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Revisiting the Carnegie Public Library built form: the design and early history of three Illinois Carnegie Library buildings

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ABSTRACT

Despite the challenges involved in re-cycling older library buildings, it is important not to underestimate the value of extant Carnegie libraries, which in many places are among the most celebrated and cherished structures in the community. Any tendency to underestimate the possibilities for extant Carnegie library buildings can be reduced by revisiting their original designs and challenging popular impressions that are based on unwarranted retrospective history. Case studies of three Illinois Carnegie libraries are presented: Decatur (opened 1903), Paxton (opened 1904), and Park Ridge (opened 1913). These case studies are followed by a positive interpretation of the built form of the three libraries studied, by drawing on recent accounts of the material culture of Carnegie public libraries in the decades immediately prior to the First World War, as well as by referring to contemporary policy on architectural control by Carnegie's office and critical reporting in the later stage of the Carnegie programme on its successes and failures.

KEYWORDS

public libraries; library architecture; Andrew Carnegie; United States; twentieth century

Notwithstanding the many and various philanthropists who lent support to the pre-First World War free, tax-supported library, it is not so long ago that across the United States the terms 'public library' and 'Carnegie library' were virtually synonymous.¹ A century after his death (11 August 1919), Andrew Carnegie is still seen as the 'patron saint' of the American public library. Even though the vast majority of communities receiving financial gifts from Carnegie did not choose to incorporate his name into the name of the libraries he funded (Carnegie himself did not demand that his name be included), the heritage of the public library in the United States is intimately bound up with Carnegie's philanthropy, the 1,679 buildings the steel magnate helped create there between 1889 and 1923 serving as monuments to the self-help philosophy he espoused.² Carnegie's influence extended globally, of course, a further 900-plus library building grants being offered worldwide before his universal programme came to an end in the late 1920s.³

Many of these buildings survive, others exist only in the memory or in the archive; but whether here or gone, despite lingering accusations that they were the product of 'blood money' set aside from a Robber Baron's ill-gotten gains,⁴ Carnegie libraries continue to be celebrated — often as enthusiastically as they were a century ago⁵ — as civic treasures and as iconic contributors to American public education and civic culture.⁶ Their significance today

relates more to their vast quantity and familiarity as public buildings than to any judgement of their funder's transactional ethics. Nonetheless, negativity relating to the 'political' etymology of Carnegie libraries is difficult to expunge, and just as such questions refuse to go away, questions about the future of extant Carnegie library buildings remain also.

The fate of Carnegie libraries and the need to revisit their original designs

The fate of any Carnegie library, like all purpose-built libraries, past and present, might be encapsulated by one of three terms: continual reuse (a continuity in the library functions);⁷ adaptive reuse (a repurposing of the library);⁸ and abandonment (or destruction).⁹ A large proportion of Carnegie's public libraries fall into the first category, continuing to function as libraries, despite the fact that they are notoriously difficult to heat, cool, and align with accessibility codes and digital information technology needs.¹⁰ A preservation and conservation zeitgeist allied to a 'save our libraries' movement that positions Carnegie libraries as key components of civic identity and local heritage has precipitated a strong public interest in the remodelling and extension of existing library buildings, even though final costs and resulting functional efficiency in such projects can be, respectively, higher and lower than expected.¹¹ Other extant Carnegie libraries correspond to the second of our categories, their fabric remaining largely intact but their purpose having been re-assigned — a prominent case in this respect being the opening in May 2019 of an Apple retail and publicity outlet in Washington DC's monumental Beaux-Arts Carnegie library (which had not in fact functioned as a library since 1970 when Mies van der Rohe's iconic modernist Martin Luther King Jr. Library was opened in the capital).¹² Carnegie libraries continue to disappear, of course. Despite their generally robust original construction, a number of Carnegie libraries have not stood the test of time structurally and/or have become spatially redundant in the face of changing demographics and expanding demand. This threatened to become an accelerating trend in the 1960s but the rate of abandonment has slowed considerably in recent years as attitudes towards conservation have changed and renovation techniques have improved.¹³

Each of the three libraries chosen for this study corresponds discretely to one of the three terms we have used to describe the fate of Carnegie's library buildings. Paxton Carnegie Library (opened 1904) continues to function as a library, reused in a way that has attempted to acclimate services to changing times and demands, while at the same time determinedly preserving and celebrating a Carnegie heritage and identity. Park Ridge (opened 1913), an example of adaptive reuse, has for some time provided accommodation for offices and retail outlets, a new library for the town having been built in the late 1950s. In the late 1960s the Carnegie library in Decatur (opened 1903) was abandoned and was duly demolished in 1971, the town moving the collection to a former department store building. The histories of these libraries make it clear that the survival of Carnegie libraries is not guaranteed and that if they do survive all will be significantly altered in some way, even those that remain as libraries.

Crucially — and this brings us to one of the central aims of this study — the chances of survival and sympathetic renovation will be improved if the reputation of the libraries' original designs can be enhanced, or rehabilitated. Despite the challenges involved in recycling older buildings, it is important, it has been proposed, not to underestimate the importance of extant Carnegie libraries, which in many places are among the most celebrated

and cherished structures in the community.¹⁴ Any tendency to underestimate the possibilities for extant Carnegie library buildings can be reduced by *revisiting* their original designs and challenging assessments that are based on retrospective history, such as that of the library educator Walter Allen, who in 1976, in contributing to a celebration of the centenary of the American Library Association, remarked: 'it is doubtful ... that they [Carnegie libraries] added much to the development of library architecture'.¹⁵ Although there is great sentimentality attached to Carnegie library buildings, and thus much support for their protection, there is also a realisation that to bring them into line with the digital age is a considerable challenge, one which some planners and even the public are not enthusiastic about meeting.¹⁶ It is a short step from there, moreover, to the argument that Carnegie libraries in their original form were architectural 'mistakes'. We argue, however, that not to do justice to the advances in library design registered by the largest library construction programme in history runs the risk of discolouring our ideas about what to do with extant Carnegie libraries in the future; but more than this, it would be historically incorrect and give credence to retrospective history.

Methodology

The sample of libraries examined in this study is drawn from the state of Illinois. One reason for choosing Illinois, beyond mere geographical and logistical convenience in terms of the research task, is that with 106 Carnegie public libraries out of a total of 1,689 nationwide, Illinois is ranked third (behind Indiana and California) among states with regard to the number of such libraries constructed.¹⁷ Also, partly because of the large number of Carnegie libraries that were built there, Illinois offers as good a cross-section of buildings as anywhere, in terms of style, size, and interior spaces.

Following narrative accounts of the planning and early history of the three libraries in question, the study offers an analytical interpretation of their built forms (comprising location, style, and space) by drawing on recent studies of the pre-First World War material culture of Carnegie public libraries, as well as by referring to contemporary policy on architectural control by Carnegie's office and critical reporting in the later stage of the Carnegie programme in the United States on its successes and failures. This provides a means to reflect on the changing popularity of extant Carnegie libraries as public buildings in relation to their potential for ongoing or future use. Historical studies of the original buildings demonstrate how their funders intended them to function, how their architects wanted them to appear, and what they meant to the local communities who commissioned them, thereby providing a valuable benchmark, or context, for those choosing between the planning options of continual reuse, adaptive reuse, or abandonment.

Paxton Carnegie Library (1904)

The small community of Paxton received its Carnegie library on 27 June 1904, the philanthropist having offered \$10,000 towards its construction after being approached by E. B. Pitney, a local businessman and secretary of the Library Board.¹⁸ Carnegie made his offer in the knowledge that since the early 1890s the town had supported a number of different, albeit short-lived, libraries: one attached to the Methodist

Episcopal Church; a library in the local school; and a subscription library housed in a drugstore. It was books from libraries, along with donations from individuals, which mostly formed the collection of 2,000 volumes that the Library offered when it first opened. Other donations soon followed: from the Paxton Post of the Grand Army of the Republic; from the Ladies Home Culture Club (which also donated several pieces of sculpture); and from Stockholm, in the form of a delivery of magazines and periodicals to help satisfy the reading needs of the many Swedish immigrants in the area.¹⁹ The life of the Library began with the appointment of a librarian, Emma Meharry, who was to stay in post for over forty years. By June 1906 the Library was issuing just over 1,000 volumes a month, a healthy circulation of reading given the relatively small population of the town (2,912 in 1910).

Not everyone was pleased with the Carnegie offer. Some thought taxes raised could be put to better use, such as in the provision of new sewers for the town. Other critics thought that the exercise was essentially one of self-glorification and that if the town ever found it could not support the Library then Carnegie would simply reclaim the building. In fact, the gift was outright, with no revisionary provisions. Nor did Carnegie demand that his name appear in the building's name; it was the town which opted for 'The Paxton Carnegie Library', which appeared on the pediment above the entrance (the Library Board also requested an authorised picture of Carnegie for the interior).²⁰ There was also a radical strain of opinion that saw Carnegie, in the words of one local resident writing in the local press, as 'one who robbed the government and the people and murdered the laborers whose toil and sweat made him millions because they demanded wages to support their families'. But many residents welcomed Carnegie's money: 'I am in favour of every step in the progress of Paxton', wrote one resident in support of the library project. This sentiment was later echoed by at the opening ceremony by O. J. Bainum, President of the Library Board, who claimed that the building represented a gift 'in the interests of intellectual advancement and of social and moral progress'.²¹ It was the opinion of the Board that the Library would 'stand for all time [as] a monument to his [Carnegie's] generosity'.²²

With \$2,000 raised to purchase a site, after a spirited debate as to the best location for the Library a central location was chosen, close to the business district as well as 'a very fine residence section' of the city.²³ The building was designed by Paul O. Moratz of Bloomington, Illinois, who met the criterion laid down by Carnegie that architects of the libraries he promised to fund had to have library-design experience (by the time he was chosen to design Paxton he had designed libraries in Loda and Pekin, Illinois). Eventually, Moratz designed nineteen of the 106 Carnegie libraries in Illinois, including those in Sycamore (1905) and Fairbury (1905), which were virtual copies of his Paxton design. In total he designed at least two dozen public libraries.²⁴ The cornerstone was laid on 12 October 1903, and a copper-box time capsule was placed inside it, housing a copy of the letter from Carnegie offering the grant, a Paxton YMCA card, an 1854 coin, a list of county and township officers, letter heads of every business in the town with lists of employees, and a list of favourite authors voted for by local children. Construction was completed on 25 April 1904.

Although he had shown a liking for Romanesque and Queen Anne styles, especially in respect of the private houses he had designed, Moratz chose Classical Revival for the library in Paxton. The building was constructed of Bedford stone and Illinois hydraulic-pressed beige (tan) brick. Much of the low hipped roof was covered in slate. The building's main exterior feature was a wood-framed, copper-domed rotunda, which intersected the primary



Figure 1. Paxton Carnegie Public Library, 2018. Source: Alistair Black.

rectangular plan at one corner. As befitted a small library, the entrance, although generically in the temple-front style, was relatively modest: no portico, just a pair of flanking pilasters housing small slot windows, with a high transom and a pediment (inscribed with Carnegie's name) above. The building was said to complement the nearby Queen Anne-style residences. Pitney classed the building 'a model of appropriateness and of architectural beauty combined'²⁵ — a potent mixture, it was believed, of utility and civic symbolism (Figure 1).

Finished mostly in polished red oak, the ground-floor interior of the Library had five main compartments, all off the central lobby: an adult reading room in the rotunda, equipped with an ornamental fireplace, with a marble surround and wood mantle (Figure 2; for a time the room later housed the children's library, but it returned to its original function in 1987 when the basement was renovated to accommodate the children's service); a reference room; a children's room; a librarians' office; and a stack room, arranged in a radial fashion behind a semi-circular circulation desk, with a 14,000-volume capacity (considerable scope for expansion beyond the initial stock of 2,000 volumes was thus incorporated in the design). Built-in oak shelving hugged the walls, including those forming the rotunda. There were four wooden doric columns and six wooden doric pilasters. A meeting room was located in the raised basement, and from the outset the Library served as a vibrant social meeting place. Electric lighting was fitted throughout.²⁶

Paxton Carnegie Library is an exquisite example of the many small library 'temples on Main Street'²⁷ that sprang up across the United States in the early twentieth century. From the outset there was a sense that architecturally the building was something special. Photographs of the Library formed part of a display on Carnegie public libraries in Illinois (prepared by the University of Illinois) at the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco. This sense of pride continued throughout the first century of the building's existence. In 2002 the Library was placed on the National Register of Historic Places. Two years later, in celebrating the building's hundredth birthday, an admirer proclaimed that 'Today, the library stands more vital than ever, an example of superior architecture.'²⁸



Figure 2. Rotunda reading room, Paxton Carnegie Public Library, in 2018. Source: Alistair Black authors.

In 2011, the Library's architectural pedigree attracted the attention of students from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign who, working under Professor Paul Hardin Kapp, Chair of the University's History and Preservation Department, surveyed and documented the building in depth.²⁹

Over the years the building's architecture as well as the surrounding landscaping have been lovingly preserved. Many of the original bookcases as well as the semi-circular librarians' control desk remain. The rotunda reading room has been restored. It is only when visitors entering the Library pick up on certain modern additions and alterations — computer terminals; an elevator installed in accordance with disability legislation to give access to the basement; and the remodelling of that basement in the 1980s, followed by its use as the children's library from 1997 — that the feeling of being in a time warp disappears. 'Paxton is a very historical town. Heritage is very important to people here', said LaFonda Evers, librarian in the early 1990s.³⁰ Given such a sentiment, it is not surprising that such strenuous efforts have been made to preserve Paxton Carnegie Public Library within the context of an evolving information age.

Park Ridge Public Library (1913)

In 1909 Park Ridge, a suburban town just beyond the north-western city limits of Chicago, with a population of a little over 2,000 residents, approached Andrew Carnegie for support to build a new library, which was completed and opened three years later (Figure 3). Much of the town, especially in its outlying districts, was made up of what in 1911 its mayor, Albert Buchheit, called 'intelligent German people'; a library, he continued, would be 'a great aid in forming good, intelligent, American citizens'.³¹ By the early twentieth century a vibrant cultural scene had developed in Park Ridge. There was a thriving artists' colony. Local citizens engaged enthusiastically in literary societies, where a range of political, scientific, and literary subjects was discussed. They attended musical recitals, operettas, lectures, and other



Figure 3. Park Ridge Public Library, in an Arts and Crafts idiom (opened 1913). Source: Courtesy of Park Ridge Public Library.

entertainments under bright lights at the town's Electric Hall. A circulating magazine club was established. In 1894 a literary society for women was formed, which in 1900 became the Park Ridge Women's Club.³² In 1909 the Women's Club was instrumental in establishing a free library in Park Ridge. Run by volunteers, it was opened above a downtown store, adjacent to where the permanent library was soon to be built.³³

In late 1909 the newly formed Park Ridge Library Committee succeeded in securing a pledge from Carnegie of \$5,000.³⁴ Knowing that it needed to supply a good deal of money itself for a new building, the city set about fundraising, through such activities as lectures, concerts, and bakery sales.³⁵ Later the Committee wrote to Carnegie asking for a further \$5,000, a request denied by the philanthropist.³⁶ However, the Committee persisted, and when it had demonstrated that the population of the city had exceeded 2,000 (a threshold that had to be overcome before Carnegie even considered funding), that the school population was expanding rapidly, that through the generosity of a consortium of five local residents the site for the library had been secured for free, thereby reducing pressure on civic funds, and that the city would allocate the equivalent of one-tenth of his gift each year for maintenance, in early 1911 Carnegie met Park Ridge halfway and increased his pledge by \$2,500 to \$7,500.³⁷

A Building Committee was formed in 1912 (its membership included John Paulding, Chairman, J. A. Schulkin, Sr., and J. W. Pattison). Initially, the Chicago architect Harry E. Stevens appears to have been chosen to design the Library, but when it became clear that the city would receive only \$7,500 from Carnegie, his plan was returned and he was invited to draw up a new one, although he was informed that any such plan would be considered by the Building Committee alongside submissions from other architects' offices.³⁸ Briefly, in the summer of 1912, the Building Committee entertained the idea of remodelling the City Hall to serve as a library building. However, the cost was considered too high, certainly in comparison to what could be got from Carnegie's offer.³⁹ The Library Board thus decided to stick with the appointment of the studio of Irving and Alan Pond, Chicago architects

and brothers, the Board describing Irving Pond as an architect of 'mature training, experience and judgement'.⁴⁰

Plans for the new library, in an Arts and Crafts domestic style that had recently crossed the Atlantic,⁴¹ were sent to Carnegie on 9 November 1912.⁴² Within two weeks, Carnegie's office had replied. Having reviewed the plans, Carnegie's office listed several criticisms. These were as follows:

The plans show an unusual type of Library Building. For a small library we have found the most economical and practical design to be a center entrance with reading rooms on each side, and the librarian's desk placed a few feet from the entrance. The disadvantage of the corner entrance, as shown on the plans submitted, is readily seen. Also, the arrangement of the assembly rooms in the basement does not appear to be good. Two such rooms are not needed ... [for] neither of the ones shown on the plan are of sufficient size to answer properly the purposes of a lecture room. Concerning the exterior design: We cannot see the necessity for the irregularity of the outside walls, which are costly to construct. Please note the suggestions given in the enclosed *Notes on Library Buildings* [sic] and we would recommend that you adopt the type of Library Building described in the *Notes*.⁴³

The Library Board pushed back against this criticism. It re-asserted its faith in the architects and informed Carnegie that Harry Legler, Librarian of Chicago Public Library, had examined the plans favourably. It also defended the domestic style of the design by arguing that 'our town is essentially a town of homes ... the type of architecture ... should be domestic in feeling, but retain the dignity of a public building'.⁴⁴ The defence appeared to work, because without engaging in any further debate Bertram approved the plans, in December 1912.⁴⁵ The building that emerged took no account of Carnegie's original reservations, although when the Library Board asked for a further injection of funds shortly after the Library was opened, Bertram reminded the Library Board that the plans had been passed reluctantly, the Board having been 'cautioned against the kind of building aimed at, in as much as a building of such irregular shape gives much less return in effective accommodation for the money, than one of regular shape'.⁴⁶

The 'irregularity' of the brick and stucco-like exterior design, which was worked in an Arts and Crafts, neo-Tudor idiom, remained unchanged. Pond and Pond were drawn to the irregular massing of forms that characterised Arts and Crafts architecture. This corresponded to Irving Pond's firm support for the dictum that 'form should follow function'.⁴⁷ The Ponds' liking for the Arts and Crafts idiom also appeared to be socially driven. As Irving Pond wrote: 'Our schools, our settlement houses, our hospitals ... our asylums, our libraries and art museums, — all these, expressive of the altruism of the age ... lend themselves to a strong, sincere, lovely, and individual interpretation which should characterize the age'.⁴⁸

The symmetry for Park Ridge that Carnegie advised was obviously not something that the architects believed should necessarily apply to a library (the firm also employed irregularity for the design of university union buildings for Michigan and Kansas, in 1917 and 1927, respectively, both fashioned in a late medieval style). Arts and Crafts influences were also visible in their design of the public library in Oregon, Illinois (1909). Further, it is notable that the building was described as a 'homelike library',⁴⁹ for although Arts and Crafts styling was

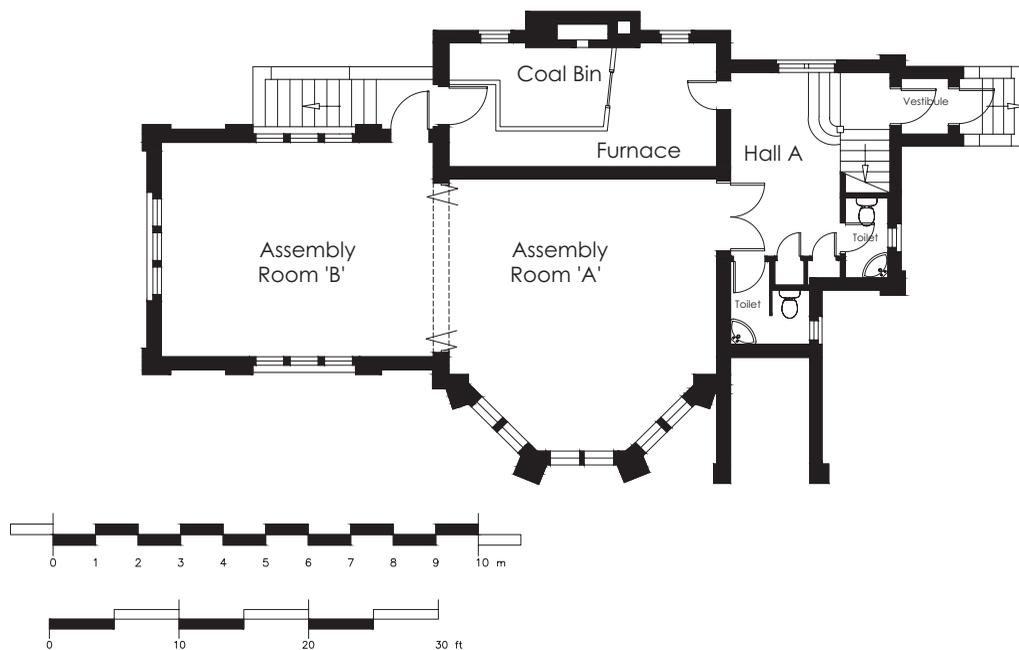


Figure 4. Basement plan, Park Ridge Public Library. Source: Park Ridge Public Library Archives. Plan re-drawn by Mahdi Boughanmi

deployed across a range of building types, its use in the context of domestic house design was relatively common.⁵⁰

As built, like the exterior, the character and disposition of interior spaces corresponded to the original Pond and Pond plans. This is clear from the description of the interior in the 'sale' brochure issued when the building was put on the market in 1958, following the opening of the new library that same year. The half-basement contained two large library rooms (Carnegie had questioned the usefulness of dividing the basement) and a small entrance hall (Figure 4).

From the latter could be found a birch staircase with oak treads leading to the building's main entrance hall, then onwards to the upper floor. The first floor was in three parts: a central room (with vaulted ceiling); a south-facing room; and an entrance/reception hall (with service counter) (Figure 5). This upper floor consisted of one large room at the north of the building.⁵¹

When the library building was completed in November 1913 it was sparsely furnished and fitted out (there was no shelving nor the planned linoleum flooring), the entire Carnegie grant having been spent on construction of the building itself. Nonetheless, incomplete and without adequate shelving, the Library opened the following month, on 6 December. The Library's final furnishings were donated by the Women's Club. The accumulation of the original book collection was reliant on donations. These came from a wide variety of local individuals and organisations.⁵² On the opening day the book committee sold fiction books to members of the public to then donate to the Library.⁵³ The estate of George Carpenter, who had become the first village president in 1873, was the largest donor, giving at least 1,000 volumes. By 1916 the Library housed 3,500 volumes. The south room of the Library was

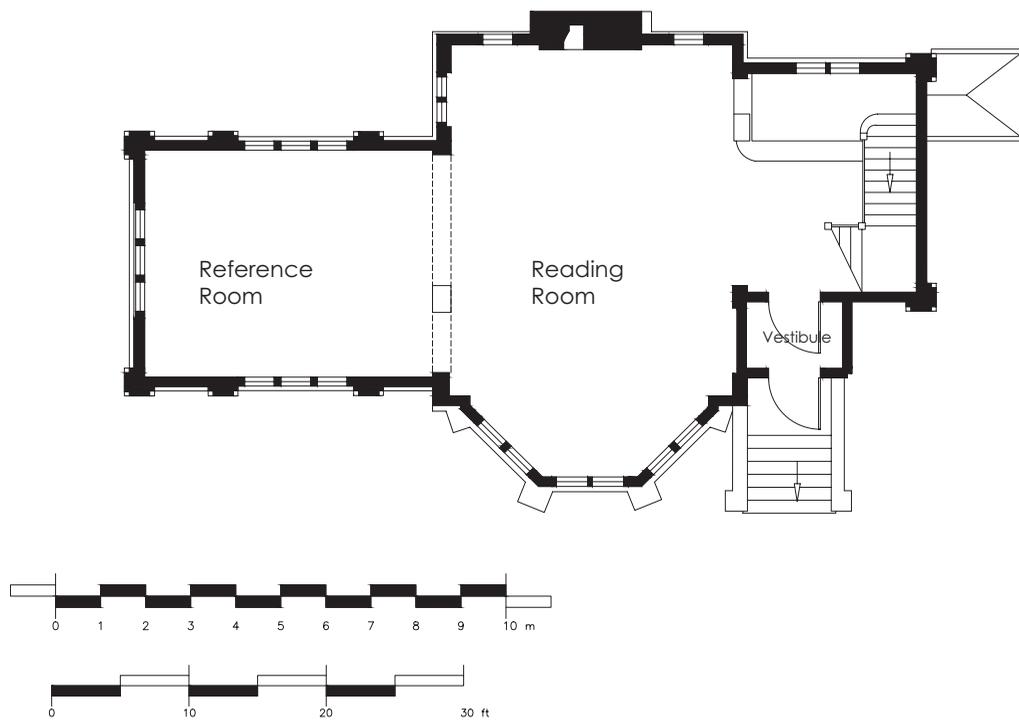


Figure 5. Main floor plan, Park Ridge Public Library. Source: Park Ridge Public Library Archives. Plan re-drawn by Mahdi Boughanmi

named ‘The George B. Carpenter Room’. Although a professional librarian, Ruth Coleman, was appointed (she was reported to have taken a course in library work), to save money on employing additional staff the bulk of the collection was catalogued by the Library’s book committee. Despite the donated, second-hand nature of the collection, it was said: ‘The books now available are of such a variety that the reading public will have no trouble in satisfying its desire.’⁵⁴

The day before Park Ridge opened its Carnegie library a local newspaper declared: ‘It is a public institution, its maintenance is paid for by the public and its patronage will come from the public.’⁵⁵ That public face was re-asserted during the depression of the 1930s when the Library Board hired workers from the New Deal’s Civil Works Administration (CWA) to remodel the Library. The most striking alteration was the establishment, in 1934, of a children’s department in the basement (Figure 6). This left the entire main floor, with refurbished tables, available for adult use and reading tables, the redecoration giving ‘an aspect of modernity to the interior’ (Figure 7).⁵⁶ By the 1950s, however, space was at a premium and plans were drawn up for a new library, directly across the street from the 1913 building. By early 1958 the new, much larger library, in a modern neo-Georgian style, was complete, and that winter 20,000 books were transferred across from the old library. In 1959, after less than half a century, the Carnegie library closed as a functioning library, the constricted space within it unable to respond to the demands of a mushrooming suburban population. The building, however, remains extant, and is now occupied by an insurance firm and a beauty salon.



Figure 6. Children's library, Park Ridge Public Library, in refurbished basement, 1934. Source: Courtesy of Park Ridge Public Library.



Figure 7. Main floor, Park Ridge Public Library, 1934, following refurbishment. Source: Courtesy of Park Ridge Public Library.

Decatur Free Public Library (1903)

Decatur got its Carnegie library in 1903 (Figure 8).⁵⁷ The Decatur Free Public Library had been founded in 1875, largely thanks to the work of the local Ladies Library Association, which has been established eight years earlier. Indeed, the Library Board's constitution stated that a third of the Board's members had to be women. There was notable continuity in the management of the Library, including the early years of the Carnegie building. Alice Evans served as librarian from 1881 (when she succeeded her husband, the city's first librarian) until her death in 1926. For a quarter of a century before its removal to the new Carnegie building



Figure 8. Decatur Public Library, c. 1930. Source: Courtesy of Decatur Public Library.

the Library was located in a number of temporary, adapted premises (one had been ravaged by fire in 1892). By 1900 the Library had over 18,000 books but was in need of somewhere to house them adequately. In particular, 'Special accommodations for children were vitally needed.'⁵⁸

The idea of approaching Carnegie for help to provide such accommodation was initiated by C. M. Hurst, a local iron manufacturer. In 1901 Carnegie received a delegation from the Decatur Library Board, led by Hurst, at his New York offices, and rewarded its request for funding with a \$60,000 gift. This left the town to find only another \$5,000 to meet construction costs. It also promised to spend at least \$6,000 a year in upkeep and paid \$15,000 for a corner site on Main Street, even though another site, on the corner of Water and Wood, had been offered free of charge. In fact, a number of sites were suggested, including one in the city's central park. There was a controversy — at times bitter — as to where best to situate the new library. According to one account, 'Sectionalism was rampant' regarding the issue.⁵⁹ It appears that the site where the Library was eventually built, even though it was a more expensive option, was chosen because of the prominence it gave to the Library, being in a downtown civic location (the city post office was opposite) and occupying a 'lofty perch'⁶⁰ on the city's main thoroughfare.

Plans were drawn up by Mauran, Russell, and Garden of St Louis after the firm had consulted closely with Alice Evans and her staff in the first half of 1901. The plans were accepted in August 1901. The first designs called for brick and terracotta construction, but the Library Board eventually opted for Bedford stone as it was thought this would 'make a better monument building'.⁶¹

The new library came to be seen as a 'thing of beauty', a 'grand building ... greeting all those heading downtown',⁶² the 'most presentatious building in Decatur and one of the best library buildings in the country for its price'.⁶³ Local people remembered it as stately, imposing, and impressive, and as standing as a proud expression of Decatur's civic worth. It 'looked like what most people thought a library should look like — sophisticated, awe inspiring, and the repository of volumes of knowledge ... those who spent time in the

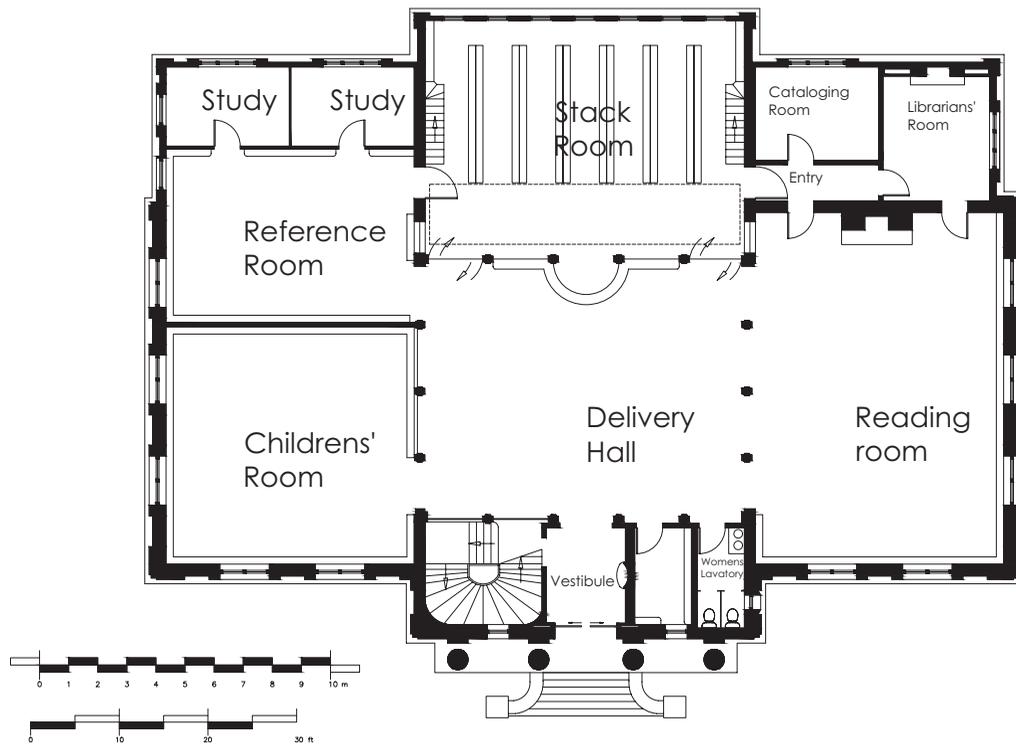


Figure 9. Ground floor plan, Decatur Public Library. Source: Decatur Public Library Archives. Plan re-drawn by Mahdi Boughanmi

Carnegie Library ... not only remember the special environment inside but also the privilege of climbing the steps and walking under the massive [entrance] pillars'.⁶⁴

Architectural formality continued inside the building, where 'decadent hand-hewn woodwork greeted patrons as well as a marble fountain and a massive fireplace'.⁶⁵ According to one source, the classical ambience appeared to imbue readers with a sense of responsibility regarding their behaviour: 'The Library never has had to check conversation or obstruct the vision of its patrons with "silence" signs'.⁶⁶ The original floor plans of the Library corresponded to Carnegie norms. On the ground floor a central delivery hall was flanked on one side by a children's room and a reference room (with two small study spaces off it), and on the other by a large reading room where periodicals and newspapers were displayed (with access to a cataloguing room and a librarians' office) (Figure 9).

When the Library opened in 1903, the reading room stocked 135 daily and weekly papers and monthly periodicals, and by the end of its first year this department had attracted 130,000 readers, thereby justifying the relatively large amount of space afforded it. In the first year of the Library's operation the reference department and the reading room were open from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. on all weekdays (except legal holidays) and from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. on Sundays throughout much of the winter (1 October to 31 May). Behind the delivery hall desk — which initially had the look of a 'bank teller's cage' but which was soon replaced by something more welcoming — stood a stack room where 'From the first, shelves, which heretofore had been closed to the public, were thrown open to all' (Figure 10).



Figure 10. Delivery hall and desk, Decatur Public Library, c. 1926. Source: *The Staley Journal* (December 1926).

The first floor housed spaces for non-book activities: a small hall, a much larger assembly room, a class room, and a club room. Private space for the library director was also allocated on this upper floor (Figure 11). The basement housed the lower part of the stack room, a staffroom, a work room, rooms for storing documents and old newspapers, and a general storeroom (Figure 12).

At first glance the sum of these parts points to a generous allocation of space to accommodate the Library's various services and activities. But it wasn't long, in fact, before overcrowding became an issue. Twenty-five years after the building opened, Minnie Dill, the librarian, recalled that when the building was first occupied staff 'didn't know what we were going to do with all the space', but by then, in 1928, she explained, the Library was bordering 'dangerously upon congestion'.⁶⁷ The impression of staff when the Library opened that it had been over-engineered in terms of space was later contradicted by others who believed that in 'contrast to the more pretentious of the early Carnegie buildings' the Decatur Public Library had 'no wasted space' and that the building had 'stood the test of time and *use* [my emphasis]'.⁶⁸ It is true that for more than a decade after the building was opened the whole of the first floor remained unoccupied, except for occasional use by local organisations, but even when the building was just four years old a further tier of stacks had to be constructed. In 1914 the children's library was moved from its modest space in the south-east corner of the building to a much more spacious upstairs room which until then had mostly been used for art exhibitions. In 1925 more stacks had to be added on all three floors of the Library; and in 1934 a large extension to the stack room, at the rear of the Library, was completed with the help of money from the CWA (Figure 13).⁶⁹ By the late 1920s the basement was becoming cluttered with public documents, files of old newspapers arranged on steel cages in a fireproof vault, and school outreach collections placed in a converted storeroom.

Always keen to keep a lid on grants and costs, Carnegie's office appeared not appreciate the need for extra space to be built into the original design. Having been asked for another donation shortly after the Library had been opened — on the grounds of population growth, increased industrial activity, and the opening of a university (James Millikin) in the town — Carnegie's secretary, James Bertram, requested a copy of the architectural plans. Having inspected the plans, he informed Decatur's Library Board that he believed the building could

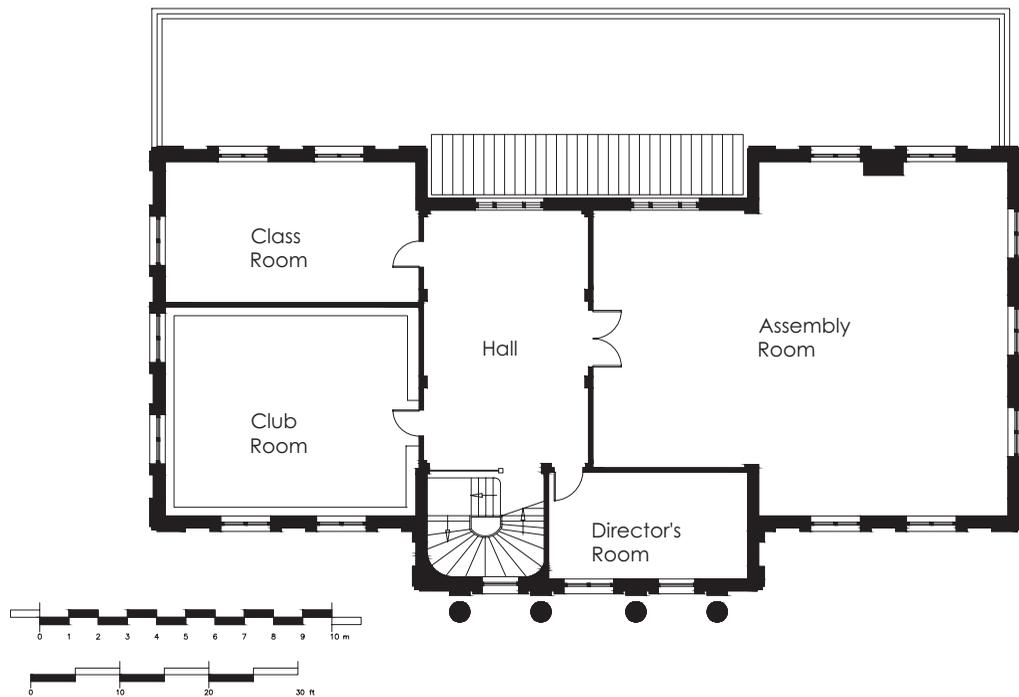


Figure 11. First floor plan, Decatur Public Library. Source: Decatur Public Library Archives. Plan re-drawn by Mahdi Boughanmi

have been constructed for \$10,000 less than the final cost, if the assembly room had been built in the basement instead of on the first floor. However, crucially, he even doubted the need for such a room, explaining that ‘Mr. Carnegie is not giving Class rooms, Club rooms etc. but library accommodation’.⁷⁰ This statement went against the main direction of travel at the time in American public library design, as discussed by Wiegand, who has stressed the grass-roots demand for community spaces in libraries.⁷¹ The statement was also contradicted by Carnegie himself, in that the Carnegie organisation’s *Notes on the Erection of Library Buildings* (1911) would contain six schematic plans for ideal small-library designs, each of which contained a lecture room.⁷²

Although the planners at Decatur viewed their library as ‘a substantial building ... [and] an honor and a monument’, they also saw ‘nothing in the plans in the way of show and extravagance’; rather, the plans had been prepared ‘with a view to economy’.⁷³ If anything, planning for future expansion had not been taken seriously enough. The building was arguably a fairly economical one in terms of space, and this was seen as regrettable twenty-five years later when it was suggested that an auditorium, a larger reading room, a technical library, and more accommodation for staff should have been included in the original plan. Regarding book storage, the Library was built for a maximum of 65,000 volumes, whereas growth in the first twenty-five years — during which time the book stock expanded from 21,000 to 60,000, card holders increased from 5,000 to 16,000, and staffing doubled to sixteen — indicated that a 100,000-volume library would have been more appropriate. Growth was fuelled by the insatiable demand for fiction books, which, having accounted for 78 per cent of loans in 1903, still represented 72 per cent of borrowing in 1928.

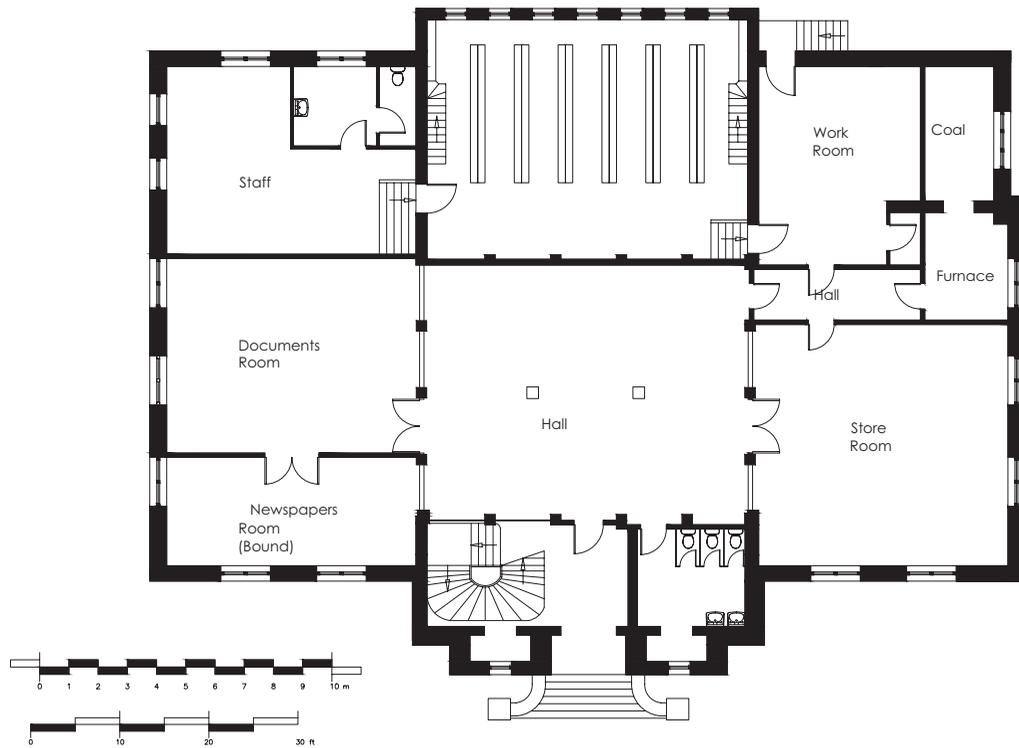


Figure 12. Basement plan, Decatur Public Library. Source: Decatur Public Library Archives. Plan re-drawn by Mahdi Boughanmi



Figure 13. Stack room extension, interior view, Decatur Public Library, c. 1934. Source: Courtesy of Decatur Public Library.

When the plans for the new library were first revealed, it was widely assumed that the building would 'be able to last for centuries'.⁷⁴ In fact it didn't quite make its seventieth birthday. The building ceased to function as a library in January 1971, at which point the collection and services moved into a former Sears department store. The Carnegie building was torn down in 1972, encouraging the lamentation that a 'true Decatur treasure [had] disappeared forever, long before its time'.⁷⁵

Many patrons did not wish to see the Library go and fought hard to save it, even though they knew it harboured a multitude of structural problems (as early as 1955 a University of Illinois study had revealed that the building was deteriorating badly). Preservationists were spurred on, it was said, by the knowledge that Carnegie had honoured the town with his gift and by the embarrassment that their Carnegie library would be one of just a few in the country that by that time had been wiped off the map. Refurbishment and expansion were eventually ruled out, however, in the face of a combination of serious ongoing structural problems, unchecked termite infestations, and the real prospect in a new age of communication that demand for services would race ahead of the limited options available for extension. Looking back fondly on the Library some three decades after its demise, the editor of a local newspaper proclaimed: 'If I had my choice of bringing back any structures that have been destroyed over the years, the Carnegie Library would be it. It had so much life left in it and, today, could be used for a number of purposes.'⁷⁶ In the new millennium Decatur citizens continued to express their fondness for the once vital Carnegie building, recalling it as a stately, imposing, and impressive edifice, standing as a proud emblem of Decatur's civic worth. It 'looked like what most people thought a library should look like', declared the editor: that is to say, 'sophisticated, awe inspiring, and the repository of volumes of knowledge'. 'Those who spent time in the Carnegie Library', he continued, 'not only remember the special environment inside but also the privilege of climbing the steps and walking under the massive pillars.'⁷⁷

Discussion

The three case studies presented above can be further illuminated by contextualising them in contemporary policy on architectural control operated by Carnegie's office and in critical reporting in the later stage of the Carnegie programme on its successes and failures, as well as with reference to recent accounts of early Carnegie library design. This concluding discussion is organised around the basic components the buildings' design: location, style, and space.

Architectural control

Appointed as Carnegie's personal secretary in 1897, from the following year James Bertram became responsible for reviewing all applications for library building grants. On occasion he viewed plans sent by applicants, and after a few years he began to link his perusal of plans to the granting of funds. In 1908 this process became formal, Carnegie's office stipulating that plans needed to be received, scrutinised (and if necessary amended), and approved before any pledge could be issued. Bertram often engaged in detailed and blunt correspondence over the effectiveness of plans. He endeavoured to exercise control over what he viewed as wasted space, superfluous ornament, and architectural embellishments in designs. This focused

oversight was intensified in 1911 by the publication of his *Notes on Library Buildings*, written with small libraries in mind but applicable in its fundamental messages to larger libraries also. *Notes* began as a leaflet but on five occasions was revised (the last time being in 1919) into something more substantial, with the longer title *Notes on the Erection of Library Buildings*.⁷⁸ It is against this backdrop of architectural oversight that the components of the design of our sample of libraries can be interpreted and discussed. In addition, however, it should be made clear that Bertram's control, including his *Notes*, did not appear in a vacuum, but reflected ideas about efficiency in library design that had been evolving for a generation.

Location

In 1917 the Carnegie Corporation commissioned a report on progress made to date in the Carnegie library building programme. The report's author, the economist and educator Alvin Johnson, had a lot to say about buildings and location. Regarding the latter, he asserted: 'Much more importance attaches to the choice of a site for the public library than is generally recognized.'⁷⁹ In some communities where Carnegie's help was requested, controversies over the best location for the proposed library raged so long and deeply that in the end no Carnegie money materialised.⁸⁰ This tendency towards indecision was reflected in the fact that only around 10 per cent of sites of buildings funded were deemed to have been had been in the best possible location.⁸¹

In each of our towns, however, the new library buildings were observed to be well located, and were celebrated as investments in public culture and education and, therefore, as prominent civic landmarks. Although there were debates as to the best site for the building, the inclination was for a central location where the library could help broadcast the status of the town and its desire for progress, as well as tap into strong, existing 'lines of traffic'.⁸² Each library was situated downtown, in, or proximate to, the town's business district. In Paxton the site of the Library nudged into a residential area, although there is no evidence that this was due to pressure from women in the town's library movement (one of Van Slyck's arguments being that the female preference for a Carnegie library site was often the residential neighbourhood, where a library could act as a strong moral force for socialisation of children; whereas men were more persuaded by central sites where a library would be more emblematic of a town's economic prowess and prospects).⁸³

Style

Generally, in the later years of Carnegie's library philanthropy, grants became smaller, while designs became more stripped and simplified. It should be emphasised, however, that not all the early single-use libraries — those that came after the initial large multi-purpose buildings, the first being in Braddock, Pennsylvania (1889) — were by any means overblown monuments where function was whimsically sacrificed in the name of aesthetics. Two of the three libraries featured here — Decatur Free Public Library and Paxton Carnegie Library — can be classed as 'early' designs. The third — Park Ridge — was built after the arrival of formal design control, being exposed to the first edition of Bertram's *Notes*. Bertram did not advise on external appearance, noting that a great variety of styles was at the disposal of architects. His main concern was that communities did not engage in exercises of civic

burnishment by creating architectural 'features' subordinate to 'useful' accommodation. Although they displayed a range of classical motifs, neither the building in Decatur nor that in Paxton was overblown by contemporary standards.

By the parameters of the day, Decatur's design was arguably, as Bertram's *Notes* were later to request, 'plain and dignified'. It was in a direct line of descent from the Colombian Exposition, which served as a considerable influence on library design for many years.⁸⁴ Its classicism, formal and grand, it could easily have been mistaken for a city hall, a courthouse or any other official building. Entry to the building was gained via a double flight of steps and through a tall four-columned, pediment-surmounted portico which projected forward (although not in an exaggerated fashion). From today's vantage point such a design might be viewed as unnecessary. But for contemporaries it was a rational choice. The emulation of ancient Greece and Rome reflected a self-confidence in the ability to both preserve and create knowledge. Features of the Paxton design corresponded closely with the Classical Revival style. However, despite its dome (which along with cupolas was criticised by some as expensive and ultimately unnecessary), its overall aesthetic was relatively restrained and stripped, hinting, along with its asymmetry, at a more modern approach. The entrance was flanked by pilasters rather than columns, with no projecting portico, and the flight of steps to the entry door was relatively low and democratic rather than steep and authoritative.

The architecture of Park Ridge was a different kettle of fish entirely. Asymmetrical and in an Arts and Crafts idiom, the building reflected the growing influence of modernism in terms of new, less formal styles like Art Nouveau and Prairie School which began to appear in the later stages of Carnegie's benefaction programme, including in places like Iowa and South Dakota.⁸⁵ It was perhaps the relative novelty of the exterior style, combined with the resulting internal asymmetry with which Carnegie's office was so unfamiliar, that prompted the initial objection from the office. But whatever the advantages or disadvantages of the irregularity, the Park Ridge design offers proof that Carnegie libraries were not, as popular historical belief would have it, clothed in a homogeneous style summed up in the sweeping descriptor 'Carnegie Classical'. In fact, styles ranged widely, from Classical Revival and Italian Renaissance to Beaux-Arts and a scattering of other popular styles such as Tudor Revival, Mission and Spanish Revival, Arts and Crafts, Art Nouveau, and residual Romanesque.⁸⁶ However, to be clear, classical styles dominated.

Space

On the matter of space wastefulness, something which increasingly concerned Bertram, it might be argued that the allocation of space in all three libraries, while not perfect, was not unreasonable. Regarding their delivery halls, Bertram's warning (eventually made clear in his *Notes*) against over-generosity was anticipated. The space devoted to the hall in Decatur was consistent with the heavy traffic that went through it (becoming ever heavier by the year), as readers not only approached the open stacks but also fanned out left and right into children's, reference, and study rooms, and into reading and catalogue rooms, respectively. As for Paxton, the central lobby in front of the delivery desk, though modest in size, was the perfect mechanism for accessing the open-plan design. In Park Ridge, there was a complete absence of 'ceremonial space' when readers crossed the threshold into the reading room, the librarians' desk confronting them immediately upon entry.

The position of the desk at Park Ridge at the entrance to the Library gave library staff a full view of the two upper-floor apartments. This corresponded to guidance in *Notes*, which advised that a delivery desk would be best ‘placed so as to supervise from it as much of the floor as possible’. The configuration of spaces at Paxton and Decatur required a central location for the delivery desk. Central observation was not, of course, something invented by Carnegie library planners, but they did place a premium on it. The widespread implementation of the open-shelf system, which aped the free browsing of the street market and, to a degree, the new department stores, necessitated increased supervision. Sometimes, as at Paxton, this was enhanced by the use of radial book stacks, which had the added advantage of admitting more light than parallel stacks. At Decatur the use of parallel stacks was compensated for by the construction of a long desk providing oversight of each aisle. Top-lit by a skylight, during daylight hours this might have served as a symbol of professional power, anointing librarians with a sacred light; but it is more likely that, as Van Slyck has argued, it essentially reinforced the symbolic importance of the Library as a ‘public’ servant of Enlightenment values.⁸⁷

Even though the other side of the open-shelf coin was the professional librarian’s insistence upon panoptic views — with as few interruptions as possible — of the various library compartments, allowing patrons to roam among the books, supervised or not, represented a growing trust in the public and a desire to foster public culture, as well as an investment in streamlined operations and rational efficiency. The main mechanism for allowing patrons to move among the books freely was the separate utilitarian stack room, hived off from reading rooms, which, with their fireplaces and polished woods, could continue to emulate the private club or the drawing room of a grand house. *Notes* advised that stack rooms be placed at the rear (which was anticipated at both Paxton and Decatur) and be amenable to future enlargement (which in fact happened on a fairly large scale at Decatur). The inclusion of separate storage spaces for books, away from the main reading and consulting space, had been advocated a generation earlier by William Frederick Poole, city librarian in Cincinnati (1869–73) and Chicago (1873–87), and Librarian of the Newberry Library, Chicago (1887–94).⁸⁸ A leading spokesman in the quest for new library design, Poole was particularly critical of libraries designed with lofty rooms — showrooms, in effect, for pleasurable spectating rather than serious reading — with vast areas of closed-access shelving, supplemented with galleries and alcoves, sometimes in multiple tiers. Such rooms, said Poole, were costly to construct, wasteful of space, difficult to heat, harmful to books stored at height (as heat rises), too busy and noisy, difficult to expand, and draughty (a dangerous accelerant if fire broke out).⁸⁹ Poole advocated the storage of books in a room separate from the reading room. Although this room was to be closed-access (open access was yet to come), he did anticipate the more open library by suggesting that spaces should not be fully walled but should have half partitions or screens, which would allow a more equal distribution of light.

The increased investment in public-sphere culture that open shelves in Carnegie libraries represented was complemented by the allocation, almost everywhere, of spaces for children and for meetings. Regarding the latter, Bertram advised that when introduced as a subordinate feature — meaning that it did not add disproportionately to the cost — a community social space should always be included. Similarly, in his report, Johnson criticised the inclusion of large community meeting spaces.⁹⁰ Such spaces were the one non-book element to survive from the first-generation, combined-services Carnegie buildings that had

offered a variety of rational-recreation activities, from bowling alleys to gymnasia. These adventurous poly-purpose, combination libraries quickly fell out of favour, eventually being frowned upon by Carnegie. This left a more modest role for non-book space: the community meeting room (variously labelled as the club room, or assembly or lecture hall).

The adoption of the one-storey, high-basement type of building at Paxton and Park Ridge, for which *Notes* was to express a preference, meant that lecture spaces were readily provided below the operational library spaces. At Decatur, relatively spacious non-book community rooms were situated on the first floor (something which Bertram subsequently began to oppose, preferring a basement location instead). One of these was eventually commandeered by the children's library, which was looking for more space, thereby justifying, in a way, the spaciousness awarded to the community rooms in the original plan (Bertram's objection to such rooms, noted above in connection with Decatur, is a little baffling). At Paxton a much smaller children's room was provided but its size was commensurate with the size of the town's young population. A generation after the opening, the children's books at Paxton were removed to one of the meeting spaces in the basement which Carnegie's office initially thought unnecessary after perusing the original plans.

Conclusion

Together, open stacks, generous children's accommodation, and the provision of reference, study and meeting spaces, alongside prominent locations as a municipal landmark and the employment of architectural styles that invoked the civic culture of the ancient polis or, as in the case of Park Ridge, the social cohesion of the Middle Ages, amounted to a significant endorsement of the ethos of public education and culture⁹¹ — one which contradicts the discourse that Carnegie libraries were an episode of over-indulgence in wasteful aesthetics at the expense of function.

In terms of their power to educate, Carnegie viewed public libraries on the same level as public schools. Free libraries, said Carnegie, were 'cradles of democracy' and 'fruits of the true American ideal'.⁹² This positive perspective should not, however, lead us to underestimate the difficulty of any attempt to rehabilitate Carnegie in terms of his world view as an entrepreneur driven by the tenets of traditional political economy. By contrast, efforts to rehabilitate Carnegie's library buildings, as opposed to rehabilitating the philanthropy behind them, are easier to digest, especially for subsequent generations who did not participate in the original transactions.

The three narratives of procurement set out in this study demonstrate that the patriarchal decorative appearance of the buildings was the choice of their architects and communities and bore little relation to the bald instructions of the funder to provide, as Bertram put it in his *Notes*, the 'utmost effective accommodation'. The conflation of reading their various architectural styles as part of a philanthropic social message ironically misses their critical architectural contribution. Negative comments on the legacy of Carnegie library buildings issued with the benefit of hindsight have tended to obscure the functional advances that came with them. These advances predate, of course, Bertram's *Notes*, which Bobinski called — perhaps impetuously, in that it underplayed the advocacy of people like Poole and ignored the fact that a level of control was already in operation — 'the beginning of modern library

architecture'.⁹³ The years around the turn of the twentieth century saw an upsurge in thinking about the problems and possibilities of library design.⁹⁴ The Carnegie programme both contributed to and benefited from the circulation of new ideas about library design. In architectural terms, the Carnegie public library represented, as Van Slyck has argued, a *reformed* public library'.⁹⁵ But the latter, it should be stressed, was also the product of influences that had been building for some years outside the orbit of the Carnegie programme. After all, two of the three libraries we have examined were designed before the 1908 architectural control watershed and were subject to little oversight from the Carnegie organisation.

The Carnegie period in and of itself did not witness a grand departure for library architecture. Rather, the Carnegie programme, we suggest, was part of a significant era of *transition* in library design.⁹⁶ It was an era of increasingly functional planning dressed in ancient clothes (paralleled in every building typology). It is very important, moreover, not to underestimate the complexity of what was in hand technically for architects of the time. Whereas the more modern, streamlined buildings of inter-war years brought with them clear messages of progress and the potential for new concepts of social order, it should not be presumed that the generation immediately preceding these buildings did not contribute to this development through experimentation and innovation.

Arguably, the rehabilitation of the original Carnegie library built form adds weight to the argument that extant Carnegie libraries should be conserved: to be either re-worked (continual renewal) or repurposed (adaptive renewal). In recent years, support has been expressed for the great potential of public library buildings of the formative era that are now threatened with closure. The prolific nature of Carnegie libraries has caused them to become familiar illustrations of a growing mentality that is less hostile to the notion of heritage preservation. Although some see old buildings as obstructions to progress, others view them as antidotes to unbridled progress: 'Towns that want to wipe out the old and put up the all-new', wrote the admiring chronicler of Carnegie libraries in Illinois, 'just become a mall-like suburb'.⁹⁷ There is clearly a growing heritage-conservation zeitgeist surrounding the retention of original public library buildings. This is naturally cut across by practical 'restraining' issues such as lack of space, poor location, and inflexibility born of load-bearing walls, as well as by funding cutbacks and challenging operational issues such as sustainability and access for people with disabilities. The powerful historical legacy of the Carnegie library built form, however, provides encouragement to preservationists. After all, when first built, Carnegie libraries were understood to be highly significant historical events in and of themselves; contemporaries knew they were witnessing something special, both culturally and architecturally. This is something which places a premium on the renewal (either continual or adaptive) of Carnegie library buildings. The extant Carnegie library built form, if evaluated with modern architectural techniques, surely has a future, especially if its original progressivism can be documented and highlighted.

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Notes

1. On the history of public libraries generally in the United States, see W. Wiegand, *Part of our Lives: A People's History of the American Public Library* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).
2. G. S. Bobinski, *Carnegie Libraries: Their History and Impact on American Public Library Development* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1969), 3.
3. The number of buildings built does not exactly correspond as not all grants were accepted and some single grants provided for a suite of libraries: see D. R. Miller, *Carnegie Grants for Library Buildings 1890–1917* (New York: Carnegie Corporation, 1946), and records of the Carnegie UK Trust, National Archives of Scotland.
4. Although ultimately, through his libraries, Carnegie uplifted millions of workers, it has been argued that he was able to do so only by 'trampling asunder thousands of workingmen', the profits from which he used to fund his library programme: P. K. Krass, *Carnegie* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley, 2002), p. xi.
5. T. W. Koch, *A Book of Carnegie Libraries* (New York: H. W. Wilson Company, 1917).
6. F. A. Schlipf, 'Remodeling and Expanding Carnegie-Era Library Buildings', *Library Trends* 62, no. 3 (Winter 2014), 556–80.
7. 'Continual reuse' is employed here in the sense of using something again for the same, or a very similar, purpose, the artefact being altered, but not in any significant way — in other words, the artefact is 're-circulated'. 'Continual reuse' indicates a continuity of library function. Rather than being abandoned or having their purpose re-assigned, a library during its life span normally undergoes refurbishment, renovation, or extension, or simply modest re-working, while retaining the identity bestowed upon it originally. Often, this re-formulation of use occurs on more than one occasion, which is not surprising given that a library is effectively out of date the moment it is opened.
8. 'Adaptive reuse' (re-use that is characterised by adaption) involves using an artefact again, many elements of its original form remaining intact. However, the artefact is subsequently awarded a purpose different to that which was originally intended. That is to say, the artefact is repurposed. In environmentalist discourse this is known as 'upcycling' (as opposed to 'recycling', which involves the destruction of original artefacts and their transformation into new artefacts). Throughout history, a great many purpose-built libraries, while avoiding destruction, have stopped functioning as libraries and have been adapted for other purposes (equally, there is a long tradition of non-library buildings being adapted for library purposes).

9. 'Abandonment' is employed here to describe an artefact that has been destroyed, or is in an irretrievable state of disrepair, having been judged, whether for material, economic, or social reasons, to be beyond rescue. Worldwide, the majority of purpose-built libraries that have ever existed fall into this category, their fate having been eradication rather than reclamation (of course, destruction has also sometimes occurred as a result of natural disaster or through malign human action known as 'libricide'): R. Knuth, *Libricide: The Regime-Sponsored Destruction of Books and Libraries in the Twentieth Century* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003). When first opened, Carnegie libraries were widely intended to be structures that were *built to last* — that is, buildings with the prospect of a healthy and long 'shelf life': K. Pringle, 'Buildings with a Shelf Life', *The Champaign-Urbana News Gazette* (16 August 1991).
10. The research on the number of Carnegie libraries still functioning as libraries needs to be updated. The most recent data for Illinois, for example, is a quarter of a century old. In 1987, 96 of the 106 Carnegie libraries were still in use as libraries: see B. M. Pacey, 'Andrew Carnegie's Legacy in East Central Illinois: Lincoln Trail Libraries System Boasts Fifteen Carnegie Grant Libraries', *Illinois Libraries* 69, no. 9 (November 1987), 618. By 1993 this figure had fallen to 83 (or 79 per cent): see R. Bial and L. Bial, *The Carnegie Libraries of Illinois* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991), p. iii.
11. Schlipf, 'Remodeling and Expanding Carnegie-Era Library Buildings', 557.
12. K. Capps, 'The Problem with D.C.'s New Apple Store', *City Lab* (10 May 2019), <https://www.citylab.com/design/2019/05/apple-store-washington-dc-carnegie-library-history-mt-vernon/589135/> (accessed 14 April 2020).
13. T. Jones, *Carnegie Libraries across America: A Public Legacy* (New York: Wiley, 1997), 105, reported that in 1996 the number of Carnegie libraries that had been razed or destroyed by fire represented around 16 per cent of the total originally built. The 1960s, when 100 Carnegie libraries disappeared, saw the peak of activity in this regard. With the rise of the preservation movement, the 1970s saw a halving of the rate of destruction, and in the 1980s only twelve libraries were expunged.
14. O. Prizeman et al., 'How can Century-Old Architectural Hierarchies for the Design of Public Libraries be Re-Interpreted and Re-Used?', *Journal of Cultural Heritage Management* 8, no. 4 (19 November 2018), 481–94.
15. W. C. Allen, 'Library Buildings', *Library Trends* 25, no. 1 (July 1976), 96.
16. Danville Public Library Board, *A Report on the Physical Facilities of the Danville Public Library Prepared for the Long-Range Planning Committee* (August 1984); J. Maloney, 'Rethinking Andrew Carnegie's Library Gift to New York City', *Wall Street Journal*, Eastern Edition (8 July 2013).
17. Jones, *Carnegie Libraries across America*, 1289. Both Ohio and New York also built 106 Carnegie libraries.
18. Key sources on the history of the library are: D. Hinton, *Paxton Carnegie Library: 100th Anniversary, 1904–2004* (Paxton, IL: Paxton Carnegie Library, 2004); 'Carnegie's Community Treasures: Temples on Main Street', *The Sunday Journal [Kankakee, Illinois]* (17 October 1993); 'National Register News ... Paxton Carnegie Public Library', *Historic Illinois* 25, no. 4 (December 2002), 14–15; and P. H. Kapp et al., *Paxton Carnegie Library: Historic American Building Survey* (Washington, DC: US Department of the Interior, 2012), <http://cdn.loc.gov/master/pnp/habshaer/il/il0900/il0998/data/il0998data.pdf> (accessed 14 April 2020).
19. In applying for a grant, perhaps appealing to Carnegie's non-American roots, the Library Board had made much of the immigrant nature of the local population. 'Fully half the population are Sweeds [sic] and Danes — a very industrious, honest, upright people', was the message it conveyed to Carnegie: E. B. Pitney to A. Carnegie, 20 January 1903, Carnegie Corporation of New York Archives, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University, New York (hereafter CCNYA).
20. E. B. Pitney to J. Bertram, 31 March 1904, CCNYA.
21. Quotes from Hinton, *Paxton Carnegie Library*, 5, 14, 18.

22. E. B. Pitney to J. Bertram, 16 May 1904, CCNYA.
23. Paxton Library Board to R. A. Franks, 11 June 1903, CCNYA.
24. C. Summers, *Paul O. Moratz* (Bloomington, IL: MacLean County Museum of History, 2016), <https://www.mchistory.org/research/biographies/moratz-paul> (accessed 14 April 2020).
25. Quoted in Bial and Bial, *The Carnegie Libraries of Illinois*, entry 56.
26. 'Specifications of Materials and Labor for a Carnegie Public Library ... Paxton. Illinois', prepared by Paul O. Moratz, architect (1903), Paxton Carnegie Public Library Archives.
27. 'Carnegie's Community Treasures'.
28. Quoted in Hinton, *Paxton Carnegie Library*, 3.
29. Kapp et al., *Paxton Carnegie Library*.
30. Quoted in 'Carnegie's Community Treasures'.
31. A. Buchheit to Mrs R. Sage, 7 February 1911, Park Ridge Public Library Archives (hereafter PRPLA).
32. 'The Old Carnegie Library, 1913–1958', *The Spokesman* (March 1988).
33. Open letter reporting the death of Clara Miller, *Park Ridge Herald* (4 May 1934).
34. J. Bertram to C. M. Miller (2 December 1909), CCNYA.
35. Library Board to Civic Committee (15 February 1910), PRPLA.
36. J. Bertram to C. M. Miller, 23 March 1910, and to C. L. Boening, 15 September 1910, CCNYA. See also Park Ridge Library Board Minutes, 8 June 1910, PRPLA.
37. Park Ridge Library Board Minutes, 17 January 1911, PRPLA; Park Ridge City Clerk, Resolution on library maintenance funds, 15 May 1912, PRPLA; J. Bertram to R. L. Baird, 6 January 1911, CCNYA.
38. J. Paulding to Harry E. Stevens, 12 August 1912, PRPLA.
39. Secretary of the Joint Buildings and Finance Committees to the Library Board, 5 August 2012, PRPLA.
40. J. Paulding to R. A. Franks, 16 December 1912, CCNYA.
41. P. Davey, *Arts and Crafts Architecture: The Search for Earthly Paradise* (London: Architectural Press, 1980), 183–94, discusses how the style was imported from Europe.
42. J. Paulding to R. A. Franks, 9 November 1912, CCNYA.
43. R. A. Franks to J. Paulding, 20 November 1912, PRPLA.
44. J. Paulding to R. A. Franks, 16 December 1912, CCNYA.
45. J. Bertram to J. Paulding, 23 December 1912, CCNYA.
46. J. Bertram to C. M. Miller, 12 December 1913, CCNYA.
47. K. Pond, *The Meaning of Architecture: An Essay in Constructive Criticism* (Boston: Marshall Jones Co., 1918), 173–74.
48. *Ibid.*, 192.
49. 'Notes on the History of Park Ridge Carnegie Library', typescript, April 1925, PRPLA.
50. C. Aslet, *The Arts and Crafts Country House* (London: Aurum Press, 2011).
51. 'Park Ridge City Hall, Property at N. Northwest Highway and N. Prospect ... as of May 14, 1958, Certificate Number 13412', 1958, PRPLA.
52. 'Notes on the History of Park Ridge Carnegie Library'.
53. 'Public Library Dedicated', news cutting, source unidentified, c. December 1913, PRPLA.
54. 'Library to be Opened Tomorrow', *Park Ridge Herald* (5 December 1913).
55. *Ibid.*
56. 'Hold Open House Monday in Newly Painted Building', news cutting, source unidentified, 1934), PRPLA.
57. Ground was broken for the Carnegie Library on 27 March 1902, and the official opening was on 1 July 1903. Core sources for the early history of the library building are: *Past and Present of the City of Decatur and Macon County, Illinois* (Chicago: S. J. Clarke, 1903), 82–83; *Fiftieth Anniversary, 1875–1925: Free Public Library of Decatur* (Decatur: Decatur Public Library, 1925); E. Steele, 'Decatur's Carnegie Library Remembered as a Thing of Beauty', *Decatur Herald Review* (21 September 2015); 'Library Invites All Decatur to Silver Anniversary Opening', *Decatur Herald* (27 June 1928); P. Osborne, 'Downtown's Stately Buildings Were Built with

- Huge Pillars at the Entrance’, news cutting, source unidentified, c. 2000, Decatur Public Library Archives (hereafter DPLA).
58. *Fiftieth Anniversary, 1875–1925*.
 59. Ibid.
 60. Steele, ‘Decatur’s Carnegie Library Remembered’.
 61. Library Invites all Decatur to Silver Anniversary Opening’.
 62. Steele, ‘Decatur’s Carnegie Library Remembered’.
 63. Library Invites all Decatur to Silver Anniversary Opening’.
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 65. Steele, ‘Decatur’s Carnegie Library Remembered’.
 66. *Fiftieth Anniversary, 1875–1925*.
 67. ‘Library Invites All Decatur to Silver Anniversary Opening’.
 68. Ibid.
 69. ‘New Addition to Library Begins to Take Form’, news cutting, source unidentified, 18 March 1934), DPLA.
 70. J. Bertram to C. F. Shilling, 26 September 1903, C. F. Shilling to J. Bertram, 5 February 1904, and J. Bertram to C. F. Shilling, 19 February 1904, CCNYA.
 71. W. A. Wiegand, *Main Street Public Library: Community Places and Reading Spaces in the Rural Heartland, 1876–1956* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2011).
 72. A. Van Slyck, ‘“The utmost amount of effectiv [sic] accommodation”: Andrew Carnegie and the Reform of the American Library’, *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 50, no. 4 (December 1991), 378–79.
 73. C. F. Shilling to A. Carnegie, 31 October 1901, CCNYA.
 74. ‘Ground was Broken’, news cutting, source unidentified, c. 2002, DPLA.
 75. Osborne, ‘Downtown’s Stately Buildings’.
 76. From the editor’s notebook, *Decatur Tribune* (14 April 2004).
 77. Osborne, ‘Downtown’s Stately Buildings’.
 78. Bobinski, *Carnegie Libraries*, 58. The third version of *Notes*, published in 1915, is reproduced in A. Van Slyck, *Free to All: Carnegie Libraries and American Culture, 1890–1920* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1995), 221–23. The version used in this study is the first, *Notes on Library Buildings [sic]*, deposited in the Park Ridge Public Library Archives — hereafter referred to simply as *Notes*.
 79. A. V. Johnson, *A Report to the Carnegie Corporation of New York on the Policy Donations to Free Public Libraries* (New York: Carnegie Corporation, 1919), 33.
 80. Bobinski, *Carnegie Libraries*, 140–41.
 81. Johnson, *A Report to the Carnegie Corporation*, 37.
 82. Ibid., 33.
 83. Van Slyck, *Free to All*, 65.
 84. A. R. Rogers, ‘Library Buildings’, in *A Century of Service: Librarianship in the United States and Canada*, ed. J. Jackson, E. B. Herling and E. J. Josey (Chicago: American Library Association, 1976), 224.
 85. P. Kruty, ‘Patton and Miller: Designers of Carnegie Libraries’, *The Palimpsest* 64, no. 4 (July–August 1983), 110–22; S. L. Richards, ‘The Building of Carnegie Libraries in South Dakota’, *South Dakota History* 20, no. 1 (Spring 1990), 1–16.
 86. Jones, *Carnegie Libraries across America*, 61–71.
 87. Van Slyck, *Free to All*, 96.
 88. W. F. Poole, ‘The Construction of Library Buildings’, *Library Journal* 6, no. 4 (April 1881), 73.
 89. Ibid., 74.
 90. Johnson, *A Report to the Carnegie Corporation*, 29.
 91. The public-sphere credentials of the American public library can be challenged by reference to the racial and class exclusion that occurred in the context of the institution: see C. Knott, *Not Free, Not for All: Libraries in the Age of Jim Crow* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2015).

92. Quoted in F. Felsenstein and J. Connolly, *What Middletown Read: Print Culture in an American Small City* (Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2015), 63.
93. Bobinski, *Carnegie Libraries*, 192.
94. For coverage of such ideas, see C. Soule, *How to Plan a Library Building for Library Work* (Boston: Boston Book Club, 1912).
95. Van Slyck, “The utmost amount of effectiv [sic] accommodation”.
96. As emphasised in O. Prizeman, *Philanthropy and Light: Carnegie Libraries and the Advent of Transatlantic Standards of Public Space* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012).
97. Ray Bial, quoted in K. Pringle, ‘Buildings with a Shelf Life’, *The Champaign-Urbana News Gazette* (16 August 1991).