IMPROVING THE PUBLIC: CULTURAL AND TYPOLOGICAL CHANGE IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY LIBRARIES

by

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Abstract

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Concurrent with New York City's emergence during the nineteenth century as the leading financial and cultural center in the United States, the city's public library architecture underwent a transition from buildings designed in romantic revival styles to monumental, neoclassical edifices that were intended by their architects and patrons to rival municipal libraries in other cities. New York's Astor Library, founded in 1848, was the first public library in the United States, and although its Romanesque Revival architecture was not a model for later libraries, its existence spurred the establishment of other public libraries. Before then access to all other libraries in the city required either membership in a particular group, such as a trade union, or a fee. The Neo-Grec design for the Lenox Library, founded in 1870, pushed public library design toward that of other emerging cultural institutions such as art museums in that it used similar forms. These two libraries, along with $2.5 million provided by the Tilden Trust, were consolidated in 1895 to form the New York Public Library. The public hoped that the new library would improve civic life by amassing a great collection and making it available to all, regardless of age, sex, or country of origin. These three institutions are the basis of this study of the library type as the embodiment of larger developments in the nineteenth-century architecture and culture of New York City. In this dissertation, I examine the

development of the public library type—which entailed debates about both function and style—against the backdrop of New York's emergence as a world-class city.

The New York Public Library was one of the last, large public libraries built in the United States during the Gilded Age. Other rival cities such as Boston and Chicago completed libraries prior to the consolidation of the New York Public Library. As a result, its architects had the benefit of studying these other institutions in order to determine what characteristics should be incorporated into the new building, and what should be avoided. New York Public Library represents the culmination of the public library type in New York City.

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgments ... vi
List of Illustrations ... viii
Introduction ... 1
Chapter 1: Library Architecture before 1840 ... 33
Chapter 2: "A very plain structure of brick": New York's Astor Library ... 68
Chapter 3: "The most monumental public building in New York," a "Book Museum": Hunt's Lenox Library ... 105
Chapter 4: A "Practical Working Library and… a Beautiful and Monumental Building": The New York Public Library ... 145
Conclusion ... 189
Bibliography ... 194
Illustrations ... 205

List of Illustrations

Figure 1: Alexander Saeltzer, Astor Library, 1849-54 205
Figure 2: Richard Morris Hunt, Lenox Library, 1870-77 206
Figure 3: Carrere and Hastings, New York Public Library, 1898-1912 207
Figure 4: Harvard Yard, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA..................................... 208
Figure 5: Richard Bond, Gore Hall, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.................... 209
Figure 6: Henry Van Brunt and William Ware, Stacks at Gore Hall, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA 210
Figure 7: William Thornton, Library Company of Philadelphia, 1791 211
Figure 8: Benjamin Harrison, Redwood Library, Newport, RI, 1749 212
Figure 9: Elevation from Edward Hoppus, *Andrea Palladio's Architecture* (1736)...... 213
Figure 10: Plan from Isaac Ware, *Designs of Inigo Jones and Others* (1735) 214
Figure 11: Charles Town Library Society, 50 Board Street, Charleston, SC (1797) 215
Figure 12: New York Society Library, 16 Nassau Street, 1794 216
Figure 13: Fredric Diaper, New York Society Library, Broadway at Leonard Street, 1840 217
Figure 14: Seth Geer, La Grange Terrace (Colonnade Row), 1833 218
Figure 15: T. Thomas and Son, New York Society Library, 67 University Place, 1856 219
Figure 16: Boston Athenaeum, Joy's Buildings, Congress Street, Boston..................... 220
Figure 17: Boston Athenaeum, James Perkins Estate, Pearl Street, Boston, 1822......... 221
Figure 18: Edward Shaw/Richard Bond, competition design, Boston Athenaeum, 1845 222
Figure 19: Gridley James Fox Bryant, competition design, Boston Athenaeum, 1845 . 223
Figure 20: George Minot Dexter, competition design, Boston Athenaeum, 1845 224
Figure 21: George Minot Dexter, competition design, Boston Athenaeum, 10½ Beacon Street, Boston, 1846.. 225
Figure 22: Edward Clark Cabot, Boston Athenaeum, 10½ Beacon Street, Boston, 1846 226
Figure 23: Edward Clark Cabot, first floor plan, Boston Athenaeum, 10½ Beacon Street, Boston, 1846. 227
Figure 24: James Renwick, Jr., Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., 1846-8 228
Figure 25: Robert Mills, Project design, Smithsonian Institute, Washington, D.C., 1841 229
Figure 26: A. J. Davis, project design, Astor Library, New York, NY, 1843 230
Figure 27: James Pennethorne, Museum of Economic Geology, Piccadilly Street elevation, London, 1846-51 231
Figure 28: Astor Library Interior 232
Figure 29: Richard Morris Hunt, preliminary sketch, Lenox Library, New York, NY, 1870.. 233
Figure 30: Hector Lefuel, Pavilion Bibliothèque, Louvre, Paris, 1854-5....................... 234
Figure 31: Richard Morris Hunt, Tenth Street Studio, New York, NY.......................... 235

Figure 32: Durand, Library, *Précis*, Part III: Examination of the Principal Kinds of Building. Plate 10 236
Figure 33: Durand, Museum, *Précis*, Part III: Examination of the Principal Kinds of Building. Plate 11 237
Figure 34: Richard Morris Hunt, First Floor plan, Lenox Library, March 14, 1870 238
Figure 35: Richard Morris Hunt, section, Lenox Library, March 14, 1870 239
Figure 36: Richard Morris Hunt, façade, Lenox Library, March 14, 1870 240
Figure 37: Richard Morris Hunt, plan, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1895 241
Figure 38: Richard Morris Hunt, New York Presbyterian Hospital, 1869-72 242
Figure 39: Henri Labrouste, Bibliotheque Ste.-Genevieve, Paris, completed 1851 243
Figure 40: Richard Morris Hunt, façade, Lenox Library, March 14, 1870 244
Figure 41: Richard Morris Hunt, study, Lenox Library 245
Figure 42: Richard Morris Hunt, façade sketch, Lenox Library 246
Figure 43: Richard Morris Hunt, presentation drawing, Lenox Library 247
Figure 44: Richard Morris Hunt, presentation drawing, Lenox Library 248
Figure 45: Richard Morris Hunt, presentation drawing, Lenox Library 249
Figure 46: Henry Hobson Richardson, Woburn Public Library, Woburn, Massachusetts, 1876-79 250
Figure 47: Henry Hobson Richardson, Woburn Public Library, Woburn, Massachusetts, 1876-79 251
Figure 48: Ernest Flagg, plan, New York Public Library, 1892 252
Figure 49: McKim, Mead and White, façade, Boston Public Library 253
Figure 50: Smithmeyer and Pelz, elevation, Library of Congress 254
Figure 51: Edwin Blashfield, Evolution of Civilization, mural, Library of Congress, 1896 255
Figure 52: Shepley, Rutan & Coolidge, Chicago Public Library, 1887 256
Figure 53: John Shaw Billings, plan for New York Public Library 257
Figure 54: William Ware, drawing of Billings's plan for New York Public Library 258
Figure 55: Carrere and Hastings, design for the New York Public Library 259
Figure 56: Howard and Cauldwell, design for the New York Public Library 260
Figure 57: McKim, Mead and White, design for the New York Public Library 261

Introduction

Concurrent with New York City's emergence during the nineteenth century as the leading financial and cultural center in the United States, the city's public library architecture underwent a transition from buildings designed in romantic revival styles to monumental, neoclassical edifices that were intended by their architects and patrons to rival municipal libraries in other cities.[1] New York's Astor Library, founded in 1848, was the first public library in the United States, and although its Romanesque Revival architecture did not become a model for later libraries, its existence spurred the establishment of other public libraries. Before then access to all other libraries in the city required either membership in a particular group, such as a trade union, or a fee. By way of contrast, the Astor Library admitted all men over the age of fourteen. The Neo-Grec design for the Lenox Library, founded in 1870, pushed public library design toward that of other emerging cultural institutions such as art museums in that it used similar forms. These two libraries, along with $2.5 million provided by the Tilden Trust, were consolidated in 1895 to form the New York Public Library. The public hoped that the new public library would improve civic life by amassing a great collection and making it available to all, regardless of age, sex, or country of origin. These three institutions are the basis of this study of the library type as the embodiment of larger developments in the nineteenth-century architecture and culture of New York City. In this dissertation, I examine the development of the public library type—which entailed debates about both function and style—against the backdrop of New York's emergence as a world-class city.

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[1]The term "neoclassical" is used here in its broadest sense to refer to the use of classicizing motifs in nineteenth-century architecture.. In this case it does not refer to a specific movement or stylistic idiom.

The New York Public Library was one of the last, large municipal public libraries built in the United States during the Gilded Age. Other rival cities such as Boston and Chicago completed libraries at the end of the nineteenth century, prior to the consolidation of the New York Public Library. As a result, the architects of the New York Public Library had the benefit of studying these other institutions in order to determine what characteristics should be incorporated into the new building, and what should be avoided. In terms of typology this meant that the New York Public Library could expand upon existing models of the public library type, which was one that designers struggled with during the second half of the nineteenth century.

The Astor Library (fig. 1) was an unsuccessful attempt at creating a public library type. Alexander Saeltzer, the library's architect, modeled the exterior of the building after European examples of public buildings, including Freidrich von Gärtner's (1791-1847) Munich Staatsbibliothek (1831-42) and the Museum of Economic Geology (1846-51) in London, designed by James Pennethorne (1801-1871).[2] Saeltzer used brick and brownstone for the exterior, and the building was criticized for a lack of monumentality that resulted from the use of these materials.

Saeltzer used the alcove plan for the interior of the Astor Library, which was one of the two preferred plans for private libraries at the time. By mid-century libraries in the U.S. generally used one of two specific plans, the hall library or the alcove library.[3] The hall library, or *Saalbibliothek*, first seen in the United States in William Thornton's (1759-1828) 1790 design for the Library Company of Philadelphia, consisted of a large

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[2]Alexander Saeltxer's life dates are not known.

[3]See Breisch, *Henry Hobson Richardson*, chap. 2.

room lined with books, and an iron gallery on a second level for reaching the upper shelving. Other buildings that used this plan include: the arts end of the Bodleian Library at Oxford (1610 and 1613); the New York Society Library's Nassau Street Building (1795); the Portsmouth Athenaeum (1817) in New Hampshire; and the British Museum Reading Room (1854-56). In the alcove plan, derived from British academic libraries at Oxford and Cambridge, books were arranged by subject. Thomas Jefferson embraced this plan in his design for the Rotunda at the University of Virginia (1821); other universities, such as Harvard and Yale, also used this plan for their libraries.[4]

By the last quarter of the nineteenth century a third library plan emerged. Metal library stacks became available, and these enabled librarians to increase the number of books in their collections. Readers were no longer seated among the shelves, instead they consulted materials in a separate reading room. Librarians were required to locate and deliver books to their readers. Concurrent with the use of library stacks, librarians developed methods of cataloguing such as the Dewey decimal system that made it possible to find one book among thousands of volumes. Architects added stacks to existing libraries, such as Gore Hall (1878) at Harvard University. Other architects, like McKim, Mead and White at the Boston Public Library (1887-1895), incorporated stacks into their designs for new buildings. Likewise Carrère and Hastings placed stacks in their design for the New York Public Library.

Twenty years after Saeltzer designed the Astor Library, Richard Morris Hunt (1827-1895) began work on the Lenox Library (fig. 2). Like his predecessor, Hunt

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[4]For a discussion of the evolution of library design, see Nikolaus Pevsner, *History of Building Types* (Princeton:Princeton University Press, 1979), chap. 7; Dale Allen Gyure, "The Heart of the University: A History of the Library as an Architectural Symbol of American Higher Education," *Winterthur Portfolio* 42 (June 2008): 107-132.

struggled with the library's exterior appearance. As a result of his education at the École des Beaux-Arts Hunt would have looked to architectural types derived from French architectural theory as a means to organize the library form. The study of building types had its foundation in eighteenth-century architectural thought. French architects and theorists such as Claude-Nicolas Ledoux (1736-1806), Étienne-Louis Boullée (1728-1799), and Antoine-Chrysostome Quatremère de Quincy (1755-1849) all studied architecture in terms of its presumed origins. Their work led to later developments, most notably to the work of Jean-Nicolas-Louis Durand (1760-1834), who advanced the theory that all architecture is derived from a modular system of predetermined forms. He called these forms "types" and they served as models for architectural design at the École des Beaux-Arts.[5] Hunt knew of Durand's types, and used them as a starting point for design of the Lenox Library. Hunt used the museum type, however, instead of the library type to create the plan for the Lenox Library. He combined an alcove plan with display cases that held rare books to create a hybrid library-museum space.

On the exterior Hunt used his own Neo-Grec architectural vocabulary. The choice of a neoclassical style was significant given that New York's other public library, the Astor Library, was not neoclassical. Hunt's use of the Neo-Grec gave the building an appearance of monumentality that critics found absent from the Astor Library. Like Saletzer with the Astor Library, Hunt did not establish a definitive American public library type at the Lenox Library. The building was very personal and was linked more to the needs of James Lenox (1800-1880) to display his collection than to the need of the public who might access its contents.

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[5]Michael K. Hays, ed., *Architecture Theory since 1968* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2000), 284.

As mentioned earlier the New York Public Library was created after many other cities had large municipal libraries. Not only did its designers thus benefit from the study of those libraries, but also from the study of the two existing public libraries in the city. The trustees of the New York Public Library wanted a building that would be monumental because they aimed to create a library that would be recognized as one of the greatest in the world. The first librarian of the New York Public Library, John Shaw Billings (1838-1912) wanted a building that functioned best for the library's many groups of users. He also sought to avoid the excessive costs that library projects in other cities had incurred. In sum he called for a public library that was monumental, useful, and could be constructed within the limits of its budget. Billings's goals for the library were the culmination of fifty years of library design, and resulted from his study of earlier attempts to perfect the public library type.

In this dissertation I will chart the emergence of the American public library type in New York City as it came to fruition in the design of the New York Public Library. The Astor and Lenox libraries will be examined within the larger context of New York City's architecture and contemporary library design. Although these two buildings represent false starts in establishing a public library type, they were significant predecessors to the New York Public Library. It was through their consolidation that the New York Public library was able to come into being; therefore it is particularly instructive to study these three buildings as a group. Together they illustrate the emergence of a viable public library type in New York City.

This is a typological study, which considers issues of style, function, and urban appearance within the particular context of the second half of the nineteenth century in

New York City. This fifty-year span was one in which the population of the city exploded in both number and diversity. Along with libraries there were a variety of institutions, especially schools and museums that emerged at the same time to educate, and possibly assimilate immigrants into the city's established culture. Like other institutions that provided immigrants and working-class New Yorkers with some of the education, which the elite deemed necessary for improvement, libraries were considered essential to providing appropriate material to better understand the society to which the lower classes were expected to contribute. The practical function of the public library, its appropriate architectural expression, and its place in the growing city, were all issues in the typological development of the public library in New York.

Libraries in New York City

The history of libraries in New York City began in 1754 with the founding of the New York Society Library, a subscription, or social, library modeled on the Library Company of Philadelphia which was established in 1731 by Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790). At the turn of the nineteenth century, New York institutions such as The New-York Historical Society, Union Theological Seminary, New York Hospital, and the New York Academy of Medicine opened specialized libraries. At the same time, trade and religious groups started social libraries as a means to educate and to improve the morals of their members through reading.[6] These were the existing models for a public library

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[6]Phyllis Dain, "Libraries," in Kenneth T. Jackson, ed., *The Encyclopedia of New York City* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), 667-70.

when the Astor Library was founded—small, private, requiring a paid subscription, and located in rooms within larger, general-purpose buildings.[7]

New York colonial libraries were not open to the general public and were housed in specialized rooms modeled on seventeenth-century European gentlemen's libraries. During the first half of the nineteenth century, purpose-built libraries such as the New York Society Library's building at 16 Nassau Street and Broadway, as opposed to rooms within larger buildings, were constructed. These early library buildings were based on domestic models and in fact were merely oversized versions of them. The Astor Library broke with this mode of design. Its plan—derived from a combination of European models, specifically a city library and a scientific museum—was the starting point for American public library design, but its form was outside of the American architectural tradition. Likewise the Lenox Library's Neo-Grec exterior relied on French and classical models filtered through the École des Beaux-Arts education of Richard Morris Hunt. The architects of these two buildings used European models for these new public libraries.

Before the Revolutionary War, the city's population was confined to the southern tip of Manhattan. In 1807 the state legislature appointed a three-person commission to study the island and to create a plan regulating its further development; the resulting Commissioners' Plan was revealed in 1811. The plan called for a grid to be applied to all city expansion. This grid created a regular street pattern that defined how the city would eventually take shape. The plan had exceptions to its rigid form, these included existing

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[7]Much of early American building was based on a modified house type. Whether buildings at The College of William and Mary or Bulfinch's Massachusetts State House, American architects tended to model their public buildings after large houses. It was the emergence of professional architects and new modern building types that pushed American design out of this domestic mode. Dell Upton, *Architecture in the United States* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

development as well as discrete areas for central markets and water distribution. These regulated spaces were unlike the overall commercial nature of the city where land development was not restricted.[8] The opening of the Erie Canal on October 26, 1825, cemented New York City's position as the dominant commercial center in the United States. In addition to the city's harbor and its dry goods markets, the canal created a hub from which transportation and communication lines developed throughout the remainder of the century. Linked to Europe by steamship and packet boat and to the interior of the U.S. by railroad, by mid-century New York City became the major transportation hub for the nation. As a result the city maintained its dominance in dry goods markets, and also became a center for banking, shipping, communication, and publishing.[9] It was in this environment that the nation's first public library was created.

The Astor Library, the first privately funded public reference library in the United States, was endowed by the German-American furrier John Jacob Astor (1763-1848) who bequeathed $400,000 to the city and a building site on the east side of Lafayette Place for the construction of a public library.[10] The New York State Legislature incorporated this library in 1849 and its board of trustees selected Alexander Saeltzer, born and educated in Germany, as the architect. Since Astor himself had not amassed a collection of books during his lifetime, Joseph Green Cogswell (1786-1861), the Astor Library's first

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[8]Eric Homberger, *The Historical Atlas of New York City* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1994), 68-69. Dell Upton, "Inventing the Metropolis: Civilization and Urbanity in Antebellum New York," in Catherine Voorsanger and John K. Howat, eds., *Art and the Empire City: New York, 1825-1861* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 3, 6-9.

[9]See Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace, *Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 649-73.

[10]The Astor Library was unusual in that it never used public funds or public lands. Almost all of the libraries founded after it had some means of public, taxpayer support. For a general history of public library building in the United States prior to 1875, see Kenneth Breisch, *Henry Hobson Richardson and the Small Public Library in America* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1997), chap. 2.

librarian and superintendent, traveled to Europe to purchase a collection that appealed to both popular and scholarly tastes. While the Astor Library was a philanthropic gesture conveying gratitude to the city that had made its patron wealthy, his bequest did not include an endowment large enough for the library's long-term survival; and therefore it was supported by contributions from its board of trustees, including the founder's second son, William Backhouse Astor (1795-1875).[11] As the first public research library in the United States, the Astor Library was open to all who wanted to use it, at no charge, and it became the model for large, public libraries throughout the country.

Unlike many private subscription libraries that appealed to a limited audience such as a trade union, the Astor Library's collection was non-circulating and included a wide range of books. In consultation with Cogwell, Saeltzer arranged the library according to an alcove plan, whereby each alcove was dedicated to a particular subject. The library had a single alcove dedicated to theology, whereas the remaining thirty-seven were given to other subjects including history, literature, classics, sciences, and fine arts.[12]

Twenty years later James Lenox commissioned Hunt to design a library to house his personal collection of Bibles, Americana, and other rare works. Unlike the Astor Library, where the board of trustees selected the architect, Lenox had a personal relationship with Hunt and asked him to design his library.[13] Its then-remote location at

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[11]J.J. Astor's eldest son, John Jacob Astor Jr. (1791-1879), was mentally disabled and not capable of conducting public affairs.

[12]Frank H. Norton, "The Astor Library," *The Galaxy* 7 (April 1869): 528.

[13]Hunt, who also designed the Gothic Revival Presbyterian Hospital (1872) for Lenox, first met Lenox in Newport in 1867. Henry Clay Frick purchased the Lenox Library in 1911, razed it, and built a mansion, designed by Carrère and Hastings, that eventually house the Frick Collection.

Seventieth Street and Fifth Avenue, its limited hours of operation, and its severe Neo-Grec exterior gave the Lenox Library an air of exclusivity that was intimidating to the casual user. Its interior design combined aspects of a gentleman's library and a picture gallery. Hunt's education at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, in particular his reliance on building types, and his subsequent trips to France informed this particular arrangement.

Before 1875 fewer than ten percent of all public, municipal libraries in the United States were in purpose-built buildings.[14] New York was unusual in that it had two public libraries as well as several other private library buildings. But by the late 1870s the public considered New York's two public libraries, the Astor and Lenox, inadequate in serving its needs. In a *New York Times* editorial written in 1879, the editors noted that smaller cities such as Boston, Cincinnati, and Chicago all had public municipal libraries whereas New York only had a few small public libraries, private libraries, and booksellers. The editors wrote that it was not possible to meet the various wants of the public without administration of a public authority, although the financial requirements of such an endeavor would be a burden to taxpayers. Although they asserted that the "demand for reading matter should in some way be met by an adequate supply," they did not propose a solution as to how to meet this need.[15] New York City's public school system began in 1826 when the Free School Society, which was created to educate free blacks, joined with the Sunday School Union and became the Public School Society.[16]

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[14]Kenneth A. Breisch, *Henry Hobson Richardson and the Small Public Library in America* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1997), 13.

[15]Ibid.

[16]Burrows and Wallace, *Gotham*, 499-500; Diane Ravitch, *The Great School Wars: A History of New York City Public Schools* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000).

Although a small number of children actually attended school, there was a concurrent rise in literacy rates alongside an increase in reading material. Like universal education itself, reading was considered beneficial for the city if its citizens read material that supported republican ideas about working towards a common good. The benefit of reading was lost, however, when works such as popular romances and murder mysteries became the material of choice.[17]

By 1895 the public, according to the popular press, was outraged that there was no public library in New York City. Not only did other major American cities have public libraries, but New York was a city with international aspirations. To its credit, New York had always looked to private individuals to create its public institutions; for example, private citizens financed both the Astor and the Lenox libraries. The Metropolitan Museum of Art was also financed by a group of private citizens, whereas the government funded the major museums in London and Paris. New Yorkers tended to look to private philanthropy to step into the void left by its municipal government. The Settlement House movement, where wealthy individuals chose to live in community houses located in poor sections of the city in order to assist and provide a model for domestic life, was an example of this call to action by private citizens to serve the public good.[18] Ultimately it was private philanthropy in the donation of $2.5 million from the Tilden Trust that made the creation of the New York Public Library possible.

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[17]The emergence of the murder mystery as a literary genre in nineteenth-century America is described in Karen Halttunen, *Murder Most Foul: The Killer and the American Gothic Imagination* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000).

[18]See Allen Freeman Davis, *Spearheads for Reform: The Social Settlements and the Progressive Movement, 1890-1914* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1984).

The accumulation of wealth by Americans families led to increased philanthropic activity during the second half of the nineteenth century. Not only did the amount of money they spent on charitable causes grow, the amount of time they devoted to helping others also increased. Buildings such as libraries and museums were erected to display a family's largesse and to reinforce its position within society. Unlike Europeans, Americans had no landed aristocracy and therefore status was based on wealth and personal connections. The Astors, James Lenox, Samuel Tilden, and other rich families and individuals used their wealth to create libraries not just to give back to society but also to ensure their position within it.[19]

In his *Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899), Thorstein Veblen addressed American wealth in general terms and argued that people usually try to emulate the perceived wealth of their peers. For example, the citizens of Boston built the first Boston Public Library in 1852 in direct response to the opening of the Astor Library and a desire to have a library of the same quality. Likewise, the first three major art museums in the United States were all incorporated in 1870: the Boston Museum of Fine Arts (opened to the public in 1876), the Corcoran Gallery (built before the Civil War), and the Metropolitan Museum of Art.[20]

Another purpose for cultural philanthropy by the elite was the assimilation of the lower classes. New York was always a city of immigrants. Irish and German

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[19]For additional sources on cultural philanthropy, see Kathleen McCarthy, *American Creed: Philanthropy and the Rise of Civil Society, 1700-1865* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003); Kathleen MacCarthy, *Noblesse Oblige: Charity and Cultural Philanthropy in Chicago, 1849-1929* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982); and Kathleen McCarthy, *Women's Culture: American Philanthropy and Art, 1830-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

[20]Calvin Tomkins, *Merchants and Masterpieces: The Story of the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., Inc., 1970), 21.

populations fleeing unrest in Europe arrived in the 1840s and 1850s, while European Jews, Italians, and Chinese came during the 1880s and 1890s. Some of these groups, in particular the Germans, settled in distinct areas of the city and maintained their cultural identities. The middle and upper classes, however, were interested in creating institutions that reinforced upper-class ideals and gave instruction to those who did not share their values.[21]

The Metropolitan Museum of Art is an example of an institution that had cultural philanthropic goals to compete with museums in European cities, to display for the public art that previously was in private hands, and to educate the public.[22] In his opening address at the dedication of the new museum building in March 1880, Joseph H. Choate (1832-1917) spoke of art and the museum as a means to diffuse knowledge to the lower classes:

> [A]rt belongs to the people, and has become their best resource and most efficient educator, if it be within the real objects of government to promote the general welfare, to make education practical, to foster commerce, to instruct and encourage the trades, and to enable the industries of our people to keep pace with, instead of falling hopelessly behind, those of other States and other Nations, then no expenditure could be more wise, more profitable, more truly republican….
>
> Their [the museum's founders'] plan was not to establish a mere cabinet of curiosities which should serve to kill time for the idle, but gradually to gather together a more or less complete collection of objects illustrative of the history of art in all its branches, from the earliest beginnings to the present time, which should serve not only for the instruction and entertainment of the people, but should also show to the students and artisans of every branch of industry, in the high and acknowledged

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[21]Burrows and Wallace, *Gotham*, chaps. 42 and 63.

[22]Winifred E. Howe, *A History of the Metropolitan Museum of Art: With a Chapter on the Early Institutions of Art in New York* (1913; repr., New York: Arno Press, 1974); and Calvin Tomkins, *Merchants and Masterpieces: The Story of the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1970). For a historiography of cultural institutions in the U.S. see Kathleen McCarthy, "Creating the American Athens: Cities, Cultural Institutions, and the Arts, 1820-1930," *American Quarterly* 37 (1985): 426-39.

> standards of form and of color, what the past had accomplished for them to imitate and excel.[23]

For Choate and the founders of the Metropolitan Museum, wanted to best European museum with their institution. The Victoria and Albert Museum in London, which specialized in the collection of "industrial art", influenced the Metropolitan Museum of Art in its attempt to collect all types of art in an effort to educate its visitors.[24]

Like the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the New York Public Library served a variety of citizens. In particular it responded to the needs of immigrants who were coming to the city in large numbers. New York City established Castle Garden in 1855, which was then the city's official immigration center. In 1860 there were 105,123 total immigrants, of those 47,330 were Irish, 37,899 were German, and 11,361 were English.[25] The city's established society wanted new residents assimilated into New York culture. To this end the periodical reading room was placed near the front entrance of the library so it would be easily accessible to those who came to the library only to read the daily paper. Library designers assumed that immigrants would use the library heavily during lunch hour, but not at other times, and therefore believed the number of people moving in and out of the periodical room would disrupt the study of other users. The placement of this room thus served two functions: it made the library accessible to the working class, including immigrants; and it allowed other users to read undisturbed. Similarly, the children's reading room was separated from the main reading room on the third floor.

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[23]Howe, *History of the Metropolitan Museum*, 196-99.

[24]Kenneth Hudson, *Museums of Influence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 54-60.

[25]See New York City's Immigrant Museum website, www.nyc.gov/html/nyc100/html/imm_stories/museum/index.html (accessed January 24, 2009).

This separation allowed the library to serve a variety of groups, presumably without offending any of them.

Toward the end of the century the press criticized the Astor and Lenox libraries for not adequately serving the needs of the public, especially those of the working class; eventually New Yorkers became convinced that they needed a public library like those in Boston and Chicago. In 1886 the former New York State governor Samuel J. Tilden (1814-1886) left the bulk of his estate ($5 million) to build a public library in New York City. Tilden's heirs contested his will, however, and the resolution of this dispute reduced his gift to the city by half. In the spring of 1895 the Tilden Trust merged with the financially struggling Astor and Lenox Libraries to form the New York Public Library (fig. 3). Its organizers intended this new library to serve the entire community, from society millionaires to recent immigrants. The board of trustees selected the architects through a two-part design competition, which was won by the firm of Carrère and Hastings. Its monumental Beaux-Arts design recalled European models as well as the American Renaissance, which embodied a variety of neoclassical styles and was popularized by the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago.

The World's Columbian Exposition was the pinnacle of neoclassicism in nineteenth-century architectural design. The exposition brought together the leading architectural firms in the United States and, under the leadership of Daniel Burnham (1846-1912), they created a unified complex of buildings that revived the taste for a Renaissance-inspired neoclassical architecture in the United States. The monumental scale of the fair and the variety of buildings showed the promise of classical architecture as an organizing force. Although some of the individual structures were not considered

outstanding, as a group they presented a classical composition that expressed the greatness of the entire enterprise.

The arrangement of the buildings around a man-made lake signaled the beginnings of the City Beautiful movement.[26] City Beautiful was a reform movement in American cities that grew from the notion that society could be morally uplifted by its physical surroundings. Everything from street lamps and park benches to monumental buildings, contributed to the city as a whole, and, as a result of a unified presentation, citizens would feel responsible for their surroundings and in turn would act in a manner appropriate to the environment. The city was a space that fostered civic pride and moral virtue. The design of Carrère and Hastings for the New York Public Library adopted a City Beautiful mode of neoclassicism, and the building's central position within the city as well as its classical vocabulary signified its importance to the people of the city. The library's architecture embodied the trustees' hope that it would become one of the leading research institutions in the world, but it also signaled a belief—central to the American Renaissance—that a world-class city should have monumental public buildings on par with those in other Western capitals.

At the opening of the New York Public Library on May 23, 1911, John Bigelow (1817-1911), president of the trustees, said:

> Some six centuries ago… the cathedral of Notre Dame [Paris] gave to France a standard in the department of architecture which, dovelike, has so brooded over that and all other departments of art in France for the succeeding years that Paris has only become not only the most attractive city in the world, but in proportion to its accommodations the city of the world most economically built and maintained. Need we despair that before the lapse of another 600 years, nay, even before Albany and Troy become, like the Bronx and Brooklyn, only boroughs of Greater New

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[26]The term American Renaissance was first used in 1880, *The Californian* 1 (June 1880): 1-2; see Richard Guy Wilson, *The American Renaissance, 1876-1917* (Brooklyn: The Brooklyn Museum, 1979), 63.

> York, this temple of Minerva in which we are assembled today may do as much for the commercial metropolis of America as Notre Dame has assisted in accomplishing for the metropolis of France.[27]

Bigelow, who was also a trustee for the Astor Library, saw the library's architecture as a way of enhancing the city's stature within the U.S. In the context of the City Beautiful movement, the middle and upper classes saw the library's neoclassical, French-inspired building as an agent for social change. Lower classes and immigrants would be able to use the library as a public university of sorts, and therefore could educate and improve themselves.

In another speech at the opening ceremony, U.S. President William Howard Taft (1857-1930) spoke of the library's role in educating New York's citizens. He said that the library and its collection were secondary to the access given to its users:

> The accumulation of books however valuable, however rare, however great in number, in a single library, without facilities for their consultation, examination, and distribution, is like the deposits of great veins of valuable minerals deposited in the earth, known to be there, but without the means and the transportation needed to make the materials available for the use of man.
>
> It is not in the treasures of the various collections that go to make up this library that its chief value consists…. It is not in the number of volumes or pamphlets or manuscripts that this library stands out first in the world… but it is in the facility of circulation and in the immense number of books that are distributed each year for use to the citizens and residents of New York and vicinity that this library easily takes the first rank.[28]

Taft, like many others, saw the library as a great democratic institution that allowed all visitors equal access to the knowledge contained within. Nonetheless, lower-class immigrants were not entirely welcomed into New York's society. The creators of the

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[27]Quoted in "City's $29,000,000 Library Is Opened," *New York Times*, May 24, 1911.

[28]Quoted in ibid.

library regulated access to the materials and designed the library in such a way that the presumed needs of the lower class would not interfere with the enjoyment of the library by its more elite patrons.

As the public library grew in importance within the cultural life of the city, the number and variety of people it served increased. By the end of the century public library users included women, children, and the blind as well as all classes of New Yorkers, yet the architecture of the public library was such that each user understood his relative position in society and could navigate the library appropriately.

Other factors, such as an interest in scholarship and historical research, the lyceum movement, trade unions, and the rise of publishing in the U.S., led to an increase in the number of public libraries at the end of the century.[29] After the Civil War, Americans became increasingly interested in their own history.[30] One way to unite the country was to research periods prior to the war in order to develop a standard version of American history that did not favor either side of the conflict. Myths regarding the creation of the United States and the lives of the founding fathers, especially George Washington, arose during Reconstruction. Myths such as Washington's throwing a silver dollar across the Potomac as a young boy and chopping down a cherry tree became popular and reinforced his American qualities of strength and honesty.[31] Historical

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[29]Jesse H. Shera, *Foundations of the Public Libra*ry (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1949), 200-5.

[30]See Michael G. Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (New York: Knopf, 1991), and Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution 1863-1877* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1988).

[31]Karal Ann Marling, *George Washington Slept Here* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988).

writing and research served as a means to create a national mythology, and libraries were integral to this trend.

The lyceum movement also strongly influenced the creation of public libraries. A lyceum was an association with three purposes: to improve instruction in public schools; to provide adult education through discussion and lectures; and to establish and support libraries and museums.[32] In 1826 the educator Josiah Holbrook (1788-1854) founded the first lyceum in Millbury, Massachusetts. This movement was particularly active in the New England states and led to a vital public library movement there. The idea of collective improvement as advanced through the lyceum movement was part of the larger reform movement, whose proponents sought to improve the lives of the poor through a variety of ways, including settlement houses. Many of the public libraries constructed included lecture halls and children's rooms. Librarians considered the education of all when they arranged their spaces to accommodate magazine and newspaper reading; the needs of those who did not read English led to the purchase of foreign language books and newspapers for library collections.[33]

Libraries were also affected by the rise of trade unions, which encouraged cooperative activities, the formation of workingmen's political parties, and the establishment of newspapers, journals, institutes, and libraries for the education and advancement of the working class.[34] In organizing and supporting the public library, the middle and upper classes wanted members of the working class to improve themselves

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[32]Haynes McMullen, *American Libraries before 1876* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2000), 94.

[33]Josiah Holbrook, *American Lyceum, or Society for the Improvement of Schools and Diffusion of Knowledge* (Boston: Perkins and Marvin, 1829); and Carl Bode, *The American Lyceum: Town Meeting of the Mind* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956).

[34]Shera, *Foundations of the Public Library*, 229.

through their reading habits.[35] The upper classes considered technical manuals and practical guides appropriate for working-class readers, and the upper classes were disappointed when their advice was not followed, and working-class readers were drawn to popular genres that were entertaining but failed to convey the values endorsed by the elite. In this context the library also became a tool for determining the reading material available to the working class. Thus public libraries also served a secondary purpose as instruments of social control. Like factory schools they were intended by their founders to impart to the lower classes the value system of the ruling class.[36]

Another important influence in the creation of libraries in the nineteenth century was the growing publishing industry in the United States. New York City became the country's publishing center after the completion of the Erie Canal in 1825. New York's newspaper and pamphlet printers had always been active, but the city finally bested its colonial rivals Philadelphia and Boston when the canal opened and New York printers gained access to the American West. This also led to the emergence of book publishing in New York. As prices on printed matter dropped and the literacy rate among Americans rose, New York's publishing industry exploded. By 1860 there were seventeen book-publishing firms in New York City producing thirty-seven percent of the industry's revenue. Libraries served as repositories for this material.[37]

In addition to the conditions that led to an increase in public interest in forming new libraries, the rise of the professional class in the nineteenth century had a direct

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[35]American Social History Project, *Who Built America?* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1992), 2: 94.

[36]Martyn Lyons, "New Readers in the Nineteenth Century: Women, Children, Workers," in Guglielmo Cavallo and Roger Chartier, *A History of Reading in the West*, translated by Lydia G. Cochrane (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), 332.

[37]Burrows and Wallace, *Gotham*, 440-41, 681.

impact on library design. These new professionals were library users, and among them were those who designed libraries. A tension between professional librarians and professional architects grew out of their forced collaboration. When Saeltzer designed the Astor Library there were no professional societies for architects or librarians. As each profession organized and created rules of practice and standards, they came to be at odds with each other, as each wanted the lead role in library design. As standards for paging, shelving, and storage of books emerged, the physical appearance of the library changed. Separate spaces were needed for book delivery, periodicals, specialized collections, and reading rooms for children, and librarians and architects did not always agree on how these spaces and their need for adjacencies should be defined.

The rise of the professionally trained architect helped to propel classicism as the leading design vocabulary for public building in the U.S.[38] Architects who practiced in America during the Colonial and Federal periods were generally divided into two types of practitioners: the carpenter-builder and the gentleman-architect.[39] The carpenter-builder included the likes of William Buckland (1734-1774), who worked as an indentured servant for George Mason (1725-1792) and designed the interiors of Gunston Hall (1755-58) for him in Mason Neck, Virginia. After Buckland served his indenture, he began his own practice as an architect in Maryland, designing such buildings as the Hammond-Harwood House in Annapolis (c. 1774).[40]

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[38]For further discussion of the rise of the professional architect, see Mary N. Woods, *From Craft to Profession* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

[39]See Dell Upton, "Pattern Books and Professionalism: Aspects of the Transformation of Domestic Architecture in America, 1800-1860," *Winterthur Portfolio* 19 (1984): 107-50.

[40]Rosamond Randall Beirne, *William Buckland, 1734-1774* (Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society, 1958); Carl R. Lounsbury, "'An Elegant and Commodious Building': William Buckland and the Design of

During the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries Thomas Jefferson was the country's most famous gentleman-architect. He taught himself through the study of illustrated architectural pattern books such as Palladio's *Four Books on Architecture* (1570).[41] At the turn of the century, the idea that the architect provided a professional service and expertise for which he should be financially compensated took hold. Benjamin Henry Latrobe (1764-1820), considered by some to be the country's first professional architect, had emigrated from England, where architects were established professionals who were compensated at regular rates. Architects in the U.S. had not yet adopted this practice and usually were paid only upon a building's completion, but Latrobe encouraged his pupil Robert Mills (1781-1855) to demand a fee of five percent of a building's cost in exchange for his drawings:

> The custom of all of Europe has decided that 5 per Cent on the cost of a building, with all personal expenses incurred, shall be the pay of the Architect. This is just as much as is charged by the Merchant for the transaction of business, expedited often in a few minutes by the labor of a Clerk; while the Architect must watch the daily progress of the work perhaps for Years, pay all his Clerk hire, and repay to himself the expense of an education greatly more costly than that of a merchant.[42]

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the Prince William County Courthouse," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 46 (Sept. 1987): 228-40.

[41]For a list of Buckland's architectural library, see Rosamond Randall Beirne and John Henry Scarff, *William Buckland, 1734-1774, Architect of Virginia and Maryland* (Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society, 1958), 149-50. For a list of Jefferson's architectural books, see William B. O'Neal, *Jefferson's Fine Arts Library: His Selections for the University of Virginia Together with His Own Architectural Books* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1976).

[42]Latrobe to Mills, July 12, 1806, in John C. Van Horne and Lee W. Fromwalt, eds., *The Correspondence and Miscellaneous Papers of Benjamin Henry Latrobe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 2: 239-44.

Latrobe believed that American clients did not value the architect as a professional. He considered his architectural drawings the embodiment of his ideas, however, and insisted that clients recognize them as such.[43]

As the architect developed into a professional, schools to train and organizations to support the architect emerged. The Massachusetts Institute of Technology (1865), University of Illinois (1867), Cornell University (1871), Columbia University (1881), and Harvard University (1885) were among the first to develop schools of architecture. William Ware (1826-1914), who trained at the Tenth Street Studios under Richard Morris Hunt and who sat on the architect selection committee for the New York Public Library, founded the architecture schools at MIT and Columbia. Hunt, who was the first American to attend the École des Beaux-Arts, influenced Ware and the curricula at the schools he founded. Both were modeled on the École and emphasized a classical architectural vocabulary in addition to the École method, by which design is generated from a predetermined plan according to a particular building type.[44]

In addition to that of architect, other professions also arose in the United States during the nineteenth century. The American Library Association (ALA), which was founded at the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia in 1876, recognized the librarian as a trained professional who was responsible for cataloging the library's collection. Librarians such as William Frederick Poole (1821-1894), who was a founder of the ALA and head librarian at Chicago Pubic Library and Newberry Public Library, developed strong ideas about how library spaces should be organized, and unlike many of his

[43]Jill Marie Lord, "Educating an American Architect: Robert Mills, Thomas Jefferson, and Benjamin Henry Latrobe" (M.A. thesis, University of Virginia, 1996), chap. 2 and app. C.

[44]Woods, *From Craft to Profession*, 68.

contemporaries, he did not advocate a stack system. He wanted a library to be a series of rooms—each dedicated to a specific subject—arranged around an interior courtyard. Architect Henry Ives Cobb (1859-1931) designed the Newberry Library in Chicago (1888) according to Poole's instruction.

In his remarks to the ALA, Poole recommended that librarians be consulted during design and construction because they understood the needs of both the staff and users:

> The architect is not qualified to decide what the requirements of a library are, for he knows nothing about the details of its administration. The librarian should study out the design of the original plan, and the architect should take his practical suggestions, harmonize them, and give to the structure an artistic effect. It would be well if librarians gave more attention to library construction. If left to architects alone, the business will run in the old ruts.[45]

Poole was particularly disappointed with the new designs for the Library of Congress (1888-98) and the Boston Public Library (1887-95), claiming that they were extravagant, wasteful, and did not properly consider the books that they housed.

Professional architects designed the three libraries in this study. Hunt was one of the founding members of the American Institute of Architects and was known as the "Dean of American Architecture" as a result of his wide influence on architects in the second half of the nineteenth century. His office was similar to that of an *atelier*, or studio, at the École des Beaux-Arts. Carrère and Hastings established a special office for the New York Public Library, and theirs was similar to other large architectural offices at the end of the century in which a number of draftsmen executed the ideas of the principal

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[45]William Frederick Poole, *Remarks on Library Construction* (Chicago: Jansen, McClurg and Co., 1884), 4.

partners.[46] Professionalization of architecture complicated library design in that architects and librarians each wanted complete control over the design process. The support of a larger professional group of architects allowed individuals to refuse to yield ground to the librarians who often better understood the functioning of the library space.

Previous Scholarship

Surprisingly little has been published on public library architecture in the United States. The most recent important studies are: Kenneth Breisch, *Henry Hobson Richardson and the Small Public Library* (1997); Abigail van Slyck, *Free to All: Carnegie Libraries and American Culture, 1890-1920* (1995); and Mary Frances Brousseau, "The Library of Congress, 1873-1897: The Building, Its Architects and the Politics of Nineteenth-Century Architectural Practice" (PhD diss., University of Delaware, 1998). None of these, however, considers New York City examples.[47]

Kathleen Curran has written about the Astor Library in *The Romanesque Revival: Religion, Politics, and Transnational Exchange* (2003) and "The German *Rundbogenstil* and Reflections on the American Round-Arched Style" (*Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 1988), and places Saeltzer within the larger context of the German influence on architecture in the United States. Her interests, however, are

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[46]Woods, *From Craft to Profession*, 129.

[47]There is a large body of literature on the history of library collections and library science. Many of these texts were consulted for this study, and although their understanding is important to this study they generally fall outside the boundary of architectural history. Abigail Van Slyck, *Free to All: Carnegie Libraries and American Culture, 1890-1920* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1995); and Mary Frances Brousseau, "The Library of Congress, 1873-1897: The Building, Its Architects and the Politics of Nineteenth-Century Architectural Practice" (PhD diss., University of Delaware, 1998).

largely formal and there are no published studies that focus exclusively on the Astor Library or its architect.[48]

In contrast there is a greater body of literature on the Lenox Library, most of which considers the life and work of Richard Morris Hunt. The bulk of the literature on Hunt addresses his role as a designer to the elite. Paul Baker, *Richard Morris Hunt* (1986) and Susan Stein, ed., *The Architecture of Richard Morris Hunt* (1986) give the most complete picture of Hunt's public commissions and the Lenox Library in particular. Paul Baker discusses the Lenox Library in terms of Hunt's mid-career when Hunt was not building much and had lost several design competitions but was active in judging student projects at the École des Beaux-Arts. David van Zanten also explored the French influence on Hunt's design. [49]

Three notable studies have been published on the New York Public Library: Harry Miller Lyndenberg, *History of the New York Public Library* (1923); Phyllis Dain, *The New York Public Library: A History of Its Founding and Early Years* (1972; republished 2000); and Henry Hope Reed, *The New York Public Library: Its Architecture*

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[48]Kathleen Curran, *The Romanesque Revival: Religion, Politics and Transnational Exchange* (University Park: Pennsylvania State Press, 2003); and "The German *Runbogenstil* and Reflections on the American Round-Arched Style," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 47 (1988): 351-73.

[49]John Morill Bryan, *Biltmore Estate: The Most Distinguished Private Palace* (New York: Rizzoli Publications, 1994); William A. V. Cecil, *Biltmore: The Vision and Reality of George W. Vanderbilt, Richard Morris Hunt, and Frederick Law Olmsted* (Asheville, NC: Biltmore Estate, 1975); Lamia Duomato, *Richard Morris Hunt: Architect to America's Wealthy Families* (Monticello, IL: Vance Bibliographies, 1980); William H. Jordy and Christopher P. Monkhouse, *Buildings on Paper: Rhode Island Architectural Drawings, 1825-1945* (Providence, RI: Bell Gallery, List Center, Brown University, 1982); Robert B. MacKay, Anthony K. Baker, and Carol A. Traynor, eds., *Long Island Country Houses and Their Architects*, foreword by Brendan Gill (New York: W. W. Norton Co., 1997); Victoria Loucia Volk, "The Biltmore Estate and Its Creators: Richard Morris Hunt, Frederick Law Olmstead, and George Washington Vanderbilt" (PhD diss., Emory University, 1984); Paul R. Baker, *Richard Morris Hunt* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1986); Susan Stein, ed., *The Architecture of Richard Morris Hunt* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986); and David Van Zanten, "The Lenox Library: What Hunt Did and Did Not Learn in France," in ibid., 90-106.

and Decoration (1986). There are three monographs on the firm Carrère and Hastings: two unpublished studies (a manuscript by Jean-Pierre Isbouts (1980) and a PhD dissertation by Channing Blake (1976)) and a two-volume monograph published by Acanthus Press in 2006. All highlight the New York Public Library as one of the firm's most important commissions, but none analyzes the library's importance with respect to the larger history of public library architecture particularly in the U. S.[50]

The history of reading also includes histories of libraries. These studies in particular look at how library spaces were used and what that usage says about the people who created them. *Institutions of Reading: The Social Life of Libraries in the United States*, edited by Thomas August and Kenneth Carpenter (2007), is a collection of essays analyzing the history of reading with respect to the physical space in which it occurred. The essays were first presented in 2002 at a conference on library history entitled "The History of Libraries in the United States." This chronological study begins with essays on eighteenth-century colonial libraries and continues until 2002. One of its themes is that as books were made more widely available, and as reading moved outside of the home separate library spaces were necessary. August and Carpenter noted that although the act of reading was private, once libraries moved into the public sphere reading became a public activity.[51]

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[50]There is also a small, published guide to the library, Ingrid Steffesen, *The New York Public Library* (London and New York: Scala, 2003). Harry Miller Lyndenberg, *History of the New York Public Library* (New York: New York Public Library, 1923); Phyllis Dain, *The New York Public Library: A History of Its Founding and Early Years* (New York: The Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations, 1972); Henry Hope Reed, *The New York Public Library: Its Architecture and Decoration* (New York: Norton, 1986); Jean-Pierre Isbouts, "Carrère and Hastings, Architects to an Era" (master's thesis, Rijksuniversiteit Leiden, 1980); Curtis Channing Blake, "Architecture of Carrère and Hastings" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1976); Mark Alan Hewitt, et al. *Carrère & Hastings Architects* (New York: Acanthus Press, 2006).

[51]Thomas August and Kenneth Carpenter, eds., *Institutions of Reading: The Social Life of Libraries in the United States* (Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007): ix, 5.

Material culture studies, such as William J. Gilmore, *Reading Becomes a Necessity of Life* (1989), have added to the understanding of how reading and books both play a role in community life. Gilmore analyzes the rise of literacy in a small geographic area and studies how it influenced the culture of that area. The consumption of newspapers and almanacs led to improved agricultural practices and linked the rural countryside to larger coastal cities. This study is just one example of how the interest in reading as a cultural phenomenon can lead to the better understanding of a particular community.[52]

In order to assess the success of the subject libraries in reaching their intended audience, the planned use of the library must be considered in tandem with its physical appearance. Histories of library science and reading position these buildings within the larger context of social developments in reading and consumption of printed matter. The public expectations for a library are important in understanding it.

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[52]Wiliam J. Gilmore, *Reading Becomes a Necessity of Life: Material and Cultural Life in Rural New England, 1780-1835* (Knoxville, TN: The University of Tennessee, 1989).

Organization

This study will analyze each library within its particular social and cultural circumstances, and the construction histories and public reception of these buildings will be discussed in each chapter. The New York Public Library contains the archives for all three subject libraries. Other archival resources include: the Museum of the City of New York, the Hunt Collection at the Octagon Museum/American Architectural Foundation, William Backhouse Astor Papers at the New-York Historical Society, and the drawings of A.J. Davis and Richard Upjohn at Avery Library at Columbia University. Among the most important collections consulted for this project are the Lenox Library Drawings at the Octagon Museum/American Architectural Foundation: forty-two drawings of the Lenox Library that range from early sketches on scrap paper to fully rendered presentation drawings. The drawings illustrate Hunt's working method and show the influence of his education at the École. These sources make possible an analysis of each library's design through the records of the discussions of the designs as well as the drawings themselves. The Hunt drawings, in particular, provide a window into his design process.

This dissertation has an introduction, four chapters, and a conclusion. Chapter one introduces the library in the context of Colonial and Federal America. It begins with a brief discussion of books, reading, and libraries. Different types of early libraries—subscription or society, university, and church-sponsored—are introduced. This serves as the basis for an architectural analysis of Colonial and Federal period society libraries such as the Library Company of Philadelphia (established 1731), Redwood Library in

Newport, Rhode Island (1747), the Charles Town Library, Charleston, South Carolina (1748), New York Society Library (1754), and the Boston Athenaeum (1807). These institutions provide context for the subsequent discussion of the public library; in particular they are intended to highlight the groundbreaking nature of the Astor Library bequest, written in 1839.

Chapter two discusses the Astor Library, with particular focus on the selection of Saeltzer's design by the board of trustees. Joseph Green Cogswell, the library's first superintendent and librarian, influenced the selection of the architect through the drawings and letters he sent to William Backhouse Astor. As the first public library in New York City, the Astor Library served as the prototype and will be referenced in the discussion of later developments in architectural design and institutional organization. There are several early designs for the library, among them one by Richard Upjohn (1802-1878) and one by Alexander Jackson Davis (1803-1892). After a discussion of the various design proposals, I will address the early reception of the library by the public, including some of the early criticisms.

The next public library built in New York was the Lenox Library. Chapter three discusses the design process used by Hunt and his office to develop the final design for the library. Hunt's design challenged the two principal types of library plans, the alcove and the hall, by combining them to enhance the display of books, as objects to be admired rather than read. [53] In form the library was more like an art gallery or a small museum, an

[53]These two types were established by Nikolaus Pevsner in *A History of Building Types* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976). See also William Jordy, "Charles McKim's Boston Public Library," *Progressive and Academic Ideals at the Turn of the Twentieth Century*, American Buildings and Their Architects, vol. 4 (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972).

appropriate design solution for a building in which readers were of secondary importance to the public display of Lenox's collection.

Chapter four explores the desire of New Yorkers to have a public library that compared favorably with those of other cities. The selection of the library's site and its architect will be discussed within the context of the American Renaissance, in which the neoclassical, Beaux-Arts idiom was accepted as the one most appropriate for municipal projects, as it signified the importance of New York as a world-class city.

The library was an institution that evolved as the city's population grew and its demographics changed. Middle- and upper-class supporters of the public library saw it as an instrument of cultivation, enabling lower-class citizens and immigrants to improve themselves intellectually without giving them any real power. Most supporters of libraries believed in educating and improving the working class but stopped short of empowering them either to challenge or overwhelm the status quo.

The chronology of New York's libraries coincides with the growth of the city into the country's leading cultural and financial center. Design changes in its libraries reflect how the city was growing, not only with respect to the new populations of immigrants, but also in response to the increased land use within the city. These physical developments dovetail with the social concerns of New York's citizens in mitigating the influence of immigrant groups on the overall population. In the 1840s German and Irish citizens left Europe in droves. By 1855 more than half of New York's population had immigrates.[54] The sheer number of these immigrant groups taxed the infrastructure of the city. Not only did they require employment, they also needed housing, hospitals, and transportation. New Yorkers were concerned about the negative impact on their city.

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[54]Burrows and Wallace, *Gotham*, 737.

Although public libraries were not designed specifically to meet the demands of immigrant groups, their founders wanted the libraries to be fashioned such that they would aid in assimilating these groups into American society.

As the library became increasingly complex in its collection and its audience, the structure that housed it developed in an analogous fashion. By the end of the century, it was no longer feasible to create an alcove plan building, as all of the public groups who wanted to use the library could no longer be served in a single room. Thus separate spaces were created, and while they opened the library to a greater number of users, these groups splintered and library usage became more focused. In turn the exterior of the buildings reflected these changes. While the library became more monumental through its size and architectural vocabulary, it simultaneously became more practical in how it served the public. Thus, the process by which a public library type was established in New York City embodied several interconnected developments. These touched on issues of function, plan, style, and urban appearance. The first two libraries in this study were unsuccessful in establishing a pubic library type. It was through study of their shortcomings that the architects of the New York Public Library were able finally to achieve a public library type in New York City.

Chapter 1: Library Architecture before 1840

An understanding of the history of reading, books, and libraries is vital to charting the emergence of the public library in the nineteenth century. From the earliest settlement of the American colonies, reading was seen as a transformative act: through reading, either in private or aloud, Americans could effect change. Native Americans would convert to Christianity, and capable European Americans could improve their position in colonial society through reading and hard work. It is not surprising then that religious societies were the first to establish libraries in North America. University and society, or subscription, libraries followed soon after, and by the time of the Astor Library's creation in 1848 could be found in many U.S. cities. Increased leisure time and changing attitudes about reading in the home also shaped the environment in which the first public library was created.

An analysis of the architecture of early libraries will show that although Colonial and Federal architects considered the library to be a public building, there was little differentiation among public buildings during the first half of the nineteenth century. No single architectural feature that defined a library. Early libraries displayed a variety of architectural solutions, and their appearance was generally neoclassical.

The history of reading—how, where, and why books are read—intersects with library history. Like many disciplines that emerged in the late twentieth century, scholars in this field come from a variety of specializations, including comparative literature,

history, and material culture.[55] The field expanded during the 1970s, when literary criticism moved away from the study of authorship and writing to that of reading. This movement corresponded to art historical studies of reception in which the reader, or the viewer (as opposed to the author) became the maker of meaning.[56] Within this critical framework there was a theoretical shift away from the study of production to that of consumption. Studies of the history of the book reacted to this trend by analyzing the physical process of making the book and the act of reading books. Like histories of reading, histories of the book do not occupy a defined place within either library or literary study.

In the introduction to their anthology *A History of Reading in the West* (1999), Guglielmo Cavallo and Roger Chartier argue that before the invention of the printing press, reading was essentially a public activity where certain forms of literature such as plays and poems were read aloud. As books became more widely available, however, reading moved into the private sphere, where one read in silence. To this point Hellenistic (Greek) libraries were designed for a select group of scholars, and books were accumulated for their use, not for reading by the public. Public reading thrived, however, in the form of plays and poetry read aloud. In Rome in the second century BC books

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[55]For a bibliographic essay on the history of reading, see, Leah Price, "Reading: The State of the Discipline," *Book History* 7 (2004): 303-20. Richard D. Altick, *The English Common Reader* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957); Guglielmo Cavallo and Roger Chartier, eds., A *History of Reading in the West*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999); Cathy N. Davidson, ed., *Reading in America: Literature and Social History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989); David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery, eds., *An Introduction to Book History* (New York: Routledge, 2005); William J. Gilmore, *Reading Becomes a Necessity of Life: Material Culture in Rural New England, 1780-1835* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1989); David D. Hall, *Cultures of Print* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996); and Michele Moylan and Lane Stiles, eds., *Reading Books: Essays on the Material Text and Literature in America* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996).

[56]Price, "Reading," 311.

were among the booty stolen from conquered people. While the Romans created public libraries, they were restricted to scholars, and public readings continued outside of these designated spaces. During the Middle Ages, books and libraries became property of the church. Access was restricted to monks and noblemen, who read for a greater understanding of God and other religious matters. Public reading no longer took place, so except for a privileged few reading was lost. Between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries in Europe, cities and schools developed, and reading and literacy began to increase. When Johann Gensfleisch zum Gutenberg (1400-1468) invented the movable type printing press in 1450, literacy rates were already on the rise. The printing press allowed books to be printed cheaply, and it furthered revolutions in reading and society that were already in progress.[57]

Cavallo and Chartier also discuss reading as a physical phenomenon that changed the space within which it was practiced. As reading moved out of the open spaces of the agora and amphitheater to the medieval library, and then to the modern public library, the physical relationship of the reader to the text changed. Originally the reader sat in a group, listening to a text being read aloud. As books became restricted to a few specialized groups, reading moved into private and silent spaces, such as monastic libraries, in which the reader sat in a stall, separate from the other activity within the space. When books were made available to larger portions of the public, reading remained silent but the physical space of the reader was situated in public. Public

[57] Cavallo and Chartier, eds., *History of Reading*, 22.

libraries are therefore both public and private spaces, where a private activity is made public by its being performed within the sight of others.[58]

The rise in literacy rates in Colonial America led to an increase in the production of books as well as other printed matter such as newspapers. Between 1710 and 1790 literacy rates among white men in North America rose from 70 percent to 90 percent. Although precise literacy rates among women are not known, it is assumed that they rose at a similar rate even though the overall rates were lower. Between 1740 and 1770 the number of printers and book publishers in North America doubled, and the number of imported books increased more than tenfold.[59] Concurrent with the increase in membership in eighteenth-century North American society libraries, a distinction between general reading material and literature was made. Periodical literature, for example newspapers and almanacs, and contemporary novels were considered general reading material, and patrons began to borrow fewer literary works, such as classics, and books on law and politics. The ordering habits of society libraries from London publishers reflected this trend.[60] In addition to novels, eighteenth-century Americans read "courtesy books," such as Eleazar Moody's *The School of Good Manners* (1715) and Richard Allestree's *The Whole Duty of Man* (1728), which instructed them on proper behavior, modeled on that of the European gentry.[61] Libraries also purchased these books in response to demand by their patrons.

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[58]Ibid., 1-36; Price, "Reading," 309.

[59]James Green, "Subscription Libraries and Commercial Circulating Libraries in Colonial Philadelphia and New York," in August and Carpenter, *Institutions of Reading*, 58-59.

[60]James Raven, "Social Libraries," in August and Carpenter, *Institutions of Reading*, 47.

[61]"The Courtesy-Book World," in Richard L. Bushman, *The Refinement of America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), 30-60.

Libraries and reading were considered part of the nation's educational framework and contributed to the American idea of improving one's life through intelligence and hard work. For example, in *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1787), Thomas Jefferson proposed a three-tiered education system where all white, male children would attend a school for three years to learn the basics of reading and writing.[62] Those who could afford it, plus a select group based on merit, would continue their studies at a grammar school where they would learn—among other things—Greek and Latin. Upon graduation an even smaller group would be chosen to receive an education in the sciences at a public university. He wrote:

> By that part of our plan which prescribes the selection of the youths of genius from among the classes of the poor, we hope to avail the state of those talents which nature has sown as liberally among the poor as the rich, but which perish without use, if not sought for and cultivated.[63]

Jefferson advocated the opportunity for all Americans to pursue an education. In his scheme, the brightest could succeed regardless of their means. Books, reading, and libraries would make this all possible.

Jefferson also linked the need for education to suffrage; if Americans were to be given the right to vote, then they needed to be able to defend their ideas of government. In his view a democratic government required basic universal education to be effective; otherwise it would become a government by and for the elite, which he believed was the deficiency of Great Britain, where only ten percent of the people had the right to vote for their government. Jefferson furthered his goal of universal education in proposing the

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[62]*Notes on the State of Virginia* has a complicated publication history. Jefferson began his manuscript in the fall 1780 and completed it in late 1781. It was first printed in France in May 1785, and was intended for private distribution. The 1787 version was the first edition of the book printed in English. William Peden, "Introduction," in Jefferson, *Notes*, xi-xx.

[63]Jefferson, *Notes*, 148.

opening of a public library and an art gallery, with a specific sum of money to be allocated annually for the purchase of books, paintings, and statues.[64]

Jefferson's writing hints at a potential problem with public libraries. If reading is a way to improve oneself, then in theory it could possibly challenge the accepted order of American life. Slaves were not allowed to read, and Native Americans were given access to books only in an attempt to Christianize them. For example, even though members of the Charleston Library Society, established in 1748, considered their library to be an important tool to educate and acculturate the enslaved Africans and conquered Native Americans living within their society, in fact those groups were not given access to the library. Thus the goal of universal education was not met.[65]

Of course because colonial and antebellum society libraries were open only to those who could pay for a membership, they were not truly public. The pubic did take an interest in these institutions, however, and was often critical of them. The Portsmouth Athenaeum, incorporated in 1817, operated as a men's club in which its members debated political news as well as enjoyed a private reading room. According to letters published in the *New Hampshire Gazette*, many residents felt that the library's members wielded too much power in the city.[66] Reading alone did not grant power or status to an individual. This further challenged Jefferson's idea that reading was central to the improvement of citizens.

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[64]Ibid., 149.

[65]Raven, "Social Libraries," 29.

[66]Michael A. Baenen, "A Great and Natural Enemy of Democracy? Politics and Culture in the Antebellum Portsmouth Athenaeum," in August and Carpenter, *Institutions of Reading*, 72-98.

During the antebellum period, books were represented in literature as respectable modes of entertainment, either through reading alone or aloud to others. Reading was held in such high esteem that it alone, without the benefit of additional instruction, was thought sufficient to improve the education of an individual. (In his book *The Refinement of America* [1992], Richard Bushman speculated that this was the reason that mechanics' libraries proliferated at the beginning of the nineteenth century; that its members considered the library to be sufficient for educating tradesmen, without need for training or other forms of organized instruction.) Although fiction was the most widely published genre in the early nineteenth century, most libraries attempted to develop collections that also highlighted histories, biographies, classical literature, scientific literature, and essays.[67]

As the nineteenth century progressed, reading changed from a social activity that promoted improvement to a private activity for personal enjoyment—more a pastime than a necessity.[68] This shift affected how libraries were used and how they selected their books. The reading and circulation of periodical literature such as newspapers and almanacs became part of the daily routine. Families also began to create personal libraries, and even rural areas circulated books through informal lending libraries.[69]

In general the word *library* refers both to collections and buildings. In *American Libraries before 1876*, Haynes McMullen (1915-2005) defined a library as an organized collection of books that may or may not include magazines. According to his definition,

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[67]Bushman, *Refinement*, 280, 286-7.

[68]Raven, "Social Libraries," 51-52.

[69]Gilmore, *Reading Becomes a Necessity*, 130-31.

almost any collection of books may be a library and he listed more than eighty distinct types of libraries: college and university libraries; church libraries; social libraries, which include athenaeums and mercantile, mechanic, apprentice libraries; lyceums; and public libraries, to name a few.[70] His concept of a public library was equally broad: it was any library other than one owned by an individual for his or her own personal use. He also noted that public libraries tended to have general rather than specialized collections. McMullen refined his definition to include libraries that were open to most or all citizens without charge, but he made no distinctions as to how these libraries were financially supported. Private individuals often financed public libraries until the end of the nineteenth century, when taxpayer support became more commonplace.[71]

In this study the term *library* will refer to both the collection of books and the architectural space that houses it. Public library refers to a library that is open to the public regardless of the financial support for the library. Thus the Astor and Lenox libraries, which were both financed privately, will be considered along with the New York Public Library, which eventually gained taxpayer support.

Libraries in colonial America were founded either through an individual's gift to an existing organization—such as the 1638 bequest by John Harvard (1607-1638) of £1,700 and his personal library of 400 volumes to create a college in Massachusetts, later to be named Harvard College after his gift—or through the creation of a voluntary

[70]McMullen, American Libraries before 1876 (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2000), 3. McMullen was a professor of library science at Indiana University and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. His data is searchable and available at The Davies Project, Princeton University, www.princeton.edu/~davpro/databases/index.html (accessed January 22, 2008). The Davies Project researches the histories and collections of university libraries in the United States.

[71]Shera, *Foundations of the Public Library*, 22, 201.

organization.[72] Other examples of early libraries established from individuals gifts include: a public library in Boston, which was established in 1656 through a gift by Robert Keayne; a library in New Haven established by Samuel Eaton in 1656; the Concord, Massachusetts, town library, established in 1676; and the library of The College of William and Mary, established in 1693.[73] The collections of most of these early libraries were religious in nature, and were intended to aid in the conversion of Native Americans to Christianity. Of course Native Americans were not given unrestricted access to these libraries, instead ministers used the books in their work, which was the teaching of Christianity to Native Americans.

In his analysis McMullen concerned himself only with library collections, not their buildings. In fact, most histories of libraries consider neither the exterior architecture of a building nor the interior arrangement of its rooms. How books were catalogued and presented was an important part of library science, and in general there was less concern with the exterior appearance of the buildings. This may be because many early libraries in the Unites States were housed within existing structures. During the eighteenth century there were few purpose-built library structures (the Redwood Library [1748-50] in Newport, Rhode Island is among the exceptions.) In the relevant secondary literature there is a clear separation between the history of library science and the architectural history of libraries.

Library scientists often discuss libraries in terms of their "type," referring to the literature contained within a library's collection, not its architectural type. For the

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[72]McMullen, *American Libraries*, 22; Shera, *Foundations of the Public Library*, 161. Arthur T. Hamlin, *The University Library in the United States* (Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981), 4.

[73]McMullen, *American Libraries*, 22.

purposes of this study, however, all purpose-built libraries will be considered a single type, regardless of their bibliographic collection. Although there are too many library collections to discuss here, it is important to look at a few common ones—college and university, church, and society libraries—and their buildings.

The university library was the model for Joseph Cogswell, the first librarian at the Astor Library, who guided the selection of its architect. Between 1815 and 1821 he studied library science at Göttingen University in Germany, and he was the librarian at Harvard before he worked for Astor and began to develop plans for the library. The library at Harvard College was one of the first large libraries in the country, and although the Commonwealth of Massachusetts allocated money to establish a college, it was John Harvard's gift of his own library that solidified the founding of the school. In 1638 construction began on three college buildings, which surrounded an open green that housed all of the school's facilities (fig. 4). Harvard's library was modeled on that of Cambridge University, where approximately sixty-five percent of the titles were theological and much of the literature was in Latin.[74] Harvard College's mission was first to educate its students in Latin and Greek, followed by mathematics, physics, astronomy, politics, ethics, logic, history, and nature of plants. Students were expected to have a complete understanding of the Old and New Testaments of the Bible upon graduation. In 1764 a fire destroyed much of the original library; what remained was moved to Harvard Hall, where it occupied two large rooms on the second floor.[75]

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[74]There were a few Greek texts, including works by Homer. Hamlin, *University Library*, 5-6.

[75]Frederick Ozni Vaille and Henry Alden Clark, *The Harvard Book*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Welch, Bigelow and Company, 1875), 1: 27, 75-76.

As the college and its library expanded, students and faculty found the Harvard Hall space inadequate. Christopher Gore (1758-1827), a governor of Massachusetts and United States Senator who graduated from Harvard in 1776, left $100,000 to the university, $70,000 of which the board allocated to construct a new library building. Richard Bond (1798-1861) designed Gore Hall in a Gothic Revival style modeled after King's College Chapel in Cambridge, England (fig. 5). Construction of the new library building began in 1837 and was completed in 1841. The corporation that ran the university was concerned about protecting the library from fire, and as a result the building had no artificial light and was forced to close at dusk. Bond incorporated iron construction to bolster the building's fireproofing.[76]

The use of a Gothic Revival style for Harvard's new library building suggested that Gothic would become an important mode of design for educational institutions and university libraries. The plan's ability to accommodate expansion helped to establish it as a model for university library building, preferred over Jefferson's Rotunda (1818-19) at the University of Virginia, which, being circular in plan with a portico, did not share those features.[77] The addition of metal stacks at Gore Hall, designed by William Ware and Henry Van Brunt (1832-1903) in 1878 (fig. 6), was an important design feature of later libraries such as the Boston Public Library and the New York Public Library, as it allowed the university to expand its collection without creating new spaces for reading

[76]Ibid., 119, 121.

[77]When Robert Mills designed an addition to the Rotunda in 1851, he added a rectangular wing to the rear of the building, giving it the shape of a tadpole. Needless to say, this was not a visually appealing solution and after the building burned in 1895 the reconstructed building did without it. Richard Guy Wilson, *"Arise and Build!": A Centennial Commemoration of the 1895 Rotunda Fire* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Library, Department of Special Collections, 1995), 9.

and study. In theory Gore Hall could be expanded infinitely through the addition of stacks, but eventually the university razed it, in 1913, to construct Widener Library.

Religious libraries were some of the earliest libraries in the colonies. The religious communities of New England imported European libraries as a tool in their attempt to spread Christianity to Native Americans. These libraries were collections of religious books whose donors intended that they be used for spreading the gospel in the new world. The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, a religious organization associated with Reverend Thomas Bray (1658-1730), was instrumental founding parochial libraries in the colonies.[78] In 1698 Bray founded Old Trinity Parish Library, part of First Trinity Church located on Broadway facing Wall Street. The earliest library in New York City, it held 450 volumes.[79] It was destroyed by fire in 1776 during an attack on New York by the British during the Revolutionary War.

The society library, however, was by far the most prevalent early American library; it typically contained general collections of books on all subjects. Membership was not restricted to a particular class or association; if one could afford to purchase shares in the library then one could become a member. The Library Company of Philadelphia, Redwood Library, and the Charles Town Library Society were examples of this type of library organization. As they did not contain the same selection of books from city to city, society libraries did not share any one particular style or plan. They often were located in rooms within other institutions, such as state houses, or, if the membership was able, the societies commissioned a purpose-built structure. These

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[78]McMullen, *American Libraries*, 23.

[79]Austin Baxter Keep, *History of the New York Society Library* (Boston: Gregg Press, 1972), 9-33.

structures did not vary architecturally from other contemporary public buildings, and often had rental spaces that would add to the library's income. These libraries, though not significant as examples of the library type, served as architectural models of library spaces that existed at the time of the founding of the Astor Library, in 1848. As institutions they served as examples of how to organize and catalogue a library collection to be used by a large group of people.

Library historians consider the Library Company of Philadelphia, founded by Benjamin Franklin and the Junto Society in 1731, to be the first society library in North America. Franklin was a printer and formed the Junto Society, a discussion group of young men comprised mostly of merchants and trades people, who met regularly to debate a wide variety of subjects. They needed books to consult when they differed on points of fact. At first members of the Junto attempted to pool their own books in order to "have each of us the Advantage of using the Books of all the other Members, which would be nearly as beneficial as if each owned the whole."[80] The number of books, however, was not sufficient to warrant this library and the books were returned to their original owners. Franklin then proposed that they pool their money to purchase a library. The Junto Society opened its library to any member of the public who could afford the cost of membership, which was forty shillings per share. Although there were printing presses in major cities, there were few publishing houses in the colonies, which made the purchase of books from Europe necessary to begin a collection. On March 31, 1732, the trustees of the library sent a list of desired books to a bookseller in England. The list, which reflected the various interests of the Junto Society, included books on history,

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[80]Franklin, *Autobiography*, 130.

philosophy, economics, architecture, and the social sciences; it did not include many theological books.[81]

The Library Company's books were first housed in a member's home, but the collection soon outgrew those quarters and in 1740 it was moved to the second floor of the Pennsylvania State House, which later became Independence Hall. The Library Company did not occupy a purpose-built structure until 1791 (fig. 7), when William Thornton, a doctor and amateur architect who designed the United States Capitol, won the design competition for the building. The library was a two-story brick, Palladian-style structure, very similar in style and scale to such colonial houses as Mount Airy in Virginia (1758-62) and Mount Pleasant in Fairmont Park, Philadelphia (1761-62). Although the library was similar to domestic buildings, its white pilasters and a second-story niche—with a full-size sculpture by Francesco Lazzarini of Franklin wearing a toga—indicated that the building had a greater significance than its neighbors. At this time, few public building types existed in the colonies, so it was necessary for architects to employ devices like sculptural embellishment to distinguish a public building from a private one.[82]

The plan made the Library Company the first hall library in the United States.[83] Its reading room was surrounded by a double-height space separated by an iron balcony lined with bookshelves. This particular plan had its origins in Europe. The first example

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[81]*At the Instance of Benjamin Franklin* (Philadelphia: The Library Company of Philadelphia, 1995), 1.

[82]In 1869 the Library Company commissioned a new building on Broad Street designed by Addison Hutton. This building was known as the Ridgway Branch after Pheobe Ann Ridgway, the wife of Dr. James Rush, whose bequest had financed the new library. Frank Furness designed another branch of the library located at the corner of Locust and Juniper streets. Austin K. Gray, *Benjamin Franklin's Library* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1937), 64-67.

[83]Breisch, *Henry Hobson Richardson*, 56.

was probably Juan de Herrera's design for the Escorial Library (1563-82), which was part of a royal complex that included a palace, a monastery, and a church.[84] The hall library allowed users unimpeded access to the shelves, so that they could remove any of the books and use them in the designated reading area. This new plan was a departure from earlier, monastic libraries, in which the books were chained to desks and users had limited access to them.

The other major library plan was the alcove plan. In this organizational scheme the library was separated into alcoves, each containing books on a particular subject, such as natural sciences, Italian literature, or fine arts. In the case of the Astor Library, although the public had to request books from the librarians, certain users were allowed access to alcoves based on their credentials. These users were able to sit among the books in the alcove and study.[85]

In his autobiography, written between 1771 and his death in 1790, Benjamin Franklin wrote the following about the Library Company of Philadelphia:

> This was the Mother of all N[orth] American Subscription Libraries now so numerous. It is become a great thing itself, and continually increasing. These Libraries have prov'd to be the general Conversation of the Americans, made the common Tradesmen and Farmers as intelligent as most Gentlemen from other countries, and perhaps have contributed in some degree to the Stand so generally made throughout the Colonies in Defence of their Privileges.[86]

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[84]For a summary of European influence on American library design, see Breisch, *Henry Hobson Richardson*, 56-60.

[85]For a list of the alcoves in the Astor Library, see Norton, "The Astor Library," 528.

[86]Benjamin Franklin, *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*, edited by Leonard W. Labaree et al., 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 130-31. The writing and subsequent publication of Franklin's autobiography is complicated; for details, see the Introduction to the edition cited here. He wrote his manuscript in four parts: Part 1 in 1771, Part 2 in 1784, Part 3 in 1788, and Part 4 in 1789-90.

The Library Company provided access to books for many who otherwise would not have been able to afford them. Franklin agreed with Jefferson that reading gave all people the ability to increase their knowledge, and when reading for self-improvement led to independent thinking that called for a new government, it took on a revolutionary spirit.

The Redwood Library in Newport, Rhode Island, is another important model for subscription libraries in North America (fig. 8). Although it was not the first in the colonies, it was the first to have its own building. In 1747 Abraham Redwood donated £500 for the purchase of books for a library in Newport.[87] Peter Harrison (1716-1775), a prominent merchant and sea captain in Newport, was a member of the library's organizing committee. He was also an amateur architect who through his travels to England was exposed to Palladianism, the latest English architectural fashion. While overseas Harrison purchased pattern books and assembled an extensive architectural library that included books by James Gibbs (1662-1754), Isaac Ware (1717-1766), and Inigo Jones (1573-1652), as well as William Salmon's *Palladio Londinensis*.[88] Each of these architects was known for neoclassical designs based on the work of Palladio. Pattern books, both published an unpublished, were widely used by architects as the generators of design. When an architect or builder worked on an unfamiliar building type, pattern books helped him find an appropriate architectural expression. Harrison's library contained pattern books written by architects whose designs were Palladian, and these were the forms that he adapted for his library design.

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[87]Carl Bridenbaugh, *Peter Harrison: First American Architect* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1949), 45.

[88]See Appendix C, "Architectural Works in the Inventory of Peter Harrison," in ibid., 168-70.

In addition to books based on Palladio, many other pattern books, such as Asher Benjamin's *The Country Builder's Assistant* (1797) and *The American Builder's Companion* (1806 and later), were written for builders, not architects. These guides served more as manuals as to how a building should be constructed than as descriptive drawings of a building's general appearance.

There was no precedent for society library architecture either built or in pattern books, so for the façade of the Redwood Library Harrison borrowed a temple-like elevation from a 1736 English translation of Palladio (fig. 9).[89] His plan for the library was copied from another pattern book, Isaac Ware's *Designs of Inigo Jones and Others* (1735; 10), using a garden pavilion designed by William Kent as his model. The plan called for one large reading room flanked by two smaller rooms, which were to be used as library offices. The reading room was too small for either an alcove or hall plan.[90] The selection of a classical form for this new building type established a precedent for new public buildings, and architects adopted classical designs found in pattern books for banks, theaters, and prisons.

The original collection of books at the Redwood Library included contemporary books on law and the arts, such as Jacob's *Common Law Common-plac'd*; Mill's *Conveyancing*; Fritsch's *Art of Painting*; Horneck's *Fortification*; and Stephens's *Italian Book-keeping*.[91] The library also had classic works, by Homer, Virgil, Horace, and

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[89]Most likely he used Edward Hoppus's *Fourth Book of Andrea Palladio's Architecture*. See Brindenbaugh, *Peter Harrison*, 49-50, and Pierson, *Colonial and Neoclassical Styles*, 142-44.

[90]The dimensions of the reading room were thirty-six feet by twenty-six feet; Bridenbaugh, *Peter Harrison*, 52.

[91]For a complete listing of the library's original titles, visit "Original Collection Titles," www.redwoodlibrary.org/missing.htm (accessed January 22, 2008).

Sophocles, as well as modern histories, books on manners, and guides to farming and commerce. The collection reflected the taste and interests of the library's founders, and its strengths were in philosophy, history, antiquities, and the physical sciences.[92] Although there was no prescribed book list, a general standard for a society library collection was beginning to take shape. It contained books of general interest but often did not incorporate religious books, which were found in the religious libraries of the earliest colonists.

The southern colonies were not without their libraries. In June 1748 nineteen merchants and professionals founded the Charles Town Library Society in Charleston, South Carolina.[93] On January 10, 1761, Daniel Crawford, the library's vice president, gave a speech honoring the victory of South Carolinians over the Cherokee who occupied the state. In his speech Crawford reasserted the purpose of the library:

> As the gross ignorance of the naked Indian must raise our pity, and his savage disposition our horror and detestation, it is our duty as men, our interest as members of a community, to prevent our descendents from sinking into a similar situation. To obviate this possible evil, and to obtain the desirable end of handing down the European arts and manners to the latest times is the great aim of the members of this Society, who are ambitious of approving themselves worthy of their mother country, by imitating her humanity, as well as her industry, and by transporting from her the improvements in the finer as well as the inferior arts.[94]

Here Crawford reasserted the American belief, advocated by Benjamin Franklin, that one could better oneself and society through reading. However, certain groups of Americans,

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[92]David King, *An Historical Sketch of the Redwood Library and the Athenaeum in Newport, Rhode Island* (Boston: John Wilson and Son, 1860), vi.

[93]James Raven, *London Booksellers and American Customers: Transatlantic Literary Community and the Charleston Library Society 1748-1811* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2002), 37.

[94]Charleston Library Society, *Rules and By-laws*, 1762, iv, as quoted in August and Carpenter, *Institutions of Reading*, 25.

particularly Native Americans and slaves, needed to be reeducated in order to emulate the social mores of their conquerors.

The Charles Town Library Society was the sixth such society library in the American colonies.[95] In Charleston, as in other cities, the library was not just a place to store books; it was also a social center where its members could meet and discuss the issues of the day.[96] Its first meetings were at Thomas Blythe's tavern on Broad Street, and its books were housed in John Sinclair's store on Broad Street until 1755, when they were moved to the house of William Henderson, the new librarian of the society. The library continued to move in location periodically until 1765, when its membership leased a room in a building on the corner of Kinloch Court and State Street. A fire in 1778 destroyed all but 185 volumes of the library, and in 1792 the library moved to the upper floor of the new courthouse in Charleston. This room was divided into five or six compartments, each of which housed books on a particular subject. There was no permanent building or reading room for the library until 1835, when the society purchased the South Carolina Bank building located at the corner of Broad and Church streets (fig. 11).[97] This Federal-style brick building was retrofitted with library shelves, and the library remained there until 1914, when a new building, designed by the Philadelphia architectural firm McGoodwin and Hawley, was completed.

Society libraries became increasingly popular during the eighteenth century, and it was only a matter of time before one was organized in New York City. In March 1754

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[95]The others were: Library Company of Philadelphia (1731), Philogrammatican Library of Lebanon, CT (1739), Library Company of Darby, PA (1743), Union Library Company of Philadelphia (1746), and Redwood Library Company, Newport, RI (1747). Raven, *London Booksellers and American Customers*, 3.

[96]Raven, "Social Libraries," in August and Carpenter, *Institutions of Reading*, 28.

[97]Raven, *London Booksellers and American Customers*, 61, 62.

the New York Society Library was founded by a group of six men: William Alexander (1726-1783), a lawyer and future Revolutionary War general; Philip Livingston (1716-1778), a merchant; Robert Livingston (1718-1775), a lawyer and amateur scientist; William Livingston (1723-1790), a lawyer who later became the governor of New Jersey; John Morin Scott (1730-1784), a lawyer; and William Smith Jr. (1723-1793), a lawyer and historian.[98] Philip, Robert, and William Livingston were all members of an established and wealthy New York family. William attended Yale and was influenced by the intellectual life there. When he came to New York in 1842 to study law he was disappointed with the intellectual climate he found there. He wanted to re-create his life at Yale, and even considered returning to the university as a tutor.[99] Instead, he remained in New York City and worked to elevate the status of lawyers as learned professionals. In 1749 William Livingston, William Alexander, and William Smith formed an evening club for lawyers called The Moot, which eventually published a weekly journal, *Independent Reflector*.[100] At one of their meetings they decided to establish the New York Society Library, which they modeled after the Library Company of Philadelphia. Like Franklin and the Junto Society, they wanted to combine the functions of a museum, a research institute, and a library.[101]

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[98]Henry S. F. Cooper, Jr., and Jenny Lawrence, eds., *The New York Society Library: 250 Years* (New York: The New York Society Library, 2004), 15.

[99]Thomas Bender, *New York Intellect* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989), 14.

[100]Clare Brandt, *An American Aristocracy: The Livingstons* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, 1986), 95.

[101]Bender, *New York Intellect*, 15-17; Dorothy R. Dillon, *The New York Triumvirate* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1949).

The founders envisioned the library not only as a collection of books, but also as a place of learning that would have "at some future day, a museum and an observatory, as well as a library."[102] The library charged a fee of £5 to join and ten shillings a year to remain a member in good standing. The founders decided to elect twelve trustees to oversee the library functions and to determine which books would be purchased for the collection. The trustees were responsible for the hiring of a "library keeper," who would supervise the library during the hours it was open and maintain a list of books borrowed.

The members of the first board of trustees were James (c. 1690-1756) and William Alexander, Henry Barclay (1712-1764), John Chambers, James DeLancey (1703-1760; a future governor of New York and chief justice of the Supreme Court), Robert and William Livingston, Joseph Murray, Benjamin Nicoll, William Smith, William Walton, and John Watts. The trustees compiled a list of books on arts and sciences and works by contemporary English writers, and gave £300 to Moses Franklin, a London book buyer, to purchase them.[103] Non-religious books dominated the book list: Baussage's *History of the Jews,* Bolingbroke's *Patriot King, Debates in Parliament*, Benjamin Franklin on electricity, Hogarth's *Analysis of Beauty*, Langley's *Principles of Gardening*, Shaw's *Travels*, biographies of Cromwell and Czar Peter, a history of France, and works by Hobbes, Locke, and Milton, as well as all of Cicero's works in translation.[104] These books are examples of what was of interest to elite readers in New York City during the eighteenth century.

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[102]William Smith Jr., *The History of the Province of New York, from the First Discovery to the Year 1756*, edited by Michael Kammen (Cambridge: Belknap Press, Harvard University Press, 1972), 150.

[103]Keep, *History of the New York Society Library*, 140, 155.

[104]From Minutes of the Trustees' Second Meeting, May 29, 1754 as quoted in Cooper and Lawrence, *New York Society Library*, 23-24.

The library was housed with the Millington Collection, a religious library, in City Hall. In 1728 Reverend John Millington, an English minister, left £200 and all of his books to the city for the creation of the Corporation Library in New York City. His books were sent to America in 1730 and the collection was housed in a second-floor room in City Hall (built 1698; a third story was added in 1763) with the New York Society Library.[105] At the time of the founding of the library City Hall was a two-story Georgian brick pile with an H-shaped plan, similar to the Governor's Palace in Williamsburg, Virginia (1706-9), and Richard Munday's Old Colony House in Newport, Rhode Island (1739-41). The inclusion of the library in an upper room of a governmental building mimicked the room usage found in large-scale colonial domestic spaces. Rather than having a specifically designed library room with either an alcove or hall plan, the library simply occupied a room as though it was a private library in a colonial house.

Large houses with rooms for specific uses, such as a library, were rare in Colonial America, at a time in which most people lived in single-room houses. In multiroom houses there were specialized spaces, but most functioned either as rooms for public entertainment or as private bedrooms. There are a few well-known instances of colonial houses that had separate library rooms. William Byrd (1674-1744) had a library of more than 4,000 volumes that was located in a flanking dependency of his plantation house, Westover (c. 1730-34), located on the James River in Virginia.[106] The Boston architect-builder and Revolutionary War Colonel, Thomas Dawes (1731-1809), described the

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[105]Keep, *History of the New York Society Library*, 66-77.

[106]Bennie Brown, "The Ownership of Architectural Books in Colonial Virginia," in Kenneth Hafertepe and James F. O'Gorman, eds., *American Architects and Their Books to 1848* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001), 22-23.

library in his own house (1756-60) as the “attic retirement,” where visitors would go after dining at the house to examine the “books and curiosities.”[107]

Another one of early America’s most famous bibliophiles, Thomas Jefferson, designed his first house, Monticello (1771-72), with a library on the second floor, located physically and symbolically at the top of his property. After fire destroyed his first house, Jefferson designed a second Monticello (1793-1809) within which he omitted a separate space for the library and kept his books in his bedroom suite. There were several possible reasons for this change. One is that Jefferson intended the domed space on the uppermost level to be a library but found it inconvenient to travel to the third floor whenever he wanted to consult a book.[108] Another is that Jefferson preferred to live with his books. He read constantly on a wide range of subjects, and after his wife, Martha, died in 1782 it is likely that he chose to spend much of his time reading. No matter where the library was actually located, Jefferson considered it to be an important space in the design of his house.

By the 1770s, the New York Society Library probably contained about 700 volumes. Its hours were Tuesday and Friday from ten a.m. until noon, and during the winter months it was open for only one hour, on Tuesdays. The first librarian, Benjamin Hildreth (d. c. 1790), monitored the library to prevent theft, maintained a list of borrowers, and assessed fines. He neither selected the books nor catalogued them; the trustees assumed those duties. During the second half of the nineteenth century, as

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[107]Frederic C. Detmiller, “Thomas Dawes: Boston’s Patriot Architect,” *Old-Time New England* 68 (1977): 6.

[108]Richard Guy Wilson, “Thomas Jefferson’s ‘Bibliomanie’ and Architecture,” in Hafertepe and O’Gorman, *American Architects*, 63-66.

librarians became professionals they continues to maintain lists of readers and fines, but they also selected the books for their collections.

During the board of trustees meeting of September 29, 1791, Henry Brockholst Livingston (1757-1823) expressed an offer of land on which to construct a library building.[109] After an aborted attempt to build on a Wall Street lot owned by Joanna Livingston, sister of the library's Livingston founders, the trustees purchased land at 16 Nassau Street between Liberty and Cedar Streets. In June 1794 the library building was complete (fig. 12), and opened with more than 5,000 volumes. The new library had a square, two-story plan, with a front room on the second floor reserved for the librarian. In 1855 the librarian's son, Philip Forbes, wrote the following account of the building:

> The building was of brown free-stone [exterior], brick interior, with three-quarter Corinthian columns, resting on a projecting basement, on which an ornamental iron balustrade formed a favorite balcony, where the younger frequenters of the Library were fond of viewing the unobstructed scenery of the vicinity…. The view southward gave a vista of that fine, wide, well-built and handsomely planted avenue, Broad Street, then still the leading quarter of the early aristocracy of the town.[110]

The New York Society Library's neoclassical façade was similar to that of the Library Company of Philadelphia. As Forbes suggested, the new building had neoclassical details, in particular a temple front above a basement arcade. Brownstone was the primary building material, making the library's overall appearance more like its residential neighbors. Like many Federal-period buildings, the new library was not

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[109]Keep, *History of the New York Society Library*, 222.

[110]John Forbes was the librarian from June 1794 to April 1815. New York Society Library, "The New York Society Library," in D. T. Valentine, *Manual of the Corporation of the City of New York* (New York: Common Council, 1855), 578-79; Cooper and Lawrence, *New York Society Library*, 31-32.

strictly Greek or Roman in its inspiration; rather, it had a combination of classical elements applied to its façade. Forbes described the interior:

> [It] was homely, but attractive for its intrinsic comforts. Several offices filled its first story, variously occupied from time to time, with a predominance, however, of legal tenantry. The access to the principal floor was by means of a flight of stairs, conspicuously placed in the centre of the building, and forming in fact the leading feature in its structure. This imposing peculiarity, which by-the-by seems to have been reverently observed as a model for future edifices dedicated to the same liberal objects, monopolized the best part of two stories, and contributed not a little towards impressing the public with a high sense of the importance of the place they were approaching.[111]

The plan of this building was similar to Georgian domestic plans in that it was symmetrical with a stair in the center hall or passage. With its three-bay façade the building was scaled as a domestic structure and, most importantly, it was not fully occupied by the library. There was space designated for a librarian's residence, but library needed additional tenants for income. All of this implies that the building was not yet considered a specialized library type, but was adapted from other known forms.

Public buildings in colonial America generally followed the model of domestic architecture. It was not until the end of the eighteenth century, with the emergence of professional architects, that they began to take on a different character. For example, the design by Thomas Jefferson for the Virginia State Capitol (1785-89) was a direct adaptation of a Roman temple. In his discussion of American building in *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1787), Jefferson wrote that there were few buildings to commend in America and that genius in American architecture was absent. In his opinion American buildings lacked proportion and symmetry and American builders used materials in a poor and wasteful manner. He hoped that "some spark may fall on some young subjects

[111]Ibid.

of natural taste, kindle up their genius, and produce a reformation in this elegant and useful art."[112] The desire for a professional architect class would not only elevate building design, it would also promote the creation of new designated building types.

In Jefferson's own designs he hinted at what he wanted for American architecture: a classical style that was not a literal copy of ancient buildings but rather a reordering of classical forms. He did not think that Americans should mimic the ancients, but instead take ancient architecture as an example and use the most appropriate forms that were for new government and education institutions. A synthesis of classical forms is seen in his design for the University of Virginia (1817-26), a rectangular space or lawn, enclosed on three sides by buildings. At one end of the composition was a large, circular building based on the Pantheon in Rome (118-26).[113] This building, called the Rotunda, was to house the university's library. On the two sides flanking the lawn there were ten pavilions, each of which had different architectural compositions using the classical orders. Jefferson intended the pavilions to serve as examples for architectural students at the university. Although the Rotunda was a significant early design, however, it was not successful as a library design.

Jefferson was not the only architect who used classical forms from published examples. Harrison used them in his design for Redwood Library, and American architects and builders used pattern books in the eighteenth century and continued into the nineteenth. Various English editions of Andrea Palladio's (1508-1580) *Four Books*

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[112]Jefferson, *Notes*, 153.

[113]Some scholars maintain that Benjamin Henry Latrobe suggested the Rotunda in a letter he wrote to Jefferson critiquing the design of the University. Richard Guy Wilson, *Thomas Jefferson's Academical Village* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1993), 18-21.

of Architecture (1570), which was based on the architectural theory of the Roman architect Marcus Vitruvius Pollio (c. 80-70 BC-after c. 15 BC), were popular. Vitruvius wrote *De architectura* (c. 15 BC), a treatise (not illustrated) on architecture. Architects read his text in hopes of understanding classical orders and the architecture that was based on them. During the early Italian Renaissance, architects rediscovered *De architectura* and began to illustrate his ideas, which led to an explosion of architectural pattern books that were later studied by architects and builders in the U.S.

As Jefferson had expressed in his design for the Virginia State House, neoclassical architecture became preferred for American public building. These styles eventually became so closely linked with American architecture that they spawned the American Renaissance. At the beginning of the century the classical had associations not with Europe but with antiquity, which was appropriate for a country that sought to define itself politically in opposition to European imperial and monarchical governments. By the end of the century, this understanding of classical forms was lost and they were considered American.[114]

In addition to the rise of society libraries, an athenaeum movement in the United States began in 1814 and continued until the 1830s. The movement was fueled by the desire of Americans to develop cultural traditions equivalent to those in Europe. In addition to the library, athenaeums often included museum spaces, lecture halls, laboratories, and spaces for study. The New York Athenaeum, founded in January 1825, it had the following services: a general reference library, a reading room that contained

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[114]Jefferson used the terms *neoclassical* and *classical* interchangeably. Kenneth Hafertepe, "A Inquiry into Thomas Jefferson's Ideas of Beauty," *The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 59 (June 2000), 217.

periodicals, a cabinet or museum, a laboratory for scientific instruments, and a lecture department. The Athenaeum struggled financially and as early as 1831 there was talk of merging it with the New York Society Library. [115]

As New Yorkers prospered they began to live away from where they worked. This created a building boom during the antebellum years in which the city gradually moved north.[116] By the 1830s the New York Society Library's location was increasingly remote from its users. In June 1835 the trustees of the library along with the directors of the New York Athenaeum purchased lots along Broadway and Leonard Street for $475,000 and the library sold the Nassau Street building. Plans were made to create a structure to house the two organizations. Due to its untenable financial situation the Athenaeum merged with the New York Society Library.

The architect of the new building was Fredric Diaper (1810-1906), an English-born architect known for his Greek Revival and other neoclassical designs. Diaper studied under the architect Robert Smirke and arrived in America in the 1830s, and he worked primarily in New York and San Francisco.[117] The building was completed and opened to the public in 1840 (fig. 13). Like the library's earlier building, it was constructed of brown freestone with a rusticated basement and engaged ionic columns. The trustees selected a fashionable Greek Revival design similar to Seth Geer's 1833 design for La Grange Terrace (Colonnade Row) located on Astor Place (fig. 14). An

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[115]Keep, *History of the New York Society Library*, 318, 399.

[116]Upton, "Inventing the Metropolis," 15-16.

[117]Diaper worked with Alexander Saeltzer on the Darius Ogden Mills House (1870) in Long Island, New York. Robert B. McKay et al., *Long Island Country Houses and Their Architects, 1860-1940* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1997), 151-52. Joan C. Weakly, "Diaper, Frederic," *Macmillan Encyclopedia of Architects*, Adolf K. Placzek, ed., 4 vols. (New York: The Free Press, 1982), 1: 570.

article describing the building appeared in the *New Yorker*, November 18, 1840. In it the author described the interior of the library:

> The basement floor is divided into stores and offices. A spacious hall occupies the middle of the building. The visitor enters this and ascends a broad flight of stairs, which leads to the reading room in the rear. This is a lofty and well proportioned apartment, with windows at each end, and in it are four commodious tables covered with rich food for the literary appetite. One contains the city journals; another those from different parts of the United States; and the other two are loaded with English and American periodicals—weekly, monthly and quarterly; literary, scientific, religious and political. This room, brilliantly cushioned arm chairs, and its rich supplies of periodicals, renewed by every steamship, forms the perfection of literary luxury. From a landing place upon the grand staircase, two flights turn and ascend to the book room, which is a spacious apartment in the front of the building, with two rows of columns arranged in double ranks. The librarian's desk faces the entrance. Connecting the reading room and the book room are two smaller apartments, used as conversation parlors for those authors who desire to pursue their investigations with their authorities around them…. A lecture room, arranged on the commodious plan of ascending and circular seats, is situated in the rear of the basement, and the upper stories are occupied by the National Academy of Design.[118]

The plan of the building was similar to that of the library's earlier Nassau Street building. The library still needed to rent space on the ground floor in order to support the cost of maintaining the library. Not only were there commercial tenants on the ground floor, but as a result of merging with the New York Athenaeum the library now had a lecture program to maintain. This required additional space, designed for public events.

In 1856 the Broadway and Leonard Street building was sold to the publisher D. Appleton & Co. (fig. 15) and the New York Society Library moved to a new building at 67 University Place designed by T. Thomas and Son architects. The library trustees again selected a neoclassical design. Interestingly, their selection was made after the completion of the Astor Library, whose Romanesque Revival appearance seemed to have

[118] Cooper and Lawrence, 49-51.

little effect on the design of the New York Society Library building. The University Place location was important for the library membership because it was in the primary residential area of the city. As residents continued their march uptown, the library moved again, in 1937, to a renovated townhouse located at 53 East 79th Street.

Colonial cities, especially those with ports, competed with one another for business. New York was particularly successful because it not only had a deep harbor, but shipments could easily be rerouted to other parts of the United States. Other ports did not have the same proximity to land routes as did New York, although they may have been easier to navigate by water. Like Philadelphia, Charleston and Newport, the city of Boston, was a rival to New York. Like New York, New England's foremost city boasted a substantial athenaeum whose leaders sought to give their library urban and architectural prominence.

The Anthology Society, a literary discussion group whose members lived in Boston, wanted a library, and on October 23, 1805, they founded the Boston Athenaeum.[119] Like several of the libraries discussed, at the outset the group had a collection of books but no place to keep them. The first location for the library was in rooms at Joy's Buildings, an undistinguished row of town houses on Congress Street (fig. 16). The library was at two other locations before moving to the James Perkins Estate on Pearl Street in 1822 (fig. 17). The Athenaeum was another example of a library that used an existing space for its collection. The Perkins estate was a large neoclassical mansion with fourteen rooms. Members found the building too large to be useful; they were constantly getting lost and were unable to find their books. A lecture hall was added to

[119] Catherina Slautterback, *Designing the Boston Athenaeum 10½ at 150* (Boston: The Boston Athenaeum, 1999), 7.

this space in the fall of 1826. An upper room, fifty by sixty feet, was used as an art gallery.[120]

In 1845 there was a design competition for a new Athenaeum building on Tremont Street. In January 1844, through the sale of the Pearl Street property and issuance of new shares in the Athenaeum, the trustees acquired the Whitwell Estate on Tremont Street, which was located near Court Square and City Hall. Although the new Athenaeum building was never constructed and the lot eventually was sold, the competition entries illustrate several approaches to library design contemporary with those of the Astor Library. The program for the library was slightly different than that for the Athenaeum, which had an extensive art and sculpture collection that required space for display; it also had to accommodate lecture rooms.[121] A comparison of proposed plans is not relevant to this study, but a discussion of the exterior appearance of the buildings is.

The Athenaeum received fourteen designs, of which only eight survive. Three designs are of particular interest: a Gothic Revival design attributed alternatively to Edward Shaw, who wrote *A Modern Architect: A Classic Victorian Stylebook and Carpenter's Manual* (1854), or Richard Bond, who designed Gore Hall at Harvard; a Greek Revival design by Gridley James Fox Bryant (1816-1899); and an Italianate design by George Minot Dexter (1802-1872).[122]

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[120]Records of the Trustees as quoted in ibid., 12-13, 16.

[121]Ibid., 19-20.

[122]For the attributions of Edward Shaw and Gridley James Fox Bryant, see Slautterback, *Designing the Boston Athenaeum*, 24, 28; and Roger C. Reed, *Building Victorian Boston: The Architecture of Gridley J. F. Bryant* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007), 180.

Shaw's design recalled such English Gothic examples as King's College at Cambridge (fig. 18), whose elevation had five bays separated by octagonal engaged columns. The roof was particularly Gothic, with a balustrade and pointed finials. This style was becoming popular in university design, for example the design by James Dakin (1806-1852) and Ithiel Town for New York University (1833-37). Although the library was not associated with a particular university, the trustees of the organization considered the Athenaeum to have an educational purpose.

In his Greek Revival design, Bryant illustrated an entrance with two Corinthian columns in Antis (fig. 19). The façade was symmetrical, with square-topped windows on the first floor and pedimented windows on the second. The cornice of the building shows particularly Greek influence in its dentiled molding and meandering key frieze.

Dexter's design used a simple Italianate vocabulary (fig. 20). He drew a rusticated ground floor and rectangular windows on the first floor. The second floor had arched windows, which gave his façade the appearance of an Italian renaissance palazzo. His design won the competition, but because of the expense of clearing the lot purchased for the new building, it was never built.

In general, each of the three contemporary designs has a symmetrical façade and three stories; all mask the complexity of the site and the variety of rooms required by the program. The designs indicate that no single architectural style was regarded by architects as the most appropriate one for a library. None of these designs looks like the Romanesque Revival one of the Astor Library, but all show a tendency on the part of designers to think of library architecture in classical terms. Even Shaw's Gothic Revival library design was symmetrical. He did not use a picturesque form for the library,

instead, he used a balanced (hence more classicizing) one and embellished it with Gothic detailing.

The cost associated with the Tremont Street site escalated when it became necessary to clear the lot of buildings. As a result the trustees of the Athenaeum voted to sell the site to David Kimball, who planned to erect the Boston Museum upon it. The trustees purchased another lot at 10½ Beacon Street, on Beacon Hill near the State House. This time the trustees invited three architects—Edward Clark Cabot (1818-1901), Hammatt Billings (1818-1874), and Dexter—to submit proposals for the library. Billings's design is lost.[123] Dexter proposed an Italianate building with a rusticated basement and quoins, similar to his earlier design for Tremont Street (fig. 21). As the great-nephew of James Perkins, who bequeathed the Athenaeum his estate, and grandson of the first President of the Athenaeum, Cabot had personal connections to it.[124] His design was also neoclassical, although it had a more robust and sculptural appearance than that of Dexter (fig. 22). His plan for the Athenaeum was organized around a square stair hall and incorporated rooms for sculpture and reading on the first floor, the library and related librarians' offices on the second floor, and a painting gallery on the third floor (fig. 23). Architecturally the façade had little in common with the Astor Library. It was built of sandstone and had a neoclassical appearance, although the façade masked the irregularity of the plan.

From this discussion of early libraries in the British colonies and the United States, one can see that there was no single library type. Library buildings varied widely

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[123]James F. O'Gorman, *Accomplished in All Departments of Art: Hammatt Billings of Boston, 1818-1874* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998), 109.

[124]Slautterback, *Designing the Boston Athenaeum*, 34.

in their size, program, and architectural style. Often they incorporated space for other, non-library users. Architects not only used the size of a library's collection to determine its form, they also had to consider the programs the library wanted to offer. If the trustees wanted to collect art or to sponsor a lecture series, specialized spaces needed to be incorporated into the design. It is clear from the many examples here that libraries, like most other public building types, were coming into their own within the colonial and Federal architectural landscape.

Although the architecture of many of these buildings was neoclassical overall, there was great variety in scale, materials, and detailing. There was an attempt to monumentalize the library's façade through a neoclassical vocabulary and selection of building materials; however, there were few attempts to distinguish a library building from other commercial or residential structures. Architects either were unable to do this, or the clients were unwilling to commission buildings that broke with the overall architectural appearances of their neighborhoods. It was only in the 1840s, with the Boston Athenaeum—an institution that had been formerly housed in domestic-scaled buildings—that a concerted effort to monumentalize the library was made. The lack of a library type left the door open for architects in the second half of the century, who were able to work on a tabula rasa and create a type based on the programmatic requirements. As literacy rates and the quantities of reading materials both increased, and as the varieties of readers to be served also became more numerous, the programs of libraries demanded more specific architectural responses.

Finally, the number of libraries in different urban centers already indicated emerging rivalries among American cities before 1850. This competitive atmosphere

was important in the construction of libraries, and intensified during the third quarter of the nineteenth century, when any city or town with cultural aspirations had a public library.

Chapter 2: "A very plain structure of brick": New York's Astor Library

During the 1830s and 1840s New York City emerged as the country's leading commercial city. As the established city center grew, merchants and artisans who used to live either above or near their places of work erected houses farther away from their shops, to areas such as Washington Square, Bond Street, and Astor Place. In 1828 the city's paved streets and lights extended up to Thirteenth Street; by 1850 development reached Twenty-third Street. In addition to constructing residences, New Yorkers began to build and patronize cultural establishments that were varied, often short-lived, and generally had a strong business interest for their owners—Rubens Peale's Museum and Gallery of Fine Arts, P. T. Barnum's American Museum, and Niblo's Garden. These venues, for a fee, provided such entertainments as freak shows, fireworks, and musical performances.[125]

For all its wealth, New York had few architecturally significant buildings. It was a seat of neither state nor federal government, and the 1811 Commissioners Plan did not create any visually dominant building sites. In the 1820s and 1830s the Greek Revival, as seen in works such as the U.S. Customs House (1834) by Ithiel Town (1784-1844) and Alexander Jackson Davis (1803-1892), dominated the architectural scene. Architects practicing in the 1840s still used Greek Revival elements in their residential structures but began to prefer Gothic and Romanesque Revival styles for other buildings. Richard

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[125]Upton, "Inventing the Metropolis," 5, 16, 25; Burrows and Wallace, *Gotham*, 643-45; and Homberger, *Historical Atlas*, 76-77, 86-87.

Upjohn's 1839 design for Trinity Church, located on Broadway, signaled the beginning of this change in architectural taste.[126]

When Joseph Cogswell advertised the design competition for the Astor Library in 1849 there was no established public library type. In fact few programmatic requirements were stated in the competition advertisement:

> Astor Library Building—The Trustees of the Astor Library have authorized the Superintendent to offer a premium of three hundred dollars for a plan of the Library building which shall be approved by them…. The dimensions of the building are to be sixty-five feet in front, and one hundred and twenty feet in depth. The plans must be sent to the Superintendent on or before the 24th of April next, from whom any further particulars in relation to the building may be learned at his office, 587 Broadway, New York.[127]

The lack of detailed information beyond the size of the building suggests the trustees had no preconceptions of what their ideal library should look like. Cogswell researched European libraries and other cultural buildings during the winter of 1848-49, and sent the trustees letters and plans from his travels, from which they determined their preferred design.[128]

Under Cogswell's direction the trustees selected Alexander Saeltzer's Romanesque Revival design, which was consistent with other emerging American cultural and intellectual institutions, such as the James Renwick Jr.'s, Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. (1846-48) and P. B. Wight's (1838-1925) New York

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[126]For a discussion of architectural design in New York City between 1825 and 1861, see Morrison H. Hecksher, "Building the Empire City: Architects and Architecture," in Voorsanger and Howat, *Art and the Empire City*, 169-87; and Talbot Hamlin, *Greek Revival Architecture in America* (1944; repr., New York: Dover Publications, 1964), 119-58.

[127] *New York Evening Post*, March 30, 1849.

[128]Astor Family, Papers, 1807-1919, New-York Historical Society; and Board of Trustees Minutes Book, 1848-1895, Astor Library Records, The New York Public Library Archives, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations.

Academy of Design (1861-65). Its architecture contrasted with the Greek Revival residential buildings around Astor Place—such as La Grange Terrace (Colonnade Row)—indicating that the library occupied a new space within New York's architectural fabric. The library was novel in its purpose (that it be free and open to the public) as well as in its design.

Three major personalities created the Astor Library—John Jacob Astor, the writer Washington Irving (1783-1859), and Cogswell—and each played a role in the library's physical and intellectual form. Astor was a German immigrant who made his fortune in a variety of enterprises. He was a furrier, an importer and exporter, and a real estate investor. At the time of his death he was the wealthiest individual in the United States. His fortune was primarily in real estate, so it is difficult to determine his exact worth, but the estimated value of his estate ranged between $6 and $30 million.

Astor was born on July 17, 1763, in Waldorf, Germany, the fifth child and fourth son of a baker named John Astor. In 1779 John Jacob moved to England to work for his brother George and to improve his English in preparation for his move to America. George ran a musical instrument shop and John Jacob brought several of these instruments with him to sell in the United States. In 1783 he left Europe and sailed for America, where he arrived at Baltimore in the spring of 1784. From there he traveled to New York, where his brother Henry helped him find employment with a baker named George Dieterich. Astor sold baked goods on the street and the musical instruments he had brought with him from London. One of his modern biographers, Kenneth Wiggins

Porter, wrote that Astor learned about the geography and real estate of the city through his work selling baked goods.[129]

John Jacob married Sarah Todd on September 19, 1785. In 1786 he opened a music store and began to travel to upstate New York and Canada to acquire furs. By 1790 he associated with Thomas Backhouse & Co., a London firm to whom he sold his furs. He began to purchase real estate in New York City in 1789, and during the 1790s he bought real estate near his fur-trading routes in upstate New York and Canada.[130]

In 1800 he expanded his sales operation by sending ships to China, exporting arms, ammunition, and wool in addition to furs. Soon he began to sell silks and teas from Asia. By 1810 Astor had five ships—*Beaver*, *Fox*, *Sylph*, *Huntress*, and *Enterprise*—and became interested in establishing a trading post in the American West. With this outpost Astor hoped to trade furs with the Canadians and transport them to China via ships sailing from the west coast. While the furs were en route to China, imported goods could be carried over land to the east coast. By making shipments simultaneously, Astor would

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[129]There are numerous biographies of Astor and his family. John Jacob Astor and his descendants, like many wealthy and socially prominent families, captured the imagination of the public and many of the stories that are repeated in Astor biographies have not been verified. These biographies are discussed in a manuscript at The New-York Historical Society by John Davis Haeger, "John Jacob Astor and the Historians: Old Myths and New Interpretations" (1984). He cites Kenneth Wiggins Porter's work as the most accurate, since Porter had relied on the historical record as opposed to oral histories. Unless otherwise stated, in my biographical discussion of John Jacob Astor I have referred to Porter's: Kenneth Wiggins Porter, *John Jacob Astor: Business Man* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1931). Other Astor biographies include: Arthur D. Howden Smith, *John Jacob Astor, Landlord of New York* (Philadelphia and London: J.B. Lippincott, 1929); Lucy Kavaler, *The Astors* (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Company, 1966); Derek A. Wilson, *The Astors, 1763-1992: Landscape with Millionaires* (London: Weidenfled and Nicolson, 1993); and Axel Madsen, *John Jacob Astor: America's First Multimillionaire* (New York: Wiley and Sons, 2001).

[130]Porter, *John Jacob Astor*, 26.

reduce the time and expense of getting goods to market and in theory be able to trade a higher volume of merchandise.[131]

On June 23, 1810, Astor incorporated the Pacific Fur Company to scout for a western outpost to meet his trading plan. Astor, Alexander McKay, Duncan McDougal, Donald McKenzie, and Wilson Price Hunt were the shareholders. McKay, McDougal, and McKenzie were all experienced explorers who had sailed the Pacific. Hunt was selected to be the first to act as governor of the new settlement. The corporation had one hundred shares; Astor owned fifty and the remainder were divided equally among the other four partners. Astor administered the company from New York and furnished the necessary "vessels, goods, provisions, arms, and ammunition" provided their cost did not exceed $400,000. The company was incorporated for twenty years, but the parties agreed to dissolve the association after five years if it was unprofitable.[132]

Two groups set out for the west coast: one aboard a ship called the *Tonquin* and the other over land by foot. The *Tonquin* set sail on September 8, 1810; it arrived at the mouth of the Columbia River in Oregon on March 22, 1811, and founded Astoria on April 12. While on a trading mission in June the *Tonquin* fell under Indian attack, the ship was destroyed and its crew was killed. [133]

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[131]Ibid., 132-33, 135, 153.

[132]In *Astoria* Washington Irving relied on manuscript records to tell the story of the settlement. Most of these records have been lost; therefore I am relying on Irving's account of Astoria. Stanley T. Williams, *The Life of Washington Irving*, 2 vols. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1835) 2: 83. Washington Irving, *Three Western Narratives: A Tour on the Prairies, Astoria, The Adventures of Captain Bonneville* (New York: The Library of America, 2004), 208. James P. Ronda, *Astoria and Empire* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990).

[133]Irving, *Three Western Narratives*, 239, 251.

Simultaneously, Hunt and McKenzie led another party of eight men on foot from Montreal across Canada and over the Rocky Mountains, arriving at St. Louis on January 20, 1811. There they obtained additional equipment, boats, and men, and sailed up the Missouri River to an Arikara town north of Omaha.[134] After selling his boats to a rival voyager and trading for horses, Hunt left the Arikara village on July 18 to travel west by land. His party reached Astoria on February 15, 1812, having traveled for more than eleven months and 3,500 miles, even though the direct route from St. Louis to Astoria was under 1,800. With the outbreak of the War of 1812, the British set up a blockade in New York's harbor that stopped Astor's ships from sailing to Astoria and delivering much needed supplies. On July 1, 1813, the Astoria partners voted to abandon the settlement as per the terms of their original agreement.[135] Astoria was sold to the North West Company, a fur-trading enterprise, and renamed Fort George after King George III.

By 1834 Astor had retired from both fur trading and his exporting business. Real estate became his primary interest and he continued to purchase property throughout New York City. Astor created new ways to make money in real estate through mortgages and land leases. He wrote land leases granting a tenant the right to lease a parcel of land from Astor for a specific length of time at the end of which, however, the ownership of the land—and any improvements made on it—would revert to him. These leases were a continuing source of income for the Astor family after the death of John Jacob.

Astor's biographers portray him as a rough businessman who spoke English with a thick German accent. There is some debate as to his command of written English; he

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[134]The Arikara were one of the many Native American tribes that the explorers encountered on their expedition. Ibid., 292, 326.

[135]Irving, *Three Western Narratives*, 361, 450, 453, 560.

wrote little and relied on agents to conduct his vast businesses. Nevertheless, his wealth brought him prominence, and his inner circle included literary men such as Washington Irving and Fitz-Greene Halleck and politicians such as James Madison and Albert Gallatin. Astor, who had a lifelong interest in music and literature, belonged to such groups as the New York Society Library and the Academy of Music, and in 1829 he subscribed to the Clinton Hall Association for the purpose of erecting a building to house the Mercantile Library.[136]

Astor's interest in literature grew out of his immigrant experience. Much like Andrew Carnegie fifty years later, he emigrated to the United States without the benefit of formal schooling and attempted to educate himself only after he had secured his fortune. Astor did not collect books during his lifetime, however, and left no specific instructions as to the types of books that should be in his library. It is most likely that Cogswell and Irving served as advisors, to help Astor shape his library.

Along with Cogswell, Washington Irving is credited with suggesting to Astor the idea of establishing a public library.[137] Irving was a leading American writer who traveled throughout Europe and knew many prominent authors, politicians, and established New Yorkers. Born on April 3, 1783, in New York City he was named after George Washington. His father, William, was a successful merchant and deacon in the Presbyterian Church. In 1799 Washington clerked in a law office instead of attending Columbia College like his two older bothers. In 1803 he met Henry Brevoort, who would later serve as a trustee for the Astor Library. That same year Irving left to travel in

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[136]He donated $1,000 to their organization. Porter, *John Jacob Astor*, 1089.

[137]Axel Madsen, *John Jacob Astor: America's First Multimillionaire* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 2001), 218.

Europe. His first major literary success was *A History of New York*, which was published in Philadelphia on December 6, 1809. By 1820 Irving had earned his reputation on both sides of the Atlantic as America's foremost man of letters. During his career he was extremely social and befriended politicians such as Madison and Gallatin as well as wealthy individuals such as Astor and Brevoort.[138]

In 1832 Irving returned to the U.S. and New York, after a seventeen-year absence. Although he was warmly welcomed, there was concern among his readers that because of his extended stay overseas he would no longer represent America as positively as he had in the past. Two years later Astor approached Irving to write a history of Astoria.[139] Astor paid Irving's nephew, Peter Munro Irving, $3,000 to research the book; Washington Irving's compensation is not known. In 1835 Irving moved into Astor's country house at Hell Gate, to write *Astoria*.[140] He finished his draft in October and the book was published in early 1836. It was considered by critics to be a vanity project for Astor. Irving's publisher paid him $4,000 upon publication of the American edition and £500 for the British one.[141]

Aside from monetary compensation, one reason Irving may have taken Astor's commission was that he had a newfound interest in the American West. *A Tour of the Prairies* (1835) was the first book Irving wrote after his return to the U.S. Along with *Astoria* and *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville* (1837) it constitutes Irving's writings

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[138]Irving, *Three Western Narratives*, 960-961, 963.

[139]Astor first met Irving in Paris in 1821. Williams, *Life of Washington Irving*, 74.

[140]At the time the poet Fitz-Greene Halleck was also living at Astor's country house. Williams, *Life of Washington Irving*, 75.

[141]Ibid., 76.

on the American West. In *A Tour of the Prairies*, Irving sees the West through a romantic lens. His descriptions of the landscape are picturesque and he extols the ruggedness of Americans as opposed to the effeminate qualities of Europeans. In embracing the West Irving reasserted his reputation as a nationalist writer, an American writer rather than a European one.[142]

In writing *Astoria* Irving attempted to capture American features such as descriptions of the native flora and fauna as well as the specific Native American tribes encountered by Hunt and his party, giving each tribe a particular character. According to his modern biographer, Stanley T. Williams, Irving's writings on the West hinted at the notion of Manifest Destiny, which defined American public policy in the 1840s.[143]

After a life of travel in 1835 Irving eventually purchased a small house called "Sunnyside" in Tarrytown, New York. He worked with the Scottish painter George Harvey (1806-1876), who was also his neighbor, to remodel the house after Dutch Colonial examples Irving had known as a young boy. In 1847 Irving added a Spanish-inspired tower he called the "Pagoda."

Irving's relationship with Astor continued until Astor's death in 1848, whereupon he served as a pallbearer at Astor's funeral and gave his eulogy.[144] Irving served as president of the Astor Library during its first ten years, and he spent the remainder of his life at Sunnyside, entertaining friends and writing until his death in 1859.[145]

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[142]Guy Reynolds, "The Winning of the West: Washington Irving's 'A Tour of the Prairies'," *The Yearbook of English Studies* 34 (2004): 88-99.

[143]Williams, *Life of Washington Irving*, 77-78.

[144]Irving, *Three Western Narratives*, 981.

[145]Joseph T. Butler, *Washington Irving and Sunnyside* (Tarrytown, NY: Sleepy Hollow Restorations, 1974).

The third individual responsible for the founding of the Astor library was its first librarian, Joseph Green Cogswell. Born in Ipswich, Massachusetts, on September 21, 1786, Cogswell attended Phillips Exeter Academy and received an AB from Harvard College in 1806.[146] He studied law from 1807 to 1809, and in 1812 married and his wife died suddenly on July 16, 1813.[147] He was a tutor at Harvard from 1814 to 1815, after which time he joined George Ticknor (1791-1871) at the University of Göttingen in Germany, where he met Astor's son William Backhouse.[148]

While in Göttingen, Cogswell studied mineralogy, geology, and European university libraries. He had a particular interest in book cataloguing. In a letter to Ticknor, Cogswell described his studies of library organization:

> I have made experiments with Benecke [the librarian at Göttingen] in the library, and rejoice that I now get an hour of very valuable instruction for one which was worth nothing at all. He takes the library first according to the arrangement on the shelves and goes through the whole with me in that way giving me minute accounts of all the divisions and subdivisions, and of the practical application of the principles of classification and distribution. Afterwards he will do the same with the catalogues.[149]

Naming, ranking, and classifying objects were central to scientific thought ever since the Enlightenment and the work of biologists such as Carl Linneaus (1707-1778), whose system of taxonomy became central to the understanding of organisms. It is not

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[146]Joseph Green Cogswell, *Life of Joseph Green Cogswell as Sketched in His Letters*, edited. Anna E. Ticknor (Cambridge, Mass.: Riverside Press, 1874), 22.

[147]Lyndenberg, *History of the New York Public Library*, 2.

[148]Ticknor later became the first professor of modern languages at Harvard University from 1817 to 1835. He was also a trustee of the Boston Athenaeum from 1823 to 1832. He helped found the Boston Public Library, for which he was a trustee from 1852 to 1866 and president in 1865. David B. Tyack, *George Ticknor and the Boston Brahmins* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967).

[149] Cogswell to George Ticknor, July 27, 1817, in Cogswell, *Life*, 67.

surprising then that Cogswell, who also trained as a scientist, would adopt these methods in his library studies.

In 1821 Cogswell returned to the United States to work at Harvard, where he was a professor of mineralogy and geology as well as the college librarian. The university hired him specifically to update and organize its collection. In a letter to S. A. Eliot dated April 1, 1822, Ticknor described Cogswell's work: "Cogswell is doing much good in the library, reforming it utterly, and will, I am persuaded, when he has finished his systematic catalogue, and shown its gross deficiencies, persuade people to do something serious towards filling it up."[150] Later that fall Ticknor wrote to Eliot: "The library is now in fine order. It is arranged on the same plan with that at Göttingen, though, for want of books, the subdivisions are fewer at present, and the catalogues are made out in the same way, so that all possible future additions will require no alteration in any part of the system…."[151] Cogswell considered his job done and left Harvard in 1823.

Later that same year, with George Bancroft (1800-1891), Cogswell established the Round Hill School in Northampton, Massachusetts, which they modeled after a German gymnasium. The school was intended for New England's elite, to prepare them for a university education similar to that found in Europe. It closed in 1834, and two years later Cogswell went to Raleigh, North Carolina, to open a similar institution.[152] In 1838 he left Raleigh and returned to New York to write for the *New York Review*. During that year he began to socialize with the Astors, twice dining with John Jacob and three

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[150]Ticknor to S.A. Eliot, April 1, 1822, in Cogswell, *Life*, 133.

[151]Ticknor to S.A. Eliot, October 29, 1822, in Cogswell, *Life*, 133-34.

[152]Harriet Webster Marr, "The Round Hill School for Boys, 1823-1833," *Old Time New England* 49 (Fall 1958): 49-55.

times with William Backhouse.[153] At these dinners John Jacob expressed interest in arts and literature. It was evident from a July 20, 1838, letter from Cogswell to Ticknor that Astor had been thinking seriously about building a library:

> Early in January Mr. [John Jacob] 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, setting all the points which have arisen in the progress of the affair. It is now so arranged that he has promised me to sign the last paper to-day, and if so, I shall see you in Boston early next week….[154]

From this letter it is clear that Cogswell expected Astor's library to open soon, but this was not to be. Astor's failing health caused the project to stall. Cogswell did convince Astor to solicit designs for the library, although it is not known whether these designs were ever submitted.

During Astor's later years Cogswell lived with the family and acted as Astor's personal secretary. On March 12, 1839, he dined with Astor and they discussed the library and its contents. He encouraged Astor to allow him to determine the contents of the library and to purchase the necessary books to complete the collection. Astor must have agreed, because on September 5, 1839, William Backhouse Astor contacted Cogswell as to his availability to travel to Europe on a book-buying trip. The Astors gave Cogswell $60,000 to buy books on this trip. While he was in Europe Cogswell, also consulted with architects to determine what the library should look like and how it should be organized.[155]

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[153]Cogswell, *Life*, 213.

[154] Cogswell to Ticknor, July 20, 1838, in Cogswell, *Life*, 216

[155]In a document entitled "Catalogue of Sundry Books Purchased in Europe for John Jacob Astor, Esq.," dated November 23, 1840, and signed by Cogswell there is a line regarding the payment of $75 "to architects in Berlin and Hamburg." From Astor Library Records, The New York Public Library Archives,

When he returned in 1840, Cogswell met with Astor to discuss his proposed 100,000-volume catalogue for the library. To Cogswell it looked as if the library would soon become a reality, but Astor continued to delay the project. In a letter to George Ticknor dated September 15, 1840, Cogswell wrote:

> I was meditating a descent upon you in Boston early in July, and about the same time Mr. [John Jacob] Astor had a fresh fit of stirring in the library. He got [Washington] Irving there, and sent for [Henry] Brevoort and myself from day to day for a week; at length the whole thing was arranged as I supposed; the plan of the building was agreed upon, and I left him on Saturday evening, July 11 in full confidence that he would authorize his son William … to make contracts for the materials, etc., the next Monday. On that day I started for Geneseo, where I remained about a fortnight. On my return I found the whole knocked into *pi*. [Richard] Upjohn, the architect, had been to see him, and put the notion of a Gothic building into his head, and the moment an excuse afforded him for hesitation, he yielded to what has now become the weakness of his age and shrunk from a decision.[156]

Richard Upjohn (1802-1878) was an English-born architect who was trained as a cabinet-maker and immigrated to New Bedford, Massachusetts in 1829. In 1834 he opened an office in Boston, and in March 1839 he moved to New York City to design Trinity Church on Wall Street.[157] Much of his architectural work was in the Gothic Revival style, which until then had not been widely used in New York City.

Although Upjohn's design has not survived, it is important in several respects. First, in his letter Cogswell indicated that he generated the plan of the library without

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The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations, Box 4, Correspondence, General, 1839-1840, 1848-1851, Folder 1839-1840. Cogswell to C. S. Daveis, in Cogswell, *Life*, 222.

[156]Cogswell to Ticknor, September 15, 1840, in Cogswell, *Life*, 226.

[157]Astor was a member of Trinity Church, although it is not known how active he was in church affairs. He purchased a pew there in 1819 and remained a member for the rest of his life. Dorthea Sartain, Assistant Archivist, Trinity Church, email message to author, August 20, 2007. Upjohn was the first president of the American Institute of Architects, which in 1857 he helped found along with Richard Morris Hunt and eleven other architects. Upjohn served as president from 1857 to 1876. Judith S. Hull, "The 'School of Upjohn': Richard Upjohn's Office," *The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 52 (Sept. 1993): 282-83.

consulting any architect, which would mean, in this case, that the librarian not only shaped the collection but also was the dominant designer for the building. The architect would thus have responded to the specific programmatic needs of the building as outlined by Cogswell.

Second, from the above-referenced letter one can infer that the style of the building initially discussed was not Gothic. Upjohn's entry into the discussion and the subsequent abandonment of the original design reflects the importance of style in the mid-nineteenth century. The German architect Heinrich Hübsch (1795-1863) first addressed this question in his 1828 essay, *In welchem Style Sollen wir Bauen? (In What Style Should We Build?)*. In his text Hübsch wrote that style was determined by four factors: material, technical experience, climate, and present needs.[158] He argued the Greek Revival was an inappropriate style for nineteenth-century German buildings; because these buildings had different programmatic needs than those of Classical Greece, the Greek style should not be used for these new buildings. He proposed that architects create a new style, *Rundbogenstil*, or round-arch-style or Romanesque, which was a natural progression from the Greek. Rundbogenstil used materials, such as stone, that were widely available in Germany, and it also incorporated arched forms that could be adapted to new, larger building types. In Europe the academic discussion of style continued without conclusion until the mid-century, when theoreticians tired of it.[159]

While American architects did not take up these particular arguments of style, they used style and its associated architectural features to bestow cultural significance on

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[158]Wolfgang Hermann, *In What Style Should We Build?: The German Debate on Architectural Style* (Santa Monica, CA: The Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1992), 5, 71.

[159]For further discussion, see ibid., 1-60; and Curran, *Romanesque Revival*, 1-35.

a particular institution.[160] For example, James Renwick Jr.'s Romanesque Revival design for the Smithsonian (1846-48) (fig. 24) was intended to associate the building with English universities. The building's history began with the bequest of an obscure English scientist, James Smithson, who left $500,000 to the government of the United States for the creation of an institution dedicated to the "increase and diffusion of knowledge." In 1841 Robert Mills designed an early version of the Smithsonian (fig. 25). He wrote that the "Saxon style" was associated with the great literary institutions of England—Oxford and Cambridge universities. From this moment designs for the new building used a medieval design vocabulary.[161]

At this time Romanesque Revival design was also considered less costly than Gothic Revival. In a September 8, 1846 letter from James Renwick Sr. (1792-1863), a chemist at Columbia College and father of the architect, to Alexander Dallas Bache, a regent of the Smithsonian, Renwick wrote about his son's design for Grace Church in New York City:

> I may be partial but I do not doubt it is the handsomest church in the Unites States, as well as least costly in proportion to its size…. It seats more persons than Trinity Church, and while that has cost $370,000, Grace Church does not exceed $75,000.[162]

Romanesque Revival designs used materials, such as brick and brownstone, that were less expensive and more widely available than the granite and limestone used in the Gothic Revival buildings. In addition, Romanesque Revival design had a greater simplicity to it than Gothic Revival and without associations with the Catholic Church

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[160]Curran, *Romanesque Revival*, 226.

[161]Kenneth Hafertepe, *America's Castle: The Evolution of the Smithsonian Building and Its Institution, 1840-1878* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1984), xxi, 7.

[162]James Renwick Sr. to Alexander Dallas Bache, Sept. 8, 1846, as quoted in ibid., 28.

and the Pope.[163] It was clear from Astor's will and from Cogswell's correspondence that his library always had a limited budget, and therefore they would have favored the more affordable Romanesque.

In an 1842 letter Cogswell wrote that Astor had met with architects, masons, and contractors about the library but for health reasons did not proceed further, although in 1843 Alexander Jackson Davis prepared a study for the Astor Library (fig. 26).[164] Davis wrote in his journal that the request came from Irving, whom Davis knew.[165] Davis had worked on two residences located near Irving's residence—Blithewood, Annadale-on-Hudson, NY (1836-51), and Lyndhurst, Tarrytown, NY (1838-42; 1864-67), and the two were friends.[166] Both had an interest in Romantic Revival styles as well as picturesque architecture. Sunnyside was a picturesque building that had the appearance of having been built over time. The composition was irregular and merged a variety of architectural styles into a single building.

Davis was born in New York City, and grew up in Newark, New Jersey, and central New York State. At fifteen he moved to Alexandria, Virginia (then part of Washington, D.C.), to work for his brother, who was a printer. In 1823 he returned to New York City to study art at the Antique School (later the National Academy of Design) and joined the prominent New York architect Ithiel Town (1784-1844) in architectural

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[163]Gwen W. Steege, "The *Book of Plans* and the Early Romanesque Revival in the United States," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 46 (1987): 218.

[164]Cogswell to Mrs. George Ticknor, May 3, 1842, in Cogswell, *Life*, 233.

[165]Jane B. Davies, *Alexander Jackson Davis: American Architect 1803-1892*, edited by Amelia Peck (New York: Rizzoli, 1992), 53.

[166]Davis and Irving were friends; Davis inscribed a copy of his book, *Rural Residences* (1837), for Irving. General William Paulding, the patron of the first building campaign at Lyndhurst, was the brother of James Kirk Paulding, the co-author with Washington Irving of *Salmagundi*. William H. Pierson Jr., *Technology and the Picturesque: The Corporate and Gothic Styles*, American Buildings and Their Architects 2 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 302, 308.

practice in 1829. The two worked together off and on until 1835, when Davis left Town's office and continued to practice architecture on his own for the rest of his life. He wrote one book, *Rural Residences* (1837), which was modeled after earlier house pattern books with illustrated examples of various architectural styles. In his book he developed the idea of an American villa, which by his definition was a country house for a client of wealth and sophisticated taste. Davis worked in a variety of architectural styles, including both Greek and Gothic Revival. Much like Irving, Davis had a romantic temperament and preferred picturesque architecture that was irregular in form and embraced nature rather than neoclassical styles, which were symmetrical in form and characterized his urban work with Town.

Davis's watercolor study for the library shows a building with a temple front and a rotunda in back. This arrangement recalled the Pantheon in Rome, as well as two well-known library designs: James Gibbs's (1682-1754) Radcliffe Camera in Oxford (1739-49) and Jefferson's Rotunda at the University of Virginia. The site for the library was known, and Davis's library would have been on the same block as the Greek Revival La Grange Terrance (Colonnade Row). The temple façade of Davis's library was similar to his other neoclassical designs of the period. His use of glass between Corinthian pilasters, however, was a departure from the Greek Revival designs of his work with Town. Although Davis was working in a neoclassical mode, he exercised greater liberty with classical motifs. He illustrated a pediment with a sculptural arrangement featuring books and a central cartouche with a bust, presumably of Astor, rather than allegorical figures. In his design, Davis revealed an interest in the physical and symbolic power of light—the glass façade illuminated the entrance to the library, creating a path for the

library user, a symbolic representation of the intellectual illumination that comes from reading.

These earlier designs reveal the freedom that Astor had in determining the appearance of his library, particularly since the public library as a type did not yet exist. However, it seems that this freedom froze Astor, rendering him incapable of making a decision about the library's architecture. This was ultimately left to the trustees, led by Irving and Cogswell. These two, both literary men, were concerned more with the collection and cataloging of the books than the library's architectural design. In Davis's design, the literal quality of the architectural expression—the books in the pediment, and the use of light on the interior—was evident. The content of the library was paramount. Although its design was monumental, the building was not intended to glorify its benefactor, but to be a beacon for the library user.

After Astor's death on March 29, 1848, New York newspapers announced his plans for a public library. The editors of the New York *Tribune* wrote:

> [I]t is said that Mr. Astor has bequeathed $400,000 for the purpose of a library for the general benefit of our fellow citizens—that Mr. Cogswell, who speaks German and resides some time with Mr. Astor, as a friend, has been to Europe negotiating for books in various languages—and that he (Mr. A.) offered $100,000 for the ground at Niblo's, intending to raise there, in Broadway, a suitable edifice in which to house his most enduring monument—the Astor free library.[167]

There was no additional discussion as to the appropriateness of this gift, nor did the editors voice an opinion as to the potential good of the library project.

The following week the *New York Evening Post* published a portion of Astor's will and they outlined the specific terms for the new library building:

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[167] *New York Tribune*, March 30, 1848, morning edition.

> For this purpose [to build a library] he appropriated a plot of ground on the southerly side of Astor Place, 65 feet by 125 deep, for the building; or, if the trustees of this bequest think it more expedient, a plot of like size on the east side of Astor Place. The building is not to cost over $75,000, and the land is estimated at $35,000. Then $120,000 are to be expended in books, maps, statuary, &c. ; and the remainder to be placed at interest, to defray the expense of management, purchase of books, or the establishment of lectures, as the Trustees may think best.[168]

Thus Astor's wishes were made known to the public. His generosity was noted, although, given his nearly inconceivable wealth, and even though his library was the largest gift ever to New York City (the second largest gift to the public of in U.S. history) Astor was criticized for not giving away more of his fortune. He was compared to Stephen Girard (1750-1831), who willed the largest amount of money for public use in the U.S. A French immigrant who made his $7-million fortune in shipping and banking, Girard left $2 million to construct a college to educate boys in the classics.[169] Like Thomas Jefferson at the University of Virginia, Girard did not want his school to have any religious affiliation. And, similar to the specifications for the Astor Library, Girard designated the location of his college but did not specify its design before his death. The executors of his will and the trustees of the college held an architectural competition for the school, which was won by Thomas U. Walter (1804-1887). Nicolas Biddle (1786-1844), president of the Second Bank of the United States and on the board of the college, had studied classics and suggested to Walter the Greek temple design that Walter proposed. Walter designed a campus of five Greek temples: a large central building

[168]*New York Evening Post*, April 3, 1848.

[169]For additional information on Girard and the architectural competition for his school, see John Baker Cutler, "Girard College Architectural Competition, 1832-1848" (PhD diss., Yale University, 1969).

flanked on each side by two smaller ones. The central building was modeled after the peripteral temples at Paestum, which Biddle had visited in 1806.[170]

Unlike Astor who left the bulk of his assets to his family, Girard was a bachelor with no family, so he left all of his estate to the public. By keeping his fortune in his family, Astor followed a European model of holding property in successive generations, which was contrary to the republican views held by most Americans. Republicanism expressed that individuals suppress their own desires in pursuit of the larger good. At this time most Americans considered themselves republicans in the sense that what was good for one was good for all, and the public considered Astor's wealth, especially since it was accumulated in America, to be part of its domain. As such, the general sentiment was that more of his money should have been left to the public.[171]

There was not a strong philanthropic sense among the American elite at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Few had vast amounts of money, and the only philanthropic institutions in existence were private, nonprofit-distributing (meaning the money earned from investment was returned to the organization, not the trustees), self-governing, voluntary, and primarily for the public benefit. Personal giving and volunteerism were the hallmarks of philanthropic endeavors at this time. Typically, if an individual was able to give away a large sum of money, he or she created an organization to which to donate it. This was the case with the Smithsonian as well as other early libraries—at Harvard, for example.[172] Girard and Astor left large sums of money to

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[170]Pierson, *Colonial and Neoclassical Styles*, 437-38.

[171]Roy Rosenzweig and Elizabeth Blackmar, *The Park and the People: A History of Central Park* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1992), 35.

[172]McCarthy, *American Creed*, 2.

create new institutions, but did little to determine the ongoing survival of those institutions. Both left the task of selecting the appearance and function of the buildings to their trustees.

The Astor Library set a precedent in New York of endowing and supporting many public cultural institutions through private contributions, although these private institutions often received a small portion of their budgets from public funds. In her study of American philanthropy from 1700 to 1865, Kathleen McCarthy wrote that charitable giving created a new sphere within the American economic system that coexisted with the government and the for-profit economy. Philanthropy promoted social advocacy and encouraged individuals to pool their resources and work together, and, in so doing, constituted a driving force for American democracy and economic development.[173]

In his will Astor named the library trustees: William B. Astor, his son; Charles Astor Bristed (1820-1874), author; Henry Brevoort Jr. (1782-1848); Cogswell; Fitz-Greene Halleck (1795-1868), poet; Irving; James G. King, Daniel Lord Jr. (1795-1868), lawyer; Samuel B. Ruggles (1800-1881), lawyer; Samuel Ward Jr., author; the sitting mayor of New York City; and the sitting chancellor of New York State. Brevoort worked with Astor in the fur trade beginning around 1811, and after his death, in 1848, his son was appointed to fill his seat. On May 20, 1848, the trustees held their first meeting when they appointed Cogswell superintendent of the library. They also appointed Ruggles and Bristed to examine the two sites named in Astor's will, one on the south side of Astor Place and the other on the east side of Lafayette Place, to determine which was

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[173]Ibid., 6.

the most appropriate for the new library.[174] At the June 1, 1848, meeting the trustees voted to name the library the Astor Library, "in grateful respect to the memory of the founder."[175] In their report to the trustees on September 28, 1848, Ruggles and Bristed chose the site on the eastern side of Lafayette Place because its orientation had superior light.[176]

At their next meeting, on October 10, 1848, the trustees authorized a fund of $20,000 for Cogswell to travel to Europe to purchase books. During his buying trip Cogswell traveled to Paris, London, and probably Germany.[177] The trustees assigned him an additional duty, which was to "procure information in Europe as to the most eligible style and plan of the Edifice of the library."[178]

On December 19, 1848, William Backhouse Astor wrote to Cogswell in London:

> You have been as active and industrious as usual particularly among the booksellers.… Respecting the library building I hope that you will be able to obtain a good plan one similar to that drawn by Saeltzer I should think likely to suit. The charter I understand will be submitted to the Trustees at their next meeting on the 27th and will if approved be without delay and sent to Albany….[179]

It is important to note that the Saeltzer's library plan was in the trustees' hands at this early date—at least four months before they advertised for a design competition. From

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174 Board of Trustees Minutes Book, 1848-1895, Astor Library Records, The New York Public Library Archives, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations.

175 Ibid., 13.

176 Ibid.

177 William Backhouse Astor to Cogswell, November 9, 1848, Astor Family, Papers, 1807-1919, New-York Historical Society.

178 Board of Trustees Minutes Book, 1848-1895, Astor Library Records, The New York Public Library Archives, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations, 17.

179 William Backhouse Astor to Cogswell, December 19, 1848, Astor Family, Papers, 1807-1919, New-York Historical Society.

the beginning Saeltzer seems to have been preferred as the designer of the library. It is not known who solicited the design from Saeltzer, or whether he sent it to the trustees. Given his advisory role to Astor for the earlier designs, it is possible that Cogswell was involved in asking Saeltzer to draw a plan, or that it passed through his hands on its way to the trustees.

Unfortunately, little is known about Saeltzer's life. Between 1840 and 1841 he probably trained at the Bauakademie in Berlin, for he later claimed to be a student of Karl Friedrich Schinkel (1781-1841).[180] He and his brother, Eduard, arrived in the United States in 1842. In addition to the library Saeltzer designed such cultural buildings in New York as the Academy of Music (1854) and Theater Français (1866). He also designed a Gothic Revival synagogue on Norfolk Street for the Congregation Anshe Chesed (1849).[181] These buildings were in a variety of Romantic styles. Saeltzer had a facility with style that was not uncommon for architects at this time. Like Davis, he could work in a broad range of idioms depending upon the client's taste. Although Saeltzer's architectural work was not outstanding, he earned a variety of commissions and was an accomplished designer.

While in London, Cogswell continued his correspondence with Astor. In a letter dated January 6, 1849, Astor wrote to Cogswell about the progress of the trustees in incorporating the library, which was approved by the State of New York on January 18,

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[180]Kathleen Curran does not have any direct evidence to support Saeltzer's enrollment at the Bauakademie or that he was Schinkel's student, but she did find Saeltzer's name on a list of students belonging to an architectural club in Berlin. Curran, "German *Rundbogenstil*," 369; Curran, *Romanesque Revival*, 229.

[181]The synagogue was the city's first reform temple. Norval White and Elliot Willensky, *AIA Guide to New York City*, 4th ed. (New York: Crown Publishers, 2000), 90.

1849. Astor requested that Cogswell return by April 1 so that they could begin the design competition:

> The trustees deem it important that the erection of the Library building should be commenced as early as practicable in the Spring, and with this view they desire me to request you to be here as early as the 1st of April next and indeed sooner if you well can. It will be necessary to advertise for plans by the 1st of April, and give our architects all the light you have collected abroad, both as to the façade of the building and its interior arrangement. We shall not advertise for plans until after your return. We shall be happy to know as early as may be, when we may expect you here, that we may make our arrangements accordingly. A plan for a front has been lately submitted by a young English architect a Mr. Wells who I think is known to you. I have not seen any plan which I think is likely to find favor with the trustees and the public as Saeltzer's [did].[182]

From this letter it is evident that the trustees had been receiving unsolicited designs, which probably were passed on to Cogswell. If Astor and Cogswell both favored Saeltzer's design, one wonders why a competition was held. It was not mandated by the will, nor was it standard architectural practice. There were two general thoughts about competitions among architects. One was that they gave young and unknown architects an opportunity to win a major commission. More experienced architects, however, found that the time and expense associated with creating competition drawings was too great. They felt that their experience should speak for itself and that they should be hired based on their past record of building. Moreover, it was not uncommon for clients to appropriate competition designs without awarding either the prize money or the commission to the architect.[183] It could be that because the Astor bequest was public, and

[182]William Backhouse Astor to Cogswell, January 6, 1849, Astor Family, Papers, 1807-1919, New-York Historical Society.

[183]Woods, *Craft to Profession*, 37-38. See also Helene Lipstadt, *The Experimental Tradition: Essays on Competitions in Architecture* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1989).

there was great interest in what would become of his fortune, the trustees wanted to make the selection of the architect open to the public.

Sometime between January 8 and 22, Cogswell sent a package of drawings to Astor, who responded:

> My dear sir, I have had the pleasure to receive your letter of the 28th together with one for the trustees of the library which was as you desire I shall lay before them at their first meeting. The charter has passed the legislature without material amendment & I have been waiting for the receipt of it here to call a meeting of the trustees. Senator Dix has been elected a trustee of the Library [due] to the vacancy in the board occasioned by the death of Mr. Henry Brevoort. I have not opened the packet containing the plans you sent for the Library Building: as I intend to submit them at the same time with your letter; I doubt not they will be found by the trustees very acceptable.[184]

These library plans were shown to the trustees on February 14, and receipt of the letter and accompanying drawings was noted in the minutes of that meeting.[185] Unfortunately, both the letter and the attached drawings are missing, documentation that would illustrate the exact models Cogswell was looking at for the Astor Library. However, in his next letter to Cogswell, February 19, 1849, Astor noted the receipt of specific drawings:

> My Dear Sir, Your kind letter of the 12th and the 20th: I have received, and the roll of plans of the Museum of Practical Geology, also the number of the Civil Engineer and Architect with a drawing of both elevations on Piccadilly and Jermyn Streets—they are very simple and beautiful. The trustees are much pleased with them and think we can find nothing to suit our purpose so well as the Piccadilly front with the alterations you propose. Your letter to the Trustees has been most gratifying to them and they are also much pleased to learn from you two subsequent letters to me of your zeal and success in the object of your mission.[186]

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[184]William Backhouse Astor to Cogswell, January 22, 1849, Astor Family, Papers, 1807-1919, New-York Historical Society.

[185]Board of Trustees Minutes Book, 1848-1895, February 14, 1849, Astor Library Records, The New York Public Library Archives, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations.

[186]William Backhouse Astor to Cogswell, February 19, 1849, Astor Family, Papers, 1807-1919, New-York Historical Society.

The Museum of Economic Geology (1846-51), designed by James Pennethorne (1801-1871), was London's first public museum of science (fig. 27). Although the museum was a neoclassical building, the arcade on the ground floor of the Piccadilly Street façade proved to be an inspiration for the Astor Library. It is possible that Cogswell promoted this feature in his letter to the trustees. According to Kathleen Curran, the interior organization of the museum was the model for the Astor Library.[187] The museum's "great room" on the second floor was similar in appearance to the Astor Library's reading room. It was a large room with a gallery and an opening in the center of the room, with tables and alcoves arranged around the center. One of the most important features of this museum was its iron and glass ceiling; a similar ceiling structure was incorporated in the Astor Library.[188]

At their March 28, 1849, meeting the trustees resolved to advertise an architectural competition. They were to award $300 for the winning design and $200 for second place. There were no printed competition materials that stated the programmatic requirements for the library. From the published advertisement, one can assume that Cogswell personally handled all communications regarding the library.[189] At their April 13 meeting, the trustees extended the deadline until May 1.

On the night of May 10, there was a riot at the Astor Opera House, which was located two blocks north of the proposed library site. The seeds of the riot were sown on May 7 during a performance of Macbeth by the English actor William Charles Macready.

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[187]The original plans for the Astor Library have not been located; Curran, email message to the author, May 31, 2007. Curran, *Romanesque Revival*, 230.

[188]Landau and Condit, *New York Skyscrapers*, 42.

[189]See competition advertisement in *New York Evening Post*, March 30, 1849.

Macready was known for a subtle acting style that contrasted with that of his chief American rival, Edwin Forrest, who had a melodramatic style, that was popular with New York's Irish working class. By acting and place of birth, Macready was aligned with the upper class and Forrest with the lower. After Macready was shouted down by a mob after which he was invited by the owners of the opera house to stage another performance on the evening of May 10. Hearing of this, Captain Isaiah Rynders, one of Forrest's backers, distributed tickets to the public in hopes they again would disrupt the performance. As the play began, a crowd of more than 10,000 gathered outside and began to throw paving stones and other objects into the theatre. Police were stationed at the theatre in anticipation of trouble and promptly began making arrests. The violence escalated and the police—supplemented by the Seventh Regiment, one of New York City's militias—fired into the crowd. Twenty-two people were killed, more than 150 injured, and 117 were arrested.[190]

The class conflict that played out during the Astor Place riot was due in part to the location of the theater, which was west of Bowery and one block east of Broadway. Broadway and Bowery were competing shopping streets. Broadway had long been established as the leading commercial street in the city, and the upper classes shopped there. Like many shopping areas, it was also a fashionable place to be seen. The Bowery's shopping district was equally vibrant but catered to another, lower class of patron. The close proximity of these two streets contributed to the class friction that started the riot. Although the Astor Library was never associated with the riots, its

[190]Burrows and Wallace, *Gotham*, 761-64. Joel Tyler Headley, *The Great Riots of New York 1712-1873*, (1873; repr., New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 2004), 75-88.

proximity to these two competing worlds must have been a source of concern to the trustees.[191]

Nonetheless, they met on May 16 to consider the submitted design proposals but postponed making a decision on the library until their next meeting, on May 24. It is unknown how many designs the trustees received. Present at that meeting were Irving, Astor, Lord, King, Cogswell, Ruggles, Bristed, and Dix. The minutes do not show a specific discussion of the merits of any particular plan. In general the trustees found the plans to be "meritorious," but none could be built as proposed; the minutes do not state why. In the end, however, the trustees decided to award the first prize to Alexander Saeltzer, and the second to James Renwick Jr.[192] At its next meeting, the board resumed its discussion of the plans. It was determined that if there was enough money according to the terms of the will, the library should include a large meeting room for public lectures.[193] The trustees also authorized Cogswell to work with Saeltzer in preparing plans for the library building. In a June 1, 1849, letter from Cogswell to Daniel Lord, the treasurer of the Astor Library, he confirmed the selection of Saeltzer as architect.[194]

At their June 13 meeting the trustees approved a plan by Saeltzer and were ready to prepare working plans and specifications to bid. They also agreed to compensate the architect an additional $1,000, and hired a building inspector for $750. On June 27 Cogswell proposed and the trustees accepted an increase in the architect's compensation

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[191]Burrows and Wallace, *Gotham*, 945-47.

[192]Board of Trustees Minutes Book, 1848-1895, May 24, 1849, Astor Library Records, The New York Public Library Archives, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations.

[193]Ibid.

[194]Board of Trustees Minutes Book, 1848-1895, June 1, 1849, Astor Library Records, The New York Public Library Archives, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations.

to $1,500.[195] On July 11 Saeltzer was asked to prepare working plans and specifications for the next board meeting.

On August 29 revised plans were presented to the board, and Cogswell and Saeltzer were authorized to obtain estimates for construction. By their October 19 meeting, the trustees had obtained estimates for the work. The low estimate was $81,385.75; the high was $107,962. Because Astor's will provided only $75,000 for the building's construction, the trustees asked Saeltzer if he could change his design to allow for lower construction costs. More bids were solicited and at the November 26 meeting the firm of Bogart and Harriott submitted a construction bid of $83,000. The trustees considered this information:

> The Trustees having upon full and satisfactory examination ascertained that the plan of Mr. Saeltzer could not be carried out for the sum limited for the library Edifice, it is resolved that such a plan be now abandoned, and consequently that the connexion [sic] of this institution with Mr. Saeltzer be now discontinued—and that a copy of this resolution be communicated to him.
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> On motion of Mr. Lord, it was then resolved that a committee of three members be appointed to confer with such architects as they may confide in to devise a plan for the library Edifice and to ascertain the actual expense of it, and to report the same to the boards.[196]

Astor, Lord, and Ruggles were appointed to this new committee. Saeltzer did not agree with the trustees' decision.[197] By their December 10 meeting the trustees had received an additional proposal from the construction firm of Bogart and Harriott to complete the library. They modified the plan and removed some of the furniture and casework from

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[195]Board of Trustees Minutes Book, 1848-1895, June 27, 1849, Astor Library Records, The New York Public Library Archives, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations.

[196]Board of Trustees Minutes Book, 1848-1895, November, 26, 1849, Astor Library Records, The New York Public Library Archives, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations.

[197]Ibid.

the original bid package. It is also possible that the materials specified were changed from limestone to brick and brownstone. By January 2, 1850, Saeltzer was reinstated as architect, and the cornerstone of the library was laid on March 14, 1850.[198]

In an article published by the *New York Herald* on January 10, 1854, Cogswell described the exterior of library as Byzantine.[199] Its style was similar to contemporary Romanesque Revival buildings, such as Renwick's design for the Smithsonian. The principal elevation had five bays; where the central three were recessed from the façade. More importantly the façade was brick, which added to its Romanesque appearance as well as contained the overall cost of the building. With the exception of the material, the exterior was very similar to Gärtner's Munich Staatsbibliothek, although the scale of the building was significantly smaller. The Staatsbibliothek also had additional functions because it was a state library, which required a more elaborate program.

In the same article Cogswell compared Astor Library to the buildings surrounding it:

> A more appropriate site could not be found in New York. The street has a refined, classic air and is in a good degree exempt from the throng, and noise, and bustle of business streets. The contrast between it and Broadway is so striking in this respect that it is difficult to comprehend that they are in such near proximity. The eye of the visitor in traversing it will be attracted by a long row of stately marble dwellings with rich porticos supported by elegant Corinthian columns [La Grange Terrace] and if a stranger, he may perhaps fix upon these for the Astor Library. But a glance across the street when about opposite this center of this fine range, will show him a very plain structure of brick…this is the Astor Library. The style of the architecture is the Byzantine; the front which has too little mass or spread for effect….[200]

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[198]Board of Trustees Minutes Book, 1848-1895, January 2, 1850, Astor Library Records, The New York Public Library Archives, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations.

[199]He may have been thinking of Venetian architecture with its round arches like those found at the Piazza San Marco.

[200]*New York Herald*, January 10, 1854.

It is clear from Cogswell's writing that he did not find the Astor Library to be particularly monumental. It was too small and lacked the grandeur of its neoclassical neighbors. The choice of using brick and brownstone was forced on the trustees because of terms of Astor's will did not provide enough money to build a library out of marble. In his tone Cogswell seems somewhat resigned to the library's modest appearance. He continued writing, however, and found virtue in the flaws of the building:

> In this city we have of late been made so familiar with the immense, that a building as limited in extent as the Astor Library dwindles into insignificance. Its fine proportions, architectural correctness, and adaptation to its purpose, will be appreciated by none but an artistic eye. Such an eye will see that the architect has made the most of his prescribed front elevation; and it should be borne in mind that the building, in all its extent, was marked out by the will of its founder, and wisely too for, instead of a library of precious books, we might now have nothing but an empty marble palace.[201]

Although Cogswell noted the library's lack of monumentality, it was not an insignificant building. He claimed that for the library's likely users, those with an educated eye, the building would be pleasing. Its unusual style would separate it from the other buildings and mark it as having a special status. The use of brick, a modest material, would underscore the purpose of the library, to make books available to the public.

When the library opened to the public in 1854 it contained 80,000 volumes. In 1890 it had more than 260,000 volumes, making it the largest reference library in the metropolitan area. Its stacks were closed and readers had to request books from the librarians. Certain qualified readers, called alcove readers, were allowed access to the

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[201]Ibid.

stacks where they sat in alcoves devoted to their particular topic of interest.[202] Although the library was open to the public, its hours—10 a.m. to 4 p.m.—excluded many members of the working class. The need to keep the collection safe and organized was very important to the library's ability to function, and limiting access to the books accomplished these goals. The library's hours also undermined its public function; the hours had the unintended consequence of keeping visitors out of the library.

Upon its opening Irving wrote a description of the library, the most important part of which was his description of the interior organization of the building; because no historical plans have survived it is unclear how the ground floor was arranged (fig. 28):

> On opening the main entrance door, the eye falls at once upon a beautiful flight of thirty-six broad marble steps, leading between straight walls of solid mason work, to the second floor of the building, which is the main floor of the library proper. These stairs and the visitor at a point about the centre of the room, which is a hundred feet in length by sixty-four in width and fifty in height. A broad skylight, extending two-thirds its length, with a row of huge curved panes of glass on each side, and a double sash spreading nearly horizontally across the centre, pours in a flood of light from above, which, with that let in through the ten broad windows in front and eight in the rear, gives an uncommonly cheerful aspect to the apartment.[203]

The interior space was similar to that of the Museum of Economic Geology in London, which Cogswell had advocated as a model for the library. The interior of the Astor Library was unusual in that it was framed in iron, including iron floor joists and interior columns. In their book *Rise of the New York Skyscraper* (1996), Sarah Landau and Carl

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[202]Readers, 1859-1911, Astor Library Records, The New York Public Library Archives, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations.

[203]*Annual Report of the Trustees of the Astor Library Made to the Legislature, January 26, 1854* (Albany, NY: C. Van Bethuysen, 1854), 10-11.

Condit posited that the iron used in the Astor Library interior was the precursor to the iron-cage construction used in skyscrapers at the end of the nineteenth century.[204]

The incorporation of skylights was also important. The library had gas lighting, but since that was considered dangerous in proximity to books, it was supplemented on the interior with natural light from the windows on the east and west elevations and from above. The use of artificial light allowed the building to be open in the evenings thus making it available to the working public, who would not have had access to the library if it had been open only during daylight hours.

Irving also described the alcove arrangement of the library:

> A series of seven alcoves, or apartments, open in front and rear, fills up the space on each side from the side walls to the columns which support the roof, leaving corridors two and a half feet in width along the walls, by which a communication is established between the different parts of the library. On this plan the capacity of the room for books is more than doubled; that is for every fifty-one wall shelves, there are seventy-two in the alcoves. On no other could it be made to contain one hundred thousand volumes, as it is now ascertained it will. Each alcove has a light gallery, eleven feet above the floor, to give easy access to the higher tier of shelves; and these galleries, extended in front of the wall shelves, form a continued corridor from end to end. The room within the columns which support the roof, is open from floor to skylight, but divided into two stories between these columns and the outer walls. In the second story there is a series of alcoves exactly corresponding to that on the first, with similar galleries above. The part of the library which is divided into alcoves is separated from the open area in the centre by a light iron railing. This area is provided with reading tables, for those who wish to use the books, which are to be handed to them by assistant librarians. The only part of the library above the first floor which has not been described, are two small rooms in the northeast corner appropriated by the superintendent: these two rooms are not taken from the main building, but formed by carrying up a portion of the walls of the projection of the rear.[205]

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[204]Landau and Condit, *Rise of the New York Skyscraper*, 42.

[205]*Annual Report of the Trustees of the Astor Library Made to the Legislature, January 26, 1854* (Albany, NY: C. Van Bethuysen, 1854), 10-11.

The capacity for book storage was critical for the library, especially since it would constantly expand its collection. The Astor Library was the only one in New York at the time that could hold 100,000 books, a feat made possible by the alcove plan. As Irving noted, the alcoves increased the capacity by twenty-one shelves. Another strength of the alcove system was the control of the books it gave the assistant librarians, who could see the books as well as the readers within the alcoves.

Irving did mention the interior decoration of the library, but only that it would be more pleasing once it was dulled with the patina of age. Contemporary drawings indicate that the library was primarily given over to books. Unlike later libraries, like the Library of Congress and the Boston Public Library, there was no mural program or larger decorative scheme beyond the embellishment of the balustrade and the ironwork of the second-floor galleries.

Although the Astor Library was open to the public, it nevertheless was privately financed and managed. Because it was the first library open to the public in the U. S., it was a model for cities such as Boston, which founded its public library in 1848 after the announcement of the creation of the Astor Library. In the case of the Astor Library, the librarian dictated the building's design. Cogswell researched the models that were selected for the library and communicated with the architect.

The library's design touched on the nineteenth-century concern with style. The consideration of style at the Astor Library was definitely one of a particularly American nature. There was never a philosophical discussion as to why the Romanesque Revival was the most appropriate choice. It is possible there was discussion as to the style's cost-effectiveness. In this example, the choice of style was probably most important for its

European associations. The library had European models and was linked to both English and German models of educational institutions.

The overall effect of the finished library seems to be modest when compared to its importance as the first public library in the U.S., and there are probably a few reasons for this. First, the trustees, librarian, and architect did not have a model for the library's design. Although there were other libraries in the U.S., none of them was public. The models that Cogswell and Astor discussed were European museums, and they provided an envelope into which the library's program was placed. Second, Astor did not leave enough money to construct a grand edifice. The trustees had to rework Saeltzer's original design for the library so that it could be constructed within the amount stipulated. They had to use brick instead of marble, which instantly changed the appearance of the building. And, third, perhaps it was not the right time in the city for a grand building. Class tension was evident from the Astor Place riot, and the trustees did not want their new institution to add fuel to this conflict.

The Astor Library is a necessary starting point because it is the first, but architects did not copy it. Instead they embraced neoclassical styles for public libraries in the city. Cogswell, the library's earliest and strongest advocate, found the building to be visually meager in contrast to its neighbors. In Town and Dakin's design for New York University, they also used neoclassical form, in hopes of elevating the status of the university. Visually these buildings were similar to European models, whereas the brick of the Astor Library made it similar to smaller scaled domestic townhouses in the neighborhood. In a way, the Astor Library served as an example of what *not* to do in

public library design. It was too small and too plain; its architecture alone did not give it special status, and this was something that future architects looked to do.

Soon after its completion the trustees determined that the Astor Library was too small. In 1856, William Backhouse Astor purchased the two adjoining lots to the Astor Library for $30,476.[206] A first addition to the library was completed in 1859. It cost $150,000, exclusive of the land, and increased the space available for volumes in the library to 200,000. A second addition was built in 1881 at a cost of $200,000, which added 150,000 volumes for a total of 350,000.[207]

Another concern about the Astor Library was that it did not meet the needs of the public. In an article written by Frank H. Norton in 1869 he discussed the library's users:

> The readers in the library are thus made up, as may be seen, of two-thirds idlers to one-third workers. Of these many are persons in no employment, who have been regular visitors for year; others are boys, who go there for their daily *pabulum* of "Punch" and the "Illustrated News," or Marryat's Novels; others again are ladies who pass away an idle hour in glancing through the "Musée Royale," or some other illustrated work. You don't find the mechanic, the clerk, or the laboring man here, or if he is here, he is seedy, out-at-elbows, and out of a situation.[208]

For Norton it seems that the public did not meet the expectations of the press. When the library was opened the press, as well as the library's creators, assumed that the public would come to the library in order to access material that would improve their contribution to the public good. As evidenced by Norton's observation, many users of the library used it to access reading material that did not meet the above-stated function. Instead, what Norton considered a significant number of readers—especially the

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[206]"The Astor Library," *New York Times*, January 30, 1856.

[207] Thomas Stent was the architect for the second addition. "Enlarging the Astor Library," *New York Times* January 16, 1880.

[208]Norton, "The Astor Library", 537.

unemployed—used the library for consuming reading material that he deemed to be merely entertaining: illustrated newspapers, novels, and other lighter fare.

The Astor Library was not a substitute for the private subscription library, it was an institution that accepted all comers regardless of their social class, as Norton confirms. Although Saeltzer did not succeed in creating an architectural type for the public library, the Astor Library did become a model for a public library that would be used by all New Yorkers.

Chapter 3: "The most monumental public building in New York," a "Book Museum": Hunt's Lenox Library

The creation of the Astor Library in the 1850s spurred the founding of many new public institutions—the Boston Public Library, for example—and it became a model for public giving. It was less important, however, as a model for subsequent library architecture. Americans associated the Romanesque Revival style with religious architecture, and by the time of the Civil War it had fallen out of favor. Almost twenty years after the design competition for the Astor Library, another philanthropist, James Lenox, decided to follow Astor's path and create a public library of his own. For his library he selected a very different architectural style, one that emulated French neoclassicism as interpreted by the American architect Richard Morris Hunt.

Hunt succeeded where Saeltzer failed and designed a monumental building for the Lenox Library. He achieved this through the use of neoclassical architectural forms and marble exterior. Although the Astor Library was physically much larger than the Lenox Library, its size did not give it a monumental appearance. Monumentality was not just a function of size, it also required an architectural vocabulary that was understood as such. Much like the Astor Library, the Lenox Library did not provide a usable type for future library buildings. But it was monumental because of its classicized style.

By the 1870s New York's population had grown to more than one million people. Streets were paved up to Forty-fourth Street and residential building had crept even farther north, to Fifty-ninth Street. In addition to the Astor Library, the city now had other cultural institutions, among them the National Academy of Design and the

Academy of Music. The city was also giving land to hospitals, museums, and other cultural organizations in hopes of developing the city north of Forty-second Street. Although Boston and Philadelphia rivaled New York in terms of cultural significance, New York was quickly coming into its own. Its economic life, which had been hampered by the Civil War, quickly resumed at the end of the war through increased trading with the West via the railroad. The completion of Union Pacific Railroad's transcontinental line in 1869 finally provided New York with a fast connection to the West coast.[209]

Under the direction of the Democratic party boss William "Boss" Tweed (1823-1878) the east side of Manhattan was developed. The East Side Association, formed in 1868, encouraged building from Fifty-ninth to One-hundred-tenth streets. The association promoted the construction of housing for working-class families along the north-south avenues, brownstones and tenements along the east-west streets, and mansions for the wealthy on Fifth Avenue.[210] James Lenox owned a thirty-acre farm in this area on which he would build the Lenox Library and New York Presbyterian Hospital.

Located on Fifth Avenue between Seventieth and Seventy-first streets, the Lenox Library, designed by Richard Morris Hunt, was once considered one of New York City's finest institutions (fig 2). In 1895 the architectural historian Montgomery Schuyler wrote:

> The Lenox Library is almost alone among Mr. Hunt's buildings of this period in presenting a solution of an important architectural problem, which is at once academic and individual, and which combines animation

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[209]Landau and Condit, *Rise of the New York Skyscraper*, 2-3. Burrows and Wallace, *Gotham*, 929, 958. Robert A. M. Stern, et al., *New York, 1880* (New York: The Montacelli Press, 1999), 14.

[210]For more on Tweed and his association with Tammany Hall, see Burrows and Wallace, *Gotham*, 929-30.

> with dignity. It is a very simple composition … it evinces no straining for novelty or for effect…. Doubtless the architect was fortunate in his problem and his client … insomuch that he has produced perhaps the most monumental public building in New York—certainly one of the chief ornaments and architectural possessions of the city.[211]

Hunt commenced design on the building in 1870 and construction was completed in 1877. During the design phase his office prepared more than forty renderings of the library. It was a public institution, endowed by a private donor whose intent was to display his bibliographic and artistic collections. As a building whose function was to display rarities and to make these objects available for scholarly study, the Lenox Library was more like a museum or art gallery where visitors could not handle the objects.

Like the Astor Library, a wealthy individual endowed the Lenox Library, but that is where the similarities end. Lenox intended his library to house his personal collection of rare books, manuscripts, maps, and art, whereas the Astor Library collection was assembled through purchases made by its superintendent, Cogswell. Furthermore, the buildings were designed in different styles. Hunt used a classical, neo-Grec architectural vocabulary for the Lenox Library, whereas Saeltzer adopted a Romanesque Revival one for the Astor Library. Hunt's selection of a neoclassical style demonstrated a move away from the romantic revival styles of the first half of the nineteenth century toward the Beaux-Arts-inspired style of the American Renaissance. Moreover, it reflected not only a difference between the architects and their times, but also a refinement in the role of the public library as the embodiment of culture for a select audience. Although it was considered a public library, the Lenox Library was not an institution that served a large, diverse population. Lenox collected rare books and artwork that did not appeal to the average New Yorker. Moreover, the library's hours were limited so that those who were

[211]Montgomery Schuyler, "The Late Works of Richard Morris Hunt," *Architectural Record* 5 (1895): 112.

interested in the collection often found it sitting behind locked doors. By way of contrast, the Astor Library had less restrictive hours and it attracted a larger group of users. These users, however, did not in large part consult the reading materials thought by the creators of Astor Library to be most uplifting. Instead most consulted popular magazines and read novels.

In comparison to the Astor Library, for which few original architectural drawings survive, a large collection of drawings for the Lenox Library exists—among them forty-two drawings at the Octagon Museum in Washington, D.C., and eleven at the New York Public Library.[212] Unfortunately, neither Hunt nor Lenox left any letters or day books associated with the project, so Hunt's design process must be gleaned from the drawings he left. He used drawing—in particular the method taught at the École des Beaux-Arts—as a means to consider and develop his design for the library. From his earliest sketch to his final design Hunt maintained a distinct plan and massing, or *parti*, of his design. His preliminary drawings show that he considered a variety of classical motifs before employing a flat neo-Grec vocabulary for the final design.

There is little evidence of Lenox's desires with respect to the design of his library. He was a private man who never married, and his papers consist of business rather than personal letters. Born on August 19, 1800, in New York City, James was the son of Robert Lenox, a Scottish immigrant and wealthy merchant who owned property throughout the city—most notably his purchase, in either 1817 or early 1818, of a thirty-acre farm bounded by Sixty-eighth and Seventy-fourth streets and Fourth (now Park) and Fifth avenues. This land was the primary source of James's wealth, and he used a parcel

[212]Prints and Drawings Collection, The Octagon Museum, The American Architectural Foundation, Washington, D.C.; and Lenox Library Records, The New York Public Library Archives, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.

of it for his library. According to the *New York Times* in 1878, this land without "a brick on it" was worth $8 million.[213] James joined his father in business until Robert's death in December 1839, after which, in 1840, James closed the family business and retired, giving "his attention to his estate, to collecting books and objects of art, and to an extensive but unobtrusive participation in the charitable and religious work of the city."[214] He was a founding member of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. A devout Presbyterian, he endowed the Presbyterian Hospital in New York City and the New Seminary Library at Princeton Theological Seminary in Princeton, New Jersey (1879). He was also the president of the American Bible Society from 1864 to 1872.[215]

Lenox had a longstanding interest in both book collecting and American history. Lenox's book collecting may have had its roots in his faith and his desire to acquire copies of the Bible. In 1858 he contributed to the publication fund of The New-York Historical Society, which published books on American history. In exchange for the purchase of 1,000 shares of the fund, Lenox was entitled to a copy of every publication produced by the Society. The publications were limited in number intentionally, to ensure that they would become rare books.[216] Lenox became a member of the Redwood Library in Newport, Rhode Island in 1858 when shares of the library's stock became

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[213]The land was purchased for $7,000. *New York Times*, December 26, 1878.

[214]Lydenberg, *History of the New York Public Library*, 95.

[215]The American Bible Society was founded in 1816 with the purpose of making a Bible available to every American.

[216]Lenox Library Records, The New York Public Library Archives, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations, Box 4.

available.[217] The purchase of these shares contributed to the addition to the library designed by George Snell (1820-1893) of Boston and completed in 1859. From this point on Lenox made periodic donations of books and paintings to the library. In 1864, for example, he donated nearly 200 volumes and eleven pamphlets to the library with the following conditions: the books must be marked with his name on the inside; they were to be non-circulating; and they must remain together, which required a new bookcase to be constructed.[218] Lenox spent his summers in Newport, so he would have been familiar with the Redwood Library's Palladian design. Beyond its neoclassical character, however, its architecture had little impact on Hunt's design for the Lenox Library.

Lenox's personal collection of rare books and artworks was known throughout New York City. Few, however, were given access to it. In 1874 the *New York Times* reported:

> Here and there in New York are men, principally dealers, who have been allowed to walk hurriedly through the rooms [of Lenox's house] … They report that the value of the collection is in the English pictures, that there are Turners, Eggs, Ettys, Stansfields, Maclists, Mulreadys, Lees, Creswicks, Copes, Leslies, Boxails, Eastlakes, Landseers, and others of that time, less celebrated, from which we may conjecture that the majority of the purchases were made between 1835 and 1845.[219]

Henry Stevens (1819-1886), who wrote the only biography of Lenox published in 1887, stated that Lenox would not allow readers to come to his home to use his books. If a scholar wanted to review an item in Lenox's collection, Lenox would bring it to the Astor Library and allow the reader to use it there.[220] Stevens became Lenox's book agent

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[217]King, *An Historical Sketch*, 18.

[218]Lenox Library Records, The New York Public Library Archives, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations, Box 4.

[219]"The Lenox Library," *New York Times*, April 12, 1874, 9.

around 1846 and eventually catalogued the man's collection at his home in New York City. Overall, Stevens revealed few personal details about his subject, choosing to write Lenox's life story in terms of the books he purchased.

Stevens was born in Barret, Vermont, on August 24, 1819. In 1834 he studied at the Newbury Seminary in Vermont, then in 1838 went first to New Hampshire Academy in May and then to Middlebury College, in October. In 1840 Stevens went to Washington, D.C., to be a clerk in the U.S. Treasury Department. During his tenure in Washington, he transferred to clerk in the U.S. Senate before he returned to school, at Yale, where he received his baccalaureate in 1843. The following year Stevens went to Harvard to study law, and there became interested in books and libraries. In July 1845 he traveled to England to start a book business, purchasing books for the Library of Congress and the newly founded Smithsonian Institute, among other institutions.[221] Lenox became a customer of Stevens in 1846, although they did not actually meet until the autumn of 1847.

While in England Stevens worked under Antonio Panizzi (1797-1879), one of the most important librarians at the British Museum.[222] Panizzi wanted the museum library to have a complete collection of books printed since 1800. In January 1845 Panizzi completed a survey of the library to determine the gaps in the museum's collection. He submitted his report to the trustees of the museum and requested an annual grant to support the library's needs:

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[220]"Mr. Lenox," MS, 17 April 1935. Lenox Library Records, The New York Public Library Archives, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations, Box 2.

[221]Henry Stevens, *Recollections of James Lenox and the Formation of His Library* (New York: New York Public Library, 1951), xix-xx.

[222]For more information on Panizzi, see Arundell Esdaile, *The British Museum Library* (1946; repr., Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1979).

> The expense requisite for accomplishing what is here suggested that is for forming in a few years a public library containing from six to seven hundred thousand printed volumes, giving the necessary means of information on all branches of human learning from all countries, in all languages, properly arranged, substantially and well bound, minutely and fully catalogued, easily accessible and yet safely preserved, capable for some years of keeping pace with the increase of human knowledge—will no doubt be great; but so is the nation which is to bear it.[223]

Panizzi received a grant of £10,000 from the Chancellor of the Exchequer on November 29, 1845, which was renewed annually for fifty years.

Panizzi hired Stevens in 1845 to assess the library's deficiencies in American literature. Stevens claimed to have had a similar arrangement with the Bodleian Library in Oxford.[224] During the course of their written correspondence, Lenox requested information from Stevens regarding the rules and regulations of the British Museum Library. Stevens responded in a letter dated February 14, 1870. From this letter it is reasonable to conclude that Lenox was looking to Stevens for advice not only on his book collection, but also on the operation of a research library. In his correspondence with Lenox, Stevens continually referred to Harvard Library as a model. Cogswell had organized that library and used it in his planning for the Astor Library. In particular he maintained the alcove system of separating books by subject. Although this was not a unique way in which to organize a library collection, Stevens and Lenox were probably influenced by it, and in this way the Astor Library may have served as a model for their approach to book collecting.

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[223]Esdaile, *British Museum Library*, 102.

[224]Henry Stevens to James Lenox, November 14, 1846; Lenox Library Records, The New York Public Library Archives, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.

When it was completed, the Lenox Library contained 20,000 volumes (less than one-tenth the size of the Astor Library), most of which were rare books.[225] The collection contained early books of voyages and travels, collections of Shakespeare, Milton, Bunyan, and a variety of manuscripts and works of art. The library also contained more than 4,000 copies of the Bible in all languages, including more than 2,400 English editions, as well as an almost complete collection of books on the Americas printed between 1493 and 1700. Once established, the library did not pursue an active purchasing policy, although several gifts, such as the Astoin books on French literature and the Duyckink collection of English and American literature, helped to widen the scope of Lenox's original collection.[226]

Like much of his personal life, little is known of Lenox's relationship with Hunt. According to Hunt's biographer, Paul Baker, Lenox met Hunt in 1867. They became good friends, visiting each other both in New York City and in Newport, Rhode Island.[227] According to Stevens, Lenox began to suffer from ill health in 1869 and became concerned about the fate of his collections; perhaps he began talking to Hunt about his library at this time.[228] One of the earliest sketches of the Lenox Library (fig. 29) is on Hunt's office paper (preprinted with the partial date "186_"), and in a letter dated January 3, 1870, Lenox hired Hunt to design his library.[229]

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[225]Dain, *New York Public Library*, 11.

[226]Description of the Lenox collection, ibid., 11-12.

[227]Baker, *Richard Morris Hunt*, 177.

[228]In 1869 Hunt began design work for New York Presbyterian Hospital, which was also financed by Lenox. Henry Stevens, *Recollections of James Lenox of New York and the Formation of His Library* (London: Henry Stevens & Sons, 1887), 190.

Hunt was particularly suited to tackle the design of a library in the U.S. He was born in Brattleboro, Vermont, on October 31, 1827, the fourth of five children and brother to the painter William Morris Hunt (1824-1879), who was three-and-a-half years his senior. Hunt's father served in the House of Representatives until he died suddenly from cholera in 1832, leaving his wife, Jane Maria née Leavitt (1801-1877), in charge of the family. In 1843, as a result of William's persistent cough, the Hunt family moved to Europe, where they traveled extensively. In May 1844 Richard enrolled in a boys' academy in Geneva. During this year he studied architectural drawing with Samuel Darier—a Beaux-Arts trained architect. The following year Richard visited his mother in Paris and began preparing for his entrance exams to the École des Beaux-Arts, the premier institution for architectural education in France and beyond.[230]

Any man between the ages of fifteen and thirty who passed the requisite entrance exams could attend the École.[231] Hunt was the first student to be admitted from the United States. Although students did not pay tuition at the École, they were required to belong to an atelier, or an architect's studio, associated with the school. In the atelier students gained a practical education in architecture and prepared the drawings necessary for completion of their education. There was no comparable institution in the United States, and until the first professional department of architecture was created at MIT in

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[229]James Lenox to Richard Morris Hunt, January 3, 1870, Lenox Library Records, The New York Public Library Archives, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations, Box 4. The Act of Library incorporation is January 20, 1870, Lyndenberg, *History of the New York Public Library*, 99.

[230]A history of Richard Morris Hunt and his family can be found in Baker, *Richard Morris Hunt*, 1-25. See also Sally Webster, *William Morris Hunt, 1824-1879* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

[231]Baker, *Richard Morris Hunt*, 29.

1865, American architects were trained in architectural offices as apprentices. This method of training continued well into the twentieth century.[232]

The École des Beaux-Arts admitted Richard Morris Hunt as a member of the second class, the lower of two classes, on December 11, 1846.[233] Training emphasized monumental, public commissions, such as theaters, museums, and other civic institutions. In France the government (not private individuals as in the United States) financed the most prestigious projects, and the official taste leaned toward the Roman Classical tradition. To be awarded a government commission was the mark of success in France, and the École stressed the government's preferred style. Hunt's patron, Hector Martin Lefuel (1810-1880), whose most notable commission was an addition to the Louvre, was one such example of a successful French architect.

At the École students did not take classes in architecture, although they did attend lectures on various topics; instead they participated in a series of competitions, or *concours*. The way in which the competitions were organized underscored the importance of the *parti*, or the scheme of a building's organization, to a successful Beaux-Arts design. Students were given the *programme* for the *concours*, which included the general nature of the building, its size, and its location. The students then were given a set amount of time to draw their *esquisse*, or initial sketch of the project. In the *esquisse* the student established the *parti* through the drawing of a plan, section, and elevation. At the end of the given time, usually twelve hours, the students turned in their *esquisses* to be judged. Depending on the competition, the students were allowed to

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[232]Arthur Drexler, *The Architecture of the École des Beaux-Arts* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1977); Donald Drew Egbert, *The Beaux-Arts Tradition in French Architecture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980).

[233]Baker, *Richard Morris Hunt*, 30.

participate in a second phase of design. In this phase, often called an *étude*, the students elaborated their original *esquisse* and more fully developed the architectural details of their *parti*. In order for their final design to win the competition, students had to maintain the same *parti* they had developed in the initial phase, or they were judged *hors concours* and received no credit for the exercise.[234]

In the Beaux-Arts method, the *parti* was the generative idea for the design. In most *concours* there were only a few acceptable *parti*; these were then elaborated as the student worked out all of the details. Nineteenth-century French architectural theory insisted on the primacy of the plan, and Beaux-Arts composition emphasized large-scale form over historically correct detailing; in this sense it can be said that a Beaux-Arts building was designed from the inside out.[235] In an examination of Hunt's drawings for the Lenox Library one can see his adherence to this method. He determined a *parti* with a U-shaped plan and three-story massing at the very beginning of the project and he rarely, if ever, deviated from this original idea.

Under Lefuel's patronage, Hunt became the Fourth Inspector for the Pavilion Bibliothèque at the Louvre (fig. 30). Hunt claimed that he designed this pavilion, although this would have been most unusual for an architect of his age and experience; more likely he supervised construction and possibly designed some of the architectural details. The ornate detailing, while classically inspired, was more sculptural and decorated than Hunt's own work, especially his early commissions.

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[234]For a more thorough discussion of the École and its history, see Richard Chafee, "The Teaching of Architecture at the École des Beaux-Arts," in Drexler, *Architecture of the École des Beaux-Arts*, 60-109.

[235]Drexler, *Architecture of the École des Beaux-Arts*, 27. David Van Zanten, *Designing Paris: The Architecture of Duban, Labrouste, Duc, and Vaudoyer* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1987), 132-33; Van Zanten, "Architectural Composition," in Drexler, *Architecture of the École des Beaux-Arts,* 185.

In September 1855 Hunt returned to the United States to practice architecture. He initially went to Boston, but settled permanently in New York. One of his first commissions was the Tenth Street Studio building (1857-58; fig. 31), which was one of the first buildings to combine gallery, studio, and living accommodations to satisfy the needs of artists. In 1858 Hunt moved his own studio there. Due to the prominence of the Tenth Street Studios as a center of artistic life in New York City, Hunt was immediately connected to the city's artistic community, which elevated his status as an architect.[236]

Hunt and his brother William were interested in art education in the U.S. They even contemplated starting an academy. To this end Hunt collected art objects, architectural books, and photographs—all of which he made available to his pupils. He modeled his studio on the French atelier, and every month gave his students a major and minor problem to solve. He also assigned reading and considered good drawing to be fundamental to architectural design. Hunt emphasized classicism in his teaching reasoning that its proportions provided the basis for all design.[237]

Hunt's office contrasted with those of the early nineteenth century. Richard Upjohn's office provided an example of an office based on the apprentice system. Like Hunt, Upjohn kept his office small so that he could supervise his staff and have a hand in all aspects of the practice from design through construction. He also kept a library of

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[236]Baker, *Richard Morris Hunt*, 61, 66. Sarah Bradford Landau, "Richard Morris Hunt: Architectural Innovator and Father of a 'Distinctive American School,'" in Stein, *Architecture of Richard Morris Hunt*, 49.

[237]Hunt's students included Henry Van Brunt, Charles Gambrill, Frank Furness, William R. Ware and George B. Post. Ware, his most influential student, founded the architectural schools at MIT and Columbia. He often cited the importance of his study with Hunt in his later work as an educator. Paul R. Baker, "Richard Morris Hunt," in Stein, *Architecture of Richard Morris Hunt*, 5. Baker, *Richard Morris Hunt*, 98,100, 102.

architectural books. Upjohn's library was smaller than Hunt's. Upjohn's library contained more than 3,000 volumes, including books on Gothic architecture, a copy of Palladio, Ruskin's *Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849), and books on English domestic architecture. Upjohn typically signed all of his drawings, even when he did not execute them. Like Latrobe before him, Upjohn advocated that architects be paid whether or not their designs were built and that all architectural drawings remain the property of the architect. He fought for the right of the architect to be recognized as a professional, and helped to found the American Institute of Architects in 1857.[238]

In 1860 Hunt was sent to Newport under doctor's orders to recover from dysentery, which he probably caught while working on a project in Providence, Rhode Island. During this trip he met Catherine Clinton Howland (1841-1909), the daughter of Joanna Esther Hone and the niece of both Philip Hone, a former mayor of New York, and Samuel Shaw Howland, a successful New York merchant who worked with John Jacob Astor. The couple married on April 2, 1861, and Hunt became part of New York City's upper class.[239]

In the earliest sketch for the Lenox Library (fig. 29), which Hunt executed in either late 1869 or early 1870, he developed his *parti*. Although Hunt probably did not study Durand's *Précis des leçons d'architecture données à l'École Polytechnique* (1802-5), it had been influential at the École des Beaux-Arts for many years. In this text Durand described and illustrated specific building types, including libraries and museums. He presented generic combinations of architectural features that had been

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[238]Judith S. Hull, "School of Upjohn", 281-306.

[239]Baker, Richard Morris Hunt, 124-25.

incorporated into buildings to serve a specific function. According to Durand's method these buildings were then embellished with features that represented the appropriate architectural style, or character, of the project. Thus there were two steps to using architectural types: the first was to develop the *parti* of the project; the second was to decorate it in such a way that the building made sense for its time and place.[240]

In Hunt's earliest sketches for the Lenox Library he adhered to this method. He drew an H-shaped plan over which he sketched some arched openings and freestanding sculptures. In this plan Hunt designated the major axis of his composition parallel to Fifth Avenue. In some of his early plans, Hunt placed art galleries along this axis, an indication that he emphasized the gallery functions of the building over those of the library. He drew a central entry area that was recessed from the elevation of the façade, giving the appearance of pavilions at the corner of his building. The use of pavilions in his design recalls the architecture of the Louvre, which he worked on as a student, and gives the building a French appearance.

Like other major government buildings in Paris, the Louvre had a piecemeal construction history. Pierre Lescot (1505/15-1578) designed the Square Court for the palace between 1546 and 1551, and although this court was slightly less well known than the east façade (1667-70)—designed by Louis Le Vau (1612-1670), the painter Charles Le Brun (1619-1690), and Claude Perrault (1613-1688)—it was where Lefuel added to the complex. In his trips to Paris during the 1860s, Hunt monitored Lefuel's progress on the design. The pavilions Lefuel designed projected from the palace both from the

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[240]Jean-Nicolas-Louis Durand, *Précis of the Lectures on Architecture*, trans. David Britt (1802-5; reprint, Los Angeles: The Getty Research Institute, 2000), 21-22.

roofline and from the courtyard wall. Hunt's Lenox Library designs, while more restrained than Lefuel's, mimic this massing of pavilion and courtyard wall.[241]

The building Hunt sketched on the right of this drawing shows a massive building having three stories at its center and two-story pavilions at its corners. It is similar to Lefuel's massing at the Louvre. The difference between the two designs is that Hunt was more restrained in his use of architectural detailing, whereas Lefuel used a classical style that was more in keeping with the Baroque. Hunt gave the library Roman detailing, which indicated his interest in creating a richly decorated, neoclassical building. He drew an arcade on the ground level and incorporated thermae windows on the top level. He further developed this plan in subsequent drawings.

Hunt's initial sketch bore little resemblance to Durand's design for a library (fig. 32). Durand's library type was circular in plan, with corridors radiating from the center like spokes. In his accompanying text Durand emphasized the importance of maintaining a library's collection.[242] To this end the collection had to be protected from fire and theft. In his opinion, the building had to be constructed of stone and the librarian should be placed at its center so that the activity in the reading rooms could be monitored (this form is somewhat reminiscent of Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon). It is probable that Hunt did not explore the possibility of a circular-plan building for many reasons: first, the size of the site made this almost impossible; and second, the rectilinear nature of Manhattan's grid system would be at odds with a circular plan building. It is also likely that Hunt did

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[241]David Van Zanten, "The Lenox Library: What Hunt Did and Did Not Learn in France," in Stein, *Architecture of Richard Morris Hunt*, 99-100.

[242]Durand, *Précis*, 160.

not use this approach in any of his designs, because he thought of the building as a museum or art gallery, which in Durand's text had a rectangular plan.

Much like a library, a museum was also intended to house a collection containing a wide variety of objects, and Lenox's collection of books and art fits this description. Durand's design for a museum was square in plan and had a rotunda at the center (fig. 33). There were galleries on the perimeter of the plan as well as crossing through the center. In *Précis* Durand wrote that this arrangement met the needs of the museum, which were similar to those of the library, but allowed for a greater number of entrances because the building would house different groups of objects, such as paintings and sculpture. Because artworks are not as portable as books, it was unlikely they would be stolen. The need for a librarian to control access to the space was not represented in Durand's museum type, whose variety of corridors and rooms allowed for different spaces that could be used to highlight a diverse collection of objects, such as that accumulated by Lenox. Hunt's sketch for the library could be modeled on one of the galleries of Durand's art museum. Hunt and Lenox may have been thinking about an art gallery because both were collectors, and Lenox would have known Hunt's earlier art gallery design at the Tenth Street Studios.

American libraries, as we have already seen, usually contained objects other than books. The Library Company of Philadelphia had glass tubes from Franklin's experiments on electricity. The Redwood Library had paintings, busts, photographs, and scientific instruments. Most others had maps and drawings. Painting, sculpture, and

architectural casts were often incorporated to add to the overall educational mission of the library.[243]

Hunt refined his idea of the library in a series of five drawings dated March 14, 1870: first floor plan (80.6035; fig. 34), second floor plan (80.6031), two north-south sections (80.6033 and 80.6034; fig. 35), and façade (80.6032; fig. 36). These drawings were done in ink with watercolor wash and had a high degree of finish, indicating that they were probably shown to the client. They were executed on heavy, blue-toned paper but they were not presentation renderings. The stair hall section, or drawing 80.6034, was the only one of this set was dated with the architect's stamp. According to Hunt's notes on the plans, the library's spaces included a reading room, sculpture gallery, and rare book room, as well as engravings, medals, "pictures" (presumably paintings), Etruscan vases, and bronzes. Like Durand's museum and early American society libraries, the building housed a collection of great variety.

Of the two plans, only one (80.6035; fig. 34), for the first floor, will be illustrated, although both will be discussed. In Hunt's design the north pavilion was reserved for a reading room, and had book alcoves. A dome covered the central area labeled "reading room," and three library tables were added in pencil in this room. Library tables were also indicated in the alcove spaces. Lenox's collection was non-circulating, so there were no areas for book delivery or stacks. Two small rooms connected the reading room to the central portion of the building and were labeled, from east to west, "Librarians' Room" and "vestibule."

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[243]Franklin, *Autobiography*, 242. For a catalogue of pictures and busts in the Redwood Library, see King, *Historical Sketch*, 50-53. Jefferson, *Notes*, 149.

The central block of the building had a stair hall in the rear, a grand vestibule in the center, and a sculpture gallery at the front, or Fifth Avenue side, of the building. The grand vestibule along with the domed reading room and library created the principal north-south axis of the building. The south hyphen contained the janitor's rooms and another vestibule. The south pavilion was similar in organization to the north. There were four alcoves for books and a reading desk each in the east and west rooms. The central area was surmounted by a dome and is labeled "library."

The use of an axis to organize a building or to emphasize a particular path of circulation was a hallmark of Beaux-Arts design. Hunt did not place his principal entrance in the center of the Fifth Avenue façade; rather, he created two smaller entrances that brought the visitor into a vestibule before he or she reached the main axis parallel to Fifth Avenue. It is unclear why Hunt made this particular decision. It is likely that he was using the main axis to connect the building with the city grid. Unlike later libraries, such as McKim, Mead and White's Boston Public Library, the building does not have a grand entry sequence, emphasizing its galleries and relationship to Fifth Avenue. The building's relationship to Fifth Avenue was particularly important because it was being developed concurrently as a domestic avenue lined with grand mansions. Lenox and Hunt would not have wanted these buildings to overshadow their library, like La Grange Terrace did to the Astor Library. They would also have wanted the library to stand apart from its neighbors. The decision to place the library's façade back from the street line, and to incorporate a forecourt in the building, helped to achieve this.

The second-story plan (80.6031) was more elaborate in its details, presumably because it was exclusively for the display of art, not books. The northern rooms, from

top to bottom, were labeled: “rare books”; “engravings, etc.”; and “medals, etc.” The rare books and medal rooms were mirror images of each other. Each had a groin-vaulted ceiling with a dome and a light at the center, similar to John Soane’s (1753-1837) designs for his own house at Lincoln Inn Fields, London (1812-13). A dome covered the central room, labeled “engravings,” and the connecting area was covered by a series of groin vaults.

The central area from east to west was marked: “Grand Staircase Hall 20' x 74'; Skylight Picture Gallery 32' x 74'; Etruscan Vases Bronzes, etc.” The Grand Stair Hall and the Etruscan Hall each had a groin-vaulted ceiling. In the stair hall, the stairs rose from the outer edges of the room and met at a central landing then switched back to join the upper floors. The skylight picture gallery had a central, double-height, rectangular area that was higher than the flanking pavilions. Its grandeur corresponded to its function as a display area. The southern rooms were collectively labeled “Sidelight picture gallery,” and were a mirror image of the northern pavilion.

The plan is similar to the entrance hall in Hunt’s 1895 design for the Metropolitan Museum of Art (fig. 37), the length of which was also parallel to Fifth Avenue. This was a change from Calvert Vaux’s 1871 museum, which was perpendicular to Fifth Avenue and more directly addressed Central Park. Hunt’s design turned its back on the park and embraced the city streets. In his design for the museum, Hunt’s entry hall, like the Lenox Library, also had three central spaces flanked by two pavilions. The use of a triumphal arch motif at the Metropolitan Museum definitely differs from Hunt’s elevation at the

library but both of these buildings address Fifth Avenue as the major axis within the city.[244]

The sections were the most elaborate drawings of the group, and included renderings of the furnishings and interior decoration. There were two north-south sections, one through the stair hall (80.6034; fig. 35) and the other through the central gallery (80.6033). This north-south section through the stair hall illustrated the stairs and landing that dominated the central area of the building. Bookcases filled the ground floor pavilions and the secondary spaces had niches that contained sculpture. The upper floor had paintings on the gallery walls and a richly painted ceiling. In this drawing the pavilions had walls on the lower level with windows above. Hunt's drawings showed a sumptuous interior and highlighted his interest in depicting a variety of materials and surfaces. In his rendering of the second floor, Hunt incorporated details such as color on the walls and many of the paintings. In the south gallery he drew heavy curtains to separate the space into three rooms. Paneled doors divided these same spaces in the north gallery. Four columns, each surmounted by an eagle, divided the central gallery. The curved ceiling allowed light to enter the upper-story windows, similar to a clerestory. In his drawing the interior was filled with objects and ornate drapery, providing a sharp contrast to the more austere exterior.

The façade rendering (fig. 36) recalled Hunt's earliest known preliminary sketch, but he had changed its form, reducing the overall size of the structure. Hunt also reduced the size of the north and south pavilions from three stories to two. He kept the central portion of the building three-stories tall. This area included the sculpture gallery, grand

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[244]Carrère and Hastings also used the triumphal arch motif in their entrance for the New York Public Library, and although it is located on two miles south on Fifth Avenue it addressed the city in a similar manner.

vestibule, stair hall, and second-floor painting galleries. The uppermost level of the central block was a clerestory that lit the picture gallery below. The prominence given to this space both internally and externally was significant in that the space was not for books. Lenox's books—the supposed reason for the building—were located in the pavilions, which at least in their architectural representation, were spaces of secondary importance. This particular design confirmed that for Hunt and Lenox the building's use as a library was subordinate to its display of art and objects.

Hunt's choice of a neoclassical vocabulary was clear from the very beginning of the design process. There were no sketches of romantic revival styles such as High Victorian Gothic or Romanesque Revival. It is not known whether Lenox encouraged the pursuit of a more classical design or whether Hunt himself preferred it. One possible reason for Hunt's design was that he was concurrently working on the Presbyterian Hospital (1869-72; fig. 38), also endowed by Lenox, for which he employed a High Victorian Gothic style. The two projects were located on adjoining blocks, the hospital on Seventy-first Street between Madison and Fourth avenues and the library between Seventy and Seventy-first streets and Fifth Avenue. It is possible that because the two institutions were being designed by the same architect and were endowed by the same philanthropist it was necessary to distinguish the two architecturally in order to give each its own identity. Also the hospital was not on Fifth Avenue, which seemed to have particular importance to Hunt in his conception of the *parti* of the Lenox Library.

In her article "Richard Morris Hunt: Architectural Innovator and Father of a Distinctive American School," Sarah Landau stated that during 1860s High Victorian Gothic was the preferred style for cultural and institutional commissions in New York

City. She argued that this preference accounted for Hunt's lack of public commissions during that decade, along with the general economic downturn at the end of the Civil War. Hunt attempted to incorporate High Victorian Gothic in designs for the National Academy of Design, the New-York Historical Society Museum, and the Brooklyn Mercantile Library, but was unsuccessful. Landau noted that even though Hunt worked in the High Victorian Gothic mode, the classical tradition he absorbed in France was always present in his work. After his 1867 trip to France, Hunt's designs changed, and he reintroduced elements of the neo-Grec into his work. Designs for the Yale Divinity School, Stuyvesant Apartments, and the Lenox Library reflect this change in Hunt's architecture.[245]

In addition to Roman classical features such as thermae windows and an arcade at the entrance, Hunt also included on his façade areas for sculpture, both relief and in the round. The words "Architecture," "Sculpture," and "Painting" were inscribed on panels above the second-story windows. The second story also had niches for sculpture as well as figures atop the columns at this level. There was a relief frieze on the third level, below the windows. The exact nature of the sculptural program is unknown, and there are no notations designating a particular subject or sculptor for the project. This choice of external decoration hinted at the later architectural developments of the American Renaissance, wherein sculpture and painting were integrated into the design of public building.

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[245]Landau, "Richard Morris Hunt: Architectural Innovator and Father of a Distinctive American School," in Stein, *Architecture of Richard Morris Hunt*, 47-77.

Hunt also included inscribed relief panels under the second-story pavilion windows. The combination of these elements, the carved panels and windows, recalls Henri Labrouste's Bibliothèque Ste.-Genevieve (completed 1851; fig. 39), which Hunt certainly would have known from his study at the École in Paris. The similarity between the two buildings ends with this detail. Not only do the two buildings have different plans, but Hunt's façade had a higher level of sculptural detail, giving it a sense of three-dimensionality not seen in Labrouste's building. Labrouste created a façade that was a taut skin, whereas Hunt drew one that had multiple planes.

Henri Labrouste's Bibliothèque Ste.-Genevieve is widely considered the purest example of neo-Grec design. Labrouste, along with Félix Duban (1797-1870), Léon Vaudoyer (1803-1872), and Louis Duc (1802-1879) formed a group of students at the École who won the Prix de Rome in successive years during the 1820s. This group considered classical architecture in a radical way. They no longer saw classical architectural features as parts of an unbreakable whole, appropriate only for a specific building type; rather, they considered such features to be parts that could be manipulated and adapted to any building. This radical approach to classicism allowed these architects the freedom to design new building types. Labrouste used this methodology for the Bibliothèque Ste.-Genevieve.[246]

Because of its prominence and its proximity to the École des Beaux-Arts, Labrouste's library was certainly known to Hunt.[247] Nonetheless, the Lenox Library elevations were more plastic and sculpted than those of the Bibliothèque Ste.-Genevieve. Again, Hunt was probably not copying the French design but rather reinterpreting the

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[246]Van Zanten, *Designing Paris*, 176-223.

[247]Duban's design for the École des Beaux-Arts was also an example of neo-Grec.

neo-Grec in his own design. Some of Hunt's solutions, such as the support of the roof with pilasters that start at the top of the springing of the arches on the façade, are contrary to the prescribed organization of the classical orders. In making these changes Hunt was breaking away from a strict copying of classical orders and rethinking the appropriate combination of classical elements as the Romantic Rationalists did.

Labrouste's library was designed as a "Bibliothèque d'Étude," rather than a research library.[248] A bibliothèque d'etude is similar to a monastic library, where one sits at a particular desk, and usually has a reading room with a rectangular alcove plan. As a result of the program, the two libraries were completely different in plan. Bibliothèque Ste.-Genevieve was given over to stacks and reading rooms, whereas the Lenox Library had vaulted galleries. The Lenox Library was shallow in plan, designed to bring the maximum amount of light into the galleries. Labrouste's façade was solid with small window openings, consistent with the building's use as a reading room. Clearly the Bibliothèque Ste.-Genevieve was not a model for Hunt despite how well known it was during the period. With his design for the Lenox Library he was creating a new type of building, one that emphasized the exhibition functions of a gallery over the functional requirements of a library.

Hunt prepared alternate solutions, which included two preliminary plans (80.6028 and 80.6036) and a façade study also dated March 14, 1870 (unnumbered; fig. 40). Although the *parti* was similar, with two entrances off center and with the central axis parallel to Fifth Avenue, in these drawings Hunt moved the stair hall to the center of his

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[248]Neil Levine, "The Book and the Building: Hugo's Theory of Architecture and Labrouste's Bibliothèque Ste.-Genevieve," *The Beaux-Arts and Nineteenth-Century French Architecture*, edited by Robin Middleton (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1982), 155.

plan. By doing so, he maintained a north-south axis through the center, keeping his original circulation pattern for the building; it was, however, less monumental than the previously described design.

Another undated preliminary plan (80.6036) anticipated Hunt's final plan. The overall site plan was a rectangle, with a courtyard behind a walled façade. There was a similar three-part division of north-south and east-west spaces as seen in the plans described above. Although the stair hall remained at the center of the composition, Hunt changed the entry sequence. Here visitors entered the building at its center, onto the stair landing that ascended to the second floor. This configuration inhibited access to the first floor. Hunt also placed a secondary, spiral staircase in the south central gallery, probably for the use of the librarian to retrieve books from the upper floor.

There was an accompanying façade study for plan 80.6036. The overall massing of the design was similar to 80.6032 (fig. 36)—a taller central area flanked by two two-story pavilions—but the classical detailing of this version was flatter and more severe, which recalled the neo-Grec designs of Labrouste. The façade rendering was also covered with a light watercolor wash, indicating brick or brownstone as the principal material, whereas other designs were not colored, indicating that Hunt anticipated using a lighter-colored stone such as marble or granite. The detailing of the pavilion windows was the same, although Hunt altered the roofline of the building by adding a peaked detail over the second-story windows. He also introduced small pilasters that began at the springing of the window arches on the second story. This unusual manipulation of the classical orders survived in the final building, and reflects Hunt's willingness, like the

Romantic Rationalists, to disregard the traditional use of classical orders to achieve an overall effect.

An arcade obscured the first story of the central block, which defined the edge of a courtyard. Hunt increased the size of the second-story windows while reducing the height of the third story. It seems that he wanted to bring as much light as possible into the picture gallery. On his drawing Hunt inserted very few sculptures, so he probably was not required to incorporate an allegorical program into his design. The reduced height of the central block, simplified detailing, and choice of materials all combined into a less ambitious design.

There was yet another undated drawing (80.6015; fig. 41) that could have been presented at the same time as the other March 1870 set. Like the previously discussed drawings, it was on the blue-toned paper with ink, pencil, and watercolor wash. Unlike the other previously described schemes, here Hunt combined the building's plan and façade on the same sheet, altering only the *parti*. The north-south axis was no longer dominant; instead he created a three-part plan with a central courtyard. Here the library's entrance was on the central axis of the composition, perpendicular to Fifth Avenue, and the stair hall that dominated the circulation space in the previous plans was placed into a rear projection, reducing its prominence. The use of a central courtyard recalled European museums such as Schinkel's Altes Museum (1823-30), as well as Durand's design for the museum type. Although there are no written dimensions or scale, the plan seems much larger than the others. Without labels as to room function it is unclear how the spaces would have been used. The space around the central courtyard might have

been designated for a picture gallery, because this arrangement would have allowed for a great amount of light in these rooms.

In his detailing of the façade Hunt combined features of the two examples discussed above. The pavilions were neo-Grec and the central block was more Roman. Hunt used both brick and stone in this version of the façade—the pavilions were a darker material and the central block was a lighter stone. Hunt also added two additional bays to the central arcade. In his choice of the quality of the materials and the complexity of their parts, Hunt emphasized the area of the building that was designated for art. Notably, the pavilions are closest in treatment to the Biblothèque Ste.-Genevieve. The size of this drawing, which is smaller than the others, indicates that perhaps this was never a preferred scheme. It is not clear why Hunt developed it or whether he showed it to his client. Two reasons may have prevented Hunt and Lenox from pursuing this design. One is the cost of construction for a larger building might have been too great, the other is that the *parti* of this design deviated from the initial one sketched by Hunt. His Beaux-arts training might have been so strong that he could not visualize this particular solution. The altering of the *parti* is unusual and calls into question Hunt's design methodology. Although the drawings described are not identical in any way, their similarity of form reveals that Hunt's strong feeling about the building—perhaps he had an idea of how the library type should be represented architecturally, or perhaps it may was his standard design practice that reinforced his Beaux-Arts training.

In other plans Hunt continued to explore the placement of the stair hall along the north-south axis and the overall entry sequence. He seemed unable to decide whether or not the stair should be a dominant feature. He also studied the façade, copying the same

elevation onto trace paper and adding classical details. He varied materials, orders, quantity, and placement of sculpture. Hunt rarely used a true classical order, preferring to combine features of the established orders to create his design.

In sketch 80.6039 (fig. 42) we see Hunt approaching the final details of his design. The massing of the building was that seen in his early drawings. In his later sketch Hunt drew segmental arches on the basement windows and a rusticated ground floor with rectangular windows. The three-story central block has a triple arcade separated by roughly drawn columns or pilasters. Hunt articulated the voussoirs on the second level. Flanking the central arcade are paired columns that are disengaged from the façade. Seated sculptures rest on these paired columns at the attic level, and there are rectangular windows at the attic.

In this drawing the north and the south pavilions are different, providing further evidence that Hunt was exploring architectural detail in this sketch. The northern pavilion has a rusticated basement with segmental arches. The building's rustication continued on the first story, which has a three-part rectangular window above a flat wall with an inscription area. A heavy cornice separates the first and second stories. The second story has an arched window flanked by paired pilasters. In between the pilasters Hunt employs a circular motif seen in some of his other buildings, such as Griswold House (1864) in Newport, Rhode Island. The cornice below the roof is heavy, dentiled, and similar to the one on the main block. The southern pavilion, which differs slightly, does not have a rusticated basement; Hunt gave it a pediment with sculpture.

There are three final presentation drawings (78.613, fig. 43; 78.614, fig. 44; 78.615, fig. 45), which all share the same massing but vary in their classical detailing and

materials. Figures 43 (78.613) and 45 (78.615) are the most similar. The most striking difference between them is the material—one is primarily brick and the other is stone. Some of the relief sculpture on the façade is different, but otherwise they are the same. The third drawing has the same openings as the other two, but there Hunt chose to illustrate a rusticated basement and to decorate the flat walls with niches. The pilasters and columns in the central block also seem to protrude more from the façade. This design is the furthest away from the Neo-Grec. It has a very sculptural and three-dimensional effect, as opposed to the flatness of Hunt's final design.

In the literature, Hunt's design is seen as a return to the Neo-Grec vocabulary of his earlier work, such as the Tenth Street Studio building, and as a fully mature combination of French and American influences. Typically, scholars (Sarah Landau and David Van Zanten, for example) have written about Hunt's design as though he had been working in a vacuum, with little or no input from the client. It is unclear how often Hunt and Lenox discussed the building, but letters to Lenox from Henry Stevens suggest that Lenox was actively looking at other models, such as the British Museum Library, for the organization of his library. Although documentation of Lenox's input regarding the building's appearance is absent, the number of drawings created for the building suggests that he was looking at many versions of the design.

The library's built elevations combined planar, classical elements, such as pilasters and pediments with arched widows and round openings. The plan was U-shaped, keeping Hunt's original *parti*, and the visitor entered a vestibule, which doubled as a sculpture gallery. Two-story wings flanked the vestibule; the southern wing contained the reading room, the northern wing housed an art gallery. The second floor

had a similar arrangement, with the reading room to the south and the gallery to the north, each lit by three large skylights. The space over the vestibule also served as a picture gallery. There was a mezzanine space between the first and second floors that was used as the superintendent's apartment.[249]

Hunt's use of Beaux-arts design principles, especially bilateral symmetry and axial arrangement of parts, and his choice of building material emphasized the monumentality of the Lenox Library. This is unlike the libraries designed by Henry Hobson Richardson (1838-1886), another American architect who went to Paris in 1860 to study at the École. In the late part of his short career, Richardson won a series of library design commissions. Kenneth Breisch studied these libraries and considered them the embodiment of the Beaux-Arts design tradition as practiced by Richardson. Richardson's design for the Woburn Public Library (1876-1879) in Woburn, Massachusetts (fig. 46) is of particular interest to this study because even though Richardson approached his design with a Beaux-Arts mentality, it looks nothing like Hunt's design. By using the Beaux-Arts design methodology paired with a romantic architectural sensibility, Richardson achieved a less monumental building than Hunt. This is not to say that the building is unsuccessful, but it is of a different character. A study of Richardson's library shows that the Beaux-Arts design method was flexible and that it allowed architects to use a variety of architectural forms.

In Richardson's design for the Woburn Public Library he developed a *parti* that was symmetrical along the longitudinal axis but not balanced on the whole (fig. 47). This

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[249]For a complete description and dimensions of the library, see "The Lenox Library, New York, NY," *American Architect and Building News* 2 (September 1, 1877): 280-81.

contrasted with Hunt's building, which was very balanced and symmetrical. At first glance, Richardson's library appeared to be a pastiche of parts pieced together merely to meet the programmatic requirements of the building. As James O'Gorman and Kenneth Breisch both maintained when Richardson designed a building he worked from the inside out.[250] True to his Beaux-arts education, Richardson was able to grasp immediately an architectural problem and sketch a design, or *parti*, that he would embellish later. As a result, his buildings looked as though they were composed of disparate parts, when in fact, like Hunt's work, they were conceived of as a unified whole.

One of the attributes of Richardson's design for the Woburn Public Library was that the viewer could understand it as a library from the exterior. The massing of the book wing, when stripped of its architectural decoration, was like that of Bibliothèque Ste.-Genevieve. The ground floor was an almost solid wall with slim windows piercing it and the upper level had larger openings that lit the interior. The book delivery spaces, reading rooms, and meeting spaces formed an irregular mass, but in plan, they balanced the length of the book stacks. Richardson gave his reading rooms additional height, which created a center to the composition. Hunt's Lenox Library, however, did not read as a library. The tripartite central block and the pavilions had no particular association with library design. Rather, they were generic neoclassical forms that had been used in many other buildings, such as the Louvre. The flat walls below the window openings do have some similarity to the wall treatment at the Bibliothèque Ste.-Genevieve, but they were not inscribed as such. Besides its general French appearance, the building has little to link it to that great French library.

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[250]Breisch, *Henry Hobson Richardson*, 182-85.

Richardson's use of materials at Woburn also contrasted with Hunt's library. Hunt used a uniform white marble for the exterior, whereas Richardson combined colored stone in his elevations. Richardson also incorporated Romanesque details that were not strictly classical. Like the Astor Library, which used brick and brownstone on its exterior, the colored stone of Woburn Library gave the building a Romanesque character. Because of their rough stone and brick, medieval detailing, and picturesque massing, these buildings were less classical in appearance than the Lenox Library.

The foundation of the Lenox Library was laid in May 1871 and construction progressed apace through 1875. The bulk of Lenox's books, statues, and paintings were moved to the library by the end of 1876. The books, however, were not yet organized and therefore remained unavailable to the public. On January 15, 1877 the painting and sculpture galleries opened to the public. Tickets were required for admission and visitors had to write the library in advance to obtain one. A *New York Times* article of May 18, 1879, described a visit to the library and outlined the admission policy:

> [A] large number of the rarest and most valuable books and manuscripts have been arranged with great care in the north wing of the building…. They may be visited on Monday and Friday from 11 to 4 o'clock by obtaining a card of admission. For this it is necessary to address a written request a day or two beforehand…. By return mail the applicant receives a card of admission. These regulations are but just and reasonable. It is incumbent on the Trustees not only to provide for the public convenience, but to surround the treasures in their keeping with proper safeguards.[251]

The press agreed with the library's strict rules as a means to protect the objects within it, aligning with the trustees' concerns rather than the public demand for accessibility.

In 1880 the *New York Times* wrote about the library in Lenox's obituary:

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[251] "The World's Oldest Books," *New York Times,* May 18, 1879.

> It should be understood that it is by no means a “popular library” or one in which the general public would feel deeply interested were its treasures freely opened to them. It is designed to supply the wants of the highest scholarship, and to furnish with material that spirit of profound study which makes men really learned and creates books that live.[252]

The library was portrayed as a place appropriate only for scholars, and the admission policy underscored this fact. In addition, the library’s location was distant from the center of city life, making it physically as well as intellectually inaccessible. By 1880 the building had been used only for exhibitions—no books were available for consultation.[253]

By 1884, the library was becoming known for its lack of usefulness to the public. A parody of a visit to the library was published in *Life* magazine. It outlined a fictional conversation between two visitors to the library:

> What is this?
> This, dear is the great Lenox Library.
>
> What is it for?
> Nobody knows.
>
> But I thought you said it was a library?
> So I did.
>
> Then there must be books in it.
> Perhaps.
>
> Why is it called the “Lenox” Library?
> Because it was founded and given by Mr. James Lenox.
>
> Given to whom?
> The City of New York.
>
> Oh! Then it is a public library?
> Yes, dear.

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[252]“Death of James Lenox,” *New York Times*, February 19, 1880.

[253]Lyndenberg, *History of the New York Public Library*, 100-101, 104.

How delightful! Why it must be very useful to students and the reading public?
Very.

But why are the doors locked?
To keep people out.

But I though you said it was a public library?
So I did.

Then how can they keep people out?
By locking the doors.

But why?
To keep all the pretty books from being spoiled.

Why! Who would spoil the pretty books?
The Public.

How?
By reading them.

Gracious! What are those brass things on the roof?
Canon, dear. To blow the heads off the students who want to get in

Why! And see those gallows!
Yes, dear.

And people hanging!
Certainly, sweet.

Who are they?
Students who got in.

But there is no way of getting into the library without being shot or hanged?
Yes, sweet.

How?
By writing an humble letter of application to the kind Lord High Librarian….[254]

[254]*Life* (January 17, 1884), 113-15.

It is not clear when public opinion changed about the library, but it happened after Lenox's death. It was very evident that the library was not going to be a great one that would serve the public. By the time of the Lenox Library's completion, the city's population had only continued to grow and simultaneously publishing continued to expand, so that the need for a public library was ever more acute. The Lenox Library was small and had limited influence on later library organization and architecture.

The Morgan Library (1902), designed by Charles Follen McKim (1847-1909) of McKim, Mead and White, is one exception to this generalization. By 1902 the financier-collector Pierpont Morgan (1837-1913) had more reading material than the library in his house could hold. He commissioned McKim to design a separate library building for him adjacent to his Madison Avenue town house. Morgan also hired a librarian, Belle da Costa Greene, to organize his collection. When Pierpont Morgan died in 1913, his son J. P. Morgan, Jr., fulfilled his father's wishes and opened the library to the public.[255] The Morgan Library, like the Lenox Library, was a small neoclassical building—McKim designed it in the Italian Renaissance style. The library was known for being Morgan's uptown office as well as the location of his impressive collection of art and rare books.

By the 1880s, the press began to clamor for a truly public library, one that would serve both the upper and lower classes. The issue of a library's intended audience emerged as a primary concern in the city's press and among its reformers. After the incorporation of the Free Circulating Library in 1880, a writer from the *Library Journal* wrote:

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[255] *The Morgan Library: An American Masterpiece* (New York: The Pierpont Morgan Library, 2000), 22-23, 26.

> Every one knows that for the general public, and particularly for the poorer portions of it, access to books is almost as completely cut off in this city as it is in the Adirondacks…. There are few thinking people in New York who are not aware that its condition in respect to public libraries is a scandalous reproach to its pretensions as a civilized capital.[256]

Although not mentioned by name, the Astor and Lenox Libraries were known as public libraries but they were not considered useful for everyone. The writer of the article considered those libraries of limited use because they appealed to only a restricted group of scholars.

An 1884 editorial in the *New York Times* expressed the desire for a truly free public library that was large enough to serve New York's population. The proposed library was compared to a grammar school, and the editors thought it was just as important an institution for universal education.

> It would be ungracious to found praise of this free library upon adverse criticism of such indispensable store-houses of books as the Historical Society Library, the Astor, the Mercantile, and the Lenox Library—though this latter is thus far only a book museum—but in estimating the comparative value of these different collections as an educating force it is to be remembered that the free library is analogous to the free primary school, while others may be more appropriately likened to the academy of the select and opulent few. New York should have a free public library like Boston's, ample in extent for the vast demands sure to be made upon it by a metropolitan population, and so well and liberally managed as to invite readers of every class and quality.[257]

The editors of the *Times* wanted a library supported by taxpayers, noting that while private philanthropy had been important in establishing earlier public libraries, a truly public institution needed public funding. It is also important to stress the perception that the Lenox Library was essentially a book museum. Although presumably this was not the intention of Hunt and Lenox, it was the result of the combination of the library's

[256]"New York Circulating Library Association," *Library Journal* 5 (April 1880): 116.
[257]"The Free Circulating Library," *New York Times*, January 13, 1884.

design and its collection. Lenox's books were too rare to be handled by the average library user, and Hunt's design reinforced this perception by being overly monumental and looking like a museum.

At its outset the Astor Library attempted to fulfill the goal of a truly public library, but in the ensuing forty years, its building and collection were no longer current. As the library's funds dwindled, book purchases stopped. The building was small and there was no money for improvements to it. Astor's original goal—to create a library for the public—was unmet. Although it was relatively new, the Lenox Library never even attempted to address the needs of a large public through its collection, so it too was unsuitable as a public library.

Despite its collection of smaller specialized and subscription libraries, and so-called public libraries like the Astor and the Lenox, New York City needed a new library—one that reached the audiences of the Astor and Lenox yet also attracted more users than those who frequented New York's existing libraries. This new public library would serve the broadest audience possible, meeting the needs of all members of the public—including children, the blind, and specialized researchers. In other words, it would be as useful for those seeking general knowledge as for those pursuing specialized research.

To meet the needs of the expanding and diversifying public, the design of a public library had to bridge the gap between the practical and the monumental. It had to be accessible to all yet have specialized rooms and spaces to accommodate scholars. Most library buildings in both the United States and Europe were not successful in combining these disparate needs. Library journals began to discuss in the 1880s which plan was the

most appropriate for a large public library. Fredrick Poole was a frequent writer on this topic. He criticized the use of stacks and interior decoration in public libraries. He thought that artwork commissioned by libraries, such as murals and sculpture, were a waste of funds. He wanted a library for books, and believed the librarian should design it. Librarians' primary design concerns were: book storage, using either an alcove or stack system; proximity of the reading room, delivery room and storage areas; and the means to integrate previously underserved groups into the library.[258]

Although the Lenox Library was flawed as a public library, it did address what had been the major complaint about the Astor Library's architecture—it was monumental. The use of white marble on the façade and its neoclassical architectural vocabulary made it so. It was also considered one of Hunt's greatest public commissions, so other architects would know and study the building when considering their own library designs. Its program, however, made it an unsuitable model for most institutions. Hunt created a building to display objects, as opposed to a place for reading. The fact that the books were last to be installed in the building underscored this point. The Lenox Library was a place for its benefactor to pass along his life's collection to the public.

By the mid-1880s, libraries were seen by the public as important institutions that provided books for circulation, as well as other services for groups that had been excluded from earlier libraries, such as women and children. The Lenox Library did not fulfill those goals. Its collection did not significantly expand after the death of its founder, and it soon became useless to the general public. Eventually its collection was

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[258]William Frederick Poole, *Report on the Progress of Library Architecture* (Boston: American Library Association, 1882) and William Frederick Poole, *Remarks on Library Construction* (Chicago: Jansen, McClurg, and Co., 1884).

consolidated with the Astor Library and the Tilden Trust to form the New York Public Library.

After the consolidation of the Astor Library, the Lenox Library, and the Tilden Foundation into the New York Public Library in 1895, the trustees decided to build a new library on the reservoir site at Forty-second Street and Fifth Avenue. To raise funds for the new library building, in 1906 and 1907 they authorized the sale of the Lenox Library building and its adjoining site to Henry Clay Frick for approximately $4 million. Frick took possession of the property in 1912, demolished Hunt's building, and commissioned Carrère and Hastings to design a new mansion and museum for him.[259]

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[259]Dain, *New York Public Library*, 340-341.

Chapter 4: A "Practical Working Library and… a Beautiful and Monumental Building": The New York Public Library

During the 1880s and early 1890s it was clear that New York City's two public libraries, the Astor and the Lenox, were not adequately serving the public's needs. The city's population had grown to more than 1.5 million and immigrants continued to arrive daily.[260] With the opening of elevated railways on Third, Sixth, and Ninth avenues, the city continued to expand northward and many of its residents lived uptown and worked downtown. Areas such as Lenox Hill, located at Sixty-sixth Street and Park Avenue, and Prospect Hill (later renamed Carnegie Hill), located near the 8th Regiment Armory on Park Avenue between Ninety-fourth and Ninety-fifth Streets, were developed. On the western side of Central Park, large apartment buildings intended for the professional class—the Navarro Flats (1885) and the Dakota (1884), for example—were built. New York's elite commissioned mansions along Fifth Avenue by architects such as Hunt and McKim, Mead & White.

The death of Samuel J. Tilden in 1886 and his bequest of his $5 million estate to the city of New York sparked the organization of the New York Public Library. Tilden was a successful lawyer and politician. He had exposed the corrupt political ring run by William "Boss" Tweed, served as governor of the State of New York from 1874 to 1878,

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[260]According to the 1890 census, New York City's population was 1,515, 301. John Shaw Billings, *Vital Statistics of New York City and Brooklyn* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1894), 5.

and had run for president as the Democratic candidate in 1876.[261] Born in 1814 in New Lebanon, New York, he grew up in a politically active household. His father, Elam Tilden (1781-1842), was a well-connected farmer and grocery store owner who counted among his friends the future president Martin Van Buren (1782-1862), U.S. Senator Silas Wright (1795-1847) from New York, and New York governor William Marcy (1786-1857).[262] Tilden père entertained these politicians at his home, giving his son an early practical education in New York and national politics. Young Tilden was very sickly as a child and spent much of his time studying indoors. His interest in politics eventually led him to pursue law.

In June 1834 he matriculated at Yale College, entered law school at New York University in 1838, and was admitted to the bar in 1841. Tilden settled in New York City to practice law and quickly joined in local politics. He became the city's Corporation Counsel in 1843; founded and edited a Democratic partisan newspaper, the *Morning News*, in 1844; and served a term in the state legislature in 1846. He joined the Democratic Party's Tammany Hall, becoming a sachem in 1856. Tammany Hall, or the Tammany Society of the Columbian Order, was founded as a patriotic social club at the start of the Revolutionary War. Its name was taken from the Delaware Indian chief Tammanend, who in 1682 welcomed William Penn to the New World. Legend had it

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[261]Like Al Gore in the 2000 presidential election, Samuel Tilden received more popular votes than Electoral College votes and lost the 1876 election to Republican Rutherford B. Hayes. He attempted a second run in 1880 but his candidacy was blocked by Tammany Democrats. There are several recent studies about the contested election, among them Roy Morris, *Fraud of the Century* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2003), and William H. Rehnquist, *Centennial Crisis* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004). The conventional biographies of Tilden include John Bigelow, *The Life of Samuel J. Tilden* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1895), and Alexander Clarence Flick, *Samuel Jones Tilden* (New York: Dodd, 1939).

[262]Van Buren, Wright and Marcy were all members of the "Albany Regency," which ran the antebellum Democratic Party in New York. See Kenneth D. Ackerman, *Boss Tweed: The Rise and Fall of the Corrupt Pol Who Conceived the Soul of Modern New York* (New York: Carroll & Graf, 2005), 44.

that Tammanend defeated the Evil Spirit in a battle so fierce that it created Niagara Falls, the Detroit Rapids, and the Ohio River. Using Native American terminology, Tammany Hall members called themselves "warriors" or "braves" and their leaders "Sachems."[263] Tammany Hall was the most influential political organization in the state. Its leaders, most notably Boss Tweed, dictated not only who ran for political offices, but also who won. Tweed controlled much of the New York City budget, and he stole a large amount of money for himself and for his allies. Through a careful examination of the city's accounting and contracts, Tilden and a few other city employees eventually were able to break up Tweed's ring and his influence over the city. Tweed was imprisoned and died in jail in 1878.

Tilden prospered as a lawyer for the railroads—by one account his clients included half the railroads in the northeastern United States. In 1863 he purchased a large Gothic Revival townhouse at 15 Gramercy Park South. By this time he owned two iron mines, a fortune in railroad stocks, and an office at 43 Wall Street. In 1881 he hired Calvert Vaux to combine his house with 14 Gramercy Park South and to design a new façade to unite the two buildings. The resultant building resembled the Victorian Gothic architecture that Vaux used at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the American Museum of Natural History (1874-77). In 1905 the National Arts Club, founded in 1898, purchased the expanded house.[264]

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[263]Ackerman, *Boss Tweed*, 21.

[264]The American Museum of Natural History was founded in 1869. The National Arts Club restored the building in 1997. See Christopher Gray, "Streetscapes/National Arts Club, 15 Gramercy Park South; The Literary Façade of Samuel J. Tilden's House," *New York Times*, September 21, 1997; Carol Lowrey, "The National Arts Club: Its Founding, Early History and the Artist Life Membership Program" (PhD diss., City University of New York, 2003).

Tilden, who died in 1886, bequeathed the bulk of his estate, about $5 million, 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 said Executors and Trustees may more particularly designate."[265] Tilden never married, and his heirs included his sister, Mary B. Pelton, who died shortly after he did, and the six children of his late brother. Tilden left trust funds and legacies to his heirs totaling $1 million, but the remainder of his estate was designated for the Tilden Trust. His will was admitted to probate on October 20, 1886, and his nephew George H. Tilden began proceedings to contest the trust. Tilden's other heirs supported his challenge.[266]

At a special term in 1889 the New York State Supreme Court sustained the trust, but the general term reversed this decision, on appeal. On October 27, 1891, the judges, in a four-to-three vote, declared the trust illegal and void and gave the entire residuary estate to the next of kin and heirs at law. The court found that the power conferred by the will on the executors was indefinite and vague. Motion for re-argument was denied and the Tilden Trust was stripped of its property. The public was outraged. Newspapers published editorials claiming that the dissolution of the trust was unjust and that the denial of a library to New Yorkers was a disservice to the public. The *New York Times* published a letter to the editor written by one "Public Spirit":

> It will be a burning shame, if … the great public library which it was the desire of Gov. Tilden to establish here in our midst is lost. The founding of such an institution as was intended by the testator would be of

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[265]George Lockhart Rives, ed., *Book of Charters Wills, Deeds, and Other Official Documents* (New York: New York Public Library, 1895), 71.

[266]Rives, *Book of Charters*, 71-109; Dain, *New York Public Library*, 36-42.

> incalculable good to the morals and intelligence of this metropolis and it is surprising that the entire press of New-York doesn't see it in the light. The failure to secure the benefit which it was Mr. Tilden's wish to confer upon to people of this city would deprive us of what would prove the greatest public library in the New World. Such a deprivation should never be permitted if we have the power to prevent it, and certainly we have if we only have the mind to exercise it. The citizens of New-York should not allow some overgrasping heirs backed up by our false representatives at Albany to override and destroy the last will of a sound-minded public benefactor.[267]

New Yorkers felt that the gift of the Tilden Trust was theirs, and that the court had struck a major blow against the creation of a public library.

The Tilden Trust managed to keep a portion of Tilden's money. While the case was awaiting adjudication, Tilden's grandniece, Laura Pelton Hazard, the only heir of his late sister, agreed to sell her interest in Tilden's estate to the trust for $975,000. This arrangement was kept secret until after the settlement of the case. Therefore, when the estate was settled on March 28, 1892, the trust received half of the residuary estate, less $975,000.[268] The trust was able to get additional money when Tilden's real estate holdings were divided and sold, providing an endowment of $2-2.5 million. It also had Tilden's private library of 20,000 volumes, William Cullen Bryant's library of almost 800 volumes (donated by his daughter, Julia S. Bryant), and several hundred books and manuscripts bequeathed to the trust by Maria M. Flagg.[269]

The income from the trust was not enough to sustain a public library on the scale envisioned by Tilden. From the beginning, public expectations for the Tilden library were so high that the city was reluctant to appropriate municipal funds for the circulating

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[267] "Public Spirit," letter to the editor, *New York Times*, March 9, 1887.

[268] Agreement for Partition between the Tilden Trust and the Heirs at Law of Samuel J. Tilden, March 30, 1892; Rives, *Book of Charters*, 97.

[269] Dain, *New York Public Library*, 42.

libraries in 1886 and later cut its support for those that were already receiving money, which forced the trustees to consider other solutions to fulfill Tilden's vision. Talk of consolidation with other libraries began.

The use of private funds to create a public library continued the trend established with the founding of the Astor Library. Like Astor, Tilden had an unformed idea of his library and left its determination to his trustees. This contrasts with the Lenox Library in that Lenox had a collection and was a driving force in deciding the physical appearance of his library building. Tilden's money was critical to founding the New York Public Library. Astor's model of public institutions being created by private wealth was both good and bad for the city. It allowed institutions to be funded without having to raise funds from taxpayers, but it also reduced the amount of control the city had over its institutions and left them vulnerable to the wishes of their trustees. In the case of the Astor Library, contributions from the trustees, especially those who were members of the Astor family, kept the library open.

After the funds bequeathed to the Tilden Trust were reduced, it was clear that there would not be sufficient funds to found a new library. Andrew Green, a Tilden Trust trustee, proposed through an act of the state legislature that other libraries such as the New York Free Circulating Library be invited to join with the Tilden Trust to create a public library.[270] In May 1892 Green presented a report to the Tilden Trust in which he urged the trust to absorb and take over management of some of the city's under-funded libraries.[271] The new library organization could either inhabit Tilden's Gramercy Park

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[270]Ibid., 43.

[271]Green's report is reprinted in Lyndenberg, *History of the New York Public Library*, 141-43.

home, which Green considered too small, or it could construct a new building on the reservoir site at 42nd Street and Fifth Avenue.

Various proposals for consolidation circulated in public and in meetings with the trustees. The terms of Tilden's will required a "free library and a reading room," but this clause was vague and opened debate as to Tilden's true intent. Did he want a research library or a large lending library? Was his library intended for scholars or the general public? In addition to the Astor and the Lenox Libraries, there were already many specialized libraries in the city. After much debate in the press and in private, the trustees decided that Tilden wanted to create an institution similar to the Boston Public Library, a library with a central building and additional circulating branches. It was to be a library for both scholarly and general use, one that served a variety of public purposes. One suggestion was to merge with the library at either Columbia College or the University of the City of New York (later New York University). Green proposed the creation of a scientific library and research center that incorporated a variety of libraries: the Astor, Lenox, Columbia College, New York University, Cooper Union, Mechanics, Mercantile, Society, and New York Free Circulating. This library fulfilled Tilden's wishes, but the number and complexity of merging the institutions became overwhelming and the trustees had to search for another solution.[272]

Finally, at a dinner party in 1894, John L. Cadwalader, an Astor Library trustee, suggested to Lewis Cass Ledyard, a Tilden trustee, that the two organizations merge.[273] The public knew and respected the Astor Library but the library had run out of money

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[272]Dain, *New York Public Library*, 55.

[273]Ibid., 58.

and could no longer maintain its collection. The Tilden Trust had money, but no collection. In October the two organizations began to discuss their merger. When the Lenox Library trustees heard of these talks, they approached the Tilden Trust with a similar proposal, and joined the Astor in formal discussions in January 1895. The Astor Library and Tilden Trust agreed to merge on February 13, 1895. After the Astor Library, Lenox Library, and Tilden Trust agreed to a merger, the Free Circulating Library and the Aguilar Library approached them in hopes of achieving a similar arrangement. The addition of these libraries to the Astor-Lenox-Tilden group would create a network of branch libraries similar to the Boston Public Library model.[274] There would be one central library with many branches, each of which would lend books to the public. The trustees of the consolidated organization chose the name "New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations," which acknowledged each of the institutions that formed the library without privileging a single one. The formal consolidation agreement was signed on May 23, 1895.[275]

The selection of the reservoir site for the new library was the next carefully negotiated agreement. The Lenox trustees wanted the new organization to use Lenox Library as its central building. The building was then only twenty years old but it was small. It could not be used by another organization because, according to the will of Lenox's sister, Henrietta A. Lenox, the property adjacent to the library was to be used only for library purposes, which made the site undesirable to sell to other

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[274]Andrew Carnegie's 1901 gift of $5.2 million to create sixty-five branch libraries added more libraries to the NYPL system. Van Slyck, *Free to All*, 113.

[275]"Agreement of Consolidation," May 23, 1895, in Rives, *Book of Charters*, 118-22.

organizations.[276] The Lenox Library lacked book storage and its plan would have to be reorganized to accommodate book circulation. As a result, the library building was not used for the new library.

While use of the Lenox Library building had its limitations, use of the Astor Library building was not even suggested. The Astor Library building was also small and showed its age: its outdated gas lamps and deteriorated condition were not appealing for a new organization. Its location was no longer central to the inhabitants of the city, which was important for the new public library. The library's architecture and its lack of monumentality were also not suitable, since that many hoped the new library would be a great civic enhancement.

Bigelow was always interested in locating the library at the reservoir site between Fortieth and Forty-second streets and Fifth and sixth Avenues. The reservoir, which was built between 1835 and 1836, was designed by David B. Douglass and brought water to Manhattan via a forty-one-mile aqueduct connecting the Croton River to two reservoirs in New York City. The reservoir site was appealing for its central location and its accessibility would help fulfill the desire of the Tilden Trust to create a library that would serve the public. Moreover, because the city owned the site, the library could obtain the rights to build on it without having to purchase the land. Ultimately the board of the New York Public Library struck a deal with Mayor Robert Van Wyck (1847-1918) whereby the board would finance the purchase of the branch library sites if the mayor would turn over the reservoir site free of charge.[277]

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[276]"Extract from the Will of Henrietta A. Lenox," in ibid., 58-59.

[277]The site was a distributing reservoir for the Croton Water Aquaeduct constructed in 1842. Another reservoir was located between Sixth and Seventh avenues and Seventy-ninth and Eighty-sixth streets.

Design ideas for the new library emerged after the settlement of the Tilden estate. The architect Ernest Flagg (1857-1947) proposed the earliest known design. Flagg was related by marriage to the Vanderbilts and the Scribners, two prominent New York families.[278] His father, Jared Bradley Flagg (1820-1899), was a clergyman, portrait painter, and entrepreneur who was well acquainted with New York's elite. In their youth Ernest Flagg and his brother were involved with numerous speculative ventures; in fact he designed several apartment buildings for sale on speculation.[279]

Flagg left New York in the spring of 1888 to begin his studies at the École des Beaux-Arts, even though he was, at age thirty-one, too old for admission to the École.[280] Flagg's interest in attending was not so much to gain a solid architectural education as to have the stamp of approval from such an esteemed institution.[281] His association with the École would help him win clients and sell speculative properties. Flagg studied under M. A. G. Guicetre and Paul Blondel (1847-1897). He left the École in the summer of 1890, traveled in Italy during the fall, and returned to New York in 1891. Flagg's time in France influenced his architecture, which was firmly rooted in Beaux-Arts principles of axial organization and symmetry.

Olmsted incorporated this reservoir as a water feature in his design of Central Park. By the early 1880s the city's need for water exceeded what the Croton Aqueduct could deliver. Construction on a new aqueduct began in 1885 and was completed in 1891. The New Croton Aqueduct made the reservoir at Forty-second Street obsolete. Lyndenberg, *History of the New York Public Library*, 355-62. Burrows and Wallace, *Gotham*, 625-28, 1229.

[278]Mardges Bacon, *Ernest Flagg: Beaux-Arts Architect and Urban Reformer* (New York: Architectural History Foundation; Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1986), 75.

[279]Ibid.

[280]In fact the École had a cutoff age of thirty years.

[281]Bacon, *Ernest Flagg*, 36.

Flagg's personal connections aided him in winning his early commissions. His biographer, Mardges Bacon, wrote that Cornelius Vanderbilt II used his influence to get Flagg his first job, designing St. Luke's Hospital in New York City.[282] In 1892 Flagg competed with John Carrère for the design of the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. Although he was not officially hired until April 18, 1893, Flagg was in constant contact with the building committee from the beginning of the competition.[283] And after the competition was closed to other architects, he was allowed to alter his design according to the committee's instructions. During this early, productive period, Flagg drew designs for the New York Public Library. On May 3, 1892, he wrote a letter to Bigelow regarding the design of the library; Flagg's design was published in September of that year in *Scribner's Magazine* (fig. 48).[284]

Flagg's design was a grand one. His large, domed catalog room was formally similar to the great libraries of Europe, such as the British Museum Library and the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. Flagg attempted to mimic these institutions in his design just as the trustees hoped to emulate their collections. To save on costs he advocated using Roman construction techniques, specifically concrete construction faced with stone. For the façade he proposed a Doric portico with eight columns. On the interior he wanted display cases for the library's treasures. The plan of the library was a Latin cross, with the head along Fifth Avenue. At the crossing was a rotunda, ninety-feet in diameter,

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[282]The committee declared Flagg the winner of an open competition on November 28, 1892. The architectural community charged that Flagg's design was given preferential treatment in an exhibition of competition entries. This and his close relationship with Vanderbilt were believed to have secured the job for him. Ibid., 63-64.

[283]The competition began on April 9, 1892. Ibid., 65.

[284]John Shaw Billings Records, The New York Public Library Archives, The New York Public Library, Astor Lenox and Tilden Foundations, Box 34, Folder 2.

surrounded by four octagonal pavilions. The stacks were located in the arms of the cross and the rear portion of the building contained a lecture hall and more stacks. Not only did the rotunda copy European libraries, it also was similar to the newly completed Library of Congress. Flagg proposed stack space capable of holding one million volumes, half the number found in the overseas libraries referenced above.

Flagg's design reflected his studies at the École. Like Hunt at the Lenox Library, Flagg developed a *parti* for his design, which was a cross. This was slightly modified from Durand's library type. After Flagg developed his *parti*, he began to work out a classical scheme that fit his design. At the École Flagg studied with Paul Blondel, who was a student of Louis Duc, one of the *pensionners* or Romantic Rationalists who shook up the École with their new approach to classical forms.[285]

By having the exterior form reflect the function of the institution inside, Flagg hoped that New York's new public library would be as great as the public institutions of Europe. Ultimately John Shaw Billings (1838-1912), the head librarian, reacted against this architectural statement. He wanted architecture to serve the institution, not the other way around. In no way was Billings interested in showcasing the building's architecture at the expense of the serviceability of the library to its users.

Billings was born in Switzerland County, Indiana, on April 12, 1838. He attended Miami University in Ohio in 1857, and received his medical degree there three years later. He joined the Union Army at the beginning of the Civil War, and in April 1862 was commissioned Assistant Surgeon. Four years later he was promoted to Surgeon Captain. In 1876 he earned the rank of Surgeon Major, and in 1890 he was named

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[285]Bacon, *Ernest Flagg*, 40; Van Zanten, *Designing Paris*, 176-223.

Colonel and Deputy Surgeon General of the U.S. Army. He retired from the army in 1895 and began work as a professor of hygiene at the University of Pennsylvania.[286]

During his years of army service, Billings developed his administrative skills. In 1875 the faculty of Johns Hopkins Hospital asked Billings to develop a plan for their new building. In December 1883 the U.S. Army placed him in charge of the Museum Library Division and named him a curator of the Army Medical Museum in Washington, D.C. In this role Billings wanted:

> to try to establish for use of American physicians a fairly complete library, and in connection with this to prepare a comprehensive index which should spare medical teachers and writers the drudgery of consulting thousands or more of indexes or the turning over the leaves of many volumes to find the dozen or more references of which they might be in search.[287]

John Cadwalader, an Astor Library and New York Public Library trustee, recommended Billings for the position of director of the new library.[288] Billings had both design and cataloging experience. Although one might not think a retired army general would be a suitable librarian, he was the best candidate for the job.

Billings's plans for the library included a design competition.[289] After seeing Flagg's early design he was concerned that only grand architectural designs that did not carefully consider the overall needs of the library would be submitted. Billings consulted

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[286]S. Weir Mitchell, *Biographical Memoir of John Shaw Billings 1838-1913* (Washington, D.C.: National Academy of Sciences, 1917), 375-76.

[287]Billings, as quoted in ibid., 379.

[288]Carleton B. Chapman, *Order Out of Chaos: John Shaw Billings and America's Coming of Age* (Boston: The Boston Medical Library, 1994), 277.

[289]For a summary of the competition and its results, see "Extract of the Fourth Day of American Library Association at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Thursday, June 24, 1897. Morning Session," John Shaw Billings Records, The New York Public Library Archives, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations, Box 34, Folder 1.

with William Ware, professor of architecture at Columbia College, and Bernard Green, engineer of the Library of Congress. They formed a committee of advisers to develop a set of specifications for a design competition for the new library and they elected to have a staged competition. The first stage would be open to all architects in the greater New York area. The committee would review all designs, which would be submitted without names attached. The committee would select the twelve best designs, then they would attach the names of the firms and select the six best designs. Those six winners as well as six additional architects whose offices were located outside of New York City would be invited to participate in a second competition.[290]

The trustees of the New York Public Library placed their faith in Billings as an administrator and allowed him to direct the architectural competition. In a statement released to the press before the first competition the trustees wrote:

> The problems before the Trustees in regard to the new building are two. The first, what should be the principal characteristic of the proposed Library, and second, who should be the architect of the structure, and whether he should be selected by the Board or through some form of competition. The Trustees have decided to adopt a scheme which they believe combines the advantages of a limited competition and also those of an open and unrestricted competition. A similar method has been tried, as the Trustees are informed, in others [sic] cities, and with very satisfactory results.[291]

The press release did not specify which competitions were found to be successful, but this two-tiered approach allowed all interested architects to compete. It also addressed one of the biggest complaints against architectural competitions, specifically that they were a method for clients to obtain designs without paying the architect's fees. Although

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[290]Lyndenberg, *History of the New York Public Library*, 440-42.

[291]Board of Trustees Records, The New York Public Library Archives, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations, Box 20.

Billings had concrete ideas about the library's design, in his writing he seems to show deference to other librarians. He had solicited their opinions, after all, so it followed that he would want to select its design from as many architects as possible. Thus the instructions with specifications were printed for the first competition and were available to any architect located in New York City.

In preparation for the new library design competition, Billings visited the Boston Public Library, the Library of Congress, the Newberry Library in Chicago, and the Chicago Public Library.[292] Billings's design and the specifications for the competition were developed in light of what he saw in these other libraries. It was important to the trustees and to the people of New York that the library compare favorably to those in other major American cities.

The Boston Public Library, established by an act signed by the governor on March 18, 1848, was the first public library of the type defined by Poole in the United States.[293] This was the first official recognition of a municipal library by a state governing body. The library was created for two principal reasons. First, the mayor of Boston, Josiah Quincy Jr., had received books from Nicolas Marie Alexandre Vattemare in France, who had sent the books in hopes of encouraging the international exchange of

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[292]In the press release it does not state specifically which libraries Billings visited, only that he went to Boston, Washington, and Chicago. One can assume that he visited the Boston Public Library and the Library of Congress because both were near completion. In Chicago the Newberry Library opened in 1893; it was designed by William Frederick Poole, librarian, and Henry Ives Cobb, architect. The Chicago Public Library's central building was opened to the public on October 11, 1897. Board of Trustees Records, The New York Public Library Archives, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations, Box 20.

[293]William F. Poole defined public library in U.S. Department of Education, *Report on Public Libraries in the U.S.* (1876): "The 'public library' which we are to consider is established by state laws, is supported by local taxation or voluntary gifts, is managed as a public trust, and every citizen of the city or town which maintains it has an equal share of its privileges of reference and circulation." As quoted in Shera, *Foundations of the Public Library*, 157.

literature. The secondary reason for establishing the library was in response to the creation of the Astor Library in New York City. The citizens of Boston were in competition with those of New York and wanted a library to keep up with their rival city. The Boston Public Library opened in March 1854. It was part of a public school on Mason Street and housed 16,000 volumes. Later that year the Library's commissioners hired Charles Kirk Kirby to design a building to be constructed on Boylston Street. This building was Italianate in design and was in use until a new building, designed by McKim, Mead and White in 1887, opened in 1895.[294]

By 1878 the Boylston Street library building had outlived its usefulness. It was loud, poorly ventilated, and not adequately fireproofed. The library's examining committee urged the board of trustees to ask the state legislature for a piece of land the size of a city block on Boston's Back Bay, which had been filled by 1857. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts had sold the majority of the lots but gave some of them to the City of Boston and to such public institutions as Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the Museum of Fine Arts.[295] In 1883 land was given to the library for construction of a new building with the understanding that construction would begin within three years. The trustees held an architectural competition in 1884, which failed to produce a winning design. The trustees asked Arthur H. Vinal, architect for the City of Boston, to produce plans for the new library building. Vinal was incredibly slow and not a particularly gifted designer, but he was able to produce plans so that the foundations of

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[294]Ibid., 175.

[295]Walter Muir Whitehill, *Boston Public Library: A Centennial History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1956), 131-32.

the building could be laid on April 21, 1886.[296] The state legislature was so unhappy with the progress of the library building that it gave the library's trustees complete control over the building's design. They immediately removed Vinal from the project. On March 30, 1887, the trustees hired McKim, Mead and White to design the library.[297]

Charles Follen McKim was the designer for the project. Born the son of an abolitionist, he studied at the École des Beaux-Arts and worked briefly in the office of H. H. Richardson. Throughout his career McKim embraced neoclassical styles in a variety of building types, including residences, clubs, libraries, and state houses. It took him about a year to develop his design for the library. He looked to European Renaissance models for the exterior design. He considered the Louvre, the Farnese Palace, and Duban's façade for the École des Beaux-Arts as models. According to Charles Moore, late one night in the office McKim looked at a drawing of the Coliseum in Rome. He found the simplicity of the arches to be an inspiration and reportly stayed up until 2 a.m. drawing a new design solution for the library.[298]

The library's exterior was similar to a two-story Renaissance palazzo with an arcade on both levels (fig. 49). McKim placed a tripartite archway at the central entrance. This echoed Roman classicism as well as Renaissance neoclassicism. This

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[296]Ibid., 139.

[297]Charles Moore, *The Life and Times of Charles Follen McKim* (Boston and New York: Hougton Mifflin Co., 1929), 62.

[298]Ibid., 66.

elevation was often compared to Labrouste's Bibliothèque Ste.-Genevieve, but upon closer examination McKim's façade has greater depth.[299]

The new Boston Public Library building opened to the public in 1895, the same year the New York Public Library was consolidated. The trustees originally wanted it to be a functional library to house books, but in his design McKim transformed the library into the "People's Palace."[300] The project was fabulously over budget.[301] This was forgotten, however, once the building opened. Its grand architecture, sculpture, and mural programs were points of pride for the people of Boston. McKim intended to have the building decorated with murals by leading artists—Puvis de Chavannes (1824-1898), Edwin Austin Abbey (1852-1911), and John Singer Sargent (1856-1925)—to complement its architecture, unifying the whole into a work of art. After seeing the library without its decoration in November 1894, the sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens (1848-1907), wrote to McKim: "We were completely bowled over by it; it is a splendid piece of work and even as it is, without the paintings of Puvis, I know nothing equal to it."[302]

The library became a place where arts mingled with books and each contributed to the uplift of the people of Boston. Abbey painted a series of murals in the delivery

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[299]For discussion of the façade of Bibliothèque Ste.-Genevieve and its relationship to writing, see Neil Levine, "The Book and the Building," chap in *The Beaux-Arts and Nineteenth-Century French Architecture*, edited by Robin Middleton.

[300]Oliver Wendall Holmes wrote a poem for the cornerstone ceremony on November 28, 1888. In it he wrote: "Behind the ever-open gate/No pikes shall fence a crumbling throne,/No lakeys cringe, no courtiers wait,---/This palace is the people's own!" Whitehill, *Boston Public Library*, 147.

[301]The initial amount approved for the library in 1883 was $450,000. In 1890 McKim produced an estimate for the completion of the building, without furniture, at $2,218.865. The final cost of the library was $2,743,284.56. Whitehill, *Boston Public Library*, 137-38, 150; and Moore, *Charles Follen McKim*, 66.

[302]Augustus Saint-Gaudens to Charles Follen McKim, quoted in Whitehill, *Boston Public Library*, 159.

room on the subject of the Quest for the Holy Grail. Saint-Gaudens was commissioned to sculpt two groups of figures, each of which was to be a male figure flanked by two female figures and all to personify an important subject within the library. The first group was Labor flanked by Arts and Science; the second was Law flanked by Religion and Power. Unfortunately the works were never finished.[303] Sargent took on the subject of the history of religion on the third floor corridor that led to the special libraries. Puvis painted the most famous group of murals, which are located in the library's entrance and stair hall.

The central building of the Boston Public Library, located on Copley Square, was one of McKim, Mead and White's greatest designs and is certainly the most important library building constructed in the United States. As William Jordy discussed in his essay on the building, McKim, Mead and White's classical design marked a break with the Romantic Revival styles of the second and third quarters of the nineteenth century.[304] The library building embodied the American Renaissance, a period of neoclassical architecture that would see its apex at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893, and would continue to dominate public building in the U.S. until World War I.

As a term to describe recent developments in American art, American Renaissance was in use as early as 1880, and McKim's Boston Public Library marked the

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[303]Saint-Gaudens created plaster studies of these groups. The studies were lost when he sent them from Europe to the United States. They were crushed beyond recognition. Saint-Gaudens was unable to re-create them and he never finished the project. Moore, *Charles Follen McKim*, 71-72. For more information on library murals, see Derrick Randall Cartwright, "Reading Rooms: Interpreting the American Public Library Mural, 1890-1930" (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 1994), and Bailey Van Hook, *The Virgin and the Dynamo: Public Murals in American Architecture 1893-1917* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2003).

[304]Jordy, *Progressive and Academic Ideals*, 316-17.

high period of this particular style.[305] American Renaissance referred not only to the period's architectural style, which borrowed heavily from the French and Italian Renaissance, but also to the collaboration among architects, muralists, painters, and sculptors. Just as the greatest buildings of the Italian Renaissance, were known to have engaged artists working in a variety of media, those designed during the American Renaissance were truly works of art, with contributions from many designers. Architects were aware of this association with the Italian Renaissance—McKim's nickname in his office was "Bramante".[306]

In 1893 the American Renaissance Style culminated with the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. Its organizers intended the fair to promote America and its products throughout the world. The U.S. Congress selected Chicago as the fair's site in 1892. The city had been rebuilt after a devastating fire in 1871 that destroyed much of the city's center. The organizers of the fair appointed Daniel Burnham, the Chicago architect and planner, to lead a select group of architects to design the fairgrounds. Although Burnham was from Chicago, most of the fair's architects were selected from the elite firms on the east coast and the midwest: these included: Richard Morris Hunt; McKim, Mead and White; and Peabody and Stearns, among others. The fair was organized around the Court of Honor, which included buildings surrounding a man-made lake. Different architects designed the buildings, but under Burnham's design guidelines a uniform appearance was achieved because the buildings were all constructed of staff, a plaster material that was painted white, and they had the same cornice height. These

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[305]Richard Guy Wilson, *American Renaissance, 1876-1917* (Brooklyn: The Brooklyn Museum, 1979), 63.

[306]Stanford White's nickname was Cellini, after the Italian sculptor; and Mead's was called "Dummy".

characteristics created a classical façade that was inspired by the architecture taught at the École des Beaux-Arts.[307]

The architecture of the World's Columbian Exposition had another effect—it ushered in the City Beautiful movement. Reformers and architects believed that by improving the aesthetic environment of a city, its residents would be uplifted and become more interested in the common good. City Beautiful projects ranged from large urban designs such as the MacMillan Commission's plan for Washington D.C. (1901-1902), to public parks and parkways, to small urban elements, such as lampposts and park benches. Although the movement was very popular, its goals went beyond what realistically could be accomplished through architectural design. Like the World's Columbian Exposition, the City Beautiful movement represented the ideals of the American Renaissance and embraced a European Renaissance revival style in its architectural expression.

The Boston Public Library was conceived as an American Renaissance building. In a review of it, Wallace Wood wrote in the *New York Times*:

> Greatness is the simplest thing in the world. The Boston Library is the simplest thing in the world. The Gates of Paradise by Daniel Chester French, the Hill of Parnassus by Puvis [de Chauvannes], and the whole temple of light by McKim. Architecture is the simplest of arts; it is also the greatest as the name shows.
>
> What constitutes a great man? Shall we count Vitruvius and Palladio and Vignola among the great and good? Shall we count the brain that conceived the Pantheon, the brain that conceived the British Museum? Is not the Boston Library McKim's true monument?[308]

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[307]Neil Harris, et al. *Grand Illusions: Chicago's World's Fair of 1893* (Chicago: Chicago Historical Society, 1993).

[308]*New York Times*, September 16, 1909.

With McKim's design Boston achieved want New York wanted—a great public library that both served its citizens and gained national recognition.

Because their cities were vying to be preeminent in the U.S., the Boston Public Library and the New York Public Library were destined to become competitors. McKim, Mead and White's building was conceived and built during a time when Boston was physically reinventing itself. Commonwealth Avenue was being reshaped as a Parisian boulevard lined with row houses of equal height and with a strip of land in the middle planted with lines of trees.[309]

Billings wanted to learn from what he thought were the deficiencies of the Boston building in order to improve the design for the New York Public Library. In plan the Boston Public Library was square with a courtyard in the center, which allowed for light and air to reach the interior, similar to a Renaissance palazzo. Two small courtyards provided light and air to the rest of the building. The library's reading rooms were located on the perimeter of the building and the stacks were located in a single block at the rear. In his plan for the New York Public Library, Billings put the reading room on the third floor so that it would get light from clerestory windows and skylights located above the readers. In New York the stacks were located below the main reading room on the third floor. Because the stacks were adjacent to the reading room, delivery of books could occur quickly, whereas in Boston the stacks were in a corner of the building and the books had to come from an area that was not contiguous with the reading rooms. The efficiency with respect to library functions of the New York Public Library layout was

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[309]Bainbridge Bunting, *Houses of Boston's Back Bay* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, Harvard University Press, 1967), 287-360.

the result of its being planned primarily by the librarian, whereas at Boston, the architect assumed the principal role of assigning function to the spaces.

The Library of Congress was completed at about the same time as the Boston Public Library, and Billings traveled there as well, to study the ways in which the New York Public Library could best it. The Library of Congress was a huge building. Its entire footprint was approximately equal to that of the reservoir site, the area bounded by Fortieth and Forty-second streets and Fifth and Sixth avenues, and it was planned to house four million bound volumes, as well as works of art, maps, pamphlets, and other materials. The New York Public Library was designed to hold two million volumes. John L. Smithmeyer (1851-1908) and Paul J. Pelz (1841-1918) won the design competition in 1888. Smithmeyer was born in Austria and trained in Chicago; Pelz was born in Germany and trained in New York City.[310] Soon after they won the commission, General Thomas Lincoln Casey, Chief Engineer of the Army, was put in charge of the project. Pelz stayed on as architect, but Smithmeyer quit the job to pursue others. Bernard R. Green, who consulted with the New York Public Library's building committee, was hired as chief engineer for the project. In 1892 General Casey's son, Edward Pearce Casey, replaced Pelz as the principal architect. Casey graduated from Columbia University with a degree in engineering in 1886 and another in philosophy in 1888. He then worked in the office of McKim, Mead and White and attended the École des Beaux-Arts for three years. Casey's primary responsibility was to oversee the decoration of the building, which included sculpture and mural projects designed to

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[310]*American Renaissance*, 103.

attract large numbers of visitors to the building.[311] To that end Casey and Green hired nineteen artists (to paint one hundred twelve murals); twenty-two sculptors, and seven other artists who did ornamental painting.[312] These included well-known American Renaissance artists such as Kenyon Cox (1856-1919), Elihu Vedder (1836-1923), Louis Saint-Gaudens (1854-1913), Daniel Chester French (1850-1931), and Edwin Blashfield (1848-1936).

Blashfield's mural, *Evolution of Civilization*, was the culmination of the decorative program of the building (fig. 51). It covered the dome over the main reading room of the building. Blashfield painted a series of allegorical figures beginning with ancient Egypt and ending with America. His representation placed American civilization at the pinnacle of world history, and his theme embodied the spirit of the American Renaissance. America was part of a progression of civilization that moved through the classical world and then Europe.[313]

The decorative program at the Library of Congress was much more ambitious than that at the Boston Public Library, and was second only to that at the World's Columbia Exposition. The other murals at the Library of Congress included Vedder's *Good Administration*, *Government*, *Peace and Plenty*, *Anarchy*, and *Corrupt Legislation*; and Cox's *The Arts* and *The Sciences*. The murals were located throughout the building and were not unified with respect to their style or subject. Although the public loved

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[311]Russell Sturgis, "The New Library of Congress," *Architectural Record* 7 (January-March 1898): 299.

[312]*American Renaissance*, 185.

[313]John Y. Cole and Henry Hope Reed, eds., *The Library of Congress: The Art and Architecture of the Thomas Jefferson Building* (New York: Norton, 1997).

them, the murals were criticized as not being cohesive and were considered an example of what to avoid in the future.[314]

As a group, the murals in the Library of Congress are a fine example of the American Renaissance; however, they do not have the novelty of subject and execution of the Puvis murals in the stair hall at the Boston Public Library. Billings was able to rationalize the exclusion—or at least the reduction in number—of decoration from his library: it would keep his building on budget.

The architecture of the Library of Congress had its critics. In his 1898 review of the building in *Architectural Record*, architect Russell Sturgis wrote:

> The general plan may be considered economical, practical, such as to utilize aright the abundant space allowed the building, but it gives no evidence of being part of a strong architectural conception. The exterior which results from it, is of no real consequence, except for its detail. It is not, of course, of any great value as a work of art, in its general system or distribution. The dome is not very dignified nor very graceful. The rear portico with coupled columns resting on a second basement and adorning a central pavilion is neither very novel nor very impressive considering its size and costliness, and the side pavilions are notably feeble and inconsequent. That false idea of grandeur which consists mainly in order to secure for it a monstrous flight of steps which must be surmounted before the main door can be reached, has prevailed here as in other buildings erected by the government.[315]

Although he thought the overall effect of the building was poor, Sturgis admired the decorative sculpture on its exterior. He wrote that although the sculpted pieces were not important as individual works of art, they served to enrich the whole of the building. He added that "the building is rich within and plain without."[316] Billings heeded Sturgis's

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[314]Bailey Van Hook, *The Virgin and The Dynamo: Public Murals in American Architecture, 1893-1917* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2003), 29-30.

[315]Sturgis, "Library of Congress," 299.

[316]Ibid.

criticism in that he did not want a grand decorative plan or murals and sculpture to overshadow the function of the library. He wanted a building for study—not a palace.

In their design for the Library of Congress, Smithmeyer and Pelz attempted to create a monumental building. The size of the building made it monumental, but the design itself was uninspired. In his essay in the *American Renaissance* catalogue, Richard Guy Wilson wrote:

> Their design, euphemistically labeled "Italian Renaissance," represents the High Victorian attitude toward composition and form. Instead of the large subdivision of parts in The New York Public Library or the solid block of The Boston Public Library, The Library of Congress represents a picturesque attitude in which elaborate and extensive subdivision of parts dominates. This difference between the New York library's easily perceivable subdivisions, and The Library of Congress's fractured multiplicity and lack of relationship of elements…reflects the essential difference in attitude towards form in the two periods of the 1860s and the 1870s and the 1880s to the 1900s.[317]

Although the Library of Congress was completed during the 1890s and included a decorative program, it was not an example of American Renaissance design. The building design was not unified in any way. The dome, which was so important for the interior program, was barely visible from the street level. The building overwhelmed visitors with its bulk, and there was nothing about the exterior that made it clear that it was a library. From this example, Billings saw that size and materials alone did not constitute a great library building.

In addition to Boston and Washington, D.C., Billings also traveled to Chicago, where he probably looked at the Chicago Public Library and the Newberry Library.[318]

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[317] *American Renaissance*, 105.

[318] It is clear from his letters that Billings also corresponded with the librarian at the John Crerar Library in Chicago. Since this library occupied a space in the Marshall Field building at the time, and not a purpose-built structure, it will not be discussed here.

The Chicago Public Library was founded through a program called the "English Book Donation." On December 17, 1871, in response to the Great Chicago Fire, an editorial by A. H. Burgess appeared in the London *Tribune*: "I propose that England should present a Free Library to Chicago, to remain there as a mark of sympathy now, and a keepsake and a token of true brotherly kindness forever…."[319] Thomas Hughes, a member of parliament and author, sent circulars requesting book donations to London writers, book sellers, and publishers, and more than 8,000 volumes were donated to the library for the citizens of Chicago. Soon after a petition was presented to the mayor of the city to create a public library, which in turn led to the Illinois Library Act of 1872, establishing tax-supported free libraries throughout the state. The Chicago Public Library, which was located in an abandoned iron water tower that survived the fire and was retrofitted with library shelves, opened its doors on January 1, 1873. On October 24, 1873, its board elected William Frederick Poole head librarian, who left in 1887 to start the rival Newberry Library.[320]

After Poole's resignation, Frederick H. Hild became the librarian. Under his leadership, a new building was constructed and in 1887 the library moved from its retrofitted water tank to a new building designed by Charles Allerton Coolidge (1858-1936) of the firm Shepley, Rutan and Coolidge (fig. 52).[321] Its construction cost approximately $2 million, close to the budget for the New York Public Library. It had a Beaux-Arts design, like the Boston Public Library, with an arcade on its lower level and

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[319]The Great Chicago Fire burned from October 8 to 10, 1871; see the Chicago Public Library website, www.chipublib.org (accessed July 17, 2008).

[320]Houghton Wetherold, "The Architectural History of the Newberry Library," *The Newberry Library Bulletin*, (November 1962), as quoted in www.newberry.org/collections/ArchitecturalHIst.html (accessed July 17, 2008).

[321]Shepley, Rutan and Coolidge was the successor firm to H. H. Richardson. Van Slyck, *Free to All*, 11.

rectangular windows defining the upper area; a heavy cornice capped the building. The interior was lavishly decorated with murals, sculpture, and a glass dome created by Tiffany Glass and Decorating Company.

When Poole left the Chicago Public Library he became the Newberry Library's first librarian. In his will Walter Loomis Newberry (1804-1868) directed that half of his estate be used to found a public library. Although he had died nine years earlier, his estate was not settled until July 18, 1887.[322] When Poole assumed his duties on August 1 of that year he immediately began work on a design for the new library building, believing that architects were not capable of properly designing a library. He cited the Boston Public Library as one such example, calling it poorly designed and too expensive. In his view architects only wanted grand architectural statements, and the needs of the library and its users suffered as a result.[323]

Poole advanced an unusual solution to library organization. Instead of using the stack system employed at the Boston Public Library and the Library of Congress, he advocated for a series of reading rooms, each assigned its own subject matter, to be placed around a courtyard, which would allow light into the rooms. Interior walls helped to make the building fireproof—which was a major concern for all builders in Chicago. And because the books were stored in designated study rooms, there was no need for delivery services.

In March 1888 the trustees, at Poole's recommendation, selected twenty-nine-year-old Henry Ives Cobb (1859-1931) as the architect of the Newberry Library. Many

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[322]Ibid.

[323]Poole, *Report*, 4.

members of the American Library Association were of the opinion that hiring a young architect—if you had to hire one at all—was best because he would be more responsive to the suggestions of the librarian.[324] Cobb tried to introduce a stack system into his design, but Poole would not allow it. Ultimately, in fact, Poole forced his design on Cobb. Because Poole did not want to use additional funds for embellishment, the exterior and interior of the building were quite plain. The exterior architecture, an example of Richardsonian Romanesque, conveyed a solidity that emphasized the building's permanence. Its robust character and similarity to commercial architecture met Poole's desire that the building be unadorned. Although it was not neoclassical, the style was appropriate for Chicago, and the massive stone walls and round arched detailing looked like Richardson's Marshall Fields warehouse building (1887).[325]

Billings absorbed ideas from the libraries in Chicago, Boston, and Washington. Like Poole he was clear about what he wanted the library's program to be—a stack system, separate reading rooms for specialized subjects, and a large general reading room with natural overhead light. He did not want to waste money on grand architectural features, such as a dome or allegorical sculpture. He did need to respond to the need for a monumentality that had been growing as a requirement for New York libraries.

The response to the first competition was overwhelming. More than 240 architects applied for competition plans and specifications, and eighty-eight of them submitted proposals. Billings stated that his reasoning behind having two competitions was to insure that no New York City architect would be overlooked.[326] He also wanted

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[324]Wetherold, "Architectural History," 3.

[325]Jordy, *Progressive and Academic Ideals*, 324-25.

some of his own ideas to be considered by the architects, in essence using the first competition not just to find prospective architects, but also to validate his ideas.

In addition to the materials made available to the architects, the specifications for the competition and the program for the library—largely made up of Billings's own wish list—were printed in the spring 1897 edition of the *Library Journal* (figs. 53, 54). The stack room was to hold 1.2 million volumes on 150,000 linear feet of shelving. There were to be seven shelves per stack per floor. The large public reading rooms had to accommodate 800 readers, with thirty square feet per reader plus additional space for catalogs; the total square footage for this room was to be 26,800. The periodical room was to have 4,000 square feet and 1,000 linear feet of shelving. The newspaper room, also 4,000 square feet, was to be located on the first floor. The program included an additional 5,000 square feet of newspaper storage space on the third floor. There was to be a patents room on the second floor, with 2,500 linear feet of shelving and 3,000 square feet; a children's room on the first floor near the entrance of the library; and a library for the blind on the first floor.

In a meeting of the American Library Association on June 24, 1897, Billings presented the competition specifications to his fellow librarians.[327] He wanted their opinions on two questions related to the library's design. His principal concern was about the placement of the main reading room. Billings wanted it located on an upper floor of the building. He thought this would accomplish several goals: it would keep readers away from the street noise; the room would be lit from above; and its location would facilitate delivery mechanics. His plan would keep the noisiest parts of the library,

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[326]"Extract of the Fourth day…," 2.

[327]Ibid.

such as the children's room, on the first floor. If the periodical and special reading rooms were located on the first floor, then tourists and sightseers would likely remain there and the scholars would be able to work in quiet on the upper floor. Billings could find only two undesirable aspects to his design. First, the architects would not be able to create an imposing architectural feature, such as a dome. Second, artificial light would be required in the secondary reading rooms on the first and second floors, although he reasoned that this was a lesser concern because artificial light was already used in major libraries such as the Astor and the Boston Public libraries.

After his presentation Billings opened the floor to his fellow librarians. Many of them were pleased that Billings was willing to forego architectural grandeur for a better functioning building, that he had chosen function over form. Some felt Billings should include a secondary reading room on the first floor to accommodate readers who wanted quick access to the library, not just scholars or students. One of the librarians, a Mr. Green, said:

> [A b]eautiful room filled with statuary, and handsomely bound books, is the idea of a private library, but I think we had better say with the greatest stress to the people interested in the library for New York, that it is entirely impracticable to do such a thing in a public library, and the effort to secure the convenience of the people which has been made by these plans is what is to be kept most in view.[328]

The observation that interior art and decoration are not appropriate was a direct reference to the Boston Public Library. Librarians were very concerned about cost, as it directly affected their ability to purchase books—which was, after all, the purpose of the library. The cost overruns at the Boston Public Library were well known and Billings did not want to repeat that mistake.

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[328]"Extract…", 21.

In addition to his presentation to the American Library Association, Billings solicited opinions about the library from many other librarians, including: John Vance Cheney of the Newberry Library; Henry P. Bowditch, Boston Public Library; the head librarian at Harvard Medical School; William E. Foster, Providence Public Library; Clement W. Andrews, The John Crerar Library, Chicago; The Lenox Library; Wilberforce Ames, Astor Library; J. X. N. Larrad, Buffalo Public Library; and Melvil Dewey, director of the State Library and Extension Department of the University of the State of New York and creator of the Dewey decimal system.[329] Billings queried them on the location of the reading room on the upper floor, the appropriate size of the administrative spaces, the sizes of the various rooms, and the best material for the building.

The First Competition Circular outlined the program for the new library. The footprint was to be approximately 400 feet by 225 feet, with two inner courtyards 100 feet by 75 feet separated by a central axis. The entrance would be on this axis, perpendicular to Fifth Avenue. The patents, children's, periodical, public documents, lecture, and accession rooms were to be on the perimeter of the first floor, and the service rooms were located near the center. The second floor was to contain specialized departments, such as orientalia, rare books, genealogy, music, and manuscripts.[330] The third floor would have galleries parallel to Fifth Avenue with a reading room located at the opposite side of the building.

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[329]John Shaw Billings Records, The New York Public Library Archives, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations, Box 34, Folder 5.

[330]At one point there was talk of including a separate room for the Bibles in the Lenox Collection, but most of the librarians Billings surveyed felt this was superfluous so it was eliminated. The Bible room probably was included to make the Lenox Library trustees more comfortable with the idea that Lenox's collection would be overtaken by that of the new library.

Of the eighty-eight designs entered in the preliminary competition only twenty-nine were eligible.[331] Forty of the entrants, had placed the reading room on either the first or the second floor, which went against the requirements of the competition. Why they did so is not known; perhaps they wanted it to be closer to the building's entrance. Twelve successful competitors were chosen from the first competition: Joseph H. Freedlander; Haydel & Shepard; Henry Hornbostel; George E. Wood; George C. Palmer; Howard & Cauldwell; Lord, Hewlett & Hull; Clarence S. Luce; Parish & Schroeder; Roos & Weber; W. Wheeler Smith, who was associated with Walker and Morris; C. W. and A. A. Stoughton; James E. Ware & Son; and Whitney Warren. The most famous of the twelve was Warren who in partnership with Charles Wetmore designed Grand Central Terminal in New York City.[332] Six survived a second round of elimination and were invited to join the second competition: Freedlander; Haydel and Shepard; Hornbostel, Wood and Palmer; Howard and Cauldwell; Smith; and Warren.

The executive committee of the board of trustees invited McKim, Mead and White; George Browne Post (1837-1913); Carrère and Hastings; Cyrus Eidlitz (1853-1921); Charles Coolidge Haight (1841-1917); and Peabody and Stearns to join the six finalists in a second competition, which had essentially the same specifications except for the addition of a circulation department located across from the Fifth Avenue entrance.[333]

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[331]"Report on First Competition," John Shaw Billings Records, The New York Public Library Archives, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations, Box 34, Folder 6

[332]Warren attended the Ecole des Beaux-arts from 1888 to 1893, *American Renaissance*, 76. Peter Pennoyer and Anne Walker, *The Architecture of Warren and Wetmore* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2006).

[333]Although he had submitted a design earlier, Ernest Flagg was not invited to participate in the competition. In the intervening years between his proposed design and the competition, Flagg had a disastrous experience as the architect of the Corcoran Gallery. Led by Charles Glover the trustees hired John S. Larcombe as clerk of works. His interference with Flagg and the construction firm, Norcoss

Post had been a student of Richard Morris Hunt from 1858 to 1860, and designed such notable buildings as the Equitable Life Assurance Society (1868-70), the first office building to use elevators; the Western Union Telegraph Building (1872-75), and early New York skyscraper; and the New York Produce Exchange (1881-84). He designed the Manufactures and Liberal Arts Building for the World's Columbian Exhibition in 1893. Eidlitz, son of architect Leopold Eidlitz (1823-1908), was born in New York and studied architecture in Stuttgart, Germany. He designed such works as the Buffalo and Erie County Public Library in Buffalo (1887) and Dearborn Station in Chicago (1885). He also collaborated with Richardson on the New York State Capitol in Albany. Haight designed buildings for Yale University, Columbia University (its Madison Avenue campus, which no longer exists), Trinity College, and General Theological Seminary in New York City. Robert Swain Peabody (1845-1917) and John Goddard Stearns (1843-1917) formed their partnership in 1870. Peabody attended the École des Beaux-arts from 1867 to 1870. A nationally recognized Boston-based firm, Peabody and Stearns designed more than 1,000 buildings and it was known for working in a wide variety of architectural styles, which included High Victorian Gothic, Shingle Style, and Colonial Revival. They also designed the Massachusetts State building for the World's Columbian Exhibition.[334]

Bothers, led to several lawsuits which delayed the construction of the building. Although Flagg might not have been at fault, the problems associated with this job led potential clients to find him unsuitable for future commissions. Bacon, *Ernest Flagg*, 66-67.

[334]Sarah Bradford Landau, *George B. Post, Architect: Picturesque Designer and Determined Realist* (New York: Monacelli Press, 1998); Kathryn E. Holliday, *Leopold Eidlitz: Architecture and Idealism in the Gilded Age* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2008); Wheaton A. Holden, "The Peabody Touch: Peabody and Stearns of Boston, 1870-1917," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 32 (May 1973): 114-31; Montgomery Schuyler, " A Review of the Work of Chas. C. Haight," *Architectural Record* (1899).

Entries for the second competition were closed on November 1, 1897. The jury met the following day at the Astor Library to deliberate. The second jury consisted of three architects (Walter Cook, Cass Gilbert [1859-1934], and Edgar V. Seeler), three trustees (John L. Cadwalader, Alexander Maitland, George L. Rives), and Billings.[335] On November 8, the library published a report of the jury's findings, which determined Carrère and Hastings's design to be superior (fig. 55). The jury found the design of the runner-up, Howard and Cauldwell, satisfactory in that it met the design requirements, but did not consider it as "beautiful" as the design by Carrère and Hastings (fig. 56). McKim, Mead and White—who modified their design for the Boston Public Library—came in a distant third (fig. 57). Their design did not conform to the program requirements outlined in the competition. The jury thought that their attempt to rework the design had merit, but ultimately it was not as good as the design based on the plan Billings had developed during the previous months.

The library printed the following report from the jury:

> [W]e further state that in our judgment design Number 11 [Carrère and Hastings] fulfills in a high degree all the requirements called for by the terms of the competition, and presents a consistent skillful and artistic solution of the practical and structural conditions. It is, moreover, direct and dignified in treatment and would give the City of New York an entirely satisfactory and practical working library and at the same time a beautiful and monumental building. It is distinctly the best of the designs submitted and of very exceptional merit in every respect. In its interior arrangement this design follows closely the plan outlined by the Committee in the Terms of Competition.[336]

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[335]Lyndenberg, *History of the New York Public Library*, 450.

[336]"Report of the Jury of Award in the Second Competition," Board of Trustees Records, The New York Public Library Archives, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations, Box 21.

In its assessment of the design submitted by McKim, Mead and White the jury wrote: "While the design is interesting and exhibits power and capacity in a high degree, it is evident in our judgment that significant weight has not been given to the working necessities of the Library…."[337] The same criticism had been made of the Boston Public Library.

Carrère and Hastings's design had a five-part façade with a central entrance pavilion and two end pavilions. A three-part triumphal arch motif with a colossal ionic order defined the entrance. The ranges, or hyphens, that connected the entrance to the end pavilions were two stories high. On the ground floor there was an arcade, and the upper floor had rectangular openings. The end pavilions combined the wall treatment of the entrance and the hyphens through the use of the colossal Ionic order. The plan conformed to what Billings had outlined in the competition documents.

Howard and Cauldwell's second-place design was similar in form to that of Carrère and Hastings. The Fifth Avenue elevation was also a five-part façade that used a colossal Ionic order. The end pavilions, however, did not have columns. Instead the wall had rusticated pilasters and a domed roof. The hyphens were two stories high, but they used rectangular openings on both levels instead of an arcade. The overall design was not as unified in appearance as that by Carrère and Hastings.

McKim, Mead and White's design was very similar to theirs for the Boston Public Library. The Fifth Avenue façade was unbroken and had a uniform cornice. The form recalled that of Italian Renaissance palazzi. There were three levels below the cornice: a rusticated basement and rectangular openings on the second and third levels. Double

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[337]Ibid.

Corinthian columns separated each bay. There was no special articulation of the wall to define the entrance of the library; rather, it was designated by steps flanked by two sculptures. When compared to the five-part designs, McKim, Mead and White's was not as monumental. The regularity of the openings diminished the importance of the building. Their model, the renaissance palazzo, was a private, domestic structure, whereas the model for Carrère and Hastings's five-part design was a public, governmental building, a French Royal palace. Thus this particular division of the library's façade was associated with monumental public architecture.

The New York Public Library was their most important commission for Carrère and Hastings. John Merven Carrère, whose father was involved in the coffee trade in Brazil, was born in Rio de Janeiro on November 8, 1853. He enrolled in the École des Beaux-Arts in 1877 and received his *diplôme* in 1882. In 1883 he joined the firm of McKim, Mead and White, where he met Thomas Hastings Jr., who was working as a draftsman there. Hastings was born on March 11, 1860. Hastings was from an old New York family, the first of whom arrived at the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1634.[338] Early in his career he worked for the furniture designers Herter Brothers under Charles Atwood. In 1880 he entered the École and studied there for three years. Like Carrère, he joined the firm McKim, Mead and White in October 1883 after earning his *diplôme* at the École, and in 1885 he formally joined in partnership with Carrère.[339] Of the two architects, Hastings was the more socially connected. He used his position within the upper class of New York society to cultivate clients. He was a hard worker and often

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[338]Hastings died of appendicitis on October 20, 1929. Blake, "Architecture of Carrère and Hastings," 10.

[339]According to Curtis Channing Blake, the two did not legally formalize their partnership until 1900. Ibid., 3.

stayed late at the office. In fact he built a small bungalow on top of his last office in order to keep his long hours. Because of the size and importance of the New York Public Library commission, Carrère and Hastings relocated their office from Bowling Green in downtown Manhattan to a townhouse on Fortieth Street and Madison Avenue, one block from the library.[340]

Their training at the École and with the firm of McKim, Mead, and White, and equally influenced their work. Carrère and Hastings were also in Paris at a time when the classicizing influence of the École was most deeply felt. While studying there, they would have seen Baron Georges Haussamann's (1809-1891) design for the city under Napoleon III, as well as works such as Charles Garnier's (1825-1898) Paris Opera (1862-75). Carrère and Hastings were employed at McKim, Mead and White when the Villard Houses in New York City were being designed. This complex of six attached town houses, organized in a U-shape around a courtyard, marked an important point in the oeuvre of McKim, Mead and White. The exterior of the houses was one of the firm's first scholarly studies in Italian Renaissance design, and sources for the design include Baldassare Peruzzi's Villa Farnesina (1509-11) and Donato Bramante's Palazzo della Cancelleria (c. 1485), both located in Rome. The firm's design, which embraced Renaissance style and also incorporated a strong relationship to the urban environment, was a possible source of inspiration for Carrère and Hastings in their design of the New York Public Library.[341]

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[340]Blake, "Architecture of Carrère and Hastings," 19. Woods, *From Craft to Profession*, 129.

[341]Stern, Mellins, and Fishman, *New York 1880*, 601; William C. Shopsin and Mosette Glaser Broderick, *The Villard Houses: Life Story of a Landmark* (New York: Viking Press, 1980).

Henry Morrison Flagler (1830-1913), one of the original partners of the Standard Oil Trust, gave Carrère and Hastings their big break in 1885, when Carrère went to Florida to consult with him on the accuracy of the drawings for the Ponce de Leon Hotel (1885-87) in St. Augustine. Carrère convinced Flagler to hire him and Hastings full-time for the hotel project, which led to a commission for the Alcazar Hotel (1885-87) in Palm Beach. Throughout their partnership Carrère acted as administrator of the firm, courting clients and maintaining correspondence for the firm, and Hastings was the primary designer.

In his article on the work of Carrère and Hastings, published in January 1910, Barr Ferree considered the French Renaissance style that Carrère and Hastings incorporated into their work was a breath of fresh air, a needed break from the hodgepodge of revival styles that dominated American architecture in the mid-century:

> They selected as the style which gave American architects their best opportunity, that of France toward the mid-eighteenth century; and this style was preferred, because it marks the termination of the Renaissance architectural development. Up to that time or a little later, the Renaissance forms had passed through many different phases, some better ones than others, but all of them based upon an intelligent attempt to give those forms a more consistent expression and to adapt them more completely to novel and contemporary needs. This effort culminated in the domestic architecture of France in the eighteenth century. Thereafter came the Classic and the Gothic revivals, which attempted impossible tasks and which broke the continuity of Renaissance architectural development.[342]

Along with the work of McKim, Mead and White, the French Renaissance style was the strongest influence in their work. The articulation of the Fifth Avenue façade at the New York Public Library illustrated this influence. The large central entrance pavilion gave

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[342] Barr Ferree, "The Work of Messrs. Carrère and Hastings," *Architectural Record* 27 (January 1910): 39.

the façade definition as an important building within the city. This architectural device underscored the public's high opinion of the library as a significant institution.

In Ferree's opinion the Renaissance was the best architectural model for American architects practicing at the turn of the twentieth century.[343] It allowed for individual creativity within a framework of historical restraint. Firms like McKim, Mead and White could select which Renaissance models to emulate—for example, the Italian Renaissance at the Boston Public Library—whereas a firm like Carrère and Hastings could stick to a single vocabulary like that of the French Renaissance. Ferree did not find the New York Public Library to be the most elegant of Carrère and Hastings's designs. He was critical of the large spaces of blank wall on the exterior and the arches in the entrance hall, a defect he believed stemmed from the wishes of the firm's client, not the architects themselves.[344]

In his report on the library's design competition, Edwin Emerson Jr. wrote in *Harper's Weekly*:

> Thus, while attention is given to such important questions as fire-proof construction and the safe-keeping of the valuable special collections accumulated by the late Messrs. Tilden, Lenox, and Astor, the real problem given by the all-important demands of the librarian was a more satisfactory correlation of the general reading-rooms with the book-stacks than what has hitherto been the practice in the other great libraries of this country and in Europe. There the most commonly accepted plan has been to have the books and their readers together on the same floors, with the stacks forming either the centre or the outer circumference; but in this case, in accordance with a resolution passed by the American Library Association at its last meeting, in Philadelphia, the reading-rooms have been placed above the book stacks. This arrangement makes it possible for the seven stories of stacks to contain nearly two million volumes without infringing upon the space allotted to the reading-rooms; it allows

[343]Ibid, 54.

[344]Ibid., 109.

> the best natural light to be shed upon the readers remaining in the library; and it furthermore makes it possible for the large numbers of persons who come to the library merely to draw books for home reading to enter and leave the main distribution-room without in any way disturbing the readers seated at their tables above, while a multitude of elevators will render stair-climbing unnecessary.[345]

Situating the stacks in an area separate from the reading room was done at the British Museum Library and the Boston Public Library. Billings had studied those buildings and through his guidance of the architects' plan he was able to meet the recommendations of the American Library Association and place the reading room of the New York Public Library on the third floor. In Carrère and Hastings's realization of Billings plan they accomplished his goals for the reading room—it was quiet, well lit, and close to the stacks. Emerson continued his report:

> Beside this simple division of the two principal features of the library above and below, there is another equally simple division of the ground-plan, within and without, the rear and higher working part of the library standing within the lower but more ornamental exterior portion of the building, as the T might stand within a square-shaped U, with two open courts filling out the inner corners.[346]

The "T" Emerson describes includes the Fifth Avenue façade and main reading room. The "U" includes the specialized rooms and the stacks. His description of a plan within a plan is further reinforced by the exterior appearance of these two sections. While the front façade is neoclassical with a five-part scheme, the rear is plain and unadorned. It has vertical strips of windows between stone panels and anticipates the curtain walls of the twentieth century.

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[345]Edwin Emerson Jr., "New York Public Library," *Harper's Weekly*, December 11, 1897.

[346]Ibid.

Not only was Carrère and Hastings's exterior visible from Fifth Avenue, it was also a focal point on Forty-second Street. A statuary program for the exterior—a group of bronze statues for the roof and two free columns surmounted by bronze statues along Fifth Avenue—was planned but never executed. The Commissioners of Public Parks, who oversaw the erection of the building, estimated its cost at $2 million. $2.5 million was appropriated to complete the project.

The building's construction took nine years and its final cost was closer to $10 million. The completed library had shelf space for three million books and could accommodate 1,700 users.[347]

In September 1910 *Architectural Record* published a review of the library written by A. C. David, a pseudonym for the critic and political scientist Herbert Croly.[348] Croly wrote that the New York Public Library was the most important building erected since the "American architectural renewal."[349] The building dressed Billings's plan in the American Renaissance style of the late nineteenth century. This neoclassical vocabulary and its associations with the White City and the World's Columbian Exposition instantly marked the library as an important center in the city. It was a monumental public building.

At the laying of the cornerstone of the library on November 10, 1902, John Bigelow (1817-1911), president of the board of trustees, proclaimed:

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[347]"Opening of the New Building of the New York Public Library," *New York Libraries* 2 (July 1911): 262-63.

[348]Mark Alan Hewitt et al., *Carrère and Hastings Architects* (New York: Acanthus Press, 2006), 28-29.

[349]A. C. David [Herbert Croly], "The New York Public Library," *Architectural Record* 28 (September 1910): 145. See also David W. Levy, *Herbert Croly of the New Republic: The Life and Thought of an American Progressive* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985).

> [I]t is the lending rather than the reference library which is the real university for the people. The reference library is to the lending library what in war the reserves are to the battalions at the front. They are not needed all of the time—in many a campaign, not at all—but are of incalculable importance in an emergency.[350]

The New York Public Library was the most important library building in New York City. Not only was it the central branch of the newly formed public library system, it also served as an attraction to visitors to the city. Its neoclassical style identified it as an important municipal building. The library was used by a wide number of citizens, including those of underserved groups, such as the blind. Its overall significance within the city cannot be understated, and it continues to serve the public as one of the greatest research institutions in the U. S.

In 1901, while the central building of the New York Public Library was under construction, Andrew Carnegie gave a gift of $5.2 million to the city to erect sixty-five branch libraries at an approximate cost of $80,000 each.[351] These libraries would eventually become the "battalions at the front." Situated within the residential areas of the city, most users of the New York Public Library system would visit these buildings rather than the central building on Forty-second Street. Carrère, McKim, and Walter Cook—of the firm Babb, Cook and Willard who designed Carneigie's Fifth Avenue mansion (1899-1903)—formed an architectural committee. They established design guidelines for New York's Carnegie libraries, which included specifications for the buildings' style and materials. The architects of the buildings were required to use a

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[350]John Shaw Billings Records, The New York Public Library Archives, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations, Box 34, Folder 10

[351]"Agreement Entered into with the City of New York Relative to the Gift of Andrew Carnegie for Branch Free Circulating Library Buildings," July 17, 1901, as quoted in Mary B. Dierickx, *The Architecture of Literacy*, 211.

neoclassical style and limestone on the exterior. Billings and the other branch librarians were consulted as to the buildings' plans, and they requested that the libraries have side entrances in order to allow a greater amount of uninterrupted space on the interior. It is these smaller, neighborhood libraries that would supplant the large, research library as the public library type used by most New Yorkers.

The New York Public Library represents a culmination of the search for a public library type. It was a large, taxpayer-supported institution, although much of its initial financing came from private sources, and as such was located within a monumental building. It was, in its representation of Billings's library plan, a marriage of librarian and architect. Through adherence to Billing's plan the program for the library was met; its many users were able to use the building in ways that were meaningful to them. The building's exterior appearance also achieved its founders' goal of having a monumental structure that represented New York City as an internationally significant city.

In October 2008 the library announced a major renovation of its central building. During its life as a functioning library, the building had undergone many smaller renovations to increase stack space or to refurbish the reading rooms. This project, however, will be the largest to date. The total cost is estimated at $1.2 billion. The financier Stephen A. Swarzmann gave $100 million, and the library will receive additional funds through the sale of two public library branches, the Donnell Branch (West Fifty-third Street) and the Mid-Manhattan Branch (Fortieth Street and Fifth Avenue). The library's trustees selected Norman Foster, the British architect, to design the new addition, which will leave the exterior of the building unaltered.[352]

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[352]Robin Pogrebin, "British Architect to Redesign City Library," *New York Times,* October 23, 2008.

Conclusion

The three public libraries discussed herein illustrate the typological change of the library within the physical environment of New York City. The Astor Library with its Romanesque Revival design shows the first attempt by architects to create a public library type. The building was not grand, and although it was open to the public, initially it served only men over the age of fourteen. Eventually women were granted access, but the library never became truly public because its daytime-only hours of operation kept out much of the working class. The Lenox Library was the next attempt at creating a public library to serve the city, but this also was not successful. Although the Lenox Library was public in that it did not require a fee for entrance, its inaccessibility made it more of a private institution. There was little sense of ownership of its treasures by the public. Furthermore, the library's admission standards intimidated the public, who ultimately avoided it altogether. Its architecture, however, shows a step forward in library design, toward the use of neoclassicism to enhance the perceived significance of the building. The New York Public Library is the culmination of these developments in libraries. It was open to all users, regardless of age, sex, or country of origin, and its design, monumental as well as practical, is considered the ideal library type.

A year after the New York Public Library's opening, an article appeared in the *New York Times* assessing the library from the point of view of those who worked there. The author interviewed much of the library's staff and found that the library did not have sufficient funds to support all of the demands made on them by the public. As one library official explained:

> Since we have moved into the new library… the demands upon us are even greater than they were at the old Astor. There are tobacconists, tea

> growers, and other merchants who have demanded that I buy all the city directories of the country, a demand which would cost me at least $2000 a year…. The public must realize that funds are needed everywhere in this huge building.[353]

There were many demands for specialized materials that were unfulfilled. Not only was there not enough money for these requests, but it was not even the purpose for the library. It had to serve the entire public, not a select group of merchants or scholars. Where the library achieved depth in a particular area, it was usually the result of a gift of money or materials.

The central library collection was created from those at the Astor and Lenox Libraries, and the central building became a research library. As such it was compared to other nearby institutions:

> "Let the public remember," said one official, "that inasmuch as we cannot do everything in the way of building up a full collection of reference books, it is better to have three or four sections complete than to have the whole field thin. The move from Lafayette Street has opened up the library as never before. One hundred thousand volumes are now accessible which were impossible to handle at the old Astor. But this opening-up process has shown us where we are weakest, and there is where we will have to be strengthened. We are now in the neighborhood of many specialized libraries. But even though the engineers library, the law library, the library of medicine and the chemists' library are near at hand it is still necessary for the New York Public Library to have an adequate reference supply on these subjects, even though we drop out of certain fields."[354]

The library's collection was particularly strong in American history and weak in drama, although the library for the blind attracted new users. Samuel Putnam Avery (1822-1904), a New York art collector, gave the library his print collection, which along with works from the Astor and Lenox became the basis for a special prints room. One

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[353]"A Busy Year at New York's Public Library," *New York Times*, June 30, 1912.

[354]Ibid.

librarian said that the building had room for book purchases for at least another twenty-five years, when they could expand the building by adding stacks in Bryant Park. The circulation during the first year was 7,914,882 volumes.

As the collection was catalogued it was clear that it would be one of the largest and most important in the city. There were still concerns, however, that it would not be accessible to the entire public:

> One of the librarians declared that the greatest change he had noted since the move was the sifting out of the undesirable citizen. The only unfortunate fact is that many people who used the [Astor] library heretofore are unable to use it now, because 10 cents-cabfare is a serious problem for them.
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> "When we moved from Lafayette Street a year ago," he said, "we bought for the branch libraries in that neighborhood many books which we know would be called for. But even then we realized that there were many teachers, for instance, earning scarce 70 cents a day, who would miss the luxury of a large collection."[355]

Although the Forty-second Street location was central, it did move the library away from some of its users, especially the less wealthy inhabitant of downtown neighborhoods that had been abandoned by the more fashionable in favor of new uptown elite enclaves. The trustees of the library thought the branch libraries created by the Carnegie grant would serve these citizens, but every branch library could not become a research library. Thus the goal of providing an easily accessed, world-class research library to all New Yorkers would remain unmet. The writer did not specify who the "undesirable citizens" were, although one could assume by the fact that they could not afford transportation fare uptown that they were members of the lower class who lived near the Astor Library.

It is contradictory that New York's great public library, which was open to all, would find some of its users undesirable. The librarians at the Astor complained about

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[355]Ibid.

the idlers, but they comprised the majority of the library's users. Billings pushed many of the New York Public Library's users to the edges of the building in order to privilege the scholar who would climb the stairs to the third-floor reading room. Through his plan he created a hierarchy among the library's users. Thus the vision of the library as a "public university" could be met even though not all of the users had such lofty goals for themselves.

Because the staff was more visible in the new library, the public asked more of them. One staff member was quoted as saying: "A person comes to the library to hunt up something, and expects us to hunt it up for him. In Europe, if the reader wishes this work done, he has to pay for it; but here it is considered part of our duty."[356] This research component to the new library shows how library science and the role of librarian had grown into respected professions since the opening of the Astor Library in 1848. Librarians were now expected to help patrons perform research, rather than merely to catalogue and safeguard books.

The article concluded on a positive note: "And so at the close of the first year, the library is at last in order. The dingy Astor days are in truth a memory, and the building on Forty-second Street is now making library history."[357] The New York Public Library building was a success. It brought together several existing library collections under one roof and made them useful to everyday users. It was also successful architecturally, in that it was recognized as a significant landmark within the city. Carrère and Hastings created a building that was both monumental in appearance and useful to the library patron. This was the public library type that New Yorkers had been looking for during

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[356]Ibid.

[357]Ibid.

the nineteenth century, and it was one that would continue to serve them into the twenty-first.

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