours and borrowing system were finally set in December 1883, thirteen years after the incorporation of the Library.

While the Astor and Lenox Libraries were free for public use, the Astor Library had notably poor opening hours and the arduous application process and opening delays of the Lenox Library were not seen favourably. They both had developed elitist reputations and were not seen to be serving the needs of the city. The politicians who could have publicly funded a library initiative were more interested in buying votes and wielding power than investing in the public good; this was the Gilded Age, named by Mark Twain to describe the outer lustre and inner turmoil of the time.

The sheer momentum of economic and industrial, social and political change generated municipal problems of housing and welfare, sanitation and health, employment, transportation, and law enforcement that overwhelmed obsolete city governments and set the stage for the rise of the boss and the city machine.<sup>5</sup>

In New York City, the "Tweed Ring", led by William Marcy Tweed or "the Boss", created an alternative system for keeping the city in line; they worked outside the law to deal with the friction caused by rapid growth. By 1868, Tweed held several public offices, most likely won through nefarious means: state senator, school commissioner, deputy street commissioner, president of the board of supervisors, chairman of the Democratic central committee of New York County, and grand sachem of Tammany Hall.

Tammany Hall, the Irish-American democratic stronghold that maintained power in the city between the end of the Civil War and 1871, became synonymous with government corruption, especially evident in the actions of the Tweed Ring. In just one example, embezzlement of public funds ballooned the construction cost of the New York Courthouse from \$250 thousand to \$13 million--twice the cost of Alaska.

To counter the fraud of the Tweed Ring a faction split in the New York Democratic Party. The group opposing Tweed power, called Young Democracy, was directed by Samuel Tilden. Because of his experience a corporate lawyer educated at Yale and New York University, Tilden was able to find legal proof of corruption within the Tweed Ring. As New York State Governor (1875-6) Tilden also exposed the corruption of the "Canal Ring," a group of contractors and their political collaborators who systematically overcharged for repairs to the Erie Canal. By finding irrefutable evidence and appealing directly to the citizens of the state, Tilden leveraged popular opinion over the strength of the Ring. In 1876, Tilden was the Democratic candidate for President. Ultimately, he lost to Rutherford B. Hayes by one Electoral College vote, despite winning 51% of the popular vote, in what was a heavily disputed election.

A life-long bachelor, Tilden made a great deal of money as a lawyer, amassing a six million dollar fortune at the time of his death. In his will, Tilden left the majority of his fortune to fund "an institution to be known as the Tilden Trust, with capacity to establish and maintain a free library and reading room in the city of New York, and to promote such scientific and educational objects as my Executors and Trustees may more particularly designate."<sup>6</sup> On the event of his death the Tilden Trust was established, separate from the politics of the city and run by men Tilden knew and trusted. Ironically, given Tilden's legal reputation, the clause in his will establishing the Trust was successfully contested by his next of kin. His fortune was redistributed among relatives, with no funding directed to the Trust. A sensational news story, the loss of the money for the library was felt by the public to be a miscarriage of Tilden's wishes and a great blow

to the city of New York. As the case was playing out in court, members of the Trust were preparing for the worst outcome by secretly negotiating with several of Tilden's heirs. Only Laura Pelton Hazard, granddaughter and sole heir to Tilden's sister, decided to follow the spirit of her Great Uncle's wishes. When the case was finally settled, Hazard sold her interest to the Tilden Trust. The final amount at the Trustees disposal to establish a library was just over two million dollars, a much smaller sum than the 5.5 million dollars originally intended by Tilden.

The ramifications of this outcome were significant; two million dollars was not enough money to set up a successful institution of the scale envisioned by the Tilden Trust. Trustee John Bigelow, who would later become the first president of the New York Public Library issued this call for a greater institution in the September 1892 edition of Scribner's Magazine

New York has already as many small incomplete, and struggling libraries as are needed. Would it not be a folly to add to their number? What the city now wants is a library that shall possess sufficient vital force to become, reasonably soon, a repair from students from all parts of the world; to constitute an attraction to the literary and contemplative classes, fitly corresponding with the incomparable attractions which she has always held out to men of affairs; to the organizers of the material industries and the interests of the nation.<sup>7</sup>

In order to fulfill Tilden's bequest, the Trust was required to look at other options, including working directly with the city or consolidating with one of the other libraries already established in the city. The matter was debated in both the press and the library community in New York, with the librarians of the various systems each giving their opinions about what approach to take. There were two propositions in the discussion; whether to create a centrally located public reference library or to establish a series of smaller circulating libraries, with each participant championing their own view of exactly what the future library should be.

Several possible alliances were introduced from a variety of organizations: Columbia University, newly relocated to Morningside Heights, the University of the City of New York--Tilden's alma mater,

the Scientific Alliance, the Free Circulating Library and the Lenox Library. At the same time, a range of possible locations for the new library were proposed. Bigelow preferred a purpose built library, hopefully paid for by the city at the now obsolete Croton Reservoir site. Other possibilities included retrofitting Tilden's city property at 15 Gramercy Park South, or the City Hall itself. This changed when a chance dinner party brought together Lewis Ledyard, a Tilden Trustee, and John L. Cadwalader, a trustee for the Astor Library. The Astor Library, always thought to be disinterested in a union that would in any way compromise the prominence of the Astor name, was found to actually be quite amenable to the possibility of consolidation. Negotiations with William Waldorf Astor and the Trustees took place as quickly and with as much discretion as possible to avoid news of the union being leaked to the press prematurely. Even so, members of the Lenox Library heard of the talks and declared their interest in a possible agreement between the three institutions.

All three institutions decided to move forward with the difficult process of consolidating the Astor Library, Lenox Library and Tilden Trust, to develop a central reading room and research library. Additional plans to work directly with the Free Circulating Libraries in the future were also discussed. There was a great deal of inner turmoil about the direction of the institution, specifically about the best site for the consolidated library, as well as debate in the press about the avenues not taken. The formal consolidation was completed on May 23, 1895 as the New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.

The New York Public Library developed circulating libraries a few years after the initial consolidation. A branch library system developed through a second consolidation with the Free Circulating Library, generous donations from Andrew Carnegie and additional funding from the City of New York. But the donations of Astor, Lenox and Tilden set the tone for the world-class research institution the New York Public Library has become. While each founder shared a common goal of creating a public library, the particular composition of collection, reputation and fortune directed

the development of the consolidated library. The comprehensive research collections of the Astor and Lenox libraries led to the initial research driven focus of the library. So many rarities and important works could not become part of a circulating collection. The board members who served to direct the Astor and Lenox libraries and Tilden trust were attracted by the reputations established by the founders, whether the prestige of Astor, or the particular political stance of Tilden. The reputations could also be limiting; the Astor and Lenox libraries were portrayed as elitist by the popular press. Meanwhile, the amount of money donated set limitations on the growth of each institution, leading them to work together, achieving more as a consolidated institution than as individual organizations. These attributes are all a part of the New York Public Library today, embodied in the function and appearance of the Central Building.

## NOTES

1. *The Rich Men of the World, and how They Gained Their Wealth: Exhibiting a Variety of Examples of Practical Business Success, Under Various Circumstances, Successful Speculations, Etc., Etc. With Many Valuable Examples for Every Young Man*, (New York: The American News Co., 1867), 45.
2. Harry Miller Lydenberg, *History of the New York Public Library: Astor Lenox and Tilden Foundations*, (New York: The New York Public Library, 1923), 3.
3. *Ibid.*, 33.
4. *Ibid.*, 108.
5. Sean Dennis Cashman, *America in the Gilded Age: From the Death of Lincoln to the Rise of Theodore Roosevelt*, 2nd ed., (New York: New York University Press, 1984), 133.
6. Lydenberg, *New York Public Library*, 130.
7. *Ibid.*, 146.

*There can be no doubt that in the three centuries between 1500 and 1800 not nearly as many technical changes took place as in the decades between 1800 and 1890. Nor was the process completed by that time.*

—HELLMUT LEHMANN-HAUPT  
THE BOOK IN AMERICA, 146

## PUBLISHING

The book publishing process encompasses multiple industries within a varied community: from production to distribution, from writers to readers. Before the 19th century, very little had changed about the publishing process since the perfection of the hand printing press, a few decades after Gutenberg's initial invention. The technology remained largely unchanged for approximately three centuries with the craft of printing and binding books only practiced by skilled artisans.

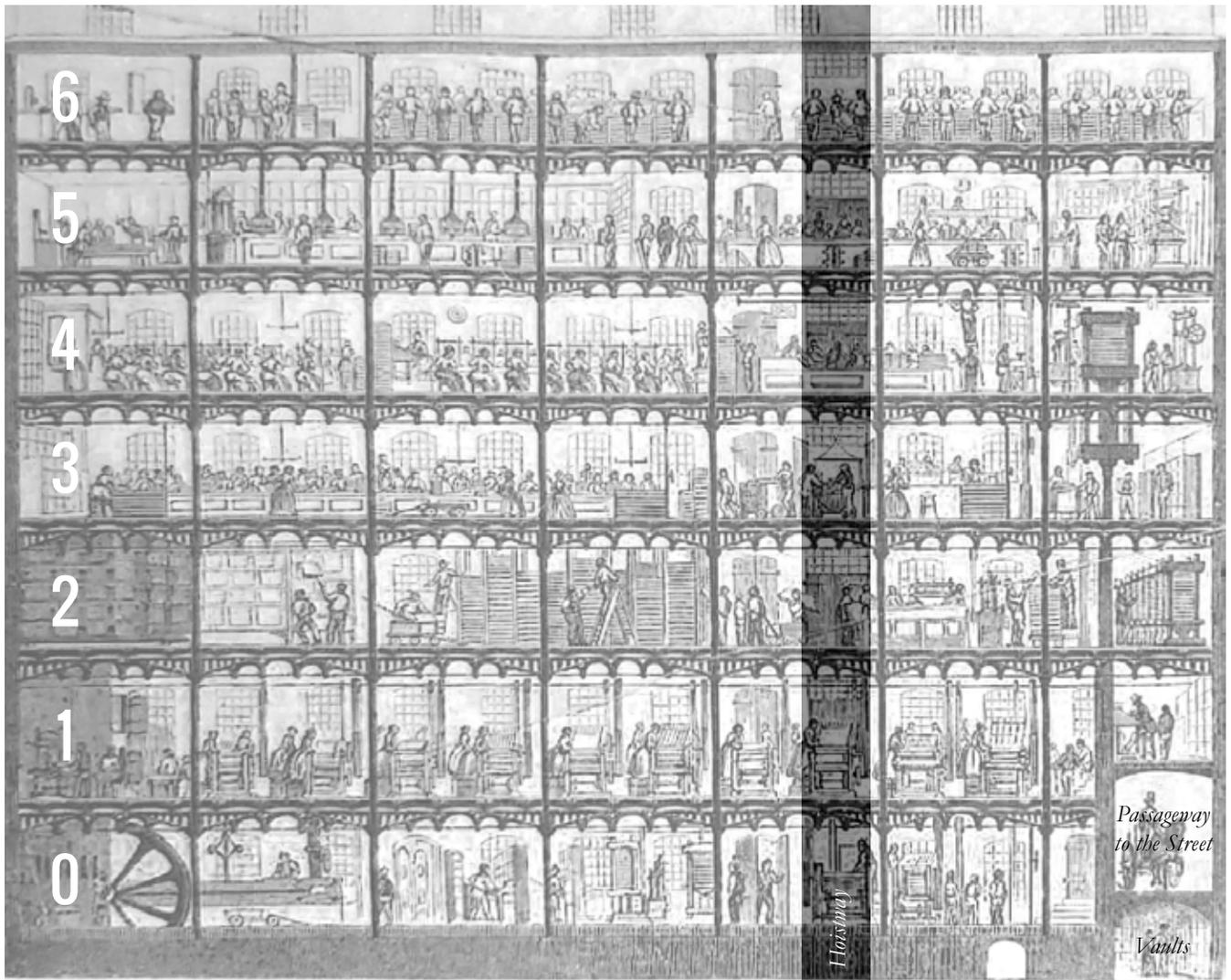
Book production itself was a local business; most often printers would sell their books directly to patrons, often from a space at the front of their workshop. Specialized distribution of titles did exist through book dealers, and in the United States many books had to be imported from overseas. The scarcity of books increased their value; only specific segments of the population could afford to purchase books and build personal libraries.

However, the 19th century was filled with the spirit of industrial invention and revolution. The invention of the steam engine, electric light and the telephone were all documented in the newly founded weekly magazine, *Scientific American*, and featured in exhibitions like the *Exhibition of the Industry of All Nations* in New York City's Crystal Palace in 1853. The mechanics surrounding book production changed incrementally. The original flat-bed press became power driven, first by horse—literally driven by horses walking around a track—and eventually, more effectively by steam. The flat-bed press was eventually superseded by a cylinder press, which could print more fluidly and mechanized the application of ink, a process that had previously been done by hand.<sup>1</sup>

In concert with these developments in the printing press were changes to the manufacture of paper. In 1830, Pheleps and Spofford, a paper manufacturing company from Connecticut, constructed a machine that could “take in pulp at one end of the machine, make the paper, dry it, cut it into sheets of the desired size and turn it out ready for finishing or packaging at the other end of the machine.”<sup>2</sup> Additional inventions like the wire stitcher and book sewer also dramatically changed the printing process, leading to a more economical method of manufacturing books.

In the United States, the publishing industry gradually began to centralize as it grew. Though new presses were established across the country, often in tandem with settlement, New York City was the center. This was in large part due to its location in relation to waterways; English novels would arrive at the city’s ocean port before being sent by river to the interior of the country.<sup>3</sup> The New York publishing industry, like other trade enterprises, benefited from the opening of the Erie Canal and its connection to the interior. Better links with the rest of the country meant books—those printed in the U.S. and those imported from abroad—could be more easily transported. Ideas and tastes were also transmitted back to New York along the same lines, helping develop the next cycle of printed material distributed among the States.

Harper and Brothers, located in New York and founded in 1817 as a printing business, began to rethink, not just the machines involved in the production of books, but the entire working process at their printing and binding facility. In 1853, their sixteen building enterprise was destroyed by fire. When rebuilding, they concentrated their resources on two buildings. The first held the accounting department, all of the supplies and completed product. The second held the entire manufacturing facility. The book making process was organized sequentially from the basement to the 6th floor, from the raw material to the bindery, with efficient transfers of material at each stage of the process.<sup>4</sup> This systematic way of thinking about the management of the book production process would only intensify following this time period.



1855 Factory Section | New York

- 6 **COMPOSING ROOM**  
*Standard and Electrotypes composition*  
*Access to skylights dictated location*
- 5 **FINISHING ROOM**  
*Gold tooling*  
*Standing press, for forth and final press of completed book*
- 4 **SEWING | STICHING ROOM**  
*Stitching machines, sawing machine*
- 3 **FOLDING ROOM**  
*2 storey hydrolic press*  
*Used to press folded sheets*
- 2 **DRYING + PRESS ROOM**  
*Heated drying room, stacks ready for folding*  
*Hydrolic press*
- 1 **THE GREAT PRESS ROOM**  
*Steam-powered presses, each 5 tons*  
*Structural bays designed to each hold 2 presses*
- 0 **BASEMENT**  
*Engine provides power to the building*  
*Paper brought in and pressed before moving upstairs*



1855 Franklin Street Elevation | New York

HARPER & BROTHERS' PUBLISHING | FIGURE 039

Built after an 1853 fire destroyed their previous location, the warehouse and factory buildings are connected by a courtyard containing a hoistway. The factory layout reflect's the process, minimizing unnecessary movements between tasks, starting in the basement and working up.

The character of the United States also changed immensely during the 19th century. In 1789 the country consisted of a small band of thirteen former colonies along the eastern seaboard. By the end of the century, the United States stretched from east coast to west coast, having overcome a bitter civil war, purchased, claimed, and settled the remaining land. It had literally become the United States of America. Both participating and documenting the whole process was the press.

In all the frontiers of space and of the mind, the printer takes his place. He, too, broke ground and cleared the wilderness. He too built schools and planted seed, laid the railroad tracks and built the cities. He, too, advanced the reaches of a nation's mind. With plowman and hunter, with merchant and trapper, he made the nation's history. But, above and beyond those others, he recorded that history as well.<sup>5</sup>

By the end of the century, the nature of the book had completely changed. While still the same basic physical form, the books being published were printed in substantially greater quantities for a fraction of the price. The industrialization of bookmaking more people had access to books. Both Cogswell, the founding librarian at the Astor Library, and Lenox purchased books for their respective collections from the continent, either in person during trips to Europe to attend specific book auctions or from dealers in London or Paris. Books at this point in the first half of the century were still valued because of their scarcity; very few were produced and even fewer were shipped to the United States. At the end of the century, while this means of accessing books was still practiced, it was no longer necessary given the now robust nature of American publishing. The printed documentation of the events of the country, access to the news of the day, had also gained in importance to the majority of New Yorkers, though a central location was needed to access all of this material.

## NOTES

1. Hellmut Lehmann-Haupt, Lawrence C Wroth, and Rollo G. Silver, *The Book in America: A History of the Making and Selling of Books in the United States*, 2nd ed. (New York: R.R. Bowker Company, 1952) 77.
2. *Ibid.*, 87.
3. William Charvat, *Literary Publishing in America, 1790-1850*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1959), 22.
4. Lehmann-Haupt, *Book in America*, 71.
5. Madeleine B Stern, *Imprints on History*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1956), 2.

*The time was when a library was very like a museum, and a librarian was a mouser in musty books, and visitors looked with curious eyes at ancient tomes and manuscripts. The time is when a library is a school, and the librarian is in the highest ensue a teacher and the visitor is a reader among the books as a workman among his tools.*

—MELVILLE DEWEY  
"The Profession" *American Library Journal*,

## LIBRARIES

Thomas Hamilton, a British author traveling through America in 1833 had this to say about the state of libraries in the country in his book *Men and Manners in America*:

There is at this moment nothing in the United States worthy of the name of a library.... At present an American might study every book within the limits of the Union, and still be regarded in many parts of Europe ... as a man comparatively ignorant. And why does a great nation thus voluntarily continue in a state of intellectual destitution so anomalous and humiliating? ... Is it poverty, or is it ignorance...? I should be most happy to believe the former.<sup>1</sup>

By 1833, the United States had a library history dating back two centuries; Harvard's library—a collection of 329 titles—was bequeathed to the college in 1638. But the great American libraries were still being established. The Library of Congress was still located within the capital building having suffered from two fires, including one that burned the entire collection. The library at Harvard had its entire collection of 5,000 volumes destroyed in 1764, and after the library was rebuilt the facilities were not easily accessible, even to the students who had right of access.

In comparison, La Bibliotheque Nationale located in Paris had a history dating back centuries. It had begun as the Bibliotheque du Roi, the personal collection of the Kings of France dating from the reign of Louis XI, 1461-1483.<sup>2</sup> The British Museum Library was also years ahead of its American

counterparts. Founded on several personal collections, both older and much larger than the collections in America, the British Museum Library also benefited from books purchased and received by English Royalty.

These libraries endeavored to create universal collections, located in important, modern structures of prominence. The construction of Henri Labrousse's *Bibliothèque Nationale* on Rue de Richelieu in Paris from 1854 to 1875, and the Reading Room in the Great Court of the British Museum in 1857 defined the standard for research libraries, both served as precedents for the Jefferson Building of the Library of Congress in Washington DC, completed in 1897. According to Kenneth Carpenter, the Assistant Director for Research and Resources at Harvard University Library, "the goal of the universal library was not unique to Americans... but it seemed to have a different meaning here than in other countries. Focused on a universal American library it seemingly relates to a need to foster a sense of national identity, even to provide antiquity in an era in which age legitimized."<sup>3</sup> Several American cities also constructed new central library buildings at the end of the 19th century; the Chicago Public Library and the Boston Public Library each became part of the narrative, establishing the importance of the library to their city's reputation and the American identity.

At the same time, a new type of library emerged, based on a new way of storing book collections of ever increasing size. Book storage had evolved greatly in relation to the number of books that needed to be stored. During the Middle Ages, books were kept in locked trunks, recesses or armirium (a type of upright chest with purpose built shelves on which bound manuscripts were laid horizontally.) Books were considered precious items: scarce, valuable, and closely protected. As the number of books and the need for frequent access grew, books were eventually stored chained to lecterns where they could be read as needed. As the number of books continued to grow so did the number of lecterns, often resulting in a consistent arrangement, lecterns placed back to back between windows for best access to light. Shelves were then added above and below the reading

surface, with the lectern eventually disappearing altogether. Book presses, (horizontal wooden shelves with vertical structure at either end, so called because of their resemblance to the presses used to bind books) were arranged either perpendicular to the exterior walls like stalls, flush around the perimeter of the room, or both. Books could be freely accessed by the user, and taken back to a desk or table to be read. The next stage in the evolution of book storage was to extend the height of the shelves past the point where they could be reached without assistance, requiring a gallery or ladder for access. In the Bibliotheque Sainte-Genevieve, books were stored in a different location than the reader for the first time, creating a closed system. This same idea—separating books from the readers in order to create optimal storage conditions—was used in the British Museum Library and eventually in the Library of Congress, where a series of highly engineered book stacks housed the collection.

With an increase in the number of books available, the democratization of library access, and the evolution of a closed book stack system that eliminated browsing, it became increasingly important for libraries to have an effective catalogue and referencing system. Books can be organized and placed on the shelves many different ways: alphabetically, in order of the date they were acquired, or according to an organizational system that attempted to classify their contents by subject. Books in many of the old alcove or stall libraries were found using a shelf list, located on the end of the book press, listing all of the titles contained in that press with a fixed order. The Library of Congress based their shelving locations on that of Thomas Jefferson, whose personal collection formed the basis of that Library after the original collection was destroyed in the Burning of Washington in 1814. Jefferson used Lord Francis Bacon's division of knowledge to arrange the collection by subject, the basis for the Library of Congress Classification system that is used by that library and many other research libraries today. This is a relative system, with the flexibility to add volumes in the correct location as they were acquired.

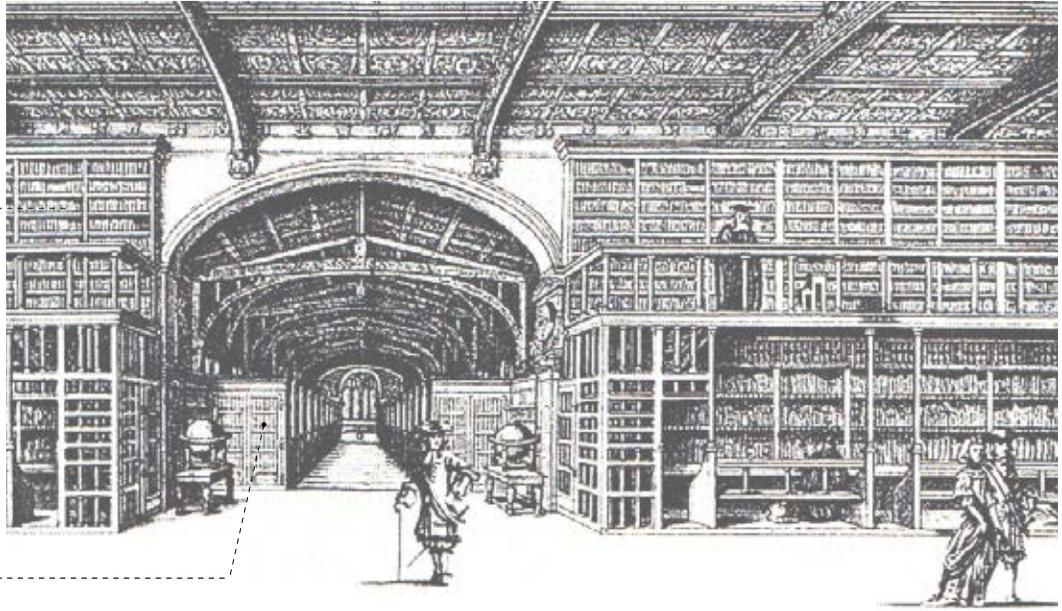
Once the books were on the shelves, users needed some way of locating the one they needed. Systems were developed to reference the book in a fixed location in the library or a location relative to the books on either side. Manuscript catalogues or shelf lists were not uncommon, with new entries written as books were added to the collection. The biggest research libraries also published printed catalogues, which could be compiled several different ways. Charles Cutter, who worked twenty-five years as the head librarian at the Boston Athenaeum, published *Rules for a Printed Dictionary Catalogue* in 1876 that would assist the reader in finding the book they were looking for if they knew the author, title or subject.

The year 1876 was pivotal to the development of libraries in America for many other reasons. In this year, the American Library Association (ALA) was founded during the Centenary Exhibition in Philadelphia—the longest serving professional library association in the world. Melville Dewey is known primarily for the classification system he created that bears his name, which was first publicly explained in 1876. Dewey also worked to found the ALA and pushed for the recognition of librarianship as a profession. In an article published in the very first edition of the *American Library Journal*, Dewey outlines his argument as follows:

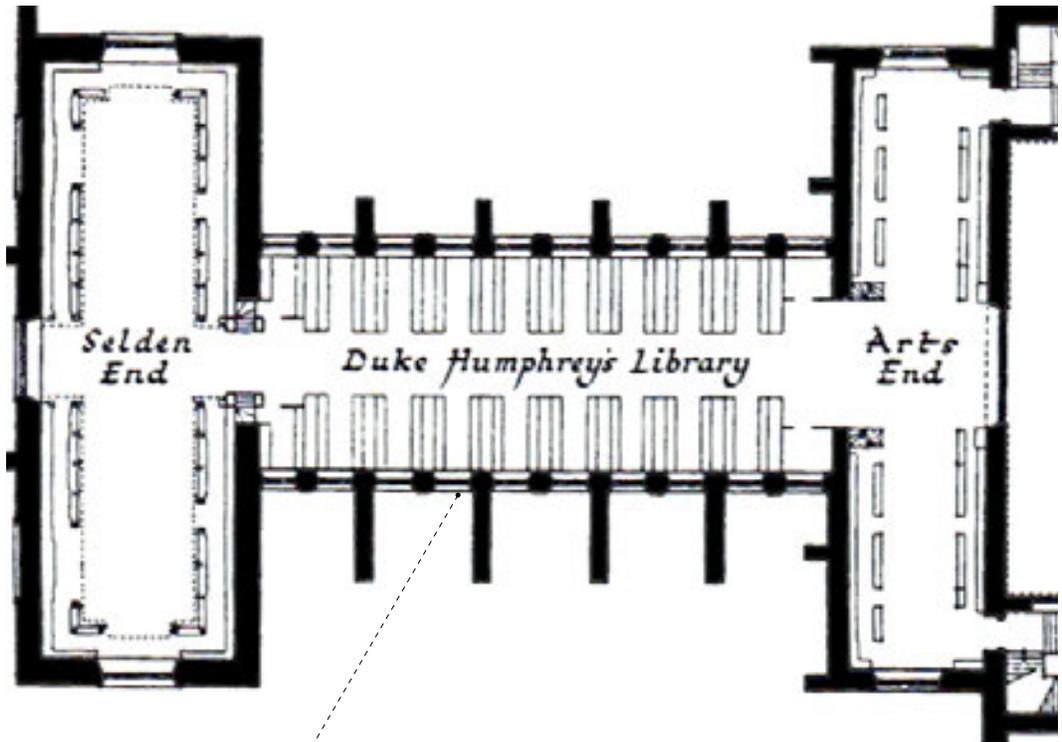
The time *was* when a library was very like a museum, and a librarian was a mouser in musty books, and visitors looked with curious eyes at ancient tomes and manuscripts. The time *is* when a library is a school, and the librarian is in the highest sense a teacher and the visitor is a reader among the books as a workman among his tools. Will any man deny to the high calling of such a librarianship the title of profession.<sup>4</sup>

Dewey summarizes the contemporary trends and changes in libraries resulting from the new abundance of printed material and the development of a middle class interested in universal education. He concludes that librarianship plays an important enough role to merit a professional title. The years following the Industrial Revolution led to the development of several new types of libraries, and a great push in library building in both Europe and North America. Access to information was now being seen

Wall presses with mezzanine access.



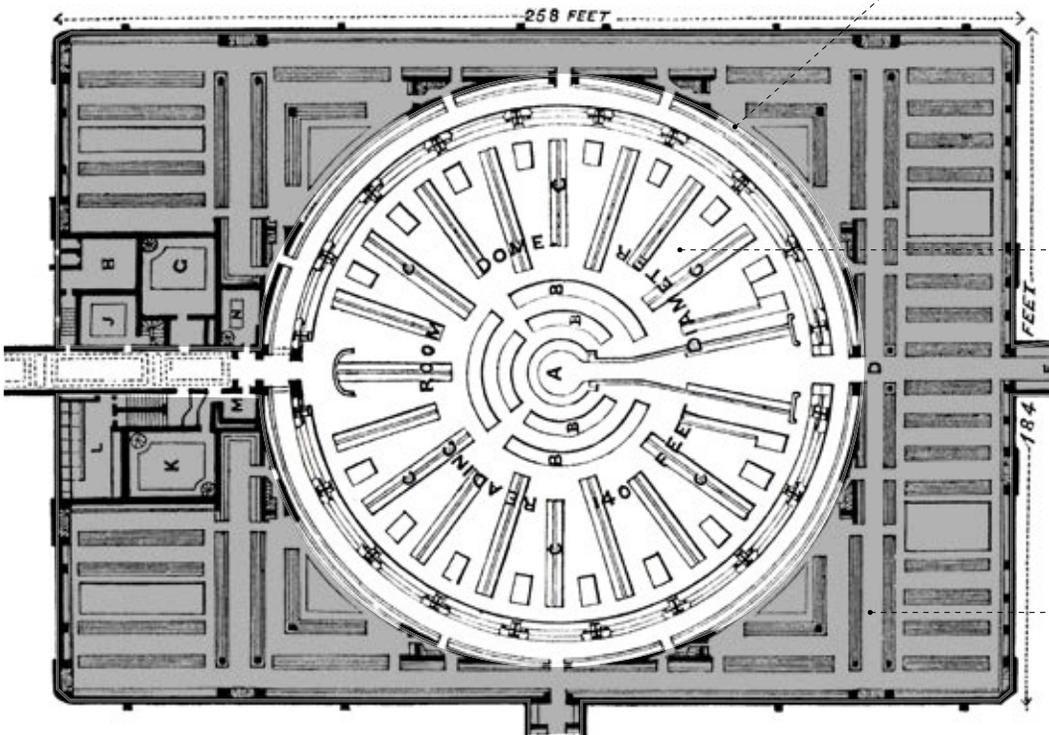
Alcove book press system beyond.



Windows aligned with the alcove book presses in the slightly older Duke Humphrey Library.



*Windows located above the mezzanine levels and the stacks located beyond the reading room.*



*Open reference on wall presses with two mezzanine levels.*

*Public reading room.*

*Closed bookstacks.*

LIBRARY SHELVING TYPOLOGY AND THE INTRODUCTION OF THE READING ROOM | FIGURE 040

The Bodleian Library demonstrates two book press arrangements, the alcove style with perpendicular presses, and a wall presses system with mezzanine levels. The Library at the British Museum, separate the reader from the stacks, using a central reading room .

as a public right. Initiatives like the 1849 Parliamentary Select Committee on Public Libraries raised awareness of the state of libraries in the United Kingdom, an awareness that was passed on to library enthusiasts in the United States.<sup>5</sup> In 1850, the United Kingdom passed the Public Library Act, guaranteeing free access to information and literature in that county.

In the United States in 1850, Boston was the first to establish a tax-funded public library system. The greatest source of debate at the time in Boston was not whether such an institution should be funded by taxes but rather the nature of the collection. Would the library develop a research collection, focused solely on scholarly material? Or create a collection of popular literature, including novels and plays, available for circulation? The collecting policy “has been described as a compromise between ‘the best books’ and ‘the best that the people will read’”<sup>6</sup>

The history of libraries in New York City also revolves around the tension between collecting for research or for circulation, free access to libraries and by extension the extensive class struggles in the city. The libraries founded by Astor and Lenox strove to create collections of use to researchers, focused on rare books that researchers would not otherwise be able to access. Their collections, while comprehensive, did not include the most popular novels because these were not considered worthwhile from a scholastic perspective. Though ostensibly free to all, these libraries were seen as closed fortresses, with incredibly limited access and utility. A second library type in the city at the time, social libraries were based on either the investment of shareholders or set subscription fees; they relied on continued patronage in order to run successfully. The collections at these libraries included books that their fee-paying subscribers were interested in, that could be borrowed for set amounts of time. These libraries often had organizational affiliations, like the Mercantile Library or Apprentices’ Library. In an attempt to address the needs currently overlooked by both the research libraries and social libraries, in 1879 a dedicated group of women created the New York Free Circulating Library, giving the poor in the city

free access to books that could be borrowed. Originally operating out of Grace Church as a way to provide girls with access to reading material, the Free Circulating Library opened branches throughout the city in a series of smaller storefronts rather than a large centralized library building, thus encouraging neighborhood accessibility over grand architectural statements. While the wealthy could afford to purchase books or pay the cost of a subscription library, there were very few ways for the poor to access books before the creation of the Free Circulating Library.

The consolidated New York Public Library, a partnership run by the same trustees as the Astor and Lenox Libraries and Tilden Trust, began as a reflection of those institutions. The board, composed of only white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant men, the majority of whom were lawyers with great personal fortunes, decided the direction of the library. Just as the consolidation agreement with the Astor Library had been initiated through social connections, so too was the appointment of Dr. John Shaw Billings as Library Director.

Billings, a senior surgeon and medical inspector during the Civil War, subsequently became Director of the Library of the Surgeon General's Office. The library that he helped to create became the core of the United States National Library of Medicine, now the largest medical library in the world. Consisting of about two thousand volumes when Billings became director, the library was moved to a new location in Ford's Theatre, famous as the location of President Lincoln's assassination two years later. The retrofit of the building was led by Thomas Lincoln Casey, Chief of Engineers for the United States Army Corps of Engineers, whose other works included the Washington Monument and the Library of Congress, Jefferson Building.<sup>7</sup> Billings other accomplishments included creating the *Index Catalogue of the Surgeon General's Office*, a comprehensive catalogue of the collection, and the *Index Medicus*, a monthly periodical index to all medical articles published until 2004. These accomplishments at the Surgeon General's library would arm him with the tools needed to oversee the creation of the New York Public Library.

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*Ordinarily the stack is a self-supporting structure surrounded by masonry walls... However, when diagonal bracing is used, the stack can be made an entirely independent structure and may support curtain walls enclosing it.*

—SNEAD & COMPANY  
Library Planning, Bookstacks and Shelving

## STRUCTURE

The Croton Distributing Reservoir and New York's Crystal Palace sat side by side on 42nd Street; two equally scaled buildings representing two fundamentally different construction types. The 7.6 metre thick granite walls of the Reservoir exemplify load-bearing masonry construction while just to the west the Crystal Palace typifies early skeleton framing using iron component pieces. These two structural techniques were both used in the 19th Century, one reaching the end of thousands of years of development, the other an emerging construction technique. The transition from load-bearing masonry construction to iron skeleton construction signaled a drastic change in building, stemming from the materials inherently different physical properties. While the look of buildings would be forever altered, the fundamental differences in structural performance also changed the underlying definition of architecture itself. Centuries of monumental construction transitioned to a search for dematerialization, based on assembling component pieces in an economic, rational way.<sup>1</sup> This instigated a "necessary transformation of building from an empirical and pragmatic craft into a branch of scientific technology."<sup>2</sup>

Load-bearing masonry construction is an ancient structural technique using only forces of compression. It can be explained simply as a pushing force, an example being that of a wall bearing weight directly down on its foundation. The greater the load, the more massive the wall. Architectural historian Sigfried Giedion links the massive nature of load bearing masonry construction to the very definition of architecture.

The concept of architecture is linked to the material of stone. Heaviness and monumentality belong to the nature of this material, just as the clear division between supporting and supported parts does. The great dimensions that stone requires are for us still habitually connected with each building... Architecture is linked to the concept of “monumentality.”<sup>3</sup>

While masonry construction can be traced back through antiquity, early large civic structures in the United States were also defined by monumentality. Load-bearing masonry structures contributed to the country’s national identity.<sup>4</sup> The United States Capitol building is mainly constructed using load-bearing masonry and the *gravitas* of the building is conveyed through its stone façade. A range of masonry vaulting techniques were used to support the main rotunda and main Senate hall, though the dome, completed at a later date, uses the latest advancements in iron technology in its construction. The use of masonry construction in the design of many large civic buildings—town halls, state capitals and courthouses—in the United States was continued through to World War I.<sup>5</sup> The Croton water system, culminating in the distributing reservoir at 42nd Street, used stone construction for its infrastructure. In addition to the monumental distributing reservoir, the High Bridge aqueduct that crossed the Harlem River at 175th Street used load-bearing construction to create its brick arched form.<sup>6</sup>

Giedion marks the change in construction technologies as the point in time when the production of iron for construction is shifted from hand-wrought iron to manufactured rolled iron, the process was being industrialized.<sup>7</sup> The adoption of iron and then steel skeleton construction was gradual, driven by a range of factors. The first full metal skeleton structures borrowed from the principles of heavy timber design, often in newly developed building types including the roofs of train station platforms.

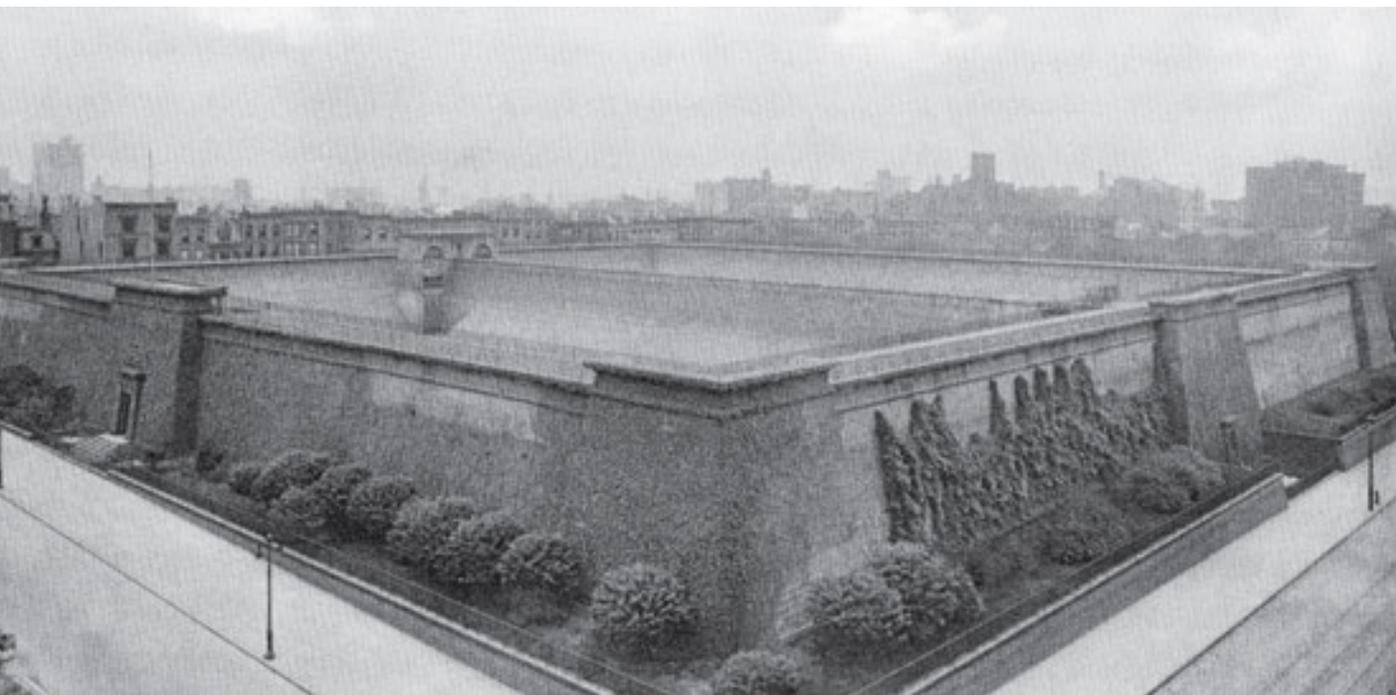
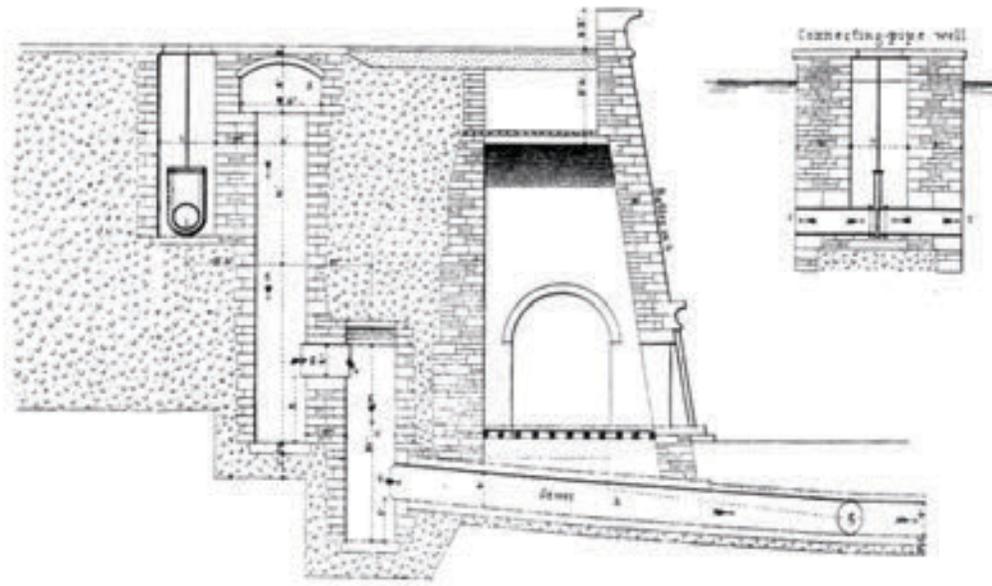
Joseph Paxton’s 1851 exhibition pavilion, the Crystal Palace, brought together several key innovations in the framing process bringing public attention and fame to the new construction process. This led to the

construction of similar pavilions in France, Germany, and the United States.<sup>8</sup> The Crystal Palace on 42nd Street was designed by Danish born architects George Carsten and Charles Gildemeister for the New York Exposition of 1853. Great effort was made to develop fireproof structures, especially following the fires in New York City and Chicago. The owners of warehouse and factory buildings began to search for methods of replacing timber columns and wooden roofs, using cast iron and later steel structures and roofs to fireproof their properties. Finally, as buildings were constructed to greater heights, load-bearing masonry construction was proving a financial liability. In order to increase the height of a building, the width of load-bearing walls was increased proportionally to support the structure of the upper floors. The required structure reduced the amount of usable, and more importantly rentable space for the first few floors. Skeleton framed structure eliminated the need for these wide, space consuming masonry walls.<sup>9</sup> These developments in public acceptance, fireproofing, and financial benefits led to a widespread adoption of skeleton framing, especially for tall buildings.

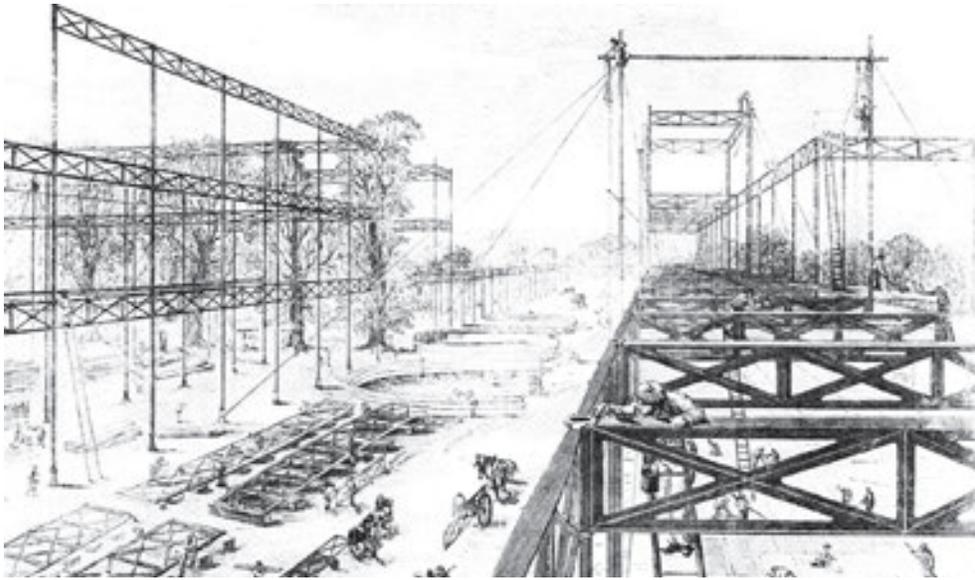
While infrastructure, commercial and industrial buildings readily adopted iron skeleton structures, it took the work of Henri Labrouste to introduce the new structural system to civic buildings, demonstrating that they could be rethought as something other than monumental masonry buildings. In constructing the Bibliotheque Sainte-Genevieve and later the Bibliotheque Nationale, “Labrouste inserts the iron frame into the building like the works into a clock: The massive masonry core encasing the building remains unaffected, but within this masonry core, from the ground floor to the ridge of the roof, is placed an iron system: columns, ceilings, vaults, girders, roof construction.”<sup>10</sup> Using iron in a formal setting had not been done before. It was the act of revealing the iron structure in so prominent a setting that changed the way the material was seen.<sup>11</sup>

Experiments in iron construction went beyond structural requirements to include imitation classical building details that could be made more economical through industrial production. Storefronts, railings,

*Cross section at entry to pipe vaults demonstrating masonry construction.*



1851 Crystal Palace Construction | London



*Cast iron structure could be pre-assembled and erected on site quickly without scaffolding.*

1853 Crystal Palace | New York



79

## MASONRY LOAD-BEARING vs METAL SKELETON FRAME CONSTRUCTION | FIGURE 041

The Croton Distributing Reservoir and the Crystal Palace exhibition hall, each built in the mid 19th century, represent two very different construction types. Both monumentally scaled, they provide the context for the New York Public Library, which would be built on the same site fifty years later.

grates and stairways were often integrated with masonry buildings. Snead & Company Iron Works, based out of Louisville Kentucky, and then Jersey City New Jersey, manufactured a range of iron products including the stairway to the top of the Washington Monument.<sup>12</sup> Snead & Co. became well known for their book stack designs. Their earliest stacks were made for Gore Hall at Harvard University. Those stacks and the stacks at the Athenaeum Library, Boston, and the Army Medical Library, Washington, all used a combination of wood and iron. Working with engineer Bernard Green, the company manufactured the book stack system for the Library of Congress, which became their signature product. Using cast iron component parts and the structural principles of skeleton framing, the stacks at the Library of Congress are composed of identical seven foot tiers literally stacked on top of each other to form “a self-supporting structure surrounded by masonry walls,”<sup>13</sup> as described by Snead and Company in their book *Library Planning, Bookstacks and Shelving: With Contributions from the Architects' and Librarians' Points of View*. However, this was not the only structural option, “when diagonal bracing is used, the stack can be made an entirely independent structure and may support curtain walls enclosing it.”<sup>14</sup>

The New York Public Library, built on the site of the Croton Reservoir next to the former location of the Crystal Palace, would be built using both systems. But, for all the technical developments in building construction in the late nineteenth century, it was still uncommon for large civic buildings to give outward indications of new construction methods. Giedion describes this tendency as a “historicizing mask”

In every field the nineteenth century cloaked each new invention with historicizing masks. In the realm of architecture as well as in the realm of industry or society. New construction possibilities were created, but at the same time they were feared; each was senselessly buried beneath stone stage sets. [...] This historicizing mask is inseparably linked to the image of the nineteenth century. It cannot be denied. But by the same token we must not forget the forward momentum that permeates the nineteenth century.<sup>15</sup>

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*After 1880, under Hunt's leadership New York's rich began to house themselves in urban palaces such as had not been constructed in Europe for a hundred years or more... After 1880, fine architecture became a public responsibility of the rich, to be enacted in the houses they built for themselves and in the charitable institutions they supported.*

—ROBERT AM STERN  
New York 1880: Architecture and Urbanism in the Gilded Age.

## STYLE

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century the United States was still searching for a national building style that could represent its ambitions. Many of the architects working in the U.S. were trained in Europe, bringing references and style back across the ocean. Monumental buildings reflected this tendency, as seen in the design of the New York Public Libraries precursors, the Astor and Lenox Libraries.

Located at Lafayette Place, German Architect Alexander Saelzler won the competition to design the Astor Library. In his will, John Jacob Astor limited the construction budget for the building to \$75,000—a small portion of the original \$400,000 donation—with the remaining funds to be used to purchase the book collection and supply all operating costs. Saelzler designed the Library in the American Round-Arched Style based on the German Rundbogenstil and used extensively for German public building in the early 19th Century. A type of Romanesque Revival, the Rundbogenstil was considered an intermediary between Classical and Gothic and could be built using local materials like brick and sandstone instead of marble. The façade design of the Astor Library, likely based on Munich's Staatsbibliothek, was completed in 1841.<sup>1</sup> Several steps were also taken to ensure the building was fireproof, including upgrades to the structure. These improvements were paid for by William B. Astor, Astor's son and a trustee of the library, as the initial limit on the construction budget would

not allow for such upgrades.<sup>2</sup> The interior of the Astor Library featured bookshelves arranged in alcoves around the perimeter, with galleries above and a large open workspace in the centre. The Astor Library opened in 1854, six years after Astor's death, with a collection of approximately 90,000 volumes available for free public use within the library building. Both the building and the collection expanded over time; two major renovations were completed to match the original Saeltzer design.

James Lenox eventually decided to make his comprehensive book and manuscript collection available to the public, incorporating the Lenox Library in 1870. A notoriously private man, Lenox chose his friend and prominent New York architect Richard Morris Hunt to design the new library. Hunt had previously worked with Lenox to design and build the Presbyterian Hospital, a project that Lenox initiated and helped to fund. Following the construction of the hospital, Lenox decided to create a free scholarly public library where those students and scholars given special permissions could access his collection. Located on land inherited by Lenox, the library fronts Fifth Ave between Seventieth and Seventy-First Streets.

Hunt was the first North American architect to study at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris, and quickly rose to prominence after establishing a practice in New York City. Designed in a refined classical style with Neo-Grec details, the symmetrical Lenox Library faced the park. Entered from a courtyard, the central volume contained a lobby, administrative, and gallery spaces, while wings to the north and south housed reading rooms on the first and second floors. The reading rooms of the Lenox Library were designed with perimeter book shelving, and a gallery level and large open tables in the center of the rooms where patrons could access the material. Called "perhaps the most monumental public building in New York,"<sup>3</sup> Hunt's work greatly influenced the development of the gilded age "eclectic" style in the city, including that of the New York Public Library.

In addition to changing the architectural style of the city, the gilded age was a time when it became fashionable for the rich to use their wealth to construct the city. According to Robert A.M. Stern in *New York 1880: Architecture and Urbanism in the Gilded Age*,



*State of the Astor library building as it was when abandoned by the NYPL in 1911.*

*Original structure before two complementary additions.*



*Astor Library South Hall*



*Lenox library designed by Richard Morris Hunt in the classical style with Neo-Grec details.*

*Library and Reading Room.*

After 1880, under Hunt's leadership New York's rich began to house themselves in urban palaces such as had not been constructed in Europe for a hundred years or more... After 1880, fine architecture became a public responsibility of the rich, to be enacted in the houses they built for themselves and in the charitable institutions they supported. This trend would culminate in the civicism of the City Beautiful movement, which Hunt, McKim, White and others helped initiate and which would be the dominating ideal of American architecture between 1890 and the First World War.<sup>4</sup>

Contemporary projects in the gilded age included the Grand Central Terminal, the Dakota, the Waldorf-Astoria, the Vanderbilt Mansions the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the façade of which was also designed by Hunt, and the Morgan Library, located close to the location of the site of the New York Public Library.

Richard Morris Hunt, changed the architectural style of the city by bringing some of Paris and the Beaux-Arts Style to North America. But he also developed new ways of educating architects on the continent. At the Ecole des Beaux-Arts a student's education was divided between lectures and work at small private ateliers, each run by a patron with a separate practice who would spend a few days a week supervising students for the Ecole. This was quite different from the architectural education system in place in North America at the time. Most architects were educated through apprenticeships with existing firms or were educated at one of the technical schools. When Hunt first established his practice in New York City, he took on several students, instructing them based on the lessons he learned in Paris and setting them projects to complete based on the atelier system.

One of his first students was William R. Ware, who would go on to found the architecture schools at MIT and Columbia University. He would later say of his time spent at Hunt's office, "I think we all of us felt that it was then that we learned everything we knew."<sup>5</sup> Ware would go on to collaborate with John Shaw Billings on creating the competition for the New York Public Library. He drew up the diagrammatic plan for the building, based on Billings' original sketch, and served as one of the members of the jury responsible for choosing the final design for the library building.

## NOTES

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# CONSTRUCTION

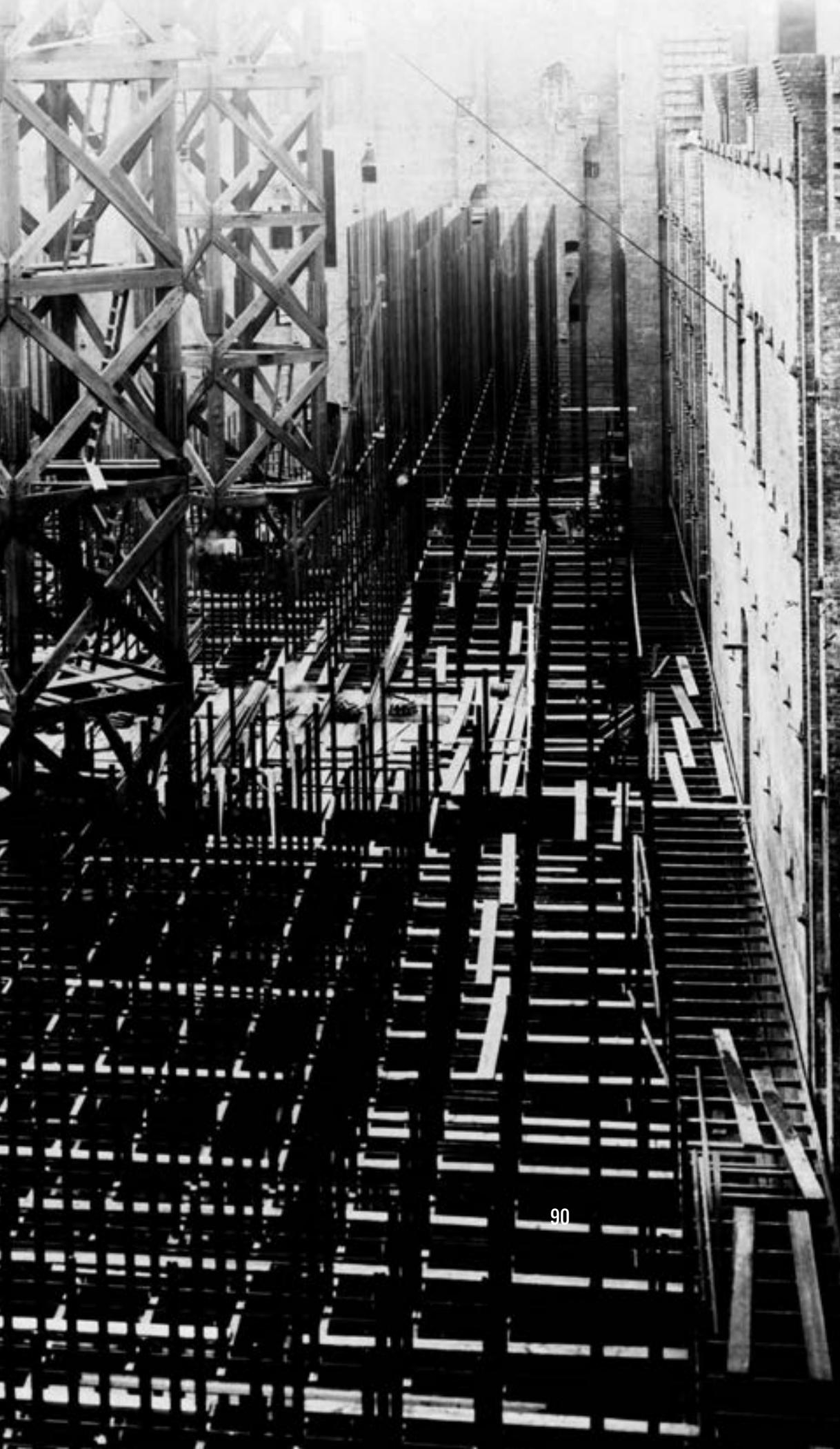


FIGURE 043      CONSTRUCTING THE STACKS, OCTOBER 24, 1905

The foundations of the New York Public Library were established in the century before the construction of the Central Library, providing a complex framework for a local institution with global ambitions. The histories of the city, the founders, publishing and libraries, building style and structure influenced the type of institution the Library would become following the consolidation of the Astor Library, Lenox Library and Tilden Trust 1895, and the subsequent second consolidation of the Circulating Branch. Decisions about the structure of the Library system were reached during those two consolidations of previously independent institutions. The special collections of the Astor and Lenox Libraries would form the core of a research collection housed in a monumental structure in the center of the city. The smaller circulating collections would work together as part of a larger system spread across the city, housed in smaller branch libraries, funded in large by Andrew Carnegie. Together they formed the New York Public Library.

The Central Branch was designed to both embody the ideals of the institution and clearly provide a practical solution to the needs of the library program. It took fifteen year to translate these influences to architecture. First, Director John Shaw Billings established a program and plan for the building. Following a two stage competition, the trustees selected the Architect they felt best suited to design and construct the building.



*Resolved: That the American Library Association expresses its hearty approval of the methods adopted by those in charge of selection of plans for the New York Public Library Building, both as to its general requirements and the manner of competition.*

*We rejoice that the needs of the Library for administration and public service are to be considered before questions of architectural style and ornament.*

*We find in the arrangement of a central stack, with reading room above, an excellent provision for ample light, freedom from noise, ready and quick delivery of books and opportunity for extension as the growth of the library may require.*

—RESOLUTION OF THE AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION  
JUNE 24th 1897

## COMPETITION

In 1895—the same year as the consolidation of the New York Public Library—the Boston Public Library opened their central research library. Now called the McKim Building, McKim, Mead and White designed the Boston Public Library. An incredibly successful gilded age New York architecture firm, McKim, Mead and White used European precedents and their beaux-art training in their design; the neo-classical façade fronting Copley Square closely resembles that of Labrouste’s Ste. Genevieve Library in Paris.<sup>1</sup> Today the building is a National Historic Landmark. Upon opening, however, the Boston Public Library was not uniformly embraced. The initial proposal included a stack capacity equal to the Library of Congress at the time. As the project progressed the capacity of the stacks were cut in half to accommodate other functions including a porte-cochere and auditorium.<sup>2</sup> This decision to sacrifice the stack space integral to the library’s functionality for “aesthetic” concerns was criticized by the professional library community, who had not been widely consulted by either the architects or the trustees of the Boston Public Library.<sup>3</sup>

In New York, the City required the library trustees to submit an architectural proposal for the library to the Board of Estimate, as the construction was to be funded by the City of New York and supervised

by the Department of Public Parks. The board of trustees assembled a committee to be responsible for choosing an architect and plan for the Library. The site, the budget, and the program guaranteed the New York Public Library would be a monumental civic structure but it was the trustees' desire that the building also function effectively as a library. They did not want to repeat the mistakes that had happened in Boston.

John Shaw Billings, appointed Director by the trustees of the New York Public Library, was a man of many talents particularly suited to oversee the design and construction process. Before taking the position as Director, was the head of the Library of the Surgeon General's Office in Washington, D.C, where he was responsible for their renovations. In Baltimore he worked to develop the original plans for Johns Hopkins Hospital. These experiences were formative to his work at the New York Public Library; as Director he was responsible for working with the committee of trustees to develop the program and provide a plan to the City. Unlike many of the trustees, Billings had a scientific background. His experience as a surgeon, a professor of hygiene at the University of Pennsylvania, and an author of works like *Principles of Ventilation and Heating* (1884) likely influenced his approach to planning the library. He was trained in and practiced the scientific method: solving a problem by formulating a question, developing a hypothesis, testing that hypothesis and analyzing the results of the testing. In contrast to many architectural approaches, the stages of this method were evident in the way he managed the development of the library plan.

The problem was clear; provide plans for a library building that could provide space for readers and house the Astor and Lenox collections with room for expansion on the former site of the Croton Reservoir. The context was set. The building would need to respond to the site and the Manhattan grid, would have to address fashions in libraries, the popular architectural styles and current engineering technology. Billings began to collect information that would allow him to hypothesize about the best plan for the library. He toured important library buildings in Europe and

America. He consulted with library staff. The existing Astor and Lenox Libraries were studied in detail, room by room, generating a record and understanding of how the current space was used. From this research, Billings drafted a sketch plan. This sketch depicts the basic formal relationships and some of the key programmatic moves, notably the location of the reading room. He also decided that the best way to choose an architect for the library was through a competition.

Billings developed the terms and specifications for the competition in association with two experts. William R. Ware, student of Richard Morris Hunt and founder of the architecture schools at MIT and Columbia, contributed his architectural expertise. Bernard R. Green, the Superintendent & Engineer for the Library of Congress and book stack designer, provided an engineer's perspective. Together the three men refined Billings' quick sketch, developing a room schedule, program description, site plan and massing, and basic structural requirements. The proposal differed from many of the leading research libraries, the British Museum reading room and the Library of Congress, by locating the main reading room on the topmost floor with books stored below rather than on the ground floor with books surrounding the central space. Billings presented the general arrangement of the three floors of the library as follows:

The controlling reasons which led to putting (the reading rooms) on the upper floor were to get as far away from the dust of the street as possible; to get light from above, so as to have the walls free for books to a certain extent; to get the most central possible delivery of books on the shortest line from the stacks with the least complication of machinery; to keep the loaning part of the business on the first floor easy as possible of access, to have the periodical room on the first floor and the newspaper room on the first floor with the easiest possible access, but to have the special reading room for special scholars, the private rooms which require special cards for admission, on the second floor away from sight-seers as far as possible and away from the general crowd. Those are the reasons in favor of this particular arrangement.<sup>4</sup>

This preliminary proposal was the hypothesis for the library, a hypothesis that needed to be tested.

Billings and the trustees decided to hold two competitions. The primary competition was open to any architect in Greater New York, regardless of experience. From the primary competition, the architects of the top six projects were asked to move on to the final competition. Six established architectural firms were also invited to participate in the final competition. All twelve firms would be paid for their work in this round. This was to encourage new architectural voices and served to further the transparency and inclusiveness of the public library project; it also encouraged established firms to participate, many of which would not submit a proposal without remuneration.

The New York Public Library published the terms for the first competition on May 21, 1897. In addition to being distributed to architects, Billings used the summary of the project as published in the terms to solicit feedback from the public and library professionals. Library historian Phyllis Dain analyzes this decision in *The New York Public Library: A History of its Founding and Early Years*:

Billings and Rives seemed most anxious for the opinions of librarians, particularly on the location of the main reading room. Billings described the plans, which were published in *Library Journal*, at the American Library Association's annual meeting. All this public discussion and solicitation of comments was unusual, but Billings and the Executive Committee realized that they were planning an important building and were modest enough to want to avoid any large blunders and to take advantage of the best advice they could get.<sup>5</sup>

Eliciting the advice of librarians on the functional arrangement of the library program was essentially a peer review of the library hypothesis. These experts could provide knowledgeable feedback on the proposal, as well as endorse the decisions being made. This step in the development of the New York Public Library demonstrates a much different attitude towards the library profession than that of the Boston Public Library, where one trustee was quoted saying “it was no use to consult librarians, for no two of them agreed on any point.”<sup>6</sup>

The Preliminary Competition served as comprehensive architectural

testing of the proposed hypothesis. Eighty-eight submissions were received. Several followed the plan as illustrated, but there were a great number who provided iterations and alternatives to the proposed plan. This allowed the Jury, the Executive Committee, and Billings to compare the merits of each type of layout, specifically the controversial relationship between the reading room on the third floor and the stacks located below. Billings, Green and Ware compiled and analyzed the feedback received from the staff of the New York Public Library, the public, librarians and the architectural proposals. The results became the Final Competition brief. In addition to including the edited description of the proposed building, schedule of rooms, and revised drawings, the brief included a report on the Preliminary Competition and the resolution adopted by the American Library Association commending the function of the plan.

The analysis printed in the second competition brief concluded Billings' scientific method of forming the best possible plan for the building. The question posed by the City of New York and the Executive Committee; research, case studies and collaboration with experts leading to a hypothesis; and the testing of this hypothesis, both architecturally and by librarians, can all be seen as part of this process. This approach also served a secondary function. It gave everyone with an interest in the project agency, engaging the many stakeholders in the future of the library in the preliminary discussions.

While the architectural design process differs from the scientific method, using his training as a scientist, Billings essentially orchestrated and thoroughly carried out preliminary and schematic design for the Library, undertaking research into the program requirements and creating study drawings to spatially illustrate the relationships between the program elements and the site. This meant the twelve firms selected to participate in the second stage of the competition could start directly in design development, using the resources and opinions already compiled.

This method of choosing an architect kept the Trustees and Director of the New York Public Library firmly in control of the plans for the building. By the time the Jury—composed of three architects elected by the participants, three trustees, and Billings—came to choose a winner there was very little debate that Carrere and Hastings's three dimensional rendering of the schematic plan presented in the brief was the most appropriate architectural solution. The reasons why this project would be chosen were so well understood, by the staff, by the public, there was no controversy.

McKim, Mead and White—the architects of the Boston Public Library—also submitted a proposal. They did not follow the massing established in the competition brief, instead locating the reading room on the first floor. Rather than accept and use the findings of this research process, they were offended that so much of the planning had already been completed and presented a completely different scheme. Carrere and Hastings, while not “starchitects” like McKim, Mead and White, were awarded the project going on to make their name as the Architects of the New York Public Library—following the direction established by Billings.

## NOTES

1. Leland M. Roth, *McKim, Mead & White, Architects* (New York: Harper & Row, 1983), 119.
2. *Ibid.*, 130.
3. *Ibid.*, 388.
4. American Library Association proceedings, 24 June 1897, file ALA Talk 1897, box 34, Series II: Central Building Material, John Shaw Billings, The New York Public Archives, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.
5. Phyllis Dain, *The New York Public Library: A History of Its Founding and Early Years* (New York: New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations, 1972), 163.
6. Charles C. Soule, *How to Plan a Library Building For Library Work*, (Brookline MA: The Riverdale Press, 1912), 15.
7. Terms of Competition for the Building to be Erected for The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations, pg 20, 2 August 1897, file 7, box 34, Series II: Central Building Material, John Shaw Billings, The New York Public Archives, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.





*These plans were merely diagrammatic to show the juxtaposition of the different departments of the Library, a simple single line marking the divisions, the halls in the four floors nowhere coming over each other, —in fact no walls coming over each other. It was no more than a verbal description made clear diagrammatically. The two courts however, were determined upon and the location of the main reading room over the stacks. In a building of this monumental character, the plan is of the most vital importance from the artistic point of view. In the six months allotted to complete, the architects spent more than four of these months in the study of the the plan without much consideration of the elevations. ... This diagrammatic plan as given, while it helped solve the problem from a utilitarian point of view, made the artistic problem of the plan only more difficult.*

—THOMAS HASTINGS  
HISTORY OF THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY, 445.

## BUILDING

On Monday, November 10th, 1902, the cornerstone of the New York Public Library was lowered into place by the mayor of the city amongst a distinguished crowd, including president William H. Taft, marking the start of construction. A day later a smaller unofficial ceremony took place. Billings described this more intimate occasion in a letter to his wife;

Yesterday, Carrere, Hastings and myself had a little private corner-stone laying, setting the first block of marble on the N. W. corner. I took the trowel, spread the bed of mortar a little, Hastings dropped a new ten cent piece (1902) into it, down came the stone, I tapped it three times with a hammer and said - 'May this building be all that the builders, architects, the trustees, and the people of New York hope and expect'<sup>1</sup>

Also present at the ceremony were Owen Brainard, junior partner at Carrere and Hastings, and the site superintendents.<sup>2</sup> Together these men were responsible for the design and construction of the building; Billings established the function and flow of the space; Hastings translated Billings diagram into architectural space, and championed the decorative scheme; Carrere dealt with criticism, logistics and administration. Brainard was the engineer and also wrote all specifications.

By the time this ceremony took place, the Library had been consolidated for seven years; the building would not officially open till nine years later. In these sixteen years many changes took place: the cost of construction materials increased dramatically, new technologies were invented and governments changed. But in that time, through the work of hundreds of men and nine separate building contracts, the New York Public Library was transformed from a diagram sketched in words and lines to a building that could be embodied and traversed.

The description of the building and the plan included in the terms of the competition laid out the programmatic relationships to be developed for the library, but did not eliminate the voice of the architect. Carrere and Hastings were especially concerned with the choice of exterior masonry material to be used in the project. It was Billings' intention to have the building built of brick. This option would be cost effective and practical. The trustees were partial to Indiana Limestone, a material in fashion in New York City after it was used by Richard Morris Hunt in the 1883 construction of the William K. Vanderbilt House.<sup>3</sup> The architects suggested white marble: it was more durable and would wear more gracefully over time. It was also much easier to carve than the alternatives, an important feature for the decorative scheme they were imagining.<sup>4</sup> The reasons were logical, and architects convinced the trustees and the city that the additional expense would be worthwhile.

Carrere and Hastings completed the construction drawings and specifications for the marble and included them in the third contract issued for the building; the main structure. Eleven separate contracts were issued for the building over the course of construction: reservoir removal and foundation laying, boiler and engine room excavation and extension, main structure, stacks, heating and ventilating, plumbing and drainage, interior finishes, electrical wiring, approaches, generating plant, and furniture and equipment.<sup>5</sup> The first contract was awarded in 1899 and the final contract for the furniture and equipment awarded in 1910. This allowed the design to

progress over time. The built work informed later design decisions. For this reason, it was incredibly important for the architects to be in contact with the construction progress. Soon after being awarded the project Carrere and Hastings moved their office to within a block of the building, at Forty-first Street and Madison Avenue.

In addition to constructing an office, which included room for the contractors, architects and draftsman, Carrere and Hastings built a modeling building. Throughout construction drawings and models progressed simultaneously. Scale models of the entire building were made and adjusted. A full size model of the 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue colonnade was installed as closely as possible to the final location. The models allowed the architects to evaluate the three dimensional implications of their designs, making changes that would not be possible when carving the final marble pieces, and including these changes in the drawings.<sup>6</sup> In addition to aesthetic decisions, the models were used to determine structural capacity when necessary. Hastings stated the structural goal of the building was to use modern materials like steel only in places where timber would have been used in classical structures, otherwise designing a load bearing masonry building.<sup>7</sup> In a few places steel was avoided entirely and load-bearing building techniques were used. When designing Astor Hall, the vaulted main entrance to the building, each piece of the marble vaulting were first modeled and evaluated to ensure they would be able to properly support the room above.<sup>8</sup>

There were two places where the architects abandoned classical construction for the latest modern building techniques, the circulating library lending room and the book stacks. In the tradition of the Crystal Palace, Carrere and Hastings used steel and glass to create a dome ceiling over the original lending room of the circulating library, located in the northern courtyard. Surrounded on four sides by the masonry bearing walls of the building, the only way to access daylight was through the roof. Not only was the modern structure visible from within the circulating library, but there was also a clear

view of exterior of this modern structure from the upper floor windows that looked onto the courtyard, a daring move in so traditional a building.

In the published terms of the competition, “the building will be constructed of masonry, except the book-stacks; that the so-called skeleton construction of iron will not be employed.”<sup>9</sup> The book stacks, located below the main reading room in the west half of the building, enclosed in brick and marble masonry, were built using a separate “skeleton construction” structural system. A building within a building, the stacks looked forward to a new type of construction, one that would propel development in New York City for the years to come.

The architects issued the book stack as a separate contract: contract number four. This contract comprised all free standing stack work and the main stack room including “all of the structural and finished work to complete seven tiers of stacks, and the construction and fireproof filling for the main reading room floor, comprising all floor beams, columns, wall beams, ties, curbs, stack ends and partitions, shelves for all stacks, sliding shelves, stair work from floor No.1 to the reading room floor.”<sup>10</sup> The specification required all contractors bidding on the job to submit, not just their bid, but a full size stack section showing two floors and complete framing. As with the full-scale model of the 5th Avenue entrance, the architects were able to judge the stack systems before their construction.

Unsurprisingly, the New York Public Library was completed amidst a variety of setbacks; unforeseen issues that challenged the journey from idea to building. The cost of materials increased by 25% from 1897, the year of the competition, to 1899, when contracts were being issued. This was one of the many reasons why the total cost of the building was several million dollars over the original intended budget. The choice of white marble also caused a range of problems. The library was by far the largest marble building to be constructed at that time, requiring over 530,000 cubic feet of white marble. The white marble quarried runs in layers, interspersed with discoloured streaks of blue and grey. At the outset of the project, it was

assumed that the discoloured “waste” layers would comprise 25% of the marble quarried—instead, 65% of the marble could not be used for the library. Added to this were issues with transportation and the labor force, and the masonry structure construction time was double that of the original three year time limit. The book stack contract was not issued to the lowest bidder but rather to the firm deemed to have submitted a proposal in best conformity with the specifications. A lawsuit followed, the lowest bidder claiming to have been wronged. Rumors of wrong-doing circulated through the press, “Easy graft in Library contracts! Learned and ingenious rogues. One of the Big Contracts in Connection with the New Library on Fifth Avenue the Channel of Thievery,”<sup>11</sup> before being humbly and apologetically retracted when a court decided in favor of the Library. In spite of these setbacks, the library was completed, both according to the plan that was set and exceeding its intentions in detail, development and execution.

## NOTES

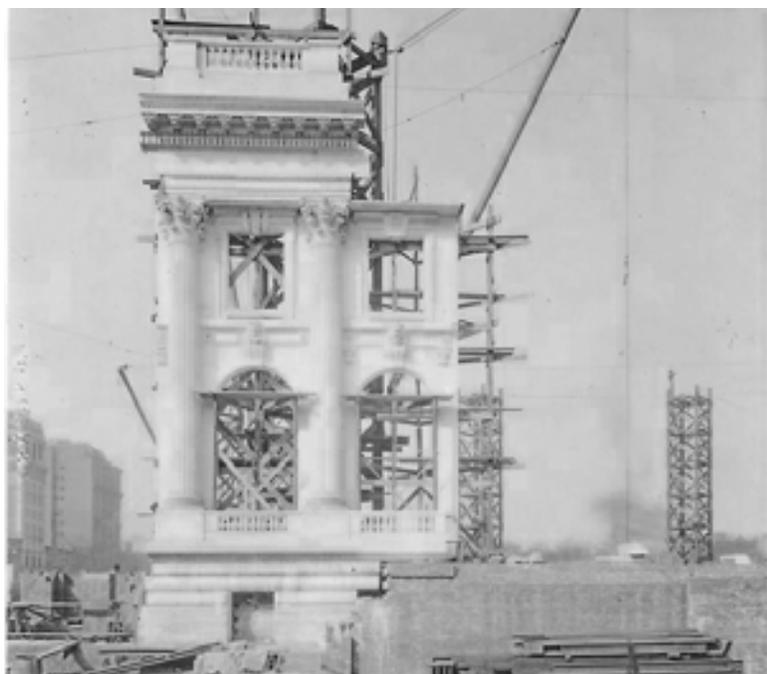
1. Harry Miller Lydenberg, *History of the New York Public Library*, (New York: New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations, 1923), 483.
2. *Ibid.*, 484.
3. Laurie Ossman and Heater Ewing, *Carrere & Hastings: The Masterworks*, (New York: Rizzoli, 2011), 116.
4. Lydenberg, *History*, 471.
5. New Building Contracts, undated, file 21, box 34, Series II: Central Building Material, John Shaw Billings, The New York Public Archives, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.
6. Lydenberg, *History*, 480.
7. *Ibid.*, 445.
8. *Ibid.*, 484.
9. Terms of Competition for the Building to be Erected for The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations, 2 August 1897, pg. 4, file 7, box 34, Series II: Central Building Material, John Shaw Billings, The New York Public Archives, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.
10. Contract No. 4 Specifications, 1903, pg. 25, box 46, Series II: Central Building Material, John Shaw Billings, The New York Public Archives, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.
11. Lydenberg, *History*, 491-492.



SOUTH\_WEST ELEVATION



1905



108 1901

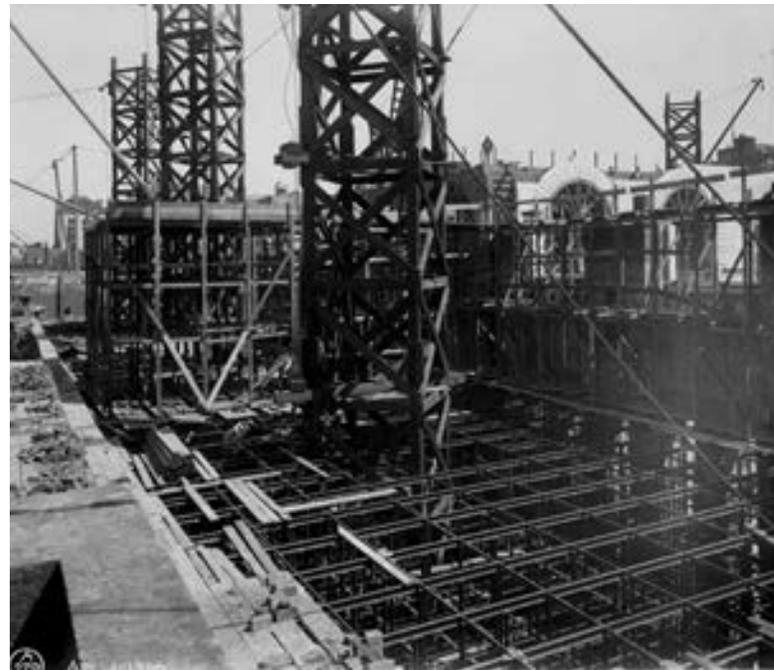


Above Series: Five year of exterior construction, showing the marble work from the South-East corner of the library.

Far Left: Draftsmen at the Carerre and Hastings office, working between drawing and scale plaster model.

Left: Full scale plaster model of the East, 5th Ave elevation, built in situ. Testing design decisions before carving in marble.

Right: Structural steel stack construction in the foreground, loadbearing masonry marble arches in the distance.





In 1897, the New York Public Library published Terms of Competition outlining the intentions for the Central Library in 24 pages of text and diagrams. These words and illustrations were then translated to architectural drawings and models. From those drawings, the building was constructed.

The following pages juxtapose quotations from the original 1897 description with fragments of the architectural construction drawings and 1910 photographs of the same space.

*The book stacks are at the back towards the open portion of the Park. They occupy two stories and the basement, and have the Reading Rooms in a third story above them. This arrangement gives the Reading Rooms the maximum amount of light, brings the stacks into easy and direct communication with them, and allows the extension of the building towards the west as some future date.*

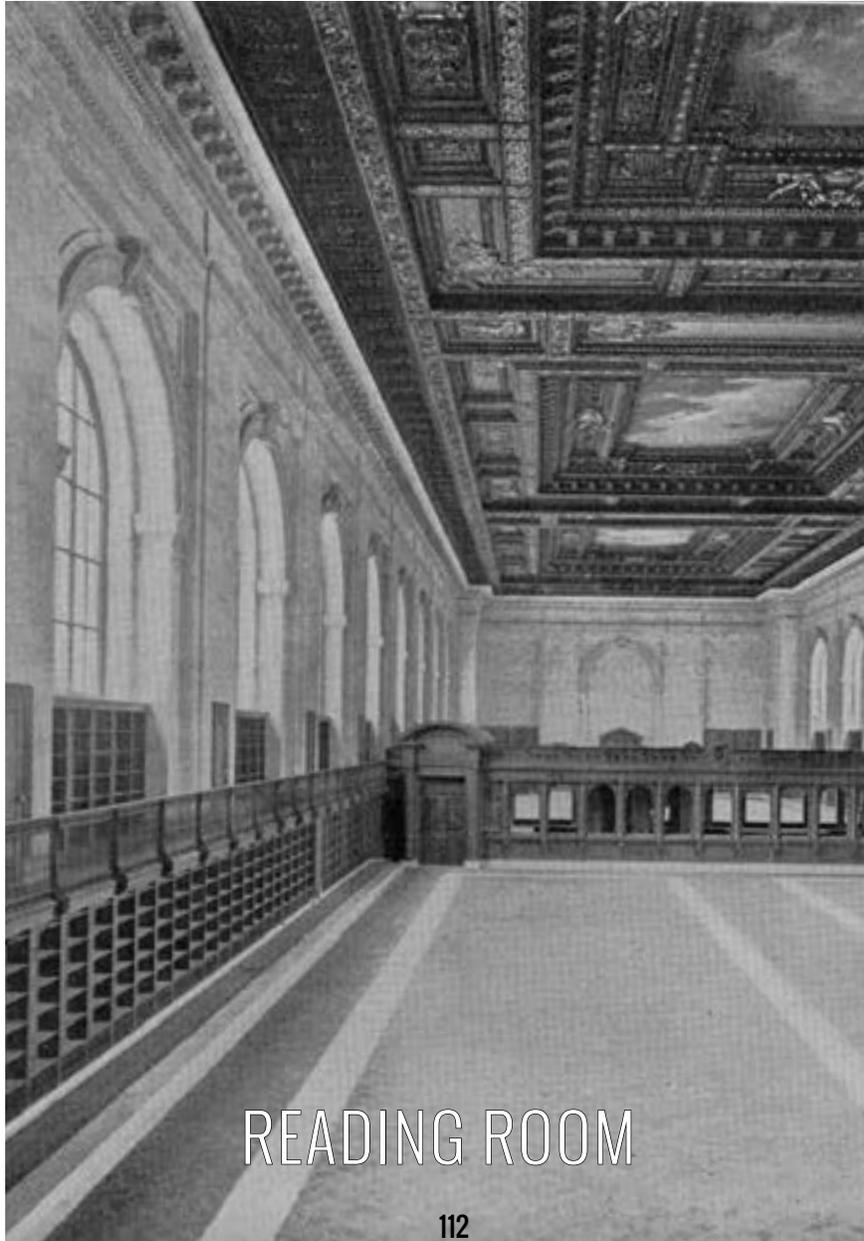
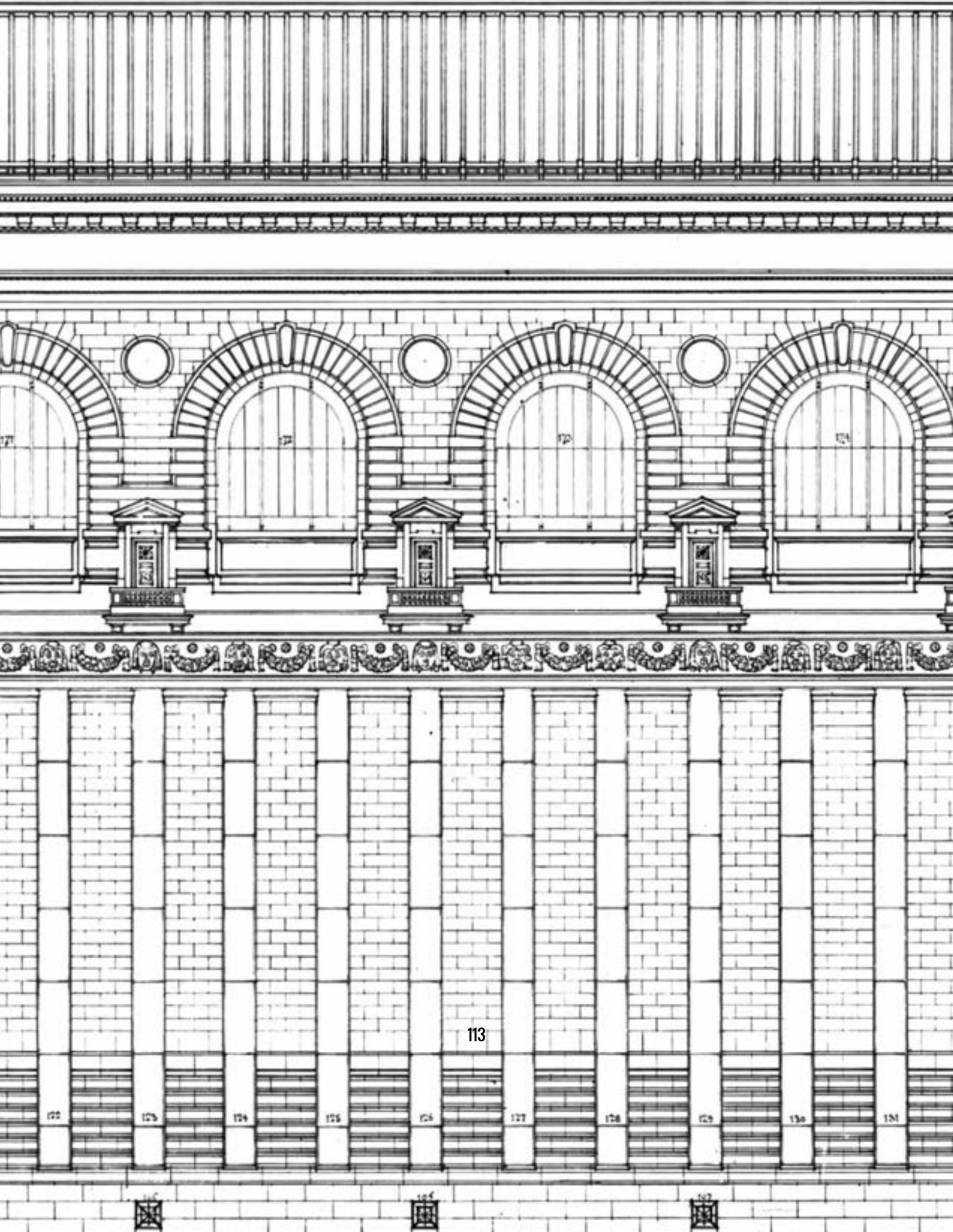


FIGURE 046 + 047



113

122

123

124

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126

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128

129

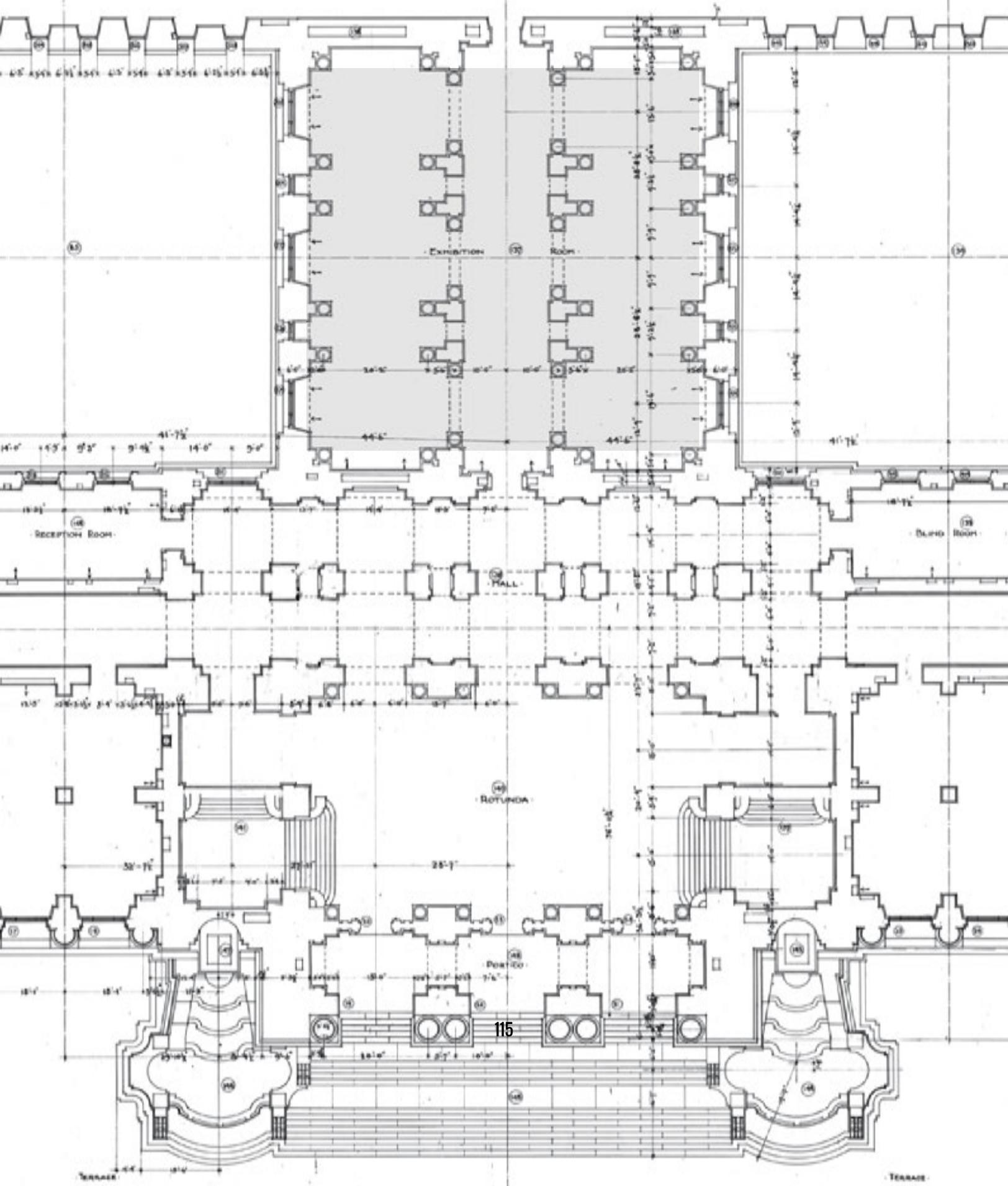
130

131

*D. Exhibition Rooms Open to the Public*

*XVII. An Exhibition-Room for the History of Printing &c., 4,000 sq. ft. May be on the first story, and some smaller rooms for the same purpose may be provided on the third story.*



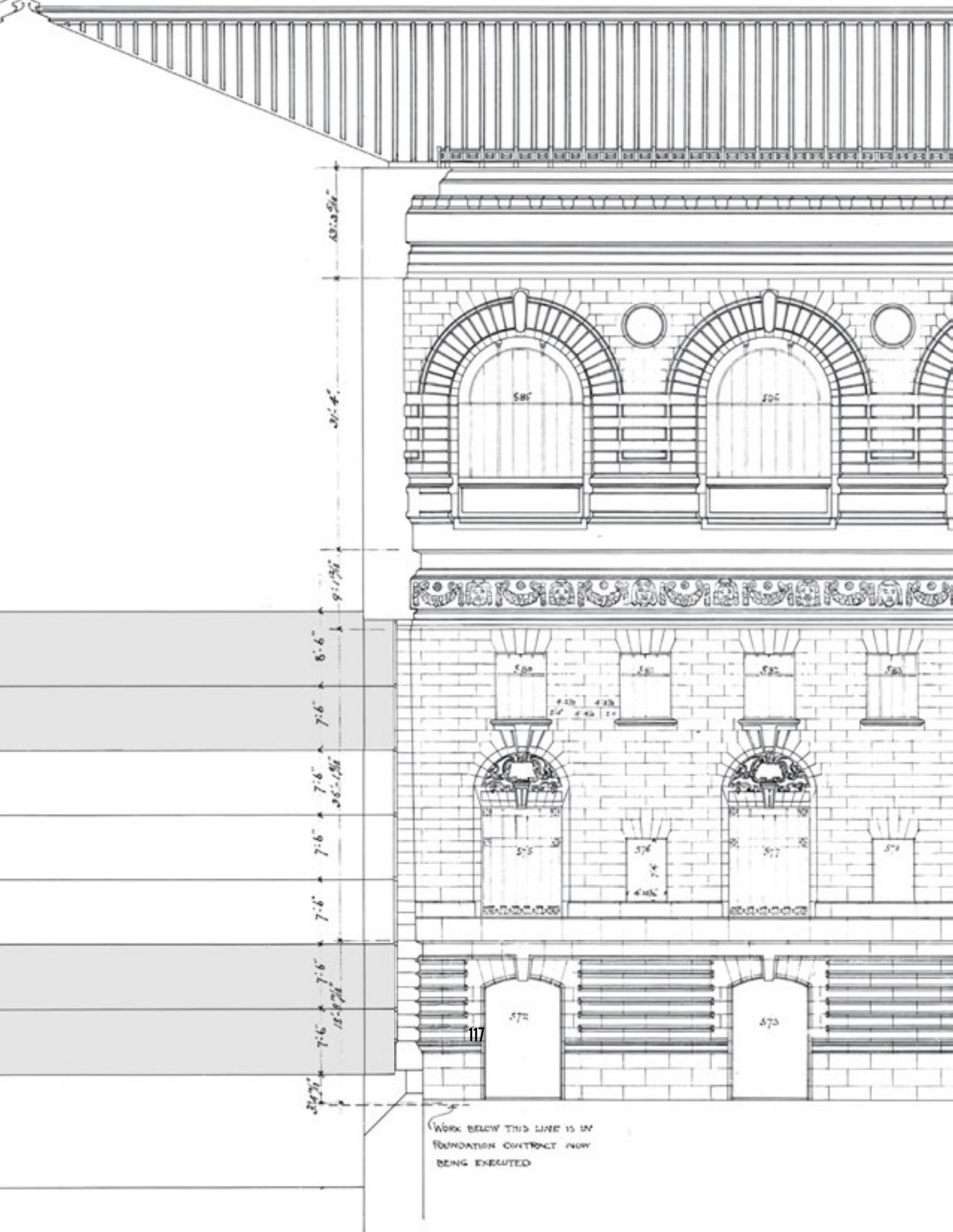


*The different floors of the building are to coincide with the level of the floors of the book stacks. The floors of the book stacks are to be seven feet six inches apart, from top to top. The basement and second stories of the building will accordingly be fifteen feet in height, from floor to floor, being two stacks high; and the first story will be twenty-two feet and six inches, or three stacks in height.*



116

FIGURE 050 + 051



13'-3 5/8"  
 21'-4"  
 9'-1 7/8"  
 8'-6"  
 7'-6"  
 7'-6"  
 7'-6"  
 7'-6"  
 7'-6"  
 7'-6"  
 7'-6"  
 7'-6"  
 7'-6"  
 18'-4 7/8"  
 24'-2"

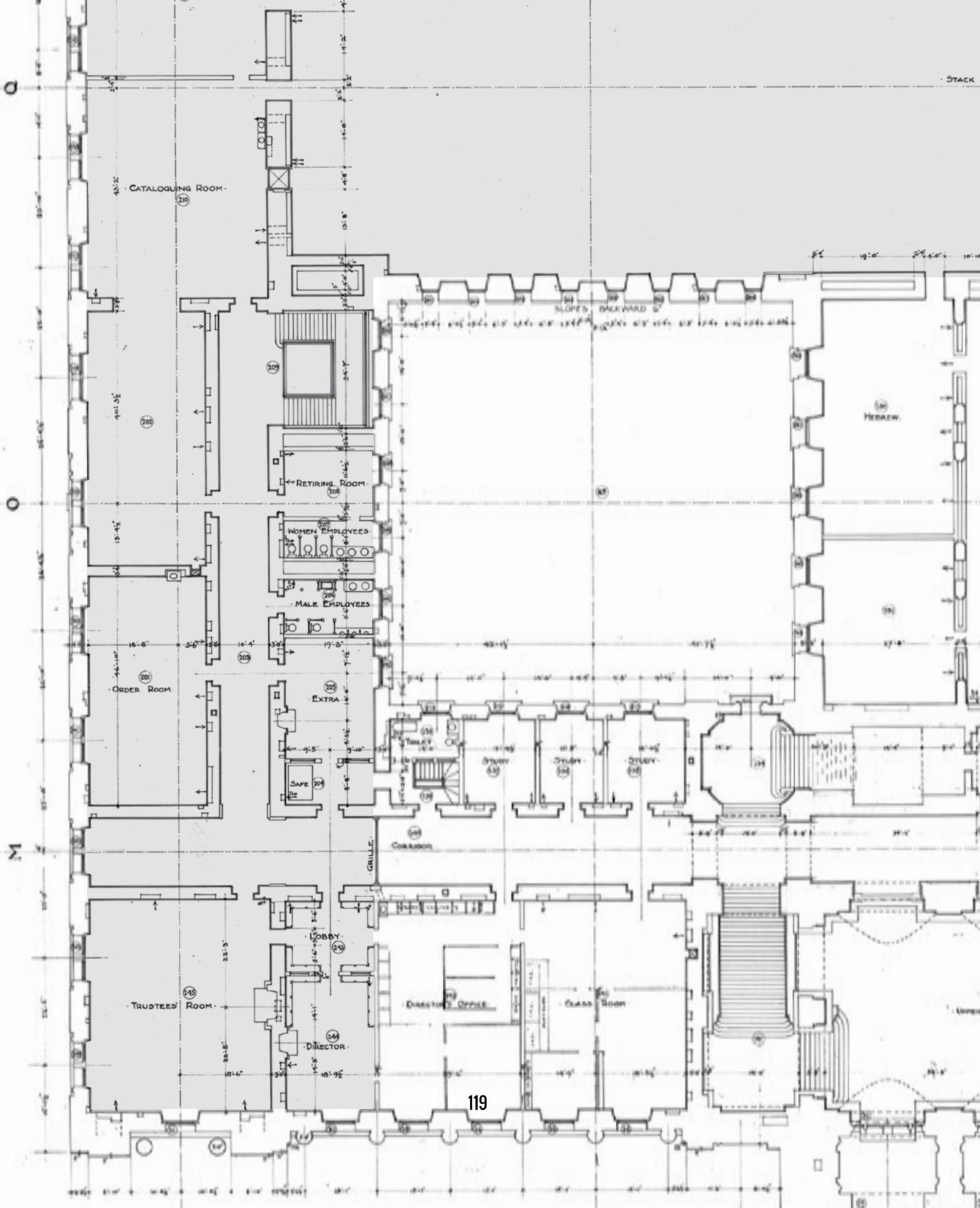
117

WORK BELOW THIS LINE IS IN  
 FOUNDATION CONTRACT NOW  
 BEING EXECUTED

*The administration is concentrated on the southside of the building. ... In the basement near the driveway are the storerooms, book bindery, printing room... Above are rescieving rooms for books, accessions department, cataloguing room, and order and checking department. Between the administrative part of the building and the part open to the public, come the rooms for the Director and the Trustees.*



FIGURE 050 + 051



119

 SURFACES DRAIN WITH A DOUBLE LINE SLOPE BACK WITH A STRAIGHT HATCH OF THE ABOVE FIGURE, IN THE DISTANCE BETWEEN TOP OF RAILING COURSES AT FIRST FLOOR LEVEL AND BOTTOM OF CORNICE AT THIRD FLOOR LEVEL.  
 FIGURES OVER OR IN THIS PLAN ARE JUST BELOW BOTTOM OF CORNICE, AND IN OTHER PLANS, IN CASES OF SLOTTED SURFACES, ARE GIVEN IN INCHES OR GRADES.

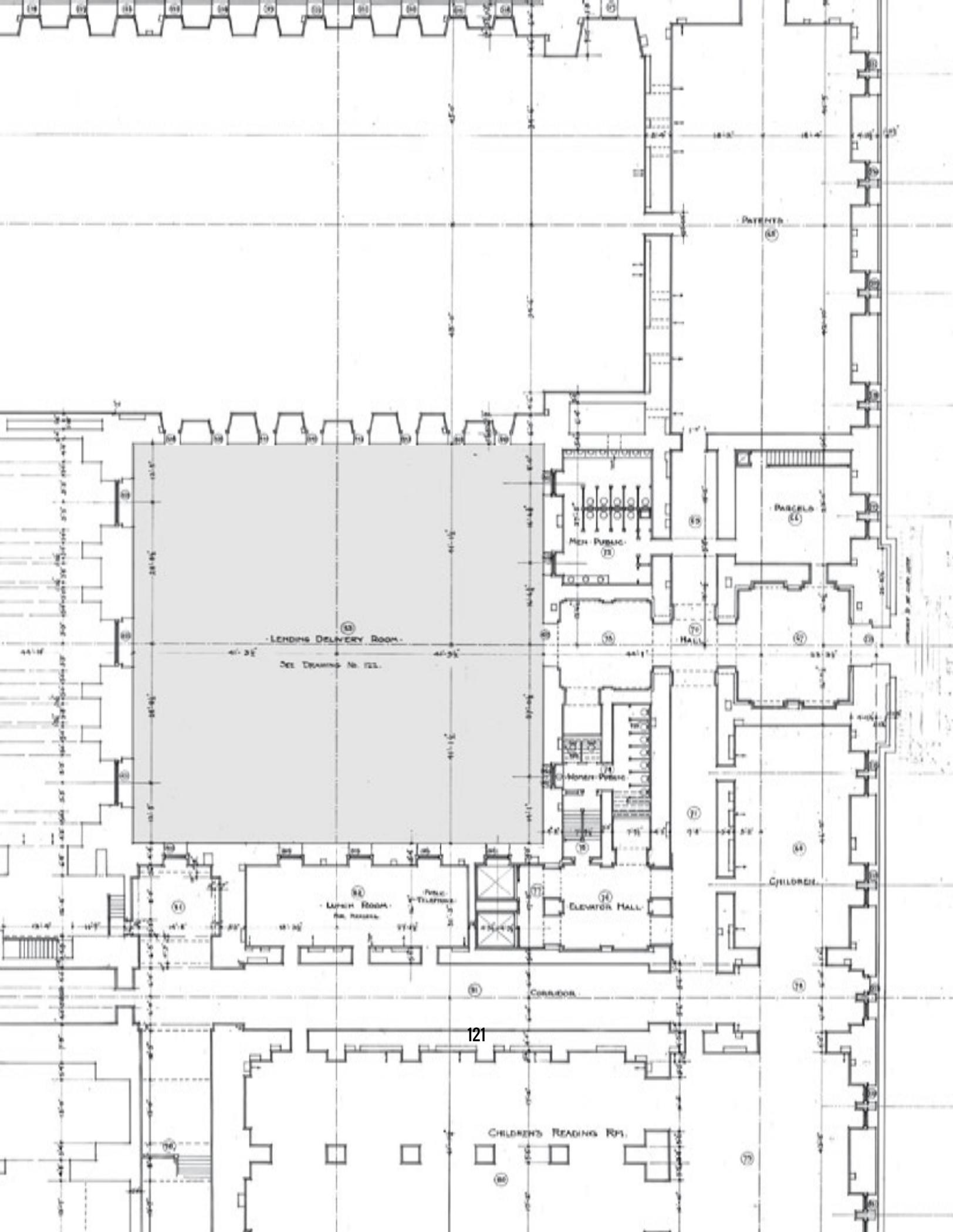
*In the basement, near the Forty-second Street entrance, which will be approximately on a level with the sidewalk, is the delivery room for the Lending Department, running up into the first story. It is next to the book stacks, and occupies the lower part of the northern area or open court, and is lighted from above.*



## LENDING DEPARTMENT

120

FIGURE 052 + 053



LEADING DELIVERY ROOM  
SEE DRAWING No. 122.

LUNCH ROOM  
No. 72

ELEVATOR HALL  
No. 74

CHILDREN'S READING RM.  
No. 71

121



# ADAPTATION

Estimate of Space Available  
for future growth in Stacks  
Feb. 1923.

Stacks	Quarter	Class	Estimate	Maximum Stacks	By Removal	II to rel.	Others.
VII	SE-SW	N	6 Yrs.	10 yrs.	17 yrs (*S) (*DZ)	1/4 Stacks	
	NE-NW	*D	10				
	NE	*S	5				
	NW	C	10				
VI	SG	Reserved for Journal Russian & Prep. Divs.					
	SW	AN-*G	8			4 Presses	(Boksellen)
	NE	*SY	3				
	NW	XWZ *S	6 6	7 yrs.	15 yrs		Discard 2 P Bills. 3 Presses f Dre. Co
V	SW-SE	B-L	6				
	NE	S-T	6	5 yrs	15 yrs	(T) 1/4	
	NW	S	3				
IV	<del>SW</del>	M-*Y	8				
	<del>SE</del>	Z	5			(*Y) 1/8	
	<del>NE</del>	Y PQ	10	8 yrs	18 yrs		
	<del>NW</del>	R-T	6				
III	<del>SE</del>	W	8				
	<del>SW</del>	3	4	8 yrs	15 yrs		Put Circ
	<del>NW</del>	X	6	(using		1/8	or W
		V +	3	Space and			II
	<del>SE</del> <del>NE</del>	V-0	5-	occupied by mercantile	124		

In 5 yrs we will be forced to utilize II. It would be well at that time to take 3/4 of the stacks

ESTIMATE OF SPACE AVAILABLE FOR FUTURE GROWTH IN STACKS. FEBRUARY 10, 1923  
 FIGURE 056

In April 1926 a report, addressed to New York Public Library Director Anderson, was written about the desperate lack of space at the Central Library; this was only 15 years after its construction.

The report addresses three areas of concern: shelf space, reading room space and work space. Each of these areas were either approaching or operating beyond capacity. From that point, the history of the New York Public Library has been a question of space. This was anticipated in the planning of the Library though it was probably not imagined such an expansion would be required so quickly; Billings required a plan for expansion as part of all competition submissions. A renovation to the Central Building to the extent predicted by Billings has yet to occur, though the pleas for more space have continued. Compromises have been made, temporary solutions found. Now, the balance of these three programmatic components, shelf space, reading room space and work space, is in the process of shifting completely.



*Shelf Space: A careful inventory of the shelving in the building by Mr Henderson and myself has brought out the following:*

*The vacant shelves and the unused parts of partially filled shelves will hold from 225,000 to 250,000 volumes. As we add about 55,000 volumes a year, there is room for a little over four years' growth. By removing duplicates that can be spared, space for one more year can be obtained. After that we have no choice but to box some of the books, or crowd them to such an extent that additional assistants will be required to care for them, and the service to the public will be seriously delayed. Even now there is so little vacant space that much shifting is required whenever sets of books are received. This condition will, of course, get worse until the five or six years spoken of above pass and the limit is reached.*

—THE "SPACE" MEMORANDUM  
APRIL 12, 1926

## SHELF SPACE

The Terms of Competition for the Central Building of the New York Public Library, released August 2nd, 1897, contained a written description of the proposed building, a detailed room schedule and drawings of the spatial relationships between these rooms and the site. This document required that the book stacks be designed to hold 1,500,000 volumes or 187,500 linear feet of shelving, arranged in quadrants around a central book lift.<sup>1</sup> They were to be located at the back of the building towards Bryant Park, beneath the Main Reading Room. While important for the operation of the building, specifically the ease with which books could be delivered from this closed stack system to the Readers above, this particular location was also chosen in anticipation of future expansions, which would be required as both the number of readers and the number of books in the collection continued to increase. The location “allows of the extension of the building towards the west at some future day, by enlarging both the stacks and the Reading Rooms simultaneously and proportionately, with a comparatively small enlargement of the portions of the building devoted for administrative and other uses.”<sup>22</sup>

Completed in 1911, the constructed bookstacks had twice the capacity specified in the Terms of Competition. Occupying the original location indicated at the rear of the building towards Bryant Park under the Main Reading Room, the seven stack tiers were built with shelving in excess of 332,640 linear feet. Combined with book shelves built into 53 other rooms, including the open reference shelving encircling the Main Reading Room and the shelving built into the special collections reading rooms, the Library was built with book storage capacity for over four million volumes.<sup>3</sup>

Readers looking for a particular book or other print document would search through the card catalogue for the reference information, fill out the call number and give the slip to a reference librarian.

The reference librarian takes the order slip, gives it a number, gives the reader a check bearing the same number, and finally instructs the reader to go to the north or south side of the delivery desk in the main reading room. The order slip is shot through a pneumatic tube to the main reading room. The reader waits in front of an indicator. When his check number is flashed on the indicator his books are ready for him. The check is exchanged for the volumes that he has ordered. Instead of taking the books himself from the delivery desk, the reader may have them delivered to him, if he will indicate by number on his blank what seat he has taken.<sup>4</sup>

The very first patron request was filled in six minutes. A team of people worked below the main reading room to fill the orders and used an intuitive system to process requests. The pneumatic tubes used to transport the request slips between floors and systems used to move books were established technologies. The “stacked” relationship between the reading room and the bookstacks below meant they could be installed in the simplest way possible; there was no need for corners or kinks in the system, which have a tendency to cause complications and delays. In all, the researcher only had to wait a short period of time for their request to be filled when the library first opened.

Despite the increase in capacity from the original Terms, the stacks were soon filled. Many library collections discard or “weed” infrequently used material to make room for new, but a research collection, like that of the

Central Research Library, is additive. “The Library usually gets only one copy of any publication. Such a single-copy collection is archival. Each acquisition must be regarded as an acquisition for all time.”<sup>5</sup> In 1923, only twelve years, after the Library opened, the first report was written indicating that the stacks would soon reach capacity. Robert Henderson, “In Charge of Stacks” at the library undertook an inventory of the current usage; in his summary, at the current rate of acquisition, “the overcrowding will be to the limit,” in ten to fifteen years.<sup>6</sup> Today the four NYPL Research Libraries—the 42nd Street Stephen A. Schwarzman Building; the Science, Industry and Business Library on 34th Street; the Library for the Performing Arts at Lincoln Centre; and the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, located at 515 Malcolm X Boulevard in Harlem—have a combined collection exceeding 44 million items.<sup>7</sup> From that time to this, one of the most pressing concerns at the Library has been about space; finding a balance between the finite space of the stacks and the infinite growth of the collection.

The need for space was approached in several different ways. These approaches fall into four broad categories; rearrangement, replacement, renovation and relocation. Rearrangement strategies involved creative ways to move books within the stacks to create more room for new acquisitions. Changes to the way books were cataloged and shelved allowed more material to be stored within the same footprint. A second approach used was the replacement of parts the physical collection with reproductions. It was believed that some material was quite fragile, and therefore would be better preserved if transferred from the original paper format. This transfer had the added benefit of allowing the same content to occupy much less space. The library also looked to different architectural solutions to increase the total area available for storage. Several proposals for renovations to the building were made over the decades, though only a few were actually constructed. Beyond renovations to the central building, some of the special research divisions were relocated to different locations—dispersing the amount of material accessed through the Reading Rooms of the Central

Building—thereby distributing the amount of storage space needed across locations. Relocating material to external storage annex spaces has further accommodated collection growth. Essentially, each strategy—whether rearranging, replacing, renovating or relocating—is a compromise. They are each imperfect solutions reconciling the ever-growing physical mass of the collection and the finite amount of available space. Each strategy sacrificed a component of the ideal system, which is all too often the experience of the researcher in the reading room.

The classification, organization, cataloging, tracking, and distribution of material are the most pressing concerns in a library; without a clear system to find material the library cannot function. Several different systems are familiar to the average user. The Dewey Decimal Classification is common in many public libraries, while many university libraries use the classification system developed by the Library of Congress. The classification scheme at the New York Public Library is unique. Called Billings Classification and first published in 1899, it was developed by library Director John Shaw Billings to reconcile the consolidation of the three founding collections. Like the Dewey Decimal and Library of Congress Classifications, Billings' is relative and subject based, shelving books according to subject matter; each book about a particular subject would be located in a given section of the stacks. For instance, in the Billings Classification books about the history of the United States are found in the section starting with I. These sections that can be further broken down to even more specific subject areas: section IB relates to the constitution, section IBD general works of constitutional history.<sup>8</sup> In this system new acquisitions are added into the appropriate categories as they arrive, relative to the surrounding books about similar subject matter.

The Billings system is not perfect. Far from flexible, many new subjects had been developed by the 1950s but were unaccounted for in the system; it was very difficult to see how they could be made to fit. At this point, the research library could have switched to the more prevalent Library of

Congress Classification, but, in 1956, the Library opted to switch to a fixed order system to increase shelving efficiency.<sup>9</sup> In a subject-based system, books are shelved irrespective of size, meaning that small books are placed next to tall ones, with the tallest governing the height of the shelf. The space between the bottom of the shelf above and the shortest books is considered lost. In order to add new books to the system, enough space must be left throughout every shelf to facilitate their addition, space that could be used more efficiently. In the fixed order system adopted by the library, books are shelved by size and acquisition date, regardless of subject matter, this eliminates the 20 to 50 percent lost shelf space inherent in a subject based system.<sup>10</sup>

While the fixed order system helps to save space, it makes some tasks much more difficult. Even though the stacks are closed—no reader can enter this space to look for the book they need—librarians could help patrons look for material by entering the stacks, browsing specific sections in their stead. Browsing—a search tactic involving looking not for a specific book title, but rather the books in a subject field located in a defined area of the stacks in a subject based system—is impossible in a system dictated by size and date of acquisition. This is one of the reasons why many of the special research divisions continued to use the Billings Classification long past the major shift to the fixed system. Also, the switch to a fixed order system adds another level of difficulty to the job of the librarians in charge of collections development.<sup>11</sup> It is no longer possible for these librarians to walk through the stacks to gain a sense overall sense of the composition of the collection, which, until the fixed system was implemented, was a one-to-one physical display of the currently digital database.

Shelving books by size probably did ease the transition to the most current space saving classification system: barcoding. At the ReCAP (Research Collections and Preservation Consortium) facility in Princeton New Jersey, the new home of the majority of the New York Public Libraries research collections, books are stored in a high-density, environmentally controlled facility. The collection is sorted based on size and placed in trays

stored on shelves accessed by a fork lift: it resembles a typical warehouse operation. In order to track the material location in the facility, each book, book tray and shelf location is given a unique barcode, which is scanned and verified to indicate the books' exact position in the warehouse.<sup>12</sup> In the warehouse storage system, each tray of books eliminates the final variable of space not controlled in the fixed classification system; the sizing controls for the width of the book as well as the height.

Shelves of books and collections of daily newspapers take up a great deal of space. A second strategy in the search for space saving solutions is the replacement of these objects, reducing the amount of space that ostensibly the same content occupies within the stacks. Transferring content from its native paper format to alternative formats began as a method to preserve materials in fragile condition. Microfilming or Microphotography is used to create microscopic images—images that cannot be read without the use of a magnifying device<sup>13</sup>—allowing copies of documents to be made for preservation purposes without significantly adding to the bulk of the collection. Common microform formats include microfilm, which is wound on reels, or microfiche, which are flat sheets of photographic film; both formats require machines to magnify the image in order for it to be read.

The New York Public Library began microfilming content in 1934, adding 59 reels to the collection by the end of that year. The benefits of microfilming as a space saving measure soon became clear to institutions like the NYPL. One 35mm roll of microfilm 100 feet in length can store the equivalent of 800 images of broadsheet newspaper pages. Nicholson Baker describes this tendency in *Double Fold Libraries and the Assault on Paper*:

But the main reason microfilm (and its rectangular cousin, microfiche) has always fascinated library administrators is, of course, that it gives them a way to clear the shelves—to “expand without expanding,” in the words of a full page Xerox-UMI advertisement in the July 1976 issue of *Microform Review*. The picture in the ad is of a squeezed, feather shedding American eagle; the headline is AMERICA'S SPACE PROGRAM IS IN TROUBLE:

We don't have enough of it. Space. Not in the cities. Not on the land, and,

as we don't need to tell you, not in the libraries. University Microfilms can give you more space. More space translates as more ways to expand without expanding, more options open.

Serials Management in Microform is our own slum clearance program.<sup>14</sup>

By 1969, the New York Public Library had produced a microfilm collection of over 40,000 reels, the equivalent of 200,000 volumes. Rather than just use the microform copies as versions accessible to readers while the otherwise fragile original material was carefully protected and stored, microfilming was used as an opportunity to offload material that otherwise would occupy a great deal of stack space. For instance, the Library once owned the complete run of Joseph Pulitzer's New York *World*, but it has since been microfilmed in black and white, and the million page print edition is no longer part of the library collection, replaced with an imperfect copy.<sup>15</sup> The Library began to make decisions about what material it considered important enough to keep based primarily on spatial restraints. These decisions degraded the quality of the collection; while the microfilm copy preserves some of the content of the original, much is lost. Reading a broadsheet newspaper is considerably different than peering at a microfilm reader, and colour illustrations reduced to black and white can lose basic legibility. The practice became even more common; in the New York Public Library "Memorandum on Space" dated December 1969, several projects were recommended to alleviate some of the concerns in the building. Recommendation No. 28 states "Although miniaturization has been thought of up to now primarily in relation to preservation of deteriorating materials, it must be considered also as a partial solution to the space problem. Even the most common form of microfilm (35mm) results in a 95% reduction in space."<sup>16</sup>

If microfilm promises a reduction in the physical size of the collection, digitization is even more spatially economical; technology is continuously increasing its storage capabilities. The New York Public Library was one of the initial participants in Google's Google Book Search Library Project in

2004, with Harvard, Stanford, Oxford and the University of Michigan. As of 2013, the Google database includes over 30 thousand scanned books.<sup>17</sup> The New York Public Library allowed Google to scan books in the public domain, not currently under copyright protection. The library has made many efforts to work with digital scanning projects, partnering with several other institutions and business. In 2009 the Library announced a partnership with Kirtas Technologies, a company specializing in a digitize-on-demand service.<sup>18</sup> The Library also recently partnered with the Digital Public Library of America, a not-for-profit “large-scale, collaborative project working towards the creation of a unique and consolidated digital library platform.”<sup>19</sup> Additionally, the New York Public Library has developed several in-house digital projects, from the NYPL Digital Gallery, a collection of 800 thousand images from several of the library collections, to the diverse projects of NYPL Labs, a group that calls itself a “digital innovation unit doing experiments around library collections and services.”<sup>20</sup>

Unlike the microfilm initiatives, which led to the discarding of material, the NYPL's digital initiatives do not appear to have resulted in the replacement of print items at this point. However, these digital projects contextualize the current institutional attitude towards the physical collection. If all physical material at the New York Public Library is accessible through digital surrogates, the necessity of immediate access to the original source material becomes less essential. In the 1958, the Division Chiefs of the Reference Library compiled a report discussing the importance of a physical addition to the Central Library building to house the growing collection and number of users. Called “The Reference Department: Its Nature; Use and Staff; Space and Financial Problems”, the report was adamant about the need for more physical space at the central library, given the anticipated growth of the collection, “until such time as technological advances make possible centralized storage and rapid transmission and reproduction at place of need.”<sup>21</sup> Depending on the type of research being conducted and the quality of the copy, instant access to digital material could be a suitable alternative; it could be the technological

advance these librarians were anticipating. Currently, however, it is not the case for the whole collection. A large amount of material remains to be digitized and the digital copies do not yet communicate all of the tangible qualities of the print source material; relative size, thickness, paper quality, and other haptic characteristics.

The iron bookstacks of the New York Public Library were designed as an ideal system based on the need for a library page to travel within the stacks to retrieve material. The shelves were just as tall as an average man could be expected to reach and the aisles between each set of shelves were made wide enough to allow the page space to bend down and read the call numbers of the books on the lowest shelf. These stacks and aisles were then arranged on a regular grid with a centralized system for transporting books to and from the Reading Room above. Integrating the stacks with the structure, while economizing on the space used for this system, makes changing that structure almost impossible. No physical additions have been possible in the stacks themselves. The only renovation undertaken to increase the amount of storage space in the stacks was the conversion of a portion of the basement below stack level one to book storage.

Many additions to the building, specifically to increase the stack capacity have been proposed. In 1928, the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees resolved to accept plans for an extension to the building submitted by Thomas Hastings, the original architect of the project. Funding was sought from various sources though nothing came of these plans.<sup>22</sup> In the New York Public Library Archives and Manuscripts division, there are microfiche copies of plans that show an incredible proposal to fill both the North and South Court with additional bookstacks. The proposed stacks would then connect above the existing catalog room and extending a further four stories. New public reading rooms are depicted on the third floor, adjacent to the existing Catalog Room and Main Reading Room, with an additional large reading room on the eighth floor. Presumably overseen by New York City Architect Aymar Embury in his role as a senior member

of Robert Moses' Department of Parks, this proposal would have added thirteen stack levels to the existing storage capacity of the main stacks.<sup>23</sup> As fantastical as the proposal is, it demonstrates consideration of the Courts as one of the key areas where the library could be expanded.

In 1961, Bloch & Hesse Architects completed a "Survey Study and Report For the Rehabilitation of the Mid-Manhattan Building Group of the New York Public Library" which focused on two concerns for the NYPL; finding space for a "New Library" catering to the needs of the general adult and student population and the importance of finding more space for the research collection. Recommendations included building in the courtyards, excavating under the east and west terraces and a future extension of the Library under Bryant Park.<sup>24</sup> While at the time this last suggestion was not considered a "priority project," the Bryant Park Stack Extension (known by its acronym "BPSE", pronounced "bipsee") is currently the only fully realized renovation to the building that prioritizes research collections storage.

Construction began in 1988; the stack extension was built in coordination with renovations to Bryant Park, the New York Public Library's neighbor to the west. The extension is built only 30 feet below grade to avoid blasting through bedrock, leaving room for only two stack levels and 6 feet of earth below the grass of the central lawn.<sup>25</sup> Between the opening of the Library in 1911 and the construction of BPSE, the nature of bookstack design had changed immensely. While the stack design patented by Bernard Green and built by Snead and Company was efficient, aisles and not books dominated the majority of the plan. The Bryant Park Stack Extension would use the latest book storage technology "movable aisle compact shelving." This shelving system is intended to reduce the wasted space accumulated in the aisles needed for Library pages to access the shelves.<sup>26</sup> The Bryant Park Stack Extension was built with one movable aisle for every eight stacks; the eighth stack is fixed and aligned with the structure of the space, while the seven movable stacks in between are operated electronically to open the aisle space where required. Electronic

weight sensors are included in the system to ensure that aisles are not closed while library employees occupy the aisle space.<sup>27</sup> This project was completed in 1991, though it has never been completely functional. One floor of the structure never reached a level of climate control that could allow for the storage of the research collection. An eight million dollar donation from NYPL Trustees Howard and Abby Milstein should provide the funding necessary for a project to renovate the lower floor of the stack extension, adding 30,000 square feet of on site storage space.<sup>28</sup>

Since the first real renovation adding storage space to the building occurred years after memorandums and reports called for increased book storage space, the challenges and cost of renovating the Central Research Branch in Midtown Manhattan are obviously great. In addition to the space-saving changes to the shelving of books and the microfilming of newspapers, the Library looked elsewhere to find space to store the Research collection. The first replacement or “Annex” storage space was purchased by the New York Public Library in 1933. Located on 25th Street in Manhattan, the Annex was used to store 300,000 duplicate newspaper volumes. A few years later, the entire newspaper division was moved to the 25th Street Annex. A second Annex building, situated much closer to the Central Branch on West 43rd Street, was purchased in 1959. The materials from the 25th Street Annex were transferred to this new location, along with lesser used materials from the Central Building. Not purposely constructed to store books, renovations were undertaken to make these buildings suitable for collections storage. Though there was a small reading room in the 43rd Street Annex, where researchers could consult material if they were making extensive use of the collection, these buildings were never intended for public use.

Dispersing the collection among new thematic research branch locations was another architectural strategy used to manage some of the spatial problems in the Central Branch through replacement facilities. Three additional research branches were designated through Manhattan. The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts located at the Lincoln Centre

opened in 1965; it is comprised of both research and circulating material specifically related to the performing arts. The Dance Collection, Music Division, and Theatre Collection were moved to the new research area of the library, freeing up additional stack space in the central research branch. The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in Harlem at the 135th Street Branch was designated a research library in 1972. There was no direct space saving associated with the designation of this particular center, as the Schomburg collection had been a part of the 135th Street Branch Library since it was originally donated in 1926.<sup>29</sup> The fourth research library opened in 1995. The Science Industry and Business Library (SIBL) located in the former Altman Department Store was described by Paul LeClerc, the president of the New York Public Library at the time, as “a prototype of the 21st Century Library.”<sup>30</sup> The hundred million dollar project was designed to work with both the traditional print collections in science, technology and business and act as a center for digital research focused on offering free public access to digital hardware including desktop computers and CD-ROMs. It was looking ahead to the future of library service as predicted in the decade before the building opened in 1995—this was a year before Google was founded, two years before the first smart phone, and six years before the launch of Wikipedia—which has quickly become outdated.

The New York Public Library is currently reversing the collections dispersal strategy. The Central Library Plan calls for the sale of the eighteen year old Science, Industry and Business Library, with plans to reintegrate its programs and collections back into the Central Branch. The strategy is to centralize as many services as possible; however the vast majority of the collection has already been relocated to an external depository where books are efficiently stored until requested by a researcher. The system described above was championed by Charles William Elliot, president of Harvard College from 1869 to 1909. When Elliot looked through the circulation document of the Gore Hall library, he noted that not all books were

circulated equally. Books that were not used as often could be stored more effectively if separated from the rest of the collection.

Eliot considered books ‘sufficiently accessible if they could be delivered within twenty-four hours,’ and opposed spending millions of dollars on storage facilities just so readers could have their requests filled in minutes. He considered browsing an after-hours pastime, not an essential means of scholarship, for he argued that consulting books in library stacks was an “unscientific” approach because no collection was in fact complete. He proposed that all libraries in the Boston area, for example, should store their disused books in a common warehouse, with duplicates discarded. He was opposed to classified storage and shelving books by size.<sup>31</sup>

Just over a century later this description of book storage is essentially being applied as part of the Central Library Plan. The ReCAP facility, located on the Princeton Campus in New Jersey, is shared by Princeton, Columbia and the New York Public Libraries, though at this point they still retain their individual collections. Books are all processed in a central location, and then stored in one of five currently constructed warehouse modules. There is room to expand the storage facility, more than doubling its capacity, while maintaining the same processing facility.<sup>32</sup>

By creating a remote depository with an incredibly large capacity and space to expand in the foreseeable future, the New York Public Library has found a solution to its space problem. The most readily accessed material will remain in Manhattan, stored in the special reading rooms and the newly enlarged Bryant Park Stack Extension. The remainder of the collection has been transferred to New Jersey. This leaves the aboveground stacks below the main reading room empty. Although this solution seems to solve the space problem it is not without consequences. If every solution has been a compromise, if rearranging the collection by changing the catalog, replacing newspapers with microfilm copies, and renovations to the basement have had implications to the way research is conducted, so too will the relocation of the collection in a different state. An average retrieval time measured in days rather than minutes has been deemed acceptable. A century after the building was constructed completing research at the New York Public

Library has become much more difficult.

Most importantly, the displacement of the collection, the architectural surgery on the heart of the building, indicates a distinct change in the values of the New York Public Library as an institution. While there are obvious, centuries-long difficulties in accommodating an ever-growing collection in a finite space, the fact that the NYPL has decided to relocate the research collection indicates that the physical material at the core of its identity—the very reason why it deserves to be ranked alongside institutions like the Library of Congress and the British Library—no longer deserve to be at the physical core. Rather than working to renovate the stacks, rather than blasting through the bedrock to find a home for the research collection, it is being relocated to a different city, miles away.

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*Shelf Space: A careful inventory of the shelving in the building by Mr Henderson and myself has brought out the following:*

*The vacant shelves and the unused parts of partially filled shelves will hold from 225,000 to 250,000 volumes. As we add about 55,000 volumes a year, there is room for a little over four years' growth. By removing duplicates that can be spared, space for one more year can be obtained. After that we have no choice but to box some of the books, or crowd them to such an extent that additional assistants will be required to care for them, and the service to the public will be seriously delayed. Even now there is so little vacant space that much shifting is required whenever sets of books are received. This condition will, of course, get worse until the five or six years spoken of above pass and the limit is reached.*

—THE “SPACE” MEMORANDUM  
APRIL 12, 1926

## READING ROOM

There is currently a section of the New York Public Library website dedicated to explaining the proposed “42nd Street Renovation” plans; a sales pitch aimed to sell the plan’s benefits, legitimacy, and support. A section titled “Fulfilling a Historic Mission” describes the original founding intentions for the 42nd Street building as a center of both research and circulating services for the New York Public Library system. This brings the current rhetoric of the Central Library plan in alignment with the founding history of the institution. While there is no direct misinformation—the inscription above the marble fireplace in the Trustees Room does indeed read “The City of New York has erected this building for the free use of all the people”—this 700 word summary of the history of the institution<sup>1</sup> deliberately misrepresents the entire relationship between the circulating and reference branches of the New York Public Library.

Until 2009 the Library was a unified system in name alone. Throughout the history of the institution, the Library consisted of two separate systems: the research collection and the circulating branches. The system of governance and finance differed; private foundations have primarily

supported the research libraries, while the branch libraries were mainly funded by the City of New York. These two types of libraries—circulation and research—have inherently different organizations, objectives and dynamics. In *Planning Academic and Research Library Buildings*, “an understanding of the special nature of an individual institution—its organization, objectives, and dynamics as well as the community it serves.”<sup>2</sup> is designated the matter of first importance in planning a library. Decisions about the building—priorities, program, budget—are made based on the nature of the institution. It then follows that the objectives of the institution are embodied in the building itself. In many libraries typology can aid in these decisions, but the unique nature of the New York Public Library defies typology. The efforts to reconcile these two different institutions, or conversely to keep them separated, are embodied in the spatial history of the Central Library; each architectural decision, from the original planning and design of the building to the current renovation, is an indication of the organization’s vision for the New York Public Library.

The trustees of the New York Public Library never intended to support a circulating system. Phylis Dain, a celebrated library historian who extensively researched the New York Public Library, summarized the prevalent attitude of the founding trustees in *The New York Public Library: A History of Its Founding and Early Years*:

Caldwaller said privately in 1911, long after the fact, that “this inferior business” of circulation finally undertaken by the New York Public Library... was “something not within [the] contemplation” of the initial consolidating corporation. Yet it should seem from his own statements and actions during the Public Library’s first years that it was then considered, if reluctantly and sporadically, to be only a matter of time before the trustees would commit themselves to circulation work. The New York Public Library could of course, as Caldwalder pointed out in 1900, have found more than enough range for its income and efforts in serving the community’s reference and research needs. Most of the trustees would not be especially concerned with the education and entertainment of the masses, and their choice of Billings as Director indicated their preoccupation with research collections rather than popular libraries.<sup>3</sup>

The Library they envisioned, anchored by the Astor and Lenox collections, was centered on research. The precedents they looked to—the Library of Congress, la Bibliotheque Nationale, the British Museum Library—were concerned with creating libraries that followed an ancient type; the Universal Library. These monumental structures house and protect both the collected work of a nation and the references deemed important enough to preserve for all of humanity. Billings' original sketch of the Library program and the plan included in the "Terms of the First Competition" do not give any indication of space for a public lending library. Of primary importance was the accommodation of a sophisticated book stack to house the collection, and a practical reading room where patrons could access these books. Using a closed stack system meant the librarians had absolute control of the collection; only trained pages and librarians could access the stacks, meaning all distribution of books was monitored. Even the location of the reading room can be seen as a design decision appropriate to the goal of a universal library. Rather than giving immediate access to the collection by locating the reading room on the ground floor, readers must climb to the top floor of the building, reducing the number of casual occupants.

However, the combined resources of the Astor and Lenox Libraries and the fortune from the Tilden Trust were not great enough to finance the construction of the library envisioned. It was necessary for the trustees to work with the City of New York to ensure public funding of the construction of the consolidated library building. Thus, a show of support for the idea of a circulating collection accessible from the new library building was needed to gain the support of the public, and in turn the support of the city.<sup>4</sup> The "Terms for the Second Competition" do include a space for a lending delivery room, placed in the north courtyard, described in the schedule of rooms as requiring a "delivery counter at least 60 feet long; seats for 150 waiting; 2,000 feet of shelving; catalogue space; bulletin boards; about 16,000 sq. ft" as well as a "small reference collection."<sup>5</sup> This was an afterthought to the previously established program, adding the circulating branch without compromise the strength of the design of the

research library. However, the simultaneous introduction of the current 42nd Street basement entrance leading to the Lending Delivery Room, does establish a trend in the design of branch libraries; it was considered incredibly important for branches to be easily accessible by the public.

In 1900, as the dismantling of the reservoir began at the site of the Library, the City Comptroller asked the Board of the New York Public Library if they would investigate the buildings, finances and structure of the circulating libraries in the city. Several of the small lending libraries were receiving funding from the city, which was simultaneously funding the construction of the 42nd Street Library; the city wanted to ensure the money it appropriated on behalf of the libraries was being used as effectively as possible.<sup>6</sup> Billings investigated fourteen libraries in Manhattan, of which six were independent circulating libraries, and compiled a report with four key recommendations:

- I. That the Municipal Authorities of New York should make appropriation for free public libraries in the City for the year 1901, under such conditions and restrictions as will ensure the organization of a definite central system of work with satisfactory supervision and accountability.
- II. That one of the existing Library corporations in the City be requested to undertake the organization of such a system, the details as regards forms of accountability for funds and property being subject to the approval of the Comptroller.
- III. That the corporation selected to devise the system referred to should also act as the central authority for the approval of the objects of expenditure for each of the several libraries entitled to grants of funds under the State Library law, for making systematic inspections of such libraries with reference to the character and amount of work done by each, and that it should make a full report to the municipal authorities of what has been done during the year, with recommendations as it may deem best.
- IV. While it may be possible at some future time to organize a general system applicable to Greater New York it is not expedient, in our judgement at this time, to do more that include in the proposed system the Boroughs of Manhattan and The Bronx.<sup>7</sup>

These recommendations did not specifically indicate that Billings believed that the New York Public Library should be the Library corporation in charge of the organization of a centralized circulating library system, but it was quite apparent that the new, centrally located building in the midst

of construction was in the best possible position to become a centralized administration facility.

Billings had begun to focus to the administration of a circulating library system, most likely a result of the survey of libraries he had submitted to the City. He likely realized the amount of effort and money it would take to develop a system of circulating branch libraries to complement the world class research library he was responsible for creating. As such, he had been in talks with the industrialist Andrew Carnegie, a trustee for the Free Circulating Library, throughout the winter about a major donation to the Circulating Branches of the New York Public Library.<sup>8</sup> The independent circulating branches formed a second wave of consolidations with the New York Public Library, beginning with the Free Circulating Library in early 1901. On March 12, 1901, the day after he sold his steel company to J.P. Morgan, Carnegie announced he would be working with the New York Public Library and the City of New York to fund the construction of branch libraries throughout the city, donating \$5,200,000, over twice the amount received from the Tilden Trust.

The Circulating Branches have quite a different character than the Central Library; they have different objectives. The first Chief of the Circulating department, Arthur E. Bostwick, the former director of the Free Circulating Library, wrote about the characteristics of a modern library in his 1910 book, *The American Public Library*:

The lending of books for home use, free access to shelves, cheerful and homelike library buildings, rooms for children, cooperation with schools, inter-library loans, longer hours of opening, more useful catalogues and lists, the extension of branch-library systems and of traveling and home libraries, coordination of work through lectures and exhibits--the thousand and one activities that distinguish the modern library from its more passive predecessor.<sup>9</sup>

The conditions Bostwick describes are similar to those endorsed by the UNESCO Public Library Manifesto, which focus on childhood development and providing resources locally.<sup>10</sup> These characteristics are common to the public lending library typology; not that of the universal

library, the original objective of the New York Public Library trustees. Bostwick also had ideas about how these characteristics could be expressed architecturally in the Carnegie branch libraries. To engage with the public, Bostwick recommended that “every library building should advertise itself as such, by having a reading room near enough to the sidewalk level for passers by to look as it were into a show window and see the readers”<sup>11</sup> The Executive Committee decided to appoint three architects to propose a way of designing 40 libraries with the Carnegie money. The architects, Charles F. McKim, John M. Carrere, and Walter Cook, proposed that there be a general uniformity of design, scale and material in order to create a unified language of library branches across the city. They suggested that a committee of capable architects, each responsible for a certain number of projects but working cooperatively, undertake the design and construction of the branches. The Advisory Committee of Architects contracted by the Library was composed of the three firms belonging to the consultants; McKim, Mead and White, Carrere and Hastings, and Babb, Cook and Willard.<sup>12</sup> These architects incorporated some of the functional suggestions of Bostwick and Billings in the design of the library branches, but the buildings were quite traditional, forgoing the suggestion of a “show window” considered inappropriate for civic architecture.

It was left to the city to appropriate the land on which the Carnegie branches would be built. The locations of the new libraries were considered incredibly important. In a letter to the Mayor, the trustees of the New York Public Library wrote to ask that these new libraries be situated as “conspicuously” as possible:

The Trustees are of the opinion that in establishing branch libraries it is of great importance to establish them, as far as possible, in conspicuous positions on well frequented streets. In some measure the same principles should be applied that would govern in the selection of a site for a retail store. The fact that a branch library is constantly before the eyes of the neighboring residents so that all are familiar with its location will undoubtedly tend to increase its usefulness.<sup>13</sup>

If the architecture of the branches eschewed the retail principles embodied

in the “show window,” the location of the libraries could still follow that example, siting the branches on busy streets, where they would be easily accessible to citizens as they went about their daily lives. Though this ideal was not always possible, it was one of the underlying principles that directed the development of the New York Public Library circulating branch system.

The governing structure that followed the consolidation of the circulating branches with the New York Public Library and the Carnegie gift was anything but straightforward. The circulating libraries were overseen by the Circulating Committee, which in turn was supervised by the Board of Trustees. “The peculiar organization” of the New York Public Library system into two departments, unequal in status, led to an odd situation where, “the Circulation Chief ran a system that grew into the largest in the world, but he remained subordinate to a Director and had direct contact with the Committee on Circulation rather than the full board.”<sup>14</sup> This structure, which was only recently changed, dictated the relationship between the Circulating and Research Branches of the New York Public Library for the remainder of the century; impacting the architecture of the Central Library. Administration for both the circulating and reference divisions was based at the Central Branch, but the community of users was quite separate. The branch libraries serve the needs of the local community; small, useful reference collections in each location, open stacks for browsing, while still providing access to the entire circulating collection of books throughout the system. Another focus was the creation of specialized programs for different types of readers, especially children. Meanwhile the Central Library—while indeed housing a lending library—continued to develop the research collection, dramatically increasing the number of works available. The closed stacks reaching capacity just over a decade after the building opened.<sup>15</sup>

“By the Numbers,” a second section to the New York Public Library website dedicated to providing information about the renovation of the 42nd Street Central Library, reveals a few of the statistics surrounding

the renovation. “Double the Space, Restore the Attendance” charts the attendance at the Central Library using a bar graph from the opening in 1911. This graph shows the use of the Library increasing dramatically, peaking at just over four million visitors, through to the mid 1940’s, before dropping to around three million visitors to 1970. At that point the usage dropped dramatically, averaging just over a million visitors over the past four decades. The promise of the 42nd Street renovation is illustrated in the projected usage; a surge of over 4 million visitors in the years after the completed renovation should match the busiest years in the Library’s history.<sup>16</sup> Like the brief summary of the relationship between the Circulating Branches and the Central Library, this graphic does present the facts. What it does not include are the reasons behind each change in usage, it does not show the story behind the numbers.

When the Library opened in 1911, the Main Reading Room had desk space for 768 readers. The additional Special Collection Reading Rooms throughout the building had enough space for just under 800 readers. Even so, the “Space Memorandum,” issued April 12, 1926 and included in the May Library Committee meeting minutes, included an entire section about the overcrowding of the reading rooms:

For a number of years the reading rooms have been over-crowded on certain days. During the past winter again and again every seat in practically every reading room has been filled, and readers have turned away because they could find no place to sit. This has happened in spite of the fact that we have restricted the use of the rooms to those coming to use library books, and have placed in the special reading rooms many extra chairs.<sup>17</sup>

Even with limits placed on who could enter the Library, it was so popular that the public reading areas were perpetually filled past capacity. As with the stack space, the memorandum called for an increase in the amount of “public space.” This memorandum and its supporting statistics led to a call for renovation. Thomas Hastings drew plans for the extension of the Library and submitted them to the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees, who resolved that the plans be accepted in March, 1928.<sup>18</sup> Edwin Anderson, the current Director, made funding appeals for the addition to

the building.<sup>19</sup> The appeals must have been unsuccessful, as no extension to the building took place at that time.

The number of library users did significantly decrease following the Second World War, never again reaching the record numbers of the 1930's, but that did not mean that the Central Library's issues with reading room space had ended. In 1958, a committee of Division Chiefs wrote a comprehensive report documenting and analyzing the Reference Department titled "The Reference Department: Its Nature; Use and Staff; Space and Financial Problems." They opened the report with a clear summary of the objectives of the Reference Department, specifically citing that the Library should not use the title "Reference Department" as the term does not accurately describe the history of the collection and the work still being accomplished:

The collection and the catalog are the product of private benefactions and the efforts of scholar-librarians attempting to anticipate the present and future needs of the researcher... It is a *research* library planned for advanced systematic study by intellectually mature readers. Research, by definition, "requires the scientifically accurate discovery, collection, analysis, valuation and interpretation of data." This Library's acquisitions are geared to the potential needs of research workers who may at some time or another require a publication, no matter where or when it appeared. For example, its collections contains books in many fields whose true and full significance was not generally recognized at the time they were acquired. The Library usually gets only one copy of any publication. Such a single-copy collection is archival. Each acquisition must be regarded as an acquisition for all time. This policy carries special responsibilities for care and preservation and for protection against abuse leading to rapid deterioration.<sup>20</sup>

These librarians believed that one of the major areas of concern at the library lay in confusing the work of a research library, dedicated to creating and preserving a single copy collection built to serve the needs of present and future researchers, with a "house of answers" where the general public came for answers to popular queries, long before they could just "google" the information required.

The report includes an analysis of the usage statistics since the Library opened. In the 1920's enrolment in colleges was increasing, but many

colleges had not yet built libraries of the depth and breadth of the New York Public Library. Therefore the number of users was inflated with students accessing resources they could find no other way. In the 1930's the Works Progress Administration, the largest and most ambitious New Deal agency, centered several projects in the Library; during the Great Depression the unemployed turned to the Library as a resource. This accounts for some of the incredibly high usage statistics of those decades. Upon entering World War II, the rates of library usage dropped, but this was common across libraries in the United States.<sup>21</sup> Here the Division Chiefs argue that what is most debilitating is the inclination to equate the high usage statistics with a properly functioning system:

It is our conviction that in the periods of highest use, the Library was working far beyond its capacity to give good service. Much of this excess use was actually misuse by people who did not need and could not cope with the resources of a research collection.<sup>22</sup>

They believed the problem stemmed from a lack of clarity about the function of the library, the difficulty arising from trying to provide too many services, “trying to be a reading library, a quick fact-finding service, a reference library and a research library.”<sup>23</sup> The Division Chiefs were describing a gap in the New York Public Library System as a whole. Casual readers could find everything they needed in their local circulating library, especially through the catalogue that connected the branch library network. Serious researchers were able to use the incredible resources and collections at the Central Library. However, between these two groups of readers, was a gap; readers with reference questions just beyond the scope of their local branch. Undergraduate students attending college outside of the city, returning to New York on weekends or holidays, had no choice but to turn to the Central Library. Due to the complex conditions under which the library system was formed, the Central Library did not function as the Head Branch of a Circulation Network, but rather a different type of library entirely.

The recommendation of the report was the establishment of a new library that could fulfill the needs of the readers currently in the gap

between the local branch libraries and the research collection. They proposed that the new library “should be in or adjacent to this building since this is, and seems likely to remain, the library center of New York.”<sup>24</sup> More specifically, they believed the best option was “a new building to the rear of the present structure on the property which was originally assigned to the Library, and by modifications of the present building.”<sup>25</sup> There had been calls in the past for renovations to the Central Library, but this was the first that identified the need for the creation of a new type of library to cater to a currently underserved population.

For the next decade, creating a general reference library with extended opening hours and a circulating collection targeted towards adults became one of the primary goals of the New York Public Library. A variety of possible locations were suggested for the new library, both in and around the 42nd Street Building. In a March, 1959 report of the Director to the Board of Trustees, it was suggested that the general reference library could be a one storey addition to the east elevation at grade, forming “a kind of porch or marquee and might add to rather than detract from the architectural interest of the present Fifth Avenue facade.”<sup>26</sup> It was thought that this type of addition could both extend below grade and wrap around the north and south elevations—after further architectural study. Additionally a possible addition to the west side of the library was proposed. In 1960, a statement was drafted that included part of the current renovation plan; to build modern book storage underneath Bryant Park and use the stack space to house the new “popular reference library in the broadest sense, with books on the open shelves.”<sup>27</sup> A year later, the Library hired the architectural firm Bloch & Hesse to complete a “Survey Study and Report on the Mid-Manhattan Building Group of the New York Public Library.” Their report documented the need to find space for both a new general reference library and the need to find adequate space to house the research collections. Among the recommendations were the possibility of building in the courtyards, excavating under the east or west terraces, building within the current building, though in a memorandum on the

report, it was clearly stated that, “the establishment of the ‘New Library’ in a new building would be of more immediate advantage than excavation and construction at the Central Building.”<sup>28</sup>

After the architectural study was complete, the Library decided to move forward with the possibility of locating the “New Library” in a building nearby, rather than undertake a major renovation project. They bought the property at the corner of Fifth Avenue and 40th Street, located diagonally across from the Central Building. At the time of purchase, the property was still occupied, with a lease that could extend almost twenty additional years.<sup>29</sup> Built in 1915, the building was the site of Arnold Constable, one of the oldest specialty stores in the city. The store released floors four, five and six of the building only three years later, allowing the Library to begin planning for the opening of the new branch: the Mid-Manhattan Library.

Officially opened in 1970, this new library contained 350,000 open shelved books—many which could be circulated. The renovation was decidedly modern. A New York Times article written about the opening of the library documents that a delivery boy seeing the library for the first time, “seemed stunned by the bright orange carpets, royal blue upholstered chairs and the gleaming escalators. ‘This is no library, this is a giant cocktail lounge,’ he said.”<sup>30</sup> For all of the glamour, this library opened during a time of financial strain. The Central Library drastically cut hours and spent ten million dollars of its endowment principle just to keep the building running.<sup>31</sup> Architectural critic Ada Louise Huxtable described the context for the addition of the Mid-Manhattan Library and comments on its design in a 1971 article titled “Library as Friend” discussing her love for the Carrere and Hasting building across the street:

This year also brought the Mid-Manhattan Library, an addition across the avenue in the Arnold Constable building to increase the availability of general research and circulation material. The new facility arrived in a year of austerity because it was put into the city’s capital budget about a decade ago and has been slowly inching its way through municipal glue to realization. It represents a careful jigsaw of city, state, Federal and public and private funds. Welcome. It is wonderful to have it. But did it have to be so depressingly

ordinary in design? The trip across the street was all downhill. It makes one hope that the furniture of the mind is what really counts. I don't, of course, believe that for a minute; you can't be literate, or non-educated and non-visual at the same time.<sup>32</sup>

The opening of the Mid-Manhattan Library accounts for the next drop in use at the Central Library, as the targeted patrons began using the new collection—complete with borrowing privileges. Slowly, over the next decade, more of the Arnold Constable Building shifted to library use. In 1975 the store closed for good. The Mid-Manhattan Library was renovated once more; architect Giorgio Cavaglieri unified the interior, leaving the walls white, but color-coding the different areas of the library using brightly colored carpets and chairs. The work was completed in sections, meaning the Mid-Manhattan Library did not need to close for construction. All renovations were completed by 1982 and no major work has been undertaken at the Mid-Manhattan Library since that time.

In addition to the Mid-Manhattan Library, new subject based research centers—the Library for the Performing Arts and Science, Industry and Business Library (SIBL)—also served to draw users from the Central Building. Moving special research divisions to new locations meant savings in collections storage and reading room space. The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, then known as the Library-Museum of the Performing Arts, was part of the much larger Lincoln Center project. Initiated by the Metropolitan Opera and New York Philharmonic, and supported by Robert Moses and John D. Rockefeller, the Lincoln Center was one of the largest cultural projects undertaken in New York City. One of the principles of the project was the interaction between acts of creation with education and scholarship; the benefit of physically juxtaposing complementary programs. The Library was an integral part of that program attracting, “scholars from all over the world”<sup>33</sup> with the Dance collection and the Music and Theatre Research Divisions, moved to a spacious new location from the over-crowded Central Library. Not solely a research facility, the building also houses exhibition facilities, circulating collections

related solely to the performing arts, and a special area just for children.

Like the Mid-Manhattan Library, SIBL is housed in the former location of a historic midtown department store. Located just six blocks south of the Central Branch, the building housed B. Altman from its opening in 1913 to 1990 when the flagship store closed. The New York Public Library purchased a portion of the building fronting Madison Avenue as the location for a new research center. A large selection of circulating books complement SIBL's research collections. But, most of the effort in this library went towards accommodating new technology; providing computer access and establishing workstations where users can connect to the important databases available at the library. Renovated for \$100 million from public and private sources, this branch was hailed as a "showpiece of technology."<sup>34</sup>

The New York Public Library began as two separate systems: research and circulating. Brought together under one name and sharing a common principle, "the free use of all the people," these systems have complimentary but distinct objectives. The purpose of the Research Library lies in its collection. Unique in its composition, the research collection is one of only a few such comprehensive and extensive collections, comfortably listed alongside some of the greatest libraries of the world: the Bodleian Library at Oxford, the British Library in London, the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, the Library of Congress in Washington. The Research Library is neither a national library, supported by a central government, nor an academic library, supported by a larger institution. While New York City has provided capital funding for the library buildings and their maintenance, the majority of the Research Library programs are privately maintained. The initial contributions by Astor, Lenox, and Tilden have been supplemented by generations of philanthropists; the endowment fund supporting the research branches has just reached one billion dollars.<sup>35</sup> Developed over the past 150 years, beginning with Joseph Green Cogswell's first purchases for the Astor Library, the collection is maintained not just for today's needs, but

for those of future researchers, generations from now. Use of the collection is strictly monitored; many of the works are irreplaceable. The books are kept under constant control. They can only be read in particular rooms and cannot be taken out of the building by patrons. Rules against eating and drinking are established to protect the material being read; it is the wellbeing of the collection that is most important.

In contrast, the circulating libraries across New York City do have a large collection of books and other relevant material, but it is the access to that information that is most crucial. The small neighborhood libraries are located within easy walking distance of the majority of the population. The facilities and programs encourage readers to actively participate in gathering new information from books, digital resources, and group discussion. Books can be taken to readers' homes, the park, on the subway; what is most important is easy access. Unlike the fortress constructed to house the research collection, the circulating branches have open shelves, where books can be directly found by readers. The New York Public Library circulating system is one of the largest in the world, founded out of need, supported by the generosity of Andrew Carnegie and operated by the City. In character, it is quite similar to other urban public lending libraries found around the world.

Between these two systems—the research and the circulating—a gap did form, a segment of the population was underserved. The Mid-Manhattan Branch was developed over the course of a several decades to fulfill this last need. Really, the Mid-Manhattan Library functions as a central branch library, a type found in the majority of circulating branch library systems, as studied by the committee who guided its development: libraries in Baltimore, Los Angeles and Brooklyn. Unfortunately, the Mid-Manhattan Library was built in pieces in a time of economic austerity. Though it provided missing resources and services, the building itself has never received the attention it deserved, especially in comparison to the Central Research Library, located just diagonally across Fifth Avenue.

At the 42nd Street Central Research Library, the usage statistics have

dropped significantly from the record levels of the 1930's. However, this is not an indication that the Library is ineffective—it continues to develop its world class research collection—but rather a sign that the efforts over the past century to reduce the strain on its resources are working the way they were intended. Now, the Board of Trustees is in the process of reversing every decision made by previous generations. The 42nd Street Renovation brings the Science Industry and Business Library and the Mid-Manhattan Branch back into the Central Library, selling off the real estate to pay for the gutting of the book stacks that house the precious research collection.

## NOTES

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## NOTES

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22. Ibid, pg 3.
23. Ibid, pg 4.
24. Ibid, pg 7.
25. Ibid, pg 8.
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The New York Public Library Call number:

Author or Periodical: FRONT OF HOUSE,  
Book Title: BACK OF HOUSE  
Date/Vol. No.

Correct and Legible Name and Address Required Indicator No./ Seat No.

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
School or Business \_\_\_\_\_

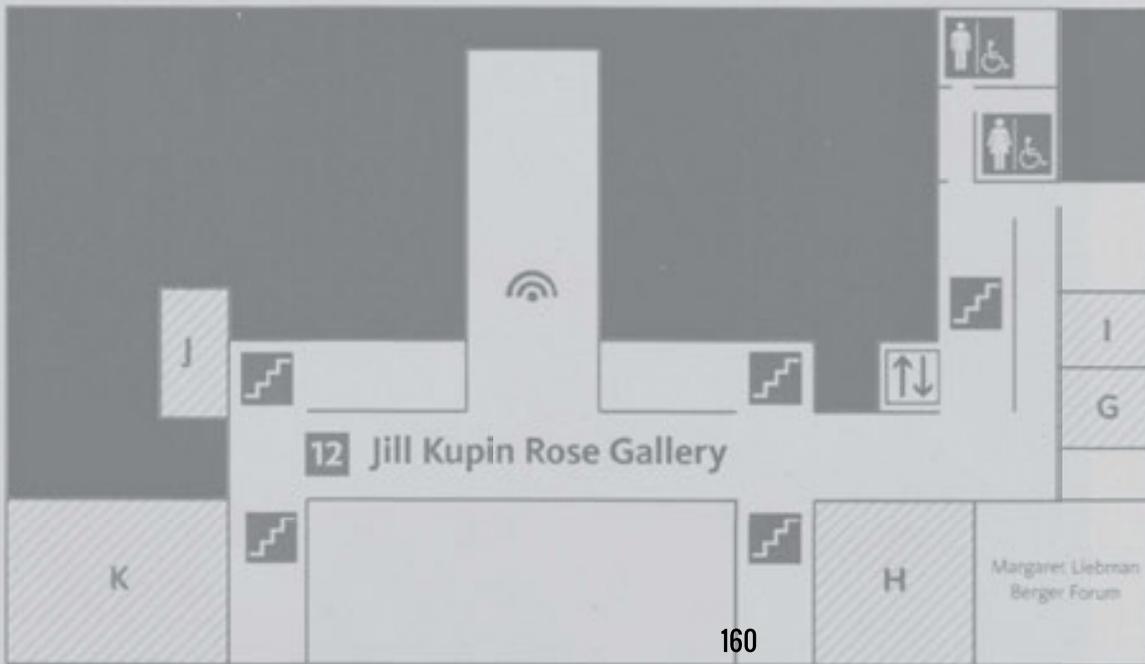
PLEASE PRESS FIRMLY

ACCESS Card Required for Material Form 2th

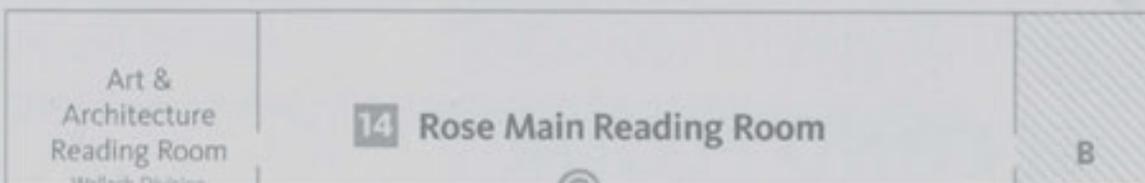
FIRST FLOOR



SECOND FLOOR



THIRD FLOOR



THE SCHWARZMAN BUILDING AT A GLANCE, NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY PAMPHLET

FIGURE 057

The Library, a painstakingly crafted New York City landmark, features some of the most remarkable interior architecture in the city. Astor Hall, the main entrance lobby, is one of the only interior spaces in the city constructed entirely of marble, with vaults designed to be structurally self-supporting. The room is accented with two pairs of marble candelabra, highlighting the names of library donors, carved into the marble. The Main Reading Room spans almost two full city blocks uninterrupted by columns, with an sumptuously carved ceiling inlaid with three panels depicting the sky. Remarkably, this building is also open to the public, freely accessible almost everyday of the year.

Thousands of visitors a year are drawn to the building; a sight to see in a city of landmarks. But, the building is more than a tourist attraction. It is home to one of the largest research collections in the world, which must be consulted with the buildings walls. The infrastructure of the building was designed to facilitate research, ensuring that readers received the material they requested quickly and efficiently. Often the front of house spaces are mirrored by back of house counterparts. Additionally, throughout its history the building has housed a printing press and bindery, a library school, offices for librarians, and the library's director, plus all of the other services that are needed to maintain one of the largest research libraries in the world.

In the current library brochure depicting "The Schwarzman Building at a Glance" the services spaces of the library are left blank, pushed and crowded in a map stretched completely out of scale, shaded. There is no indication of what these spaces actually are, or how they support the Library.





FIGURE 058

Entrance





FIGURE 059

Entrance



FIGURE 060

Corridor



FIGURE 061

Corridor



FIGURE 062

Catalogue



FIGURE 063

Catalogue



FIGURE 064

Programmed



FIGURE 065

Programmed



FIGURE 066

Flexible



FIGURE 067

Flexible





FIGURE 068

Above





FIGURE 069

Below



FIGURE 070

Distribution



FIGURE 071

Distribution



FIGURE 072

Use



FIGURE 073

Use





FIGURE 074

Above





FIGURE 075

Below

To seamlessly provide the services offered in this building, requires not just the grand public rooms, but also places to undertake the work required to keep the building functioning effectively. This service space has always been hidden from view, unobtrusively holding together the public programs of the building. While this work is often accomplished without being noted, its importance to the whole should not be diminished.

For every grand public entrance, explicitly designed to elevate the reader and inspire an uplifting experience, there must be a service entrance, designed to efficiently transport materials from the street to the interior of the building. If the front of house spaces of the Library hold the present reality of the building, the back of house spaces hold the memory of the institution; the card catalog, replaced by computer terminals in the public areas of the building is stored behind the scenes. In the New York Public Library, spaces of service echo public spaces. The expansive floor plate of the reading room marking the extent of the book stacks located in seven levels beneath.

In a landmark building like the New York Public Library, judgements have been made regarding what is worthy of landmarking, what deserves protection. But the building is not just a facade, not just an assemblage of wood and marble carvings, it is also the relationships between public program and hidden services.

The New York  
Public Library Call number:

Author or  
Periodical:

Book Title: **YOU HAVE TO PAY  
FOR THE PUBLIC LIFE**

Date/Vol. No.

**Correct and Legible Name and Address Required** Indicator No./  
Seat No.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

School or Business \_\_\_\_\_

ACCESS Card Required for Material

Form 29b

PLEASE PRESS FIRMLY



188

PAUL STUART FALL 2010 CATALOG NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY PHOTO SHOOT  
FIGURE 076

10:00 am to 6:00 pm Monday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday, 10:00 am to 8:00 pm Tuesday and Wednesday, and 1:00 pm to 5:00 pm Sunday. The New York Public Library Schwarzman Building is open seven days a week for a total of 56 hours. This time is especially important, as the vast majority of the material accessed in this building cannot leave its walls, cannot be circulated. These public opening hours are also the only times when visitors to the city are able to visit the building, to experience the monumental interiors.

When the library opened just over a century ago, the first book requested was retrieved in six minutes. Now, it is common to wait a few days for requested material to arrive from storage facilities “offsite”. The length of time it takes to complete research is consequently stretched, even as technology has sped up many aspects of the research process.

A range of special events punctuate the daily routine of the Library. From author talks and readings to an anti-prom to fundraising galas, many of these events directly relate to Library programs and initiatives. In addition to the events hosted by the Library itself, seven spaces in the Schwarzman Building are available to rent for private and corporate functions. While some of these spaces can be rented during operating hours, the events hosted in public spaces must start one hour after the library has closed to the public.

This section traces just some of these stories, over the course of a week in the Library.

# MONDAY



6:27 AM @moralecommittee

Gloomy forecast for an otherwise very #bright day #nypl #davidstark #event #design

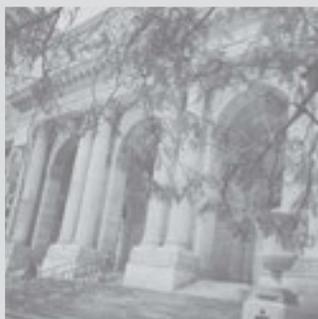


8:34 AM @bgoodick



8:38 AM @nypl

Is the bust of Thomas Hastings wearing a crown of globe lights? Methinks maybe Monday morning is just playing tricks on the eyes... #nypl



9:08 AM @anniebdwy

# 10AM - 6PM



10:23 AM @mr\_mish

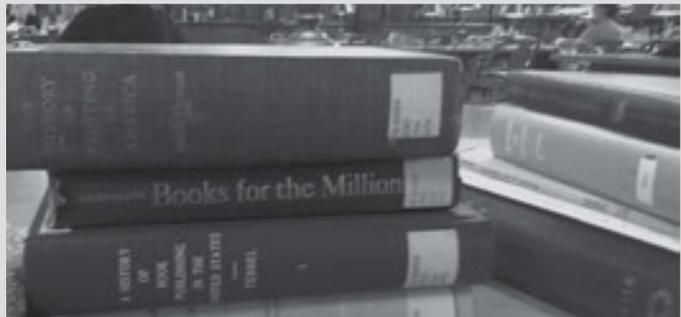


1:46 AM @dalelore



10:48 AM @fashtronaut

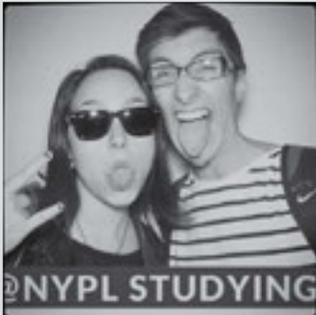
Look familiar? It's the window of #GoodNightMoon at #nypl why childrens books matter #exhibit



11:08 AM OPEN REFERENCE | ROSE MAIN READING ROOM

A few of 20,000 open reference books lining the walls of the Rose Main Reading Room. My starting point for examining the History of Printing in the United States in the century before the consolidation of the library.

RESEARCH: DAY ONE



3:11 PM

@ufds



4:27 PM

@bahiamw



3:55 PM

@the\_rev\_jacob



4:36 PM

@fmakarenko

Le ciel de la #nypl



4:25 PM

@karelone



4:58 PM

@bahiamw



5:25 PM

@vitalia\_nyc

<http://www.nypl.org/support/benefit-events>

*Show your support for The New York Public Library by attending or sponsoring one of our exciting benefit events. Your participation will offer you a unique way to experience the Library, while helping ensure that we advance our mission of providing essential, free services to New Yorkers and the world at large. Contributions to events are tax-deductable and all proceeds benefit NYPL.*



7:35 PM

2013 SPRING DINNER FOR EDUCATION | HONOREES



7:40 PM

@vinovalentinobx



11:01 PM

@vinovalentinobx



9:01 PM

@julgear

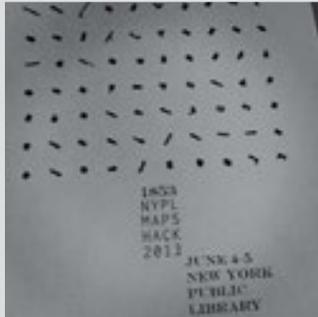
Another successful gala at the #nypl featuring the lovely #dianakrall who rocked the house and couldn't be a more lovely lady. #lovemyjob

# TUESDAY

# 10AM - 8PM



8:14 AM @gemmaifer



10:14 AM @notmariamishka



Map hack! #nypl #maps



2:34 PM @applegracedesigns

Happy Tuesday!  
Thankfully the heat and heavy rains of yesterday have given way to cool, dry, and beautifully sunny weather today.  
#nypl #nyc #tuesday



10:23 AM NYPL LABS | MOBILIZING HISTORICAL GEODATA



3:21 PM @houseofshuks



9:18 AM @catherinemoleski



11:51 AM @catherinemoleski



12:19 PM SUMMER READING 2013 KICK-OFF CELEBRATION



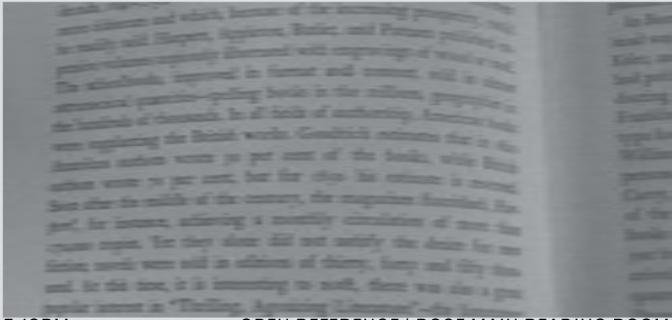
12:05 AM @vinovalentinobx



1:47 PM @natattack1204



4:56 PM @marcsea



5:18PM OPEN REFERENCE | ROSE MAIN READING ROOM

RESEARCH: DAY TWO  
Reference to New York publishers in one of the open reference books in the Rose Main Reading Room. Getting closer to the content that I need for the essay on publishing.



6:23 PM @amps210

The New York public library. Unlike any other in beauty and architecture. #nypl #nyc



7:32 PM @candelaquema



7:41 PM @amps210



5:39 PM @danelmex



7:12 PM @artactivist\_ekh



7:57 PM CELEBRATING FEDERICO GARCIA LORCA



6:21 PM @amaya59



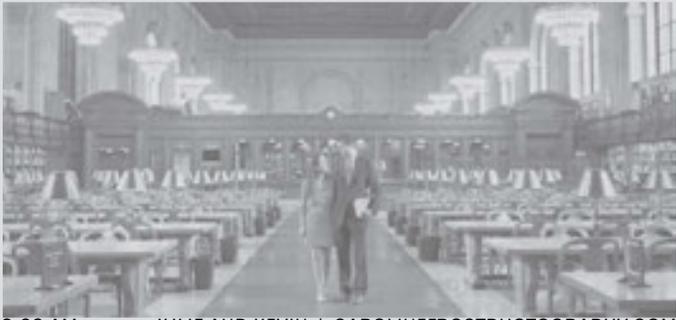
7:32 PM @jarcenas

*LIVE from the NYPL is The New York Public Library's flagship ticketed event series, offering programs that are as unique and engaging as the Library itself, and embody the institution's mission to educate, inform, and inspire the diverse community it serves in New York and beyond. LIVE from the NYPL is made possible with generous support from Celeste Bartos, Mahnaz Ispabani Bartos and Adam Bartos, and the Margaret and Herman Sokol Public Education Endowment Fund.*

<http://www.nypl.org/events/live-nypl/about>

# WEDNESDAY

# 10AM - 8PM



8:28 AM JULIE AND KEVIN | CAROLINEFROSTPHOTOGRAPHY.COM



*The New York Public Library has been a featured setting in many of Hollywood's most famous film and television productions and is a sought-after locale for fashion and editorial photography shoots. A Letter of Intent for all filming and photography requests must be submitted in writing at least 2-3 weeks prior to filming. Please submit to [spev@nypl.org](mailto:spev@nypl.org).*

<http://www.nypl.org/spacerental/filming>



10:44 AM @thundrhawke



12:26 PM @darcythomas



10:53 AM @zxnikxz



1:04 PM @whimsyniche



#dcrit is at #nypl Stephen A. Schwarzman Building Day 3 of #designwriting and #research #summerintensive #microfiche #number7 #newspaper on film



8:58 AM @justapieceofsky



9:13 AM @lokomaikaiokalani



12:12 PM @jarcenas



9:08 AM @mimiritzencrawford



9:37 AM @hannagrnkqvist



12:19 PM @rigolem



1:35 PM @whimsyniche



1:38 PM @oranencodesignsinc



5:19 PM @artistbbgunn



6:37 PM @shlu0218



8:52 PM @listentobonkers



1:50 PM @skingld



5:54 PM @artistbbgunn

My stars, I've never seen such #beautiful doors with #classy initials for the INSIDE of a public #library. Wish I could live in here! #nypl #architecture



10:12 PM @kdh0509



3:00 PM @suzyyayo

RESEARCH: DAY THREE

Book Request Slip for an index to the microfilm archives of New York publisher Harper & Brothers, one of the largest publishers in the United States in the mid 1800s. Currently located offsite.



Ran Into A Dear Former Neighbour #BeautifulDay #WhileAtTheLibrary #nypl #nyc

The New York Public Library Call number: 396 13 1 2242

Author or Periodical: *THE NEW YORK PUBLISHERS* *Harper & Brothers*

Book Title: *THE NEW YORK PUBLISHERS*

Date/Vol. No.:

Contact and Legible Name and Address Required

Name: *ROSE*

Address: *75 HIGHLAND AVE*

Indicator No./ Seat No.:

PLEASE PRESS FIRMLY

6:00 PM BOOK REQUEST SLIP | ROSE MAIN READING ROOM

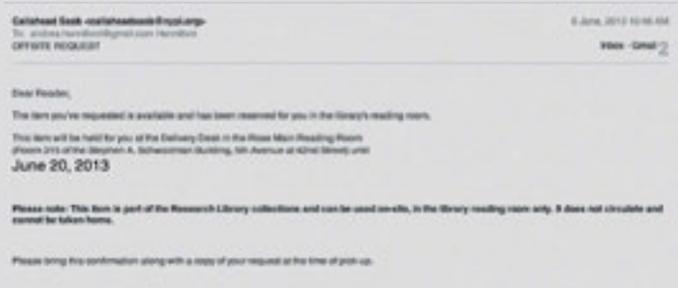
FIGURE 079

THURSDAY

10AM - 6PM



8:27 AM @pedropizano



10:46 AM CALL AHEAD OFFSITE REQUEST NOTICE



4:31 PM @iam88



Email from the "Call Ahead" nypl.com account indicating the book I requested has arrived at the Schwarzman building, and will be waiting for me at the delivery desk for two weeks.

RESEARCH: DAY FOUR



4:51 PM @jingrevilla



12:17 PM @michaeljay74



1:44 PM @designbymar

Getting some work done at the beautiful NY Public Library #nypl



12:46 PM @jteixeira\_



3:11 PM @santiago\_winkie



5:09 PM @vinovalentinobx



5:30 PM @\_blairab

Daring Methods:  
The Prints of Mary  
Cassatt @ #nypl  
#younglion  
#nofilter



6:12 PM @pulkitd86



8:27 PM @flashbang



11:13 PM @thatgenevieve



6:24 PM @flashbang



9:17 PM @pilispocket

Just another work  
night @prfactory  
#amfar2012 #nypl



5:31 PM @\_blairab



6:34 PM @flashbang



10:38 PM AMFAR INSPIRATION GALA 2012



5:53 PM @sarpinio



7:40 PM @factorypr

*Celeste Bartos Forum:*  
*With its 30-foot-high glass saucer dome ceiling, this 6,400 square foot space provides a beautiful setting for wedding receptions, dinners, galas, sales meetings & presentations.*

<http://www.nypl.org/spacerental/event-spaces/schwarzman>

# FRIDAY

# 10AM - 6PM



8:07 AM @elastcamel

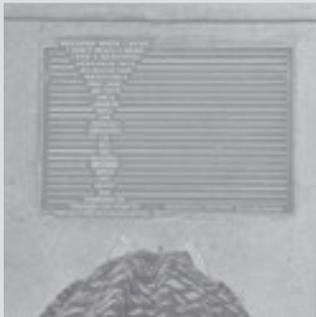


10:12 PM @mrpena

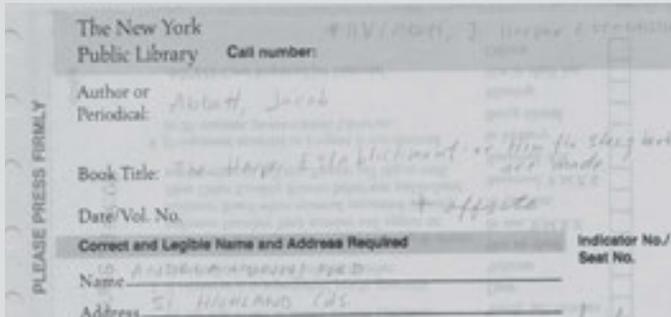
Yeah we're doing the touristy shit!  
 #NYC #5thAve  
 #FifthAve #nypl  
 #NewYorkPublicLibrary



1:53 PM @barbgirl1999



8:12 AM @nypl



11:46 AM BOOK REQUEST SLIP | ROSE MAIN READING ROOM



2:35 PM @titaponte

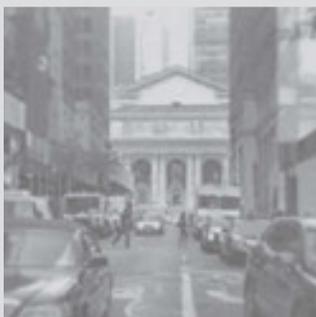
View of the main branch from Madison Ave. So many great research collections here. #nypl #nyc #library #city #research #discovery #imagination #escape #knowledge

Book Request Slip for a book published by Harper & Brothers found using the references in previously requested works. Once again, this book is located offsite.

RESEARCH: DAY FIVE



3:08 PM @aces\_ices



8:21 AM @wildchile



1:22 PM @peakes31



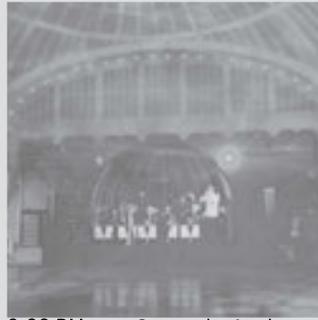
1:31 PM @plusmodelkatherine

Rainy day @ the lib #nypl #newyorkpubliclibrary #nyc #library #shhh #books #billblass #bookwormseverywhere #quiettime #didntreadathing



4:53 PM

@cakeypal



9:03 PM

@everydayfood\_mag



4:55 PM

@cakeypal

The Cocktail Classic  
gala begins! #nypl  
#cocktailclassic #mcc2013  
#mccgala2013



11:57 PM

THE MANHATTAN COCKTAIL CLASSIC 2013



4:55 PM

@cakeypal



10:21 PM

@ladybOnnie



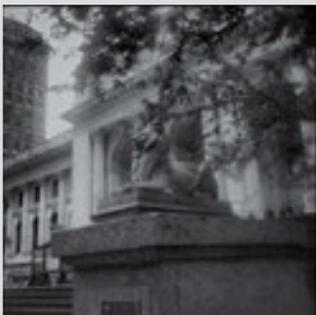
12:13 PM

@well\_la\_de\_da



1:59 AM

@manuel\_c\_



5:59 PM

@dropitlikeahotdog



10:41 PM

@dsikov

Dancing and drinking  
the night away under  
the stars #nypl  
#cocktailclassic  
#mcc2013 #manhattan  
#cocktails #gala  
#gatsbyparty



2:10 AM

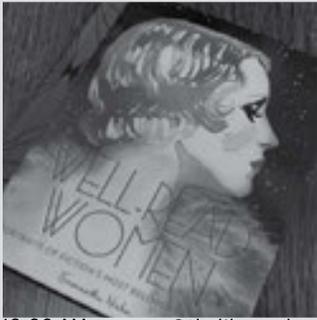
@manuel\_c\_

<http://www.nypl.org/spacerental/event-spaces/schwarzman>

*The magnificent Beaux-Arts building with its seven exquisite rental spaces caters to both intimate gatherings as well as lavish extravaganzas and lends a sense of grandeur and distinction to any occasion. All event fees help to support the Library's collections, services, and programs. Fees available upon request. Appointments are necessary.*



# SATURDAY 10AM - 6PM



10:06 AM @thelibraryshop



11:19 AM @kitsanaphanz

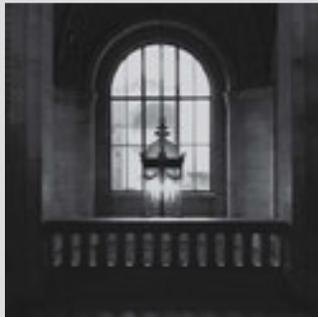
“Be awesome! Be a book nut!” #DrSeuss #nypl #therosemain #readingroom facing south #manhattan #nyc #ny



3:23 PM @mbasquin



10:43 AM @flockingthisway



12:00 PM @willchoi



2:42 PM @scedgley



3:35 PM @valerie\_horn



10:52 AM @lobsterworld



12:07 PM @dataguy

[Learning Landmark] The amazing main entrance portico of the Stephen A. Schwarzman Building of the Main Branch of the New York Public Library. Opened in 1911 and a National Historic Landmark, it is now named after the donor who contributed \$100 million toward its renovation.

Engraved building section illustrating the new Harper & Brothers printing house from the 1855 book *The Harper Establishment or How the Story Books are Made*. At the time, this factory layout revolutionized printing by rationalizing the movement between tasks.

RESEARCH: DAY SIX



2:51 PM

RESEARCH MATERIAL | ROSE MAIN READING ROOM



4:15 PM @radboyukillem

My nana, great grandmother and uncle. Got lucky and found the article at the library. #nypl



5:38 PM @lafawnduhnyc

Bettering Ones-self:  
#arofshaving #artdirection  
#artdirectorsmanual  
#magazinemanual  
#stradacustoms #nypl  
#fakeittillyoumakeit



4:17 PM @piacentinomike



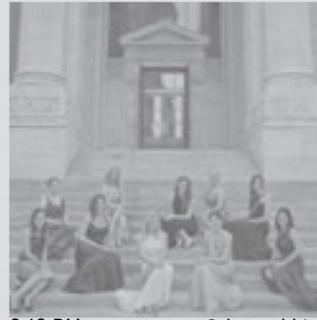
5:42 PM @pattysou



5:24 PM @melisb\_



5:51 PM @msvitri



6:16 PM @daverobbins



7:51 PM @daverobbins

<http://www.nypl.org/spacerental/weddings>

*The The New York Public Library's Stephen A. Schwarzman Building has been voted the Best of Weddings/Venue 2012 by The Knot. There is something magical about getting married in a setting that transports you to another place and time. And how thrilling that such an iconic place can belong to you for just one night. Have your wedding at the Library and make its history a part of your own.*



7:34 PM CRAIG + JESSIE | A SOPHISTICATED LIBRARY WEDDING



7:36 PM @daverobbins



10:27 PM @daverobbins

In 1855, Harper & Brothers published a book in its “Harper’s Story Books” series describing the printing process or “How the Story Books are Made” This book features engravings of every step of the printing process, plans and even a section of their factory and warehouse on Franklin Street in New York City, built after a fire destroyed their original operation in 1853. The book was published and then collected by the Astor Library, as indicated by the embossed stamp on the title page: Astor Library, Lafayette Place, N.Y. Following the consolidation of the New York Public Library in 1895, this book was integrated into the new collection, eventually moved from the Astor Library to the Central Library at 42nd Street, re-catalogued as part of the NYPL collection, and re-labeled as part of the New York Public Library—below the original Astor Library Stamp.

This small book, only about a half inch thick and only slightly bigger than a pocket paperback—actually almost the exact size of an ipad—had been delivered to me to use, free of charge in the Rose Main Reading Room. At over 150 years old it was hard to imagine that this object was half a century older than the room I was sitting in, but the proof was there in the stamp on the title page. This little book had actually been made in the factory illustrated on its pages, long since vanished from Franklin Square. It had seen the Astor Library, had been held by the Librarians in that institution, had made the journey north to its home in the stacks at the new Central Library. Not only that, but the day before it had been in New Jersey, stored in a climate controlled warehouse and had since traveled into the city, through the Lincoln Tunnel back to its home at the New York Public Library.

There is literally no possible digital replacement for the experience of holding that book. This is not the only volume at the New York Public Library with a history. There are works that date back to the origin of printing, and manuscripts that predate even that technology. If buildings contain the memory of a city, embodied in their mass and permanence, books must contain the memory of a civilization.

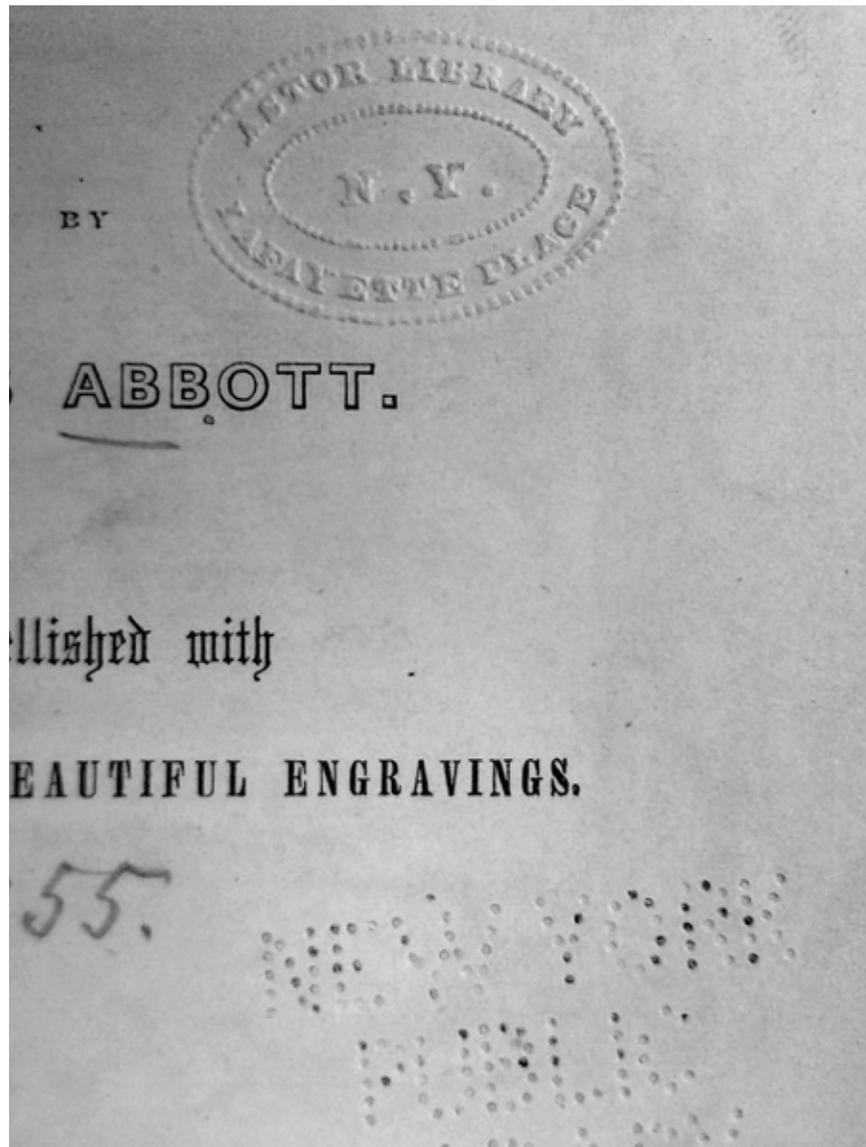


FIGURE 083

*The Haper Establishment or How the Story Books are Made*

# SUNDAY



8:16 AM @b\_wellington

#At the Victoria Beckham Fashion Show. #nyfw2012 #nypl



10:12 AM @victoriabeckham



12:33 PM @nyplspectialevents



10:28 AM VICTORIA BECKHAM | FALL WINTER 2012

*Some of the world's most famous fashion, accessory, and jewelry designers have chosen The New York Public Library's Stephen A. Schwarzman Building to serve as a spectacular backdrop for their runway collections, product launches, press conferences, and advertising campaigns... From the all-marble grandeur of Astor Hall to the warm wood and murals of McGraw Rotunda, we offer the appropriate ambience for any project.*

<http://www.nypl.org/spacerental/fashion>

# 1AM - 5PM



1:35 PM @cakeypal

Sunday afternoon. Writing outside #nypl with the sound of the Puerto Rican pride parade in the background. #nyc



1:36 PM @reginap93



1:57 PM @conradgartz



1:39 PM @reginap93



2:32 PM @michaeljay74



1:53 PM @aguitas02

#whpstraightfacades #newyorkcity #nypl #architecture #building #library #classic #midtown #bryantpark #nyc #ny #manhattan



3:08 PM

@sophistnyc



4:53 PM

@colin\_md



7:37 PM

@boroughed



10:57 PM

@\_eini\_



4:06 PM

@noirbox

Sea of Blue. #NYC  
#nypl #NYCmarathon



9:27 PM

@mrlibrarydude

Courtesy of the  
fantastic NYC Public  
Library #nypl #library  
#books #public  
#manhattan

RESEARCH: DAY SEVEN

The information discovered about the Harper & Brothers printing house is integrated into other research about publishing in New York City. It is one more piece of information integrated into the tapestry of the research thesis.



4:31 PM

RESEARCH MATERIAL | ROSE MAIN READING ROOM

Charles Moore wrote the 1965 article “You Have to Pay for the Public Life” for a *Perspecta* issue considering monumental architecture. Moore investigated contemporary Californian architecture. His analysis included Disneyland and the public life of Disney’s interpretation of an American Main Street—minus any raw edges—circa 1910. To access this version of public space was not free, it could only be experienced with paid admission to the theme park.

At the New York Public Library, the public has access to one of the best examples of monumental architecture in America. This building is not representative of the average public experience at the beginning of the twentieth century, but rather its pinnacle, its aspiration. The Progressive Era’s ideal, the American dream of the self-made man is encapsulated in the structure, material and opulent decoration of the central research library. But the building costs. Ongoing maintenance, resource upkeep and the diverse programs are not free. The New York circulating library system has historically been supported by public funds; the research libraries have been primarily supported privately since before the consolidation.

The building is an asset that has been leveraged to benefit the public aims of the institution. The researchers who benefit from the facilities and the sightseers who flock to the historic building pay for the privilege of use in time. The limited public opening hours of the building as a world-class free research library are augmented with the use of the building as an event space. Named the top wedding venue of 2012 by “the knot” magazine, galas, film shoots, and fashion shows also use this building as a backdrop, contributing to the funding of a public privilege.

# RENOVATION



The original announcement regarding the restructuring of the New York Public Library and the renovation of the 42nd Street Library was made in early 2008. Foster + Partners were soon selected as the architects for the project, which was delayed for several years following the 2008 Recession. The Library relaunched the project in 2012 with “a Public Engagement Process in Planning Libraries for the Future.”

Since that time, while the Library has failed on their promise of public engagement, the debate has shifted to the media. From complete coverage of every stage of the process in the New York Times and Wall Street Journal, to features in magazines like The Nation, n+1, and Vanity Fair, to individual blog posts, the discussion is loud enough to influence the Library’s design process. Following harsh criticism about the storage of the majority of the research material offsite, the trustees found the money to renovate the Bryant Park Stack Extension. Hearings and lawsuits have characterized the last year of development. As of the writing of this thesis, the architects have “gone back to the drawing board” to redesign the circulating library to include a few sections of the historic stacks to the north and south ends of the reading room. While this does not take into account the changing function of the Library, it does show some responsiveness to public pressure.

The following chapter tells the story of the renovation through a compilation of the media coverage, exposing trends in the announcements, critiques and responses.

DATE	TITLE	AUTHOR	SOURCE
01-Feb-08	Two NYPLs or One?	Francine Fialkoff	Library Journal
11-MAR-08	SIBILLION LIBRARY PLAN ANNOUNCED		
11-Mar-08	For \$100 Million, a Library Card and Perhaps His Name in Stone	Robin Pogrebin	New York Times
17-Mar-08	With Expanding Library's Promise, Concern About Its Purpose	Edward Rothstein	New York Times
22-OCT-08	FOSTER · PARTNERS SELECTED TO REDESIGN 42ND STREET LIBRARY		
22-Oct-08	British Architect to Redesign City Library.	Robin Pogrebin	New York Times
23-Oct-08	Treading Carefully but Not Timidly in a Civic Masterpiece.	Nicolai Ouroussoff	New York Times
01-Feb-09	Architect Selected for Library Project	Staff	New York Construction
18-Mar-11	THREE RENOWNED RESEARCH LIBRARIES JOIN FORCES TO BETTER SERVE U	States News Service	States News Service
30-Nov-11	Upheaval at the New York Public Library	Scott Sherman	The Nation
22-Dec-11	Upheaval at the New York Public Library? At the Least, Some Clouds Over Transformation I	Norman Oder	Library Journal
15-FEB-12	42ND STREET LIBRARY RENOVATION RE-INITIATED		
15-Feb-12	Ambitions Rekindled at Public Library	Robin Pogrebin	New York Times
20-Feb-12	New chapter opens for Fosters' New York Public Library	Elizabeth Hopkirk	Building Online
12-Mar-12	Controversy at the New York Public Library	The Leonard Lopate Show	WNYC
15-Mar-12	Build More Deliberately	Caleb Crain	Steamboats Are Ruining Everything
27-Mar-12	The NYPL's Central Library Plan: Some Updates and Corrections	Caleb Crain	Steamboats Are Ruining Everything
28-Mar-12	Stop Cultural Vandalism	Scott McLemee	Inside Higher Ed.
APRIL-12	NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY PUBLIC RELATIONS CAMPAIGN		
SPRING-12	COMMITTEE TO SAVE THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY STARTS PETITION AGAINST PLANS		
01-Apr-12	The Culture of the New York Public Library's Research Divisions	Caleb Crain	Steamboats Are Ruining Everything
02-Apr-12	A Tale of Two Libraries and a Revolution	Anthony Grafton	The Daily Princetonian
04-Apr-12	Opponents of radical NYPL renovation coalesce	Kelly Burdick	Moby Lives, the Melville House blog
04-Apr-12	The Changing Culture of the New York Public Library	Christopher Shea	Ideas Market, a blog of the Wall Street Journal
06-Apr-12	Improving a Treasured Institution	Anthony Marx	Inside Higher Ed.
06-Apr-12	New York Public Library's plan to take books off shelves worries scholars	Brian Braiker	The Guardian
07-Apr-12	Guy Noir Visits the New York Public Library	Garrison Keillor	A Prairie Home Companion
09-Apr-12	Libraries Rethink Their Role in City	Jennifer Maloney	Wall Street Journal
10-Apr-12	New York Public Library President Anthony Marx.	The Leonard Lopate Show	WNYC
10-Apr-12	NYPL Embraces the Future of Libraries—Today: Your Questions Answered	Anthony Marx	Huffington Post: The Blog
15-Apr-12	Library Chief Defends Plan to Renovate	Robin Pogrebin	New York Times
16-Apr-12	Rich NYPL, Poor NYPL	Francine Fialkoff	Library Journal
16-Apr-12	New York Public Library Renovations: Good or Bad?	Victoria Bekiempis	Runnin' Scared: A Village Voice News Blog
18-Apr-12	The Battle Over the New York Public Library, Continued	Scott Sherman	The Nation
20-Apr-12	New York Public Library President, Answers Reader Questions	Anthony Marx	New York Times
22-Apr-12	Sacking a Palace of Culture	Edmund Morris	New York Times
22-Apr-12	Debate at N.Y. Public Library Raises Question: Can Off-Site Storage Work for Researchers?	Jennifer Howard	Chronicle of Higher Education
23-Apr-12	A Reimagined Library: Are the Changes Good?	Letters to the Editor	New York Times
25-Apr-12	For Books, Against Boilerplate	Scott McLemee	Inside Higher Ed.
25-Apr-12	Where's the Model?	Mark Lamster	Observatory: A Design Observer Blog
27-Apr-12	Let in the Riffraff: In Praise of the New York Public Library's Renovation Plan	Chloe Schama	The New Republic
27-Apr-12	Norman Foster's Plans for a More 'Democratic' New York Public Library Meets Fierce Oppo:	Kelly Chan	Object Lessons, an Art Info blog
06-May-12	Battle of words: Sweeping Central Library redesign plan stirs controversy	Christina Boyle	New York Daily News
07-May-12	New York Public Library must look to the future	New York Daily News editorial bo	New York Daily News
07-May-12	The New York Public Library Central Library Plan and its Critics	Polly Thistlethwaite	ACRLog
08-May-12	Diversions from the NYPL	Marilyn Johnson	This Book Is Overdue, the author's blog of Mari
09-May-12	A Library for the Future	New York Times editorial board	New York Times
09-May-12	Lions in Winter	Charles Petersen	N+1
09-May-12	Cultural Heavyweights Let Public Library Know They Don't Like Planned Revamp	Robin Pogrebin	Arts Beat, a New York Times blog
16-May-12	New Vision for Library	Jennifer Maloney	Wall Street Journal
16-May-12	The People's Palace?	Samuel Goldman	The American Conservative
17-May-12	Scholars and Ruffians: Reactionary Elitism in the NYPL Debate	Shannon Christine Mattern	Words in Space, a media studies professor's blog
17-May-12	Seizing the Future or Renouncing Its Past?	Robert Darnton, Howard Dodson,	New York Times online
17-May-13	The NYPL Renovation and the Future of Libraries	Kyle McAuley	HASTAC
22-MAY-12	PANEL DISCUSSION ABOUT RENOVATION PLAN AT THE NEW SCHOOL		
23-May-12	Public Library Head Faces Critics of Renovation Plan	Robin Pogrebin	New York Times
23-May-12	In a Heated Debate, Experts, Scholars, and Administrators Discuss a Plan that Would Radical	Dan Rosenblum	Capital New York
23-May-12	5/22 NYPL Panel Discussion, The New School	Renee (@reneemc)	Twitter
23-May-12	Former Employees Feel Silenced on Library Project	Robin Pogrebin	New York Times
23-May-12	America's Public Library Crisis: Who's Reading the Books?	Jon Reiner	The Daily Beast
29-May-12	Save the New York Public Library		The Notion
18-Jun-12	The Fight to Save the New York Public Library	Editors of The Nation	The Nation
01-Jun-12	A Librarian's Plea to Keep the Stacks of Books	David Smith	New York Times
05-Jun-12	NYPL Secrecy Must Go	Francine Fialkoff	Library Journal
06-Jun-12	What Do Norman Foster's Plans for the New York Public Library Mean for its Stored Archi	Reid Singer	Blouin Artinfo
06-Jun-12	The Personal Side of Public Libraries	Jesse Browner	Speakeasy, a blog of the Wall Street Journal

DATE	TITLE	AUTHOR	SOURCE
07-Jun-12	In Defense of the New York Public Library	Robert Darnton	New York Review of Books
10-Jun-12	Shh! Scholars Fight Over Library Plan	Genia Bellafante	New York Times
12-Jun-12	Loud Debate Rages Over N.Y. Library's Quiet Stacks	Margot Adler	Morning Edition, National Public Radio
12-Jun-12	A Rumble in the Stacks	Hannah Yi	The Daily Need, a PBS blog
12-Jul-12	'In Defense of the New York Public Library': An Exchange	Joan Scott, Caleb Crain, Charles Pe	New York Review of Books
21-Jun-12	Save the New York Public Library	David Brussat	Architecture Here and There, a blog of the Prov
21-Jun-12	NYPL office condo is sold for \$60.8M	Lois Weiss	New York Post
21-Jun-12	A new plan for the NYPL?	Kelly Burdick	Moby Lives, the Melville House blog
28-Jun-12	Save the New York Public Library: Ripping out the stacks is not the answer	Charles Warren	New York Daily News
07-Jul-12	What lies behind the battle over the New York Public Library	Jason Farago	The Guardian
02-Aug-12	The Bookless Library: Don't deny the change. Direct it wisely	David A. Bell	The New Republic
Jul-12	Still Here: A funny thing happened on the way to its predicted obsolescence. The library becar	Mark Lamster	Metropolis
Dec-12	Firestorm on Fifth Avenue	Paul Goldberger	Vanity Fair
04-Dec-12	Undertaking its Destruction	Ada Louise Huxtable	Wall Street Journal
04-Dec-12	A Notable Voice Joins Chorus Against New York Public Library Plan	Robin Pogrebin	Arts Beat, a New York Times blog
19-DEC-12	DESIGN UNVEILED		
19-Dec-12	After Criticism, Public Library Offers Peek at Renovation Plans	Robin Pogrebin	New York Times
19-Dec-12	Here's What The New York Public Library's \$300M Makeover Looks Like	Gothamist	Gothamist
19-Dec-12	The New York Public Library Is Getting A \$300 Million Makeover	The Business Insider	The Business Insider
19-Dec-12	Fosters' New York Public Library designs unveiled	Iain Withers	Building
01-Dec-12	Why The Starchitect? Foster Unveils Plans For New York Public Library	Samuel Medina	Architizer
09-Jan-13	Debate Continues Over Public Library Plan	Robin Pogrebin	Arts Beat, a New York Times blog
21-Jan-13	Why the Mid-Manhattan branch has to go	Jenny Che	New York Daily News
22-JAN-13	LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMITTEE APPROVAL OF RENOVATIONS		
22-Jan-13	Landmarks Commission Approves Library Changes	Robin Pogrebin	Arts Beat, a New York Times blog
30-Jan-13	In Renderings for a Library Landmark, Stacks of Questions, Still	Michael Kimmelman	New York Times
31-Jan-13	New York Times critic on NYPL renovation plans: "I'm not buying it"	Kelly Burdick	Moby Lives, the Melville House blog
01-Feb-13	New York Public Library Threatened	Charles Warren	Architectural Record
01-Feb-13	The Library and the Architect Respond to a Critic	Anthony Marx, Norman Foster	New York Times
08-Feb-13	Library Chairman: Renovation Budget Still A Work in Progress	Robin Pogrebin	Arts Beat, a New York Times blog
17-Feb-13	A Roar, From the Side Without the Lions	Christopher Gray	New York Times
18-Mar-13	Landmark Status Sought for Public Library's Rose Reading Room	Robin Pogrebin	Arts Beat, a New York Times blog
08-May-13	Opponents Rally Against New York Public Library Plan	Robin Pogrebin	Arts Beat, a New York Times blog
09-May-13	New York Public Library to Begin Spending City Funds on Renovation	Robin Pogrebin	Arts Beat, a New York Times blog
14-May-13	New York Public Library: Why New Yorkers Are Rallying to Save It	Jewelyn Cosgrove	PolicyMic
27-JUN-13	NEW YORK STATE ASSEMBLY PUBLIC HEARING ON THE SALE OF LIBRARY BUILDINGS		
27-Jun-13	Critics Prompt New Review of Library Plan	Robin Pogrebin	New York Times
4-JUL & 11-JUL	LAWSUITS FILED TO STOP RENOVATION		
04-Jul-13	\$350 million renovation of NYPL's Fifth Avenue branch will endanger iconic Rose Reading R	Barbara Ross	New York Daily News
05-Jul-13	New York Public Library Is Sued Over Renovation	Patricia Cohen	New York Times
05-Jul-13	Why the New York Public Library is being Sued	Zach Schonfeld	The Atlantic wire
12-Jul-13	De Blasio Decries New York Public Library Renovation Plans and Sale of Two Midtown Libr	Bill de Blasio	Bill de Blasio Website
11-Jul-13	New York Public Library Is Sued Over Book Plan	Robin Pogrebin	New York Times
11-Jul-13	Second Lawsuit Filed Against NYPL		Huffington Post
11-Jul-13	Update: Second Suit Filed to Halt NYPL Central Renovation	Meredith Schwartz	Library Journal
12-Jul-13	Public Advocate Questions Library Plan to Renovate Fifth Avenue Branch	Robin Pogrebin	Arts Beat, a New York Times blog
13-Jul-13	Lawsuit Filed to Stop New York Public Library Renovation	Stephen M. Cohen	Library Stuff by Stephen M. Cohen
15-Jul-13	A Reprieve for the Stacks		The Huffington Post
16-Jul-13	The NYPL Renovation Controversy	The Leonard Lopate Show	WNYC
01-Aug-13	NYPL Renovation Plan Strikes Nerve With Novelists, Lawsuit Delays Construction	Jennifer Peltz	Huffington Post
23-Aug-13	New York Public Library Rethinks Design: In Response to Critics, a New Renovation Plan Wi	Jennifer Maloney	Wall Street Journal
23-Aug-13	New York Library Is Firm on Plans for Revamp: Library Says Plaintiffs Seeking to Block Ren	Jennifer Maloney	Wall Street Journal
23-Aug-13	Library Fires Back at Historians Suing to Block Renovation	Jennifer Maloney	Wall Street Journal: Metropolis
28-Aug-13	The Hidden History of New York City's Central Library Plan	Scott Sherman	The Nation
23-OCT-13	DELAY IN RELEASE OF NEW DESIGN ANNOUNCED		
23-Oct-13	Delays on Library Redesign: After Outcry, NYPL Goes Back to the Drawing Board	Jennifer Maloney	Wall Street Journal
23-Oct-13	New York Public Library Delays Release of New Design	Jennifer Maloney	Wall Street Journal: Metropolis
23-Oct-13	New York Public Library Postpones Release of Revised Renovation Plan	Robin Pogrebin	Arts Beat, a New York Times blog
24-Oct-13	New York Public Library Hires Firm to Promote Renovation Plan	Robin Pogrebin	Arts Beat, a New York Times blog
29-Oct-13	The New York Public Library's Uncertain Future	Stephen Eide	City Journal
01-Nov-13	Brian Kenney: Revisiting the NYPL's Renovation Plan	Brian Kenney	Publishers Weekly
03-Nov-13	Community Groups Unite Against Sale of Public Assets	Genevieve Belmaker	Epoch Times
05-Nov-13	Soiree in the Stacks: A Night for the NYPL	Mike Vilensky	Wall Street Journal
06-Nov-13	Library Lions honorees are greeted by protestors at the NYPL	Claire Kelley	Moby Lives, the Melville House blog

# ANNOUNCEMENT

## NYPL PRESS RELEASE

FOSTER + PARTNERS SELECTED AS ARCHITECTS FOR NEW CENTRAL LIBRARY IN THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY'S HISTORIC FIFTH AVENUE BUILDING

October 23, 2008

*Foster + Partners, the acclaimed international architecture firm, has been selected to create the design to transform The New York Public Library's building at Fifth Avenue and 42nd Street into the world's largest comprehensive library open to the public.*

*The new central library will serve users of all ages and will feature expansive new reading rooms with open shelf circulating collections overlooking Bryant Park. After nearly 40 years in which it has served exclusively as a research library, the historic building will feature extensive circulating collections, including those moved from the nearby Mid-Manhattan Branch.*

*The creation of the central library is the centerpiece of a \$1 billion plan announced in March to transform the entire New York Public Library system. Foster + Partners was chosen by a special committee of the Library's Board of Trustees, which considered more than thirty firms before reaching its final selection. Designs for the project are expected to be completed over a two-year period.*

*"Norman Foster's understanding of the Library, his personal enthusiasm for the project, the professionalism of his team and the portfolio of striking and innovative designs he has created around the world convinced us that Foster + Partners is exactly the right firm to help us create a new central library for New York City," said Library President Paul LeClerc. "We were particularly impressed*

*by the work he has completed in other historic buildings where he has been sensitive to tradition while finding brilliant, unexpected ways to use space and unite old and new."*

*"The New York Public Library is a magnificent building with a powerful civic presence, both locally and internationally," said Lord Foster. "Significantly, it is also the flagship of a network of 89 community libraries throughout Manhattan, and its cultural and intellectual range is extraordinary.*

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## NEW YORK TIMES

TREADING CAREFULLY BUT NOT TIMIDLY IN A CIVIC MASTERPIECE

By Nicolai Ouroussoff

October 22, 2008

*I don't blame people for being nervous. It takes a certain hubris to mess with the noble Beaux-Arts structure that has dominated the southwest corner of Fifth Avenue and 42nd Street for nearly a century. A product of the City Beautiful movement, the New York Public Library is one of the most glorious examples of civic architecture in America, a temple to the city's highest democratic ideals. Why tinker with it?*

*But news that the library has hired Norman Foster and his London firm, Foster & Partners, for the job is one of a string of shrewd decisions by the library that should put our minds at ease. The project, part of the most ambitious expansion in the library system's history, will update the classical interiors of this Carrère & Hastings building without disturbing the character of its beloved cavernous halls and reading rooms.*

*Mr. Foster has a long history of designing thoughtful additions to touchy historical structures, including the British Museum in London and the Reichstag in Berlin.*

*The question is how far he is willing to push his vision.*

*Known for his high-tech forms, Mr. Foster is not likely to design an interior that will blend quietly into its surroundings. The project's potential lies in the delicious tension that could be created between new and old. To make it work he must create a structure strong enough to stand on its own while treating the colossal 1911 landmark with the care and tenderness it deserves.*

*The renovation will be the centerpiece of a much vaster overhaul of the library system that is philosophical as well as pragmatic. As Internet usage has ballooned, research libraries have seen a steady decline in visitors. Yet this drop has been matched by a surge in traffic at neighborhood libraries, where computer stations have multiplied and the mood is one of bustling communal activity.*

*Given that shift, officials have sought to reassert the library's populist mission, announcing two new hubs, as well as branch renovations that will refocus services on children, teenagers and working-class people. The library also intends to merge its research and branch arms.*

*The Fifth Avenue building will become the nerve center of this vast network. Today's old, noncirculating Rose Reading Room is used mostly by researchers; the planned new library space, tucked under this level and dominated by a new reading room lined with open shelves, is apt to be used by a wider audience, including those who cannot afford Internet service or who compete to share a sole computer with many others at home.*

*In combining the research and branch arms, the library is not only forging a more democratic vision but also a more fluid relationship between its collections and those who use them.*

*Part of the genius of the plan is its use of existing space. A vault to be built beneath the adjacent Bryant Park will be able to house more than three acres of books and research materials. By moving the stacks there, the library frees 1.25 million cubic feet in the back of the building, roughly the volume of the existing reading room.*

*The library showed similar vision in selecting an architect. Some believe that the only way to show respect*

*for an old building is to dress up any new addition in a cute period style. This approach trivializes history by blurring the distinction between old and new. The result is a watered-down vision of history — or worse, kitsch. In choosing Mr. Foster the library is signaling confidence in the ethos of our own era, while nodding to a distinct past.*

*Major architectural hurdles lie ahead. One of the biggest challenges is getting visitors in and out of the new reading room. The most obvious entrance point, from Astor Hall on Fifth Avenue, would require slicing through the library's main exhibition space. A second-floor entrance from the top of the hall's vaulted staircases might be too small to accommodate crowds; the same problem might arise for an entry point on West 42nd Street.*

*Mr. Foster must also find a way to address the project's functional needs — meeting rooms, Internet stations, abundant shelving — while creating a circulation library that equals the Rose Reading Room in grandeur. Because steel frames in the current stacks now support the floor of this old reading room, he must devise an equally strong structural support without piercing the new reading room with ungainly columns.*

*Finally, he must resist timidity. In his design for the British Museum's Great Court, a two-acre, glass-enclosed square with the circular Reading Room building at its center, he seemed to be striving too hard not to disturb the 19th-century structures. The resulting weblike canopy and ersatz neo-Classical entry have a feeble air, lacking the boldness of Mr. Foster's best designs.*

*Still, anyone with a minimal imagination will realize the dramatic possibilities of embedding a contemporary space in the New York Public Library, with its vaulted stone arches and grand staircases. The notion of passing through these magisterial chambers and emerging in one of Mr. Foster's technological marvels makes the mind reel.*

*There is no project today that is more important to the civic identity of New York — or to reasserting a populist ideal that has been dormant for too long.*

# ANNOUNCEMENT – AGAIN

## NYPL PRESS RELEASE

THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY LAUNCHES A PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PROCESS IN PLANNING LIBRARIES FOR THE FUTURE

February 16, 2012

*The New York Public Library's plan to reimagine its libraries for the future is moving into its next phase, which includes a public engagement process to hear what users — from researchers to families to Library staff and patrons everywhere — want from their libraries.*

*The Library's Board of Trustees authorized last night the design and implementation of key pilot projects for new and expanded branch programming. The Board also authorized the start of the schematic design process by renowned architects Foster + Partners for the Stephen A. Schwarzman Building at Fifth Avenue and 42nd Street. Both steps are central to a system-wide vision to create open, community-focused, democratic libraries of opportunity throughout the Bronx, Manhattan, and Staten Island.*

*The plan — first proposed in 2008 — now includes:*

- *Several education-based pilot programs at NYPL branches — including expanded ESOL, literacy, and after-school offerings — to meet the critical needs of New Yorkers at a time when many providers of these services are cutting back*
- *Hundreds of millions of dollars in capital improvements to branches across the NYPL system*
- *A focus on all NYPL branches as active, vibrant community hubs*
- *The creation of the nation's largest combined*

*circulating and research library at the Stephen A. Schwarzman Building, a symbol of transformation across the system. The improved Library would double overall public space, double the workspace for scholars and researchers, and provide all users the opportunity to browse and check out books on a large scale for the first time in decades.*

*Beginning today, people can learn the details of these and other aspects of the plan at a new website, [www.nypl.org/yourlibrary](http://www.nypl.org/yourlibrary). They can then contribute feedback and new ideas that will help NYPL shape its libraries for the future. The website is the first step in a series of ways the Library will directly engage communities and members of the public.*

*“Libraries could and should change lives, offering unprecedented access to books, services, and active education centers where creativity and ideas are born,” said Library President Anthony Marx. “Our goal is to create the Library for the Future, one worthy of this great city, one that enhances how it serves all of its patrons. We believe we are on our way to doing just that.”*

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## INSIDE HIGHER ED.

### STOP CULTURAL VANDALISM

By Scott McLemee  
March 28, 2012

*The New York Public Library's proposed Central Library Plan (CLP) is a case of long-term planning at its most shortsighted. It will affect scholars and writers in both the United States and abroad, and will have a particular impact on some fields of study in which the library has especially important collections, such as Russian literature. And the plan embodies an unreflective approach to the trade-offs between print and digital media that is*

*problematic in the best of cases, but intolerable when it involves a research library.*

*In short, the CLP needs to be stopped. The stakes are not just local, and I hope readers of this column will do their part in spreading the word, whether they live in the city or on the other side of the planet.*

*The CLP calls for transferring 3 million volumes from the New York Public Library building on 42nd Street (the one with the lions) to storage facilities in New Jersey so that the space they now occupy can be redesigned to accommodate computers for public use. Not that books will disappear from the 42nd Street branch altogether. It will become a lending library, rather than a research collection that is available to the public but restricted to use within the building.*

*While a quarter of the size of the Library of Congress, the 42nd Street collection contains a good deal of material not available in the country's largest public research library. So I have learned while trying to track things down over the years. If CLP goes into effect, the three million volumes will remain available – but not within a couple of hours, as has been the norm in the past. You will place a request for a book on 42nd Street and the book will then have to cross state lines, which, as the surly expression goes, will take as long as it takes. You might want to go see a Broadway show or something. For scholars living elsewhere, traveling to do research there will be a bit of a gamble.*

*The gutting... er, the transformation of the library will be complete by 2015, provided that the board of directors raises another \$150-\$200 million beyond the \$150 million made available by the city. And where would that money come from? According to Scott Sherman's investigative reporting for *The Nation*, "The NYPL expects to raise another \$100-\$200 million by selling off two prominent libraries in its system: the busy (but decrepit) Mid-Manhattan branch library on 40th Street, and the Science, Industry and Business Library on 34th Street, a research library that opened in 1996 to considerable fanfare."*

*But hey, at least you'll be able to check your email while on 42nd Street.*

*\*\**

*So far, the CLP has generated alarmingly little concern among scholars -- who, after all, will be on the losing end of it. The major exception has been a couple of blog posts by Caleb Crain (here and here) which make a thoughtful and worried assessment of the CLP's likely damage to the 42nd Street Library's cultural role. And in a comment appearing at *Library Journal's* website, Hal Grossman, a reference librarian at Hunter College, describes the pedagogical stakes:*

*"I regularly refer students to the New York Public Library's research collection when they are doing advanced research," he writes. "This great collection gives our students, many of whom are the first in their families to go to college, access to recorded knowledge that's on a par with what Columbia or NYU students have... Many of our students work while studying, and they often cannot wait for material to be shipped to New York for them to use. Offsite storage also creates another barrier between our students, who often lack the self-assurance of affluent students at private universities, and the world of ideas."*

*Grossman ends with a point of principle applying well beyond the five boroughs: "It's wrong to say that the closed stacks at NYPL are not public space. True, we can't walk around there, but they exist to serve the public's research needs. They are unique. Seven floors of computers are not. This is a poor tradeoff."*

*Now, I am by no means hostile to e-reading, which certainly has its place. But that place is wherever you happen to be doing it, at the time. The reading possible at the 42nd Street library is far more location-specific. It is a distinct kind of public-intellectual space, where a reader coming from anywhere in the world can sit down with the very copy of a book that Alfred Kazin or M.N. Roy studied there decades ago, and that may never have been removed from the shelf in the meantime.*

The links so created are not hyperlinks. And what makes the CLP worrying -- beyond its consequences for one research library, however important -- is the massive devaluation of "offline reading" it represents. Obviously this is not just a New York problem. A campaign to oppose this tendency is well overdue, and we might as well start now.

Please take the time to read and mull over Scott Sherman's article and Caleb Crain's blog posts, cited above -- and circulate them to others as well. There is a Facebook page against the CLP, created by an ad hoc committee of scholars and writers now in formation. Beyond that, initiative is encouraged. Bloggers can blog, Twitterers can twitter, and scholarly organizations can issue polite but firmly worded statements of concern.

You might also write to Anthony Marx, former president of Amherst College and currently CEO of the New York Public Library, to ask why a collection of three million volumes gathered over more than a century is being treated as a distraction, rather than as the institution's entire claim to cultural significance. His public email address is: [president@nypl.org](mailto:president@nypl.org).

To be fair, let's keep in mind that the library did respond to Sherman's exposé with a statement. It reads as follows: "The NYPL is enthusiastically pursuing a systemwide major transformation plan, including the Central Library project announced in 2008, which will house the biggest circulating library in the country and continue to serve our existing users with even better facilities. Any transformation requires difficult choices. Thus we are working to ensure that we receive the advice, input, and reactions of all the library's constituents, staff, users and trustees." I suspect this was written not just on a computer, but by one, running the software preferred by rogue investment bankers and politicians facing scandal, though not currently under indictment.

The belief that every pre-existing cultural and intellectual expression must be digitized or else downgraded is destructive. The time has come to challenge it clearly. More on this campaign in a later column, as it develops.

# PUBLIC RELATIONS

## NEW YORK TIMES

### NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY DEFENDS PLAN TO RENOVATE

By Robin Pogrebin  
April 15, 2012

The New York Public Library is engaged in a public-relations blitz to address criticism from scholars and writers who object to the library's plan to reimagine its Fifth Avenue flagship building at an estimated cost of \$300 million.

In the past few weeks the library's president, Anthony W. Marx, has written articles for *The Huffington Post* and *Inside Higher Ed*, appeared on radio and television and assembled an advisory panel that includes people skeptical of the plan.

The library's efforts are the sort of salesmanship that traditionally accompanies any new ambitious undertaking. But they are also an acknowledgment that the plan, which includes the sale of two prominent Manhattan branches, is a dramatic reshaping that has, at the very least, upset library traditionalists.

Several scholars have published criticisms of the project, known as the Central Library Plan. On Friday others began circulating a letter of protest among academics; more than 200 have signed so far, including Mario Vargas Llosa, the Nobel Prize-winning writer, and Lorin Stein, the editor of *the Paris Review*. "We are alarmed by the Central Library Plan, which seems to us to be a misplaced use of funds in a time of great scarcity," the letter says. "We think the money raised can be better used to preserve and extend what already exists at 42nd Street." Mr. Marx said the issues raised by critics would be considered.

*"The scholarly community is concerned and we are concerned," he said.*

*The project would convert the main library, now strictly a reference operation, into a hybrid that would also contain a circulating library, many computer terminals and possibly a cafe. The Mid-Manhattan branch and the Science, Industry and Business Library would be sold and their operations folded into the main building. To accommodate the new services, up to half of the three million volumes in the stacks under the main reading room would be moved into storage in New Jersey.*

*Critics say that the money would be better spent refurbishing deteriorating branch libraries, and that the changes will diminish the library's role as a leading reference center, essentially turning it into a glorified Starbucks. Of particular concern: how long it will take the library to retrieve books from storage.*

*"The library is being repositioned less as an institution that thinks of research and scholarship than as a kind of fashionable place for intellectuals that is more about entertainment than depth of knowledge," said Ilan Stavans, a professor in Latin American and Latino culture at Amherst College, where Mr. Marx was formerly president.*

*"Research is going to pay a heavy price with this change," he added.*

*Monica Strauss, an art historian, said: "The age of the book is not yet over. It may be over in 40 years, but it's not over now."*

*Mr. Marx said in an interview that the plan — which had languished due to the economic downturn — incorporates a continuing commitment to books and research and represents an effort to meet the needs of the general public better.*

*"The project will produce a greater single facility that includes the crown jewel of the branch system — Mid-Manhattan," Mr. Marx said. "People come from all over the city now to use the library, and the system will end up with significant additional resources."*

*Renovating just Mid-Manhattan, as some have suggested, would cost about \$150 million and require closing the library for about two years, Mr. Marx said; selling it, along with the science library, will infuse the system with \$10 million to \$15 million in annual operating savings that can be spent on other priorities, like research acquisitions.*

*"We see this as an investment in the research collection," Mr. Marx said.*

*Designed by the British architect Norman Foster, the renovation is to be financed with \$150 million from the city, proceeds from the sale of the two libraries and private donations.*

*Joan Scott, a social science professor at the Institute for Advanced Study, who helped draft the letter of opposition, called the plan disturbing.*

*"The idea that these reforms are going to make it more democratic doesn't make sense to me," she said.*

*Critics question how users of the libraries to be sold will fit inside the main building (its number of annual visitors — 1.6 million — is expected to more than double) and whether books moved to New Jersey really will be available within 24 hours, as the library has promised. Off-site books currently often take longer than that to obtain.*

*"Is it necessary?" Stanley N. Katz, a professor at the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, said of the plan. Mr. Marx's advisory panel includes prominent academics like Annette Gordon-Reed, a Harvard law professor; David Nasam, a history professor at the CUNY Graduate Center; and Anthony T. Grafton, a Princeton University history professor. In a column for the university's newspaper this month, Mr. Grafton wrote, "My stomach hurts when I think about N.Y.P.L., the first great library I ever worked in, turned into a vast Internet cafe."*

*(In a subsequent interview Mr. Grafton said he was encouraged by Mr. Marx's assurance that at least two million books would remain in the library.)*

*Some of the critics said they were concerned that the library is not airing the advisory panel's discussions about the plan or the sorts of feedback it has been getting on its Web site.*

*One panelist and a critic of the plan, Caleb Crain, a former fellow at the library's Scholars and Writers center, said the library had asked him not to write about the panel's first meeting, on April 5, on his blog, steamthing.com, because the other panelists had not been consulted. In addition, he said, the library has asked him not to attend the next meeting, on Thursday, at which the panel will discuss whether to allow news coverage.*

*Mr. Marx said he would be willing to post online questions and comments about the plan and sought in an interview to counter other concerns.*

*The library would not become too crowded, he said, because the renovation would create up to 20,000 square feet more public space than is currently available at the Mid-Manhattan, science and main libraries combined. Turning the stacks into space for a circulating library makes sense, Mr. Marx said, because the stacks are nearly 100 years old, and there is minimal humidity and fire control. The library will study which volumes should go to storage for reasons like low use. Half of the library's research collection is already in storage, he said, and most major research libraries have off-site locations. The books moved out will for the first time have bar codes, making them easier to locate for delivery, Mr. Marx said, and can be ordered online from home, including on Saturdays.*

*He said that he would be open to the idea of using the space under Bryant Park to store 1.2 million to 1.5 million more volumes, but that this would cost an additional \$20 million.*

*As for the branches, he said, a separate \$300 million has been spent on them over the last 10 years, with \$125 million to \$150 million more to be spent over the next five.*

*"The world of libraries is changing," Mr. Marx said. "And we have to change with it."*

## LIBRARY JOURNAL

RICH NYPL, POOR NYPL

By Francine Fialkoff  
April 16, 2012

### *Pushing change beyond 42nd Street and Fifth Avenue*

*New York Public Library (NYPL) has always been a hybrid. There's the lion-flanked icon on 42nd Street and Fifth Avenue, part of the research libraries, and the 85 branches—the poor relation. The rich library is supported mostly through its hefty endowment (30 percent is income from investments) and private contributions (25 percent). The poor library, the branches, gets most of its support (81 percent) from the city. (All stats are from the 2010 Annual Report.) A plan for the future of the library is causing consternation in some circles, though it is unlikely to have much impact on the rich/poor divide. It calls for putting most of the research collection into storage and transforming the recaptured space for public use, including additional Internet access, a popular collection, areas for creation and collaboration, and so on.*

*Anthony Marx, the relatively new NYPL president and CEO, who took over from longtime head Paul LeClerc last July, has not only inherited the dual structure but the plan for the future. His background as a native New Yorker and product of its public schools (and a champion of diversity as president of Amherst College, MA) might have meant that he'd have more affinity for the branches and more of a man-of-the-people approach, but there's been little evidence of that yet. He owes his allegiance to the 60-plus-member Board of Trustees, comprised mostly of those with old (and new) money and a smattering of intellectuals, which governs the entire library.*

*The "new" NYPL—announced in early 2008 just as the economy tanked and mostly put on hold—serves to perpetuate NYPL's dual nature rather than bring the entire system to the level it should be. The original concept*

*included renovation of the Central Library on 42nd Street, starting with a \$100 million donation from Stephen A. Schwarzman, CEO of private equity Blackstone Group, for whom the building was subsequently named. The plan also would close the Mid-Manhattan branch, a much-used circulating library, and transfer its popular collection to the 42nd Street library. And it also projected building two “hubs,” one in upper Manhattan and one on Staten Island. Those have both been scotched in the plan’s current incarnation.*

*I’m all for “reimagining” the Central Library, as NYPL puts it. I want the research library to be as strong as possible. I do not support the continued bifurcation in treatment of the two “systems.” The 42nd Street edifice is scheduled to get its renovation from noted British architect Norman Foster. Meanwhile, the branches have had modest (some call them crappy) renovations over the past decade, along with some new buildings that are pleasant but in no way match the New Landmark Libraries identified by LJ last year.*

*NYPL deserves—and needs—change, but it’s not just on 42nd Street. In an April 11 blog on the Huffington Post, Marx called for a “public engagement process to solicit your suggestions and concerns about our plans,” on a website that went up in February 2012. That’s half a year after he became president and four years after the original plan was announced to the staff and public.*

*Where was the request for input before the plan became official? Other major libraries hold public forums to engage residents and suss out their ideas; they survey users and nonusers extensively. They draw on the best ideas from the field both here and abroad. Instead, NYPL paid large amounts of money to consultancy firms like McKinsey & Company for top-secret reports to advise on the organizational structure and future of the library—including the plans it is now Marx’s lot to implement.*

*We need a proposal for the entire library system, one arrived at with input from all, and one that benefits users in all three boroughs that NYPL serves.*

## PETITION

### CHANGE.ORG

ANTHONY W. MARX: RECONSIDER THE \$350 MILLION PLAN TO REMAKE NYC’S LANDMARK CENTRAL LIBRARY

By Committee to Save the New York Public Library  
Spring 2012

*The following letter to the President of the New York Public Library, Anthony Marx, was written in the Spring of 2012 to express opposition to the Central Library Plan, which would irreparably damage the 42nd Street Library — one of the world’s great research libraries and a historic landmark. The plan also calls for the sale of the Mid-Manhattan Library (at 40th Street and 5th Avenue), one of the most heavily used branch libraries in the country. At enormous cost to New York City and its taxpayers, the plan would demolish the 42nd Street Library’s historic seven-story book stacks, install a circulating library in their stead, and displace 1.5 million books to central New Jersey. The new circulating library would replace the Mid-Manhattan Library and the Science, Industry and Business Library (at 34th and Madison), despite being less than one-third the size of the two existing libraries.*

*Initially, the letter was circulated by email. 750 signatures from librarians, scholars, artists, writers, students, and (as one person described herself) “ordinary users” arrived in record time, among them Nobelist Mario Vargas Llosa; Pulitzer Prize winners Frances FitzGerald, Margo Jefferson, David Levering-Lewis, Edmund Morris, Art Spiegelman, and Annalyn Swan; writers Tom*

*Stoppard, Salman Rushdie, Jonathan Lethem, Amitav Ghosh, Luc Sante, Annie Proulx, Colm Toibin, Peter Carey, and Colum McCann; Anne Waldman, Chancellor of the Academy of American Poets; John Palattella, literary editor of The Nation; historians Natalie Zemon Davis and Ramachandra Guba; Lorin Stein, editor of the Paris Review; Jackson Lears, editor of Raritan; and the editors of the journal n+1; Lawrence Weschler, head of the New York Institute for the Humanities; Srinivas Aravamudan, President of the Consortium of Humanities Councils and Institutes; and Jonathan Galassi, President of Farrar, Straus and Giroux.*

*We hope you will sign this letter and circulate it to others. The more names we collect, the better. The goal is to bring the CLP out into the open and to have a frank and critical discussion of what it will mean for the future of the NYPL, the People's Library.*

*In the past month, there has been dramatic progress in the fight against the Central Library Plan. Two lawsuits have been filed to prevent demolition of the stacks, NYC Public Advocate and mayoral candidate Bill de Blasio has announced his opposition to the plan, and New York State Assemblymember Micah Kellner held a hearing on the plan at which the New York Public Library pledged for the first time to commission an independent financial analysis of the cost of the plan and its alternatives. For more information and the latest updates on our fight against the Central Library Plan, please visit [www.savenypl.org](http://www.savenypl.org)*

Dear Dr. Marx:

*We write as scholars, writers, researchers, and teachers who have long benefited from the services and collections available to us at the four research facilities of the New York Public Library. We are alarmed by the Central Library Plan, which seems to us to be a misplaced use of funds in a time of great scarcity. The budget cutbacks of the past five years have had disastrous effects for the NYPL's research libraries, and especially 42nd Street:*

*\*the skilled staff vital to supporting our research*

*activities—curators, archivists, bibliographers, and librarians—has been drastically reduced in number;*

*\*the Slavic & Baltic division and the Asian & Middle Eastern division have been entirely eliminated; and there is no full-time curator for the Slavic collection;*

*\*the Schomburg Library in Harlem—the place to do research on African-American history—has been allowed to deteriorate through the postponement both of capital improvements and of computer upgrading; and*

*\*the Library for the Performing Arts at Lincoln Center is no longer a haven for scholars and critics. Many of the reference librarians who specialized in dance, music, recorded sound, and theater were eliminated, moved off the reference desks, or offered buyouts.*

*Instead of addressing these issues, the CLP will spend over \$300 million on a restructuring of the 42nd Street building which includes a huge expansion of public space, the removal of stacks (and the 3 million books in them), and the creation of a circulating library in the building. While we understand that it may be necessary to store some books in order to make room for others and that more computer access may be necessary for users of the library, the changes planned envision a much more radical transformation.*

*NYPL will lose its standing as a premier research institution (second only to the Library of Congress in the United States)—a destination for international as well as American scholars—and become a busy social center where focused research is no longer the primary goal. Books will be harder to get when they're needed either because of delays in locating them in the storage facility or because they have been checked out to borrowers. Those of us who also use university libraries know how frustrating it is to discover that the book we need immediately is checked out or lost. And we worry about the effects of removing the stacks that now support the glorious Rose Reading Room. More*

*important, perhaps, is that the CLP seems to make no mention of restoring the staff positions that have been lost and that are critical for the functioning of a major research institution.*

*One of the claims made about the CLP is that it will “democratize” the NYPL, but that seems to be a misunderstanding of what that word means. The NYPL is already among the most democratic institutions of its kind. Anyone can use it; no credentials are needed to gain entry. More space, more computers, a café, and a lending library will not improve an already democratic institution. In fact, the absence of expert staff will diminish the accessibility of the collections to those who aren’t already experienced researchers, narrowing the constituency who can profitably use the library. They will be able to borrow books, to be sure, but they won’t be inducted into the world of archives and collections if staff aren’t there to guide them. Also, in the age of the web, we need, more than ever, skilled, expert librarians who can assist us in navigating the new databases and the back alleys of cyberspace. We understand that it is often easier to raise money by attending to buildings (and naming them), but the real need at the NYPL is for the preservation of a great library and the support of its staff.*

*We appreciate the fact that you have established a committee consisting of some critics of the CLP to advise you. We hope you will take a hard look at the plan you’ve been given and revise it so that the splendid culture of research embodied by the NYPL can be maintained. We think the money raised can be better used to preserve and extend what already exists at 42nd Street. Change is always necessary, but not of the kind envisioned by the CLP.*

## NEW YORK TIMES

### CULTURAL HEAVYWEIGHTS LET PUBLIC LIBRARY KNOW THEY DON'T LIKE PLANNED RE-VAMP

By Robin Pgrebin  
May 9, 2012

*More than 700 scholars, writers, publishers, artists and others sent a letter to the New York Public Library on Wednesday protesting the \$300 million restructuring of the 42nd Street flagship building and calling for a public discussion of the plan.*

*The signers include the writers Salman Rushdie and Jonathan Lethem, the cartoonist Art Spiegelman and the historian Natalie Zemon Davis.*

*In particular the critics take issue with the notion that the renovation, known as the Central Library Plan, will make the library more democratic. “More space, more computers, a café, and a lending library will not improve an already democratic institution,” the letter said.*

*The letter, which was addressed to the library’s president, Anthony W. Marx, also called on the library to restore staff positions that were reduced by budget cuts. Mr. Marx was not immediately available for comment.*

# PANEL DISCUSSION

## CAPITOL NEW YORK

IN A HEATED DEBATE, EXPERTS, SCHOLARS, AND ADMINISTRATORS DISCUSS A PLAN THAT WOULD RADICALLY RESHAPE THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

By Dan Rosenblum  
May 23, 2012

*New York Public Library chief executive Anthony Marx last night found himself defending a plan for renovations that will significantly change the operations of the library's central branch in Midtown.*

*He made his remarks at a panel debate held at the New School in which critics of the plan, which is estimated to cost \$300 million to \$350 million, got a rare public hearing from the library administration.*

*The plan has been controversial in part because it involves moving half of the roughly 3 million volumes held at the library's flagship Schwarzman building (the one on Fifth Avenue with the lions) to a storage facility in Princeton that will be shared with Princeton and Columbia universities.*

*The space created by moving out the million-and-a-half volumes would be used to house a regular circulating library that would replace the library's Mid Manhattan branch, currently across the street from the Schwarzman building, and the Science, Industry and Business Library, also in Midtown.*

*Some writers and researchers who use the Schwarzman building have said that the plan severely diminishes the library's position as a research institution.*

*David Nasaw, a writer and history professor at the CUNY Graduate Center, has been critical of the plan*

*for that reason. He said one of the reasons CUNY's Graduate Center center is located on Fifth Avenue was its proximity to the research halls of the Schwarzman library, "not because we very much want to be in Midtown."*

*Other people on the panel included Joan Wallach Scott, a writer who helped organize and deliver a petition signed by 750 academics and writers to Marx and city leaders, as well as architectural preservationist Mark Alan Hewitt, who argued that even removing the stacks would require an engineering feat that defied expectations of a smooth and sensitive preservation effort.*

*Mary Panzer, a photography historian in the audience, told Marx she was concerned with who picks which books stay and which go. Though the library will keep its unique items onsite, the situation reminded her of when stock image agency Corbis moved much of the Bettman Archives to cold storage in Pennsylvania, which she said was good for conservation, but bad for discovery.*

*"They only decided to digitize the most-used images and have been very slow to digitize more. And what happened was, we get Albert Einstein with his tongue stuck out and Marilyn Monroe with her dress coming up, and all of the very rare images, the irreplaceable images that don't get used ... are still unveiled or are still invisible."*

*Moving the books and renovating the interior wasn't just a matter of philosophy and preservation to the critics. The Library already stores books at the Princeton site, and typically tries to make such books available within 24 hours, but researchers fear moving more books so far off-site would mean that spontaneous calls for books as they research would have to wait a day or more before the books could arrive in Manhattan, as opposed to the current system, in which most books can be produced in minutes.*

*One solution mentioned by Robert Darnton, a cultural historian and one of the library's trustees, was a service where people in Princeton scan the books or requested chapters and provide them to those making the request. But Nasaw said that service hasn't been reliable so far and could only get worse.*

*"If for the past ten years, the library has not been able to provide reliable 24-hour service, why are we to believe that with additional books moved there it will be able to do this? Is the traffic on the New Jersey Turnpike going to decrease? Is congestion on the bridges and tunnels going to decrease?" He said he didn't care if the books at research libraries could be anywhere, even, as he put it, the moon, as long as he could get them quickly.*

*"I want them in 24 minutes but I will accept 24 hours," he added.*

*One of the most vocal panelists was n+1 associate editor Charles Petersen, who wrote a lengthy piece criticizing the library's plans. He wondered whether the investment wouldn't be revealed to be short-sighted in a few years, when the technology needs of library users could be much clearer. The library has had a history of making expensive and ultimately faulty moves with respect to technology.*

*"I'm very grateful that the library's listening to us, but I think they should have done a lot more listening in the last five years," Petersen said. "We're saying that you should think about a different plan entirely."*

*Scott Sherman, who in December broke the story about the library's plans in The Nation, was in the audience and asked why the NYPL was planning such a move while branches across the city were falling apart. The city has proposed \$100 million in cuts across the city's three library systems.*

*Marx, head of the library since July, said that \$150 million in city money was tied directly to the project as it was, and said for now it was incumbent to stick with the agreement from the mayor and city council.*

*"Is it conceivable that they could do something different? Yes," Marx said. "But it's at least as conceivable that if we do not pursue the plan, that the \$150 million disappears and we go back to the drawing board for a future administration that may be less able or less amenable to be supportive of that kind of investment."*

*Though many in the room wanted to preserve much of the landmark 42nd Street building, including Marx—who said almost all the areas of the library that are open*

*to the public would stay the same—the Mid-Manhattan Library, across the street, didn't meet the same criteria. "It's in terrible shape and it is mechanically failing," Marx said. "Indeed, as coincidence would have it, scaffolding went up this morning to keep pieces of it from falling on people."*

*Darnton, who also wrote an article defending the plan, admitted expansions and attempts to predict the future of library technology in the 1970s and '80s were misguided. Specifically, money spent on the Mid-Manhattan branch is thought now, retrospectively, to have been largely wasted.*

*"We are not trying to predict the future now and asserting that everything will be digital," he said. "We are trying to meet our commitments in the present where the printed book and digital source coexist and to make sure that we can handle the demands of readers into the future. So, I agree that that expansion in retrospect was a mistake. We cannot maintain three large libraries in mid-Manhattan and this extremely valuable real estate."*

*Darnton added that consolidating the three libraries into the Schwarzman building would save the library system \$12 to \$15 million annually.*

*Marx told the audience they expected to have the first plans for the redesign from British architect Norman Foster in September and would take the issue before community boards, the media, and the public in more events of this type in coming months.*

*The panel opened with an acknowledgement that nearly everyone on the sitting at the table had fond memories of spending time using the research tools in the Beaux-Arts landmark: Darnton said he'd written his first scholarly article in 1964 in the reading room, and Scott said the library was a source of "enormous richness" while growing up. Possibly because of that, the discussion ended amiably. Even after some tense debate, at the end of the night the panelists hung back to chat and shake hands.*

*On her way out, Scott told Marx he'd done well on stage, then urged the library to hold more meetings as he'd promised that night.*

*"Or we will," she said, pleasantly.*

# ANALYSIS

NEW YORK TIMES

FORMER EMPLOYEES FEEL SILENCED ON LIBRARY PROJECT

By Robin Pogrebin  
May 23, 2012

*The New York Public Library's plan to turn part of its flagship Fifth Avenue research center into a lending library has unleashed a torrent of commentary, with scholars, writers, artists and students signing a petition and writing articles, many of them critical. But one highly informed contingent has been notably silent: former curators, department heads and librarians.*

*That's not because this group has no opinions. On the contrary, some former employees say they are eager to participate in the debate over the \$300 million proposal, known as the Central Library Plan. But they say they can't because they signed a nondisparagement agreement when they left, promising not to criticize the library in exchange for the additional pay known as severance.*

*"I'd like to comment, but I can't," said John Milton Lundquist, a longtime curator at the library who retired in 2009.*

*The library says nondisparagement clauses are standard in separation agreements and that it has used them for 18 years. Still, critics say that for an institution with a tradition of championing free speech — the library opposes book bans and has permitted visitors to watch pornography on its computer terminals — the clauses seem inconsistent.*

*"It does raise the question, what are they afraid people are going to say?" said Joan E. Bertin, executive director of the National Coalition Against Censorship. "So what if former employees criticize them? They ought to be able to take the heat."*

*The library says its former employees and its critics are misreading the clause — that it was not meant to curb free speech, has never been the subject of a formal complaint and did not have to be signed unless the employee sought the severance.*

*The clause in question prohibits employees from commenting to the news media or other entities with which the library does business in a way that could "adversely affect in any manner the conduct of the business of any of the library entities (including, without limitation, any business plans or prospects)" or "the business reputation of the library entities," according to a copy of the separation agreement obtained by The New York Times.*

*The library said in a statement: "The clause is in place to protect library employees and library management. It is not intended to stop a former employee from exercising his or her right to free speech by discussing matters of public interest, such as expressing an opinion on the advantages and/or disadvantages of the Central Library Plan."*

*Several former employees and employment lawyers, though, said the nuance was lost on them.*

*Annette Marotta, a research librarian at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts at Lincoln Center on and off for 22 years, said she passed up several thousand dollars in severance when she left in 2010, partly because she believed the nondisparagement clause precluded her from criticizing the library.*

*"It was hush money," she said. (As for the plan to revamp the main library, she described it as "bizarre," adding that, "People who are interested in a circulating library don't have the same needs as serious researchers who want to sit in a quiet place and use books that are on site.") The library has recently made significant efforts to argue for the long-term benefits of its plan. Anthony Marx, the library's president, for example, on Tuesday night participated in a panel debate on the renovation in Greenwich Village.*

*At the debate Mr. Marx denied that the library had been secretive about the redevelopment project, as some critics have said. But his remark did not sit well with*

a former librarian in the audience, Harriet Gottfried, who alluded to the nondisparagement agreements when she stepped to the microphone. “If decisions aren’t being made behind closed doors,” she asked, why had the library “gagged everyone?”

Mr. Marx, who declined to be interviewed for this article, said in answer to Ms. Gottfried that the agreements are “not meant to gag former employees from talking about issues of public concern.”

Maureen Sullivan, the president-elect of the American Library Association, a national organization, said she had no problem with the New York library’s use of nondisparagement agreements. “It is a core value of librarianship and of most libraries to respect intellectual freedom,” Ms. Sullivan said, “but this is a different situation.” Such agreements, she said, typically do not seek to restrict a departing worker’s ability to comment generally about a former employer but are “an agreement about what will be said about the end of that employment.”

Ms. Sullivan said that organizations commonly use them, though at least two large library systems — those of Los Angeles County and Boston — said they did not. Some business employees of *The New York Times* are asked to sign nondisparagement agreements when they leave the company but journalists are not.

The New York Public Library has long been celebrated, and criticized, for its support of free speech. In 1984, for example, it was praised for staging a major exhibition on censorship in the West since the invention of the printing press, while the policy of allowing patrons to view pornography on computers, one in place at many libraries, has been controversial. (The library notes that it has safeguards to ensure that children do not view such content.)

“The library community at large has done so much to foster and specify and defend free speech — it’s a hard-won paradigm,” said Matthew Battles, a fellow at the Berkman Center for Internet and Society at Harvard and the author of *Library: An Unquiet History* (W. W. Norton, 2004). “I would hope that the institution of the New

York Public Library would be stronger than anything it might fear from former employees.”

The nondisparagement agreements have come to the fore partly because many employees have recently left the library after buyouts were offered to cut costs. Those who left under this “voluntary separation incentive program,” introduced in 2009, could elect to receive severance in exchange for several conditions, including the nondisparagement agreement. Several former employees who accepted the severance said they would like to comment on the Central Library Plan, a much debated proposal to overhaul the main branch by selling off other branches and moving some of the stacks to New Jersey, but could not because they had signed the agreement.

Around 1,500 scholars and writers — including the playwright Tom Stoppard and the novelists Annie Proulx and Colum McCann — have signed a petition objecting to the plan because they fear it will lessen the central library as a research center.

Wayne N. Outten, a New York employment lawyer at Outten & Golden, said nondisparagement agreements are so common that it is hard to view them as a significant curtailment of anyone’s civil rights. Companies generally find it difficult to pursue former employees who have violated the agreements for damages, he added.

“It’s a private contract as far as I’m concerned,” he said. “The employee is making a deal: ‘O.K., in exchange for this money I will sign a release of claims and agree not to disparage my employer.’ ”

But Andrew G. Celli Jr., who ran the civil rights bureau at the New York state attorney general’s office from 1999 to 2003, said the free-speech principles of organizations like magazines and newspapers went “out the window” when they used nondisparagement clauses.

“We expect our institutions to live up to their ideals, and we call upon them to do that,” said Mr. Celli, now a partner at Emery Celli Brinckerhoff & Abady. “It’s a pity when they don’t — but they don’t.”

## THE GUARDIAN

### WHAT LIES BEHIND THE BATTLE OVER THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

By Jason Farago  
July 7, 2012

*Libraries across America are facing swingeing budget cuts and uncertain futures. But here in New York, home to the second-largest library in the country, the future is non.*

*The hottest cultural controversy of this already hot summer concerns the New York Public Library (NYPL), and a plan to disembowel its main building – a plan that will slice open the stacks and “replace books with people”, in the words of the NYPL system’s CEO, Tony Marx. It’s enraged writers and professors, demoralized a staff already coping with layoffs, and called the entire purpose of the system into question.*

*And the debate is getting bitter. Hundreds of writers, from Peter Carey to Mario Vargas Llosa, have gone on record against the plan. An exhaustive exposé in the literary magazine *n+1* raised the temperature, and the current issue of the *New York Review of Books* contains page after page of tetchy point v counterpoint. Whatever the fate of our library, a lot of people are going to be very angry when this is all over.*

*The New York Public Library comprises 87 branches in three of the city’s five boroughs, but the prize is the big beaux-arts central facility on Fifth Avenue, 101 years old, with its pair of marble lions guarding the entrance. Even those who have never been to the city know the place – it’s the setting of the first scene of *Ghostbusters*. As is the way in Bloomberg’s New York, however, the facility was renamed in 2008 for a private equity titan. There was a whole fight about just where and how many times he could get his name incised on the façade.*

*Unlike the borough branches, the central library does not lend books. It’s a research institution, and compared to establishments of the same caliber – the Library of*

*Congress, say, or the collections of Harvard and Yale – it is exceptionally open. You don’t need an academic affiliation. You don’t need to pay for a reader’s ticket. You don’t even need to come up with a convincing excuse to call up Walt Whitman’s manuscripts if you want to have a rifle through. Just fill out a call slip and you can have it in about an hour.*

*The new Central Library Plan, though, will move 3m books (about 60% of what’s now on site) out of the central facility, to be immured in some bunker in New Jersey. Researchers have been promised that they can summon these books with a day’s notice. But the library already promises that for books currently off-site, and it doesn’t really work that way; in practice, it takes closer to two or three days. One skeptical professor at CUNY, the public university whose students rely heavily on the library, wondered at an acrimonious debate whether the NYPL expected “the traffic on the New Jersey Turnpike was going to decrease.”*

*What will take the place of the books? Well, the closed stacks will be smashed open to make way for a smaller lending library, to supersede the large one across the street from the main facility which the NYPL plans to sell off. That worries not just researchers but architectural preservationists. The library, designed by Carrère and Hastings, is a masterpiece of engineering; unusually, the grand reading room sits at the top of the building, perched on stacks that were state of the art in their day. (Norman Foster, the world’s richest architect and the very predictable choice to renovate the library, has not yet published his designs.)*

*And there will be lots of computer terminals, too, which will surely look very shiny on opening day but, history suggests, will be outdated before long. Also, café spaces. Several. With wireless. To lounge in. You will have to go to Columbia or NYU to do serious research, if you can wangle a library card; as for 42nd Street, I’m sure it will be a beautiful place to update your Facebook status.*

*The library insists that cafes and wireless are what people want – or so say the consulting firms called in to*

*speak for us. It also argues that the collection is just eating up space, since a large fraction of the books is “never” or “rarely” called up, and so no one will miss them when they’re gone. For a start, that’s misleading – I myself regularly fail to call up books because it would take days to fetch them. They remain in their bunker, neglected and unread.*

*More than that, though, it’s not germane. A research library has a different mission from a lending library; it’s there to put everything, not just the most popular volumes, at our disposal. If you hit an intriguing footnote that references another publication, or if you find an irregularity in a text and want to check it against another source, all you have to do now is grab one of the library’s stubby golf pencils, write down the title, and it’s yours. That will soon be gone, and its effect on research will be brutal if not mortal.*

*Of course, there are a few grumblers with a Luddite attachment to musty print, but books themselves are not really the issue. The library bulges with maps and manuscripts, photographs and ephemera. Books are just one kind of resource. But, as of today, there is no substitute for the collection of print books – not yet and not foreseeably. Digitization of books remains in its teething stage, and as any archivist will tell you, if you’re building a long-term collection, analogue wins over digital every time. (The Gutenberg Bible is holding up a lot better than your VHS collection.) Talk about the promise of digitization or the belatedness of print is a smokescreen to obscure a larger abdication: the library exists to maintain a collection, in perpetuity, for everyone.*

*Besides, the primary hurdle with digitization isn’t really technology. It’s law. Publishers have hesitated to offer ebooks to libraries; lending licenses for ebooks are as expensive as print copies; and since a judge halted its expansion in March 2011, Google Books has been effectively dormant.*

*Decades’ worth of copyright litigation lies before us, and there’s no reason to assume that some, as yet unknown digital resource will offer researchers a fraction of the value*

*the library now does. Perhaps, copyright hardliners will win, and books published before the 1920s will remain unavailable in digital form. Or perhaps, untold millions of books will be digitized – which would mean readers could access them at any of the dozens of branch libraries, or at home, or on their phones, or with their nifty virtual reality glasses. Digitization may succeed or may sputter. But exiling the majority of the book collection is premature either way.*

*The central library plan might not be irredeemable. Several advocates have proposed a sensible alternative that would keep most of the books in town. But the NYPL has shown no inclination to listen to its own users, or even to make its deliberations public, and that is the truly worrying thing. Replacing books with people may look accessible and anti-elitist. But the real popular gesture is to keep research free for all.*

*Instead, on the advice of some of the world’s most profitable consultancies and a board full of oligarchs, we are being told that what we really deserve is not a world-class library, but comfy chairs and blueberry muffins.*

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## DESIGN UNVEILED

### NYPL PRESS RELEASE

THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY’S CENTRAL LIBRARY PLAN TAKES NEXT STEP WITH RELEASE OF SCHEMATIC DESIGNS

December 19, 2012

*The New York Public Library today unveiled the first schematic designs of its historic Central Library Plan (CLP), which will bring a new lending library to its iconic 42nd Street location, the Stephen A. Schwarzman Building.*

The project—designed by world-renowned architect Norman Foster and his award-winning firm Foster + Partners—more than doubles the amount of public space within the iconic building, better preserves its research materials, and creates a truly integrated central library in the heart of New York City serving all people, from scholars and students to toddlers and teens.

The designs show a modern, light-filled lending library with views of Bryant Park—the first circulating library in the building in two generations. The building was always meant to have both research collections and a browsable circulating collection, as it in fact did on opening day in 1911. The new library will offer the services and materials currently provided in the deteriorating Mid-Manhattan Library and the innovative Science, Industry and Business Library, both of which will be merged into the 42nd Street building.

At the same time, the designs call for the preservation of the landmark building's awe-inspiring public spaces—such as the Rose Main Reading Room, which will not be touched—and the reopening of historic rooms long closed to the public. In addition, portions of the 101-year-old steel bookshelves that currently hold the core of the Library's research collections—the obsolete "stacks," which will be removed as part of the plan—will be incorporated into the new lending library, to be seen and enjoyed by the public for the first time.

Research services will also be enhanced under the plan, with vastly improved storage conditions for core collections and expanded spaces for scholars, writers, and researchers. With this mix of innovation and tradition, Carrère and Hastings's Beaux-Arts masterpiece will enhance its role as "The People's Palace," with about 66 percent of the now underutilized building open to the public and offering services for all.

In one building open seven days a week, 12 hours a day most days, the public will enjoy free access to:

- Books, DVDs, and more to browse and check out (circulating collections for adults are not currently available in the Library's flagship building)

- More public space than is currently available in all three of our Midtown libraries combined
- New spaces for children and teens
- Job Search resources
- Computers and Internet access
- Classrooms
- Programming spaces
- Quiet study zones
- A permanent display of treasures from the Library's collections in an enhanced Gottesman Exhibition Hall
- Research materials housed in new state-of-the-art, climate-controlled storage, better preserving the collections for future generations of researchers
- More dedicated spaces for scholars, writers, and researchers
- Much, much more

By combining three buildings and their services and collections into one central location, the CLP will also result in up to \$15 million more to spend annually, which the Library can use to hire more librarians and curators and to buy more books.

"The New York Public Library is creating the single most exciting library in the world, a center of knowledge, information, and scholarship in the heart of New York City," said NYPL President Tony Marx. "With the Central Library Plan, we will open up more of our landmark building to the public, offering both circulating and research collections in one place, as well as the programs, classes, materials, and services needed by our patrons. All this, while better protecting our research collections, and enhancing the research experience. The Central Library Plan is truly a vision for the future for the Library and the people of New York City."

"For more than a century, The New York Public Library on 42nd Street has been an iconic landmark, celebrated for its outstanding beauty and exceptional collections," said Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg. "Together with the incredible restoration of the Stephen A. Schwarzman Building facade, the new Central Library

*Plan will preserve this historic institution and transform it into the world's largest combined research and circulating library."*

*"We are reasserting the Library's main axis and its very special sequence of spaces, from the main Fifth Avenue entrance and the Astor Hall, through the Gottesman Hall, into the dramatic volume of the new circulating library, with views through to the park," said Norman Foster. "Our design does not seek to alter the character of the building, which will remain unmistakably a library in its feel, in its details, materials, and lighting. It will remain a wonderful place to study. The parts that are currently inaccessible will be opened up, inviting the whole of the community—it is a strategy that reflects the principles of a free institution upon which the library was first founded."*

*To create the space for the approximately 100,000-square-foot circulating library, seven floors of outdated bookshelves under the Rose Main Reading Room will be removed. The stack area—built in 1911, facing Bryant Park, and always closed to the public—currently holds a portion of the Library's core research collections, but does not have proper climate controls to preserve these precious materials. The books are deteriorating at approximately five times the rate of books kept in appropriate storage. As part of the plan, most of these materials—about 3 million volumes—will be housed in modern storage under Bryant Park, where they will be easily requested by the public, and safely preserved for future generations of researchers and scholars.*

*"Our books will get proper preservation underground, the public will get the light and the spectacular views of Bryant Park," said Marx. "It's a good trade."*

*"This visionary project by the New York Public Library, embodied in this beautiful building by Norman Foster, is central to this great institution's evolution as a vital part of our city, as it has been for over a century," said City Council Speaker Christine C. Quinn. "I applaud NYPL for listening and heeding the concerns of the stakeholders, and for crafting a project that sensitively addresses its dual mission as a great center*

*of scholarship—and as the people's library for all New Yorkers—for the next century."*

*The original estimate for the plan was \$300 million, but as a result of enhancements and changes made following the public feedback process, we expect the actual budget to be somewhat higher. The budget has not yet been finalized. The Library expects construction to begin in 2013, and to be completed in 2018, pending various approvals. All three buildings involved will remain open throughout construction.*

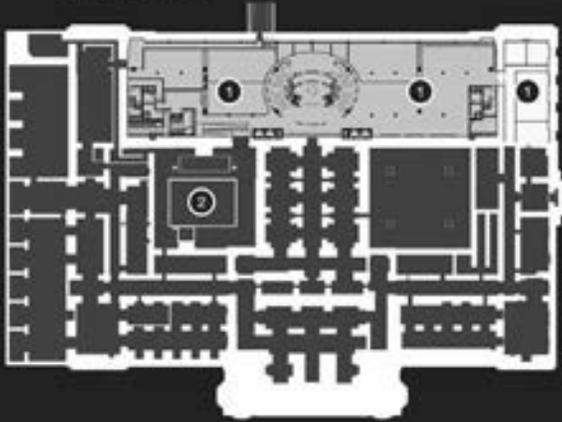
*The Library will submit designs to the Landmarks Preservation Commission to seek approvals for proposed modifications. The Central Library Plan calls for relatively minor work to the outside of the building, including a new emergency exit door, an updated loading dock, and replica windows. Hearings on just the changes in the application are expected to be held at Community Board 5 throughout January, and then at the Landmarks Preservation Commission.*

*"The New York Public Library's main branch has always been a center of intellectual life—and a symbol of democracy—in the heart of our City," said Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer. "I am pleased that the new designs unveiled today will create a lending library at the facility's historic 42nd Street site, and a publicly accessible home for some three millions books in a storage facility under Bryant Park. With this bold step forward, our public library will continue to play a vibrant role in the life of New York for decades to come."*

*"Fusing innovation and tradition, the finished project—in the heart of New York City—will result in more services to the public and better preservation of scholarship materials," said Kenneth Adams, Empire State Development (ESD) President and CEO. "The State has an important role to play in preserving cultural institutions for generations to come. On behalf of Governor Cuomo, we were proud to partner with The New York Public Library to help turn its Central Library Plan into a reality."*

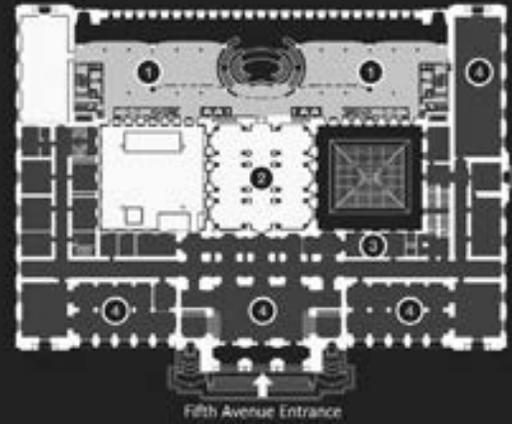
*Updates on the Central Library Plan can be found at [www.nypl.org/clp](http://www.nypl.org/clp).*

### Ground Floor



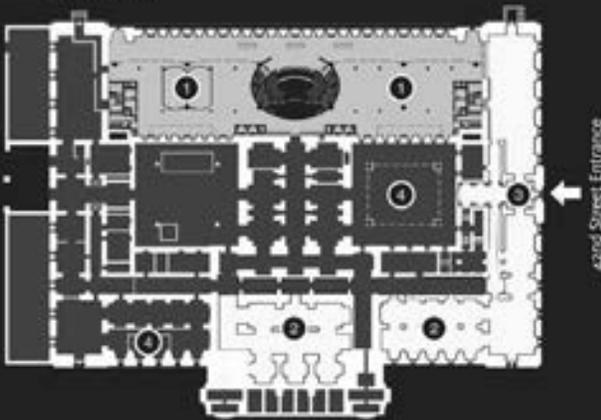
- 1 New Business Center, classrooms, and other educational spaces
- 2 South Court Auditorium, administrative offices will not change

### First Floor



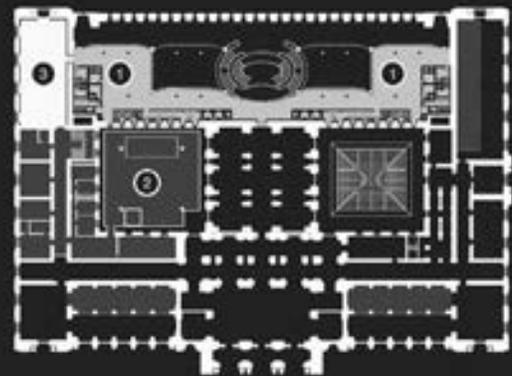
- 1 New circulating library
- 2 Renovated Gottesman Exhibition Hall, which will connect the original building to the new circulating library
- 3 Renovated Library Shop
- 4 Astor Hall, public reading rooms will not change

### Park Level



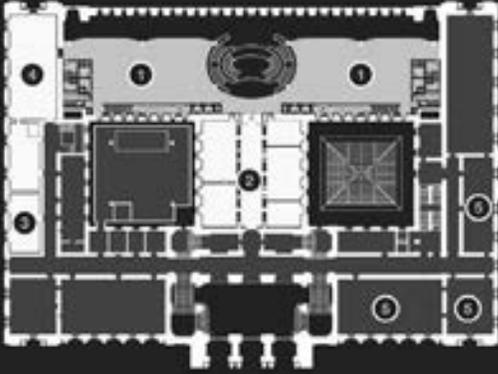
- 1 New circulating library
- 2 New centers for children and teens
- 3 Expanded and improved 42nd Street entrance
- 4 Bartos Forum, administrative offices will not change

### Mezzanine Level



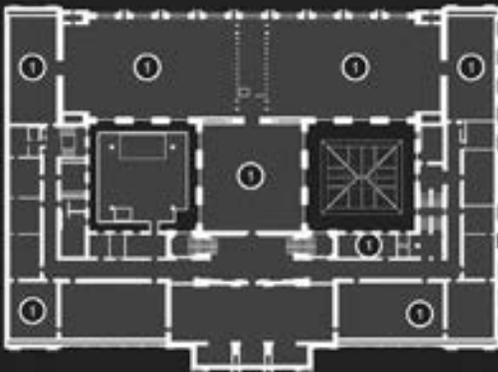
- 1 New circulating library
- 2 Staff offices will not change
- 3 New reading room

### Second Floor



- 1 New circulating library
- 2 New centers for readers and writers
- 3 Additional book shelving and a multipurpose room
- 4 New reading room for the Manuscripts and Archives Division
- 5 Berger Forum, Allen Room, Cullman Center, and other rooms will not change

### Third Floor



- 1 Entire floor—including the Rose Main Reading Room, McGraw Rotunda, and special collections reading rooms—will not change



FIGURE 085

# ANALYSIS

NEW YORK TIMES

FORMER EMPLOYEES FEEL SILENCED ON LIBRARY PROJECT

By Michael Kimmelman

January 29, 2013

*None of New York's great buildings embody the spirit of the city more than the New York Public Library, the cherished century-old Beaux-Arts landmark in the heart of Midtown Manhattan. But cities change — New York all the time — and even the greatest buildings may need to change with them. So it was that more than four years ago the library announced a \$250 million plan (since revised upward to \$300 million and still rising). Norman Foster, the celebrity architect, was enlisted to revamp and modernize the 42nd Street building.*

*The plan gave New Yorkers plenty to fight about: Would it cripple scholarship by hindering access to research materials? Would it offend the dignity of a venerated space by opening it up to Starbucks-slurping teenagers and transitory mobs scouring DVDs? Would it bring the financial efficiencies promised?*

*But only lately, since Mr. Foster revealed sketches last month, has it been possible to see an actual rendering of the proposal. Having looked at it and spent a few hours speaking with the library's president, Anthony W. Marx, and with other library officials, and after further discussions with Mr. Foster, I'm not buying it.*

*Even after all these years, more time is needed to figure this thing out.*

*The plan entails closing two troubled branches: the dilapidated Mid-Manhattan across the street, which serves 1.5 million visitors a year, and the Science, Industry and*

*Business library, a profligate investment from 20 years ago that remains a cautionary tale.*

*This time the bright idea involves demolishing the deteriorating seven floors of the structurally integral book stacks in the vault space under the Rose Main Reading Room at 42nd Street, and in its place installing a brand-new circulating library, designed by Mr. Foster: major transplant surgery, with the great building designed by Carrère and Hastings as guinea pig.*

*Closing these two branches and consolidating operations will save money, library officials insist. Selling the two buildings that house the branch libraries should raise a fortune. The books now in the 42nd Street stacks (a space whose decades-long decline, through various renovation campaigns, suggests to me a kind of demolition by neglect) would be sent to state-of-the-art storage below Bryant Park and in New Jersey.*

*At the same time, rooms now unused in the 42nd Street building would be thrown open to writers and children. And so the research library would be joined under one roof with a circulating one.*

*The motivation is money, and there's no denying that the library needs it. Combined with private donations and Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg's commitment of \$150 million from taxpayers, the plan is supposed to accumulate an endowment that would yield perhaps \$7 million to \$15 million a year, partly by eliminating the expense of operating the branches. That money would go toward buying more books, rehiring laid-off staff members and other things the public needs. So library officials see it.*

*The parties in charge are earnest in their conversations. While remaining hard to pin down on the dollar amounts, they are eager to demonstrate that every conceivable alternative strategy has been explored, weighed, re-examined and rejected. Proceeding in any other way than by investing in this potential Alamo of engineering, architecture and finance would be irresponsible, they've concluded. I have found this to be a not-uncommon phenomenon among cultural boards, a form of architectural Stockholm syndrome.*

*There is, in the abstract, something catchy about the Chinese puzzle ingenuity of the plan, about the consolidation and reinvention of the century-old stack space. I can see how the idea caught on.*

*The problem with it is not, as many prominent writers and scholars have complained, its excessive populism or the inconveniencing of researchers who might have to wait an extra day for books to arrive at 42nd Street from New Jersey. These snobbish-sounding objections have only fueled the library's public relations offensive, which has advertised the plan as democratizing a building that many New Yorkers find intimidating.*

*But the library, free and open, is already an exemplar of democracy at its healthiest and best, of society making its finest things available to all. Climbing the library steps, passing the lions, rising up to the reading room where anyone can ask for books, ensprines, architecturally, the pursuit of enlightenment. Inspiring more people to reach those heights is the library's loftiest mission. Peddling "democracy" as if it were a popularity contest is what "American Idol" does.*

*The library makes a hollow case about how much square footage of the building is now closed to the public and will be opened. The Metropolitan Museum is 2.4 million square feet; less than one million of that is public space. The American Museum of Natural History is 1.8 million square feet; 700,000 is public.*

*The value of an institution isn't measured in public square feet. But its value can be devalued by bad architecture. And here we get to the schematics Mr. Foster finally unveiled last month. They aren't worthy of him. After more than four years, this hardly seems the best he can do. The designs have all the elegance and distinction of a suburban mall. I was reminded that Mr. Foster is also responsible for the canopied enclosure of the inner court at the British Museum, a pompous waste of public space that inserts a shopping gallery into the heart of a sublime cultural institution.*

*At the least, the 42nd Street library will require Mr. Foster's full attention, or the attention of another architect,*

*one with a genius for devising a pleasing and functional place deserving of this building in a vault never intended for the public. Carrère and Hastings devised the stacks with a long wall of narrow, deeply recessed windows slotted between wide piers to keep daylight off the books, not to give library patrons views of the outside. You can see these windows from Bryant Park, below the arched windows of the Rose Reading Room. They look penitentiary.*

*To make a virtue of their oppressiveness, Mr. Foster has pulled the various floors of the circulating branch back from the wall, creating balconies that officials hail as an architectural boon because visitors will be able to take in the full height of the slot windows. To me, what results is an awkward, cramped, banal pastiche of tiers facing claustrophobia-inducing windows, built around a space-wasting atrium with a curved staircase more suited to a Las Vegas hotel.*

*Equivalent in size to the Rose Reading Room, but chopped into floors, this former book-stack vault provides about the same amount of public space now in the two branches that the library wants to close. Leaving aside renovations and additional rooms elsewhere in the building (rooms that could be opened now, independent of the rest of the plan), we're talking about a straight-up trade, in terms of space, that costs \$300 million.*

*And that's if you believe the budget. Library officials point out that the numbers aren't official yet. Mr. Marx acknowledged to me that the cost might well rise to \$340 or \$350 million. But the library won't permit it to go higher, he vowed. I can't recall a single major building project at a cultural institution whose original budget hasn't ballooned, too often catastrophically. Every one of those projects began with a pledge of vigilance. And the more calamitous of them (museums in Milwaukee, Denver, Rome, Amsterdam, Ottawa, the list goes on) involved engineering feats and celebrated architects.*

*In this case the engineering burdle is that the book stacks are a forest of 1,300 steel columns that support the Reading Room. Removing those columns now to make way for Mr. Foster's library will be like "cutting the legs off*

*a table while dinner is being served,” as Joseph Tortorella, the principal in charge of the project at Robert Silman Associates, the engineering firm enlisted by the library, recently put it to The Wall Street Journal.*

*Today’s engineers have all manner of high-tech tools at their disposal, and Silman is a top-notch outfit. But homeowners know what happens when contractors talk about performing magic tricks. Even if Silman’s pros ensure that the reading room doesn’t collapse, the whole rationale for the plan — the annual millions promised for acquisitions, librarians and so on — comes crashing to earth if the finances don’t work out.*

*So let’s step back. Put the plan aside for a moment and ask the big question: What do New Yorkers actually want from the library system today? Circumstances have evolved over the last few years. Technology is changing, and so are reading habits and urban demographics. The public thirst for neighborhood branches has become unquenchable. Financial honchos who cough up big bucks to carve their names on 42nd Street for the sake of posterity might recall that Andrew Carnegie made himself immortal by supporting — and building — the small local branches that now more than ever are anchors of their neighborhoods all across the city. They’re the ones that really need the money. The library should make a case for them, vigorously.*

*Officials make a decent argument for concentrating on a new central circulating library instead. But at a time of flux and before any contracts are signed, the library owes New Yorkers a clear and open accounting of both its plan and some alternatives.*

*It should make public a detailed cost analysis by at least one independent party — not one of the firms the library has already hired. I gather that Mr. Foster is back at the drawing board, pursuing revisions that might be less expensive and incorporate more of the historical elements of the stacks. We’ll see if they’re any better. Or maybe the library might even wish to open up the project to other architects.*

*As for those alternatives, the Mid-Manhattan site at present has the potential to be redeveloped as a 20-story building. The library could also sell some 100,000 square feet of unused space at the site, or seek city permission to transfer air rights (there may be more than a million square feet) from 42nd Street. A new Mid-Manhattan branch should cost a fraction of gutting the stacks and could produce much better architecture.*

*Library officials recapitulate that they’ve run the numbers for redeveloping Mid-Manhattan and that they don’t work: They’d lose much or all of the taxpayer money Mayor Bloomberg has committed, lose the benefits of consolidation and would still have to repair the stacks at 42nd Street.*

*That said, the last thing they’d want to be remembered for is trashing their landmark building and digging a money pit. They might check out the names of the lions on the front steps, for prudence’s sake.*

*Patience and fortitude.*

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## LAWSUITS + POLITICS

### NEW YORK TIMES

#### OPPONENTS SUE TO BLOCK NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY RENOVATION PLAN

By Patricia Cohen  
July 4, 2013

*Some opponents of the New York Public Library’s plan to renovate its Fifth Avenue headquarters, which will involve removing its research stacks, filed a lawsuit on Wednesday*

*in New York State Supreme Court to stop the project.*

*The suit, filed by the nonprofit group Advocates for Justice on behalf of five preservationists and scholars who include the historian David Levering Lewis, accuses the library of violating its charter and the state's Constitution by dismantling seven floors of stacks and removing books from the site. It also says the library failed to conduct an environmental impact review.*

*"Irreparable harm is imminent," the suit states.*

*"If the stacks are destroyed, the books — the unique and distinguishing asset of the NYPL — can never be returned to their rightful place under the Rose Main Reading Room."*

*The library recently applied for building permits from the city but has said they are for "preliminary" work and that a final design has not been completed.*

*Ken Weine, a library spokesman, said Thursday evening, "We think the renovation offers a great opportunity to improve libraries for all New Yorkers. We have not yet reviewed the complaint."*

*Officials have defended the renovation as necessary to replace the Mid-Manhattan branch, a lending library that has been described as "physically failing." Space for users of that branch is included in the renovation.*

*The city is one of the defendants named in the suit, which was reported by The Wall Street Journal, because it is putting up \$150 million toward the cost of the project. The renovation had a preliminary estimate of \$300 million but library officials have said the estimate, like the design, could change as the project is further defined.*

<http://advocate.nyc.gov/libraries>

DE BLASIO DECRIES NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY RENOVATION PLANS AND SALE OF TWO MIDTOWN LIBRARIES

July 12, 2013

*Today, Public Advocate Bill de Blasio joined advocates and activists in opposing the New York Public Library's plan to renovate the Central Library located on Fifth Avenue. The proposed \$300 million renovation project stands to not only remove the existing seven floors of stacks in place but also includes plans to sell two of the most important libraries in the City—the Mid-Manhattan Library as well as the Science, Industry, and Business Library. These libraries have served as a fundamental and critical source of academic information for students and researchers, and any changes to the existing infrastructure and supplies will negatively impact future services and limit public accessibility. De Blasio, in a letter to Mayor Bloomberg, expressed his concerns over the proposed budget and is calling for an independent cost audit and review of the proposed renovation. De Blasio also asked that the same consideration be given to the plans for the Brooklyn Public Library.*

*"These plans seemed to have been made without any forethought to the building's historical and cultural integrity," said Public Advocate Bill de Blasio. "We need to ensure that a detailed financial audit and review is conducted, so that these renovations won't exceed the \$300 million proposed. Before NYPL goes about demolishing stacks and consolidating libraries, they need to ensure that the people they serve aren't being shortchanged and being disregarded for the bottom line."*

# DELAY

## WALL STREET JOURNAL

DELAYS ON LIBRARY REDESIGN: AFTER OUTCRY, NYPL GOES BACK TO THE DRAWING BOARD

By Jennifer Maloney  
October 23, 2013

*The New York Public Library on Wednesday said that it is delaying the release of a new design for the controversial renovation of its landmark Fifth Avenue building.*

*The library, in response to outcry over its plans to demolish century-old book stacks, said in August that it was developing a new design that would preserve a significant portion of them.*

*The library's president and chief executive, Anthony Marx, said then that the new design would be revealed this fall. The library now plans to release them "sometime after the New Year," according to a statement posted to its website Wednesday.*

*"The design work is complex, and we are committed to getting it right to provide a transformative library experience for our users," it said. "Accordingly, our schedule has changed."*

*Responding to critics who have questioned the finances of the plan, Mr. Marx in June said the library would commission third-party estimates on the cost of potential alternatives, which include renovating the book stacks and Mid-Manhattan Library. The library Wednesday said those estimates "will be released upon their completion."*

*The planned \$300 million renovation has sparked two lawsuits brought by scholars and preservationists, including two Pulitzer Prize-winners, aiming to block the stacks' destruction. Those lawsuits are still pending.*

*The library's original renovation plan called for replacing the building's historic book stacks under the Rose Main Reading Room with a new circulating library designed by British architect Norman Foster.*

*The library still intends to build a new circulating library under the reading room. But the new design will incorporate the stacks, which would hold the circulating library's books, it said.*

*It also launched a Web page Wednesday featuring quotations from supporters of the renovation, including Mayor Michael Bloomberg, Urban Librarians Unite and Susan Delvalle, director of the planned Sugar Hill Children's Museum of Art & Storytelling in Harlem.*

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# PUBLIC RELATIONS

## NEW YORK TIMES

NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY HIRES FIRM TO PROMOTE RENOVATION PLAN

By Robin Pogrebin  
October 24, 2013

*The New York Public Library is paying a prominent lobbying firm \$25,000 to help promote the library's controversial renovation plan, according to a contract obtained by The New York Times.*

*Opposition to the library plan, which calls for creating a circulating library in the area now occupied by stacks, has arisen "from a loose coalition of scholars opposed to circulation returning to the 42d St. building and anti-development activists," the contract says. "These opponents*

*have attracted some press coverage and some support from elected officials and prominent New Yorkers. Therefore the library seeks public affairs representation in order to build support for their innovative model with key stakeholders.”*

*The library has enlisted the Parkside Group, whose team will be led by Evan Stavisky, the contract says.*

*Asked about the decision to hire Parkside, library officials said in a statement that, like other large cultural institutions and library systems that rely on government financing, “the library has for decades used a variety of consultants to help amplify our own efforts at community and officeholder outreach.”*

*As part of the renovation the library plans to consolidate two other properties into the 42nd Street flagship — the Mid-Manhattan Library and the Science, Industry and Business Library, both of which will be sold. A revised design by the architect Norman Foster was expected this fall, but the library announced on Wednesday that the plans had been delayed, along with independent cost estimates of alternative options.*



FIGURE 086

## CONCLUSION

Upon opening, the New York Public Library was lauded as a technical triumph in the popular press. The *New York Times* wrote a feature article on the Library's electrical plant, which was a comparable size to that of the city of Stockholm at the time:

The New York Public Library stands quite alone among buildings of its character. Sometimes, when a great new structure is to be made, it is possible to look over the various buildings of the sort already existing and choose from each the most useful and convenient features. But with the public library new ground was struck. This is an age of electricity. None of the great libraries has been built so recently as to make it possible to utilize all of the scientific knowledge we have now.

It was a brand new problem to be worked out in a brand new way. Architecturally, the library is original, too, but here the comparison may be made with other buildings. The main reading room is certainly one of the most beautiful rooms in the world, but there are others in Europe and even in this country which suggest it. There is no library existing, however, with which the mechanical perfection of our new building can be compared.<sup>1</sup>

After describing the functionality of the electrical equipment employed in the book stacks—the pneumatic tube system and six book lifts—the article quotes a “pithy remark” made by the electricians, “the library was the home for books, and that everything was done to make it a comfortable home for books.”<sup>2</sup> Soon after, a section through the seven-story book stack—illustrating the system's structure and relationship to the main reading room—graced the cover of *Scientific American*.<sup>3</sup> While the masonry structure and artistic detail of the Library referenced historic precedents, there was something ambitious and modern about the book stacks. Beyond these differences, the popular press coverage documents the necessary



FIGURE 087

relationship between the opulent public spaces and the practical storage space.

Since that time, the public perception of the building—and the stacks in particular—has changed. The building's status as a monument has continued to strengthen while the technical supremacy quickly faded; new technologies rapidly outpaced ongoing maintenance efforts. The “proto-modern” Bryant Park facade has become indiscernible from the remaining elevations, the nuance of the strip windows too slight. The Library's monumental status has increased with the years; its three-floor masonry structure, a stark contrast from the heights reached by the steel skyscrapers that have since defined the Manhattan skyline, embodies public grandeur.

The function of the Library has shifted in accordance with public perception. Now the building provides a backdrop of timelessness and sophistication for advertisements, weddings, and fashion shows, in addition to safely housing research material. Hollywood interpretations of the Library have continued to re-shape public perception of the building. Set in the very recent past, HBO's *The Newsroom* used the Library to establish confidentiality by implying that modern surveillance was no match for the masonry walls; reinforcing the separation between the historic structure and contemporary technology.<sup>4</sup> The Library has played important roles in two recent dystopias, 2004's *The Day After Tomorrow*<sup>5</sup> and 2013's *Oblivion*.<sup>6</sup> *The Day After Tomorrow* shows New York City engulfed in the rising sea and encased in ice, while the protagonists huddle inside the protective walls of the Library. New York is almost unidentifiable in *Oblivion*, the landscape is so changed. There are a few clues: the Yankees hat worn by the protagonist, and the remnants of the New York Public Library—identified through engraved marble fragments and the remains of Rose Main Reading Room. In these examples the Library becomes a symbol, a monumental building housing the equivalent of all human knowledge representing the both the destruction of mankind and its greatest hope.

Meanwhile, the book stacks have been absent from the public imagination, hidden out of sight. Before the proposal to remove the stacks,

very few references to the stacks are made beyond the *Scientific American* illustration. While 1984's *Ghostbusters* opens with the Library, the scenes in the book stacks were not even filmed at the New York Public Library.<sup>7</sup> In the Library itself, a tired and faded display on the second floor summarizing the history of the building, and its collections, uses the same, century old *Scientific American* image to describe the stacks, located only a few dozen feet away.

The New York Public Library will change. Investigating the past century of use has shown this; no matter how deliberate the initial planning process or careful and far reaching the intentions. The alternative—turning the library into a place out of time, static and unchanging—is not an effective solution. Over the past hundred years, many changes have been made to the building, an inevitability given the finite space available and exponentially increasing collection. These have been pragmatic decisions, compromises made without undermining the purpose of the building; to house the Library's world-class research collection.

The 42nd Street building is remarkable in large part because of the value of its collection. The trustees, director and architects, built a temple to protect these contents. Since then the collection has continued to grow. Now, the research collection will be displaced, not just outside the building, but outside of the city. Once complete, the building will stand like an empty jewel box, playing host to parties, but robbed of its true treasure.

New York needs a fantastic main circulating library. The Mid-Manhattan branch, built during a time of austerity, should be re-imagined. The idea is good, but this is not Seattle—New York needs two main libraries. Replacing the research collection with a circulating branch looks at the immediate rather than distant future and ignores what makes the New York Public Library unique. Just because the stacks are not accessible does not mean they are not “public space.” Prioritizing the circulating collection now will divert attention from the research collection, which will have a lasting impact on the future of research in the city.

In many ways, the proposed renovation of the Library is not radical enough. There are only a handful of libraries in the world with collections like that of the New York Public Library, preserving information, not for future generations. This was a chance to truly reinvent the form of the universal library, to confront the changing relationship between information creation and permanent storage. When the Library was built, the book stacks were built using the latest technology, from the frame structure to the electricity powering the book lifts. What if, rather than replacing the book stacks with a different use, the now antiquated stack technology was replaced with a more effective and innovative information storage system? Digital works are inherently impossible to permanently archive. The Library has been a leader in efforts to digitize its physical collection, could this have been a statement about the importance of giving the digital a physical form? While these efforts could take place at the new storage facility, location is everything. Removing the collection from the heart of the institution relinquishes its perceived importance.

What is at stake is more than just a building, because the building is not just the structure at 5th Ave and 42nd Street, but a symbol of human accomplishment. After the renovation, research will still take place, but it will no longer be the prime objective. The symbolism lies not just in the shell of the New York Public Library, but in its heart.

## NOTES

1. *New York Times*, "New Public Library's Novel Mechanical Devices," May 21, 1911.
2. *Ibid.*
3. "The New York Public Library" *Scientific American* 104, no. 21 (May 27, 1911): 527.
4. Aaron Sorkin, "The Blackout Part I: Tragedy Porn," *The Newsroom*, directed by Lesli Linka Glatter, (HBO, 2012.)
5. Roland Emmerich and Jeffrey Nachmanoff, *The Day After Tomorrow*, directed by Roland Emmerich, (Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation, 2004.)
6. Karl Gajdusek and Michael deBruyn, *Oblivion*, directed by Joseph Kosinski, (Universal Pictures, 2013.)
7. Dan Aykroyd and Harold Ramis, *Ghostbusters*, directed by Ivan Reitman (Columbia Pictures Corporation, 1984.)



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