The Stephen A. Schwarzman Building: A Bibliography

- Principal Works
- Personal Accounts and Historical Works
- Additional Information
- Collections
- Eminent People
- Exhibitions
- Miscellany

This is a guide to the Stephen A. Schwarzman Building of The New York Public Library at Fifth Avenue and 42nd Street, and its constituent collections and divisions, its staff, and the famous structure which houses the Humanities and the Social Sciences Library and many of the administrative offices of The New York Public Library.

The Stephen A. Schwarzman Building is one of the most familiar landmarks in the United States. The large marble building, designed in the classical style by John Carrère and Thomas Hastings, and guarded by its two stone lions, is notable not only for its collections but also for its architecture, sculpture, ornamentation, and decoration. That it has captured the imagination of scholars and researchers is beyond question; equally notable is its appeal to the general public. E.B. White noted in *Here is New York* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1949) that New Yorkers have the opportunity, even if they do not exercise it, to spend an "afternoon in the great rustling oaken silence of the reading room of the Public Library, with the book elevator (like an old water wheel) spewing out books onto the trays (p. 20)."

The building, which opened on May 23, 1911, was the result of the merger of the Astor Library, the Lenox Library, and the Tilden trust in 1895, a move which created the entity known as The New York Public Library. The combination of these different institutions and the creation of a large endowment permitted the Stephen A. Schwarzman Building to house and sustain a large research library, which, although privately supported, has always been open to the public; it is this relationship of private funding, public access, and comprehensive collections which has given the Stephen A. Schwarzman Building its unique stamp and distinctive character. In his speech at the opening of the Library in 1911, President William Howard Taft evoked these very qualities as he elicited support for the new institution from the city and the nation:

This day crowns a work of National importance. The dedication of this beautiful structure for the spread of knowledge among the people marks not only the consummation of a noteworthy plan for bringing within the grasp of the humblest and poorest citizen the opportunity for acquiring information on every subject of every kind, but it furnishes a model and example for other cities which have been struggling with the same problem, and points for them the true way.


**Principal Works on The New York Public Library**


New York Public Library. *History of the New York Public Library: Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations* by Harry Miller Lydenberg (New York: The New York Public Library, 1923). This offers a comprehensive examination of the origins and foundation of the Library, providing detailed discussion not only of the Astor and Lenox libraries, but also of the various "free" or "circulating" libraries which were the nuclei of the branch system of The New York Public Library. Both this work and that by Dain contain much salient information on the construction, opening, and organization of the Stephen A. Schwarzman Building. *R- HND 91- 9019*. Other editions are listed in CATNYP.


New York Public Library. *Report*. Beginning in 1896, the Library issued an annual report, thereby providing a contemporary record of its aims, achievements, and aspirations. *HND*

**Personal Accounts and Historical Works on The New York Public Library**


Berger, Meyer. *The Library* (1956) This brief introduction to the resources of the Library, originally appearing in the January 27, 1940, issue of *The New Yorker*, is useful for its photographs and discussion of reference questions answered by librarians during the 1940s and 1950s. *F-10 387* and *HND (N.Y.P.L.)*
The first issue of this periodical, published in New York from 1935 through 1939, begins with the ringing declaration, "We are the librarians, pages, and service workers in the New York Public Library system who are members of the Communist Party and of the young Communist League." This newsletter dedicated itself to fight against "the intolerable working conditions, low salaries, and vicious system of spying," which, it claimed, characterized and defined life at the Library. *ZAN- 7992

Henderson, Harry B., Jr. "The Private Life of the Public Library," New Masses, June 6, 1939, pp. 4-7. This leftist critique of The New York Public Library accused its Board of Trustees of being a "self-perpetuating body consisting of the wealthiest, most reactionary financiers in America," uninterested in public education and unrepresentative of the population of New York City. Alleging censorship in the Library's acquisitions policy and deterioration of its book stock, the author calls for the liquidation of the Board whose membership is labeled "reactionary and fascist-minded." The call number of New Masses is *ZAN-5832.

Kazin, Alfred. "To Room 315, with Love," The New York Times Book Review, April 30, 1972, pp. 42-44. The writer's tribute to the main Reading Room of the Library where, when researching modern American literature, he had "nothing more delightful to do than to sit much of the day and many an evening at one of those long golden tables acquainting myself with every side of the subject." Request The New York Times for the date given in Room 100.


Metcalf, Keyes DeWitt. Random Recollections of an Anachronism: or Seventy-five Years of Library Work (New York: Readex Books, 1980) This memoirs of a former administrator of the Library (1913-1937) is valuable for its anecdotes about the collections and personalities of the Stephen A. Schwarzman Building during its early years. Perhaps the most amusing story is that relating to Whitaker Chambers, who was dismissed from Library employment for stealing books from the libraries of Columbia University; Chambers, who had worked in the newspaper division, had tried "to destroy the identification marks" of the books in question (p. 158). JFE 89-2312


New York Public Library. Staff News Published since July 1911, this weekly organ of the Library offers a continuing record of the Library's personnel activities, programs, regulations, and internal functions. *HND


New York Public Library. Reference Department. Scrapbooks (New York: 1858-1946) *ZAN-5817

New York Public Library News Published from March 1983, to the present, this newsletter provides information to those outside the Library about its programs, exhibits, lectures, and special functions; please request this item in Room 108. The predecessor to this publication was Library Lions, published from fall, 1970, through December, 1982; it has the call number *HND (N.Y.P.L.) 78-1493

Reading Rooms, edited by Susan Allen Toth and John Coughlan (New York: Doubleday, 1991) This anthology of writings about public libraries includes several works on the Stephen A. Schwarzman Building of The New York Public Library. E.B. White is represented by two poems: "A Library Lion Speaks" (from his work The Lady is Cold, 1928), and "Reading Room" (from Poems and Sketches of E.B. White, 1981). Descriptions of the Reading Room of the Stephen A. Schwarzman Building are provided by Alfred Kazin (excerpt from New York Jew, 1978), Edmund Wilson ("Response of the Gentle Scholars," a poem published in Notebooks of Night, 1942), and Henry Miller, whose work Plexus (1953) evokes the excitement of being
in a reading room "the size of a cathedral, under a lofty ceiling which was an imitation of heaven itself." William Cole's essay, "The Heart of the Heart of the Library," discusses the scope and variety of information and reference questions encountered at the Information Desk in Room 315; Elizabeth Hardwick's memoir, "Back Issues," offers a personalized, impressionistic account of the Library and its readers. JFE 91-3886


Striker, Cecil. *John Shaw Billings, 1838-1913* (Cincinnati, 1969) John Shaw Billings, the first Director of the Library, conceived and designed the Stephen A. Schwarzman Building, created its administrative structure, established its collections, and devised a classification scheme for the holdings. JFF 75-13 See also Chapman, Carleton B. *Order out of Chaos: John Shaw Billings and America's Coming of Age* (Boston: Boston Medical Library in the Francis A. Countway Library of Medicine, 1994) *R-AN (Billings) 98-9892


**Additional Information**


**Collections**

**General**


Williams, Sam. *Guide to the Research Collections of the New York Public Library* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1975) this definitive analysis and examination of the various collections located in the Research Libraries (through 1975) is arranged by subject categories; its index is particularly useful for its access to Library materials by donor, format, and collection name and, for unique items, by specific names. Request at the Information Desk in the Bill Blass Public Catalog Room; for other copies, please consult CATNYP. The predecessor to this work, and still useful for information deleted in Williams, is Brown, Karl, *Guide to the Reference Collections of The New York Public Library* (New York: New York Public Library, 1941), which is available, upon request, at the Information Desk in the Bill Blass Public Catalog Room.
The George Arents Collection (containing his Collection on Tobacco and his Collection of Books in Parts)

Brooks, Jerome. "The Library Relating to Tobacco, collected by George Arents," The New York Public Library Bulletin, January 1944, pp. 3-15. This article discusses the formation and nature of the Arents Collection, a part of Special Collections devoted to the history and role of tobacco in human society.

Berg Collection

Gordan, John Dozier. The Scholar Adventurer; A Tribute to John D. Gordan (1907-1968) on the Eightieth Anniversary of His Birth; with Six of his Essays (New York: New York Public Library, 1987) This collection of essays celebrates the influence and contributions of the first curator (1940-1968) of the Berg Collection of English and American Literature, a division of Special Collections with significant and rare holdings in Anglo-American literature. JFD 87-10224 or *HND (N.Y.P.L.) 88-1364 or *HND (N.Y.P.L.) 88-1365


Dorot Jewish Division

Studies in Jewish Bibliography and Related Subjects: In Memory of A.S. Freidus (New York: Alexander Kohut Memorial Foundation, 1929) This anthology includes evaluations of the life and scholarship of Abraham S. Freidus, organizer and first chief (1897-1923) of the Jewish Division, as well as a bibliography of works by and about him. *PA or *PBN. For more information on the Jewish Division, see Berger, Abraham, "The Jewish Division of the New York Public Library," in Jewish Book Annual, vol. 23 (1965-66), pp. 42-47; its call number is *PAA. The Joshua Bloch Memorial Volume: Studies in Booklore and History (New York: New York Public Library, 1960), a collection of essays, includes an appreciation of Dr. Bloch, the chief of the Jewish Division from 1923 to 1956, and a bibliography of his works; its call number is *PBT.

Map Division

Hudson, Alice C., and Cole, Maud D., "The Cartographic Treasures in The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations," in The Map Collector, Summer, 1988, pp. 2-11. Alice Hudson, the chief of the Map Division, and Maud Cole, the former curator of the Rare Book Division, discuss some of the notable and rare maps and atlases found in these two divisions of the Library. Call number for The Map Collector is Map Div. 85-202.

Ristow, Walter William. The Emergence of Maps in Libraries (Hamden, Conn.: Linnet Books, 1980) the author was chief of the Map Division in the 1940's and prominent in the development of map librarianship. Map Div. 86-1002

Photographic Collection

From Talbot to Stieglitz: Masterpieces of Early Photography from the New York Public Library, compiled by Julia Van Haaften (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1982) MFW 84-1873 or *HND (N.Y.P.L.) 86-1853


Pforzheimer Collection of Shelley and His Circle

Wagner, Stephen, and Doucet Devin Fischer. "The Pforzheimer Collection of Shelley and His Circle: The
Eminent People of The New York Public Library

In addition to the listings under History and Collections of The New York Public Library, please examine the following for information about those individuals who shaped and formed the Library's distinctive purpose and singular mission.


Slavic and Baltic Division

*RS-BT 77-3168 or request in Slavic and Baltic Division.

Division from 1917 to 1955, and provides a bibliography of his works. For more on him, see: Scaruffi, Ellen, "Avraham Yarmolinsky: The Early Years," Public Service News, Winter, 1990, pp. 18-20. The call number for Public Service News is *HND (N.Y.P.L.) 99-5533.


Winship, George. "Wilberforce Eames: Bookman," in The New York Public Library Bulletin, January 1938, pp. 3-9. Upon the establishment of the Stephen A. Schwarzman Building, Eames, who had been the librarian of the Lenox Library, assumed responsibilities for collecting in American history, genealogy, and manuscripts; he later received the title of bibliographer and developed the rare book collection of the Library. For more on him, see Paltsits, Victor H., "Wilberforce Eames, American Bibliographer," in The New York Public Library Bulletin, October, 1955, pp. 505-514; this article is immediately followed (pp. 515-519) by a listing of Eames' writings compiled by Lewis M. Stark.

Exhibitions

The Stephen A. Schwarzman Building has hosted many significant exhibitions, and the books listed below have accompanied some of these; of necessity, this enumeration is limited to those major exhibitions employing the Library's own collections. In addition, these books also serve as helpful and illustrative guides to the collections.


Bernstein, Richard B. Are We to be a Nation? The Making of the Constitution (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987) IBE 87-2319 or request at the Information Desk in the Bill Blass Public Catalog Room.


Deak, Gloria-Gilda. William James Bennett: Master of the Aquatint View (New York: New York Public Library, 1988) MDG (Bennett) 89-2056


Hudson, Alice C. *Heading West, Touring West: Mapmakers, Performing Artists, and the American Frontier* (New York: New York Public Library, 2001) MWED 01-5580 or Map Div. 01-4850


The New York Public Library also possesses some uncataloged material on the Stephen A. Schwarzman Building, which must be requested directly from a librarian at the Information Desk in the Bill Blass Public Catalog Room. These include *The New York Public Library News Clippings*, a collection of newspaper articles on the Library taken largely from newspapers in the New York metropolitan area; an introductory volume consists of selected clippings from 1896 through 1969, while later years are covered more comprehensively in succeeding volumes. Separate folders, entitled *Lions* and *Room 315*, respectively provide narratives and historical photographs on the Library's most famous symbols and the room, which serves as its nucleus.