PRO LIBRIS: ARCHITECTURAL INSCRIPTIONS AND THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY BUILDING

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE

MASTER OF SCIENCE IN HISTORIC PRESERVATION

BY

COURTNEY WIMBERLY THEIS

CHAIR: EDWARD T. WOLNER

BALL STATE UNIVERSITY

MUNCIE, INDIANA

MAY 2011
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my thesis committee members, Ted Wolner, Carol Flores and, Ron Rarick for your sound advice and encouragement throughout the course of this research. A special thanks to Carol Flores for first introducing me to the topic of architectural inscriptions. Never again will I enter a building without glancing around for lines of text.

I am indebted to the the staff at Ball State University Library as well as the archival staff at Yale University, Columbia University, the University of Chicago, the University of Washington, the University of Virginia, the University of Michigan, Indiana University, Harvard University, and Northwestern University, for all their help in locating research material.

I would also like to thank my colleagues and family for their encouragement and support throughout this process. A special thanks is owed to my husband, Geoff, for all that he has done throughout my graduate school career.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements .................................................................................................................. i

List of Illustrations ................................................................................................................ iv

Methodology .......................................................................................................................... xii

Literature Review .................................................................................................................. xiv

Chapter I: Introduction .......................................................................................................... 1

Chapter II: Architectural Inscriptions and Morality, 1890-1930 ........................................ 6

Chapter III: Trends in Library Building ................................................................................ 15

  - The Influence of the Public Library ..................................................................................... 17
    
    *Boston Public Library, Library of Congress, Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, Indianapolis Public Library, San Francisco Public Library*

  - Changes in Academia .......................................................................................................... 37

Chapter IV: Inscriptions of Beaux Arts University Libraries ............................................. 41

  *Low Library at Columbia University, Rotunda of the University of Virginia, Langdell Law School and Library at Harvard University, Butler Library at Columbia University, Clements Library at the University of Michigan*

Chapter V: Inscriptions of Neo-Gothic University Libraries ............................................. 73

  *Harper Memorial Library at the University of Chicago, Suzzallo Library at the University of Washington, Sterling Memorial Library at Yale University, Deering Memorial Library at Northwestern University, Franklin Hall at Indiana University*

Chapter VI: Influence of the Modern Movement and the Resurgence of Contemporary Library Inscriptions .................................................................................................................. 99

  *Firestone Library at Princeton University, Indianapolis Public library addition, John Carter Brown Library addition, University of Rhode Island Library.*

Chapter VII: Conclusion ........................................................................................................ 109

Appendix I: Inscriptions on the Library of Congress ........................................................... 112

Appendix II: Inscriptions on the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh ....................................... 121
Appendix III: Andrew Carnegie’s Letter about Inscriptions on the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh................................................................. 122
Appendix IV: Inscriptions on the Indianapolis Public Library................................................................. 123
Appendix V: Inscriptions on the San Francisco Public Library................................................................. 124
Appendix VI: President Seth Low’s Proposed Inscriptions for Low Library ....................................... 126
Appendix VII: George Rives’ Notes on Low Library Inscriptions ......................................................... 128
Appendix VIII: List of Inscriptions in Low Library’s Architecture Reading Room ............................. 131
Appendix IX: Inscriptions on Butler Library......................................................................................... 132
Appendix X: Letter from James Gamble Rogers to President Nicholas Butler................................. 133
Appendix XI: Inscriptions on Harper Memorial Library ..................................................................... 134
Appendix XII: Inscriptions on Suzzallo Memorial Library ................................................................ 136
Appendix XIII: Inscriptions on Sterling Memorial Library .................................................................. 137
Appendix XIV: Inscriptions on Deering Memorial Library .................................................................. 142
Appendix XV: Inscriptions on the University of Rhode Island Library ............................................. 143
Bibliography........................................................................................................................................ 145
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

FIGURES

Except where noted, all photographs were taken by the author.

CHAPTER II


Figure 3: Claude Nicolas Ledoux, River Inspector’s House for the Ideal City of Chaux, 1804. Drawing from Richard A. Etlin, Symbolic Space (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994): 111.

Figure 4: Claude Nicolas Ledoux, Pacifère for the Ideal City of Chaux, 1804. Drawing from Richard A. Etlin, Symbolic Space (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994): 113.

Figure 5: Daniel Burnham, Union Station, Washington D.C., 1907.

Figure 6: Bertram Goodhue, Nebraska State Capitol Building, Lincoln, Nebraska, 1922-32.


CHAPTER III

Figure 8: Charles Follen McKim, Boston Public Library, 1895, south elevation.

Figure 9: Charles Follen McKim, Boston Public Library, 1895, detail of frieze and tablets on south elevation.
Figure 10: Charles Follen McKim, Boston Public Library, 1895, detail of inscribed tablets on south elevation.


Figure 12: Charles Follen McKim, Boston Public Library, 1895, entrance vestibule groin vaults.

Figure 13: Charles Follen McKim, Boston Public Library, 1895, reading room.

Figure 14: John L. Smithmeyer, Library of Congress, Washington D.C., 1897.


Figure 19: Longfellow, Alden and Harlow, Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, 1895/1907, west elevation.


Figure 22: Paul Cret, Indianapolis Public Library, 1916, south elevation.

Figure 23: Paul Cret, Indianapolis Public Library, 1916, south elevation cornice.

Figure 24: Paul Cret, Indianapolis Public Library, 1916, reading room.

Figure 25: Paul Cret, Indianapolis Public Library, inscription over entrance, 1916.

Figure 26: George Kelham, San Francisco Public Library, 1917. Photograph from Gray A. Brechin. Inscriptions at the Old Public Library of San Francisco. (San Francisco: Book Club of California, 2003): 9.

Figure 27: George Kelham, San Francisco Public Library, 1917, detail of exterior tablets. Photograph from Gray A. Brechin. Inscriptions at the Old Public Library of San Francisco. (San Francisco: Book Club of California, 2003): 44.

Figure 28: George Kelham, San Francisco Public Library, 1917, frieze inscription. Photograph from Gray A. Brechin. Inscriptions at the Old Public Library of San Francisco. (San Francisco: Book Club of California, 2003): 43.

Figure 29: George Kelham, San Francisco Public Library, 1917, interior tablets in mezzanine. Photograph from Gray A. Brechin. Inscriptions at the Old Public Library of San Francisco. (San Francisco: Book Club of California, 2003): 11.

CHAPTER IV:

Figure 30: Arch of Titus, Rome, First century AD.


Figure 32: Charles Follen McKim, Low Library, Columbia University, 1893, south elevation.
Figure 33: Charles Follen McKim, Low Library, Columbia University, 1893, elevation drawing. Courtesy of the University Archives, Columbia University.

Figure 34: Charles Follen McKim, Low Library, Columbia University, 1893, entablature detail.

Figure 35: Charles Follen McKim, Low Library, Columbia University, 1893, reading room.

Figure 36: Charles Follen McKim, Low Library, Columbia University, 1893, architecture reading room inscriptions.

Figure 37: Stanford White, Rotunda restoration, University of Virginia, 1895, West elevation. Photograph from the cover of Richard Guy Wilson and Sara A. Butler, *The Campus Guide: University of Virginia* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1999).

Figure 38: Stanford White, Rotunda Restoration, University of Virginia, 1895, dome room frieze. Photograph from c.1940, Courtesy of University of Virginia Special Collection Library.

Figure 39: Shepley, Rutan, and Coolidge, Langdell Hall, Harvard University, 1906/1929. Photograph courtesy of the University Archives, Harvard University.

Figure 40: Shepley, Rutan, and Coolidge, Langdell Hall, Harvard University, 1906. Photograph courtesy of the University Archives, Harvard University.

Figure 41: Shepley, Rutan, and Coolidge, Langdell Hall, Harvard University, 1929, frieze inscription, east elevation.

Figure 42: Shepley, Rutan, and Coolidge, Langdell Hall, Harvard University, 1929, frieze inscription, east elevation.

Figure 43: Shepley, Rutan, and Coolidge, Langdell Hall, Harvard University, 1929, frieze inscription, west elevation.

Figure 44: James Gamble Rogers, Butler Library, Columbia University, 1934, north elevation.

Figure 45: James Gamble Rogers, Butler Library, Columbia University, 1934, north elevation frieze detail.
Figure 46: James Gamble Rogers, Butler Library, Columbia University, 1934, west
elevation frieze.

Figure 47: James Gamble Rogers, Butler Library, Columbia University, 1934, east
elevation frieze.

Figure 48: James Gamble Rogers, Butler Library, Columbia University, 1934, north
elevation tablets, names of statesmen.

Figure 49: James Gamble Rogers, Butler Library, Columbia University, 1934, north
elevation tablets, names of authors.

Figure 50: James Gamble Rogers, Butler Library, Columbia University, 1934, reading
room inscription.

Figure 51: James Gamble Rogers, Butler Library, Columbia University, 1934, reading
room entrance inscription.

Figure 52: Albert Kahn, William Clements Library, University of Michigan, 1922.

Figure 53: Albert Kahn, William Clements Library, University of Michigan, 1922,
inscribed tablet, west of entrance.

Figure 54: Albert Kahn, William Clements Library, University of Michigan, 1922,
inscribed tablet, east of entrance.

CHAPTER V:

Figure 55: Shepley, Rutan and Coolidge, William Rainey Harper Memorial Library,
University of Chicago, 1912. Photograph courtesy of University of Chicago Digital
Archives.

Figure 56: Shepley, Rutan and Coolidge, William Rainey Harper Memorial Library,
University of Chicago, 1912, detail of university seals on exterior. Photograph courtesy
of University of Chicago Digital Archives.

Figure 57: Shepley, Rutan and Coolidge, William Rainey Harper Memorial Library,
University of Chicago, 1912, west screen in reading room. Photograph courtesy of
University of Chicago Digital Archives.
Figure 58: Shepley, Rutan and Coolidge, William Rainey Harper Memorial Library, University of Chicago, 1912, east screen in reading room. Photograph courtesy of University of Chicago Digital Archives.

Figure 59: Carl F. Gould and Charles Bebb, Suzzallo Library, University of Washington, 1926.

Figure 60: Carl F. Gould and Charles Bebb, Suzzallo Library, University of Washington, 1926, detail of elevation. Drawing Courtesy of the University of Washington Digital Archives.

Figure 61: Carl F. Gould and Charles Bebb, Suzzallo Library, University of Washington, 1926, detail of fields of knowledge inscriptions.

Figure 62: Carl F. Gould and Charles Bebb, Suzzallo Library, University of Washington, 1926, secondary entrance with inscribed scientists’ names. Photograph courtesy of the University of Washington Digital Archives.

Figure 63: Carl F. Gould and Charles Bebb, Suzzallo Library, University of Washington, 1926, detail of printers’ names in entrance grillwork.

Figure 64: Carl F. Gould and Charles Bebb, Suzzallo Library, University of Washington, 1926, inscription in grillwork.

Figure 65: Carl F. Gould and Charles Bebb, Suzzallo Library, University of Washington, 1926, wall inscription in reading room.

Figure 66: James Gamble Rogers, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University, 1930, east elevation.

Figure 67: James Gamble Rogers, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University, 1930, east elevation inscription.

Figure 68: James Gamble Rogers, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University, 1930, east elevation over-entrance inscription detail.

Figure 69: James Gamble Rogers, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University, 1930, west elevation detail.
Figure 70: James Gamble Rogers, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University, 1930, west elevation detail.

Figure 71: James Gamble Rogers, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University, 1930, front desk inscription.

Figure 72: James Gamble Rogers, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University, 1930, wall inscription at the crossing.

Figure 73: James Gamble Rogers, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University, 1930, wall inscriptions at the crossing.

Figure 74: James Gamble Rogers, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University, 1930, north reading room, mantel inscription.

Figure 75: James Gamble Rogers, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University, 1930, courtyard, inscribed tablets of printers’ names.

Figure 76: James Gamble Rogers, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University, 1930, courtyard, inscribed printers’ marks.

Figure 77: James Gamble Rogers, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University, 1930, courtyard over-entrance inscription.

Figure 78: James Gamble Rogers, Charles Deering Memorial Library, Northwestern University, 1932.

Figure 79: James Gamble Rogers, Charles Deering Memorial Library, Northwestern University, 1932, entrance portal inscription.

Figure 80: James Gamble Rogers, Charles Deering Memorial Library, Northwestern University, 1932, entrance portal inscription.

Figure 81: James Gamble Rogers, Charles Deering Memorial Library, Northwestern University, 1932, entrance vestibule inscription.

Figure 82: James Gamble Rogers, Charles Deering Memorial Library, Northwestern University, 1932, entrance vestibule inscription.
Figure 83: James Gamble Rogers, Charles Deering Memorial Library, Northwestern University, 1932, reading room vestibule inscription.

Figure 84: James Gamble Rogers, Charles Deering Memorial Library, Northwestern University, 1932. reading room vestibule inscription.

Figure 85: Patton and Miller, Franklin Hall, Indiana University, 1908/1927. Photograph courtesy of the Indiana University Archives and Records Management.

CHAPTER VI:

Figure 86: Robert O’Connor and Walter Kilham, Harvey S. Firestone Library, Princeton University, 1949.

Figure 87: Woollen, Molzan and Partners, Inc., Addition to the Indianapolis Public Library, 2007, detail of new inscriptions, “Vonnegut.”

Figure 88: Shepley, Rutan and Coolidge, John Carter Brown Library, Brown University campus, 1904.

Figure 89: Hartman-Cox Architects, Addition to John Carter Brown Library, Brown University campus, 1991, detail of south tablet inscription.

Figure 90: Hartman-Cox Architects, Addition to John Carter Brown Library, Brown University campus, 1991, detail of north tablet inscription.

Figure 91: University of Rhode Island Library, Kingston, 1991, detail of exterior inscription (north side).

Figure 92: University of Rhode Island Library, Kingston, 1991, detail of exterior inscription (south side).

TABLES

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The initial research for this study involved gathering secondary sources about the general topic of architectural inscriptions. This survey established a context for the study of architectural inscriptions as an ornamental form. A part of this research included understanding the moral and didactic component of the architectural inscription, and its connection to designed works with similar intentions. Libraries emerged as a building type that was particularly prone to the use of the inscription. This led to a survey of secondary sources related to both public and university libraries, with the goal of identifying specific programs of inscriptions. It was during this survey that the period from 1890 to 1930 emerged as not only an important era for library development and construction, but also when inscriptions were widely employed. As such, social and political histories of this period were studied to identify factors that may have encouraged the use of moralizing inscriptions. At the same time, secondary sources about the history of the inscribed public and university libraries were gathered. These sources related to the history of the university and campus, the library architect and patrons, and the architectural styles of the libraries. Secondary sources were identified using Ball State University’s online card catalog, the Worldcat database, the Avery Index to Architectural Periodicals, JSTOR, and the websites of each university.

The third step involved locating primary sources about the construction of the libraries from the relevant university archives. The primary sources included correspondence, reports, bulletins, and architectural plans. The intention of this primary source research was not only to identify who determined the program of inscriptions, but
also to ascertain whether the inscriptions were planned or added at a later date, to search for inscriptional trends between libraries, and to determine a rationale for the use of inscriptions in the context of that particular university. The author visited the public and university libraries included in this study in summer 2010, with the exception of the Public Library of San Francisco and La Bibliothèque Ste. Geneviève. This access allowed for the accurate identification and cataloguing of inscriptions at each site, the lists of which are included in the Appendices. The primary source research, which was instrumental in the course of this research, was also conducted during this time at the archives of the respective universities.
Introduction

This is the first study that explores the specific topic of university library inscriptions from the period of 1890 to 1930. As such, there are no sources that directly relate to the topic. This research pulls from a range of sources, which can be categorized into three general themes. The first theme is general literature on architectural inscriptions. These sources refer to architectural inscriptions that appear on building types and in time periods outside the immediate scope of this study, but contextualize the study of this ornamental type. The second theme is literature related to the period from 1890 to 1930. These sources include general context histories, as well as sources that describe the library movement and changes in higher education which marked the period. The third theme is literature on libraries and universities. These sources include sources about the history of specific public and university libraries, university campuses, architects, and architectural styles.

Theme 1: General literature on inscriptions

There has been little written about architectural inscriptions considering their widespread use throughout the history of architecture. Scholarship on the subject has focused on inscriptions from antiquity or the formal qualities of architectural lettering. For example, in “Latin Inscriptions from Corinth II,” from the Journal of Archeology, and “Greek Inscriptions from Egypt” from the Journal of Hellenic Studies, the authors identify and translate Greek temple inscriptions, but do not analyze them as an
ornamental type or comment the significance beyond the literal text. This is also the case with John Cole’s guidebook, *On These Walls, Inscriptions and Quotations in the Buildings of the Library of Congress*. Cole identifies and locates architectural inscriptions in the three Library of Congress buildings, but does not substantially analyze the program of inscriptions. These sources typify much of the current literature on architectural inscriptions. However, there are several authors who have addressed the topic with a more analytical approach. Carol Flores’ article, “Engaging the Mind’s Eye: The Use of Inscriptions in the Architecture of Owen Jones and A.W.N Pugin,” delineates three types of inscriptions: informative, aesthetic and emblematic inscriptions, which provides a useful framework for the study of architectural inscriptions. Flores focuses on the “emblematic inscription,” the type which aims to illicit a particular response from the viewer, in the work of is Owen Jones and A.W.N Pugin. She relates this interest to Jones’ study of the Arabic inscriptions and ornamentation at the Alhambra, as well as his interest in medieval manuscript illumination and calligraphy during this period. Flores’ article not only defines inscriptive types, but speaks to the importance of the inscription as an expression of an architectural scheme. The analysis of the inscriptions employed by Jones and Pugin is certainly relevant to the understanding of the architectural inscriptions in this study and in general.

Another important work that discusses inscriptive content is Jack Quinan’s *Frank Lloyd Wright's Larkin Building*. Quinan’s chapter, “The Message in the Building,” not only identifies inscriptions employed on the interior and exterior of Wright’s Larkin Building, but points to the intentions of the architect and sculptor in defining the inscriptive program. Quinan found that the inscriptions not only accentuated the design
of the building, but also sought to motivate the employees and declare the principles of the company. Though he does not specifically define the term, Quinan describes the “emblematic inscription,” in the context of the Larkin Building. He claims that the inspirational inscriptions ultimately created a transcendental experience for the users of the space. He is also careful to comment on the relationship between the author of the inscriptions, office manager William Heath, and Wright. This component of Quinan’s research is particularly relevant to the topic of university library inscriptions, as the university administration often worked together with the architect to define inscriptive schemes. Though the Larkin Building was designed as a corporate office, it was constructed during the period of this study, and contained inscriptions of a similar sentiment to those found in libraries. Quinan and Flores provided a significant contribution to the study of this topic.

Neil Levine, in the “The Romantic Idea of Architectural Legibility: Henri Labrouste and the Neo-Grec,” analyzes the inscriptive program found on the Bibliothèque Ste. Geneviève. While his analysis also focuses on Labrouste and his relationship to the École des Beaux Arts, Levine discusses the inscription as a specific ornamental type, and how the inscriptions fit into the principles Neo-Grec architecture. Levine is one of few scholars who has critically analyzed a specific program of inscriptions, which is not only important to the study of the topic generally, but was instrumental in this study.
Theme 2: Literature on the period from 1890-1930: The Library Movement and Changes in Academia.

An important element of this research was the link between inscriptions and the context history of the period from 1890 to 1930. General surveys of American history, which mostly focused on the social and political events from the decades, were consulted in order to characterize the period. More useful were architectural history surveys, which not only provided basic information about the architectural movements, major architectural works, and architects from the period, but also relevant historical background. Burchard and Bush-Brown’s *The Architecture of America: A Social and Cultural History* is arranged by time period, as opposed to broad movements or styles, which was useful for this research. The chapters “1885-1913” and “1913-1933” provided much of the context used in this study.

The decades between 1890 and 1930 were important for the professional library field. The history of libraries is a topic has been extensively researched, and from which there are wide range of secondary sources. Most of this literature focuses on the history of public libraries in America. Samuel Swett Green’s *The Public Library Movement in the United States, 1853-1893*, is typical of these sources. Green discusses the formation of the ALA, describes early ALA conferences, and comments on the relationship between the public library and public schools. While Green includes one chapter on library building, it is brief and focuses on the people involved in the erection of new public libraries. There are several sources, however, devoted specifically to library building. The earliest books, including Chalmers Hadley’s *Library Buildings* from 1924 and Charles Soule’s *Library Rooms and Buildings* from 1902, include recommendations and plans for
large and small library buildings. These are generally intended as practical guides to library building, and do not elaborate about programs of ornament. More recent literature on library building focuses on technical concerns like storage and stacks, rather than architectural style. There were several sources that also discussed the history of university library building, which were instrumental in this research. Walter Allen’s “Library Buildings,” and David Kaser’s *The Evolution of the American Academic Library Building*, not only characterize the developments in university library construction, but also focus on architectural styles and changes in academia. Both Allen and Kaser point to developments in college curricula and building technology as chief influences on the form of the library. Kaser is perhaps more comprehensive in his analysis, cataloguing changes in plan, square footage, architectural style, cost of construction, and number of libraries built within certain eras. Though neither author specifically comments on inscriptions, they established the trend in monumental and elaborate library building that corresponded with the libraries chosen for this study. Helen Reynolds’ Master’s Thesis, “University Library Buildings in the United States 1880-1939” is the only source devoted to the specific genre of university library building in the late nineteenth century and first decades of the twentieth century. Reynolds, like Kaser, also focuses on cataloguing libraries by plan type, and provides data on enrollment size, cost of construction, square footage, and number of libraries built in certain time span. Reynolds is the most comprehensive in the number of university libraries included in her study, which range from major state universities to small private colleges.

Articles published in the *Library Journal* and other documents sponsored by the American Library Association also provide primary sources related to library building.
and changes in the field. These articles concentrate on public libraries, but also include articles about major university library buildings. For example, *Library Journal* Volume 21, 1896, features the article “Dedication of the New Columbia University.” This article includes a sketch and brief description of Low Library. Architectural periodicals like *Architectural Review* and *Architectural Forum* also highlight major library buildings constructed during this period.

**Theme 3: Literature on libraries and universities**

The literature about each specific library and university in this study is varied. Certain libraries, such as the Boston Public Library and the Library of Congress, have been extensively explored in books and periodicals. The majority of the libraries, especially university libraries, are not as thoroughly researched. Often, information about the library’s construction is included in sources related to the architect of the library or history of the school. The Campus Guide series, published by the Princeton Architectural Press, includes background information about the history of the school, as well as provides a brief history of the major campus buildings. This source was consulted for the University of Virginia, University of Chicago, University of Washington, and Princeton University. On the whole, secondary sources about the design of the libraries may identify inscriptions and other ornament, but generally do not substantially analyze the program of inscriptions. An example of this type of source includes Andrew Dolkart’s *Morningside Heights: A History of Its Architecture and Development*. Dolkart discusses the history of the Columbia University campus in Morningside Heights and the circumstances surrounding the building of Low Library. He mentions that there was a
controversy surrounding the scheme of inscriptions for the interior and exterior of the library, but does not identify them or describe the conflict in depth.

There are several secondary sources that did provide substantial information about the program of inscriptions and the context of the library construction. Gray A. Brechin’s *Inscriptions at the Old Public Library of San Francisco* specifically catalogues the inscribed tablets and names found on the Public Library of San Francisco. Brechin cites the Boston Public Library and the Bibliothèque Ste. Geneviève as models for the San Francisco Public Library, and comments on the trend of listing prominent names on the exterior. He also focuses on the formal technique of carving inscriptions, and discussed the workshop that inscribed the tablets at the Public Library of San Francisco. This source, however, is primarily meant to be a record of the inscriptions, as the interior tablets were being removed at the time of the publication because the building was being converted to an Asian Art Museum.

*Carnegie Magazine* devoted the January 1982 Special Issue to the inscriptions found on the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh. This source not only lists and identifies all the figures inscribed in the library’s frieze, but analyzes the choices behind the inscriptions. Scholars with relevant expertise in literature, art history and music were enlisted to evaluate Carnegie’s and the building committee’s names to determine whether the prominent figures have stood the test of time. The articles focus on the relative distinction of specific figures chosen for the frieze, and suggest other figures that may have been more appropriate. This source begins to analyze some of the issues addressed in this study, but is less scholarly than it is anecdotal.
Deering Library: An Illustrated History by Nina Barrett, not only details the inscriptions found inside Deering Library at Northwestern University, but discusses the meaning behind the inscriptions, and the goals of librarian Theodore Koch in his choices for the ornament. Barrett cites primary sources from the Northwestern University Archives, which makes this a useful and reliable source about the history of Deering Library and its inscriptional program.

All other information regarding the decision-making process behind the inscriptions and the rationale for the schemes come from primary source documents located in university archives, or on the university websites. Information about inscriptions is often found in university facilities records, papers of the university president or involved faculty members, or records of the library or librarian. Trustees’ minutes or building committee minutes can also relate to the goals for the library and outline potential programs of ornament. Northwestern University, the University of Chicago, and Yale University issued special bulletins that identified the inscriptions and ornament carved on the completed library. These are useful source if only because they list the inscriptions, which are sometimes difficult to read, the location of inscriptions, and the sources for the inscriptions. In a more contemporary mode, the University of Rhode Island maintains a website devoted to their library inscriptions. The inscriptions and their translations, if required, are listed by location. The sources for the inscriptions are noted, and photographs are provided of several inscriptions. Photographs, especially those in university digital collections, can be very useful sources for identifying inscriptions when written sources do not describe the ornament. Overall, the sources about specific universities and libraries are varied depending on the library, and most
literature related to the inscriptions is located in the archives maintained by each institution.
Chapter I: Introduction

The inscription, be it an imposing message or an intimate note, is a distinct kind of ornamentation in architecture. While other types of ornament, and even architectural forms are most certainly expressive, words are our most succinct and direct form of communication. When permanent lines of text are embedded to communicate to an audience, the power of the written word seems to speak directly through space and time. The inscription has been widely employed over the history of architecture. Whether in the friezes of Rome, or on the hearth of the Victorian house, text has been incorporated into a variety of media. Perhaps it is the permanence of the text that conveys its significance; that at a particular time, someone determined a message warranted a laborious carving in stone or wood for all to see and remember. The architectural inscription is particularly powerful because it combines the communicative power of language with the expression of architecture, both of which become the lasting records of a society and its people. For this reason, the inscription carries with it a historic weight that can provide insight into a particular culture and its context.

In her article, “Engaging the Mind’s Eye: The Use of Inscriptions in the Architecture of Owen Jones and A.W.N. Pugin,” Carol Flores provides a useful framework for the study of inscriptions with the designation of three types: informative, aesthetic, and emblematic. An informative inscription is used to convey basic information
about a structure, which might include its name, function, architect, patron, or date of
construction. This is the most common use of inscriptions, as seen at an entrance or a
cornerstone of a building. An aesthetic inscription may relate to the building’s particular
style through the choice of lettering, scale, and/or location of the text. This type of
inscription may both complement the architectural style, as well as accompany other
stylized ornamentation. It also likely that this type follows a prescribed historical
precedent; medieval black lettering employed on a Gothic Revival church is one such
example. The emblematic inscription differs from both the informative or aesthetic
inscription in that it is used to elicit a response from the viewer that includes and goes
beyond the literal meaning of the text.¹ In this type, it is the idea brought forth by the
inscription that can be both emotionally stimulating and thought provoking. This
intentional response is achieved through the inscription in combination with other
iconography and the setting that can enliven an architectural experience. These types are
not mutually exclusive; a single inscription is typically more than one type, and other
types could also potentially be defined. The inscriptions found in this study are framed by
Flores’ definitions, with a focus on the emblematic inscription.

This paper examines the phenomenon of inscriptions in the particular genre of
university libraries during the period from 1890 to 1930 in America. For the purposes of
this study, I focus on independent lines of text or words, as opposed to inscriptions that
have been incorporated into murals or stained glass. That topic also deserves study, but
was outside the scope of this project. Libraries seem to welcome the inclusion of

¹ Carol A. Hrvol Flores, “Engaging the Mind’s Eye The Use of Inscriptions in the Architecture of Owen
inscriptions if only because they reflect the literary function. The university is also a breeding ground for inscriptions, where the highest ideals of knowledge, truth and scholarship are taught and celebrated. The university library, often located in the center of campus, became the literal and figurative heart of the university during this time; it became a place to impress, as well as to showcase the ideals of the institution. As such, the choice of particular inscriptions tells a provocative story about the relationship between architect, patron, faculty and staff, and the context of the building’s construction.

The period from 1890 to 1930 saw the widespread use of inscriptions on library buildings, which is due in part to the trends in building styles. The Beaux Arts style often included a program of inscriptions and certainly influenced many building types from this period. The style refers to the particular mode of neoclassicism taught at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris following the French Revolution of the late eighteenth century. The style was popularized by the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition in America, and was promulgated by many leading architectural firms, including McKim, Mead and White. The use of inscriptions in Beaux Arts architecture is largely due to the influence of Henri Labrouste his Bibliothèque Ste. Geneviève in Paris from 1847. The concept of “Architecture Parlante,” a phrase that refers to the ability of the architecture to aesthetically express its function, has been discussed with regard to La Bibliothèque Ste. Geneviève and is relevant to its adaptation on the American stage. University libraries were also influenced stylistically by the widespread construction of Beaux Arts public libraries during this period. This was due in large part to the concurrent “Library Movement” in America, which involved the formalization the professional library field and the subsequent rise in free public libraries in the United States.
Where Beaux Arts ideals dominated public architecture, and many college buildings, the Neo-Gothic was also adopted widely for campus buildings. For the university administrators and architects in this period, the buildings at Oxford and Cambridge universities in England exemplified the academic use of the Gothic style. This style is typically accompanied by highly ornamental sculpture, relief, and stained glass, as well as inscriptions. Both the Neo-Gothic and Beaux Arts styles were applied to library buildings, and were particularly well-suited for the monumental reading rooms that were constructed during this period.

The period from 1890 to 1930 is also of particular interest in part because of the social, cultural, and technological changes of the era. The idea of progress entered into many facets of life from literature to politics to social reform. The appearance of inspirational or high-minded sayings on buildings, particularly with a civic or educational function, may be related to larger ideas of societal advancement and moral improvement. The public library building, for example, became synonymous with the widespread education of the American public; this idea was translated to the university library building, which became synonymous with the education of the student body. Carved quotations or lists of prominent thinkers whose books are in the libraries relate to a quest for knowledge, the potential of man for greatness and the power of learning. These inscriptions marry ideology to architecture such that the building itself becomes both the medium and the message.

The transformative power of inscriptions is an idea that is explored in this paper and harkens back to Enlightenment thinking and design. This concept is applied to the specific period from 1890 to 1930, an era of monumental library building in cities as well
as on campuses. In addition, several case studies of university library inscriptions demonstrate that a few lines of text can reveal a wealth of information about the building and its historical context.
Chapter II: Architectural Inscriptions and Morality, 1890-1930

The period from 1890 to 1930 was an age of transition in America. It was a time of drastic changes in population, cities, science, technology, business organization and labor patterns.\(^2\) Migration to the city had come to fruition, which was largely the result of massive waves of European immigration, farm outmigration, and modern industrialization. It was also a time of social and political unrest and reform, and an emerging middle class became the focus of the Progressive Era. An 1899 *New York Times* article summarized the zeitgeist: “...The condition of the mass of the people is immensely improved and continually improving. There is much to do, but the forces that enlighten and elevate humanity have gained tremendous power in the century and are dispelling ignorance, degradation and misery as never before.”\(^3\) This concept of progress and reform influenced many facets of American life in the period from 1890 to 1930, including the growth of educational and civic institutions.

The Progressive interest in education is rooted in ideas of social and moral equality, and the responsibility of the government to provide for its citizens. The interest in social and civil liberties lead to a rise in the idea of widespread education for the


\(^3\) “Nineteenth Century,” *New York Times*, December 31, 1899.
masses. Progressives advocated compulsory education and curricula reform, as a way to reduce child labor and push for social equality.\(^4\) Beyond basic instruction in reading, writing, and arithmetic, schools also taught principles of order, civic responsibility, morality and “American” values and standards of behavior.\(^5\) These virtues are also inherent in the rapid growth of other civic institutions, including museums and libraries in this period. Critical to the issue of widespread education, as seen in the growth of public institutions of culture and learning, was a moral idea - that an enlightened public was also a righteous one. Frederick M. Crunden, director of the St. Louis Public Library in the 1890s, believed that the public library, specifically, served as the “people’s university,” enlightening a great mass of voters about the history and logic of the institutions under which they lived, and served as a promoter of public intelligence, order and progress.\(^6\) He summarized this connection between institutions like the public library and the enlightenment of society in an 1890 article in *Library Journal*:

> The free library is the most promising of all measures for social amelioration because more than any other it teaches and leads to self help...[Benefits of the library can be seen in the] increased productiveness of our mechanics and artisans, in the lessening of crime and disorder among us, in the influx of the most desirable class of citizens, in the great sobriety, industry, morality, and refinement throughout the community that must necessarily result.

\(^5\) Ibid, 31.
\(^7\) Ibid, 39.
The ardent belief in progress and societal improvement in this era is a concept that is not unique to this time in American history. In fact, it can be traced back to Enlightenment thinkers of the eighteenth century. Enlightenment thought was firm in its belief in the power of reason to discover and conquer all. Rationalize society, its institutions, laws, educational system, it was thought during the Enlightenment, and humanity will be restored to something resembling a pure and blissful state.\(^8\) These ideas had an immense influence on the American psyche, not the least of which was their influence on the founding fathers in their establishment of the American political and judicial systems. The unlimited reach of human thinking and progress, seen in so many facets of American life from 1890 to 1930, is an idea examined by the French philosopher Marquis de Condorcet in his “Sketch of a Historic Tableau of the Progress of the Human Mind,” published between 1801 and 1804. For Condorcet, “[In its aspect of reason] nature has set no term to the perfection human faculties; that [its] perfectibility, from now onward, independent of any power that might wish to halt it, has no other limit than the duration of the globe upon which nature has cast us,”\(^9\) The progress of mankind is assured through universal education and the cumulative character of knowledge.\(^10\) The impact of this perfectibility would be a future where all nations would eventually become equally civilized, discrimination would disappear, and disease would be conquered so that life could be extended indefinitely. Even more, man himself, through education, would develop into a being far superior to the creature we know now. This quest for

---


perfectibility, as outlined by Condorcet, provides a theoretical framework for many ideas concerning the belief in the progress of American society during the turn of the nineteenth to the twentieth century.

In fact, this idealism as outlined by Condorcet is at the root of moralizing and uplifting inscriptions on educational and civic architecture at the start of the twentieth century. The inscriptions not only related to the function of the building, but convey these higher principles of progress and knowledge that justify the widespread construction of these institutions in the first place. The architecture, perhaps self-referentially, becomes a kind of moral compass for its visitors.

The belief in the moral power of the architectural inscription can also be traced to historical precedent in the Enlightenment era and the work of the eighteenth century French architects Claude Nicolas Ledoux and Etienne-Louis Boullée. Their designs are understood in relationship to Enlightenment philosophies that were critically questioning traditional institutions, customs, morals and the status quo. Boullée and Ledoux experimented with designs for institutions that would not only be rational, but display intelligibility through the appropriate architectural expression or character. Boullée’s Palais National, a unbuilt project for government, for example, features an imposing façade inscribed

Figure 1: Boullée’s Palais National.

---

from top to bottom with the French Constitution in “the manner of the biblical tablets brought down from Mt. Sinai by Moses” (Figure 1). In this case, the inscriptions not only identify the function of the building, but create an architecture that informs its citizens. Several of Boullée’s conceptual civic buildings also featured inscriptions, including his plan for the public library (Figure 2). As a true child of the Enlightenment, Boullée focuses on the essence of what a library is, which in Enlightenment terms meant the repository of humankind’s knowledge about the universe. The library would feature galleries containing the statues of great men so that the shades of the past’s great minds could commune, so to speak, amongst themselves and with the readers. This theme of “great minds” is adapted many times in the decorative schemes of library architecture, through statuary as well as inscriptions.

Ledoux took the idea of appropriate architectural expression to a new level in his Ideal City of Chaux. He is most well-known for his creation of architectural forms that literally represented their functions in this ideal city. The River Inspector’s House was designed as a cylinder laid on its side to straddle the flowing river (Figure 3). The Cooper’s Workshop featured interpenetrating cylinders and concentric circular forms, depicting the

---

12 Ibid.
hoops and barrels of the cooper’s trade. Ledoux’s play with architectural symbolism at
Chaux is still more extreme in the Oikema –
the temple dedicated to love and desire, which
was shaped in the outline of a phallus in plan.14
While the concept that architecture should
expressly demonstrate its function is clear in
these examples, Ledoux was also concerned
with the idea that space would construct and reform social mores by its form and
symbolic representation.15 At Chaux, Ledoux envisioned a series of ideal lodges, each
dedicated functionally and symbolically to a particular social virtue. The Pacifère, for
example, stood for law and justice. On the outer walls, Moses-like mosaic tablets are
incribed with the principles of the new justice, the maxims of morality, framed by a
giant order in the shape of the Roman
fasces, symbols of unity (Figure 4).16 The
Maison d’Union, dedicated to universal
brotherhood, featured inscribed maxims
eulogizing unions and their benefits. Lastly,
Ledoux’s Panaretheon or “accomplished
virtue,” was conceived as a school of virtue,

---

14 Trachtenberg, 404.
15 Anthony Vidler, Claude-Nicolas Ledoux Architecture and Utopia in the Era of the French Revolution
   (Boston: Birkhauser, 2006): 133.
16 Ibid, 135.
where one learned the duties of man.\textsuperscript{17} In the interior, inhabitants were to surround their didactic philosopher, who stood at the center of the room, and on the walls were carved allegories of form and beauty—the Graces, the Days, The Hours, Wisdom in the guise of Minerva, the Canon of Polyclitus, along with a carved troupe of social virtues.\textsuperscript{18} Ledoux and Boullée set the precedent for the use of the inscription as a vehicle for moral and social reform, as well as a direct architectural expression of the building’s function.

The moralistic and progressive sentiments as established by the Enlightenment and expressed in the work of Ledoux and Boullée, provide an ideological backdrop for architecture in the period of 1890 to 1930 in America. The architect of this era was making some of the same gestures as Ledoux and Boullée, and sought after an architectural form that both expressed its function, and promoted higher ideals of society. However, many other issues also informed their work including the budding of Modernism and advances in building technology.

A variety of architectural styles and movements were prevalent during this period—Arts and Crafts, Neoclassical, Beaux Arts, Neo-Gothic, Art Deco, and others—and all were somehow an answer to an array of technological, social and cultural conditions. Yet, regardless of style, high-minded inscriptions were routinely seen on a variety of civic and educational building types during this time. For example, the monumental Union Station in Washington D.C., designed by Daniel Burnham in 1907 in the Beaux Arts style, carries the inscription from the eighteenth century man of letters, Samuel Johnson, “He that would bring home the wealth of the Indies must carry the

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid, 135.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid, 137.
wealth of the Indies with him – so it is with travelling – a man must carry knowledge with him if he would bring home knowledge” (Figure 5).

The Nebraska State Capitol, designed by Bertram Goodhue in the early 1920s, represents a fusion of Modern and Neoclassical styles. It contains a rich display of symbolism and inscriptions, such as “Laws and constitutions spring from the moral dispositions of the members of the state,” a quotation from Plato, and “Political society exists for the sake of noble living,” a quotation from Aristotle (Figure 6).

Consider the eclectic styles of the architecture at the Cranbrook School for Boys, designed by E. Saarinen in the 1920s and 1930s. These buildings represent a confluence of Arts and Crafts, Neo-Gothic, Art Deco, and Saarinen’s individual Scandinavian aesthetic, and include several inscriptions. The Marquis Arch, which marks the entrance to the school reads, “A life without beauty is only half-lived,” and “Truth leads to beauty as sparks fly upward” (Figure 7).
It is clear that architectural inscriptions in this era, especially on structures that served society, were intimately tied to deep-seated principles of the time. The library, which the following chapters explore, is an excellent case study in the connection between the inscription and morality. Its function as a “repository of humankind’s knowledge about the universe,” as Boullée claimed, perhaps most directly answers this call to learning so characteristic of the times. The inscriptions expressing these higher ideals actively involve the architecture in the mission of acculturation, widespread learning, and ethical uplift. These principles not only sought to enhance the human mind, but also advance society at large towards a more perfect and moral civilization.
Chapter III: Trends in Library Building

Prior to 1880, universities were small and their libraries were especially so. Collections were scattered in departmental libraries and there were no library schools to provide guidance or leadership. There were also no professional librarians, as we define the term today.\textsuperscript{19} Public librarians were well-educated gentlemen assisted by volunteers, and university librarians were mostly faculty members. Library planning in general was haphazard and only beginning in the 1870s did both cities and universities begin to consider more formal and functional library spaces. The founding of the American Library Association in 1876 and the \textit{Library Journal} in that same year considerably influenced the professional development of the library field. At the same time, it provided channels through which librarians could exchange ideas, many of which concerned the new kinds of buildings that were needed. It was during the period from 1876 to 1889 that many universities and cities began to construct architect-designed libraries. For the most part, these libraries followed the general trends in architectural style or simply followed a previously established campus design. The best known library architect from this period was Henry Hobson Richardson, who designed five public libraries in New England and one academic library at the University of Vermont. The

Romanesque style was adopted for several major academic libraries afterward, including those for Dartmouth, Syracuse, Colgate and Cornell.

The Richardsonian Romanesque library mostly died out by the end of the century, but it played an important role in the early development of library architecture. The Romanesque style allowed for a single, centrally-located building to house books and was adapted to house stack space, a reading room and staff rooms in a three-tier system.\(^\text{20}\)

It also seems have set an important precedent that maddened librarians for decades to come: that the beauty and style of the library superseded function. Richardson’s libraries were sometimes criticized for being fortress-like, heavy and poorly lit, but very comely.\(^\text{21}\)

The Classical style had never really departed from the American library scene during the Romanesque style’s popularity. The period from 1890 to 1930 has been termed the “monumental” phase of library architecture. This was due in large part to the rise of the Beaux Arts style, as popularized by the Columbian Exposition of 1893 and the work of the New York firm, McKim, Mead and White. The Beaux Arts style displayed unrelenting formalism and grandeur and was particularly well-suited for the monumentalism of this period. The public library was to be a literal monument to learning, as well as embody the democratic ideal of opportunity for all citizens to better their lives through reading.\(^\text{22}\) As the dominant building style of public buildings and public libraries, it was also influential on American college campuses. It was during this period of “monumentalism,” 1890-1930, that one finds the most widespread use of the

\(^{21}\) Allen, 92.
architectural inscription. It also corresponds to impressively large reading rooms and lavish programs of ornament. Monumentalism did not just apply to Beaux Arts libraries, for the Neo-Gothic style, particularly on university campuses, also had large-scale interior spaces and elaborate decorative schemes.

The Influence of the Public Library

The emergence of the large-scale university library was due in part to the corresponding rise of the behemoth public library that emerged during this time. McKim, Mead and White’s Boston Public Library, completed in 1895, was one of the most influential for future public and university libraries in the era. The library was important not only as a prominent civic institution for Boston, but also represented the firm’s decisive adoption of Renaissance Classicism, a style that they believed was a part of the rich European architectural tradition to which the United States considered itself heir.23 Boston trustees mandated that the building was to be a palace for the people, and as such should be a monumental building, worthy of the city of Boston. The challenge for McKim and other library architects of the period was that they were searching for an appropriate form for a virtually new building type. McKim looked towards Henri Labrouste’s Bibliothèque Ste. Geneviève, Paris (1842-50), as a model for his design. He considered it, “the best type and the best scheme in its outward expression and also its arrangement.”24 This was a natural starting point, it was generally regarded by architects as an exemplary modern library and had been the paradigm of libraries for several

24 Ibid. 119.
generations of students at the École des Beaux Arts. McKim’s use of the Renaissance Classical style, as well as the plan of the Boston Public Library, proved to be widely influential for future library architecture (Figure 8). The placement of the entrance vestibule on the ground floor with a prominent stair leading to an expansive, well-lit reading room on the second floor became an important precedent.

Figure 8: McKim’s Boston Public Library

The same was true for the use of inscriptions and the decorative themes employed by McKim. On the exterior, the front façade frieze reads, “THE PUBLIC LIBRARY OF THE CITY OF BOSTON BUILT BY THE PEOPLE AND DEDICATED TO THE ADVANCEMENT OF LEARNING MDCCCLXXXVIII (1898).” The Bolyston Street frieze inscription reads, “THE COMMONWEALTH REQUIRES THE EDUCATION OF THE PEOPLE AS THE SAFEGUARD OF ORDER AND LIBERTY.” The Blagden Street frieze inscription reads, “MDCCCLII (1852) FOUNDED THROUGH THE MUNIFICENCE AND PUBLIC SPIRIT OF CITIZENS” (Figures 8, 9).

25 Ibid.
These sayings reflect many of the ideas of moral improvement and societal education presented in Chapter I, and the library’s role in this ideology. Charles Eliot Norton, Harvard University President, composed the inscriptions for the frieze. In addition, McKim placed round medallions in the spandrels above the window arches that derive from the marks or trade devices of the earliest printers and book sellers. This is a theme that is adopted in several subsequent library buildings. In addition, tablets below the arched windows on the façade listed the names of great literary man, artists, scientists, statesmen and soldiers, a list which “served not only as a decorative relief, but constituted a kind of roll of honor,” according to historian Walter Muir Whitehall (Figure 10).26 This scheme was also adopted from the Bibliotèque Ste. Geneviève, where Henri Labrouste employed 310 tablets inscribed with the names of prominent thinkers throughout history (Figure 11). Where Labrouste’s names were in chronological order, McKim’s names were intermingled in a “pleasant hodge-podge to suggest the diversity of riches to be

Figures representing science and art flanked the entrance, and additional names of prominent scientists and artists were carved on the pedestals. Incidentally, a controversy erupted on May 27, 1892 in the *Boston Evening Record* regarding the listing of names on the building’s façade. The following combination occurred in one of the tablets:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MOSES</th>
<th>MOZART</th>
<th>WREN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CICERO</td>
<td>EUCLID</td>
<td>HERRICK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KALIDASA</td>
<td>AESCHYLUS</td>
<td>IRVING</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISOCRATES</td>
<td>DANTE</td>
<td>TITIAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MILTON</td>
<td></td>
<td>ERASMUS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The newspaper discovered that the architects had left a vertical acrostic spelling of their firm names, MCKIM, MEAD, and WHITE, using the first letters of figures on the tablet as an amusing joke. The trustees took the matter humorously, but the public was outraged at the audacity of the architects, and money had to be spent to erase the offense.

The interior decoration of the library was highly ornamental, and included a program of mosaics, murals, sculpture and inscriptions. Over the entrance to the vestibule are carved the words, “FREE TO ALL,” and the three seals of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, the library and the city of Boston. The library seal bears the Latin motto, which translates, “The Light of all Citizens.” The vaulted entrance hall contains a mosaic ceiling bearing thirty names which have given fame to Boston, including Hawthorne,

---

27 Ibid.
Peirce, Adams, Franklin, Emerson, and Longfellow (Figure 12). Bates Hall, the main reading room, also features the names of great philosophers and artists inscribed in a frieze around the room, and the sides of the hall contain busts of great authors and eminent Bostonians (Figure 13). The frieze names read as follows:


The influence of the Boston Public Library on future library designs cannot be overstated. Similar monumentality, styles, plans, and ornamental programs would be employed in many prominent library commissions in the following years. The theme of printing and bookbinding, as seen in the medallions on the exterior, is readily adopted in subsequent library buildings, as well as the use of prominent names from world history, science, art and literature. Names
listed both on tablets, as seen on the exterior, or as individual names in a frieze, as seen on the interior, become a kind of library ornamental archetype. The reverence for local figures, in this case prominent Bostonians, in combination with the great minds of human history, is another strategy that is adopted elsewhere for both public and academic libraries.

If the Boston Public Library set the precedent for monumental Renaissance Classicism, the Library of Congress, constructed between 1888 and 1897, certainly reinforced it. The Library of Congress had the dual function of serving as a legislative library for the United States Congress, as well as a national library for the American people. The underlying goal of the library had been to carry forward Thomas Jefferson’s belief that information and knowledge about all subjects are essential in a democracy – for legislators and citizens alike. As such, the ornamentation reinforces this theme of education for the masses, as well as the idea that this was to be an encompassing national encyclopedia and repository. The main library is located on Independence Avenue and First Street SE across the street from the United States Capitol, and is now called the Thomas Jefferson Building (Figure 14).

---

was designed by John L. Smithmeyer, who was subsequently replaced by his assistant Paul J. Pelz, who was in turn replaced by Edward Pearce Casey. The Library’s design was based on the Paris Opera House and was topped with a gilded dome. The circular domed room at the center was to be the reading room, surrounded by space for the Library’s various departments. The reading room was enclosed by rectangular exterior walls, which divided the open space into four courtyards. Corner pavilions were devoted to the departments and to exhibit space. At the time of its construction, it was the largest and costliest library ever built.

Casey and the head librarian, Ainsworth Rand Spofford, determined much of the ornament along with Charles Eliot Norton, who was also enlisted for advice on the choice of certain inscriptions and decorative features throughout the process. The decoration of the Library of Congress is very elaborate, featuring sculptures, mosaics, murals, and reliefs, in addition to many inscriptions. A contemporary guidebook boasted, “America is justly proud of this gorgeous and palatial monument to its National sympathy and appreciation of Literature, Science, and Art. It has been designed and executed solely by American art and labor and is a fitting tribute for the great thoughts of generations past, present and to be.”

In fact, nearly fifty artists were employed to work on decorating the building, many of whom had been employed or exhibited at the World’s Columbian Exposition or worked at the Boston Public Library in years prior.

\[\text{Ibid.}\]
\[\text{Herbert Small, } \text{The Library of Congress, Its Architecture and Decoration} \ (\text{New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1982}): 32.\]
The inscriptions are listed in John Cole’s guidebook, *On These Walls: Inscriptions and Quotations in the Buildings of the Library of Congress*, which is excerpted in Appendix I. The themes found in the library represent the breadth of human knowledge and achievement, in combination with overt American nationalism. The use of great thinkers’, artists’, scientists’, and authors’ names, as seen at the Boston Public Library and Bibliotèque Ste. Geneviève, was also employed here in a variety of modes. The exterior features busts and inscribed names of nine great men: Demosthenes, Emerson, Irving, Goethe, Franklin, Macaulay, Hawthorne, Scott and Dante (Figure 15). The Great Hall also features names in groin vaults, which is similar to the entrance hall vaults of the Boston Public Library. The names include: Dante, Homer, Milton, Bacon, Aristotle, Goethe, Shakespeare, Moliere, Moses, Herodotus, Cervantes, Hugo, Scott, Cooper, Longfellow, Tennyson, Gibbon, and Bancroft (Figure 16). There are also many instances of listing the domains of knowledge, as seen in the mosaic vaulting of the ceiling in the north corridor: Art, Family, Astronomy, Mathematics, Chemistry, Physics, Geology, Poetry, Sculpture, Painting, Art, Family, Astronomy, Mathematics, Chemistry, Physics, Geology, Poetry, Sculpture, Painting,
Music, Architecture, Education, and Science. The inscriptions include dozens of quotations about truth, knowledge and books, like those written in the librarian’s room: *Literara Scripta Manet* [The written word endures], *In Tenebris Lux* [In darkness light], *Liber Delectation Animae* [Books, the delight of the soul] *Efficiunt Clarum Studio* [They make it clear by study], or those found on second floor of the Great Hall like “Beauty is Truth, Truth Beauty,” from Keats (Figure 17). The inscriptions are often quotes from well-known poets and works of literature, like “Tongues in Trees, Books in the Running Brooks, Sermons in Stones, and Good in Everything,” from Shakespeare’s *As You Like It*. The government pavilion features quotations from American politicians and are patriotic in tone. For example, a quotation from Abraham Lincoln’s *Gettysburg Address*, “That this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom; that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth” is prominently inscribed around the dome of the pavilion.

![Figure 17: Library of Congress, Great Hall inscription.](image)

The themes of the Library of Congress both echo and elaborate those seen on the Boston Public Library. The carved names of prominent thinkers are an important constant, as well as the use of great minds of history in combination with great American contributors; this was similar to how McKim was careful to include local Bostonian
contributors alongside the great minds of history. The moralizing and inspirational sayings about learning and books contribute to the concept that this library was thought to be a repository of American knowledge, as well as a place to educate and enlighten the populace. Thus, the inscribed architecture began to serve the same purpose as the books that it housed.

A discussion of public libraries would be incomplete without mention of Andrew Carnegie and his contribution to library building. Between the years 1883 and 1929, over 1,600 libraries were built in the United States with construction grants paid for by Carnegie. Though many of the libraries were not close to the scale and decoration of the Boston Public Library or the Library of Congress, they were often constructed in the Classical Revival style and were in many cases the most imposing building in small towns. Carnegie did not mandate a particular style; rather he left the choice to citizens of grant communities. The wide range of Classical Revival libraries is a testament to the widespread popularity of the style for civic buildings at the turn of the century, in part because of its perceived image of democracy, purity, high culture and the arts.\textsuperscript{31} Theodore Jones, in the foreword to his book on Carnegie libraries, summarized the use of classicism and the impact of the institution:

\begin{quote}
Public libraries traditionally used the columns and pilasters of antiquity to show that here was a place where the past was venerated. The Carnegie Library was often the most imposing structure in town, perched on a lofty podium, embellished with details rarely seen on the rawboned storefronts of Main Street. It was a repository for culture and beauty, but it was culture, too—an abstraction made real in mortar and stone…Carnegie’s
\end{quote}

benefactions gave a tangible form to notions of self-improvement and connectedness with a larger, global community of information and ideas. An elevation of the Free Public Library designed by Penn Varney for Schenectady, New York, was published in a 1902 edition of *Architectural Review*, and is an example of a typical Carnegie Library (Figure 18). The Classical Revival façade calls for inscriptions in several locations. The first is the standard Carnegie name tablet located centrally below the pediment and the second is the common motto, “FREE TO ALL” over the entry. The elevation also specifies “L-stone panels with carved names” below the windows of the façade. Undoubtedly, this is another appearance of the listing of prominent historical figures as seen in Boston Public Library and Library of Congress, yet its appearance on a

![Figure 18: Penny Varney. Carnegie Library, Schenectady, New York.](image)

---

32 Jones, xi.
rather ordinary public library is a testament to its establishment as a commonplace library ornamental type. The use of prominent literary names, for example, worked seamlessly with the goal of the library to both educate the public and address the function of the building.

While most Carnegie libraries were modest compared to the monumental libraries of this period, the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh main branch in Oakland (1895) could compete with the grandest libraries of the time (Figure 19). The plan of Longfellow, Alden and Harlow, a Boston-based firm, was chosen from 97 submissions from firms around the country.\(^3\) The building was in the Beaux Arts style, similar to that of the Boston Public Library and the Library of Congress. The library also contained a music hall and a museum, and was later expanded in 1907 by Alden and Harlow for additional space for these functions. The original library featured the names of prominent thinkers carved in the cornice around the front and sides on the exterior. The names do not appear in random order as they have in preceding libraries; instead, the names correspond to the function of the building interior at that location. The front façade, for example, features names from literature because the library was located in the center of the building; the north façade features names of composers because the music hall was located on the north side of the building; and the

south façade features the names of artists and scientists because the museum was located on the south side of the building (Figure 20).  

When the building was expanded, the north and east facades were partially covered, which necessitated re-carving the names on the new exterior. New names were added to the list that embraced other subject areas; this could correspond to the increased function of the museum and the expanded and diversified library collections. A list of the names on the library as they were carved after the addition appears in Appendix II. There is no evidence of a procedure for choosing the names, but the building committee and Carnegie had final say in the selection (Figure 21). A letter from Carnegie regarding the choice provides insight into the importance of the inscriptions and is included in Appendix III. Carnegie was acutely aware of how his choices would reflect his own erudition, as well as foster respect for his institution and for Pittsburgh.

The names on the cornice were analyzed by academics in their field in a special issue of *Carnegie Magazine* published in 1982. In this issue, art historian David Wilkins...

---


35 Ibid.
points out that the library was rather conservative in its choice of names, preferring to pick individuals who were indisputably regarded as leaders in their respective fields. Wilkins speculates that this was due to the fact that Carnegie wanted a timeless building that could never go out of fashion.

In addition to the names on the exterior, the interior featured allegorical sculpture and murals, as well as inscriptions in the same mode as the Boston Public Library and the Library of Congress. The elaborate interior decoration in the 1907 addition was completed under the direction of Elmer Ellsworth Garnsey, who was also involved in the decoration of the Boston Public Library and the Library of Congress. On the interior, above the door to the Music Department, is the inscription, “Omne Labore,” translated as “Everything through work.” At the opposite end of the corridor the inscription reads, “Vivere est Cogitare,” which means “To live is to think,” a quotation from Cicero. In addition, the main reading room features murals of early European printers’ marks, echoing the theme of printing found in the medallions on the Boston Public Library and the printers marks’ employed on the ceiling in the Great Hall of the Library of Congress.
These inscriptions, in addition to the names on the exterior, relate to the ultimate goal of the library to educate and uplift the public. In fact, Carnegie said of the library, “it was to provide ladders upon which the aspiring may climb to the enjoyment of the beautiful and the delights of harmony, whence comes sensibility and refinement; to the sources of knowledge, from which springs wisdom; and to the wiser and grander views of human life, from whence comes the elevation of man.” Its style, scale, and ornamental motif reinforce what became a typical monumental public library of the period. The study of the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh also points to the overall importance of inscriptions, as Carnegie approved the list personally. This was true for the Boston Public Library and Library of Congress as well, as Charles Eliot Norton, a respected authority and scholar, was enlisted for his advice on the inscriptions and ornament. The inscriptions were highly scrutinized not only because they were a signpost for high culture, but also because of the permanence of the medium. Imagine the challenge of choosing a timeless quotation or list of names that will forever represent the library and the city where it is located. The study of the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh inscriptions illuminates this dilemma.

The Indianapolis Public Library, designed by Paul Phillipe Cret in 1916, continues some of the trends established in the previous decade (Figure 22). Cret, like Charles Follen McKim, was educated at the École des Beaux Arts in Paris and designed in the Classical style. His designs are often called “Stripped Classicism” for their starkness in comparison to more elaborate varieties of Beaux Arts architecture. Despite his restraint in architectural form, the Indianapolis Public Library, which is an imposing

---

limestone building with a Doric portico in antis, continued to employ a typical mode of relief sculpture and inscriptions across the frieze and along the sides (Figure 23).

![Indianapolis Public Library](image1.png)

**Figure 22: Paul Phillipe Cret, Indianapolis Public Library**

Though not as large as the Library of Congress or Boston Public Library, the Indianapolis Public Library is rooted in this period of monumentalism, for it featured the trademark stately façade, a central hall featuring tall ornamented ceilings, and two sets of grand staircases leading to two airy reading rooms. In some ways the ornamental scheme is typical of the period, featuring the names of prominent persons carved on the interior and exterior, as well as the common theme of the zodiac, as seen in carved panels at the base of the columns. The names are only those of writers, unlike the Boston Public Library, Library of Congress or Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, which include names from science,

![Indianapolis Public Library, inscribed frieze.](image2.png)

**Figure 23: Indianapolis Public Library, inscribed frieze.**
geography, art and other fields; a complete list of the Indianapolis Public Library names is found in Appendix IV. They are writers of literature, poetry, philosophy, history, and religion, from antiquity through the nineteenth century and include a variety of nationalities (Figure 24). As the land was donated by local Indianapolis poet, James Whitcomb Riley, his name is included amongst the writers on the exterior. Another break from the norm is the inclusion of four female authors: Harriet Beecher Stowe, Jane Austen, George Sand and George Eliot, two whom were writing under male pseudonyms.

This may point to the increased role of women in library affairs, both as workers and patrons of libraries, as well as reflect the influence of the fight for increased women’s civil rights in the early decades of the twentieth century. In addition to the carved names, the interior carries the following inscription by an unknown author found underneath a clock placed over the entrance: “Time by minutes slips away, first the hour and then the day; small the daily loss appears, yet it soon amounts to years” (Figure 25). The verses encourage the viewer to use his or her time wisely, suggesting the importance of industriousness and higher pursuits. Thus, in the context of the library, the implication is that here, one should not waste time idly, but take advantage of the opportunities for

---

leaning made available in this building. It is both a note of encouragement and a reflection of the library’s role in nobler pursuits. The Indianapolis Public Library demonstrates the widespread use of classicism for civic buildings, especially libraries, as well how routine the use of names on the façade and interior had become by 1916.

The demand for public libraries reached as far west as San Francisco, California, with the construction of the San Francisco Public Library in 1917 (Figure 26). The architect George Kelham continued the precedent of the large-scale public library of this period.

Figure 25: Indianapolis Public Library, inscription over entrance.

Figure 26: George Kelham, San Francisco Public Library.

Kelham was educated at the École des Beaux Arts and had been the supervising architect for the Panama Pacific Exposition held in San Francisco in 1915. The library was an
important part of Mayor Edward Robeson Taylor’s promotion of the City Beautiful and Daniel Burnham’s civic plan for San Francisco. It was also endowed with a grant from Andrew Carnegie and supplemented with additional money from the city. Kelham’s Beaux Arts design was similar to the Boston Public Library on the interior and exterior, and occupied an entire city block adjacent to San Francisco City Hall. It employed many common inscripational forms, like carved names on tablets on the exterior, listed in Appendix V (Figure 27). It also includes a frieze with a similar sentiment to that of the Boston Public Library: “THE PUBLIC LIBRARY OF THE CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO - MAY THIS STRUCTURE, THRONED ON IMPERISHABLE BOOKS, BE MAINTAINED AND CHERISHED FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION FOR THE IMPROVEMENT AND DELIGHT OF MANKIND” (Figure 28).

The wording was chosen by then former Mayor and library

---

trustee Edward Robeson Taylor, and summarized the goals for the new civic library. This sentiment was echoed in the twenty-four tablets bearing inspirational quotations about learning, art and happiness that lined the central mezzanine on the interior, an area that was reached after climbing the wide central staircase en route to the reading room (Figure 29). These quotations were from a variety of sources including the Bible, writers from antiquity, American politicians and poets, and English authors (see Appendix V). For example, the Proverb, “A soft answer turneth away wrath but grievous words stir up anger,” is used alongside the Daniel Webster quote, “Let our object be our country, our whole country, nothing but our country.” Several quotations refer directly to its function as a library such as, “Handle a book as a bee does a flower; extract its sweets but do not injure it.” This use of inscriptions reinforced the notion that the library had become a moral and intellectual guidepost for the public. The offering of sage advice and words of wisdom correlated with the library’s goal to improve its users.

This small selection of public libraries demonstrates the widespread trends in library architecture across America during this period. Both in inscriptive types and themes, as well as general style and scale, libraries were developing a distinct building typology that would influence the development of university libraries.
Changes in Academia

The circumstances in American higher education were such that the size of the academic library building depended on the size of the book collection, the number of students, and the predominant teaching style used in the institution. Academic institutions had almost completely changed their curricula during this time. The old order of rote learning and classical curricula now included seminars and electives. There was an increase in course offerings and changes the way classes were conducted. Class sizes decreased and operated with a collection of books at hand in lieu of textbooks. The new approach also meant students were required to consult a variety of primary and secondary sources, requiring a greater usage of the library. This resulted in larger collections and greater diversity of sources. These changes in university teaching methods, and the increased role of the library, at the turn of the century are perhaps best summarized by an excerpt from the 1896 biennial report of F.H. Snow, Chancellor of the University of Kansas.

In the olden time, the libraries contained few books, and but little use was made of them either by professors or students. Additions by purchase were absolutely unknown, and the chief increase in the size of the book catalogue was from gifts or government publications. In the best universities of the present time, the library building is the soul of the institution. In the olden time, such an officer as a librarian, whose whole time should be devoted to the care of the books and the guidance of the students in their use of the books, was entirely unknown. When the writer was a college student, the librarian was a member of the faculty who spent one hour each Wednesday and Saturday afternoon in handing out books to the few students who chose to avail themselves of the privilege. At the present time both students and professors spend a

39 Kaser, 85.
40 Ibid.
large portion of their time every day in consulting many authorities upon subjects which were formerly taught from a single textbook.\textsuperscript{41}

At the same time, the large library building can be attributed to the increase in enrollment size as well as library collections. Table 1 shows the growth in these areas from 1890 to 1930 in several major American universities. These figures show an average enrollment growth rate of more than 370 percent and a fivefold increase in the library collection. The heavier use of the library, combined with expansion of curricular interests, and the new requirements of research facilities for graduate students and faculty created a continuous demand for more and more library materials.\textsuperscript{42} Additionally, the library served all departments of the university as an educational tool, so that it became one of the standards by which one institution measured its progress against others. Consequently, a predominating feature of university libraries since 1890 has been the pressure to increase collections.\textsuperscript{43} The monumental library, therefore, served the practical function of housing an ever expanding number of books, as well as serving as a showpiece for the large collection. The building itself became an object of pride, becoming ever more elaborate and grand in its schemes. The imposing facades and expansive reading rooms were often highly ornamental and were where inscriptions were most commonly located. Indeed, the libraries became the literal and figurative “soul” of the university.

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid, 17.
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid, 18.
The libraries were also becoming increasingly expensive; some requiring large gifts from private donors. In fact, the donors’ interest in the building often led to the requirement that a building be a suitable architectural monument, in addition to a functioning university library. Sterling Memorial Library at Yale University, and Butler Library at Columbia University, the largest of the behemoths, were also the most expensive. These two libraries were also two of the more highly decorated libraries, which substantially increased the cost of construction.

The monumentalism of the period can be attributed to a number of factors. The precedent of the large-scale public library building, as seen in the Boston Public Library, Library of Congress, Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, Indianapolis Public Library and San Francisco Public Library, as well as curricular changes, the growth of the universities, and large private donations were very influential. One would expect that the use of library inscriptions would follow the trend in expansive, ornamented, and costly libraries. At the same time, the clear inscriptive themes employed in the earlier public libraries were being adapted to university settings.
Table 1: University Enrollment and Collection Size, 1890-1940.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brown</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>68,000</td>
<td>868</td>
<td>110,000</td>
<td>993</td>
<td>186,500</td>
<td>1,310</td>
<td>270,000</td>
<td>2,161</td>
<td>403,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California</td>
<td>701</td>
<td>41,330</td>
<td>2,504</td>
<td>79,000</td>
<td>3,858</td>
<td>198,231</td>
<td>12,630</td>
<td>413,000</td>
<td>18,689</td>
<td>765,505</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>3,410</td>
<td>303,000</td>
<td>6,681</td>
<td>500,000</td>
<td>11,301</td>
<td>599,492</td>
<td>14,713</td>
<td>915,837</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbia</td>
<td>1,671</td>
<td>115,700</td>
<td>2,452</td>
<td>300,000</td>
<td>3,534</td>
<td>448,580</td>
<td>8,510</td>
<td>747,448</td>
<td>15,903</td>
<td>1,222,524</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cornell</td>
<td>1,328</td>
<td>108,138</td>
<td>2,299</td>
<td>238,676</td>
<td>4,227</td>
<td>383,696</td>
<td>5,765</td>
<td>630,637</td>
<td>5,893</td>
<td>810,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harvard</td>
<td>2,126</td>
<td>380,000</td>
<td>4,103</td>
<td>548,511</td>
<td>4,046</td>
<td>850,278</td>
<td>4,650</td>
<td>2,028,100</td>
<td>9,475</td>
<td>2,971,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>469</td>
<td>19,000</td>
<td>2,019</td>
<td>44,000</td>
<td>4,783</td>
<td>157,836</td>
<td>8,549</td>
<td>461,598</td>
<td>13,370</td>
<td>836,496</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indiana</td>
<td>438</td>
<td>12,000</td>
<td>1,017</td>
<td>35,000</td>
<td>2,328</td>
<td>77,158</td>
<td>3,783</td>
<td>134,370</td>
<td>4,524</td>
<td>218,750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johns Hopkins</td>
<td>404</td>
<td>35,000</td>
<td>645</td>
<td>94,000</td>
<td>679</td>
<td>142,000</td>
<td>2,715</td>
<td>225,000</td>
<td>5,027</td>
<td>376,775</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kansas</td>
<td>509</td>
<td>12,541</td>
<td>1,093</td>
<td>33,000</td>
<td>2,111</td>
<td>76,145</td>
<td>3,700</td>
<td>132,638</td>
<td>4,498</td>
<td>232,570</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>2,158</td>
<td>74,599</td>
<td>3,309</td>
<td>140,000</td>
<td>4,755</td>
<td>270,998</td>
<td>8,652</td>
<td>432,394</td>
<td>10,298</td>
<td>748,864</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minnesota</td>
<td>1,002</td>
<td>25,000</td>
<td>2,991</td>
<td>60,000</td>
<td>5,050</td>
<td>145,000</td>
<td>12,180</td>
<td>300,000</td>
<td>14,928</td>
<td>654,447</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Carolina</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>34,000</td>
<td>515</td>
<td>31,000</td>
<td>821</td>
<td>58,000</td>
<td>1,437</td>
<td>93,914</td>
<td>2,865</td>
<td>223,295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northwestern</td>
<td>1,484</td>
<td>23,000</td>
<td>2,728</td>
<td>43,182</td>
<td>4,830</td>
<td>142,040</td>
<td>6,801</td>
<td>193,662</td>
<td>14,358</td>
<td>280,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pennsylvania</td>
<td>1,594</td>
<td>90,000</td>
<td>2,681</td>
<td>145,000</td>
<td>4,126</td>
<td>293,913</td>
<td>6,862</td>
<td>503,572</td>
<td>9,333</td>
<td>712,358</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Princeton</td>
<td>769</td>
<td>65,000</td>
<td>1,194</td>
<td>144,000</td>
<td>1,400</td>
<td>270,040</td>
<td>1,850</td>
<td>444,268</td>
<td>2,489</td>
<td>...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stanford</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>1,331</td>
<td>45,000</td>
<td>1,744</td>
<td>174,000</td>
<td>2,809</td>
<td>320,000</td>
<td>4,642</td>
<td>530,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>307</td>
<td>6,300</td>
<td>952</td>
<td>35,000</td>
<td>1,861</td>
<td>72,732</td>
<td>4,418</td>
<td>194,459</td>
<td>6,681</td>
<td>422,973</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>483</td>
<td>45,000</td>
<td>655</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>803</td>
<td>70,000</td>
<td>1,638</td>
<td>120,300</td>
<td>2,458</td>
<td>172,230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>1,465</td>
<td>8,000</td>
<td>1,646</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>1,024</td>
<td>109,684</td>
<td>2,640</td>
<td>176,013</td>
<td>3,938</td>
<td>295,532</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yale</td>
<td>1,477</td>
<td>200,000</td>
<td>2,432</td>
<td>309,500</td>
<td>3,297</td>
<td>575,000</td>
<td>3,152</td>
<td>1,250,000</td>
<td>5,330</td>
<td>1,983,338</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chapter IV: Inscriptions of Beaux Arts University Libraries

Many university libraries constructed during the period from 1890 to 1930 were designed in the Beaux Arts style for a number of reasons. Architectural historians have long recognized the major role of the World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago from 1893 as the causal factor of the rapid transition in popularity from the Romanesque to the Renaissance architectural styles during the later 1890s. Charles Follen McKim was the coordinating architect for the Exposition buildings. Under his direction, and with the designs of other architects who were also either trained at, or strongly influenced by, the École des Beaux Arts, the Exposition buildings displayed the formalism and monumentalism that would become the dominant model for public and institutional architecture in the United States. This influence is evident in the public libraries described in Chapter II, all of which draw from the Beaux Arts tradition. The appearance of the inscription on this popular style, especially in the mode of listing prominent names, can be traced back to the teachings of the École and the important precedent of the Bibliothèque Ste. Geneviève.

The École des Beaux Arts was arguably the most powerful entity that ever existed for the training of highly skilled architects after the French Revolution. The school championed certain aesthetic traditions and ideals that became so inseparable from the architecture designed by École-trained architects that it became its own style. One goal
was to establish a universal architectural ideal through study of the five orders; both their highest actual embodiment in Roman and Renaissance buildings and writings (hence the emphasis on studying the works of antiquity in Italy), and their noble adoption by seventeenth century French Classicists. Thus, the use of the inscription in Beaux Arts architecture can be seen in relation to its Roman antecedents. In fact, the lettering style often employed for carved inscription is the typical Roman letter form, as employed on the ancient public edifices. The Renaissance theorist and architect Leon Battista Alberti comments on ancient inscriptions in his *Ten Books of Architecture*, a seminal architectural text. “Our Romans recorded the exploits of their great men, by carving their story in marble. This gave rise to columns, triumphal arches, porticoes enriched with memorable events.” The Arch of Titus, for example, was an often-copied Roman monument at the École and featured a large attic inscription using typical Roman lettering (Figure 30). The location of the inscription in a frieze, tablet or attic with carved serif lettering became the mode employed in the Renaissance and later at the École.

The inscriptions may also figure into the inherent planning principles of the École. The planning system of a Beaux Arts building became so ingrained in École teaching that it developed a special vocabulary of its own. The *parti* was the basic

---

44 Trachtenberg, 427.  
scheme of the building, which demanded that the architect address the fundamental question of the buildings’ functional program. The *composition* concerned the detailing of the *parti*, which involved both the distribution and the disposition of the elements, and their articulation and linking together into a cohesive whole.\footnote{Trachtenberg, 428.} The *marche* of the building referred to the way that architecture was used and experienced aesthetically; it was the imaginary experience of walking through a plan in the mind’s eye and ultimately the experience of the building itself.\footnote{Ibid.} The inscriptions on Henri Labrouste’s Bibliothèque Ste. Geneviève, though sometimes seen as a departure from Beaux Arts classicism, can also be seen in light of these principles (Figure 31).

naming on the surface of the actual content of thought contained therein in books of printed words. The inscriptions can be also understood in light of the traditional parti, or the functional program of the building. The inscriptions directly communicate the function of the building as a library and also suggest the building’s interior arrangement. The inset panels of the upper arcade denote the back sides of the bookshelves in the reading room behind them and the names inscribed on the surface externalize those on the spines of the books on the shelves. The inscriptions can also be seen as an integral element to the marche of the building, for the procession of the building is rigidly ordered beginning with the exterior and continuing inside to the reading rooms. The reading of the names on the exterior is meant to be an elevating experience, expressing the “progressive development of historical change; the meaning of that progress is open to all who can read”. Then the visitor proceeds into the vestibule on the ground floor, which is on axis with a double staircase leading to the second floor reading room and book stacks. The figurative understanding of human progress, as seen on the exterior of the building, is coupled with a procession that literally elevates the visitor to the space dedicated to the books and the wisdom contained therein.

Levine also discusses Labrouste’s use of inscriptions in light of Victor Hugo’s assertion in Notre-Dame de Paris of 1832 that architecture was a book in stone. Hugo believed that there was a struggle between architecture and the printed book as the primary agent of the communication of ideas. He says, “humanity has known two books, two registers, two testaments: masonry and printing, the bible of stone and the bible of

---

49 Ibid, 350.
50 Ibid, 353.
51 Ibid, 351.
paper…Up to the fifteenth century, architecture was the great book of mankind, man’s chief form of expression…the universal writing. It seems no idea of any importance came into being without being inscribed in stone.” Thus, the use of text at the Bibliothèque Ste. Geneviève seems to defer to the importance of the written word while also reacting to Hugo’s belief that the “book will kill the building” through reasserting the communicative role of architecture.52

The use of the architectural inscription on Beaux Arts architecture is intimately tied to its roots in inscriptions from antiquity, particularly in the form and location of the inscription. At the same time, the appearance of the inscription on Beaux Arts libraries in particular cannot be divorced from Labrouste’s Bibliothèque Ste. Geneviève and its adaptation of Beaux Arts ideology. While not all of Labrouste’s intentions with his use of inscriptions may be fully realized in their adaptation on the American architectural scene, their formal qualities and rhetorical intent are certainly understood. As discussed in Chapter II, the large public libraries built during this era were highly influenced by McKim, Mead and White’s Boston Public Library, an adapted version of the Bibliothèque Ste. Geneviève. This firm’s successes in civic and public library architecture were followed by several projects for universities, including Low Library at Columbia University and the Rotunda restoration at the University of Virginia. These commissions, combined with the popularity of the Columbian Exposition, began to shift Beaux Arts design to universities and their library buildings.

52 Ibid, 356.
In 1892, the trustees of Columbia University voted to purchase a site on Morningside Heights, further north on the island of Manhattan from their then-current Midtown campus on 50th Street, because the university had outgrown its facilities and the city was rapidly urbanizing around the campus. University President Seth Low was instrumental in the move, and would play a large role in the future campus design. Low understood that there were high expectations for the new campus in the city. *Harper’s Magazine* saw the campus as “the magnificent and adequate representative of the just aspirations of the city for an institution which is symbolical of the higher interests of every great and prosperous community”\(^\text{53}\). *Real Estate Record* editorialized, “It will rest with the authorities of Columbia…more than those of any other institution to treat their plot so as to add a real architectural monument to New York.”\(^\text{54}\) In 1893, the trustees hired Charles Follen McKim to design the campus after an architectural commission comprised of McKim, Richard Morris Hunt and Charles Coolidge Haight drafted several proposals for the site and its arrangement. McKim proposed that Columbia build an impressive formal ensemble focusing on a monumental Classical library. It is not surprising that McKim chose the library as the central feature since both he and Low considered the library to be the most important building of a great academic institution.\(^\text{55}\)

Thomas Jefferson was the first to emphasize the library as the literal and figurative head of the university in his design for the University of Virginia in 1826. Jefferson’s adoption of Neoclassicism, his hierarchical campus plan, and the scheme’s association with


\(^{54}\) Ibid.

\(^{55}\) Dolkart, 127.
Enlightenment principles could have had an influence on the conceptual design for Columbia University, at least its emphasis on a single classically-inspired library. The ancient architectural models for Columbia’s library included the Pantheon and the Baths of Caracalla in Rome, which had long been valued as symbols of the greatness of classical civilization. The building was a Greek cross in plan, with angled corners, crowned by a shallow dome set on a drum articulated with large thermal windows. The façade, which faced south towards the main campus entrance, featured a portico of ten Greek Ionic columns (Figure 32).

![Image](https://via.placeholder.com/150)

**Figure 32: Charles Follen McKim, Low Memorial Library, Columbia University.**

The scheme featured the signature Beaux Arts planning principles of symmetry, formalism, and hierarchy with stately classical facades and a grand procession. This campus design was the second monumental urban ensemble for a university designed in America following the World’s Columbian Exposition, and was initially received with great praise by the university trustees because it “explicitly placed the expanding college in the tradition of European culture and sought to recast Columbia as a rival to the
universities of the Old World\textsuperscript{56} President Seth Low donated one million dollars of his own money to see the library completed because he had staked his reputation on the success of the Morningside Heights campus; the library was to be its crown jewel. As principal donor, University President, and chair of the Building Committee, Low was intimately involved in the details of the Library’s construction. In fact, Low and McKim collaborated on the inscriptive program for the library, which soon became an object of controversy within the Board of Trustees.

Early elevation drawings of the library reveal that McKim initially planned to inscribe prominent names of philosophers, artists and authors on the frieze in the typical mode. His elevation shows the names: Tacitus, Pindar, Pliny, Livy, Milton, Shelley, Cicero, Schiller, Goethe, Racine, Corneille, Cimabue, Giotto, Durer, Bramante, Alberti, Sansovino, Palladio, Michelangelo, Ghiberti, Cellini, Donatello, Della Robbia (Figure 33). McKim planned for a Latin inscription using Roman lettering in the entablature, though it is not totally legible on the elevation drawing.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure33.png}
\caption{Charles Follen McKim, longitudinal drawing for Low Memorial Library.}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid, 134
A memorandum entitled, “For use in determining the inscriptions to be carved on the exterior and interior walls of the Columbia College Library” outlines the spaces McKim made available for inscriptions.

The main frieze contained space for 55 names, the large panel over the main portico may contain 330 letters, the four panels in the angles of the library below the frieze can contain 23 letters each, the frieze of the main entrance door, an inscription of 37 letters. On the interior there are sixteen spaces, 20 letters in each in the frieze over columns and 32 names in the frieze of the main cornice.57

From this memorandum it seems clear that a much more involved program of inscriptions was planned for the exterior of the building than was actually executed. In an 1895 letter from Seth Low to Professors Peck and Woodbury, fellow building committee members, Low explains his ideas for the library inscriptions.

Since Mr. McKim has returned from Europe, I have learned from him that, in his opinion, it is absolutely essential that there should be lettering in his frieze of the Library Building. Assuming that the front entablature is to contain the inscription provisionally adopted in the spring, which as you will remember is historical in character, I propose that the frieze and the small panels in the angles shall be used to epitomize the history of the university by indicating the historical development of parts…The inscriptions may be read as a whole around the building, or such one by itself and equally make good sense. You will notice that the angle referring to the Faculty of Pure Science looks towards Schermerhorn Hall and the Physics Building; the angle referring to medicine looks towards the College of Physicians and Surgeons.58

Thus, President Low intended to summarize the history of the university in panels around the centrally-located building that also corresponded with the location of those

57 “For use in determining the inscriptions to be carved on the exterior and interior walls of the Columbia College Library.” Folder 2, Box 11, Subseries III: Morningside Heights Campus, Series I: Buildings, Buildings and Grounds Collection, University Archives, Columbia University.
58 Low to Peck, Woodbury, and Sherman August 24, 1896, Folder 16, Box 531, Low Memorial Files, Central Files, University Archives, Columbia University.
departments on the new campus. The panels and frieze inscriptions as he suggested are located in Appendix VI. This scheme is essentially a foil to the inward-looking inscriptions that refer to the books on the shelves found on the Bibliothèque Ste. Geneviève. Instead, the inscriptions that Low proposed refer outwards to the external campus arrangement and its individual departments. Low’s arrangement still related to Beaux Arts principles, for it was a logically-planned application of inscriptions that referred directly to the building’s function as a library and as a physical and symbolic centerpiece for the new campus.

This scheme was an alternative to the exterior inscriptions rendered in the early plans of McKim, which noted the names of prominent figures and a Latin inscription in the south entablature. Of the new exterior inscriptions, McKim seemed to approve, as a letter from Seth Low notes, “My dear Mr. McKim, you will be glad to know that Mr. Pine likes the outside inscriptions as well as you do.”

The wording of the south entablature and north entablature, which were considerably larger spaces, was an object of debate between Trustee John B. Pine and President Low, and is documented in a series of letters between February and March of 1896. It was determined that the south entablature (front) would carry a historical inscription about the university and the north entablature would carry a quotation. Pine writes that, “I have sought in vain for a quotation, which would aptly express my idea of what a great library should be: a gathering together of arts, sciences literature, law,

59 Low to McKim, Mead and White, August 24, 1896, Folder 7, Box 527, McKim, Mead and White Files, Central Files, University Archives, Columbia University.
history, philosophy, from the study of which emanate knowledge, wisdom, and truth.”

He insists that the inscriptions be in Latin for “expressed in English, it seems crude...and that Latin seems to have a terseness and dignity all its own.” He also suggested substituting allegorical sculpture for the inscription, which might more “beautifully express the idea of the library.” However, Low so much preferred the inscriptions that “he found it difficult to discuss the question upon its merits.” Low also retorted about the use of Latin:

Questionable taste is not made any better by finding expression through a language that only a few understand. That I conceive to be desirable is to carry to the mind of every person who reads the inscription the sense of the long time that has elapsed since the founding of Kings College in 1725 so that every person who reads the inscription shall feel himself at once to be in the presence of a venerable and historic institution. This, I think my inscription does in more ways than one.

This sentiment speaks to the inherent power of architectural inscription to communicate directly with its viewers and enliven the spaces they adorn. Pine echoed this sentiment as well, in his search for a quotation that would express what the great library should be. Nonetheless, the trustees voted to wait until the building was completed to decide on the program of inscriptions. Some felt that it would “cheapen the effect of a building otherwise dignified and impressive.” Others were not sure that the inscriptions as proposed were the best obtainable. Charles McKim notes that a better solution than

60 Pine to Low, February 14, 1896. Folder 1, Box 479, John B. Pine Files, Central Files, University Archives, Columbia University
61 Ibid.
62 Pine to Low, February 15, 1896.
63 Low to Pine, February 17, 1896.
64 Low to Pine, March 27, 1896.
65 Low to McKim, Mead and White, October 6, 1896, Folder 7, McKim, Mead and White Files, Central Files, University Archives, Columbia University.
waiting until the building’s completion would be to place the inscription upon the model of the building and take photographs. Low notes in a letter to Pine that McKim, “feels very strongly, as I knew he would, that it will be most unfair to him if the inscriptions are omitted from the building. He is not so greatly concerned as to the nature of the inscriptions, but he does feel that an artist is entitled to have the building completed as he has designed it. I feel that his attitude in this particular is entirely right and I shall support him in it with all the influence at my command.”

Trustee George Rives also weighed in on the discussion about the inscriptions as proposed by President Low; his concerns are listed in Appendix VII. He wrote, “The placing of inscriptions in the frieze and panels seems to me unfortunate and in bad taste. I do not agree that we ought to accept an architect’s opinion in such matters.” Rives believed that the “literary elements enters so largely into the question, that the views of all other persons of equal culture are entitled to equal weight.” It is for this reason that inscriptions are often so controversial, because everyone feels that he or she is entitled to an opinion on the matter; inscriptions are viewed as outside the immediate purview of the architect. McKim’s insistence that there be text on the building in some form showed that his was an aesthetic concern, based on the precedent that Beaux Arts architecture carry lettering. He notes that the inscriptions were needed for “proper artistic effect.” Low and the other trustees, on the other hand, were concerned with the content and impact of those words. Rives’ primary concern with Low’s program was that the panels

---

66 Low to Pine, October 12, 1896, Folder 1, Box 479, John B. Pine Files.
67 George Rives, “Library Inscriptions,” Folder 16, Box 531, Low Memorial Files, Central Files.
68 Ibid.
69 Ibid.
on the exterior were merely statements of fact about the university’s history. He believed that the north and south entablature struck the right note “because there is some inspiration in them.”  

Rives, Pine, and Low understood that the inscriptions had the power to communicate with a viewer and elicit a particular response, but they could not come to a consensus on the particular wording to do so.

Low successfully convinced the trustees that the inscription on the south entablature should be inscribed in English. It reads,

Kings College Founded in the Province of New York by Royal Charter in the Reign of George II Perpetuated as Columbia College by the People of the State of New York When They Became Free and Independent – Maintained and Cherished from Generation to Generation for the Advancement of the Public Good and the Glory of Almighty God (Figure 34).

The exterior frieze, as well as the north entablature, are still blank because they never decided on a scheme once the building was completed.

![Figure 34: Low Memorial Library, south entablature inscription.](image)

On the interior, several names/subjects areas were intended to be inscribed above the columns and in the frieze of the central domed space, but those were also omitted.

---

70 Ibid.
The angled panels in this space were inscribed, however, with the words: Philosophy, Law, Medicine and Theology in gold Roman letters (Figure 35). These inscriptions generally correspond to the arrangement that Low originally proposed for the exterior of the building: the subjects are oriented towards the building that housed the related department. Medicine, for example is inscribed on the southwest angle. The was the same angle on the exterior that Low proposed for the inscription about the School of Medicine, which was oriented towards the College of Physicians and Surgeons. The architecture library, located to the east of the main reading room, also retained a scheme of architectural inscriptions. The names of famous artists and architects were inscribed in decorative plasterwork along the frieze and cross beams of the room (Figure 36). Perhaps this was one concession to McKim, who pushed for the use of inscriptions so adamantly on the exterior.

Figure 35: Low Memorial Library, inscribed panel in main reading room.

Figure 36: Low Memorial Library, architecture reading room inscriptions.
The names are listed in Appendix VIII and include artists and architects who worked in the Classical style; they were largely from antiquity and the Renaissance, but also included French and British Classicists.

In many ways, the controversy surrounding the Low Library inscriptions is representative of similar discussions at other institutions. The arguments speak to the important precedent in employing a scheme of text on the building, and the ways in which the inscriptions were to symbolize the ideals and history of the school. The proposed inscriptions also worked together with the message of McKim’s imposing classically-inspired library building and carefully arranged campus plan.

The architectural inscriptions chosen for the interior frieze of Stanford White’s Rotunda restoration at the University of Virginia reinforce the decorative prototype developed earlier by the firm and offer insight into the rebuilding process of Jefferson’s celebrated library. The original Rotunda was envisioned as the literal and symbolic head of Jefferson’s “Academical Village.” The building is situated at the northern terminus of a terraced lawn, which is flanked by ten two-story pavilions connected by one-story student rooms (Figure 37). The whole ensemble was derived from a variety of classical and Renaissance models; the Rotunda was chiefly influenced by the Roman Pantheon. True to the Enlightenment, the

---

Figure 37: Stanford White, University of Virginia, Rotunda restoration.
library was the apex of the whole design, which was a novel concept at a time when chapels were the most prominent buildings on a college campus. The library, which stood for reason and knowledge, represented Jefferson’s personal goals for the school and was a part of his larger vision for the emerging American Republic.\textsuperscript{71} For Jefferson, an educated and enlightened populace was instrumental for true liberty and the success of the democratic process.\textsuperscript{72} At the same time, the Lawn was to be a paradigm of good taste; each of the pavilions, for example, was meant to serve a didactic function, that of “exhibiting models in architecture of the purest forms of antiquity, furnishing to the students, examples of the precepts he will be taught in art.”\textsuperscript{73}

In October 1895, the Rotunda caught fire and was nearly totally destroyed. The University’s Board of Visitors decided it was of utmost importance to the school to rebuild, and Stanford White was hired in 1896 for the restoration. He designed two schemes for the restoration. One scheme preserved the original Jefferson arrangement, but the other White believed was, “a nearer approach to a classic and ideal treatment for the interior.”\textsuperscript{74} White’s alternative was ultimately selected by the Board of Visitors, to the consternation of the faculty, who advocated strongly for the restoration of the building to Jefferson’s original designs. White’s design not only added a north portico to the exterior, as well as terraces around the structure, but also a large two-story space inside the main entrance, which had previously been divided into two levels. In this main circular dome

\textsuperscript{72} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{73} Ibid, 11.
room, which served as the main reading room, were a series of added inscriptions carved in a decorative plaster frieze (Figure 38). It is important to note that there were no inscriptions on the original Rotunda or any of Jefferson’s buildings on the Lawn, and that the scheme was a part of White’s alternative plan. The inscriptions included a series of prominent names in the typical mode and read as follows: Bacon, Tacitus, Milton, Pindar, Cicero, Maury, Darwin, Shakespeare, Gibbon, Dante, Aristotle, Henry, Goethe, Tennyson, Scott, Plato, Horace, Molière, Poe, and Homer.

It is clear that White intended for names to be included in the frieze because they are noted on his longitudinal section drawing in the same mode as on McKim’s drawings for Low Library. However, the names noted on the plans do not entirely correspond with those installed in the frieze. Only seven names are visible in White’s drawing: Plato, Socrates, Homer, Caesar, Horace, Pliny, and Euclid. The selection only included the names of those from antiquity, which may have corresponded with White’s desire for classical purity. It also may be the case that the firm had stock names that they employed on the drawings to indicate the effect of the inscriptions since this was becoming a prototypical decorative scheme for the firm and for Beaux Arts libraries in general. This left the ultimate choice for the inscriptions to the patron. In this case, the Board of Visitors was
clearly involved in the decision-making process, for several of the names are specific to the University of Virginia. The inscribed names as executed are varied and in random order on the frieze; they include seventeenth century contributors to the English Renaissance, as well as nineteenth century figures. The choice of Edgar Allan Poe, for example, would have been a curious choice if installed in another context. Poe was certainly a well known American poet and author, but he certainly did not have the reputation of many of the other authors whose names appear in the frieze. However, Poe grew up Richmond, Virginia, and considered Virginia his home. More importantly, he was a student at the University of Virginia in 1826. Thus, the choice of Poe amongst the most prominent figures of history is a statement about the university and its contribution to the world’s collective knowledge.

Similarly, the name “Maury” refers to Matthew Fontaine Maury, the nineteenth century American naval officer, geographer, astronomer, and educator. Maury died in 1873, and was the most recent figure cited in the frieze. Aside from his accomplishments, Maury was also a native Virginian and his grandfather, Reverend James Maury, was associated with Jefferson. The elder Maury was not only an inspiring teacher to Jefferson in his youth, but he also taught James Madison and James Monroe. Once again, this choice reflected national and state pride, as well as fostered an association with the university’s founder.

The frieze inscriptions for the Rotunda relate to its reconstitution as a two-story reading room and stack space. White believed that Jefferson would have designed it that way himself if not for the necessity of the spaces on the intervening floor. This new
arrangement created an impressive interior space, and included a gallery lined with monumental Corinthian columns. The frieze inscriptions work together with the formalism and artistic effect of the new space. At the same time, the inscriptions follow the trend in Beaux Arts library ornament, as established by previous and contemporary works by the firm. This particular mode of inscription marks the library as a place of learning, where a user will not only find the works of these great minds, but also may contribute to scholarship himself. This is particularly true with the choice of Virginia natives, Maury and Poe, which suggest to the user that perhaps they too could find their own name amongst Bacon’s and Aristotle’s. In 1973, the Rotunda interior was restored to the original Jefferson design. Among other changes, the restoration involved reconstructing the intermediary floor in the dome room, replacing White’s two-story Corinthian colonnade with a one-story Composite colonnade, and removing the inscribed frieze.

Low Library at Columbia University and the Rotunda restoration at the University of Virginia are early examples of the Beaux Arts influence at universities. The style was also employed in 1906 by Shepley, Rutan and Coolidge for their Langdell Hall design on the campus of Harvard University (Figure 39). This building functioned as the library for Harvard’s Law School, in addition
to containing several classrooms and offices. Austin Hall, the H.H. Richardson-designed building adjacent to Langdell Hall, was the previous home of the Law School; its collection size and student body had outgrown the space by the first decades of the twentieth century. Langdell Hall was the largest building on campus when it was built, and is still the largest law library in the country. The rather austere five-part Classical façade features a shallow portico of monumental Ionic columns, and a pedimented central block where the main entrance is located. The cladding is white limestone, which “was foreign to the Harvard campus,” in 1906.\(^75\) The choice of white limestone shows how completely and promptly the dark color and picturesque forms of Richardson’s era were discarded for the imperial mood of the new Classicism.\(^76\) The southern section of the building was constructed first, and was open by 1907. The northern and western sections of the building were not constructed until 1929, when funds became available for the building’s completion.

The exterior featured several inscriptions, but only on the later 1929 section of the building. It appears that this was planned, for the earlier southern section included the name of the building in the frieze. If additional inscriptions were not planned for the northern section, the name of the building would not have been inscribed until the central block of the


\[^{76}\text{Ibid, 109.}\]
façade was constructed. As it was inscribed, it would have been an off-centered inscription on an otherwise symmetrical façade (Figure 40). The fact that the inscriptions were still employed in 1929 is also evidence that the use of the inscription on classically-designed libraries was a still an important decorative element even into the 1930s. The main entry features the quotation, “Non Sub Homine Sed Sub Deo Et Lege,” carved in the frieze (Figure 41). The quotation comes from Henry de Bracton, a thirteenth century English jurist, and translates as, “Not under man, but under God and the law.” This not only signifies the function of the building as the law library, but it also reminds the viewer of the importance of the law for society, and the student’s own study. The inscription was carved in Latin, as opposed to in English, because the quotation was originally written in Latin, the traditional language of the written law. The façade also includes the names Gray, Ames, Thayer, Smith carved in the east façade frieze and the names Story, Greenleaf and Parsons carved on the west façade frieze in the typical mode with Roman lettering (Figure 42, 43). These figures are all former professors at Harvard Law School. Gray, Ames, Thayer and Smith were on the Law faculty during the same era as C.C. Langdell, for whom the building is named. Langdell was the first official Dean of the Law School beginning in 1870, and was instrumental in the development of the case-study method of legal education. James. B.
Ames succeeded Langdell as dean, and was the dean at the time of construction of the southern section of the building. Ezra Thayer also served as Dean of the Law School after Ames in 1910. Smith and Gray were on the Law Faculty at the time of Langdell and were associated with the growth and development of the school. Parsons, Story and Greenleaf, whose names appeared on the rear of the building, were faculty members in the “old”, pre-Langdell, Harvard Law School. Story taught at Harvard in 1829, after becoming the youngest Supreme Court Justice to ever serve on the U.S. Supreme Court (nominated by President Madison in 1911). Simon Greenleaf succeeded Story as the Dane Professor of Law at Harvard in 1833, and Theophilus Parsons succeeded Greenleaf as Dane Professor of Law in 1848. Each professor seems to represent the era in which he served at the university, while at the same time paying homage to the great accomplishments of each individual. In a sense, this strategy combined Seth Low’s concept of inscribed panels with the school’s history with the typical mode of inscribed names. Each name signifies both an individual figure and a time period. This is a significant departure from the precedent set by public libraries.

Figure 42: Langdell Hall, 1929 section, frieze inscriptions.

Figure 43: Langdell Hall, 1929 section, frieze inscription.
and previous universities’ use of this motif. Perhaps what was also suggested at the University of Virginia with its inclusion of Poe and Maury is now fully realized at Harvard; prominent figures from world history have now been replaced with the names of Harvard faculty.

Overall, the inscriptive scheme at Harvard is multi-layered. The inscriptions are carved in the typical mode: names in Roman lettering in the frieze and a quotation over the entry, which follows the aesthetic trend in public libraries and other Beaux Arts architecture. The inscriptions relate to the building’s function, while also referencing its long and illustrious past through its choice of names.

Butler Library at Columbia University continued the trend of monumental Classical libraries and their close connection with inscriptions (Figure 44). Low Library and Butler Library sit across the central plaza of Columbia’s campus like book ends. This is an appropriate analogy, for if Low Library was the beginning of the monumental Classical library, Butler could be understood as one of the last monumental Classical libraries before the influence of Modernism. It is a very typical academic library from this era in many ways, from its use of inscriptions to its arrangement. It is perhaps the closest stylistically to the large public libraries of the time period, and it also was one of the most expensive at 3.5 million dollars.

Butler Library began in 1926, when Charles Willamson, Director of the Columbia Library, wrote to President Nicholas Murray Butler about the inadequacies of Low Library. Low Library had always been a better monument than a functional library according to Williamson, who insisted that more shelf space was a necessity, and that a
new library would ideally provide for the growth through forty years at least.\textsuperscript{77} Butler agreed that a new library was in order, and approached Edward S. Harkness to be the principal donor. Harkness had inherited his father’s 15% share in Standard Oil, and had spent his life donating to educational and health care institutions. Harkness agreed to finance the library, but brought along his favorite architect, James Gable Rogers, for the project.\textsuperscript{78} Rogers had made his career designing for academic institutions, and was in the midst of designing Sterling Memorial Library at Yale. It appears that the final design was a collaborative effort between Harkness, Butler, Rogers, and Williamson. The result was an imposing six-story classically-inspired design of limestone with fourteen three-story Ionic columns across the façade that articulate the glazed reading room behind.

![Figure 44: James Gamble Rogers, Butler Library, Columbia University.](image)

There are several interior and exterior inscriptions, which were chosen by President Butler (Appendix IX). Butler notes, “It has been my fortune to write all the inscriptions which are on or in the building on Morningside Heights, and I shall at my convenience

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{78} Ibid, 8.
\end{itemize}
address myself to this new and inviting task.”

The planned spaces for exterior inscriptions are detailed in Appendix X, and were outlined in a letter from James Gamble Rogers to President Butler. As was typical, the architect planned for text to be incorporated into his design, “as lettering would be the most dignified form of decoration.”

For the frieze of the principal façade, Butler chose prominent classical names: Homer, Herodotus, Sophocles, Plato, Aristotle, Demosthenes, Cicero, and Vergil (Figure 45). Along the east and west are names from a variety of periods and disciplines, including Milton and Shakespeare, as well as St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Augustine (Figures 46, 47).

---

79 Butler to Rogers, April 13, 1932, Folder 7, Box 358, James Gamble Rogers Files, Central Files, University Archives, Columbia University, New York.

80 Ibid.
This hierarchical arrangement suggests the correlation between the building style and the classical names placed on the primary elevation. A 1934 article published in the *Christian Science Monitor* comments on the names in the frieze:

As you go along the terrace, which constitutes at once an academic court between the two libraries, look at the part of South Hall that faces you, directing your eye up the wall to a band of stonework between a row of windows and the roof. On it you will see a line of names, inscribed in large letters. That suffices to tell you what the building is for, though very likely the six Greeks thus noticed enjoy but symbolic and incidental honor at the new institution. Their books can hardly be supposed to take up much room, or their writings occupy much attention, in the big house of research. Nevertheless, much that is stored on the shelves of the hall takes it source from them; and so they earn this praise and exaltation that hammer and chisel allow them. As you follow the strip along, you catch sight of the names of a couple of Latin authors; and you can easily imagine that, if you found it possible and convenient to make a circuit of the building, you would have the whole history of European Literature accounted for, as the decoration breaks around the four corners.  

In this article, the journalist comments that the names carved in the frieze first identify the function of the building. By 1934, when the building was completed, this motif was definitively associated with library architecture. The article also points to the major influence of the classical writers on all the works found on the shelves inside. Thus, the appearance of the classical writers on the front of the building suggests the debt that later writers, like those on the sides of the building, owe to their fundamental works. There is also the important note about the comprehensiveness of the names – eliciting the “whole history of European Literature.” Certainly, this was the goal of Butler in defining his list; for it not only suggests the immense collection of the Columbia University library, but it

---

suggests the sophistication and high standards of the school. Again, the connection between the names on the façade and the books in the stacks on the interior was the intention of Labrouste at the Bibliothèque Ste. Geneviève, and continues to be an important link between ornament and function at Butler Library.

In addition to the names in the frieze, the panels along the front façade were inscribed with the names of prominent authors and statesmen. Rogers suggested listing great authors in the panels, and Butler proposed listing the names of statesmen. The authors are listed on the panels on the right side of the façade and the statesmen on the left side of the façade (Figures 48, 49).

The seals of Columbia University are located in the center above the main entrance between the two sets. All of the figures on the panels are eighteenth and nineteenth century Americans. American authors and statesmen were also found in the motifs of the Library of Congress, which is one precedent for their appearance at Butler Library. It also adds yet another layer of symbolism to the hierarchy on the façade. None of the figures in the much larger and more prominent frieze are Americans, but are prominent classicists and Europeans. The location of the American names beneath the great minds of literature

---

82 Butler to Rogers, April 24, 1933, Folder 7, Box 358, James Gamble Rogers Files.
and theory suggests the debt that American writing and politics owes to European works. At the same time, the fact that these names appear on the building at all suggests that America has made a significant contribution to the literary world. The decision to put the names of authors in the panels closely follows the building’s function, but the appearance of statesmen like George Washington, Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson is more unusual for a library outside the Library of Congress. The choice of statesmen and authors together, joined by the Columbia University Seal, suggests that the Columbia University library is a place for the study of a variety of subjects, including politics, literature, and history. At the same time, the political figures chosen are associated with the American Revolution and the ideals of individual liberty and freedom. This harkens back to Thomas Jefferson’s concept that an enlightened and educated populace was crucial for the success of the democratic process. Perhaps the inclusion of these names implicates Columbia University’s role in this educational process.

On the interior, several high-minded quotations relate to the acquisition of knowledge and are inspirational in nature. In the main entrance vestibule, “Homines Dum Docent Discunt,” appears around the base of a small dome in the ceiling. This Latin phrase is from the Roman writer, Seneca, and means, “Men Learn While They Teach.” Along the south wall of the main reading room, the large quotation from Francis Bacon, reads, “A Man is But What he Knoweth” (Figure 50).

Figure 50: Butler Library, reading room inscription.
Over the entrance to the reading room is Cicero’s, “Magna Vis Veritas,” which means “Truth is Mighty” (Figure 51). These types of inscriptions speak directly to the students, faculty and researchers who use these spaces for study. It reminds them of their duty to seek truth and knowledge and that Columbia University is a place where the highest ideals are practiced and held in high regard. They were also chosen by President Butler, and can be understood as his personal ideals for the school.

Not all of the libraries built in the Beaux Arts or Renaissance Classical style were monumental. Many universities did not have the funds to construct such large libraries, and several were already beginning to subdivide into smaller specialized libraries. One such specialized library is Clements Library on the campus of the University of Michigan (Figure 52). The building was designed by Albert Kahn in 1920 and paid for by University Regent William Clements, to house his personal collection of rare books and manuscripts. Albert Kahn’s eclectic works could be seen in his previous academic buildings on the campus of Michigan and other works throughout the Detroit area, yet the one he desired most to be remembered for was the Clements Library; he considered it to
be his great masterpiece. The Italian Renaissance library was modeled after Vignola’s casino at the Villa Farnese in Rome, complete with a triple-arched entrance arcade. The library was to be governed by a Board of Trustees selected by the Regents and chaired by the university president. This body, along with Kahn, developed the scheme of ornament for the library.

The scheme included two inscribed relief tablets on either side of the entrance that read: “In darkness dwells the people which know its annals not,” and “Tradition fades but the written record remains ever fresh” (Figures 53, 54). These inscriptions remind viewers of the importance of studying history through the written record, the likes of which are housed inside the library. The Board deferred to the Michigan professor Ulrich B. Phillips, who taught American history, to determine the exterior inscriptions. Since much of the collection included resources from early American history, Ulrich Phillips was thought to have relevant expertise. The theme of early American history is echoed in the choice for the shields under the arcade, which were chosen by Kahn and included the seal and coats of arms for the University of Michigan, Christopher Columbus, and George Washington. Anecdotally, Kahn chose the shields from a book of heraldry, and stipulated that the carving should be completed from that rendering. However, sometime

---

85 “Clements Library Façade Bas Reliefs.”
during the production, the shield of ancient Scottish kings, shown on another page of the book, was carved instead of the coat of arms for George Washington. William Clements and the head librarian noticed the error, but nobody told Kahn and it was never changed. Overall, the Clements library demonstrates that inscriptions had become a standard ornamental type for Beaux Arts university libraries, even if executed in a limited, small-scale context.

The inscriptions on Beaux Arts libraries can be fundamentally related to Beaux Arts principles and the important precedent of the Bibliothèque Ste Geneviève. The listing of names on the interior and exterior of the building became a prototype for university libraries as well as public libraries of the era. At the same time, inspirational quotations about knowledge or reading were also employed on the libraries, which were also seen as appropriate for the library building. Each scheme of inscriptions also provides insight into the specific ideals of the school and the particular context of the

---

86 Ibid.
library’s construction. The majority of the Beaux Arts university libraries followed the conventional approach of inscriptions established by public libraries. This was exemplified by Butler Library, which included the listing of prominent names on the exterior frieze and on exterior panels, as well as included high-minded quotations on the interior. The Rotunda at the University of Virginia and Langdell Hall at Harvard University also followed the trend of listing prominent names, but distinctively included figures associated with their home institution. Seth Low’s scheme for inscriptions at Low Library was perhaps the most novel approach. It included panels that listed when each university department was founded, and the location of each panel aligned with that department’s building on the new campus. Though the scheme was not ultimately installed, the correspondence relating to the inscriptions for Low Library revealed the justification for the inscriptions and their communicative function, the role of the architect in the decision-making process, and the apprehensions that often surrounded architectural inscriptions. In general, the inscriptions on each library can be seen in relation to larger Beaux Arts principles as well as communicated the individual goals of each institution.
Chapter V: Inscriptions of Neo-Gothic University Libraries

The period from 1890 to 1930 was an era of architectural eclecticism in the United States; the Beaux Arts style was only one of many popular styles. Medieval styles had also long been associated with academic architecture, as employed for the university buildings at Oxford and Cambridge in England. Not only was this style properly associated with learning, but it was also highly adaptable to a variety of functions. For example, the monumentalism of the period could be applied to the cavernous reading rooms found in the Neo-Gothic libraries. Several publications in the early twentieth century began to popularize the style for college campuses. In 1903, there appeared in *Outlook*, a prescient piece on “Recent American College Architecture,” by Columbia University professor A.D.F. Hamlin. This article prompted an admiring editorial the same year in *The Nation* entitled, “The College Beautiful.” From July 1906 to December 1907, the *Brickbuilder* published several articles on the American campus by architect Alfred Morton Githens; these were followed by an extensive series of ten essays by the distinguished critic Montgomery Schuyler printed in *The Architectural Record*. These were very influential in a period when universities were building new facilities and formalizing their campus plans. At the same time, architects like Bertram Goodhue and Ralph Adams Cram were popularizing the Gothic with their ecclesiastical designs, and

---

calling for a “new Gothic Revival”\footnote{Burchard, 283.} An important element in the Neo-Gothic was its inherent historical associations and moral qualities; the venerable style was thought to be traditional, uplifting and long-lived. These innate qualities fostered the use of architectural inscriptions. The inscription was also a part of the artistic effect associated with the Gothic style, which included carving, sculpture, relief, and stained glass. Despite the differences in inscriptional style and lettering type between Beaux Arts and Neo-Gothic styles, the content of the inscriptions found on Neo-Gothic libraries was not substantially different from those found on Beaux Arts libraries. The inscriptions were largely quotations about books, knowledge or truth. The exception was the typical Beaux Arts mode of listing prominent names, which was not widely employed in the Neo-Gothic style in the same way. However, even that concept was translated in the Neo-Gothic using statuary or Gothic lettering, as seen on the exterior of Suzzallo Library at the University of Washington. Just as with inscriptions of the Beaux Arts libraries, inscriptions on the Neo-Gothic libraries reflected circumstances of a building’s construction and/or the underlying values and goals of a particular institution.

The University of Chicago campus is an early example of the use of the Gothic style for American academic building. In 1891, Henry Ives Cobb designed the campus plan, which called for a series of quadrangles. This style was advocated by the university trustees and President William Rainey Harper, with the hope that “the passing years among its beautiful structures might increase intelligence, refine taste, and develop
character, and thus minister to the highest culture." Jean Block, in the *Uses of Gothic: Planning and Building the Campus of the University of Chicago, 1892-1932*, notes that the “Architecture stands in such a intimate relationship to man’s physical and spiritual life that comment about it is frequently laden with moral phrases. Gothic architecture was, for the first forty years of the University of Chicago’s existence, considered ennobling, inspiring and uplifting.” In the same way that Beaux Arts architecture evoked the rational ordering and progress of society, Gothic architecture was considered inspirational and uplifting. In a sense, both styles reflected the common idea that architecture had the inherent power to reform humanity in a variety of ways: emotionally, spiritually, intellectually, or physically. Thus, the inscriptions can be understood as a literal manifestation of what is already implied by the architectural expression. Collegiate Gothic architecture is perhaps even more direct in this connection between architectural expression and written message.

While Cobb designed the initial buildings on the campus, the William Rainey Harper Memorial Library became a project of Cobb’s successors, Shepley, Rutan and Coolidge in 1912 (Figure 55). The library was planned in a different manner than other libraries of the time, as the central member of a group of departmental buildings. Each department had its own small library and reading room which connected to the central reading room, administrative offices, working rooms, and additional stacks of the main

---


90 Jean F. Block, *The Uses of Gothic, Planning and Building the Campus of the University of Chicago, 1892-1932* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Library, 1983): xvii.
library. The Divinity School, Law School, History Department, Science Department, Philosophy Department, Classics Department, Language Department and Oriental Department each had individual libraries housed in adjacent buildings, which were either directly connected to Harper Library or linked to it with bridges. Despite this distinct layout, the library was just as ornate as the stand-alone university libraries of the day. The ornament was decided on by the Commission on Library Building and Policy, which included members from the Board of Trustees, faculty members, and the university president. The scheme followed the traditional designs characteristic of Gothic architecture, and included stone carving, tracery, and inscriptions. Carved on the exterior are the seals of prominent American and European universities, which are listed in Appendix XI (Figure 56). Seals of the home institution are a common ornamental motif, as seen at Butler Library at Columbia and Clements Library at the University of Michigan. However, it is not as common to see the seals of other universities. This gesture represents

---

the goal of the University of Chicago to be considered as prestigious as these established American and European universities. This choice also reflects the timelessness of the university’s educational mission.\textsuperscript{92} When the university was founded, President William Rainey Harper wanted to give the university an air of tradition and age. Harper even proposed to forego inaugural ceremonies with the hope that on the first day the university would, “appear a continuation of a work that had been conducted for a thousand years.”\textsuperscript{93} The use of seals not only works aesthetically with the Gothic style, but it reinforced this air of tradition and timelessness that continued Harper’s original vision for the school.

On the interior, Harper Library employed the theme of printers’ marks, which were carved on the stone corbels of the ceiling. This is a motif that was used in the Library of Congress, and later it was employed at Yale’s Sterling Memorial Library. The printers’ marks corresponded with the function of the library to house books, and also read like a medieval history of the printed word. All of the printers featured in the corbels worked between the thirteenth sixteenth centuries in Europe. This choice may relate to medieval ornament and architecture, and to the advances of printing during that era.

In addition, two carved quotations are featured prominently above elaborate screens on the east and west ends of the reading room: “Read not to contradict, nor believe, but to weigh and consider,” and “Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning” (Figure 57, 58). The former is from Francis Bacon and the latter an excerpt from Romans 15:4. Both quotations communicate directly with the students


\textsuperscript{93} Ibid.
studying in the reading room, and provide a token of insight about their current task of learning and reading. This inscription is not fundamentally different from that seen in the reading room of Butler Library at Columbia University. At Butler, the monumental Roman lettering in the frieze certainly have a different style than the medieval lettering above the Gothic screen at Harper Library, but both quotations are taken from the writings of Francis Bacon, and serve to inspire the students utilizing that space. Overall, the inscriptions adhere aesthetically to the Gothic style, work with its expression of timelessness and tradition, relate to the function of the library, as well and communicate higher ideals of learning. They also reflected the ideals of the late university president, William Rainey Harper, who died in 1906, during the initial planning process for the library and for whom it is named.
Suzzallo Library, on the campus of the University of Washington in Seattle, was completed in 1926 in the Neo-Gothic style (Figure 59). The new campus was laid out in 1895, with subsequent plans revised in 1904 by the Olmsted Brothers, and in 1915 by local architect Carl F. Gould. This plan dictated that all future construction would be in the Collegiate Gothic style, and provided for a series of picturesque views of Mount Rainier and the adjacent lake. President Henry Suzzallo arrived at the University of Washington in 1915, and favored the Neo-Gothic style for its beauty. He envisioned a university as a place where “morality and intellectuality are doubled in their efficiency when the grace and appreciation of beauty are added.” Carl Gould and his partner Charles Bebb planned for a central library building in their campus plan, and President Suzzallo took an active role in the building’s design. The construction of the library was a top priority for Suzzallo, envisioning it to be the “soul of the University...a library for all time…and the dominant feature of the university as a whole.” As a result, the imposing Neo-Gothic library and its ornamental scheme became a centerpiece of the campus plan and a place to showcase Suzzallo’s ideals for the school.

---

96 Ibid.
The ornamental scheme was decided on by President Suzzallo along with advice from faculty and the building committee of the Board of Regents. It is clear that Gould and Bebb planned for the ornament, as tablets for inscriptions and niches for statuary were rendered on the elevation drawings, but not with specific statues or words (Figure 60). On the façade, there are eighteen niches for terra cotta figures symbolizing contributions to learning, which were chosen by a panel of faculty members. The faculty members were asked to submit names of individuals representing significant contributions to learning and culture. The list included 246 names, eighteen which were finally chosen by Regent Winlock Miller, President Henry Suzzallo, and Dean David Thompson (see Appendix XII). Many of the figures chosen for the façade were similar to those inscribed on Beaux Arts libraries.

Suzzallo Library also incorporates text in several different locations. On the exterior underneath the statuary, a series of eight tablets were inscribed with the

\[\text{Figure 60: Gould and Bebb, Suzzallo Memorial Library, elevation drawing.}\]

\[\text{Figure 61: Suzzallo Library, exterior statues, inscriptions and seals.}\]

\[97\text{ Ibid.}\]
following subject areas: Medicine, Jurisprudence, Religion, Philosophy, Science/Letters, Technology, Fine Arts, Poetry (Figure 61). The lettering is black letter script, and refers to both the function of the library and the breadth of the collection housed inside. Just as at Harper Library, Suzzallo Library features the seals of other universities on the exterior, including Bologna, California, Harvard, Heidelberg, Louvain, Michigan, Oxford, Paris, Salamanca, Stanford, Toronto, Upsala, Virginia, Yale. Once again, this motif attempts to root the University of Washington in a long tradition of prominent institutions of higher learning. The entrance on the southwest elevation contains the names of prominent scientists above the door, which are listed in Appendix XII (Figure 62). This is one example of the direct adoption of the name motif so popular on public libraries and Beaux Arts libraries, but applied in a Neo-Gothic style. The names are all American nineteenth century scientists, which speak to national achievement in the sciences, and the potential role of the University of Washington in that achievement.

The interior also incorporates text in several unique ways. The main entrance features a series of doorways with inscribed decorative grillwork. The names of six printers with their dates of birth and death are incorporated into the doorways and
The names read as a history of printing technology, since Tao Feng was the prime minister of China who sponsored the early technique of block printing, and later European printers contributed to the fields of bookbinding, printing technology and publishing. This is an adaption of the common motif of printers’ marks, as seen on the Library of Congress, Sterling Memorial Library and Harper Memorial Library. Decorative grillwork is featured throughout the interior.

One decorative entrance grill featured the inscription, “Reading giveth vigor to the mind” (Figure 64). This quotation is not attributed to a particular author, which suggests that President Suzzallo or the building committee authored the saying. This was also the case in the main reading room, which features two carved

---

Figure 63: Suzzallo Library, entrance grillwork featuring names of printers.

Figure 64: Suzzallo Library, interior grillwork featuring inscription.
inscriptions in the walls of the north and south ends. They read, “Good books are a priceless possession, they reveal the minds of creative men and enrich life with experience,” and “Books are to be read with imagination, that their wisdom may interpret events and their ideals inspire worthy action” (Figure 65). In the typical Gothic style, the inscriptions are highly decorative and hardly discernible from a band of floral carving in the reading room. The content is intended to be uplifting, in tandem with the architectural intentions of the Neo-Gothic.

The reading room also features unique world globes hanging from the ceiling that contain explorer’s names and the signs of the zodiac. Explorers are also featured in the Library of Congress; the analogy of exploration is apt for a library, a place that fosters the “exploration” of the mind. At the same time, this theme speaks to the worldliness and sophistication of such an institution as the University of Washington. In all, the inscriptions and ornament support the artistic effect of the architecture, relate to the President Suzzallo’s vision for the library and the university, and figure into larger inscriptional trends from this period, including the use of prominent figures, printing, and inspirational verses about reading and books.

Perhaps the most elaborate and expansive of the Neo-Gothic libraries constructed during this period was Sterling Memorial Library at Yale University completed in 1930.
The library was by far the most expensive, at a cost of over twelve million dollars, which was largely funded by alumnus John W. Sterling. Sterling left his estate to Yale University in 1918, and wished to have a portion of the 29 million dollars used to create one magnificent and useful building that would act as a memorial in his honor. The Sterling trustees had been working with Bertram Goodhue for a design of the library, but upon his death in 1924, James Gamble Rogers was chosen for the project. Rogers worked with Goodhue’s plan, as well as incorporated the complicated program envisioned by librarian Andrew Keogh into a new design. The preliminary sketches were presented at a meeting attended by Yale administrators, as well as the Librarian of Congress, and head librarians at Harvard, Princeton, and other institutions. Rogers called for a plan that revolved around a vertical steel book stack with reading rooms, offices, and card catalogues on the ground floor. The ground floor, which was also the main circulation area, became the canvas for an elaborate scheme of ornament. Rogers worked with the sculptors Lee Lawrie and René Chambellan, who designed carvings and statuary, and the artist G. Owen Bonawit, who designed the

![Figure 66: James Gamble Rogers, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University.](image)

---

99 Ibid, 118.
100 Ibid, 107.
elaborate stained glass program. The ornament was so extensive that a subcommittee on
decoration was formed to determine the wording of inscriptions, the subjects of reliefs,
and the figures of statuary. Andrew Keogh, Head Librarian, Clarence W. Mendell, Dean
of the College, Carl C. Lohmann, Secretary of the University, and Anson Phelps Stokes,
former Secretary of the University, were active committee members and largely
determined its ornamental program.

The major themes of the ornament relate to the idea of knowledge through the
processes of printing, storing and reading books. Stokes and Keogh assembled several
books of images illustrating printing processes, bookshops, famous figures in book
collecting, the calligraphy of book designs of cultures around the world, and inscriptions
exhorting students to read and learn, which informed the ornament of the library. A
statement from the Secretary’s Office in 1930 comments on the ornamental scheme:

…The decorations, rich in symbolism, were carefully selected as being especially appropriate for a library building. The quotations and proverbs, whether wrought in stone, wood, metal or glass all have to do with books, reading or libraries, the carved figures are usually those of scholars and book lovers. An important series of panels depict scenes in the history of the Yale Library and the marks of great printers and engravers to illustrate the history of the book since Gutenberg’s time. Even the corbels, bosses, foliage borders, and grotesques have their origins in illuminated manuscripts in early woodcuts, printers’ ornaments, or in the tooling on fine buildings.\(^\text{101}\)

Thus, the inscriptions and accompanying ornament were from books and about books,
which married the building’s function to its architectural expression. Another source for

\(^{101}\) “Decorations on the Sterling Memorial Library at Yale University” Statement from the Secretary Office, December 7, 1930. Folder 1824, Box 157a, Records of the University Librarian 1918-1928, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University, New Haven.
the inscriptions was the Library of Congress, which was equally elaborate and comprehensive in its scheme and contained many of the same motifs adopted at Sterling Memorial Library. A comprehensive list of the interior and exterior inscriptions is included in Appendix XIII.

There are two inscriptions flanking the door to the entrance vestibule: “A Library is a Summons to Scholarship,” a quotation from British educator Michael Sadler, and “The Library is the Heart of the University,” a quotation from William Osler, founder of Johns Hopkins School of Medicine (Figure 67). Above the entrance doors are a series of intricate relief sculptures symbolic of the ancient civilizations based upon the written record. The reliefs include excerpts from native texts, drawings, or carvings that refer to knowledge, learning, history and libraries. The reliefs represent the Cro-Magnon, Egyptian, Assyrian, Hebraic, Arabic, Greek, Chinese, and Mayan civilizations. Expert faculty members in each language and subject area were enlisted to help with the choice of the text and proper wording of each panel. The hieroglyphics in the Egyptian panel, for example, translate as, “Would that I might make thee love books more than thy mother. Would that I might bring their beauty before thy face. Verily it is greater than that of any office” (Figure 68). This scheme relates to the

Figure 67: Sterling Memorial Library, detail of inscription flanking main entrance.
long-standing tradition of recordkeeping and the acquisition of knowledge. At the same time, the verses in native languages serve as individual inscriptions about books, reading and knowledge that fit together with the other inscriptions used in the library. Last, these excerpts were transcribed from important written texts or ancient carvings, like the Old Testament and Aeschylus’ *Prometheus Bound*, which in and of themselves would relate to history of the written word and the theme of books. The theme was suggested by James Gamble Rogers, and approved by Andrew Keogh, who agreed that it was an appropriate subject. Keogh suggested studying the lunettes in the Library of Congress, which depict the development of the book, for inspiration.  

The exterior also features figures representative of the fields of knowledge, in a fashion similar to that at Suzzallo Library. Symbols and scenes relating to the history of Yale library are featured on the York Street exterior. Shields representing the buildings where the Yale library had been housed previously are listed with dates, and scenes depicting events in the history of the library are featured across the elevation. Brief descriptions of the scenes are inscribed. For example, “Bringing the Books to New Haven, 1718” depicts books being pulled by an ox and cart, and “Removing the books to Sterling Library, 1936,” depicts workers unloading a pickup truck full of books (Figures

---

102 Keogh to Rogers, January 4, 1927, Folder 1826, Box 150, Records of the University Librarian 1918-1938, University Library, Manuscript and Archives, Yale University.
69, 70). This motif speaks to the long tradition of the library at Yale and the growth and progress of the collection and the school. The Committee on Decoration labored over every detail concerning the decoration as understood by their meeting notes. For example, the notes specify that “in the picture of the transfer of books from Saybrook to New Haven, the cart should be drawn by New England oxen, and not by classical bulls.”103 The notes also deliberate over the spacing of letters, the accuracy of the details of a seal, and the clear identification of specific statues. This demonstrates that the success of the decorative scheme was a top priority for the committee.

![Figure 69](left): Sterling Memorial Library, detail of exterior panels with inscription.

![Figure 70](right): Sterling Memorial Library, detail of exterior panels with inscription.

The interior features a central “nave,” which is the ceremonial center of the library, acts as circulation space, and houses the card catalogues. The main desk is at the end of a long procession from the front door, and offices, the main reading room, study rooms, an interior courtyard, and the stacks all branch from this space. Inscriptions, decorative painting, wood carving, and stained glass are concentrated in this area. The inscriptions on the interior were chosen from hundreds of potential inscriptions that were

103 “Notes from Committee on Decoration,” October 31, 1928, Folder 1826, Box 150, Records of the University Librarian 1918-1938, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.
individually read and selected by the Committee on Decoration. The front desk contains the inscription, “Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased,” quoted from Daniel XII (Figure 71). This area serves as the crossing of the library, and also contains panels with the names of librarians of Yale Library and the dates of their terms, as well as the names of Sterling Trustees and the Building Committee in the bosses of the stone vaults. On a screen between the crossing and a corridor to the university archives, four inscriptions read, “And out of olde books, in good faith cometh al this newe science that men lerne,” from Chaucer; “If I must be a prisoner I would desire to have no other prison than that library,” from King James I of England about the Bodleian Library at Oxford; “For whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written from our learning,” from Romans XV; and “There studious let me sit and hold high converse with the mighty dead,” from the eighteenth century poet James Thomson (Figures 72, 73).
Not only do these inscriptions relate to the theme of books and learning, but biblical quotations correspond with the Gothic style, and Chaucer is a figure from the late medieval era.

While there is a preference for biblical quotations and those associated with the medieval era, not all the inscriptions follow this trend. For the mantel of the north reading room, a Latin quotation from Cicero was chosen; it reads “studying in youth sustains delight into old age” (Figure 74). This demonstrates that the content of the inscription took precedence over the source.

The interior courtyard features a number of inscriptions relating to printing and publishing. Ten panels under the windows of the south wall feature the names of famous printers and the east wall features famous printers’ marks (Figure 75, 76). Over the southeast entrance is the quotation “Non Calami Stili Aut Pennae Suffragio Sed Mira Patronarum Formarumque Concordia Proportions Et Modulo,” from the Colophon of Johannes Balbus’ *Catholicon*, Figure 74: Sterling Memorial Library, north reading room mantel inscription.
printed in 1460 and attributed to Gutenberg’s Press (Figure 77). The verse translates as, “By a vote not of pen, stylus, or quill, but by the wondrous harmony, proportion, and measure of patronesses and of forms.”

Four printers’ mottoes are also located on the north wall: “Anchora Spei,” which means “Anchor of Hope,” “Bonte et Valeur,” which mean “Goodness and Value,” “Praestat,” which means “It is Superior,” and “Qui Legit Regit,” which means “He Who Reads Rules.” The theme of printing has been a common motif for libraries, but few programs are as extensive Sterling’s. Overall, the images and inscriptions in Sterling Library portray a world of learning and knowledge, and became “the validating heart of the Yale campus.”

James Gamble Rogers continued to work in the Collegiate Gothic style with his design for Charles Deering Memorial Library at Northwestern University. In 1929, Charles Deering left a large part of his estate to Northwestern, and President Scott asked Rogers to proceed with designs for a central

---

104 Betsky, 126.
library. Rogers had been working at Northwestern since 1922 as the university architect, and successfully incorporated the Collegiate Gothic style on the Evanston campus. The head librarian, Theodore Koch, became very involved in the design of the library, often to the chagrin of Rogers, who once asked Koch what he thought the United States Congress would have done with the Gettysburg Address if Lincoln had submitted a draft of it to them for approval. President Scott and Theodore Koch saw the new library as the centerpiece and architectural keynote for a future grouping of buildings, to be designed by Rogers, which would transform the Evanston campus. Koch advocated for the Neo-Gothic; “no other architectural style, unless it be the Greek, has expressed more adequately the upward-reaching of man’s spirit.” The final design was a two-story rectangular plan, with eleven identical bays separated by buttresses and large stained glass windows on the ends (Figure 78). The interior and exterior featured a number of embellishments including inscriptions. G. Owen Bonawit and René Chambellan, who worked with Rogers at Yale, were once again hired to execute the ornamental details. Many of the decorations were personally chosen by Koch in collaboration with President

---

105 Ibid, 188.
107 Ibid, 39.
Scott and the building committee.

Just as at Sterling Memorial Library, books were used as sources for the ornament and inscriptions. Though none of the inscriptions are repeated in the two libraries, the content is very similar, as is the lettering and style. The inscriptions on the interior and exterior defined the purpose of the library and described the work of the scholar.\(^\text{108}\) For the cornerstone, Koch chose a phrase he understood to be found on Roman libraries: “Nutrimentum spiritus” (Food for the Mind). The north and south exterior arches feature the Proverbs “The fountain of wisdom flows through books,” and “Happy is the man that findeth wisdom” (Figures 79, 80).

![Image](image1.jpg)

Figure 79 (left): Deering Memorial Library, north entrance portal inscription.

Figure 80 (right): Deering Memorial Library, south entrance portal inscription.

In the interior, framing the entrance are the mottoes: “Aut scribere legenda” and “Aut legere scribenda,” which translates as, “read something worthy of being written” and “write something worth being read” (Figures 81, 82). According to Koch, this quotation defined the aim of the library, where undergraduates “will find worthwhile books and

\(^{108}\) Ibid, 51.
scholars will be provided with material needed in their research.”¹⁰⁹ This quotation comes from the preface of Pliny the Elder’s *Natural History*, published in AD 77-79. This work became the model for all later encyclopedias of knowledge; this was an appropriate theme for a library, which was understood to be a repository of knowledge. Both the cornerstone inscription and this quotation from Pliny are classically-inspired, which does not correspond with the Neo-Gothic style of the library. This demonstrates that the message of the inscription took precedence over the source, which did not necessarily have to be medieval or biblically-based.

![Figure 81](left): Deering Memorial Library, entrance vestibule inscription (south side).

![Figure 82](right): Deering Memorial Library, entrance vestibule inscription (north side).

This was also the case for the two quotations in the reading room vestibule on the second floor, which read, “*Anter Folia Fructus*” and “*Mon Multa Sed Bona*” (Figures 83, 84). The quotations translate as, “Among the leaves, fruit” and “Not many, but good.” The former reminds readers that “he will have to look among many leaves for what he is in search

of,” or that in research it takes time to find the necessary sources.\textsuperscript{110} The latter, “advises caution in the matter of selection,” that readers should carefully select their sources in research, for quality is more important than quantity. Perhaps this was a personal motto for Koch, who was so careful in his selection of inscriptions and decorative features. He says, “For a Gothic building, this one has a minimum amount of carving and ornamentation, and because of this, the carving that was chosen has a bigger impact on the viewer and space.”\textsuperscript{111}

Figure 83 (left): Deering Memorial Library, reading room vestibule inscription (north side).

Figure 84 (right): Deering Memorial Library, reading room vestibule inscription (south side).

Deering Library provides yet another example of a university library that was meant to showcase the ideals of the school, and enlighten the student body. It also follows the trend in large-scale library building, driven by large private donations and ambitious university administrations. Last, the library exemplifies Rogers’ promotion of the Collegiate Gothic and the accompanying stylistic sensibilities of stone carver Réne Chambellan.

\textsuperscript{110} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{111} Ibid.
The Collegiate Gothic was widely adopted on college campuses, and accompanying inscriptions became commonplace. As with the Beaux Arts example of Clements Library, there were certainly smaller-scale Neo-Gothic university libraries built during this period. Franklin Hall at Indiana University was designed in the English Gothic style by the Chicago firm of Patton and Miller in 1908 (Figure 85). The University President, William Lowe Bryan, asked the Indiana legislature for 250,000 dollars for the purposes of building a new library, as the existing quarters in Maxwell Hall were becoming inadequate. In 1908, a smooth panel was left in the wall above the entrance to the hall to receive an inscription, but no inscription was placed there because none had been selected. As was the case at Low Library at Columbia University, the building was completed without the inscriptions, and then they were never executed. President Bryan intended for the space to contain an inscription, and fourteen years after the building’s construction, approached Dean Stout of the College of Arts and Sciences for a suggestion of a Latin inscription to be placed above the entry to the Library. Dean Stout never found an appropriate verse to fit the space, and so the matter was left

---

112 “Student Services Building,” July-August, 1976, Franklin Hall Reference File, University Archives, Indiana University, Bloomington.
113 Ibid.
unresolved. In 1927, an east wing was added to the library, also executed in the Gothic style, and President Bryan took that opportunity to finally install an inscription above the entrance.\textsuperscript{115} The inscription reads, “A good book is the precious life-blood of a master spirit.” The words are an excerpt from a half-page tribute to “A Good Book” by John Milton in his \textit{Areopagitica} of 1644. Dean Stout commented on the meaning behind this inscription:

President Bryan loved a good sentence, packed with meaning and agreeable in rhythm. He hoped that repeated reading of this inscription might help to create in students a deep respect for a good book, one that brings us into real contact with a wise man, to share his wisdom and his spirit.\textsuperscript{116}

The Franklin Hall inscription provides insight into the goals of President Bryan for the library on the Indiana University campus. The inscription corresponded with the opening of the new wing, which created a revived interest in the building and its meaning. The inscription also follows the trend in inspirational sayings about books, and is taken from John Milton, a seventeenth century author who was often cited in the inscriptions of the English Gothic Revival. Franklin Hall was less grandiose and ornamental than the other Neo-Gothic libraries of this study, as it was a publically-funded project for a state school. The Neo-Gothic style and the single inscription was reflective of the trends of the era, but was executed in a more limited fashion.

In all, the inscriptions on Neo-Gothic university libraries were, in many ways, similar to those installed at the Beaux Arts libraries. The analogy of the “Cathedral of Learning” had the same implications as the “Temple of Learning,” for the library was a

\textsuperscript{115} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{116} Ibid.
monument to the acquisition of knowledge and a showcase for the ideals of the school. The high-minded inscriptions are both a reflection of these goals and provide insight into the particularities of the university administration. There was also a stylistic precedent for the use of the inscription in the Neo-Gothic, though none as extensive as those found in these library examples. Inscriptions had become an ornamental convention for the Collegiate Gothic style during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and were also commonly found on the Gothic Revival style in the nineteenth century. As such, the form of the inscriptions, typically in Gothic lettering, worked together with the aesthetic goals of the architect.
Chapter VI: Influence of the Modern Movement and the Resurgence of Contemporary Library Inscriptions

The Great Depression and the advent of World War II delayed new library construction through the 1930s and 1940s. By the time library building became a major force again, it was the late 1940s, and the library field had since become dissatisfied with the awkwardness and expense of many of the library buildings constructed from 1890 to 1930. At the same time, architecture had taken a turn with the advent of Modernism, a movement that is characterized by simplification of form and elimination of ornament. Modern architects rejected the historicism of the preceding decades, calling for designs that were functional first and foremost. This change in architectural philosophy and style, as well as the librarian’s demand for purely functional buildings, meant that library inscriptions virtually disappeared after the period of this study. Firestone Library, constructed in 1949 at Princeton, is representative of this transition (Figure 86).

In recent years, however, architectural inscriptions have begun to reappear on libraries and library additions. This is due in part to the importance of the text in Postmodernism. These contemporary inscriptions are installed in the traditional mode, as carved names or inspirational sayings in a frieze or panels on the interior or exterior of the building. This not only demonstrates the long-standing connection between the inscription and the library, but that the method of representation, even the lettering style,
had not changed. This can be seen in the addition to the Indianapolis Public Library, the addition to the John Carter Brown Library in Providence, Rhode Island, and the University of Rhode Island Library in Kingston.

Librarians were calling for more functional libraries from the beginning of the library movement in the 1880s. William Frederick Poole, head librarian at the Chicago Public Library, and later the Newberry Library in Chicago, was a vocal advocate of a functional library building. He published *The Construction of Library Building* in 1881 and was critical of the recent trends in palatial library building. He developed ten points to guide future library design; his second point was, “That waste room shall be reduced to a minimum; that convenience and utility shall never yield to architectural effect.” Similar arguments were made by librarians and the American Library Association through the period of this study. Charles Soule, member of the American Library Association, published his *Library Rooms and Buildings* in 1902 and echoed Poole’s advice, claiming:

> It is wise to spend very little on ornament, and to trust, for the beauty of the building, to the effect a good architect can get from proportion and color…In making a library beautiful, care should be taken not to let any ornamental features interfere in any degree with the essential requirements of library service.

---

–especially not to decorate working-rooms or reading-rooms to such a degree that mere sight-seers will be attracted to them.\textsuperscript{118}

Despite the principles of Soule and Poole, highly ornamented libraries of the revival styles still predominated during the period of this study. Their views did not become more widely adopted until after WWII, and eventually trends in modern architecture fulfilled this demand.

The history of the Harvey S. Firestone Library at Princeton demonstrates the transition between the more ornamental libraries to a more functional, less decorative design that would mark the next half century of library architecture. At Princeton, architect Charles Klauder had produced several designs for a new library beginning in the early 1930s. He planned for a Collegiate Gothic structure with a monumental Gothic interior. These designs were similar to those for the recently completed Sterling Memorial Library and the Cathedral of Learning that Klauder designed for the University of Pittsburgh.\textsuperscript{119} Undoubtedly, this design would have called for a number of inscriptions in the typical Gothic style lettering, as well as a program of relief and statuary. However, in 1944, Klauder was dismissed from the project, and instead the Cooperative Committee on Library Plans was convened to revolutionize library building. Princeton President Harold Dodds assembled college librarians, library consultants, and the architects Robert

O’Connor and Walter Kilham to develop a plan to meet the needs of the university. This plan was to scrap all preconceptions about previous library building, hoping to create a design that would be flexible and allow for open stack access. O’Connor and Kilham first designed the interior of Firestone using a modular steel system of organization, which allowed for open stack access. The exterior was a modern adaptation of Gothic, and may not have been the architect’s choice if not for the donor, who stipulated Gothic in order to blend with the adjacent academic buildings and the chapel. Though the style is considered Gothic, it does not contain any of the typical ornamentation of stained glass, inscriptions, sculpture, murals, or carving.

The Cooperative Committee on Library Plans published Planning the University Library Building in 1949, and had a tremendous impact on the future of library building. At this time, the animosity that existed between librarians and architects in the previous decades over the functionality of the library versus its architectural effect was suppressed by the committee’s endorsement of a library that was primarily concerned with function. A survey made in 1949 revealed that of the 146 institutions that reported having constructed a new library building in the previous twenty years, sixty-three were already filled to capacity and needed replacement. It is for this reason that college campuses tend to have an earlier library building that was built during the period of this study, 1890-1930, followed by a modern library building built in the 1950-1970 era.

---

121 Rhinehart, 55.
123 Kaser, 113.
It is also important to note that the appearance of a modern, functional building on campus became the signifier of the university’s prosperity and progress. This usurped the old mode of the large-scale, richly ornamented building complete with referential inscriptions. It also reflected a change in values after WWII. Modernist doctrine proclaimed that technological, machine-aesthetic of architecture was humanity’s social and moral salvation and could make people better through a purer, more rational architectural environment. The moral connection between architecture and society was still present, but the mode had changed.

In the Postmodern era, beginning in the 1970s, people became disillusioned with the lifelessness of Modern architecture. Architects began to reintroduce traditional kinds of ornament into their designs, but often in ironic or comical ways. Nonetheless, more eclectic architectural styles emerged after Postmodernism, and incorporated text into their designs. The Indianapolis Public Library, discussed in Chapter II, constructed a new addition on the rear of the original 1917 Paul Cret building in 2007. The addition features a large atrium space, which incorporated the rear elevation of the historic library. The original library featured the names of prominent figures on the exterior frieze and interior gallery. The motif was employed again in the addition, with

Figure 87: Woollen, Molzan and Partners, Inc., addition to the Indianapolis Public Library, detail of new inscriptions.

---

124 Trachtenberg, 466.
seven twentieth century authors inscribed onto the rear of the building, which faced the new atrium of the addition. The names are Joyce, Steinbeck, Faulkner, Vonnegut, Hemingway, Dr. Seuss, and Yeats (Figure 87). The criteria for selection reflected the standards set forth by the library in 1916 when authors and leading citizens in various field nominated the 76 novelists, philosophers, poets, and historians inscribed on the original building. The criteria for the 2007 inscriptions required that the figures be already deceased, be representative of the twentieth century, represent a variety of literary genres, and be critically acclaimed in their field by earning such distinctions as the National Book Award, the Nobel Prize or the Pulitzer Prize. The names were carved in the same location on the frieze as the original 1917 names on the exterior and employ the same style lettering. The choice of Kurt Vonnegut Jr., the acclaimed novelist, and Indianapolis native, is similar to the choice of James Whitcomb Riley, the Indianapolis poet, on the original exterior. Dr. Seuss’s name in the group is also a rather playful, Postmodern gesture. These inscriptions not only stylistically tie the addition to the original building, but they also speak to the progress of literature, with the use of twentieth century names, and architecture, as they were featured in a contemporary style atrium.

Inscriptions were also included in the addition to the John Carter Brown Library in Providence, Rhode Island in 1991. The original John Carter Brown Library was constructed by Shepley, Rutan and Coolidge in 1904 in the Beaux Arts style, but did not

---

include a program of inscriptions (Figure 88). The library sits on the campus of Brown University, but is a privately-funded and governed library of Americana. The addition was constructed in 1991 and designed by the firm Hartman-Cox Architects. The subtle classical cornice and limestone cladding echo the original Beaux Arts style of the original 1904 library. The addition also included two large tablets with carved inscriptions, “Speak to the past and it shall teach thee,” and “Only the word transforms what happened into history” (Figures 89, 90). The former is the John Carter Brown motto, and the latter is an unknown quotation that was likely written by a member of the Board of Governors or the head librarian at the time of construction. The content of the inscriptions relates to the function of the library as a leading institution of historical research. They are also reminiscent of the kind of mottos and inspirational quotations employed on the earlier libraries in this study. They are installed in the traditional mode, carved on stone tablets in block lettering with serifs. It demonstrates that inscriptions are considered a traditional form of ornamentation for Beaux Arts architecture, even if not included on the original structure. Additionally, this use of architectural inscriptions demonstrates the renewed interest in incorporating text into contemporary library buildings.

Figure 88: Shepley, Rutan and Coolidge, John Carter Brown Library, Brown University campus.
Contemporary university library buildings also demonstrate a renewed interest in the architectural inscription. The University of Rhode Island in Kingston Rhode Island carries nine inscriptions on the building and on the surrounding plaza (see Appendix XV). The inscriptions were carved by artist John Benson, in correlation with a 1992 contemporary addition to the original 1965 university library. These changes were a part of the plan of the newly appointed President, Robert Carothers, which sought to improve the infrastructure, curriculum and reputation of the University of Rhode Island.126

These inscriptions are quotations from a range of sources throughout history and were

---

carved in several languages in a variety of lettering types. The two major architectural inscriptions carved on the exterior of the building are in sans serif lettering and flank the entrance. They read “Enlighten the people…and tyranny and oppression of body and mind will vanish like evil spirits at the dawn of the day,” and “My alma mater was books, a good library…I could spend the rest of my life reading, just satisfying my curiosity” (Figure 91, 92). The former is a quotation from the writings of Thomas Jefferson and the latter is a quotation from The Autobiography of Malcolm X.

In the interior, there are quotations from Dante’s Divine Comedy in Italian, Shakespeare’s Titus Andronicus carved in script lettering, and lines from mid-nineteenth century French and German poetry. There is also a Greek inscription that translates, “Healing-Place of the Soul,” which was historically transcribed by a Greek who visited the “library” of the tomb complex of Egyptian King Ramses II, where this verse was inscribed over the door.¹²⁷ The variety in the inscriptive sources speaks to the comprehensiveness of the library’s collection and to the sophistication of the reformed University of Rhode Island. This echoed the message of President Carothers to improve the infrastructure and reputation of the school. The inscriptions, while varied in their sources, are consistent in their message. They relate to the importance of the library

as an institution, a place of learning and enlightenment and to the power of that learning to better people. These messages are meant to communicate with the users of the space, students and faculty, but also speak to the larger academic community as a part of President Carothers’ new vision for the school. In many ways, this contemporary use of the inscription is similar to the use of the inscription from 1890 to 1930. However, these inscriptions were not bound by the architectural style in the same way as Beaux Arts inscriptions or Neo-Gothic inscriptions. Instead, the text was freely incorporated on a variety of media including wood, limestone, and granite, and used several different lettering styles, which related to the origin of the text rather than the style of the architecture.

In the end, the inscriptions found on the addition to the Indianapolis Public Library, the John Carter Brown Library and the University of Rhode Island library are serving essentially the same goals as the library inscriptions as their earlier counterparts. These inscriptions reference more contemporary works and figures like The Autobiography of Malcolm X and Dr. Seuss, and are less bound by a formal precedent. However, there is still the important connection between the function of the library building, the rhetorical use of text as ornament, and the inspirational nature of the message.
Chapter VII: Conclusion

The study of inscriptions on university libraries in the period from 1890 to 1930 uncovers a number of important trends. The incorporation of text, especially the inspirational and moralizing, was a common feature of civic and institutional architecture of the period. This reflected a larger concern for societal progress and the idea that architecture could both educate and improve citizens. Inscriptions proved to be equally relevant to both Beaux Arts designs and Neo-Gothic designs for university libraries. The text was adapted to the particular aesthetic of the style, but the content was similar across both types of library. The lofty themes of books, learning, knowledge and truth were widely employed, as were lists of the names of prominent scientists, authors, philosophers, politicians, explorers, or printers, the representation of these figures in statuary, or the listing of fields of knowledge. This not only reflected a desire to identify the building as the library, but also enlighten the users of the space.

This study of inscriptions frequently uncovers a latent agenda of the building committee or trustees, who wanted to legitimize the school and convey its tradition and sophistication. Since the inscriptions were in every instance chosen by the librarian, a building committee, or the president of the university, their choices and justifications provide direct insight into their goals for the building. Many of the buildings were not only functional libraries, but memorials to individual donors or former university
presidents. At the same time, they were often the centerpiece of a large building program or a new campus plan. As a result, the libraries were particularly ornamental and carefully scrutinized. While inscriptions were often more common on the large-scale, more costly libraries, smaller libraries also included inscriptions, as seen at Clements Library and Franklin Hall. Large and small libraries throughout the United States sustained the convention in the interwar period.

The architect often planned for inscriptions for “proper artistic effect” as described by Charles McKim, but left the specific scheme to the university. This demonstrates that the architect was more concerned with the aesthetic use of the inscription than its symbolic function. The architect also may have deferred to the officers of the university because they had strong opinions about the inscriptive program and the building’s message.

The Beaux Arts precedent for the use of inscription can be traced back into the immediate past at the Bibliothèque Ste. Genèveve and the work of the French Neoclassicists, and further back to antiquity. The Neo-Gothic precedent for the use of inscriptions can in part be traced back to Gothic Revival churches, academic buildings, and residences, but in part stem from convention established by Beaux Arts libraries. It is for this reason that the types of inscriptions found in Beaux Arts and Neo-Gothic libraries are not fundamentally different. The lettering style and mode are particular to each style, but both types reference prominent figures, employ the theme of printing, and use inspirational quotations. At the same time, the inscriptions were not only emblematic of the period from 1890 to 1930s, which saw the widespread use of inscriptions on many
different building types, but also became an aesthetic convention for the library building
type as well as the building styles employed. It is for this reason that when Modernism
began to dominate library architecture in the 1940s, the inscription disappeared along
with the styles that it adorned. However, the advent of Post-Modernism and the
reintroduction of ornament revived the architectural inscription. Continued in the
traditional mode of carved lettering, the inscriptions that adorn contemporary libraries
and additions maintain their communicative purpose. Perhaps it is the literary link
between inscribed text and the textual sources inside the library that continues to
encourage the use of the inscription. However, libraries are more than storehouses for
books; they also seek to educate and enlighten their users. The inscriptions, especially
those which intend to inspire and instruct, can be understood in relation to this more
symbolic role. It is apparent that the building committees, university president and
trustees, and even library architects understood and embraced the connection between the
library function and the inscriptive intent. In general, the form, type, and message of an
inscription is uniquely communicative; it can evoke historical and aesthetic associations,
unravel the circumstances of a building’s construction, and directly address the users of
space unlike any other ornamental form. Though this study focuses on the particular
phenomenon of library inscriptions in the period from 1890 to 1930, the study could be
expanded to include other building types and/or time periods. The topic of architectural
inscriptions in general is both meaningful and informative; it is a subject that deserves
further study within the field of architectural history and theory.
Appendix I: Inscriptions on the Library of Congress

**West Elevation:**

Busts with names inscribed underneath: Demosthenes, Emerson, Irving, Goethe, Franklin, Macaulay, Hawthorne, Scott, Dante.

**Entrance Vestibule:**

**Ceiling:**

Names of ten great authors on tablets above the Great Hall and on the east and west sides of the hall: Dante, Homer, Milton, Bacon, Aristotle, Goethe, Shakespeare, Moliere, Moses, Herodotus, Cervantes, Hugo, Scott, Cooper, Longfellow, Tennyson, Gibbon, Bancroft.

**East Corridor:**

There are ten trophies with symbols representing one of the arts or sciences. Below are the surnames of two native-born Americans associated with that art or science.

Math: Peirce and Bowditch.

Astronomy: Bond and Rittenhouse.

Engineering: Francis and Stevens.

Natural Philosophy: Silliman and Cooke.

Architecture: Latrobe and Walter.

Music: Mason and Gottschalk.

Painting: Stuart and Allston.

Sculpture: Powers and Crawford.

Poetry: Emerson and Holmes.

Names of native-born Americans distinguished in Medicine, Law, and Theology are inscribed in the ceiling vault. Beginning at the north end, they read:


**North Lobby:**

“Knowledge is Power.”

**South Lobby:**

“*E Pluribus Unum.*”

**Main Reading Room:**

Statues representing categories of knowledge feature relevant quotes above them:

Philosophy: “The inquiry, knowledge and belief of truth is the sovereign good of human nature.”

Art: “As one lamp lights another, nor grows less, so nobleness enkindleth nobleness.”

History: “One God, one law, one element, and one far-off divine event, to which the whole creation moves.”

Commerce: “We taste the spices of Arabis, yet never feel the scorching sun which brings them forth.”

Religion: “What doth the Lord may require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?”

Science: “The Heavens declare the Glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handiwork.

Law: “Of law there can be no less acknowledged than that her voice is the harmony of the world.”

Poetry: “Hither, as to their fountain, other stars repairing, in their golden urns draw light.”

**Around balustrade:**

Plato, Bacon, Michelangelo, Beethoven, Herodotus, Gibbon, Columbus, Fulton, St. Paul, Moses, Newton, Henry, Solon, Kent, Shakespeare, Homer.

All the state seals are located around the main reading room.

**North corridor:**

“Give instructions unto those who cannot procure it for themselves.”
Vault:
Men of education in vault: Froebel, Pestalozzi, Rousseau, Comenius, Ascham, Howe, Gallaudet, Mann, Arnold, Spencer.

Ceiling:


Northwest Corridor:
Names of the Greek muses: Melpomene, Clio, Thalia, Euterpe, Terpsichore, Erato, Polyhymnia, Urania, Calliope

Corridor Walls:
“Descent, ye nine! Descend and sing, wake into voice each silent string.”
“O Heav’n-born sisters! Source of art! Who charm the sense, or mend the heart.”
“Say, will ye bless the bleak Atlantic shore, and in the west bid Athens rise once more?”

Librarian’s Rooms:
“Litera Scripta Manet.”
“In tenebris lux.”
“Liber delectation animae.”
“Efficiunt clarum studio.”
“Dulce ante omnia musae.”

South Corridor:
“The poets, who on earth have made us heirs of truth and pure delight by heavenly lays.”

Corridor Walls:
Tennyson, Keats, Wordsworth, Emerson, Milton, Shakespeare.
Ceiling:


Southwest Corridor:

Jason: “One equal temper of heroic hearts, made weak by time and fate, but strong in will to strive, to seek to fund and not to yield.”

Orpheus: “A glorious company, the flower of men, to serve as model for the mighty world, and be the fair beginning of a time.”

Prometheus: “To the souls of fire, I, Pallas Athena, give more fire, and to those who are manful, a might more than a man’s.”

Achilles: “Ancient days! August Athena! Where, Where are thy men of might, thy grand in soul? Gone glimmering through the dream of things that were.”

The Great Hall, Second Floor, East Corridor:

“Comes the blind fury with the abhorred shears and slits the thin-spun life.”

“The web of life is of a mingled yarn, good and ill together.”

“For a web begun God sends threads.”

“This is the state of man: Today he puts forth the tender leaves of hope. Tomorrow blossoms and bears his blushing honor s thick upon him. The third day comes a frost, and nips his roots, and then he falls.”

Ceiling:

Names of American printers: Green, Daye, Franklin, Thomas, Bradford, Clymer, Adams, Gordon, Hoe, Ruce.

Tablets above the windows:

“Science is organized knowledge.”

“Beauty is truth, truth beauty.”

“Too low they build who build beneath the stars.”

“There is but one temple in the universe and that is the body of man.”
Second Floor, Upper Wall:


Entrance to the Visitor’s Gallery:

Venus, Apollo, Hercules, Zeus.

Second Floor, South Corridor:

“Beneath the rule of men entirely great the pen is mightier than the sword.”

“Man raises, but time weighs.”

“The noblest motive is the public good.”

“Beholding the bright countenance of truth, in the quiet and still air of delightful studies.”

“The true university of these days is a collection of books.”

“Nature is the art of God.”

“There is no work of genius which has not been the delight of mankind.”

“It is the mind that makes the man, and our vigor is on our immortal soul.”

“They are never alone that are accompanied with noble thoughts.”

“Man is one world and hath another to attend him.”

“Tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, sermons in stones and good in everything.”

“The true shekinah is man.”

“Only the actions of the just smell sweet and blossom in the dust.”

“A little learning is a dangerous thing; drink deep or taste not of the Pierian spring.”

“Learning is but an adjunct to ourself.”
“Studies perfect nature and are perfected by experience.”

“Dreams, books, are each a world; books we know, are a substantial world, both pure and good.”

“The fault is not in our stars, but in ourselves, that we are underlings.”

“The universal cause acts to one end, but acts by various laws.”

“Creation’s heir, the world, the world is mine!”

“Vain, very vain, the weary search to find that bliss which only centres in the mind.”

**Second Floor, West Corridor:**

Tablets with the names of scientists: La Grange, Lavoisier, Rumford, Lyell, Cuvier, Linnaeus, Schliemann, Copernicus.

**South Tablets:**

“The first creature of God was the light of sense; the last was the light of reason.”

“The light shineth in darkness and the darkness comprehendeth not.”

“All are but parts of one stupendous whole, whose body nature is, and God the soul.”

“In nature all is useful, all is beautiful.”

“Art is long, and time is fleeting.”

“The history of the world is the biography of great men.”

“Books will speak plain when counselors blanch”

“Glory is acquired by virtue but preserved by letters.”

“The foundation of every state is the education of its youth.”

**Second Floor, North Corridor:**

“The chief glory of every people arises from its authors.”

“Order is heaven’s first law.”

“Memory is the treasurer and guardian of all things.”

“Beauty is the creator of the universe.”
“There is one only good, namely knowledge, and one only evil, namely ignorance.”

“Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers.”

“Wisdom is the principal thing, therefore get wisdom, and with all thy getting, get understanding.”

“Ignorance is the curse of God. Knowledge is the wing wherewith we fly to heaven.”

“How charming is divine philosophy!”

“Books much follow sciences, and not sciences books.”

“In books lies the soul of the whole past time.”

“Words are also actions and actions are a kind of words.”

“Reading maketh a full man, conference a ready man, and writing, an exact man.”

“No real poet ever wove in numbers all his dreams, love and life united are twin mysteries, different yet the same, love may strive, but vain is the endeavor, all its boundless riches to express art and love speaks, and their words must be like sightings of illimitable forests.”

“Dwells within the soul of every artist more than all his effort can express, no great thinker ever lived and taught you all the wonder that his soul received, no true painter set on canvas all the glorious vision he conceived, no musician, but be sure he heard, and strove to render, feeble echoes of celestial strains.”

**Southwest Gallery:**


**Southwest Pavilion:**

**Wall Tablets:**


**Northwest Gallery:**

Names of famous generals and admirals: Sheridan, Grant, Sherman, Scott, Farragut, Nelson, William the Conqueror, Frederick the Great, Eugene, Marlborough, Wellington,
Washington, Charles Martel, Napoleon, Caesar, Alexander, Cyrus, Hannibal, Charlemagne, Jackson.

**Northwest Pavilion:**


Science: Babylon, Tyre, Carthage.

Art: Thebes, Athens, Rhodes.

Literature: Greece, Italy, England.

**North Gallery:**


**Northeast Pavilion:**

“That this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom, that the government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.”

“Tis our true policy to steer clear of permanent alliance with any portion of the foreign world.”

“Let our object be our country, our whole country, and nothing but our country.”

“Thank God, I also am an American!”

“Equal and exact justice to all men, of whatever state or persuasion, religious or political: peace, commerce, and honest friendship with all nations, entangling alliance with none.”

“The agricultural interest of the country is connected with every other, and superior in importance to them all.”

“Let us have peace.”

“The aggregate happiness of society is, or ought to be, the end of all government.”

“To be prepared for war is one of the most effective means of preserving peace.”
**Northeast Gallery:**


**Hispanic Room:**


Hispanic literary figures: Cervantes, Cuervo, Palma, Goncalves, Dias, Montalvo, Rodo, Heredia, Garcia, Icazbalceta, Sarmiento, Hostos, Dario, Bello, Medina, Camoes.

**Southeast Pavilion:**

Air: Hermes, Zeus, Iris.

Earth: Demeter, Hera, Dionysus.

Water: Proteus, Galatea, and Poseidon.

Fire: Hestia, Hephaistos, and Prometheus.

**South Gallery:**


---

Appendix II: Inscriptions on the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh

Along Forbes Street:


Library Side:


Museum Side:

Pythagoras, Aristotle, Columbus, Livingstone, Magellan, Say, Leidy, Harvey, Pliny, Guttenberg, Cuvier, Lamarck, Linnaeus, Humboldt, Bacon, Daguerre, Gray, Hooker, Decandolle, Lyell, Dana, Faraday, Priestley, Morse, Henry, Owen, Audubon.
Appendix III: Carnegie’s Letter about Inscriptions on the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh

My Dear Mr. Frew:

I cannot approve of the list of names published in the Dispatch of the 10th instant as those selected for the decorations. Some of the names have no business to be on the list. Imagine Dickens in and Burns out. Among painters, Perugini out and Rubens in, the latter only a painter of fat vulgar women, while a study of the pictures of Raphael will show any one that he was really only a copyist of Perugini, whose pupil he was. Imagine Science and Franklin not there. The list for Music seems satisfactory. Palestrina rightly comes first. Have been entranced by his works, which we have heard in Rome. As I am to be in Pittsburgh very soon, I hope you will postpone action in regard to the names.

Yours very truly,

Andrew Carnegie

Appendix IV: Inscriptions on the Indianapolis Public Library

South Elevation: Emerson, Goethe, Voltaire, Shakespeare, Cervantes, Dante, Vergil, Plato, Isaiah, Homer.

West Elevation: Chaucer, Burns, Wordsworth, Scott, Macaulay, Browning, Thackeray, George Eliot, Ruskin.


Reading Room: Grotius, Bacon, Moliere, Maurelius, Aristotle, Herodotus, Tolstoy, Dickens, Tennyson, Darwin, Hugo, Carlyle, Schiller, Kant, Franklin, Milton.

Reading Room Galleries (west): Descartes, Luther, Omar Khayyam, Plutarch, Aeschylus, Sappho, Aesop, Locke, Spinoza.

Reading Room Gallery (south): Stevenson, Meredith, Mommsen, Stowe, Agassiz, Hawthorne, George Sand, Bancroft, Johnson, Goldsmith, Burke, Lesser.

Reading Room Gallery (east): Balzac, Heine, Keats, Bryant, Shelley, Grimm, Moore, Austen, Humboldt.
Appendix V: Inscriptions on the San Francisco Public Library

Exterior Tablets:

Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Tennyson, Browning, Bryant, Longfellow, Whittier, Hawthorne, Holmes, Lowell, Poe.

Scott, Cooper, Balzac, Dumas, Thackeray, Dickens, George Eliot, Cervantes, Richardson, Fielding, Lessing, Irving, Whitman, Tolstoi.

Dante, Petrarch, Ariosto, Tasso, Moliere, Racine, Corneille, Homer, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Socrates, Virgil, Horace.

Xenophon, Livy, Tacitus, Gibbon, Macaulay, Mommsen, Lecky, Herodotus, Thucydides, Hume, Grote, Bancroft, Motley, Parkman.

Plato, Aristotle, Euclid, Descartes, Kant, Carlyle, Pasteur, Josephus, Plutarch, Montaigne, Bacon, Berkeley, Rousseau, Emerson.

Spenser, Dryden, Pope, Johnson, Goldsmith, Gray, Burns, Collins, Goethe, Schiller, Byron, Shelley, Keats, Hugo.

Interior Tablets:

“To be content with what we posses is the greatest of all riches.” –Cicero

“Peace be within thy walls and prosperity within they palaces.” –Psalms 122:7

“The ways of wisdom are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace.” –Proverbs 3:17

“Gold can be taken away, but knowledge is thine forever.” –Elihu Burritt

“The true. university of these days is a collection of books.” –Thomas Carlyle

“A soft answer turneth away wrath but grievous words stir up anger.”–Proverbs 15:1

“Silence at the proper season is wisdom and better than any speech.” –Plutarch

“Art is beauty passed through thought and thought fixed in form.” –Francois Delsarte

“Our happiness depends in a great measure on the choice of our company.” –John Milton
“A good conscience is the testimony of a good life and the reward of it.” –Thomas a Kempis

“Nature is a revelation of God – Art is a revelation of man.” –Longfellow

“Let our object be our country our whole country nothing but our country.” –Daniel Webster

“Handle a book as a bee does a flower, extract its sweets but do not injure it.” –Charles Caleb Colton

“Character is the governing element in life and is above genius.” –Frederick Saunders

“Love is the life of the soul it is the harmony of the universe.” –Saint Francis de Sales

“Buy what thou has no need of and ere long thou shalt sell thy necessities.” –Benjamin Franklin

“Understanding is a well spring of life unto him that hath it.” –Proverbs 16:22

“Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with they might.” –Ecclesiastes 9:10

“Books bear the messages of the wisest of all mankind to all the generations of men.” –Joseph Addison

“Here thou mayest feed on knowledge, and never grow weary of adding to thy store.” –Jeremiah 23:4

“Books are the basis of civilized life and the fountains in the desert of being.” –Anonymous

“In books lies the soul of the whole past time: the articulated audible voice of the past.” –Thomas Carlyle

“Quiet is kin to learning.” –Palladas

“Peace to all to come here.” –Anonymous

This list is compiled from: Brechin, Gray A. Inscriptions at the Old Public Library of San Francisco. San Francisco: Book Club of California, 2003.
Appendix VI: President Seth Low’s Proposed Inscriptions for Low Library

South Entablature: A.D. 1754 King’s College, founding in the Province of New York, then a colony, by royal charter from George II perpetuated as Columbia College by the State of New York, then become free and independent; maintained and cherished from generation to generation for the advancement of the public god and the glory of almightily God, A.D. 1897.

South Frieze: The Library of Columbia University.

Frieze of Southeast Angle: University Council, 1890.

Panel of Southeast Angle: The Title Columbia University Adopted 1896.

Eastern Frieze: Faculty of Philosophy, Established 1890.

Frieze of Northeast Angle: Faculty of Pure Science, Established 1892.

Panel of Northeast Angle: First Professorship in King’s College, 1757, Mathematics and Natural History.

Northern Frieze: 1793, Faculty of Law, 1858.

Frieze of Northwest Angle, Faculty of Applied Science, 1864.

Panel of Northwest Angle: School of Mines, 1864. School of Chemistry, 1768, School of Engineering, 1869, School of Architecture, 1881.

Western Frieze: Faculty of Political Science, Established 1880.

Frieze of Southwest Angle: Faculty of Medicine, 1767.

Panel of Southwest Angle: College of Physicians and Surgeons, Consolidated with Columbia College, 1891.

North Entablature: “As for the Truth, she liveth and conquereth with her, there is no acceptance of persons or rewards neither in her judgment is any unrighteousness; and she is the strength, kingdom, power and majesty of all ages.” (excerpt from Van Amringe’s speech at the laying of the cornerstone of the Physics Building)

Small Panel above the entrance door: “In Lumine tuo videbimus lumen.”
For the Cornerstone: December 7, 1895

This list is from: “Proposed Inscriptions for the Exterior of the Library,” Folder 16, Box 531, Low Memorial Library Files, Central Files, University Archives, Columbia University, New York.
Appendix VII: George Rives’ Notes on Low Library Inscriptions

1. So far as an inscription on the entablature upon the south façade is concerned, that appears obviously appropriate. The wording of the inscription proposed is good, to my mind, although some verbal changes might be made. I should omit the words “a colony” for obvious reasons. The date ought to go in the wreaths on the frieze below. I enclose a draft of the inscription in the slightly modified form which I would rather recommend.

2. The inscription on the entablature upon the north façade seems less essential, but if one is to be put there the selection strikes me as a good one. Being a quotation, however, it ought to be accurately quoted. I enclose a manuscript of the entire passage from the first book of Edras, which – with will be observed -- differs in an important respect from the supposed quotation in the report.

3. The placing of inscriptions in the frieze and panels seems to me unfortunate and in bad taste. I do not agree that we ought to accept an architect’s opinion in such matters. The literary element, so to speak, enters so largely into the question, that the views of all other persons of equal culture are entitled to equal weight. A sentence, conveying some grain of truth, has uses above mere ornamentation.

4. The devising of an appropriate inscriptions is always among the most delicate [difficult is crossed out] of literary tasks. There is perhaps not one of the inscriptions on the public monuments in this City which has not been the subject of just and severe criticism. The task is peculiarly difficult where an inscription is to be devised – because there is something which it is needful to say – but because you have a defined space, which it is needful, to fill. In this latter case, you are beginning at the wrong end. The space ought to be created for the inscription, not the inscription for the space. Unless an inscription, upon its face, bears witness to its being in accordance with the eternal fitness of things, it had better not be. Moreover, whatever is inscribed will be the subject of criticism by the public – more or less benevolent. Many even of the best critics will not see what is carved until the work is entirely finished, and a just criticism would then be disastrous. A change would only be possible at the expense of unpleasant and humiliating confession of error. The Bar Association Committee has just changed (victoriously as it happens) from a contest over an inscription of only two words. For these reasons, it is important in my judgment, that nothing should be done except after the most prolonged and patient consideration. It might be possible to invite the expression of views from the members of the faculties and the alumni. There is no haste about it, even assuming that lettering in the
frieze is “essential to proper artistic effect” which I don’t believe. At worst, the building would only look incomplete. And the lettering can be added at any time hereafter at a relatively trifling additional cost.

5. The scheme of inscriptions proposed for the frieze and panels strikes me as radically wrong; because the sentences suggested are merely bald statements of fact, devoid of any sentiment whatever. On the other hand, the inscriptions for the entablature on the north and south facades seem to strike the right note, because there is some inspiration in them. Whether you resort to patriotism (as on the south façade) or to philosophy (as on the north façade) or to religious (which is not anywhere proposed) is perhaps a minor matter, but what seems to me important is that we shall use above mere dates.

6. I think that the assertions in many cases are hardly justified by historic truth. Thus, the statement “1793, Faculty of Law, 1858” is misleading. Kent was elected Professor of Law in 1793 and delivered lectures in the College for a time, but there was no “Faculty” then. To again, in 1848, Mr. Betts was elected Professor of Law and delivered some lectures the next year. When Prof. Dwight came, Lieber and Navine were normally associated with him, but it is quite an overstatement to say that there was a faculty in any proper sense until long afterwards. Again the phrase, “Faculty of Applied Science, 1864” is misleading in a different way. A “School of Mines” was established in that year, out of which the present Faculty of Applied Science has grown; but it can hardly be said that any one in 1864 contemplated a body so highly organized and differentiated. (What is the authority for the statement “School of Chemistry, 1868?) Nor is the phrase “Faculty of Medicine, 1767” beyond criticism, although it may perhaps be fairly defeuded. These are only examples, but probably most of the sentences suggested for the frieze might and would be objected to after they were carved by well-informed persons some on one ground and some on another. Nothing is more dangerous than an attempt to confess a rather complicated statement of fact into half a dozen words.

7. Would it not be in good taste for us, as a body, suppose to be learned, while inscribing in stone, words that are destined to last for ages, to use the language of learned people of all countries and times, and write in Latin? The proposed inscriptions for the entablatures would lend themselves admirably to translation into inscriptional Latin, and by using the text of the Vulgate on the North façade we would get rid of the awkward change from the neuter to the feminine pronoun in referring to truth.

8. Inscriptions for the North Front: The following is a literal transcript from the authorized version of the Apocryphia, punctuation and all?

“As for the truth, it endureth, and is always strong; it liveth and conquereth for evermore. With her there is no accepting of persons onwards; but she doeth the things that are just,
and refraineth from all unjust and wicked things; and all men do well like of her works. Neither in her judgment is any unrighteousness; and she is the strength, kingdom, power, and majesty, of all ages. Blessed by the God of Truth” 1 Edras, Chapter IV, verses 38, 39, and 40.

These notes are from: George Rives, “Library Inscriptions,” Folder 16, Box 531, Low Memorial Files, Central Files.
Appendix VIII: List of Inscriptions in Low Library’s Architecture Reading Room


The room is now used as offices and some partition walls have been installed over a number of the inscriptions blocking them from view.
Appendix IX: Inscriptions on Butler Library

Exterior:

Over entrance: Seals of Columbia University, Seal of old Columbia College, Seal of old School of Mines

North Frieze: Homer, Herodotus, Sophocles, Plato, Aristotle, Demosthenes, Cicero, Vergil.

East Frieze: Cervantes, Shakespeare, Milton, Voltaire, Goethe.

West Frieze: Horace, Tacitus, St. Augustine, St Thomas Aquinas, Dante.


Interior:

Reading Room, South Frieze: “A Man is But What He Knoweth.” –Francis Bacon (Praise of Knoweldge, 1592)

Reading Room, Over South Entrance: “Magna Vis Veritas.” - Cicero

Appendix X: Letter from James Gamble Rogers to President Nicholas Butler

I am sending you herewith a print of the geometric north elevation of the new library laboratory being erected at south field, Columbia University. We have spaces for inscriptions as follows:

No 1: Over the main doorway.

No 2: Three panels on which it is proposed to put in the center one the seal of Columbia University and on the other two the old seal of Columbia College and the old School of Mines.

No. 3: Under the main cornice is a long frieze of letters which should bear the principal inscription, something more than a name because of its length.

No 4: Above the lower windows in the main reading room are flat surfaces of stone for which we call for lettering. As lettering would be the most dignified form of decoration we thought that it might be possible to put in the names of famous authors or possibly make it an honor roll for the alumni of Columbia University by putting in their names.

No 5: Over the door of the east entrance and over the door of the west entrance there is a space on foot high and eight feet long for a name possibly or an inscription.

We are sending this to you to give you an opportunity of selection of the names or inscriptions or the selection of a person or committee to choose these as it will soon be time when these will be decided.

This letter is from: Butler to Rogers, April 13, 1932, Folder 7, Box 358, James Gamble Rogers Files, Central Files, University Archives, Columbia University, New York.
Appendix XI: Inscriptions on Harper Memorial Library

Seals of American and European universities:


South elevation, East Tower: 7 Oxford shields and 7 Cambridge seals, 6 Oxford Colleges preceding Oxford University, and 6 Cambridge Colleges following Cambridge University: New College, Christ Church, Balliol, Oriel, Magdalen, Trinity, Oxford University, Cambridge University, Peterhouse, Pembroke, Kings, Trinity, Emmanuel, St. Johns.


Above main entrance on West Tower: Yale, Virginia, Illinois, Leland Stanford Junior, University of Chicago, United States of America.

Parapet over reading room: Annapolis, United States of America, West Point.

Parapet over center of reading room: Science, Art, Literature.

Printers’ marks are carved on the stone corbels supporting the oak beams of the ceiling: Johann Froben, Christopher Plantin, Gerardus Wolsschatus, Marcus Amadorus, Isaac Elzevirs, William Caxton, Johannes Columbus, Henning Grosse, Guillaume Rouille, Thomas Vautrollier, Theodosius Rihelius, Aldus Manutius.

On the screen at the west end of the reading room: Coats of arms of the universities in the western hemisphere: Harvard, Yale, Johns Hopkins, Columbia, Michigan, Wisconsin, California, Chicago.

Above the screen: “Read not to contradict, nor believe, but to weigh and consider.” – Francis Bacon

Above the screen: “Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning.” --Romans 15:4.

This list is compiled from: The William Rainey Harper Memorial Library. Chicago: The University of Chicago, 1912.
Appendix XII: Inscriptions on Suzzallo Memorial Library


Names of printers and their lifespan in decorative grillwork above doors: 954 Tao Feng 881, 1400 Gutenberg 1468, 1422 Caxton 1492, 1447 Aldus 1515, 1503 Estienne 1559, 1540 Elsevier 1617.

Exterior side entrance: Bessey, Coulter, Richards, Remsen, Dana, Hall, Gibbs, Michelson, Henry, Agassiz, Leidy.

Interior grillwork, “Reading giveth vigor to the mind.”

North Apse: “Good books are a priceless possession; they reveal the minds of creative men and enrich life with experience.”

South Apse: “Books are to be read with imagination that their wisdom may interpret events and their ideals inspire worthy action.”


Appendix XIII: Inscriptions on Sterling Memorial Library

Exterior:

High Street Façade

The main entrance is symbolic of the ancient civilizations based upon written records. The sketch model was made by Lee Lawrie and executed by René Chambellan. The doorway is divided into two parts by a figure of a medieval scholar, the central panel over the left door represents the more ancient civilizations: the symbol of Egypt, the Phoenician Ship, and the winged bull of Babylon. On each side of this central panel are two panels with Cro-Magnon, Egyptian, Babylonian inscriptions with typical scribes below.

Cro-Magnon:

1. Wall engraving of a bison and horse from Les Combarelles.

2. Wounded bison and claviform signs in the Cavern of Pindal.

3. Engraving on a mass of stalagmites in the Cave of La Mairie at Teyjat, Dordogne, France.

4. Wall engraving of a mammoth in the Cavern of Les Combarelles, Dordogne, France.

5. Bond pendant which had served as a hunter’s tally from the cave of Raymonden at Chancelade, Dordogne, France.

Egyptian:

“Would that I might make thee love books more than thy mother. Would that I might bring their beauty before thy face. Verily it is greater than [that of] any office.” From the Papyrus Sallier II from the Middle Kingdom, Egypt.

Assyrian:

“The wisdom of the god Ea. The science of priesthood, the lore of the wise, that which is suitable for the contentment of the heart of the great gods, upon tablets in accordance with the documentary copies of Assyria and Akkad (Babylonia) I wrote, condensed, revised, and placed in the library of Ezida, the temple of the god Nabu, which is in the midst of Ninevah, my lord. Forever may the god Nabu, the king of heaven, look with joy upon that library and upon Ashurbanipal, the chief, the venerator of thy divinity, grant
daily favor! Decree his (continuance of) life! (So) shall I exalt thy great divinity!” Part of a cuneiform inscription from the Library of Ashurbanipal at Ninevah.

Hebrew:

“Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world: even from everlasting to everlasting thou art God. Thou turnest man to destruction: and sayest, Return ye children of men. For a thousand years n thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past: and as a watch in the night. Thou carriest them away as with a flood, they are as a sleep: in the morning they are like grass which growth up. In the morning it flourissheth, and growth up: in the evening it is cut down and withereth. Let thy work appear unto thy servants: and thy glory unto their children. And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish thou the world of our hands upon us.” Psalms XC; 1-6, 16-17.

The central panel over the right doorway stands for early European and American civilizations: the Mayan serpent, the Athenian owl, and the Roman wolf. The four inscriptions with their scribes below are Arabic, Greek, Chinese and Mayan.

Arabic:

“There is no God but he; the living, the self-subsisting: neither slumber nor sleep seizeth him; to him belongeth whatsoever is in heaven and on earth. Who is he that can intercede with him, but through his good pleasure? He knoweth that which is past, and that which is to come unto them, and they shall not comprehend anything of his knowledge, but so far as he pleaseth. His throne is extended over heaven and earth, and the preservation of both is no burden unto him. He is the high, the mighty.” Koran, sura 96, verses 1-5 and sura 2, verse 256.

Greek:

“Ignorant they of all things till I came, And told them of the rising of the stars and their dark settings, taught them numbers too, The queen of knowledge. I instructed them how to join letters, making them their slaves. To serve the memory, mother of the muse.” From Aeschylus, Prometheus Bound.

Chinese:

“Thy brother [i.e., Yen Kau-k’ing], in his great fidelity as subject, by his single effort stemmed the wicked current of rebellion, capturing its chief counselors, and killing its principal felons. When he should have been reinforced with troops, he was isolated, and
fell into the hands of the rebels. Dauntlessly he enumerated their crimes, abandoning his limbs to the sword, and expressed his loyalty in his countenance. Ancient annals knew no like example. We praise the deed highly.” Eighth century writing taken from a rubbing of an epitaph, carved in stone from the Yen Family.

Mayan:

Upper left hand portion of the Mayan Inscription from the Temple of the Cross.

The following inscriptions are from the sides of the Entrance Court:

Left: “A Library is a Summons to Scholarship.” – Sir Michael Sadler

Right: “The Library is the Heart of the University.” – Sir William Osler

Fifteen buttresses on the High Street façade are surmounted by figures representative of the fields of knowledge:


Wall Street Façade:

Inscription on the wall “Festina Lente.” Translates as, “Make Haste Slowly.”

York Street Façade:

Symbols relating to the History of Yale Library: Seven panels in decorative space above the door represent the various buildings in which the Yale Library has been housed. This includes the names and dates above the shields: Russell House, Branford, 1701; First College Building, 1717-1763; Chapel, 1763-1804; Old Chapel, 1825-1843; Old Library, 1843; Chittenden Hall, 1890.

Scenes relating to the History of Yale Library, including the ceremonious procession of moving books to Sterling Memorial Library.

Courtyard:

“Non Calami Stili Aut Pennae Suffragio Sed Mira Patronarum Formarumque Concordia Proportions Et Modulo” From the Colophon of Johannes Balbus’ Catholicon printed in 1460 and attributed to Gutenberg’s Press.
North wall, entrance hall: Four panels with mottoes of famous printers: *Anchora Spei* (Anchor of Hope), *Bonte et Valeur* (Goodness and Value), *Praestat* (It is superior), *Qui Legit Regit* (He who reads rules).


Over the door of the Librarian’s office: “Ignorance is the Curse of God, Knowledge the Wing Wherewith We Fly To Heaven.” From *Henry VI*, Part 2.

Interior:

Left of the entrance: Coat of Arms of benefactors of the Yale University on twelve corbels.

Mantelpiece in north reading room: “*Haec studia adulescentiam alunt, senectutem oblectant*” From Cicero. Translates as, “Studying in youth sustains delight into old age.”

The crossing: Vaulted ceiling with plaster webs with bosses with the names of Sterling Trustees and the Building Committee.

Panels under the windows contain names of the librarians and their dates of service.

Inscriptions on the stone screen between the crossing and the exhibition corridor:

“And Out of Olde Books, In Good Feith Cometh Al This Newe Science That Men Lerne.” From Chaucer.

“If I Must Be A Prisoner I Would Desire to Have No Other Prison Than That Library.” From James I of England about Bodleian Library at Oxford University.

“For Whatsoever Things Were Written Aforetime, Were Written For Our Learning.” (Romans XV).
“There Studious Let Me Sit And Hold High Converse With The Mighty Dead.” From Thomson.

On the front desk: “Many Shall Run To and Fro, And Knowledge Shall Be Increased.” From Daniel XII.


Fireplace in committee room: “Farre More Seemely Were It For Thee to Have They Studdye Full of Bookes, Than Thy Purpose Full of Money.” From Lyly.

*There are dozens of other sculptural figures and hundreds of stained glass windows.

Appendix XVI: Inscriptions on Deering Memorial Library

Exterior:

Cornerstone: “Nutrimentum spiritus.” Translates as, “Food for the mind.”

Front entrance has three portals:

South portal: “The fountain of wisdom flows through books.” –Proverbs

Central portal: “Charles Deering Library.”

North Portal: “Happy is the man that findeth wisdom” –Proverbs 3:13

Interior:

Franking entrance doors:

“Aut scribere legenda” and “Aut legere scribenda.” Translates as, “Read something worthy of being written” and “Write something worth being read.”

Second level, reading room vestibule:

South panel: “Anter, Folia, Fructus” Translates as, “Among the leaves, fruit.”

Central Panel: In Memoriam, Charles Deering

North panel: “Mon, Multa, Sed, Bona.” Translates as, “Not many, but good.”

Fireplace in librarian office: “Old wood to burn, old books to read.”
Appendix XV: Inscriptions on the University of Rhode Island Library

Library Plaza:

NIPPENOWANTAWEM
NIPPENOWANTAWEM
MEQUAUNAMINNEA
MEQUAUNAMINNEA

Translates as: “I am of another language, remember me.” These words are phonetic renderings of phrases in the Narragansett language (an Algonquian dialect recorded by Roger Williams in, A Key Into the Language of America published in 1643.

Exterior, Main Elevation of Library Building:

“Enlighten the People…and Tyranny and Oppressions of Body and Mind Will Vanish Like Evil Spirits At the Dawn of the Day” – From Thomas Jefferson’s Letter to Count Pierre Samuel du Pont de Nemours


Interior, Lobby Inscriptions

“Pero Che Tu Trascorri Per Le Tenebre Troppo De La Lungi Avvien Che Poti Nel Maginare Abbori” Translates as: “Because you try to penetrate the shadows from much too far away, you confuse the truth with your imagination.” –Dante’s Inferno in the Divine Comedy.

“Our lives flower and pass. Only robust works of the imagination live in eternity…” These lines are from Denise Levertov’s poem “Art (After Gautier),” a free translation of Theophile Gautier’s poem “L’Art in Emaux et Carnees,” 1872. The poem was published in her collection, With Eyes At the Back of Our Heads in 1959.

ΨΥΧΗΣΙΑΤΡΕΙΟΝ

Translates as: “Healing-Place of the Soul.” The phrase was reported by Hecataeus of Abdera, a historian of the early third century B.C. to be an inscription on the sacred library of the tomb of the complex of Ramses II at Thebes. Quoted by Diodorus Siculus in his Library of History, Book I.
Interior Inscriptions

“Schweigen und Denken Wird Keinen kranken.” Translates as: “Silence and thought, Harm No One…” These lines are from the poet Wilhelm Muller in his, Gedichte from 1837.

“Come, and take my choice of all my library and so beguile thy sorrow.” William Shakespeare’s Titus Andronicus.


BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

Board of Visitor’s Minutes, University of Virginia.

Buildings and Grounds Reference Files, University Archives, Indiana University, Bloomington.

Central Files, University Archives, Butler Library, Columbia University, New York.

Construction Management Records, University Archives, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts.


Papers of the President, University Archives, Special Collection Library, University of Virginia.

Records of the University Librarian, 1918-1928, Manuscript and Archives, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University, New Haven.


Secondary Sources

Periodicals


*Books*


Block, Jean F. *The Uses of Gothic, Planning and Building the Campus of the University of Chicago, 1892-1932*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Library, 1983.


Fletcher, William I. *Public Libraries in America.* Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1894.


*Electronic Resources*


Other types
