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The Library of The Rockefeller Institute

Lillia M.D. Trask

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THE LIBRARY OF THE ROCKEFELLER INSTITUTE

LILLIA M. D. TRASK

When the Medical Library Association met in New York, it was a great disappointment to us at the Rockefeller Institute to have only a condition of chaos to call a Library, and to show to those of you who were daring enough to mount scaffoldings and rickety stairs to come and see. With sublime optimism we tried to point out some of the best features of the promised building, but if your vision failed to grasp them it was at that time small wonder. Even our own imagination, stimulated by legions of architect's plans and blue-prints, failed utterly to visualize the edifice that now stands completed and complete.

The building is located on the river side of the Institute property. It is of limestone, and rises two floors on the land side and five on the water front. Its frontage is approximately 90 ft. with a depth of 70 ft. The main reading room with alcoves at either end occupies the entire length and, exclusive of the alcoves, is two stories high. Five great windows overlook the river and with three at each end give abundant light and sun; clustered chandeliers, table-lamps and daylight floor-lamps afford ample illumination after dark.

The reading-room is finished in walnut, wainscoted to a height of 12 ft., with vaulted ceiling above of classic rough white plaster. The frieze at the top of the wainscoting is elaborately carved, depicting what at first sight appear to be cupids disporting with the Caduceus. Cupids I ventured to call them in the presence of one of the workmen, but he sent a pitying glance in my direction, and remarked in tones of utmost scorn "Them ain't Cupids: them are Genii!" So perhaps that explains the connection.

At one end of the room, between the two entrances to the alcoves hangs the beautiful portrait of Lavoisier by Louis David, enriching and beautifying the entire space; and deep red velvet hangings at the windows complete the decoration.

As you turn your back to the river, straight ahead of you at the right hand end of the room is the alcove for the bound periodical stacks. These also are built of walnut. The corresponding position at the opposite end is occupied by the charging desk, the librarian's inner and outer offices, the catalogue cases and the unbound periodical files.

In addition to the elevator, three stairways lead to the second floor, where the steel stacks are to be found. Three features were considered for this equipment,—wedge-shaped ends to the shelves which yield more room at the front than the rear of the shelf, thus safeguarding the backs of the books from crowding; solid shelves

rather than slat, as a protection from dust; and the shelf itself flanged on all four sides, furnishing additional supporting strength.

On the second floor are located also five cubicles, or study rooms, each furnished with steel bookshelves and steel tables. These are for the use of such members of the Staff as may be writing, affording a quiet place for concentration, and opportunity to segregate for the time being the books needed for the purpose. Already these have met with great favor, and are in constant demand.

You will find as well on the second floor, immediately above the cataloguing room, a spacious workroom, where the new books are received, and the periodicals assembled for binding. Just now these two floors afford ample space for our collection, but the three basement floors are so designed that they may be equipped with steel stacks for further growth and it is estimated that at the present rate of increase there will be no crowding for fifty years; and no need for the present incumbents to count on moving the library a second time. Moving it once was enough for us, but our experience may be helpful to those of you who have it ahead as a novelty. Instead of packing and unpacking the books in cases, we transported them by hod, which proved a great saving of time. Eight of our porters formed in line, each armed with a specially constructed hod, deep enough to prevent the books from slipping, and with solemn injunctions to keep the same order in the line of march they started at one o'clock on Saturday to give a practical demonstration of perpetual motion. There was a halt of about thirty seconds as each man reached the shelf in turn, and one of the library staff superintended the loading of the hod in the order that the books came from the shelves. Another delay of thirty seconds at the other end where other librarians ordered the placing of the volumes in the same order on the new shelves, and the line kept moving on. It was like ravelling out a piece of knitting and knitting it up again at the same time, and the stacks emptied and refilled so fast that the men were stimulated by their success, and worked heroically.

Four hours they labored the first day, and eight hours the following day, and the deed was done. They had moved from one building to another, and set in place, over 15,000 volumes, in addition to the files of unbound periodicals and pamphlets. It was what we had planned, but marvelous to relate it was an accomplished fact without any interruption in library service. Saturday morning the borrowers got what they wanted in the old building, Monday morning in the new building, and to the extreme joy of the library staff things were where they belonged.

We have occupied the new library for six months,—long enough to test its workable qualities, and find it fits our own particular needs most admirably. There is a quiet beauty and dignity about the building, combined with a simplicity that is charming. The arrangement of the rooms was so carefully planned with relation to the purpose of each that convenience to both readers and workers has resulted.

Studious thought was given to every detail. The floor is of inlaid cork, to afford silence and resilience, wax-filled to take a polish as of hard wood. The stack lights are of cut lenses to diffuse the radiance even to the lowest shelves. The portable floor-lamps, adjacent to comfortable armchairs, are provided with lenses that absorb the yellow rays, yielding the most comfortable reading light. In short the atmosphere pervading the whole building is conducive to reading and study, extending an invitation to come and a welcome to remain.

TREASURER'S REPORT

OCTOBER 1929-MAY 1930

Received by check Oct. 7, 1929		\$3,212.30	
Exchange		2.40	
			<u>\$3,209.90</u>
Actual Receipt			\$3,209.90
Dues			
Library	\$1,355.00		
Individual	530.40		
Professional	46.00		
Bulletin	59.00		
Miscellaneous	55.16		
Total Receipts	2,045.56	2,045.46	
			<u>\$5,255.46</u>

EXPENDITURES

Annual Meeting	\$122.32		
Bulletin	116.24		
Exchange	326.69		
Miscellaneous	125.15		
			<u>\$690.40</u>
Certificates of deposit	4,000.00		
		<u>\$4,690.40</u>	\$4,690.40
Bank Balance			<u>\$565.06</u>
			<u>\$4,000.00</u>
Total Assets			\$4,565.06
Audited and found correct,			

C. F. WYLDE,
OLGA E. SOMERVILLE,
LILLIA M. D. TRASK.