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The Burnham Library of Architecture: A History

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WHEN W.M.R. FRENCH, Director of the Art Institute, wrote to Daniel H. Burnham on July 29, 1905, to request the names of "25 or 50 books relating to architecture, which are suitable for the library of the Art Institute," Burnham responded with alacrity. At the time head of one of the largest architectural firms in the world, busily involved in major urban and architectural projects such as Union Station in Washington, D.C., Burnham generously provided a list of seventy-five books of "especial value to students engaged in creative work and who need a working library as an aid to design." He went on to add:

An adequate architectural library is one of the notable lacks in the intellectual resources of Chicago, and Mr. Hutchinson [President of the Art Institute] is to be congratulated on his intention to begin filling the gap. Chicago should aim to possess as fine a collection as the Avery [Library at Columbia University] in New York.¹

Burnham became a trustee of the Art Institute in the same year, 1905, and when he died in Heidelberg, Germany, on June 1, 1912, his unusual skills and professional contributions to the Art Institute were formally acknowledged in the trustees' resolution:

His passing takes from Chicago one of its great men and a great architect. Essentially a man of affairs, his convincing

personality compelled enthusiastic support for his ideals from those for whom and with whom he worked. His great enthusiasm and far-seeing advice for broadening the scope of the Institute's activities . . . have been so valuable that his loss will be most seriously felt.²

Daniel Burnham made his greatest commitment to the Art Institute and particularly to its architectural program through a bequest of \$50,000 for an architectural library. The executors of the estate provided for the immediate payment of the bequest, and added no restrictions or interpretations to Burnham's simple directive.³

To give form and substance to this library, Charles L. Hutchinson appointed a committee of prominent architects, and architectural educators, from Chicago to make recommendations as to the administration of the fund and to suggest books to be purchased from it. The committee was composed entirely of architects: Peirce Anderson, Hubert Burnham (Daniel's son), E.H. Bennett, and Walter Shattuck, with Howard Van Doren Shaw serving as chairman. Charged with a formidable assignment, the committee sought guidance from the staff of the Art Institute's ten-year-old Ryerson Library, as well as from the faculty and student body of the Art Institute's School of Architecture, an established clientele whose needs would continue to shape and influence the library's collection and its services.

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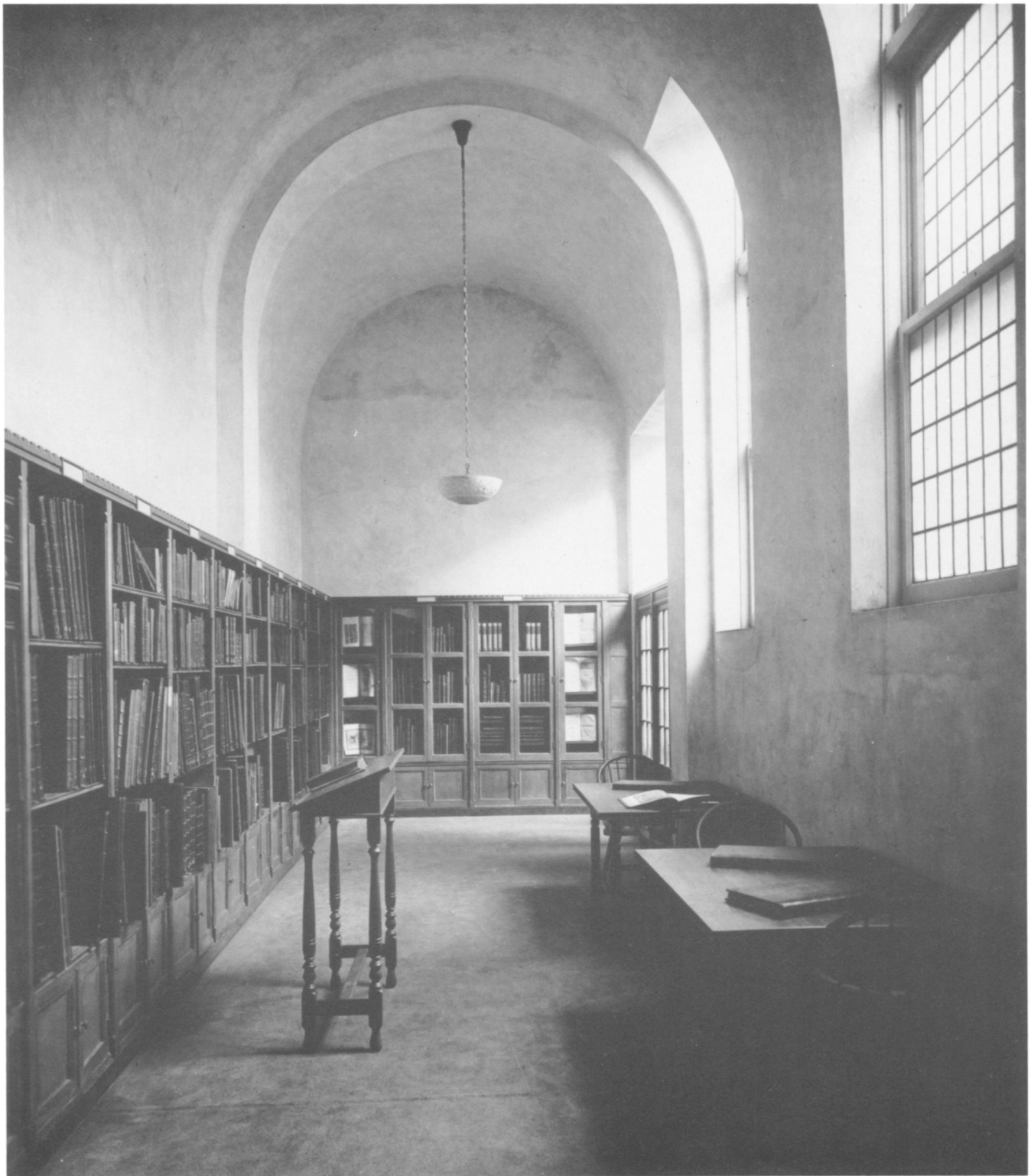


FIGURE 1. View of the Burnham Library of Architecture, c. 1920. This space, originally an exhibition corridor, was the first separate room for the Burnham Library. The area is now used for offices of the combined Ryerson and Burnham Libraries.



FIGURE 2. View toward the west end of the Burnham Library of Architecture, c. 1920. The doors at right led to the present reading room of the combined Ryerson and Burnham Libraries.

The Art Institute's libraries and the School of the Art Institute (as the former art and architecture schools are now called) share a long history. Beginning in 1879, each student paid a two-dollar fee from which art books were purchased. (These funds were supplemented with small monetary gifts, but it was not until 1903–04 that the Board of Trustees allocated income from several funds for book acquisition.) By 1884, approximately 200 books were in the collection, for which the secretary to the museum acted as librarian. Indeed, the School's students soon formed the largest group of users, constituting two-thirds of the 60,000 library readers recorded in 1908.⁴

Such demands upon a library required staff and facilities; and Martin A. Ryerson, a major benefactor of the Art Institute, gave \$50,000 to build a new library. The new addition, designed by Shepley, Rutan and Coolidge to fill a former courtyard and occupied in October 1901, was designated the Ryerson Library and now serves as the main reading room of the combined Ryerson and Burnham Libraries (see cover; fig. 4).⁵

Architecture was taught early on at the Art Institute. The School of Architecture, created as a department in 1889, offered a two-year course of study focusing on technical instruction, eliminating higher mathematics and purely literary and scientific studies. Faculty and student-body demands on the library increased after 1895, when the Art Institute joined with the Armour Institute of Technology (now Illinois Institute of Technology) to offer a four-year program in architecture instruction. Already in 1898, the librarian acknowledged

“a greater reference library of architecture is perhaps the most urgent need.”⁶

Among the architectural resources predating the establishment of a separate Burnham Library were subscriptions to important periodicals such as *American Architect*, *The American Institute of Architects [AIA] Quarterly Bulletin*, *Brickbuilder*, *Inland Architect*, *American Architectural Review*, and *House Beautiful*. In 1902, the Art Institute contracted with the Illinois Chapter of the AIA to house its library and, in 1909, the Ryerson Library purchased a small collection of architectural books at the auction of architect Louis Sullivan's library.

With the nucleus of a collection of architectural books, an established group of patrons, and an experienced staff in the Ryerson Library, the Committee on Burnham Library could begin to consider goals and policies of the new library. The committee presented its recommendations to the Board of Trustees on December 9, 1912: the \$50,000 bequest was to become a permanent fund with only the income to be spent, and the library would collect books and photographs that

FIGURE 3. View of the first Ryerson Library, 1894–1901.



FIGURE 4. View from the northeast of the Ryerson Library, c. 1901. This room was built in a former courtyard and was shared by the Ryerson and Burnham Libraries until 1920. The Burnham Library remained a separate entity until it merged with the Ryerson Library once again in 1957

covered the entire field of architecture, as fully as the funds would allow.⁷

The committee acted quickly to establish an identity for the Burnham Library, although the collection would not be gathered together and separately installed in the Ryerson Library for several years. After the Board of Trustees accepted its recommendations, the committee sent a printed notice to nearly 400 architects' offices in the city announcing that the Burnham Library would be open three evenings a week without admission fee, and that special tickets for admission any time would be issued to "responsible persons employed in architects' offices."⁸ This announcement was a clear indication of the committee's commitment to serve a second major group of patrons: professional architects and draftsmen.

In addition to purchasing the approximately 1,100 architecture and landscape volumes from the Ryerson Library collection, the committee approved the purchase of over 200 bound volumes of architectural periodicals from the John Crerar Library in Chicago, and received a collection of books and magazines presented by the Illinois Chapter of the AIA. Early purchases for the collection reveal the balance of contemporary and historical, American and foreign sources that the committee sought.⁹

In part, the library's collections and activities were reflections of the committee members' shared professional activities and commitments, design priorities, and academic backgrounds. All of them were college or university educated and several had received their architectural training at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris. The first chairman, Howard Van Doren Shaw (1869–1926), served from 1912 to 1921, when he proposed an alphabetical rotation of the members as chairman. A trustee since 1905, Shaw was also the pre-eminent North Shore "establishment" architect for Chicago's business and social elite. With degrees from Yale University and Massachusetts Institute of Technology, a man of great charm and taste, he boasted such clients as the Swifts,

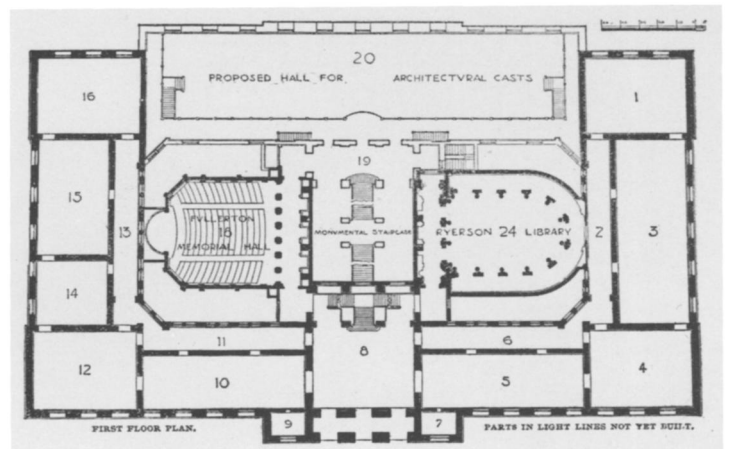
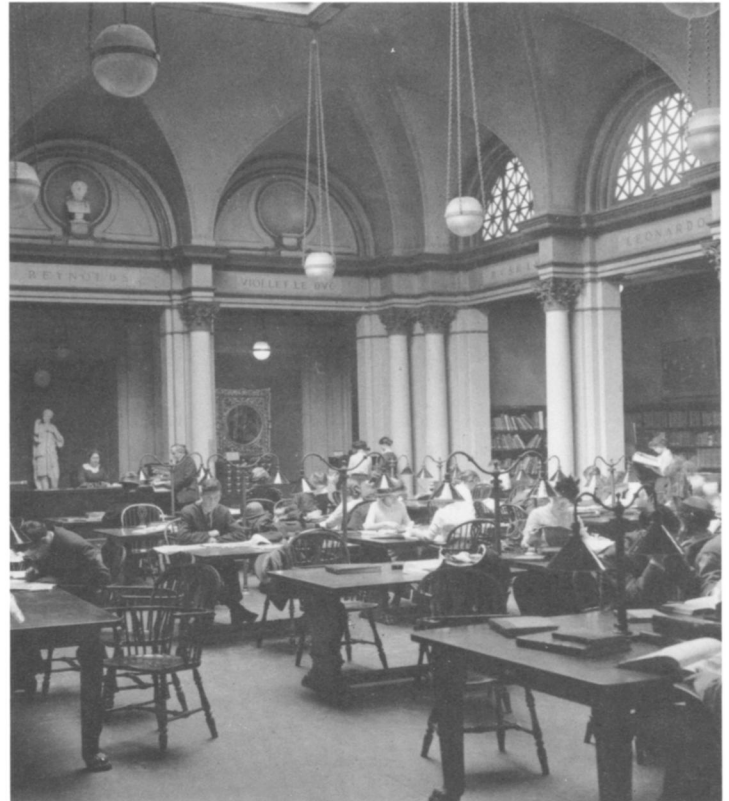


FIGURE 5. First-floor plan of the Art Institute galleries, 1901. The Ryerson Library is indicated to the right of the map; the gallery labeled number 2 was occupied by the Burnham Library after 1920; the gallery labeled number 3 was occupied by the library between 1929 and 1957 (see fig. 8). (Photo: *The Art Institute of Chicago Exhibitions, Catalogues, Publications*, 1901–02, vol. 1, cat. no. 2, p. 5)

the Donnelleys, Adolphus Clay Bartlett, and Edgar Ryerson. As a member of the Yale, University, City, and Arts clubs, he moved comfortably in the business and social milieu of his important clients.

Three other committee members, Peirce Anderson (1870–1924), Hubert Burnham (1880–1968), and E.H. Bennett (1874–1954), had worked together in Burnham's office. Walter F. Shattuck (1871–1948), professor of architecture at the Armour Institute of Technology between 1893 and 1915, later became a partner in the architectural firm of Shattuck and Layer. In 1917, he was replaced on the committee by Edmund S. Campbell, professor and then head of the Department of Architecture at the Armour Institute, who had also studied at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. When Campbell left Chicago in 1924 to become dean of the Beaux-Arts Institute of Design in New York City, the committee voted to make the head of the Architecture School of the Armour Institute an *ex officio* member. This brought Earl H. Reed, Jr., into a long period of activity on the committee.

John A. Holabird was invited to join the committee in 1920 and served as its chairman from 1925 to his death in 1945. In addition to his terms as Trustee of the Art Institute, Holabird served on the Committee for the Century of Progress Exposition. After completing his education at West Point, Holabird earned a degree from the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in 1913. Returning to Chicago after World War I, he entered his father's architectural firm, Holabird and Roche, along with John W. Root, a fellow student at the Ecole and son of Burnham's deceased partner. Holabird was made a fellow of the AIA in 1926 and was appointed to the National Commission on Fine Arts (of which Burnham had been the first chairman) in 1940. Also active in architectural education in Chicago, he served as head of the search committee that selected Mies van der Rohe as the director of the architecture department at the Armour Institute in 1938.

The committee soon recognized the problem of the cramped facilities in the Ryerson reading room and began to explore alternatives at the end of World War I. It formed a plan to break through the wall of one of the Ryerson Library's alcoves on the south into an existing museum exhibition corridor. On January 12, 1920, the Burnham Library opened to its patrons as a separate library room (see figs. 1, 2), with a recently appointed, full-time assistant-in-charge, Marian Comings. Shaw designed the space and supervised the construction

work. Additional decoration (and perhaps inspiration) was derived from two murals (see figs. 6, 7), one on either end wall, by artist and collector Frederic Clay Bartlett.¹⁰ Bartlett completed the murals by September 1921: one depicted the building of the Great Wall of China, illustrating ancient Chinese construction techniques; the other illustrated the construction of a skyscraper. Bartlett discussed his project in a letter:

In the first one I used the great wall of China for two reasons. First because I thought it a most appropriate theme for the decoration of an architectural library, being the first and probably the greatest architectural dream ever carried into effect. And secondly because I made a sketch of it in China. . . . The other decoration represents in contrast to the first great wall the latest type of great walls or skyscrapers in any large American city (no special place is depicted). The dome and figures of the church are somewhat symbolic, meaning to show that in the midst of all our modern commercial activities we have retained our ancient religion.¹¹

In the first year in the new space, attendance was slightly over 7,700 persons and 234 volumes were added to the collection, bringing the total to 2,728 books. Such statistics would indicate that the library had successfully found a niche, serving students and practicing architects, as well as scholars, with a well-selected collection of books. However, the Committee on Burnham Library envisioned an even more varied collection as well as new programs to serve its patrons. In 1920, recommendations were made to collect plans and sketches of current architectural projects, material on city planning, and illustrations to be arranged in a vertical file system for easy access.¹² The committee considered the addition of architectural drawings an important goal for the library. This goal was elaborated in the annual report of the assistant-in-charge of the Burnham Library for 1921: "We should have here archives of architects' drawings and plans comprising examples of the work of representative American contemporaries. No institution in the country is caring for this class of material."¹³

The committee members also acknowledged that the interest from the Burnham Fund, with small additional bequests, was insufficient to support the desired growth of the collection, and they solicited interested individuals through the Illinois Society of Architects and the Illinois and Chicago chapters of the AIA to make purchases in specific fields. By 1924, they had collected al-

most \$650 designated for the purchase of architectural photographs, as well as \$140 for the purchase of photographs of gardens—substantial sums for the time. The committee also solicited working drawings directly from various Chicago and East Coast architectural firms.

One of the most important contributions of the Burnham Library to architectural scholarship has been the *Burnham Index to Architecture*, which indexes the contents of American and foreign periodicals as well as selected books on architecture. Predating both the *Avery Index to Architectural Periodicals* (1934–) and the *Art Index* (1929–), it has very little overlap with either, and complements the Ryerson Library's *Index to Art Periodicals* (1907–74). Work on the *Burnham Index* began in 1920 and continued through the 1960s. Numerous periodicals were indexed retrospectively to the first issue, providing the only extant bibliographic control of their contents. Such important journals as *Inland Architect*, *Brickbuilder*, *Western Architect*, *Chicago Architectural Exhibition League Yearbook*, and *Architectural Record* were included. With emphasis on Chicago and the Midwest, the *Burnham Index* remains an essential tool for the study of nineteenth- and twentieth-century architecture.

In 1922, the library committee commissioned from architect Louis Sullivan drawings that ultimately were published as *A System of Architectural Ornament, According with a Philosophy of Man's Powers* (1924). The precise origin of this commission is not known, but a few clues do exist. Max Dunning, a long-time friend of Sullivan, wrote:

About a year and a half ago, a group of admirers of Mr. Sullivan, who were members of the AIA and also members of the Cliff Dwellers [Club], realizing that Mr. Sullivan was getting along in years, conceived the idea that he should perpetuate his name and philosophy in some enduring form. We arranged with the Burnham Library . . . toward having a set of twenty plates, illustrating Mr. Sullivan's philosophy of ornament prepared by him. . . .¹⁴

In 1956, architect Andrew N. Rebori recalled: "It was Peirce Anderson who gave Mr. Sullivan an order for a series of drawings showing the development of Sullivan's ornament for the Burnham Library. . . ."¹⁵ Regardless of the specific persons who initiated the commission, it was intended both to provide a destitute Sullivan with funds and with a forum for his work and philosophy—an ac-

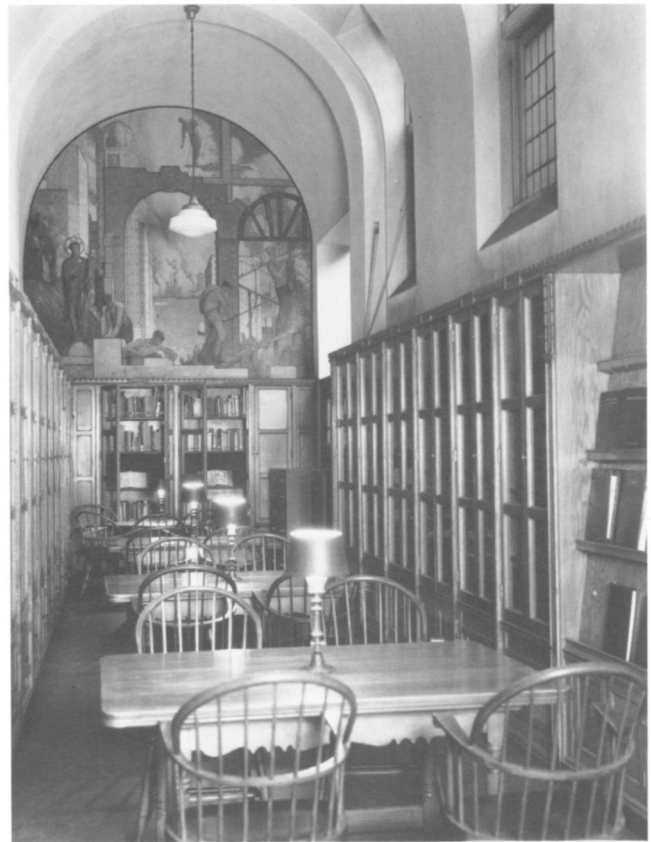


FIGURE 6. View toward the west end of the Burnham Library, c. 1921. This photograph shows one of two murals by Frederic C. Bartlett (see fig. 7) in place. The other mural was installed at the opposite end of the room. The murals have been covered over and are no longer visible, although still intact.

knowledge of his place in American architecture. Sullivan worked on *A System of Architectural Ornament* concurrently with *The Autobiography of an Idea*, first published in the *Journal of the AIA* in sixteen installments, from June 22, 1922, through September 1923. Shortly before his death in 1924, Sullivan was able to see a printed copy of *A System of Architectural Ornament*; the original drawings were first exhibited in the Chicago Architectural Exhibition League's 1924 show held at the Art Institute.

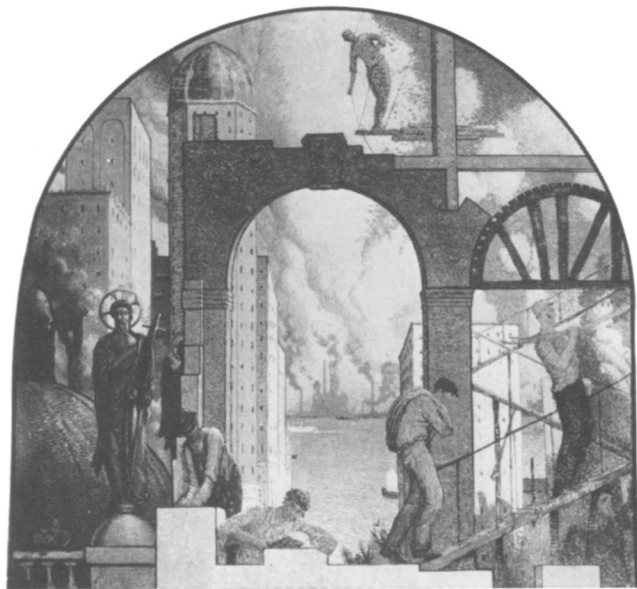


FIGURE 7. Frederic C. Bartlett. Murals depicting the building of the Great Wall of China (top) and the construction of a skyscraper (bottom), for the Burnham Library, c. 1921.

In the very active decade of the 1920s, the Burnham Library committee purchased a major collection of books and drawings from the library of P.F.L. Fontaine, state architect for Napoleon I. (See the discussion of this collection by David van Zanten, pp. 132–45.) The assistant-in-charge of the Burnham Library and the committee actively sought this collection, knowing that it would fill a need for scholarly research materials. So important was this purchase that the Executive Committee of the Art Institute's Board of Trustees recommended appropriation of income from the Burnham Fund itself be applied to the then-considerable cost and agreed to lend the library the additional funds necessary.¹⁶ When the library of 441 volumes and 148 drawings arrived in Chicago on April 4, 1927, the committee immediately sent out letters of solicitation to over 800 Chicago architects and contractors, trade suppliers, and engineering firms to raise the necessary funds.

Even though the new Burnham Library had been given its own space in 1920, it rapidly became overcrowded. Development of a circulating collection partially alleviated the crowded reading room. Students were allowed to take books to class and drafting rooms, and, in 1927, the committee recommended that certain visitors, particularly practicing architects, also be allowed to check out duplicate books upon payment of an annual fee. As early as 1925, the committees on Burnham Library and Ryerson Library submitted to the Board of Trustees proposed plans for a new Burnham Library and for alterations to be made to the Ryerson Library. The designs were prepared by Burnham Library committee members Hubert Burnham, Earl H. Reed, Jr., and William Jones Smith (appointed to the committee in 1924). The new Burnham Library would take over the sculpture exhibition space to the south of the room that opened in 1920, and its former space would be fitted with cases to display Ryerson Library's rare books and periodicals. To finance the renovation, the Burnham family generously contributed over half the final cost. The Burnham Library formally occupied the new space on April 1, 1929. Increased seating for readers and specially constructed cabinets for the Fontaine collection were included. A balcony gallery (see fig. 8) provided space to exhibit the now-extensive collection of drawings. In 1929, the annual report of the libraries recorded that two drawings by Jules Guerin for the 1909 *Plan of Chicago* and six other Guerin renderings were donated with the express purpose that they be

hung on the balcony of the Burnham Library to make it more attractive.

Although the balcony was a new space for the presentation of architectural drawings, the Art Institute had previously exhibited such drawings in its regular galleries. Drawings illustrating Burnham's Plan of Chicago, prepared for the Commercial Club, were shown in 1909. In March 1911, the Art Institute hosted the annual exhibition of the Chicago Architectural Club and hung drawings from students at the American Academy in Rome, another organization to which Burnham had devoted much time and effort. In 1915, the Chicago Architectural Club requested that the Art Institute host the club's annual exhibit and give financial support. The Board of Trustees agreed, and the Art Institute continued to host the annual exhibits through 1928.

The new balcony space in the Burnham Library increased the opportunities for such exhibitions. Between 1929 and 1931, at least seven exhibitions were hung and, in 1933, the library organized an exhibition on Louis Sullivan, featuring items from its collections: drawings from *A System of Architectural Ornament*, manuscripts and typescripts from *The Autobiography of an Idea* and *Kindergarten Chats*, photographs, and personal memorabilia (see the article by Robert Twombly, pp. 146–57). Eventually, however, this gallery space on the balcony fell prey to the library's need for additional bookshelves. By 1934, only the east wall of the balcony remained free of bookshelves and available for exhibitions.

Two events in the early 1930s—the Depression and the 1933 Century of Progress Exposition—caused an increase in the library's use. Numerous architects and designers working on Exposition projects used the library's collection extensively. "It can safely be said that the architects of all the 'Villages' [in the Exposition] referred to authoritative books in the library. . . . Many commercial exhibitors wishing to be authentic in their displays did considerable research in the library."¹⁷ In spite of the heavy use generated by the Exposition, the library reaped the greatest benefit: it was designated an official depository for printed material and photographs of the Exposition.

The lull in the architectural design and construction fields during the Depression also augmented patronage. Architects relied more heavily on the library's collections when they could not afford to renew personal subscriptions or to purchase books. To alleviate crowding, the committee reinstated its policy of loaning books

from its circulating collection to members of the professional organizations and continued its services with the help of assistants from the Illinois Emergency Relief, the National Youth Administration, and the Works Progress Administration. Purchases of books and periodicals continued, albeit with reduced funds. In 1934, the library purchased forty-five volumes, primarily seventeenth- and eighteenth-century titles, at the auction of a private library in Berlin. Major gifts were received from Chicago architects: a collection of periodicals, as well as over 1,300 photographs from the firm of Holabird and Root; books and funds from Irving K. Pond; and a collection of letters signed by famous architects, donated by Thomas E. Tallmadge, who became a member of the library committee in 1928. George Grant Elmslie, long an employee and friend of Sullivan and ultimately his literary executor, made his first gifts of Sullivan materials to the library in 1931.

Important architectural historians began to utilize the collections of the Burnham Library in the 1930s. Hugh Morrison received assistance from the library staff in the preparation of his famous book *Louis Sullivan, Prophet of Modern Architecture* (1935). Correspondence indicates that the staff prepared bibliographies and lists for Morrison, and that they shared research findings and contacts. The Swiss engineer Sigfried Giedion, during his tenure at Harvard University, researched and wrote *Space, Time and Architecture: The Growth of a New Tradition* (1941), which documents the sources and directions of twentieth-century architecture and planning. He made several trips to Chicago, during which Burnham Library staff became actively involved in conducting research for his project. "Much of the information [for Giedion's book] was not available in book form. Many libraries had to be referred to as well as individuals. In some cases inquiries in the neighborhoods lead to clues that were valuable The Burnham Library has felt that it was helping to write Chicago history which might very soon be lost if Dr. Giedion's requests had not made the research necessary."¹⁸

In 1937, Etheldred Abbot, Librarian, wrote to Henry-Russell Hitchcock requesting his advice on the purchase of certain early American imprints on architecture and interiors of the period between 1850 and 1890. Hitchcock generously responded by sending copies of file cards that he had been preparing on the topic, a bibliography "in very incomplete form" noted the librarian.¹⁹ Encouraged by the need for such a bibliogra-

phy and by the library staff's willingness to assist, Hitchcock committed himself to the completion of a seminal work, published first in mimeograph as *American architectural books: a list of books, portfolios, and pamphlets . . . published in America before 1895* in 1940–41. In a letter to the librarian, Hitchcock acknowledged, "I am glad you are still interested in the project [the bibliography] as it was you who first set me going in a serious way on it. I am afraid you are making a bibliographer of me, which goodness knows I wasn't to begin with."²⁰ For a later book, *In the Nature of Materials, 1887–1941: The Buildings of Frank Lloyd Wright* (1942), Hitchcock returned to the Burnham staff for research assistance. In the acknowledgments, Hitchcock wrote, "Indeed, the thorough study of Wright and of his Chicago architectural environment is impossible without using the resources of the Burnham Library." As a by-product of the research conducted for Hitchcock, the library staff prepared and distributed a map of Wright houses in Oak Park in 1941.

The rising popularity of modern architecture in the 1930s and 1940s had a great impact on the library. In the 1945 annual report, the librarian reflected upon this change:

"Modern" (or if you prefer to call it functional, organic, or international) architecture has gained much ground in the U.S. . . . during the war . . . the swing over to "modern" by the chief American architectural magazines is indicative of the general change in interest and wider acceptance of "modern." The Depression and the war finally necessitated changes here that had taken place in Europe after the war: the emphasis from monumental and decorative to utilitarian; from palatial residences to public, and private housing; from "hit or miss" building to planning, with a social conscience. Due to all these changes interest in, and use of historical material has almost disappeared. . . . In other words, the use of the library will probably never be the same as it had been up to ten years ago.²¹

Certainly the library had not ignored the new developments in architectural design and theory, responding with many new books on modern architects and topical subjects such as housing and slum clearance, but the appointment in 1938 of Mies van der Rohe as head of the Department of Architecture at the Armour Institute, along with the appointments of other European émigrés, such as Walter Peterhans and Ludwig Hilberseimer, accelerated the effect of changing times on the library.

Mies's appointment "has had a decided effect upon the activities of the Burnham Library. . . . An entirely different set of books has been called for, books dealing with the fundamentals of architecture, books on Greek architecture, on early framing, half-timber work, and city planning, etc."²² The library experienced an unexpected change in patronage because of the new faculty, who discouraged students from too much library research and dependence on books. While they were encouraged to browse in the library, they were not to take books to the drafting rooms. On the other hand, the new faculty used the library heavily. "The work in connection with [the Armour Institute] is much more stimulating than it has been for a number of years. Some of the new staff of the school [Hilberseimer, Peterhans, and John Rodgers] spend considerable time working in the Library, which is an innovation. These men really know books. They have expressed themselves as being delighted with the library and its comprehensive scope."²³

After the war and reformulation of the Burnham Library committee following the death in 1945 of long-time chairman John Holabird, the committee began a serious re-examination of the policies and goals of the library. Questions were raised as to whether the library should be primarily for research or should provide information for architects and the public, whether it should disseminate information concerning current activities here and abroad, and whether it should maintain a circulating collection of books. There was some consensus of opinion on certain issues: that the committee become more closely tied to the Art Institute's Board of Trustees and staff, and that it should *not* be primarily a book-buying committee, although that activity had dominated its agenda for over thirty years.

To provide an objective evaluation, the committee hired James Grote Van Derpool, Avery Librarian, to conduct a one-week survey of the Burnham Library's resources. His written report to the committee recommended that the Burnham Library maintain a close relationship with the Ryerson Library; continue the important cooperation between Chicago libraries to minimize duplication of collections; encourage the collecting of books, photographs, and drawings of Chicago architecture; make purchases to fill certain lacunae in collections; continue acquiring the "classics" in architectural source books; continue the *Burnham Index* to architectural periodicals; continue to prepare bibliographies, lists, and maps; continue to acquire Historic American

Building Survey (HABS) drawings and documents; and develop exhibition space immediately adjacent to the Ryerson Library and plan regular exhibitions. In a summary comment in the report, Van Derpool wrote: "It is important to realize that the use of a special library, such as Burnham, will never be numerically heavy. Its very nature indicates a *qualitative* rather than *quantitative* use and this should always be considered."²⁴

Van Derpool also suggested that "a committee be formed for the specific purpose of directing architectural drawings to Burnham Library."²⁵ The storage and handling of such drawings, which are usually large, fragile, and awkward to use, had been a problem, but a solution was finally suggested at this time—recording the drawings on microfilm. This was enthusiastically received by the committee, which began to investigate the feasibility of the process.²⁶

Staff assistance and funds for the project were partially provided by the University of Illinois, and an advisory committee composed of both Burnham Library committee members and university faculty was established. Filming began with the work of David Adler. While this continued, the joint committee tackled the difficult task of prioritizing other drawings to be filmed.²⁷ The most important firms initially listed were: Adler and Sullivan (together and individually); D. H. Burnham and Burnham & Root; Holabird & Roche; William LeBaron Jenney and Jenney & Mundie; Frank Lloyd Wright; and the major Chicago projects of H. H. Richardson. While the purpose of the project was not to actively seek the donation of drawings, some were eventually given to the library. In two years of concentrated activity—from September 1950 to August 1952—more than 11,000 drawings representing nearly 600 projects by sixty-three architects were preserved on film. Countless scholars and students attest to this collection's richness and importance. Not only are important drawings that have since been lost documented on film and available for reference, but correspondence with clients and elderly architects has been preserved. Unfortunately, funding for the project diminished and work effectively came to a halt at the end of August 1952.

A major administrative change in the relationship of the Burnham and Ryerson Libraries took place in the late 1950s. Since 1920, the libraries had been neighbors in the museum and had shared numerous resources—one librarian was administrative director of both, and the cataloging department served both—but funding had al-



FIGURE 8. View of the exhibition balcony of the Burnham Library, early 1950s. The exhibition space was soon taken over by the additional shelving necessary to house the library's rapidly expanding collection.

ways remained separate. In 1956, as plans for the proposed renovation of the 1893 museum building and its long-delayed expansion developed, discussions took place concerning the complete merger of the two libraries "to increase efficiency and reduce operating expenses."²⁸ In 1957, the committee considered expanding the Burnham Library to twice its size and developing its holdings of material on construction and technical data. When the Art Institute reduced its financial support for the Burnham Library by half for fiscal year 1957–58, the committee was forced to purchase necessary shelving from Burnham Fund receipts. Yielding to economic pressure, the Burnham reading room was closed in late summer 1957, and the Burnham reference desk moved to the main Ryerson Library reading room. The card catalogs were merged the next year.

In a joint meeting of the Committee on Libraries and the Committee on Burnham Library on June 8, 1959, the members reflected upon the reasons for the merger and its impact:

Annual cost of operating the Burnham Library had been excessive in relation to use and it was found that professional architects do not use a professional library to any great extent except for current publications. Separate and distinct shelving and cataloging did not appear necessary. So far as practicable and with the consent of the Committee on Burnham Library, the two libraries have been integrated, especially with respect to reading room space and such services as book selection, acquisition of books and periodicals, and cataloging. [The architectural librarian] continues with special architectural reference service and indexing of architectural periodicals, while assisting to a small extent with Ryerson reference.²⁹

In 1959–60, no new committee on the Burnham Library was appointed by the Board of Trustees, but to represent the architectural community's ongoing interest in and support of the library, Daniel H. Burnham, Jr., was appointed to the Committee on Libraries, and was eventually succeeded by E. H. Bennett, Jr., and, later, Gene Summers.

By the early 1960s, space for books and staff had once again become a pressing issue. Portions of the library's periodical and book collections had been housed outside the museum for several years, but they could no longer be maintained at that location. In 1963, the Board of Trustees authorized funding to return the collection to the building and house it in the museum's former picnic room. Two architectural firms, C. F. Murphy & Associates and Brenner Danforth Rockwell, were hired to design a long-term solution to the space problem. Their design (see fig. 9) provided for a four-level vertical addition over the Ryerson reading room, supported on the exterior load-bearing walls of the 1901 structure and containing two floors for book stacks, a floor for rare book vaults, and an exhibition gallery for architectural drawings and fragments at the former clerestory level of the reading room, accessible from the second-floor galleries. The newly completed facility, which opened in October 1967, integrated collections that had been housed in separate areas. Of greatest interest and importance to the patrons of the architecture collections, the newly created gallery housed a permanent installation of fragments from Chicago buildings, the Sullivan drawings for *A System of Architectural Ornament*, furniture designs by Frank Lloyd Wright, and drawings by Burnham and Root, Walter Burley Griffin, Marion Mahony Griffin, Howard van Doren Shaw, and others from the Burnham Library collection.

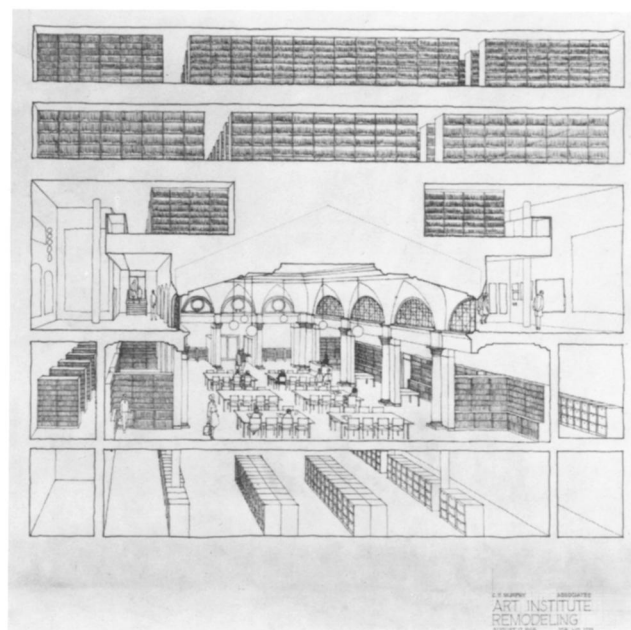


FIGURE 9. C. F. Murphy Associates. Rendering of the new, four-story addition to the Ryerson and Burnham Libraries, 1965. Ink and pencil on tracing paper; 66 × 77.3 cm. Gift of Thomas Beeby. The remodeled facility opened in 1967 and continues to serve as the present-day libraries.

In the late 1970s, America's increasing interest in architecture as an art form and as an aspect of cultural history gave impetus to the Art Institute and to the libraries to reaffirm their support of the Burnham Library's collections and activities. In 1978, Daphne Roloff, Director of the Ryerson and Burnham Libraries, appointed an architectural archivist, John Zukowsky, "to catalog the drawings, change the exhibition in the gallery that had stood dormant for almost a decade, and bring the collection up to date."³⁰ Grants were successfully sought for the restoration and installation of the Plan of Chicago renderings and for other exhibitions in the updated architecture gallery. In 1979, two major exhibitions opened: "The Plan of Chicago: 1909–1979," and a selection of drawings from the permanent collection, entitled "Chicago Architects."

An ambitious exhibition program followed these first installations: "Architecture in Context: 360 North Michigan Avenue," "P. B. Wight: Architect, Contractor, and Critic, 1838–1925," and "Walter Burley Griffin, Marion Mahony Griffin: Architectural Drawings in the Burnham Library of Architecture," as well as the Dis-

tinguished Building Awards exhibition for the Chicago Chapter of the AIA. Important publications accompanied these exhibitions and, in 1981, with funding from the Sterling Morton Charitable Trust, the library published the reference volume *Architectural records in Chicago: a guide to architectural research resources in Cook County and vicinity*.

So successful were these exhibitions, publications, and related lectures that the library committee gave the highest priority to the further development of the architecture archives in its 1981 report for the Art Institute's self-study and long-range plan, concluding that the architectural drawings and fragments should be placed in a curatorial department rather than an enlarged division of the libraries. The committee's argument was strengthened by the establishment of new architecture museums and collections in Oslo, Norway (1975); Budapest, Hungary (1975); Stockholm, Sweden (1978); and Frankfurt, West Germany (1980). At the same time, Columbia University was seeking funds to establish an architectural research center, and plans for the new Canadian Centre for Architecture in Montreal were gaining momentum and support.

The Department of Architecture was established as the eleventh curatorial department of the Art Institute on September 16, 1981, formed by the transfer from the Burnham Library of approximately 40,000 drawings and the architectural fragments collection. John Zukowsky was named curator. The acquisition guidelines for this new department are the selection of architectural drawings "judged to be of artistic value, such as preliminary

sketches and presentation drawings. The goal . . . is to select the best work by architects practicing in Chicago and vicinity—with vicinity loosely defined as the states surrounding Lake Michigan."³¹

Documents necessary for the scholar's research—architects' diaries, correspondence, job files, photographs, sketchbooks, scrapbooks, etc.—remain under the aegis of the Ryerson and Burnham Libraries, which hold unique materials and special collections, as well as published materials on the history of architecture. The libraries continue to acquire important archival collections documenting the work of Chicago architects, such as the papers of Ludwig Hilberseimer,³² a noted planner, architect, and educator at the Bauhaus-Dessau and later at Illinois Institute of Technology; Charles Herrick Hammond, a prominent Chicago architect of the early twentieth century and supervising architect for the State of Illinois for twenty years; and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe.

Bringing the collections full circle, in 1987 the libraries acquired a large and very important collection of Daniel Burnham documents, including personal and professional correspondence, photographs, manuscripts, documents relating to his activities as president of the National Commission on Fine Arts, plus a small collection relating to his sons' roles in the Century of Progress Exposition. These join voluminous materials on the Burnham Library's founder given by his family over many years and underscore the continued commitment of The Art Institute of Chicago to the study of architecture.³³