Physical Plant and Equipment

**NEW Construction, Remodeling, or Other Changes in Physical Plant and Equipment.**

*The British Museum*

The damage suffered by the British Museum Library during the war has been made good, and the over-all accommodation has been slightly, but only slightly, improved. Storage in the main library building is estimated to last between five and ten years at the outside. Accommodation for newspapers in the Newspaper Library has already been used up and is in immediate need of augmentation. A start will be made on an addition to the building this year.

Advantage has been taken of the reconstruction of the bombed portion of the main stack to provide a number of special offices, including a microfilm reading room adjoining the Photographic Section. A new photographic studio has been constructed to deal entirely with requests for microfilms and photostats. This has enabled the Library, to overtake a large part of the arrears in orders for photocopies.

There has been minor replanning in the Library, with a view to concentrating and improving the working quarters of the professional staff. The administrative arrangements in the building, however, are, because of the physical layout, still unsatisfactory. No improvement can be effected until a new building is available. A proposal for a new building has been made, and it is hoped that plans can be made for a move to new quarters to begin within the next ten years.

Changes in the physical equipment include the completion of the airconditioning plant for the whole of the main stacks, and the replacement of the book-conveyor by a system of chutes. The latter is considered a development of considerable interest. The conveyor, which has now been replaced, was designed both to deliver books to a central distribution point and to collect books when done with and return them to a number of stations on each floor of the building. It was found in practice, however, that this return arrangement was
very little used, the books, when done with, being accumulated at a central point and returned to the shelves by lift and trolley. Thus, the conveyor system was being used only at half its proper capacity. The new system avoids this waste, and also avoids the necessity of mechanical power to bring the books to the level at which they are transported horizontally to the point at which they are delivered to the readers. There are dispatch points on each floor of each of the four quarters of the main stack, the books are placed in specially designed baskets and are carried down by gravity chute to a moving belt at a basement level, and are conveyed on the belt to the delivery point adjoining the Reading Room. Experience extending over eighteen months has shown that the books remain undisturbed during their passage down the chute, and do not suffer any physical damage.

The National Central Library, London

The extensive damage from enemy bombing during the war has been repaired and the restored building was formally opened in June 1952.1

It was decided that the destroyed portions should be rebuilt, mainly as library workrooms and offices, while the basements should be fitted up as required for books—a policy which would provide for staff, storage and developments for a considerable number of years.

The west wing of the basement has been fitted up with bookstacks, mainly from the upper floors, and air-conditioning apparatus has been installed to serve the whole area below ground, and the large expanse of two-deck stacking on the Ground Floor. A strong room and workshop are also provided. . . . The second floor contains the Catalogue Room. This large room, unique in function and consequently one of the main features of the building, is fitted with wall cases and with three ranges of catalogue cases down its length, to house the catalogues and works of bibliographical reference which form the basis of the Library’s work and include the National Union Catalogue, the Outlier Libraries Catalogue, the London Union Catalogue and the Library of Congress Card Catalogue. Fluorescent lighting has been introduced into this room, where continuous close work is going on, to provide a higher intensity of light and to reduce shadows; incidentally, the light fittings have the effect of “lifting” a somewhat low ceiling imposed by the original beams. Lighting in the rest of the building is of tungsten type.

The Third Floor contains mainly offices and workrooms for the Information Department, the Bureau of American Bibliography, the South-Eastern Regional Bureau, the London Union Catalogue and
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the staff concerned with special projects such as the Russian Union Catalogue, as well as space for expansion.

The Fourth Floor contains workrooms for the British National Book Centre and a considerable area for future allocation.

A second lift has been installed to serve all floors, including the mezzanine floor of the Ground Floor bookstack, for which no lift service was formerly available.

As there are buildings in close proximity on three sides of the Library, all walls and ceilings, as well as joinery, have been kept light in colour to secure the fullest benefit of the available daylight. The walls and ceilings are of a delicate shade of pink, the metal windows are a pale turquoise, and the Lagos mahogany joinery is bleached to a golden grey. The flooring is of hardwood blocks from Africa.

The National Library of Wales

The original plan of the Library has now been completed with the erection of the central block which consists of an entrance hall and annexes to the various reading rooms and galleries. This section will come into general use after the official opening which is expected to take place in July 1955. The Council is now faced with a deficit of about £18,000 ($50,400). As this part of the building is mainly decorative, it does not afford much additional storage space. It is very much hoped that the Treasury can be prevailed upon to undertake the expense of completing the bookstack which was left unfinished in 1931. The most notable additions to the Library's plant are a new photostat machine, bought to replace the old one which had been in use since 1918, and a Monotype Caster and a Platen machine, formerly used at the well-known Gregynog Press. These were the gift of Miss Margaret S. Davies, of Gregynog.

Bibliothèque Nationale, France

Many physical improvements have been made, particularly the renovation of the heating plant and the installation of fluorescent lighting. It is now recognized that additional property immediately outside the original quadrangle must be procured for necessary expansion. Five pieces of land have been purchased in which have been installed the International Exchange Service, several administrative offices, and the classrooms for the courses in librarianship now conducted by the Direction des Bibliothèques. Independent of these installations mention must be made of two enterprises, one completed, the other in progress.2
The first is the construction, from December 1951 to September 1953, of a second repository attached to Versailles, where, in 1934, were constructed about twenty kilometres of shelves, distributed on eight floors, two of which, below ground level, are set aside for periodicals. This second repository, of analogous plan and comparable capacity, will be reserved for the collections of duplicates.

The second enterprise, initiated September 1, 1954, is the construction of five additional decks superimposed on the central bookstack of the Department of Printed Books, where thirty-five kilometres of new shelving will be placed, and reserved for accessions to the department's collections. This upward extension ought ultimately to permit improvement in the work-space allotted to the staff. A certain number of interior rearrangements are contemplated, particularly relating to the Serials Department, the Photographic Service, and the administrative offices, which are actually under study.

Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Florence

The Library building, completed in 1935, provided with adequate space and equipped with modern technical conveniences, has not undergone significant structural changes. Photographic facilities were installed in 1954. Quarters have been assigned to the staff engaged in developing the Italian Union Catalog, which is independent of the personnel employed in cataloging the Library's own accessions.

Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Rome

The building is very large, having been built at the close of the sixteenth century. The Library has occupied it since its establishment in 1875. Because it is an old building, not designed to house a library, constant precautions have to be taken to prevent overweight in certain areas, resulting from the increasing number of acquisitions. Such precautions were relaxed during the war and, as a consequence, the stability of the structure was jeopardized. Recently, reconstruction for the purpose of bolstering walls has been undertaken. Moreover, infrequently used material, such as duplicate sets of periodicals, have been removed to another location. Consideration is presently being given to the construction of a new and larger building.

Koninklijke Bibliotheek, The Netherlands

There are plans for a large new bookstack to be erected on an adjoining site, and for extensive internal modifications in the existing buildings. A modest part of the new stack is under construction, which
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is calculated to help out for only a few years. It will, however, pro-
vide adequate shelter at last to the invaluable collection of manuscripts.

Schweizerische Landesbibliothek, Switzerland

The building having been erected in 1931, no new construction or
fundamental changes have been necessary. The only important inno-
vation was a complete remodeling in 1950 of the photographic labora-
tory plant and equipment, to enable it to meet the rapidly increasing
orders for reproductions of all description.

Milli Küttüphane, Ankara

The National Library is housed in a remodeled former government
casino. In 1954, an annex was opened. This new addition was built
specifically to meet the most urgent needs of the Library. It contains
three stack levels, a large photographic laboratory, a good-sized con-
ference room, and a special film-projection room.

The Jewish National and University Library, Israel

Following the War of Independence, the University and the Na-
tional Library have been separated, for the time being, from their
home on Mount Scopus. They now occupy scattered, makeshift quar-
ters in the new city of Jerusalem. A foremost urgent need is, therefore,
the construction of a central library building on the new university
campus. Plans for this building are now in progress with the prospect
of enlisting advice from library architects abroad. It is expected that
the new building will have a capacity of two million volumes.

The National Diet Library, Japan

Ever since its establishment in 1948, the National Diet Library has
ardently wished for a building of its own. At last it has been author-
ized to expend a small sum to begin construction. It is expected that
the building will be completed in a few years.

Temporarily the Library is housed in previously existing buildings,
located in separated parts of Tokyo. This circumstance has prohibited
the Library from rendering effective service. Moreover, there has been
a serious shortage of floor space.

The new library building will adjoin the Diet building because its
primary duty is to the Diet. It will contain branch offices and will
house some of the branch libraries now scattered throughout the city.

These are the requirements of the projected building:
LIBRARY TRENDS

1. Book capacity: More than 3,000,000 volumes.
2. Reader Accommodations: More than 1,500 desks.
3. Staff and Workspace: 1,500 persons.
4. Floor area: 650,000 square feet.
5. Auditorium capacity: 1,200 persons.

The design of the new building was determined by an open competition held in 1953. Fundamental planning began in the summer of 1954. Ground was broken in the spring of 1955. Thanks to a donation from the Rockefeller Foundation, the Library has an excellent photoduplication laboratory, set up in 1954, in the compound of the Main Office in Akaseka.

General Assembly Library, New Zealand

Accommodation for libraries is poor and the chances of early improvement are not good. New Zealand is developing rapidly and the primary effort in building has been devoted to housing and to schools.

Biblioteca Nacional, Argentina

No consideration is being given to the erection of a new building, despite the fact that it is impossible to enlarge or remodel the present quarters.

Biblioteca Nacional, Cuba

A new building, incorporating all modern advances, is being constructed.

Biblioteca Nacional de Guatemala

(See page 21).

Biblioteca Nacional, Peru

The National Library building has been completed, but only on a part of the site assigned to it. It is planned to expand the building, extending it over the rest of the site. It is hoped that construction will begin during 1955.

Biblioteca Nacional, El Salvador

In the last months of 1954, a second floor was built on the east wing of the Library to provide more space for departments and for current accessions.
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South African Public Library, Cape Town

The present building of the South African Library consists of a Main Block erected in 1860, a Central Extension added in 1922, and the Fairbridge Wing, added in 1927.

Plans are now at an advanced stage for the erection of a new three-story extension to the existing building, making fireproof provision for the Grey, Dessinian and other national collections, additional storage space for 100,000 volumes, and badly-needed administrative quarters. It is hoped to make a start with this building in 1956; the funds are being provided by the Union Government.

References