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SOME POINTS IN THE INTERIOR ARRANGEMENT AND CONSTRUCTION OF A BUILDING FOR A SPECIAL LIBRARY.

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IT is possible, and quite natural, that on reading the program of this meeting the first impression to many will be that the questions I bring before you for discussion to-day, have already been well sifted and debated before the American Library Association. I wish to state that I have been unable to find direct answers to the points I now submit for your consideration.

We have as members of this Association, representatives of three Societies which have in recent years erected buildings for the purposes of a society and a medical library. In the order of their construction these are: 1st, the New York Academy of Medicine; 2nd, the Medical Society of the County of Kings; 3d, the Boston Medical Library. How much the last benefited by the experience of the others we hope to learn in the course of the present discussion. While we cannot expect to develop plans for an entire building, the opinions and suggestions recorded in our proceedings of this meeting, should be of material assistance in giving instructions to an architect engaged to prepare plans for a structure of this class.

The first question, "Is it desirable to have the reading-rooms on the first floor?", I should answer in the negative. In a building, say 100x100 feet, with the stacks built apart, as will be mentioned later, it is perfectly feasible to have the entire library equipment on the first floor, with plenty of space for the janitor's office, and apartments for a Directory for Nurses if desired; but I do not think it desirable from an architectural point of view, and less so from a practical standpoint, as there would be always more or less noise and confusion, necessarily accompanying the business of a large building, which would be an annoyance and discomfort to the readers and attendants in the library. A building of the size mentioned above, 100x100 feet, consisting of a basement and three upper stories, should have space reserved in the basement for a receiving-room with a graded outlet, if

possible, to the street level, and a storage-room for duplicates. The entire first floor should be assigned to the offices, committee and meeting rooms, etc., of the society. The second floor could contain one large meeting-room or auditorium, and the remainder of the floor space be devoted to the library: one or more reading-rooms; catalogue-room with toilet; office of librarian with toilet, and a committee-room if thought necessary. There should be a book-lift running from the receiving-room in the basement to the catalogue-room. The third floor could be arranged for a banquet hall, kitchen, and such living apartments as are thought desirable. Public toilets should be at least in the basement and upon the second floor.

To the second question, "Is one large reading-room, with gallery containing private rooms for dictation, preferable to two or three smaller rooms?", it is more difficult to give a positive answer. A single reading-room, say eighty feet in length, with a high domed or vaulted ceiling and a gallery or mezzanine story on both sides, would certainly be imposing and extremely effective, especially if sufficient funds are available for appropriate decorations. With this plan the office of the librarian, committee-room, etc., would be at one end, with the catalogue-room, etc., above on a mezzanine floor; the rooms so arranged that the receiving-room in the basement, and the catalogue-room on the second floor, would be in line, to permit of the construction of a shaft for the book-lift. The side galleries would contain the private rooms for dictation, or seminar rooms as they are generally termed by architects; but perhaps the following plan, while not quite so effective, would be more desirable:—A main or central reading-room, about forty feet in length without galleries; at one end of this, and communicating, a room thirty or thirty-five feet in length for the current periodicals, with a mezzanine floor containing several rooms for private dictation, and at the other end of the central reading-room, the office of the librarian, catalogue-room, etc.

The third question:—"Is it better to have all the book stacks in one place, built to permit of horizontal as well as vertical expansion, according to space, or to divide them?" For the special library it would perhaps seem more convenient to have all the stacks in one apartment; but I can see no objection to dividing them; in fact, if the additional expense is not considered, I would rather favor it; using one part exclusively for periodical publica-

tions and the other for books. In either case, according to my idea, the stacks should have their own building, four walls and a roof, with one wing if all the stacks are to be kept together, or two wings if they are to be divided, communicating with the main building on the basement and library floors by short vestibules having fire-proof doors at both sides. The stacks should be built on foundations at the basement level, and rise tier upon tier, of a height of not more than 7 feet 6 inches each, until the desired amount of shelf room has been obtained. No wall stacks should be allowed. This plan, if the walls are properly constructed, would reduce the danger from fire, with the accompanying destructive flooding by water, to a minimum. The Library Bureau gives, as an estimate, about 20,000 volumes to the tier of stacks on a floor space 45x25 feet. My estimate for this space would make 15,000 volumes the limit.

If the stacks are in a separate building, or, it might be advisable to call it either a wing, or pavilion, one of the most difficult problems the architect has to contend with in the construction of his plans is eliminated. The size of the main building and of the wing or wings for the stacks would, of course, be arranged according to the dimensions of the lot. The fact of the stacks being separate ought not to detract from appearance of the building as a whole; the shape and decorations of the outer walls would depend entirely upon the taste of the architect.

The fourth and last question:—"Is it preferable to have the stacks built with a uniform width of shelving, say ten inches, so as to permit keeping all books of a class together (folios proper not considered, as they are kept apart in any case), or, secondly, to follow the old plan of the lower shelves 12 inches and the upper 8 inches wide; or, thirdly, to have one or more sections with shelving twelve inches wide at the end of each row of stacks composed of eight inch shelving?" These questions I have had under consideration for some years and am strongly in favor of stacks with a uniform depth of shelving of from ten to eleven inches in the clear, for a medical library. From the information I have obtained the additional cost would be so small that if a quantity of stacks are ordered at one time, it need not be taken into consideration; the amount of floor space occupied, and the width of aisles, would be practically the same as with the old style stacks, having twelve-inch shelves below and eight-inch shelves above. Formerly the books of a library, in a great

measure, were arranged for appearance; duodecimos, octavos and quartos being lined up in each case; small books at the top and large at the bottom. I can well remember the shocked appearance of one of the members of the Library Committee of the College of Physicians when the present system of classification was introduced and the symmetry of the shelf line destroyed. My idea would certainly increase the irregularity of size as far as books are concerned, but would also greatly increase the utility of the stacks in the modern arrangement of a library by classes, bringing all of a kind together with the very few exceptions of large folios, which, for their proper care and preservation, should be kept on the flat, in cases or stacks with roller shelves.

The loss in vertical space would not be so great as at first imagined; if the stacks are seven feet high with the lower shelves twelve inches, and the upper eight inches deep, six shelves to a section is perhaps a fair average; the two lower shelves will accommodate books from twelve to fourteen inches high, and the four upper shelves, books of the ordinary octavo size; if you get beyond fourteen inches on the lower shelves, then one shelf is lost in that section: again, especially with journals and transactions, it is possible to run the octavo size from the top to the bottom of a section and gain an additional shelf, so, as I have said, I believe six shelves to the section should be taken as a fair average. If the width of shelving I have suggested is used throughout and the books classified without regard to size (with the exception of folios, already noted), there would be practically no loss of shelf room in the arrangement of the journals, reports, transactions and dissertations, which form more than one-half of most medical libraries, while the loss in shelf room for the books would probably be one-sixth, which might be somewhat decreased if the stacks were seven feet six inches high, instead of seven feet.

I quote the following from letters received in 1903, in reply to my request for an opinion in regard to the desirability of building stacks with the shelves of sufficient width to accommodate books of all sizes except folios:

1. Library, Surgeon General's Office—"It seems to us that the advantage * * * is more than counterbalanced by the loss of vertical space in keeping quarto journals with the octavos, and that the present arrangement of having the lower shelves of extra depth is, on the whole, the best. The additional expense of constructing the shelves with a depth of ten inches, and the

additional strain upon the floor are not considered very important, but it is likely that this library, when constructing new shelving, will follow the present arrangement."

2. Dr. John S. Billings, Director, New York Public Library—"The arrangement which I have made for the stacks in the new library building are that a considerable majority are eight inches deep from the bottom to the top of the stacks and at each end of the stacks are three sets of stacks which are twelve inches deep. I should advise the carrying out of the same plan with regard to the new stacks for your new building, only the proportion of wider shelves should be greater than that above mentioned."

3. Mr. John S. Brownne, Librarian, New York Academy of Medicine—"I have experienced the same trouble that you have in regard to the alphabetical arrangement of journals, etc. * * * I would go further than you go and make the size twelve inches deep throughout. You would only take up an additional half inch on the floor space. * * * I agree with you in regard to the convenience, it would outweigh the additional expense, weight and space."

4. Mr. Albert T. Huntington, Librarian, Medical Society County of Kings—"Were I designing a stack-room I would not make all the shelves the same width (ten inches deep you suggest). There will always be large quartos and folios which you cannot place in their proper order even on a shelf ten inches deep. * * * If you plan to place quartos and folios on the same shelves with octavos and duodecimos it also necessitates leaving a very much greater space between shelves. You may have one quarto on a shelf twelve inches high and all other books on the same shelf may not be more than 8 or 9 inches high; * * * if you carry the same plan through the whole library there is an enormous amount of waste space. For instance, you will be able to put only five shelves in a section where seven might go. If, instead of adjusting your shelves to a uniform height, you adjust each individual shelf to the requirement of the books it holds, you will find that the consequent irregularity will cause your stack-room to present a very ragged appearance. Personally, I find no objection to running a quarto series under the octavo series. The ratio of two quarto shelves to five octavo shelves will run pretty evenly throughout the library."

5. Dr. Edwin H. Brigham, Boston Medical Library—"Our

shelves in the stacks are of two widths, 7 inches and 11 inches, but you may add an inch because of the strong iron standard to which they hook in * * * we put wide and narrow shelves as we want them, but practically the wide on the lower half. Shelve all our folio and quarto journals on the first floor just off the reading room as a matter of convenience, thereby breaking the alphabetical sequence."

It will be seen from these replies that there is a difference of opinion in regard to the best form of building book-stacks, and the subject is a proper one for discussion. If it were simply a question of economy in shelf room, then I believe the plan of Dr. Billings to be the best; but if a question considered as a part of the modern advancement in library arrangement and classification, especially with the scientific library, then I think my suggestion worthy of favorable consideration.

DISCUSSION.

Miss Metta M. Loomis, of Chicago, thought that books too high to go in regular order on the shelves, when stood upright, might be made to fit their regular places by turning the books on their edges.

Dr. John W. Farlow, of Boston, said that, on account of the noise, he did not regard it advisable to place the reading-room on the first floor of the library building.

Dr. A. Jacobi, of New York City, in discussing the construction of the stacks, thought that all the space possible should be saved and did not favor having all the shelves of equal width.

Mr. Cutter, of Northampton, stated that the shelves in the Library of Congress are ten inches in width.

Mr. Albert T. Huntington, of Brooklyn, in discussing the first question, agreed with the previous speakers that it was inadvisable to have the reading-rooms on the first floor on account of the objections that had been pointed out.

He regarded one large reading-room preferable to a number of smaller rooms from an architectural standpoint, and also on account of the economy and efficiency of administration resulting from the fact that only one attendant was necessary to keep proper observation over all the readers.

As to the third question, he believed it most desirable to have all the stacks together rather than separated into two or

or more wings. Where it was possible he preferred horizontal to vertical expansion on account of the easier and quicker service gained. These points of construction, however, inevitably must be governed by the amount of ground space, etc., at the disposal of the architect.

He did not favor having uniform wide shelves where economy of space was necessary as was almost invariably the case in large cities. His reasons had been set forth in the communication quoted by Mr. Fisher.

Miss Marcia C. Noyes, of Baltimore, inquired as to what percentage of the books in a medical library did not require more than the narrower shelf.

Mr. Huntington thought that not over thirty per cent. required shelves more than eight inches in width. Provided the shelves were flat and permitted books to project an inch or two over the back edge, where there was at least that much space between the backs of the two rows of shelving on opposite sides of the same tier, he had found that the ratio of two quarto shelves to five octavo shelves ran pretty evenly throughout the library. By using five narrower shelves at the top of each tier of stacks plenty of elbow room was given in the aisles, as the two wider shelves at the bottom did not extend much higher than the knees. Were wider shelves used throughout, more space would have to be used for the aisles and the capacity of the stack room would thereby be correspondingly lessened.

Dr. George D. Hersey, of Providence, Dr. Edwin H. Brigham, of Boston, and Mrs. Grace W. Myers, of Boston, contributed further discussion on this subject.

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