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The Development of a University Library: The University of Nebraska, 1891-1909

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McCaslin, Sharon, Ph.D.
The University of Nebraska - Lincoln, 1987

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF A UNIVERSITY LIBRARY:
THE UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA, 1891-1909

by

Sharon McCaslin
A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of
The Graduate College in the University of Nebraska
In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements
For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Major: Administration, Curriculum & Instruction

Under the Supervision of Professor R. McLaren Sawyer

Lincoln, Nebraska

December, 1987
TITLE

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A UNIVERSITY LIBRARY:

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA, 1891-1909

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UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA
The period of transition from a frontier university library to a modern, progressive institution is examined in terms of staff, buildings, collection, services, and administrative and financial support. At the end of this period this Nebraska library had a reputation in excess of that indicated either by financial support or collection size. Timely administrative support and pioneering professional librarians developed initial procedures in cataloging, reference, and interlibrary cooperation, which made the Library at the University of Nebraska one of the outstanding research libraries in the West.
To My Family
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author wishes to acknowledge the patient and supportive assistance of Dr. Sawyer in all of the frequently interrupted stages of this research. The staff of the University Archives have also provided invaluable help, particularly Mr. Joe Svoboda and Ms. Lynn Beideck-Porn.
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INTRODUCTION

Like most people in higher education, academic librarians are continually under budget restraints, and therefore must do much soul-searching about which of their goals are essential and which merely desirable. In this concern for the essential components of a university library, it is useful to examine the origins of academic libraries. More specifically, it is possible to trace the formation of a single research library as it responded to the community it served. The library of the University of Nebraska provides an excellent situation in which to examine this problem. As a state-supported land-grant institution, the University of Nebraska is not atypical of American universities. Its early beginnings are also recent enough to be accessible.

When the University of Nebraska was founded in 1869, it had no library and, by the standards of academia at that time, a library was not particularly important. Librarianship had not even developed as a distinct profession, and the emphasis of the fledgling university was frequently on traditional classical scholarship, rather than on research and publication.
However, by the time James Canfield became chancellor in 1891, a roomful of books was clearly no longer suitable. The elective courses instituted in these years were complemented by changes in the library: new professional staff, a new building, expansion of the collection, and growth in its use. Less than twenty years later, in 1909, the university became the eighteenth institution to be admitted into the Association of American Universities, an indication of academic excellence and acknowledged scholarship.\(^1\)

By that time the library collection was larger than that of the Universities of North Carolina, Virginia, Indiana, or Washington, equal to that of Case Western Reserve, and nearly as great as Dartmouth or Johns Hopkins.\(^2\)

This period of nearly twenty years was clearly an important time of transition. The purpose of this research was to determine when, how, and why change came to the University of Nebraska library. In the

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\(^1\) Robert N. Manley, *Centennial History of the University of Nebraska*, vol. 1, *Frontier University (1869-1919)* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1969), 148.

course of the study subsidiary questions of collection
development, services offered, and organization have
been explored, as well as relationships with the
university administration and financial circumstances.
While determining with any accuracy exactly which
factors had the most importance is difficult, the
various elements of library development have been
compared with other institutions to ascertain their
relative significance.
CHAPTER I

NEBRASKA MIRRORS NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

Before examining changes on the plains of Nebraska, it is necessary to obtain some perspective on general changes in American higher education. While the beginning of the nineteenth century presented a fairly universal concept of colleges as dispensers of classical and theological learning, by the end of the century there was much diversity of approach and the goals of different institutions were widely divergent. Bestor called this a "new structure of scholarly and scientific activity...worked out in the United States in the quarter-century from 1875 to 1900." Major contributions to this diversity came from the movement

1 For a more complete history any general history of American higher education might be consulted. The ideas listed here have been gleaned primarily from Frederick Rudolph's The American College and University, a History and Laurence Veysey's The Emergence of the American University. These specific points are suggested here, since the author considers them to be most significant in changing academic libraries, and hence the University of Nebraska library.

toward practical and useful education, the elective system, the introduction of the seminar method of teaching with its emphasis on inductive reasoning, and the growth of graduate schools with an emphasis on research.

The movement toward practical education was partly rooted in the democratic and populist movements, seeking a generally applicable education rather than an elitist education just for the clergy and the lawyers. Since the classical courses of the traditional college were so widely removed from practical experience, this view was understandably popular. The desire for practical and useful training was embodied in the land grant movement by the middle of the century. Practical courses in science, modern languages, and increased mathematics entered the college curricula. In addition, the land grant colleges were inventing the study of agriculture and home economics, as well as developing engineering into a profession.

With the growing respectability of alternate courses, the concept of "electives" was developed to offer students the opportunity to devise individual programs suited to their practical needs. This concept fed on the individualism of the society as well as the concern for a useful education. Chancellor James H.
Canfield described the difference between the traditional college and the new university in this way:

A certain fixity and rigidity in the one -- a larger liberty and greater independence in the other . . . The one has a fixed curriculum, the other grants wide latitude in the choice of courses; the one controls, the other inspires and guides.

Many American students studied in Europe during the nineteenth century, and returned home to places on college faculties. They brought with them new ideas about higher education, many of them gleaned from German universities. Thus, "the scholarly achievements of the great universities of Germany . . . were in the minds of those who commenced the reconstruction of American higher education."\(^3\) The German Ph.D. degree was adopted. Instead of the traditional recitation of deductive "truth", the German seminar method was introduced as a collective, inductive search for "truth." This fit in well with the practical educational creation of scientific laboratories for inductive experimentation, and laboratories and seminars became essential parts of higher education for the foreign educated faculty. The emphasis on

\(^3\)Quoted in Howard Walter Caldwell, Education in Nebraska (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1902), 35.

\(^4\)Bestor, 169.
inductive reasoning was also conducive to a greater emphasis on research and investigation which had not been necessary in the classical college. Canfield described the increased value of these new methods:

A single principle worked out from start to finish by the student himself is worth a dozen principles about which he has received information from an instructor, without either question or interest or even curiosity on his own part; and that the mental activity and the accuracy of that activity secured by the solving of even one problem is worth more than two dozen of the old-time parrot-like recitations.

Eliot of Harvard said that methods of university instruction had "changed almost completely within fifty years... Beyond the language department the usefulness of the recitation in universities is rather limited." 6

These changes in the goals and methods of higher education were accompanied by the growth of graduate schools, specialization and professionalization of the faculty, and by an increase in the quantity of publications produced. While graduate degrees had been conferred somewhat in imitation of the Continental method, an actual graduate school never existed until

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6 Charles W. Eliot, University Administration (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1908), 174, 177.
Johns Hopkins and Harvard started the idea of graduate students conducting specialized research and discovering new information. As the curricula became more varied, it no longer was possible for one or two men to teach all the required courses. Graduate students studied in specialized fields and went out to teach on other college faculties in those fields. The amateur scholar was being replaced by institutionalized specialization.\footnote{Samuel Rothstein, \textit{The Development of Reference Services Through Academic Traditions}, \textit{Public Library Practice and Special Librarianship}, ACRL Monographs, no. 14 (Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries, 1955), 9.}

Furthermore, as the discoveries of new information increased they led to a pressing need for publications to disseminate the information to other scholars in these specialized fields. Communication was no longer primarily between the colleagues on any given theologically based college's faculty, but rather between scholars in a specialized field located at different institutions. In the latter half of the nineteenth century this emphasis on research and publication led to the beginning of dozens of specialized journals. As the literature in specialized fields developed and graduate level education became
accepted and even required, the concept of professions and professional graduate education gained momentum.

**Academic Librarianship:**
**Embryonic to Essential**

One of these newly developing professions was librarianship. Librarians first began to think of themselves as a separate profession during the last half of the nineteenth century. In 1876 the first annual meeting of the American Library Association was held, marking the advent of the professional organization. Melvil Dewey introduced his decimal classification scheme to that first ALA meeting. In the same year the first professional literature made its debut in the *Library Journal*. Melvil Dewey wrote in the first issue, "The time has at last come when a librarian may, without assumption, speak of his occupation as a profession."\(^8\) Also in 1876, the Office of Education produced a study of libraries, lending credence to the notion that librarianship constituted a new profession, and reinforcing the idea of librarians as educators.

While the general area of librarianship was becoming recognized, the separate problems of academic

librarianship were not yet being addressed. It should be kept in mind that the academic institutions were far less significant than their better established public brethren. For example, in 1876 the Boston Public Library, which had been founded in 1852, easily exceeded the holdings of Brown, California, Cornell, Columbia, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Princeton, and Toronto put together.  

Libraries in the earlier classical colleges reflected the purpose of the institutions they served. The Chinese characters for "library" mean "a place for hiding books," which may well describe the purpose of these early libraries. The collections were frequently theological in nature, or else dedicated to classical scholarship in Greek and Latin. Classes in the early American colleges were taught mainly by recitation of a few "profound" truths derived from religion and the classics, so there was little need for a library of any scope to supplement the classroom experience. In fact, Mark Hopkins, the epitome of the

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traditional college professor, once said "I don't read books, in fact I never did read any books." A college president of the 1850's referred to the library as an "aside in education, to be almost entirely omitted without making a serious change in the sense." William Poole, who later produced the classic Poole's Index, said of his undergraduate days: "Books, outside of the textbooks used, had no part in our education. They were never quoted, recommended, nor mentioned by the instructors in the classroom." Ross described libraries in the land grant colleges in his book, Democracy's Colleges:

Libraries, rather than functioning in the modern manner as reference laboratories, were still largely storehouses of a narrow range of compendiums of the learning of the past supplemented by the ever-available "government documents," with closely restricted regulations of student use.

12 Rothstein, "From Reaction to Interaction," 119, 120.
Universities and Libraries: A Symbiotic Development

During the last half of the nineteenth century the changes in higher education caused equally radical changes in the size and use of academic libraries. The libraries became more than mere storehouses to supplement a professor's own collection. As the librarian at Columbia University, Melvil Dewey reported in 1886:

The colleges are waking to the fact that the work of every professor and department is necessarily based on the library.

Each of the characteristics of the new universities required expansion and development of the university library.

The land-grant programs brought a demand for totally new subjects, far beyond the traditional tomes of classical libraries. As Canfield expressed the concept:

The scientific temper, the scientific method . . . has much to do with the present library status, and is also entitled to great credit. Indeed, the advance of library methods has simply kept pace with the advance in all

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other educational methods, and all of these are under a bond of obligation to the scientists.  

An elective curriculum created a much greater variety of subjects to be covered in the libraries. Modern specialized education led to acquisition of books in many fields, surpassing the small departmental and personal collections previously used.

The seminar method of instruction led to the concept of the library as "the very heart of university life," and "the scholar's laboratory." Ticknor, who later did so much to radically change Harvard, wrote while still a student at Gottingen in 1816:

What is worse than the absolute poverty of our collections of books [at Harvard] is the relative inconsequence in which we keep them. We found new professorships and build new colleges in abundance, but we buy no books. We have not yet learnt that the Library is not only the first convenience of the University, but that it is the very first necessity.

Eliot of Harvard wrote in 1908, "The last twenty years have seen a great reduction in the number of lectures" and a corresponding increase in prescribed reading. He


\[16\] Canfield, "Library," (1900): 104.

\[17\] As quoted in Rothstein's The Development of Reference Services, 10.
added that when a professor recommends many books
ownership on the part of the student is
impossible, and it becomes the business of
the university library . . . to supply them.
This involves large expenditures for books on
the part of the university.

Students in seminars not only demanded a variety of
reading material, but also increased access and
specialized seminar rooms.

"The impetus given by Johns Hopkins to graduate
work had a very marked influence upon the attitude of
all institutions of learning toward their libraries."19
Graduate research increased, and collections grew
accordingly. Even greater size was achieved due to the
number of new professional journals being published,
often edited as well as written by university faculty,
and published by university presses.

Changes in Size, Services, and Staff

For many of the above reasons, the most obvious
change in academic libraries was a rapid expansion in
size. A few theological or classical texts were no
longer enough. The sheer numbers of books and
periodicals published in this country soared, and the
tiny, ignored, classical libraries reeled under the

18Eliot, 180, 181.
pressure to obtain as much of this material as possible. The emphases on research, graduate education, specialization, and publication put pressure on academic libraries to expand in any way they could. Many started acquiring large gifts or complete collections. Others simply spent what they could or requested free copies. Scholars scattered over the world gathering huge manuscript collections to be shipped home to the university library for safekeeping and scholarly study. These larger collections for research were extremely important in attracting and keeping the new scholarly type of professor.

By whatever means, the size of library collections grew to the point that the library could not be housed in its previous quarters. The larger, more usable libraries became more visible on campuses. During the 1890's and early 1900's colleges and universities all over the country experienced a building boom in the form of new library construction.

The second obvious change in academic libraries was an increase in services offered. Changes in the universities led to demands for increased access and better organization. The seminar method of teaching required studious inquiry, inductive reasoning, and a careful study of "the literature," a concept that had hardly existed a generation before. Instead of
libraries that were open only an hour or two a week, and closed to all but the librarian, this new method of learning demanded access to the books not only for the professors, but also for the students. The new, more liberalized hours might not seem extensive by the judgment of our day, but considering that artificial lighting was avoided due to the danger of fire, libraries were taking advantage of most of the periods with natural lighting.

The final, most definitive, change in the academic libraries was the arrival of professional staff. In the small, neglected libraries of the classical college, there was no need for a full-time librarian. Most colleges signed over care of the library to one of the professors who had so little prestige that he couldn't avoid the task, or else was so desperate for money that he needed the additional pittance in his income. As late as 1900 there were only a few hundred college and university librarians in the country. Care of the library was considered to be unimportant, since using the books was seldom required in any of the courses on the campus. Often

the job was given to a janitor, or other custodial person. There was no particular expertise involved in putting a few hundred books on the shelves, and making sure that they were secure and properly inventoried each year. Once on the shelf, generally in order of acquisition, the book was intended to remain in the same location for generations, and often did. Just the change to a full-time "custodian" was significant, but soon the need for specific training became apparent and full professional status for librarians eventually followed.

While the library collections were growing and library buildings were being erected, the academic librarian was becoming professionalized as well. In 1883, Melvil Dewey started the first library school in the country, greatly aiding progress toward professionalization of librarianship. While graduates of this school and others that followed frequently were destined for the newly recognized public libraries, many were also hired in academic institutions. By that time, many of the larger colleges and universities had expanded their library collections, through gifts and sheer age, into sizable holdings, requiring not only a full-time librarian, but also several assistants as well.
These strains of growth and the demands for access created the academic library as we know it. The academic library in turn was essential to the new university concepts of research and scholarship. By the first few decades of the twentieth century, most of the colleges in this country had adapted to the new ideas and incorporated at least part of them into their curricula and their libraries. But during this period of rapid and revolutionary change, old classical colleges coexisted with radically new universities, clashes with trustees were common, and diversity was in the air. In this ambiguous period the University of Nebraska was formed.

Maturation of the University of Nebraska

While the period of 1869 to 1891 was not a period of rapid change for the library, the university itself was undergoing a transformation into a university in fact as well as in name. Irving J. Manatt, chancellor of the University from 1884 to 1891, started the institution in the direction of university status. His strong emphasis on a high quality faculty as well as hopes for a graduate school, research activity, and modernized curricula lent impetus to the goals of faculty members such as George Howard and Charles Bessey. Manatt had inherited an institution with many
"old-school" faculty. They had been necessary for the founding of the institution, but the new ways came slowly. Caldwell described these early instructors:

Of this first faculty it may be said in general that although not men of genius, they were all good workers and fully abreast with the development of the young State, and better prepared, perhaps, to do the work then needed than men of more brilliancy and more erudition would have been. Since then new men coming from Harvard, Yale, Hopkins, and various European universities are guiding the institution into quite other waters.  

An observer of the western universities in the mid 1880's commented that they were not true universities in fact, but only in aspiration.  

It took time to transform the opinions and goals of the institution as a whole. However, the university aspirations duly noted by outside observers began to develop visible evidence of change in the later 1880's.

**Signs of Change**

A major sign of the growth of the university can easily be read in the changing size of the student body. In sheer numbers of people served the institution changed from insignificance into a force worth considering. The first class enrolled in the

---

21 Caldwell, 31.

22 Manley, 79.
university in 1871 contained 130 students (110 in the preparatory department); twenty years later the figure was 883 (with only 83 in the preparatory department). \(^{23}\) Changes in the size of the student body led to growth in the number of faculty as well. For example, in 1871 only one person gave all of the lectures in science. By 1889 seven professors, three instructors, and two assistants were necessary to cover the courses in that subject area. \(^{24}\)

Like its counterparts on the east coast, the University of Nebraska developed the university concept from Europe as well as from leading American institutions. After graduating from Nebraska and before returning as an instructor, George Howard studied in Munich. A. H. Edgren was, of course, the product of Swedish education, Fred Fling had studied at Leipzig, George Hussey at Bonn, and John Wightman in the College de France. Graduates of Harvard, Yale, Columbia, and Johns Hopkins also brought "new" university ideas to the faculty. In 1897, after just returning from graduate study in Germany himself, Dr. H.C. Peterson gave a talk to the literary society on

\(^{23}\)Ibid., 29, 112.

\(^{24}\)Caldwell, 103.
"Why we go to Germany to Study." While major trends are not always visible to the participants, it is clear that most faculty of the time knew the origins of their "new university" goal.

The beginnings of graduate education were probably the first true indication of the higher quality of instruction appearing on the Nebraska plains. The first graduate seminar was held in 1889. Graduate students affiliated with the institution occasionally during this period, in both formal and informal programs. The first master's degree was conferred in 1886.26

The graduate seminar was accompanied by the idea of the seminar method of teaching. The "Sem. Bot." formed by Bessey in 1886 not only produced students and scientists, but it also occasionally published scholarly research. This in turn required rooms, preferrably full of books, generally in the departments, but also in the library. The advanced students enjoyed the special status such isolation afforded, but the method necessitated an increased usage of the library. The history department and the

---

25 Nebraska State Journal (Lincoln), 13 March 1897.

26 Manley, 94.
English department at the university were two of the leading experimenters with this teaching technique.

The increased emphasis on research and graduate level training led to the publication of the results of such endeavors. The first scholarly publication of the University, The University of Nebraska Studies, was started in 1888. While finances kept the publication schedule erratic and infrequent, correspondence of Bessey, Wyer, and other faculty suggests that the university was aware of the importance of maintaining a professional image through this publication. By the early 1890's the experiment station was producing valuable bulletins to add to the university's professional contacts.27

At the undergraduate level the new university in America was symbolized by the elective system of courses. This system was particularly well adapted to the land grant colleges, most of which were already struggling with the proper placement of practical and agricultural courses. At the University of Nebraska, an effort was made to separate the two aspects of the university, but a sharing of faculty, if not of campuses, blurred that distinction in later years. The elective system was already accepted to some extent by

27 Ibid., 95.
1891 when the elective process of choosing courses was 
broadened and expanded at Chancellor Canfield's 
request. Students readily moved from the classical to 
the modern, when given the opportunity. For example, 
in 1892, the German classes expanded from 163 students 
to 358.28

Later Eminence

While the first flowering of growth and change 
appeared in the late 1880's, these aspirations did not 
bear fruit until the Canfield and MacLean 
administrations. In the fall of 1891 the faculty were 
"busily at work" revising all the courses offered, to 
more readily conform to the elective and seminar 
structure of a modern university. The Journal claimed 
that the University was "at the very point of bursting 
into full bloom."29 The resulting requirements in 
history, for example, included the presentation of "a 
carefully prepared paper, containing a good 
bibliography, a well balanced narrative and critical 
notes."30 Chancellor Canfield announced that students

28 Nebraska State Journal (Lincoln), 6 November 1892.
29 Ibid., 28 September 1891.
30 "History courses," Nebraska State Journal (Lincoln), 14 December 1891.
should not be "lectured to and talked at" but rather
"trained, disciplined, and inspired." The
recognition that Nebraska was already receiving
nationally is evident from a prominent physicist
stating that "it [Nebraska] certainly stands far above
any other state university, unless it be Cornell."
Other eastern academics were reported to have similar
opinions.32

Chancellor George MacLean's inaugural address
called for movement toward "the German ideal," with its
"immense and expensive libraries" to "supplant the
small and well-selected collections of a few classic
texts."33 "During the MacLean administration the
University's graduate training became the best
available in the West." 34 This vanguard graduate
program led the Board of Regents to proclaim in 1899
that "the New University" was "the leading

31 James H. Canfield, Report to the Board of
Regents, 12 December 1893, TMs, University Archives,
Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

32 "The University Known Abroad," Nebraska State
Journal (Lincoln), 22 May 1892.

33 George E. MacLean, "Inaugural Address,"
Nebraska State Journal (Lincoln), 15 February 1896.

34 Manley, 117.
trans-Mississippi university." By 1901 the **Scarlet and Cream** was proclaiming Nebraska "the leading graduate school in the west." Credence is lent to this opinion by the fact that only 26 other schools in the country were then offering graduate programs, and of these only California, Kansas, and Stanford could actually claim to be "in the west."  

Later, under the able leadership of Chancellor E. Benjamin Andrews, this early promise developed into what Manley calls "The Golden Years." The growth of the university student body from 570 in 1890-91 to 3,611 in 1908-09 paralleled the growth of the curriculum and the development of the University's relationship to public education in the state. As Nebraska matured it became a proud example of what could be achieved in a western university. Andrews led the University to a "position of national prominence," a position which had been laboriously built over the past twenty years. The University's new eminence was proved by its invitation to membership in the Association of American Universities in 1909. Invited

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35 Board of Regents, Fourteenth Biennial Report (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1899), 7.

36 "The Leading Graduate School in the West," **Scarlet and Cream**, 22 March 1901, 3.

37 Manley, 186.
into association with universities such as Harvard, Columbia, Johns Hopkins, and Chicago, the University of Nebraska gave evidence of academic excellence in undergraduate studies, graduate training, and faculty research and scholarship. 38

38 Ibid., 148.
CHAPTER II
THE LIBRARY IN THE EARLY UNIVERSITY, 1869-1891

Even before the full development of the university idea caused major changes in the library, smaller changes were taking place. The years 1869 to 1890 saw minor changes to the collection, the places in which it was kept, and the library staff.

The Collection and Its Use

The Nebraska library was fortunate among state universities. Provision for its existence was an integral part of the original university charter, and the stipulation that matriculation fees were to be used for library books was provided by legislative act in 1872.\(^1\) While this edict never provided extensive funds, beginning at 260 dollars annually, it did provide for the slow steady growth of the library, even before the university had developed to the point of requiring a research library. Donations were a major part of the museum at this time, but library donations were not as frequent nor as extensive. Selection seems

\(^1\)Board of Regents, *Third Biennial Report*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1874), 6.
to have been primarily the responsibility of the faculty, but they appear to have merged their own private collections with those of departmental libraries and showed little concern with the central library except as a sort of study hall.

During most of this early part of the library's history, there was also little demand for reserve material or outside reading. The faculty was not as much involved with introducing students to the contents of the library as it was in using the library materials to extend its own research. This aspect of the faculty's attitude is exemplified in the fact that all faculty had keys to the library so that they might use the collection for their individual development at any time. This was, of course, at a time when library hours were extremely minimal, and, even while the library was open, there was seldom extensive use of the collection. Nevertheless, the collection was growing, and at least some students were aware of the benefits of access to books.

The Library as a Corner Room

Section 22 of the Act establishing the University of Nebraska provides for "an annual appropriation for books for a general library." This fledgling library
was to be housed in a room "set apart in the State House" until a "suitable building" could be provided.2

When the original University Hall building was erected in 1871, space was provided at the southeastern end of the second floor wing to house the roomful of books that was slowly growing. However, the library was seldom used or appreciated. In fact "little provision was made for the use of such books as were on the shelves."3 In the first year of the university, 1871-72, there were approximately 1,000 books in the collection4 and the library was open one hour daily.5 While there was slow and steady growth in the collection, funds were "too meagre to be wasted on a librarian."6 The Secretary of the Institution, who single-handedly handled all of the financial and bureaucratic affairs of the institution, was also entrusted with the management of the library. In 1873, in response to student demands, the library was

2James J. Hannah, "The Ideas and Plans in the Founding of the University of Nebraska, 1869-1875" (M.A. thesis, University of Nebraska, 1951), 96.

3Caldwell, 76.

4Board of Regents, Third Biennial Report, 6.

5Manley, 247.

6Caldwell, 76.
ostensibly open two hours per day and some more advanced students could make provision for taking books out of the library. However, Caldwell asserts that it was actually opened only once or twice per week.  

1875 was an eventful year for the library. The students petitioned for the hiring of a student librarian to increase the hours the library was open. While little immediate effect was observable, the duty of librarian was removed from the secretary (at a 200 dollar cut in salary) and added to the duties of Professor George E. Church (with a 100 dollar appropriation). This abrupt increase in duties was no doubt lightened for Professor Church in that he had been promoted the previous month to a full professorship and the Chair of Latin Language and Literature with a corresponding increase in salary of five hundred dollars. He was of course not aware that within two years all of the faculty salaries would be decreased by 200 dollars. However, by that time he was well on his way to a sabbatical in Berlin and

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7Ibid.
8Manley, 247.
9Board of Regents, Third Biennial Report, 3, 6.
Munich, doubtlessly much less concerned about the library back in Nebraska.\(^{10}\)

**George Howard as Librarian**

The record is unclear about who was in charge of the library from 1877 to 1879. Church was on sabbatical the first of those years, and the position was no doubt a relatively unimportant one, but it hardly seems likely that it was left altogether vacant. This problem is addressed in the fifth biennial report of January 1879:

> By an omission in the amendments to the original act establishing the University, the office of Librarian was omitted, it is believed by mistake. Since that time there has been no Librarian as such, and the care of the library has been committed either to the Faculty or to the Chancellor. This arrangement has not given satisfaction.

The report states further that "George E. Howard, elected tutor at the last Regents' meeting, is made librarian, and personally responsible for the management of the library."\(^{12}\) Whether his duties as librarian began when he was appointed in the summer of

\(^{10}\)Board of Regents. *Fifth Biennial Report* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1879), 4-5.

\(^{11}\)Ibid., 6.

\(^{12}\)Ibid., 25.
1878, in the middle of the academic year when this report was published, or in the summer of 1879 as suggested by Manley is unclear. In her history of the library, Nellie Jane Compton wrote:

In the fall of 1878, Dr. George H. Howard returned to the University as an instructor. The professor who was chairman of the library committee was absent on leave and Dr. Howard was asked to assume some of his duties, among them to take charge of the library.

It is reasonable to suppose that the sabbatical absence of the nominal "librarian" (Church) left the library without management, reverting by default to the Chancellor. If such were the case, then it is no wonder that the next year this situation would be presented to the Board for formal rectification. As was generally the case, this job was then given to the faculty member with least prestige and seniority.

Howard was one of the first graduates of the University (1876) and had spent two years studying in Europe before returning to teach at his alma mater. George Howard was a man of great integrity and idealism. Edna Bullock, a student at the university while Howard was both librarian and teacher, remembered

13 Manley, 57.

"his passion for truth, his devotion to human welfare, . . . his genuinely democratic spirit." He was one of the leaders of the younger faculty, intent on shaping the University of Nebraska after the European model with seminars, inductive study, and graduate education. Such a model required the use of an accessible library with an extensive collection. Dedication to an ideal was required since his salary at this time was one third that of the full professors who disdained such additional duties. As is often the case, the dedication paid off: Howard became one of the most honored and respected of the young University's faculty.

However, all was not easy for an academic librarian at that time. The 1879 report goes on to state: "The academic faculty is required twice each year to report to him [Howard] what books have been purchased and at what price, and accompany the same with vouchers." The librarian not only had no control over what was purchased and did not necessarily even see the books after purchase, but apparently there was not yet a Library Committee to oversee independent


16 Board of Regents, Fifth Biennial Report, 6.
faculty purchases. The report goes on to optimistically hope "that all difficulty that may have heretofore arisen in this regard may by this method be avoided in future."\(^{17}\)

Howard clearly took his duties as librarian seriously. Less than two years later the Board would report his management as "very satisfactory." The Library was "open as a reading room, three hours per day, five days in the week." The number of books in the library was already listed at 3,000 volumes in 1880.\(^{18}\) By 1882 the number of volumes in the library had increased to 4,400.\(^{19}\)

The increasing growth in the library was by no means adequate by Howard's standards, though. The 1884 report (listing nearly 4,800 volumes) characterizes the growth as "slow." The Board made a strong recommendation at that point for funds to buy library materials in addition to the legally mandated matriculation fees.\(^{20}\) Apparently this course was

\(^{17}\)Ibid., 25.

\(^{18}\)Board of Regents, *Sixth Biennial Report* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1880), 7.

\(^{19}\)Caldwell, 77.

\(^{20}\)Board of Regents, *Eighth Biennial Report* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1884), 22.
followed, as the Board of Regents reported the collection to have 8,700 books by 1886.\textsuperscript{21}

Services were increasing as well. Howard's ideas about opening the library for student use were unusual for the time. His circulation record book shows that several students checked out and returned books each day that the library was open. Hours were still by no means convenient, but they were steadily increasing, as the 1882 Board report indicates:

The Library and reading room have been kept open six hours a day five days in the week; great credit is due Prof. Howard for the systematic arrangement of the Library, and the increased interest taken therein by the students.\textsuperscript{22}

That student interest is evident in the student newspaper, which chronicles complaints that the library was "more conducive to conversation than to good solid study"\textsuperscript{23} and that "the rules restricting conversation and gossip" were disregarded.\textsuperscript{24} Observation of "romantic episodes" in the library started in the

\textsuperscript{21}Board of Regents, \textit{Ninth Biennial Report} (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1886), 17.

\textsuperscript{22}Board of Regents, \textit{Seventh Biennial Report} (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1882), 10.

\textsuperscript{23}Hesperian, 1 November 1885, 6.

\textsuperscript{24}Ibid., 1 November 1884, 2.
Hesperian at this time. A student reminiscing about the difference in the new library administration wrote in 1885:

In the main the order is as good as can be expected in rooms where fifty or sixty students are at work, where complete freedom of locomotion is necessary, and where some whispering is inevitable. We can remember a time when no one was in any way disturbed by disorder in the library. At that time the room was only open for a while in the afternoon . . . and once, when a prep went up after a book, he found the professor who had charge of the room [Church?] sitting on the table and talking with three others about private matters. They all seemed a little surprised and indignant that a student should interrupt them merely to get a book, and he retired feeling as though he had made some kind of a "break" which he did not understand, but yet felt must be truly horrible. In those early days, things were measurably in order in the library, but the profs lugged off and lost more books than under the present regime.

While services were being upgraded, the facilities available to the library in these small quarters were less than ideal. The appearance of the library in 1885 was graphically described in the Hesperian:

Our library presents a most dilapidated appearance. The matting on the floor has, a large part of it, been worn out and swept up. The remainder straggles in discouraged strings over the floor and seems to get a little amusement out of existence, only by

25 Ibid., 1 November 1885, 6.
26 Ibid., 1 May 1885, 3.
occasionally tripping people. A table covered more by dust than by the remnants of a once green oil-cloth, bends its weak back, and braces its debilitated legs in a sickly attempt to hold up certain dog-eared lexicons. An old cloth-bound backless edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica lops over disconsolately against the sides of an alcove to which it has been banished to make room for its next younger brother "The Ninth Edition." The lower shelf of the belles-lettres alcove is in a very disgruntled condition, and to the left of the librarian's desk is a pile of books waiting patiently to be catalogued, and some government reports that seem to be waiting to be told why they exist. In the study room, torn paper ornaments the floor, and some unpainted pine racks are filled with a disorderly heap of periodicals ranging in value from complete files of the N.Y. Herald and London Times, to staple copies of the Iris World and state weeklies . . . The order during study hours is not of the best and those who can find some other room to study in generally do so . . .

While the next year saw the addition of "two large book-cases" the fact that this storage was "nearly doubling the shelving capacity" indicates the paucity of resources available in the early library. Ventilation was also apparently poor, as a "lady student" was reported to have been so frustrated by the "close" air that she knocked a window out with a club.29

27 Ibid.
28 Board of Regents, Eighth Biennial Report, 6.
29 Hesperian (Lincoln), 17 November 1885, 6.
Professor Bessey later reminisced about the library in these corner rooms:

Professor Howard, who was the first librarian, tells me that at first only one of these rooms was used for the library. It was open for only a few hours a day to students. Every professor, however, had a key to the library, and went in at will, and drew books as he pleased. The attendants were students, and they were not very busy of course. Once I suddenly stepped into the room and found the attendants engaged in the game of "toss ball," using books for balls. One of these became an eminent professor, and the other is an equally eminent man in public life.

Smith as Custodian of the Library

In 1886 a new era for the library was established when Miss Ellen Smith was appointed as the librarian, a position she held for five years. One might consider this an improvement in the staffing of the library, since it was no longer a mere appendage to a full-time faculty member's schedule. However, it should be noted that Miss Smith was given this assignment because Chancellor Manatt considered her incapable of handling the increasing responsibility of Latin School principal. He was simply following the common nineteenth century idea that librarianship was a sinecure for the less capable and less useful faculty.

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Ellen Smith had been appointed by Chancellor Fairfield to teach Latin and Greek, at approximately the same time that Howard and McMillan were appointed to the faculty. Smith and McMillan had both come from Hillsdale College in Michigan, where Fairfield had been President. Alvin Johnson, a student at the University of Nebraska, described Smith as "an elderly woman with thin gray hair done in a hair-pinned bun at the base of her head."^31

Smith was a highly visible person, with a strong personality, making many lasting friendships as well as bitter enemies. "She was so thoroughly devoted to exactness in the keeping of records that a blunder was a great offense, and she was entirely frank in expressing her opinion to the one who had made it."^32 Nellie Compton stated that "Miss Smith had not herself the slightest realization of how sharp and irritating her words could be, and was always terribly hurt if students showed resentment or answered back. Folks who 'always say just what they think' are generally like


^32"Funeral in Memorial Hall," *Nebraska State Journal* (Lincoln), 22 February 1903.
that."33 While Smith's abrupt and brusque manner was
discouraging to the timid, the following anecdote from
her obituary suggests a keen sense of humor:

A little freshman girl right from the
prairies, with the tan of the prairie sun on
her cheeks and with sun tanned hair
approached her one day and asked after
waiting several moments: "Is Grote in?"
"In!" Miss Smith ejaculated, "He's been dead
for a hundred years!"34

Smith's forthright objections were by no means
limited to students, and she seems to have somewhat
intimidated chancellors and faculty as well. Professor
Barbour later recalled that Smith had been "the one
guiding spirit on the campus [who] kept freshmen and
faculty alike hewing straight to the line."35 Compton
related an incident from registration in which a
student handed Miss Smith a card. She demanded, "Who
approved that?" Upon being told that it was Dr. Ward,
she marched across the room to Dr. Ward, handed him the
card, and asked, "Did you approve that?" He admitted
as much, and she commented, "Well, you're a bigger fool

33Nellie Jane Compton, "Memories and

34"Funeral in Memorial Hall," Nebraska State
Journal (Lincoln), 22 February 1903.

35E. H. Barbour, "They were gay '90's," Nebraska
Alumnus, February 1936, 20.
than I thought you were." Smith laughed and Ward did, too, for those who knew her enjoyed her sense of humor.36

Indeed, while having the reputation of a dragon in the office, she was considered "cheery and sunny" at home where she welcomed and befriended many a youth. Alvin Johnson counted "Ma Smith" among his best friends at the University.37 Roscoe Pound eulogized her "sense of justice and her uncompromising honesty," while stating that "she endeavored to adhere honestly and faithfully to the very letter and she exacted the same fidelity fearlessly and impartially from others."38 Edna Bullock said that "she was the perfect example of an honest, conscientious and courageous person."39

Smith sometimes went beyond a simple adherence to regulations, at times showing genuine animosity toward those requesting exceptions to the rules. An example of this petulence can be seen in an excerpt from one of her letters to Professor Howard, then Chairman of the Library Committee, regarding a student who had asked

37 Alvin Johnson, p. 77.
38 "A Memorial Service," Nebraska State Journal (Lincoln), 25 April 1903.
to read in the library during hours when the library was not officially open:

He is a chronic grumbler and has used considerable impudence to me on several occasions; but I do not think he understands good breeding & have passed it by; . . . I gave every student all the books he asked for and had he been gentleman enough to mention what he wished to read should have done everything possible to accommodate him as I do others; but I think his main desire was to have the freedom of the room that he might ransack with no restraint . . .

During Miss Smith's tenure as librarian, she was also the university registrar, a position she held for many years. The office of librarian was still seen as a relatively minor role, to be done in addition to more significant duties. It should be noted that while the library remained open six hours per day during this time, Miss Smith had little or no help in managing the service, except in unusual circumstances. When a multiple leg fracture kept Smith away for much of the winter of 1886-87, a senior student, C. S. Polk, was "appointed librarian" until her return. 40

40 Ellen Smith, Lincoln, to George Howard, Lincoln, 23 March [no date], AMs, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

41 Hesperian, 22 October 1886, 5.
Even without additional help, Smith produced the first classification of the library. Unfortunately the catalog which she developed herself had none of the logical development of the Dewey Decimal System, which was already ten years old and well accepted by trained librarians. Modern researchers are not alone in their bafflement over this classification scheme. Nellie Compton claimed that "sometimes professors ordered books just to see where Miss Smith would class them." However, she added the warning that "no professor is ever entirely pleased with the library classification of the books on his subject." As Compton noted, most libraries of the time were arranged by individual classifications, even if the Dewey system was available and gaining in popularity.

Library Use and Facilities

The increased interest in the Library was shown in the Board report for 1886, where it was referred to as "the students' workshop." The first formal request for a "separate fire-proof building" appeared there as

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well. 44 At that point there were 8,700 volumes in the collection and it was still growing. 45 Two years later, in 1888, a collection of 11,000 was reported. Student use was also increasing:

> From seventy-five to one hundred volumes change hands daily, besides the constant use which is made . . . of the . . . books reserved for particular classes or departments. Not one-third of the students who now make use of the library could at one time find standing room in the present quarters. 46

The weekly hours the library was open had also been increased from 30 in 1882 to over 40 in 1888. 47

Increasing size and utilization put stress on the meagre facilities of the library. In the fall of 1886, Smith apparently closed the alcoves to student access. The student newspaper objected strongly.

> Order, a very desirable thing indeed, has been secured by the change; but we question whether that one gain can recompense the students for the many losses they feel themselves to have sustained. . . . Access in person to the alcoves of the library is the only thing that can properly train him [the new student] in independent research and investigation. But to the old student who

47 Ibid., 21.
has partly acquired the habit of consulting authorities, it is really discouraging to be denied access to the alcoves . . .

In a letter to the editor, signed C. S. P., and in all probability written by Smith's student assistant, it is asserted that the students

should have free access to the alcoves, leaving the proper care of the books to the students; in fact the present system should be abolished and the students put in possession of what was originally purchased for them."

Changes in the physical accommodations were not rapid. In the summer of 1887 the University Hall building was connected to the sewer lines and "water-closets" were added. While of negligible academic importance, this change in conditions must have been considered an improvement. Although a new building was not yet forthcoming, Smith also presided over the much needed expansion into a larger area in 1889.

The Library Under the Chapel

In the summer of 1889 the large rooms on the north side of the University Hall on the first floor

48 Hesperian, 12 October 1886, 2-3.
49 Ibid., 15 March 1887, 6.
50 Board of Regents, Ninth Biennial Report, 47.
were given to the library. It is perhaps typical of Smith that while her annual report gives a detailed description of her work load and problems, there is no appreciation nor description of the improved working conditions. Her report is confined to listing the size of the collection, detailing the steps necessary for labelling, stamping, recording, and cataloging the acquisitions, and complaining that student removal of books from the library was "evil" and that the professors took current periodicals away without properly notifying her.  

Perhaps her reticence about the more spacious quarters was because she herself had no part in the actual work of moving the library. The Library Committee reported that the move was completed in the summer of 1889 "under the chairmanship of Prof. Howard," who clearly was still taking an active interest in the improvement of the library. Professor Charles Little's committee report was more forthcoming about the "great improvement" brought about by the transfer to larger rooms. He also referred to the

51 Ellen Smith, "Report to the Library Committee," June 5, 1890, AMs, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.
library as "a workshop and storehouse of tools" and reported "general and extensive" use.  

Acting Chancellor Bessey's subsequent report to the Board extolled the virtues of the new location of the library:

It [the Library] has been completely transformed, by its transfer to the larger quarters assigned it a year ago in rooms 11 and 12 of University Hall. About 2600 feet of floor space is now available and on this 1250 linear feet of shelving has been placed. The accessibility of the books is much greater than ever before and the library is now a cheerful room.

The move to new quarters seems to have also heralded an opening of the alcoves. The student newspaper noted the "returning liberality toward students."

For a few years past, it has always seemed to the average student that the periodicals and books in the library were for the use of the faculty, and that he should not meddle therewith any more than was absolutely necessary, and that only when directed to do so by some instructor. . . . This broadening of the library rules, or if not broadening, then this interpretation of them, is greatly appreciated by the upperclassmen at least.

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52 Library Committee, "Report to Acting Chancellor Bessey for the year 1889-1890," Ms, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

53 Charles E. Bessey, "Report to the Board, 1890," Ms, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

54 Hesperian, 2 December 1889, 6.
While pleasure at the increased space may have been warranted, it was already acknowledged that the new rooms were only a temporary solution to the library's growth problem. The student newspaper, noting the great change in the library, with the books no longer two deep on the shelves, pointed out the obvious:

It is fully twice as large as the old library, yet it is almost full. . . . By the end of the year the need of a library building will be apparent to the most obstinate of legislators. The room adjoining the library, of the same size, will be the new reading room, but has already been invaded by several hundred volumes . . . .

Little's committee report ignored Smith's concerns about student and faculty abuse of privileges and instead gave the committee's two major concerns for the future: (1) the need for a library building, and (2) the need for a catalog. He acknowledged the new quarters as adequate for the present but warned that it left "scant room for the future growth which will be of necessity a rapid one." He also cited the danger of loss by fire, suggesting that it would be not only a severe financial loss, but also "an irreparable injury to the world at large." Regarding the committee's second concern, Little acknowledged the presence of

55 Ibid., 1 October 1889, 4-5.
Smith's "list of books," but also explained why it was inadequate for scholarly use. 56

**On the Brink of Change**

In the year 1890 there had been a clear need for further change in the library. Acting Chancellor Bessey and the Board of Regents had made clear the need for a new library building, a request which had been laid before the legislature. In Bessey's 1891 report, he twice mentioned the need for a new library building. 57

More important even than space were the demands placed on the librarian. It is possible that more of the daily correspondence of this period was saved by the professional librarians who were to arrive soon, but it also seems probable that more cracks were developing in the rather haphazard structure of library administration. A number of letters enumerating Miss Smith's frustration at faculty arrogance, student misconduct and general library problems remain,

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56 C. N. Little, Report of the Library Committee to Acting Chancellor Bessey for the year 1889-1890 [n.d.], AMs, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

57 Charles E. Bessey, Report to the Board of Regents, 1891, AMs, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

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whatever the cause for their existence. Considering the multiple duties she was assigned and the growing responsibilities of the registrar's position, she had actually done a great deal to improve the library.

Efficient as Miss Smith might have been, she had her breaking point, and there may have been some reason for her crochety reports. Her final report to the Board of Regents in May of 1891 enumerates not only her duties in preparing the temporary materials, but her responsibility for cleaning and inventorying the library in the summer, for "training" two hundred new freshmen, and for keeping all the other students "in line." She further lists all of her increasing duties as registrar and complains of the continuing problem caused by faculty keys and faculty borrowing after hours without reporting it. Smith concludes the report with a general rejection of her duties as Custodian of the Library:

I wish to say that I have felt greatly overworked the last year or two. Since the library was moved down stairs into two such large rooms, and the number of periodicals was thirbled [sic] or quadrupled . . . the demands upon my time and strength have been excessive, the confinement too constant . . .

I had a morbid curiosity to know how much the authorities would expect me to do, as a matter of course, for $1200 per year [two thirds of a full professor's salary] . . .
I would not, for any consideration, attempt the entire work of Custodian of Library & Registrar another year.

In Acting Chancellor Bessey's final annual report he suggested that the Board consider the appointment of a trained librarian as Smith's replacement, a "professor of books":

The man at the head of it [the library] must be one who has been educated for this particular kind of work. It must not be thought for a moment that the librarian's chair can be filled by any one, regardless of special preparation. It would be as great a mistake to elect an untrained librarian, as it would be to select for the chair of Chemistry any nice man, whether he knew anything of Chemistry or not. Of course every educated person knows something about books, which is more than can be said of Chemistry, but the little that the ordinary educated man knows about books in general - that is outside of his special department - will help him very little in a library consisting of works in many departments.

The changed position of the library, at least for planning purposes, is shown by his reference to it as "the most important single department in the whole University." Whether these views are his own, or represent the obvious views of Professor Canfield of

58 Ellen Smith, Letter to the Board of Regents, 30 May 1891, AMs, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

59 Charles E. Bessey, Report to the Board of Regents, 1891, Ms, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

60 Ibid.
the University of Kansas, whom Bessey had been interviewing for the position of Chancellor at that time is open to question. In either case the library was clearly slated for change in many ways.

The immediate replacement of Smith as Custodian of the Library could not wait for such a big change in policy. In the summer of 1891, just before Chancellor Canfield arrived, Professor George McMillan was assigned to the position. Despite the enlightened request for a "trained librarian," Bessey and the Board were again following the traditional method of giving that part-time responsibility to a professor. McMillan had been with the institution many years, but his health was failing and he was growing deaf. The library as sinecure seemed to be the answer since he was no longer able to meet his classes as he once had. Compounding the dilemma were McMillan's many years of loyal service to the institution and the general scarcity of any sort of pension scheme. Years later as the librarian at Columbia, Canfield would state

Fifty years ago . . . with rare exceptions, the position of the librarian was a haven for the incompetent or the decrepit. 61

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61 As quoted in Hamlin's The University Library in the United States, 44.
His arrival as chancellor of the University of Nebraska may well have helped form or confirm this opinion. The growth of the library and the changes in the university made all of this shuffling of staff obsolete within a few short years. The library was about to follow the university down the path of change and modernization. Fortunately, James H. Canfield, the newly selected chancellor, was cognizant of the direction of that movement and well aware that change in the library was an essential part of that transition.
CHAPTER III
LIBRARY STAFF, 1891-1909

The University of Nebraska Library was one of the first academic libraries to have professionally trained staff. That the University took the course of modernization and emphasis on the library can be largely credited to Chancellor James H. Canfield who arrived in Nebraska in the fall of 1891. His foresight about the importance of libraries and the importance of training for librarians was later epitomized when he became the librarian for Columbia University, following in the footsteps of the great Melvil Dewey. Nevertheless, when Canfield first arrived, the position of "Custodian of the Library" was still held by Professor George McMillan.

The Last of the Librarian-Professors

George McMillan was appointed "Custodian of the Library" in the summer of 1891, shortly before Chancellor Canfield arrived on the scene. He had served the university since 1875 as the professor of Greek. A "fine teacher" and a "true humanist,"
McMillan had already established a reputation and loyal support among the alumni.¹

In his June 10 letter requesting the change of appointment, McMillan suggested:

Owing to the impairment of my hearing, I experience some difficulty in my regular classroom work. I would therefore, ask whether it may not be expedient to relieve me of the duties of my chair and transfer me to the librarianship of the university.²

While McMillan was apparently hired as Custodian of the Library partly because of his long service and the lack of any kind of pension plan, he clearly intended to do an adequate job. He had had extensive experience in the classical college library. He reported fifteen years as librarian of Hillsdale College in Michigan before arriving at the University of Nebraska. He had also served on the Library Committee for his entire sixteen years at Nebraska, frequently being Chairman of the Committee. Not only did he know what had been demanded of the position in the past, but he seemed to have some idea of the increasing burdens being placed on the library. His letter requesting reassignment continued:

¹Manley, 57, 79, 81.
²George McMillan, Letter to C.H. Gere, President of the Board of Regents, 10 June 1891, AMs, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.
If my suggestion meets the approval of the Board, I shall wish during the summer to visit some of the larger libraries of the country to familiarize myself with the most recent methods of library details and administration.  

McMillan later told Canfield that he had indeed studied the Minneapolis City Library and intended to spend two weeks with Poole in Chicago.  

Unfortunately, McMillan's attempts at self-training were done at public libraries. It is true that the public library collections at the time were larger than academic collections, on the whole, but many fine university libraries were already in existence. Harvard or Yale would have provided excellent examples of the new field of academic librarianship and the best training of all was available in New York under Melvil Dewey.

Whether McMillan's research turned up poor ideas or whether he was simply unable to put modern ideas of librarianship into practice is uncertain. The fact remains that despite frequent suggestions, McMillan did little to improve conditions at the library. On July 3, at the first meeting of newly appointed librarian

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3 Ibid.
4 James H. Canfield, Diary, 7 July 1891, Ms, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.
and newly appointed chancellor, Canfield urged "the immediate TRIAL of Dewey's system of cataloging and arrangement,"⁵ but no cataloging effort was undertaken while McMillan was librarian. McMillan said that he wanted to "improve the library service"⁶ and hired an assistant at his own expense⁷ but made few noticeable advances in the services offered. According to Canfield, the chancellor had to suggest all the library improvements himself. This viewpoint is lent credibility by the fact that Canfield makes no such self-serving claims for Mary Jones who made many more significant changes. Already in October, Canfield presented a plan to the faculty whereby the library would be open during the evenings, and the faculty would turn in their keys,⁸ thus greatly improving both access and security. By November 11 even McMillan was ready to implement the suggestion.⁹ Since the question of faculty keys had already been vainly addressed by Ellen Smith, it is interesting to note the dispatch

⁵Ibid., 3 July 1891.
⁶Ibid., 7 July 1891.
⁷Ibid., 22 August 1891.
⁸Ibid., 26 October 1891.
⁹Ibid., 11 November 1891.
with which Canfield resolved the dilemma. Professor Bessey later recalled the faculty side of the transaction:

Chancellor Canfield finally came before the Faculty and urged every one to give up his library key, setting forth many good reasons for this request. How we all gripped our keys, each man saying to himself that it would be a long while before HIS keys were returned, when the Chancellor took our breath away by quietly remarking that we "might as well give up our keys, since the lock to the library had just been changed by the University carpenter." We gave up our keys!

In addition to being slow to grasp the necessary changes, McMillan tended to blame his problems on a shortage of funds and support. While Canfield's frequent interference on behalf of the library is apparent, the lack of funding was a real problem for the entire institution, struggling to prove its worth in a time of severe economic hardship. In December Canfield spent another "long conference" with McMillan, this time trying to convince him that he should no longer hire assistance with his own funds:

He accepts the situation -- thinks he can get on without much help. I promised him a little assistance -- possibly two hours each day . . . In my judgement the thing for him to do was to keep the library steadily at such a point of efficiency as he conscientiously felt that he could under the

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10 Bessey, 23.
circumstances and let that suffice: . . . I did not feel that he was under any obligation whatever himself to hire assistance in order to make the service more effective than heretofore.\footnote{Canfield's diary, 28 December 1891.}

While McMillan was unable to give the library the kind of leadership it clearly needed, he was cognizant of the need for an increase in prestige for the position of librarian. That first summer he requested that his title be changed from "Custodian of the Library" to the more "usual" title of "Librarian." Diplomatically he implied that that had surely been the Board's intention anyway. The Executive Committee of the Board also called this an "error" and recommended the change. McMillan also requested that he retain his full professor's salary and that an assistant be hired.\footnote{Ibid., 7 July 1891.} These requests were duly relayed by the chancellor and denied by the Board.

McMillan presents the image of a competent and respected professor reaching the end of his physical abilities, with few options in sight, yet still trying to maintain his good name. On July 7 he told Canfield that he was "not willing to hold a sinecure nor a place involving any loss of self-respect."\footnote{Ibid.} Later he
reiterated his refusal "to hold the place as a sinecure," and added, "At the first intimation that my physical infirmities render me unfit for the position, I shall resign." 14

Even though this position seems to have actually been the much denied sinecure, it was a significant advance for the library. Although McMillan had no modern training and little talent for the work, he was nonetheless an educated professor with usable knowledge and the integrity to try to improve conditions. He was also working at the position nearly full time with two student assistants, which was not only an improvement over Miss Smith's part-time responsibilities, but also a remarkable improvement over most academic libraries in the 1890's. The *Lincoln Journal* gave the most optimistic view of both library administrations when reporting on McMillan's appointment:

> Professor McMillan has taken hold of the library in good earnest, and will improve the service as rapidly and as far as the available money will permit. Several desirable changes will be made conducive to the comfort and convenience of the students. But it will be hard to replace at once the patient helpfulness of Miss Smith.

14 Ibid., 22 August 1891.

15 *Nebraska State Journal* (Lincoln), 12 July 1891.
The student newspaper reported the appointment as well, optimistically predicting the production of card catalogs "as soon as practicable." The *Hesperian* noted that McMillan was "undoubtedly one of the best read professors in the faculty" and therefore "eminently fitted to help all who come to him for advice in regard to their reading." Furthermore, these criteria were adequate to provide the University with "a full-fledged library." The local paper again gave a glowing report a year later in the spring:

The library is daily becoming more and more the very centre of this [university] life and effort, as it ought to be. Professor McMillan's large acquaintance with books and literature and his many years of efficient service in connection with the library committee so familiarized him with the contents of the library as to make his first year's labor much less difficult than would have been the work of a stranger in such a position.

At the end of April, 1892, Canfield arrived in Albany, where he spent "three hours with Dewey, over library matters; saw Mary Jones, and several other promising candidates." After returning to Nebraska the chancellor conferred with various members of the

16 *Hesperian*, 15 October 1891, 9.

17 "An Assistant Librarian," *Nebraska State Journal* (Lincoln), 12 May 1891.

18 Canfield's diary, 30 April 1892.
faculty on May 9. Howard Caldwell, Fred Fling, and John Wightman agreed "that matters could not go on as now, and that they could not be improved under McMillan." Lucius Sherman was noncommittal the first day and Harry Wolfe concurred with the majority, but they came back the next day, with Wolfe suggesting that there should first be a "revolution," returning all departmental books to the main library. Sherman was more concerned with the McMillan's fate, suggesting retention at half pay, "a 'compromise' which he doubts McMillan would accept."\(^\text{19}\) After another "long conference" with Sherman and Wightman, Canfield confronted McMillan on May 25. McMillan offered "to abide by the decision of the Library Committee and myself [Canfield]" and to "report soon."\(^\text{20}\)

George McMillan resigned his position June 15, 1892, effective in January of 1893, but with a paid leave until December. He died of heart failure at his home in Minneapolis ten years later.

**Assistants under McMillan**

McMillan's assistants are not well documented, but Canfield's diary indicates that McMillan had hired

\(^{19}\)Ibid., 9 and 10 May 1892.

\(^{20}\)Ibid., 25 May 1892.
a "Miss Wing" in the summer of 1891 "at his own expense." She may well have been the Elizabeth Wing who went to the Armour Institute Library School and returned to Nebraska as a cataloger hired by Mary Jones. Elizabeth and Alice Wing were two of the founders of the Delta Gamma sorority at the University of Nebraska in 1888. In all probability one of these girls was the one hired by McMillan for work in the library. If she were the one who later got professional training and returned to her alma mater she would have been the first of several to do so.

By the spring of 1892, the university had officially hired two students to assist in the library. These were Miss Florence Smith, as reading room assistant, and Miss Lulu M. Green, as evening assistant. These young women continued to work at the library as assistants under Mary Jones, although Green withdrew in December "in order to pursue special studies in biology in the Chicago university." Miss Green was "one of the best known students at the university," president of the YWCA, president of the Walking Club, and president of G.O.I. She seems to have returned to Lincoln, where she graduated in 1895,

21 *Nebraska State Journal* (Lincoln), 11 December 1892.
and later married a man named King, subsequently moving to Hastings. At any rate her record of library work ended with the year of 1892, but she appears to have had the ambition and strong personality evident in many early librarians.

Miss Florence Sebring Smith stayed at the library for several years. This may have been a sign of extreme loyalty to the institution, or possibly an indication of the scarcity of acceptable employment opportunities for women. In either case, the year under McMillan was her Junior year in which she was Vice President of the YWCA, Vice President of her class, and a member of the Palladian and Classical Clubs. She is listed as an "Assistant in the Library" for this year as well as the first year under Mary Jones. In the 1893-94 school year she was promoted to "Assistant Cataloger." That was the year that she received her A.B. degree from the University, as well. Even though she had graduated, she stayed on as assistant cataloger until 1897, when she left before the April salary shake-up which ended with Mary Jones' resignation. Her departure may have been at least partially due to the reduction in her salary from the $600 per year that she had been receiving for three years to the 40 dollars per month (less than $500 per year) that her library-trained successor, Elizabeth
Wing received. At any rate, teaching seems to have been her alternative career, as the last record of her activity is her departure in the fall of 1898 for Chadron, where she intended to teach in the high school. 22

The First Professional Librarian

Mary Letitia Jones, the first professionally trained librarian at the University of Nebraska, was one of the pioneers of professional librarianship. All who knew her seem to be in agreement that she was highly competent, well educated, constructive and organized. Although she was removed from her position for being a woman at least twice in her career, she remained gallantly dignified and professional, never showing signs of bitterness or spite. An obituary described her as "blue-eyed, fair-haired and blooming" with a "pink-and-gold aura...poised, gracious and decisive." 23

Mary Jones was born of Welsh stock in Bristol, Wisconsin on June 29, 1865. Her father was a Methodist minister and the family moved to Hastings, Nebraska,

22 Ibid., 4 September 1898.

when she was a young girl. Jones attended the University of Nebraska and graduated in 1885. While at the University Jones was a member of the first sorority on campus. During Jones' undergraduate days at the University, the library had just been placed under the administration of Professor Howard. Dynamic growth and an increasing importance were its hallmarks in this period, although the physical environs were still the two small drab second-story rooms described in the 1885 Hesperian. Whether Jones herself ever worked in the library is not recorded, but she certainly used it and was strongly influenced by the university characteristics espoused by Howard and Manatt. At her graduation Jones presented an essay on Milton. The student newspaper noted:

This young lady is known as one of the most pleasant performers the University can produce; pleasant to look upon and pleasant to hear.\(^2^4\)

She taught school for a time, taking a position in the high school in Beatrice immediately after graduation.\(^2^5\) However, "work in the university library was more congenial."\(^2^6\) Mary Jones decided to

\(^{2^4}\) Hesperian, 5 July 1885, 6.
\(^{2^5}\) Ibid., 10 October 1885, 5.
\(^{2^6}\) Haines, 124.
enroll in Dewey's newly formed library school in New York. In January 1891 she entered the four year old school, graduating with 19 other students in the spring of 1892. At the time of her graduation there were fewer than fifty trained librarians in the country, although each of the graduates of the library school set up some form of training in their new positions, and many of these informal training sessions later became graduate library schools on their own.

Chancellor Canfield had obviously heard of Mary Jones and her aspirations, since he made a point of visiting her in the library school before her graduation in 1892. The Lincoln paper reported her hiring with obvious approval:

Miss Jones has spent nearly two years in the school of library economy at Albany, under Professor Melville [sic] Dewey, and was reported by Professor Dewey to the chancellor as one of the most promising graduates that the school has ever known. She is remembered here with great pleasure by her old associates and by the people of Lincoln, who knew her when a student. . . . There is general rejoicing at the news of this appointment, and a feeling that it is made directly in the line of true university life and effort. . . . With the assistance of Miss Jones, the library can be put in first class working order, and be made ready for removal to the new library building.

The newspaper dispensed more glowing approval in the

27 *Nebraska State Journal* (Lincoln), 12 May 1892.
middle of the summer when Jones finally arrived at work, calling her "one of the best known graduates of the university" and continuing:

Her many friends here are delighted at her willingness to return here, which she does in the face of much better salary elsewhere because of her love for her alma mater and her interest in Nebraska educational work.\(^{28}\)

A year later in his biennial report to the Board, Canfield made his satisfaction known:

She [Jones] came to us as one of the strongest and most promising graduates of the Albany School of Library Economy, with high commendations from the President of that school [Dewey], and with an excellent record as a student in this University some years before. She has proved herself in every respect entirely competent. The business side of the Library is upon an almost absolute correct basis. All its details are managed with the greatest care. To this executive capacity she adds a large knowledge of books and literature in general, and a pleasing address which has won her an enviable place in the esteem of the general student body. It is safe to say that the library has never been as efficient in every respect and in every sense of the word as during the past year.\(^{29}\)

The next year Canfield rewarded that efficiency by suggesting that Jones' salary be raised to 160 per month, rather than the 150 she was then receiving. His

\(^{28}\)"The Library," *Nebraska State Journal* (Lincoln), 3 July 1892.

\(^{29}\)James H. Canfield, Report to the Board of Regents, 6 June 1893, TMs, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

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reasons are listed in his report to the Board:

This seems peculiarly proper not only because the present librarian had reasonable ground to expect this advance when she came to the University, but because she has been obliged to assume much larger responsibilities than those which were first given her. As an illustration, we may mention the fact that all purchasing for the library, including all periodicals, is now entirely in her hands. The Chancellor would add to this that since this change in our methods of purchasing has been made, the saving to the University will equal at least ten per cent.

It seems that the Board was in agreement, since they raised her salary to $170 per month at that point. However, it should be noted that she was paid for only eight months (four quarters of two months each) and the total came to only $1,360 annually, still short of the $2,000 full professors expected. She was, however, at the level, without the rank, of an Adjunct Professor. From the time of her hiring until Canfield left, Jones held the title of "Assistant Librarian," which was deceptive, since there was no "Librarian." In Canfield's last report to the Board he said that the librarian should have "a voice and a vote in the Faculty" and suggested that Miss Jones' title be changed "to that of Adjunct Professor of Bibliography and Assistant Librarian, instead of Assistant Librarian

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30 James H. Canfield, Report to the Board of Regents, 10 April 1894, TMs, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.
as at present." A year later that title was extended to "Adjunct Professor of Bibliography and Acting Librarian" under MacLean. In addition to accepting the acquisitions responsibilities, Jones installed other innovative library practices. A few years after her arrival she described the situation as she had found it:

I do not want to reflect on the work of my predecessors, but the fact is that no records of any value, no catalogues, or anything that goes to make up the machinery of a modern library existed previous to my taking up the task three years and a half ago, hence we have besides the regular current work the accumulation of the past twenty five years.

She immediately started the much needed and requested card catalogs, both author-title and subject. By January of 1895 about one-third of the library had been cataloged. Even after being absent for a week due to "slight injuries received in being thrown from a buggy," she showed enough dedication to her job to

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31 James H. Canfield, Report to the Board of Regents, 11 June 1895, TMs, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

32 George MacLean, Letter to Mary Jones, 21 April 1896, Ms, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

33 Mary Jones, Letter to C.H. Morrill, 19 February 1896.

34 "University Notes," Omaha News, 19 January 1895.
announce that the library would start remaining open on Saturday evening until 10 o'clock. Jones was also reported to have travelled rather extensively and to have spoken at various clubs and organizations, as did many of the faculty of the University at that time.

Mary Jones brought to the library not only modern library methods, but also a friendly and cheerful personality. In 1894, a newspaper article noted:

The university library is one of the best places in town to find good nature and plenty of it... Miss Mary L. Jones and her assistants... are conducting one of the best regulated university libraries to be found anywhere... It requires not only science, but unfailing patience. But even in this ungrateful world patience brings its reward. There is perhaps no professor in the institution who can be said to be absolutely popular... but it would be safe to offer a gold medal for any student who has anything but the warmest regard for the librarian. Miss Jones has achieved the feat of being popular alike among the learned and the unlearned.

In 1893, Canfield reported to the Board of Regents that the library had "never been so used and so useful."

There is every indication that Mary Jones enjoyed her life in Lincoln. She had many friends from her days at the University, she had grown up in Nebraska,

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35"University Notes," Nebraska State Journal (Lincoln), 23 January 1895.

36Nebraska State Journal (Lincoln), 18 November 1894.
and although she had spent two years getting an education in New York, much of that eastern culture was within easy reach of Lincoln. While the town of Lincoln was only a quarter century old and still smelled of wildflowers and prairie fires, pioneers of commerce and the professions had arrived, "bringing along their tapestries and oriental rugs, their fine linen and china, pianos and libraries." Social clubs, calling cards, opera, balloon ascensions, and oysters frozen in blocks of ice were all a part of Lincoln society. Since Lincoln was on the main rail line between the coasts, many professional touring companies performed in the town as well. Jones' interest in this aspect of university life is evidenced by her friendship with Willa Cather, who was a sophomore at the University in 1892 when Jones returned from New York. In March of 1895 these two young friends took a trip to Chicago to attend grand opera during the Metropolitan season. The excitement of visiting the big city, with acitivities both day and night, caused Cather to fall asleep in the final opera, but it

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was nonetheless a "pivotal experience." While Jones enjoyed this cultural friendship, Cather graduated that spring, leaving town at the same time as Jones' other friends and supporters, the Canfield family.

Jones never reported the accomplishment to her own credit, but she also founded the Nebraska Library Association, sending out a call for a meeting to be held at University Hall, April 22, 1895. Mary Jones was elected president of the new association, numbering 16 librarians at the time. On January 1 of the following year the first annual meeting was held in the new library building. A constitution was adopted, dues of 50 cents a year were set, and Jones was again elected president. The theme of that first meeting was "The Relation of the Public Library to the Public School," a subject dear to the heart of Chancellor Canfield, who had departed for Ohio by that time. 

Canfield's successor, Chancellor George MacLean was not congenial with Mary Jones. "MacLean did not

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39 Slote, 20.
40 Lincoln Call, 23 April 1895.
41 Nebraska State Journal (Lincoln), 18 December 1895.
have the qualities that endeared Canfield to Nebraskans."\textsuperscript{43} Alvin Johnson, a student at the University, said that MacLean "did not sit well with us."\textsuperscript{44} In addition to a personality and accent that irritated the Westerners, and educational goals perhaps more suited to eastern universities, MacLean also had an antipathy to women in positions of importance. When he arrived, he completed the suggestion of Canfield that the librarian's title be promoted to "Acting Librarian . . . ," but he also told Mary Jones that he would "secure a man for librarian as soon as the University could pay a fitting salary."\textsuperscript{45} This story was handed down verbally, since it is reported by Nellie Compton, who was an assistant at the time.

Compton's story also fits with MacLean's later recorded actions. In 1899, when he left Nebraska for the University of Iowa, MacLean promptly alienated the entire Iowa library staff, who resigned en masse. He then replaced the female head librarian with Malcolm Wyer, the younger brother of the male librarian MacLean.

\textsuperscript{43} Manley, 117.

\textsuperscript{44} Alvin Johnson, 82.

\textsuperscript{45} Nellie Compton, "Notes on the History of the University of Nebraska Library, 1869-1919," [1933?], TMs [photocopy], University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

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had hired for the University of Nebraska. Wyer reported that "the entire library staff of three had resigned in protest at my appointment, and the one who had promised to remain had eloped the day before."  

With MacLean's arrival Jones had clearly reached the peak of her success at Nebraska. She remained for two more years, with a steady decrease in both assistants and financial support. There is some indication that others noticed her plight: a seven page letter to Regent Morrill is in the files in response to his request in February 1896. This may have been investigation pursuant to her official promotion in title, also, however. All was not in complete accord with the rest of the faculty, either. While Jones generally had faculty support for what she was doing, as early as 1893 Chancellor Canfield noted "some feuding about library matters . . . literary men vs. scientific." While two faculty members criticized Jones' management "sharply," the rest of the faculty supported her to Canfield's "surprise and delight." In any case, MacLean informed her of her titular promotion in April, at the same time he notified her

47 Canfield's diary, 30 October 1893.
that there would be no appropriation to replace the full-time trained cataloger on her staff. MacLean also added:

I am well aware that your appropriations have been cut almost to the quick. It was not for lack of appreciation of your work and that of your assistants. If you and they cheerfully make a record upon this sum this year, I am sure the future results will redound to your credit, and the good of the library.

There is little doubt that Jones can be credited with "results," but that clearly did not improve the situation. By the next year, the acquisitions duties which Canfield had turned over to her with such satisfaction were removed from her authority. The Faculty Library Committee was by-passed (or refused?) and a new "Regents' Library Committee" was established to approve and place book orders. On May 13, 1897 Jones was notified that both cataloging positions were re-instated at a greatly reduced salary (the combined salaries of $350 and $280 being considerably less than the $1,000 Miss Robbins alone had been making before she left). It is worth noting that these salaries

48George MacLean, Letter to Mary Jones, 21 April 1896, Ms, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

49George MacLean, Letter to Mary Jones, 13 May 1897, Ms, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.
were abruptly increased a year later, when MacLean's choice of librarian arrived.

By this time it was clear to Jones that she could no longer stay at Nebraska. Between all of her other duties she apparently took time to type extensive reports on previous library practices and suggestions for her successor. At the end of May she travelled to Chicago "to investigate the desirability of an offer to take a position in the state university of Illinois."

The newspaper account continues:

She decided in view of the greater advantages offered there to give up her position as acting librarian of the state university here. Her announcement of the decision to the chancellor and faculty members yesterday brought universal regret, but they could hardly urge her to remain in view of the better offer. She will take a position as professor of library economy in the library school at Champaign, which is to be enlarged by the removal there of the Armour Institute library school from Chicago. Miss Jones will have charge of the library of the state university. . . The library is housed in a splendid new building. . . The purchase and reception of . . . new books will come under Miss Jones' supervision.50

Jones returned to Nebraska long enough to attend the Library Committee meeting held on June 4.51 She then wrote her formal letter of resignation to the

50 Nebraska State Journal (Lincoln), 30 May 1897.
51 Library Committee, Minutes, 24 September 1897, Ms, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.
Board of Regents: "Having received an appointment to the University of Illinois, I respectfully ask to be released from my present position . . ." While Jones was nominally still on the university staff, the summer library correspondence was done by one of her assistants. Jones' summer was well spent professionally, as she "was one of the American delegates to the London International Conference of 1897." While in Europe, she apparently planned a "tour of inspection and study of the great libraries of the world [i.e. Europe]." She left Lincoln and took up her new duties in Illinois in September.

That Mary Jones could find a new job so readily can perhaps be explained by her contacts in the library field, her reported trips to Chicago suggesting friends there, and her recent hiring of an 1897 graduate of the Armour Institute. No doubt she was well known at the institution which fortuitously was expanding. That this was only a short-term solution to remove her from an intolerable situation is made evident by the fact

52Mary L. Jones, Letter to the Board of Regents, 8 June 1897, Ms, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

53Haines, 125.

54Lincoln Call, 12 June 1897.
that she left Champaign after three months, in December 1897.

Six months later, Jones returned to the Great Plains, taking a position as a classifier at the Iowa State Library in Des Moines, where she remained for less than a year. In 1899 her aging parents died in Pasadena, California. After arriving there to arrange the estate, Jones accepted a position at the Los Angeles Public Library, where she was swiftly promoted to librarian. The incredible, sensational story of her being fired in 1905, after it was decided that it "would be in the best interests of the library to place a man at the head," has been related elsewhere.\(^{55}\) It is worth pointing out that her reaction to this discrimination had changed. In Nebraska she meekly submitted, and there is little evidence on the record of her treatment, other than the anecdote remembered by Miss Compton. However, in Los Angeles Jones fought to keep her job using every means available: publicity, the support of the American Library Association, marching suffragettes, petitions with a thousand signatures, retaining the library keys, etc. Her struggle was for naught, so she courageously continued

her distinguished career at Bryn Mawr and the Los Angeles County Library. She did volunteer service in World War I, retired to Pasadena in 1920, and died in 1946 at the age of 80.

**Assistants under Jones**

When Mary Jones took over from George McMillan in 1892, there were two student assistants in the library. The following year there were one professional (Jones) and four student assistants, and by April she had hired another "professional" (half-way through her course at Albany) as cataloger. The third year this was increased to two full-time professionals (librarian and cataloger), one full-time college-graduate (assistant cataloger), and three student assistants. The fourth year, under the influence of MacLean, the two full-time positions remained, but both women left, leaving Jones without any fulltime assistance for much of her fifth year. There were seven student assistants in 1895-96, with one college-graduate hourly employee, a staffing pattern remaining from Canfield's budget. In Jones' final year there were only three student assistants, with two graduated women, paid by the hourly student rate. In that last spring, Jones did hire two professionals, although their salaries were much
reduced before they arrived the next fall to work for Acting Librarian John D. Epes.

Lulu M. Green and Florence S. Smith were both student assistants at the library when Mary Jones started in the fall of 1892. Smith stayed until 1897, as previously related. When Green left in December, she was replaced by May Hopper, a student from Thayer. Hopper was apparently a freshman at the time, since she remained on the staff as a student until her graduation in 1896. During her senior year, she was in "charge of the library [in] the evenings, from half past six to ten o'clock." After graduation she became a teacher in Alliance.

May Hopper remained, and Florence Smith, a senior, was promoted to Assistant Cataloger in 1893-94. To this nucleus of experienced help Gertrude Laws and J.C. Jones (students) were added. The momentous step came in April of 1894, when a trained cataloger was hired to help with formation of the card catalogs.

Edna Dean Bullock was a native Nebraskan. She started grade school in 1874 across the street from the new University Hall. After growing up in the shadow of the institution, it was only natural that she should

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56 Mary Jones, Letter to C. H. Morrill, 19 February 1896, AMs, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.
enroll. After working at teaching close to Lincoln for a while she returned to the University to graduate with the class of 1889. At about that time, she heard of the library school being established in New York. Bullock did not have the financial means to go directly to library school, needing to spend some time teaching in Lincoln to earn money before matriculating in 1892. Even so, her finances were not enough to see her straight through, and she returned to the University of Nebraska when Mary Jones offered her the job of cataloger in April 1893. Jones was then embarking on a complete catalog of the University collection and a trained cataloger was necessary for the project. Bullock stayed until October, earning enough money to enroll in New York for her final year. She graduated in 1895. The first semester of training would have been enough to get her a cataloging job at that time. Many others from the library school were being lured away before graduation. In addition, Bullock's resignation to return to library school lost her the job at the University. She showed a strong attachment to the profession by returning to complete the degree.

The summer after her graduation Bullock worked in a couple of small libraries in New York and in Massachusetts the following fall, but was always on the alert for a chance to return to her beloved Nebraska.
The Nebraska state library in Lincoln gave Bullock a position closer to home in December of 1895, where she worked until 1896. In 1897 she took a short term job in Nebraska City "cataloging and starting" the public library there. However, when Mary Jones was looking for a cataloger again, even under MacLean with a greatly reduced salary, Bullock was glad to accept it. She spent the summer working in the John Crerar Library in Chicago before arriving at the University of Nebraska in September to work for Epes. That year under Epes was a disastrous year for all concerned, particularly for one used to high professional ideals and following Jones as a role model. Bullock may well have left in disgust, or she may have been dismissed for objecting to Epes' incompetence. Whatever the reason, Bullock attended the American Library Association annual convention in New York in the summer of 1898 and then left to become the assistant librarian in Helena, Montana. Understandably, "the climate there did not agree with her." The next spring she

57 Lincoln Courier, 1 May 1897.
58 A more complete explanation of this possibility appears in the discussion of Epes' term of office.
59 Nebraska State Journal (Lincoln), 9 August 1898.
60 Ibid., 4 April 1899.
got closer to home in the Iowa State Library at Des Moines, succeeding Mary Jones in that position after Jones had departed for California. While working there, she remarked: "The proper definition of the word 'exile' is 'A Nebraskan detained away from his state.'" While in Iowa, Bullock was credited with "inaugurating the movement to bring the needs of Lincoln to Mr. Carnegie's attention," regarding the new Carnegie public library in Lincoln.

After a brief stint in Washington state, and a case of typhoid fever, Bullock returned to Lincoln for five years of service as secretary to the newly formed Nebraska Public Library Commission from 1901-1906. She served as president of the Nebraska Library Association in 1905. While nominally "secretary" of the Library Commission she did the work of the Commission under the direction of its officers. J. I. Wyer, then librarian at the University, was the president of the Commission. This did not seem to be a very secure position and she eventually resigned saying she sought a job in a "permanent library." Thereafter she had short periods of work establishing libraries, cataloging and

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61 Ibid., 10 September 1899.  
62 Ibid., 31 December 1899.  
63 Lincoln Star, 2 May 1906.
indexing in New York, Ohio, Peru (Nebraska), Spokane, Minneapolis, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, and North Carolina. Finally, she found her niche in the legislative reference bureau back at the University of Nebraska, where she remained from 1911 until her retirement in 1939. While there, she served as mentor and role model, encouraging several of her part-time assistants to study further and become librarians.  

She died in 1957.

When Edna Bullock returned to finish library school, she was replaced by Mary Esther Robbins, the first graduate of a library school to be in a subordinate position at the University of Nebraska. Robbins had graduated from Dewey's library school in the same class with Mary Jones. She spent two years in Connecticut, but when Bullock left Jones without a cataloger, Robbins seems to have been glad to fill the vacancy.

While in Nebraska she took vacations in the East, and visited other libraries frequently, but she was actively involved in Nebraska activities as well. Her

64 Ruth E. Pike, "Near to a School," Nebraska Alumnus, October 1935, 24.

presence was perhaps the deciding factor in Jones' starting a state library association. Robbins served on the "formation committee" in 1895.⁶⁶

However well the situation started, by 1896 it was intolerable. Robbins resigned effective in July. Whether the resignation was due to personal reasons, an early understanding of MacLean's opinions about women librarians, or simply a prescient awareness of the worsening situation is unclear. At any rate, she remained unemployed until the following February, when she started working again in New York, and became an "outstanding name in later library annals."⁶⁷ Robbins' career centered mainly around library school education. For four years she served as a councilor for the American Library Association, and was president of that association for 1908-1909.

While Florence Smith continued on as Assistant Cataloger, and May Hopper as a student assistant, the year 1894-95 saw the addition of two new students: Lewis G. Thayer, a graduating senior from Kansas, and Nellie J. Compton, a junior from Lincoln. Thayer was with the library only one year, but Compton was at the

⁶⁶Lincoln Call, 20 April 1895.
⁶⁷Haines, 124.
beginning of four decades of service to the University library.

Nellie Jane Compton was born in New Hope, New York, in 1873, the oldest of four children. The family moved to Palmyra, Nebraska, when she was six, and then on to Bennett, when she was 9. Her brother remembered those early years:

I remember roller skating on the town rink with father, Nellie, and Paul. The Methodist minister told God and his congregation the next Sunday about father's wickedness.

Her father was a Presbyterian minister and her mother pushed all of the children to get an education. Nellie Compton was the first graduate of the Bennett high school in 1891. In 1892 the family moved to Lincoln and in 1893 she entered the university.

Compton joined the library staff as a student assistant in the fall of 1894, working for Mary Jones in the University Hall library under the chapel. As a student she helped with the move into the new building where she would work for the rest of her life. She had been trained in cataloging by the staff and graduated in 1896. Although she had intended a career travelling

69 "Illness is Fatal to Nellie Jane Compton," Nebraska State Journal (Lincoln), 18 March 1938.
and teaching modern languages, a few weeks before graduation she was offered a full time position in the library:

When . . . she [Miss Jones] and Miss Robbins both urged me to take up library work, telling me I had the right qualities to make a good librarian, I accepted their judgment and the position.

Her first year working full time could have been satisfactory only to one who had been working as a student for fifteen cents an hour. She received $30 a month, slightly less than the 20 cents an hour trained students were getting, with a schedule of 7 hours a day, six days a week, including one evening. By way of comparison, her younger brother Charles had started to college by this time and was working in a shoe store "for $2 per day" which was "not a living wage." Nellie was earning less than that, after graduation, but she still passed on her enjoyment of the occupation to her brother, who later became head of the public library in St. Louis.

While Robbins had already left, and Smith was in the process of leaving, a great deal of the library

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71Charles Compton, 22.
responsibility was left to Compton. Jones described her job that year:

Miss Compton has had the entire charge of the mail, the continuation list, has assigned all book numbers, entered the class and book number on the catalog cards, shelf cards and the books. She has shelf-listed and catalogued as occasion demanded. It will be seen that she is an all-round person and worthy of any responsibility. Her promotion I hope will be speedy.\textsuperscript{72}

When Jones left that summer, Compton was the highest ranking member of the staff remaining, and so found herself in charge, with a new librarian and two other new professionals arriving in the fall. Wisely, she kept a low profile, advising a publisher:

I shall be in charge of the library for only a short time longer and do not wish to be responsible for any more complications than necessary, when the new librarian shall take charge.\textsuperscript{73}

Compton was a survivor, and clearly managed to survive the Epes fiasco as well. While her memoirs mention the many fine attributes of the other librarians she worked for, the only reference to Epes

\textsuperscript{72} [Mary Jones] "Assistants," TMs, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

\textsuperscript{73} Nellie J. Compton, Letter to McClurg, 28 July 1897, Ms, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.
is, "For one year John D. Epes was librarian,"\textsuperscript{74} which is probably the most charitable thing that could be said for that year.

Under James I. Wyer, Compton received an immediate raise and a promotion to "First Assistant in the Library." When the professionally trained librarian, Elizabeth Wing, got married, Compton was promoted again, to "Assistant Librarian", a position outranking all librarians on the staff, with the exception of the head librarian. During Wyer’s frequent absences, as well as the times between librarians, Compton was Acting Librarian, twice for periods as long as a year. Her increasing confidence is evident from a letter to the Board of Regents written in 1905 after she had managed the library for four months during Wyer’s absense. She averred that the additional salary granted was "entirely incommensurate with the increased difficulty and responsibility of the work" and asked for $100 for the four months, which was three times the original amount.\textsuperscript{75} While Wyer was on unpaid leave this amount would have made her salary nearly equal to his.

\textsuperscript{74}Nellie Compton, "Memories," March 1937, 22.

\textsuperscript{75}Nellie Compton, Letter to the Board of Regents, 2 May 1905, Ms, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.
Later in her career Compton was in charge of cataloging, classifying, and staff management. She served as secretary and, in 1912, as president of the Nebraska Library Association, and had several minor articles published. At her retirement in 1936, Edna Bullock wrote:

Through all of these vicissitudes of growth, Nellie J. Compton has been the constant figure in the library personnel. New members of the ever changing library staff have always had her knowledge of the library's rules of faith and practice to fall back on.\(^{76}\)

Nellie Compton died two years later, at the age of 64. Her will left a bequest to provide expenses for library staff members to attend national and state library meetings, and for the pleasure or comfort of the library staff in the staff rooms.\(^{77}\)

In 1895-96, when MacLean became chancellor, Mary Jones still had Robbins as professional cataloger, and Smith as assistant cataloger, with Hopper and Compton as experienced students. That year she hired the newly graduated Anna Fossler, who had just received a science degree from the University. Fossler came from Lincoln, and was probably the daughter of Laurence Fossler, the

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\(^{76}\)Edna D. Bullock, "Four Decades," Nebraska Alumnus, February 1936, 10.

\(^{77}\)"Library Staff Given Residue of an Estate," Lincoln Journal, 23 March 1938.
Professor of Modern Languages. Anna Fossler was apparently fluent in German, as well as being educated in scientific terminology. This expertise combined with the library's cataloging course made her extremely valuable both to the library and the scientific faculty. In Jones' record of the duties of her assistants she stated:

Miss Fossler's special work has been classification of scientific books. In this she has shown uncommon ability both from her knowledge of the sciences, her ease in the German language and natural instinct of a classifier. For the last year she has had almost complete charge of the departmental libraries and for the coming year I had planned to give her more responsibility in that direction.

When Jones left in the summer, Fossler remained, but in the fall Jones found a position for her in Illinois, and Fossler resigned effective October 1. Her value to the institution is indicated by the unanimous request of the Library Committee that "something . . . be done to retain Miss Fossler." She was "well acquainted with the workings of the library . . . with the cataloguing of departmental libraries . . .

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78 [Mary Jones], "Assistants."

79 Anna Fossler, Letter to the Board of Regents. 20 September 1897, Ms, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.
[and] it would be especially difficult to find one so well posted on the scientific books."80

In 1895-96, there were five new student assistants in the library. Leo C. Smith, a junior from Council Bluffs worked there only one year. His job was to shelve and arrange books, although he was also taking the library training course "fitting himself for further work in the library."81 Mary A. Horne of University Place spent her senior year with the library working at the "Industrial College." She later used her training at the University of Nebraska to become a cataloger in a scientific library in Chicago. Flora Bullock, Edna Bullock's younger sister, "did cataloguing for the University library." Edna had just finished her library degree and Flora "intended to take up library work," too, but decided to teach instead.82

May Prentiss was a preparatory student from Lincoln, who stayed in the library her freshman year as well. She took the training course her first year and

80 Ellery W. Davis, Letter from the Library Committee to the Chancellor, 25 September 1897.
81 Mary Jones, Letter to C. H. Morrill, 19 February 1896.
82 Pike, 24.
was receiving five cents an hour more than Compton her second year, when she was dismissed. Jones said on her leaving:

In case further student help is needed of a clerical nature I would heartily recommend that Miss May Prentiss may again be given work. She has been in the library for two hours a day during the past two years accessioning and cataloging. Her work is eminently satisfactory and it is with great regret that her services were given up when the money supply was lessened.

If she had been re-hired, which she was not, Jones was planning on Prentiss for some of the evening work. That Prentiss had nevertheless been indoctrinated into librarianship is indicated by her subsequent enrollment in the New York Library School in 1899, immediately after graduation. After a short career including Bryn Mawr and the Library of Congress, Prentiss married Joel Stebbins and ended her work with libraries.

Mary Henderson Ames also started in the University of Nebraska library in the fall of 1895. She was a sophomore from Lincoln in 1895-96, although she did not appear on the record for the next year. While still a student, she helped organize the "Fem Bot," a group of seven women who clearly felt excluded from the eleven male members of Bessey's "Sem Bot." Jones left the report: "For work in scientific

83[Mary Jones], "Assistants."
libraries Miss Mary H. Ames has had considerable experience, having done a large amount of the cataloging and classifying in the departmental libraries. When the institution panicked the next fall at the resignation of Fossler, this suggestion was apparently heeded, since Ames appeared as an "unclassed" student on the staff under Epes. Although she did not graduate from the University, Ames developed a specialty. In 1899 she moved into the new mechanic arts building as "Assistant in charge of the Engineering Library." The newspaper reported:

Six departmental libraries, those of civil, electrical and mechanical engineering, agriculture, mathematics and the agricultural experiment station, have been consolidated in the new room under the care of Miss M. H. Ames of the library staff. The room will be open six hours daily with the same privileges of access to shelves and use of books overnight as obtained at the central reading room.

In 1902 Ames was assigned the academic rank of "Library Assistant with rank of Assistant Instructor." Ames was in charge of the Engineering Library until 1904, when she resigned.

84 Ibid.
85 Nebraska State Journal (Lincoln), 27 January 1899.
86 Ellery W. Davis, Letter to the Library Board, 4 June 1902.
The final year of Jones' administration saw few new faces, after the extensive budget cuts. There were two new students: Ray P. Teele, a senior from Osceola, and Bertha Belle Quaintance, a sophomore from Illinois. Teele was hired to shelve books, but by April he had been replaced by "Mr. Muller," who was "deft" at this charge. Bertha Quaintance was hired as library stenographer at $100 a year. That year is the only one where she is listed as working for the library. In April Epes wrote a letter stating that she had "transferred to the Executive Office." It might be supposed that she spent some time working for the registrar's office, since the following item appeared in 1900, describing MacLean's introduction of his new faculty at Iowa City:

Among those present [was] Miss Bertha Quaintance as registrar. She comes from the university of Nebraska where she has been registrar.

Unfortunately, this irrepressible newspaper also suggested that "Bertha Quaintance" had a fellowship to

87 [Mary Jones], "Assistants."
88 John D. Epes, Letter to the Chancellor, 12 April 1898, Ms, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.
89 Nebraska State Journal (Lincoln), 21 September 1900.

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Cornell that spring. Whatever the exact story might be, she had by that time dropped out of library circles.

A Brief Period of Ineptitude

Predictably, MacLean replaced Mary Jones with a man: John D. Epes. Epes held the position of Acting Librarian for one year, 1897-98. He had a bachelor's degree from Randolph Macon College, but no further education or training. According to Compton, he had been a professor of English and the librarian at St. John's College in Annapolis, Maryland. Apparently MacLean had offered the position to J.I. Wyer, who was then in the middle of library school, but Wyer refused, having more determination or more money than Edna Bullock had had. Therefore, Epes may have been only a temporary appointment, even though his contemporaries were not aware of it.

On October 8, 1897, after both Jones and Fossler were gone, and after school had already started, John D. Epes was appointed Acting Librarian. On June 6 of

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90 Ibid., 14 May 1900.
91 Karl Brown, "James Ingersoll Wyer, May 14, 1869–November 1, 1955; a memoir and a list of his writings," in New York State Library School Register, xxxv.
the following year Epes wrote to the Chancellor: "I desire that my time of office expire by limitation, October 1, 1898; therefore I decline to become a candidate for re-election." This resignation was accepted and J. I. Wyer was appointed Acting Librarian on August 3, to begin work on September 1.

The popular administration of Mary Jones, mentioned kindly for years after her departure, was a hard act to follow. It is probable that Epes' deficiencies would not have been noticed in other libraries of the time, which had never had professional management. While trying to explain "library keeping" as a profession, J. I. Wyer later pointed out:

A library in the hands of untrained people may appear to be doing a good work and ... it is not until such a library has passed into thoroughly competent hands that a community wakes up to find what a really well-administered library means, and to discover how many opportunities have never been realized or lived up to by the old administration.

The reverse is also true, and Epes did not live up to his opportunities. Nor did he win the respect of the campus.

92 John Epes, Letter to the Chancellor and the Board of Regents, 6 June 1898, Ms, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

An incident in March, widely reported in the newspapers, revealed the extent of Epes' unpopularity on campus. The students were in the habit of leaving their excess property, books, and notebooks on empty shelves on the main floor of the new library building. The disturbance caused by changing books and gathering belongings after each class was bothering students and staff in the library, so Epes decided to put a halt to it. It might be noted that Wyer, also, noticed the problem and later had lockers installed in the basement of the library for student use. However, Epes made a general announcement in the reading room, on two separate occasions, that any personal material left on the library shelves would be taken to the basement. This public announcement obviously only reached those students who happened to be in the reading room at that time. The announcement was ineffective. The next morning the janitor was instructed to carefully take the material down to the basement. Unfortunately, the students who discovered the act were so angry that they threw the books and notebooks around, scattering papers and tearing up valuable work. The Hesperian noted in retrospect that the Librarian did not give sufficient notice, and even if sufficient notice had been given, there was no excuse whatever for placing the books like so much rubbish on the floor, with
little chance for a student finding his books without rummaging over the whole pile. Shortly after 8 o'clock the late arrivals found the hopeless mess and "set up a howl of disgust that was loud enough . . . to prevent the classes in the building from doing any work." Cries of "Epes!", "Bring him out!" and "Hang him!" were "uttered partly in anger and partly in jest." They marched together into Epes' office but he was not there. The students agitated further:

At chapel the students turned out in full force and left the room hooting and hissing. They went directly to the library where they intended forming gangs and making a disturbance through the rooms. A rumor of this had reached the librarian and the doors were locked on them.

A few days later the large red rock which had been donated by the class of '92 was buried where it stood on campus. Despite inquiries, the newspapers had no evidence about who had done the deed or why. Interestingly enough, one of the unsubstantiated rumors was that the mound had originally been adorned with "a graveyard slab bearing the inscription, 'Eps [sic]

94*Hesperian*, 25 March 1898, 10.
95*"University Students Show Their Anger," Lincoln Evening News*, 17 March 1898.
96*"Note Books as Disturbers," Nebraska State Journal* (Lincoln), 18 March 1898.
alone, "Apparently if such a marker existed it was gone by the time authorities arrived on the scene. Nevertheless, the existence of the rumor itself is evidence of the poor esteem enjoyed by Epes.

When it was rumored that Epes would be re-hired in the spring, the student newspaper came up with blunt editorial opposition.

During the past year, practically nothing has been done to increase the efficiency of the library department. The need for a thoroughly trained head is felt more keenly than ever before. The present incumbent, we regret to say, has succeeded in inspiring neither the confidence nor the respect of the students. Members of the faculty, as well as the students, generally, do not hesitate to say that, in their judgment, the library is too important a factor in the progress of the University to be hampered by incompetency or neglect.

Another series of newspaper accounts detrimental to Epes' reputation appeared in September. C.G. Bullock had filed a formal protest with the state auditor about the payment of Epes' salary through September, to complete his year. According to Bullock, Epes had been hired from October 1 until July 1, which the Board subsequently extended to September. Epes handed in his resignation dated June 6. "Three days

97"Vandals Invade the University Campus," Lincoln Evening News, 21 March 1898.

98Hesperian, 20 May 1898, 8.
later, June 9, the library committee employed Mr. Epes for one year from October 1, 1898, but gracefully accepted the resignation dated three days previous."

While Epes was paid immediately for the summer months, his September salary was handed to him in the form of a voucher. It was Bullock's goal to block the payment of that September salary, since Epes had no intention of being there or doing any work in September. Bullock went on to call the summer payment a "transparent fraud." He claimed that in December it was clearly seen by discerning persons who used the university library that Mr. Epes was not qualified for his work, that he was not rendering service to any degree proportionate to the salary of the position, and seemed utterly unable to make himself fit the shoes he had been thrust into.

Bullock concluded by calling Epes a "complete and generally recognized failure." 99

The Omaha paper concluded the story with the statement: "Miss Flora Bullock was also an assistant librarian . . . , but has been dismissed." 100 This account suggests that C.G. Bullock was the father of Edna and Flora, or at least a close relative. Flora, of course, had been "dismissed" regretfully by Jones

100 Ibid.
two years before, because of lack of funds. However, it was not unusual for the newspapers to confuse Edna and Flora. Edna Bullock had previously worked for Jones, had graduated from library school, had just been re-hired, and knew how the library should have been run. Her arrival to work for Epes in the fall must have been quite a shock. Her opinion of Epes' management could well have led to dismissal, although there is no hint of such a thing in the written record. It would explain C. G. Bullock's anger at Epes' additional pay, if his daughter had just been exiled to Montana.

A final epitaph to Epes' sojourn in Nebraska was printed in the *Hesperian* several months after he had departed:

Some say this ominous gloom about the University is due to the loss of Librarian Epes [sic], but his episodes still hover, spectre-like, over the smouldering ashes beneath the big rock, and are soon to be substituted for the Odes and Epodes of Horace in the University curriculum. *Il fuit sed non est.*

This completes the entire official record of Epes' tenure at Nebraska. The negative evidence indicates that he had no advanced training in librarianship and the newspaper accounts of the time

10^1 *Hesperian*, 2 December 1898, 5.
indicate that he was unpopular. Otherwise, there is little to say about this brief hiatus in the library's advance toward modernization.

**Assistants under Epes**

When Epes arrived in October 1897 Edna Bullock and Bessie Wing would have already been there, hired by Mary Jones the previous spring. They both had professional library degrees, one from New York and one from Illinois. Both had graduated from Nebraska before getting further training, and both had probably worked in the University library before, under previous administrators. Added to this expertise was Nellie J. Compton, who had been trained by Jones and had been managing the library over the summer.

Elizabeth Russell Wing graduated from the University of Nebraska in 1889, but she chose to be married in Boston, so that may have been her family's home in later years. She and Alice Wing, who may have been a sister or cousin, were two of the founders of the Delta Gamma sorority at the University. If she was one of the undergraduates who helped in the library under George Howard, that fact is not recorded. She may well have been the "Miss Wing" who was hired by Professor McMillan. If so, it was two years after her graduation. It may be that that experience, or hearing
of the success of her classmate, Mary Jones, or something else entirely, proposed the profession of librarianship to her. In any case, she subsequently enrolled in the Library School at the Armour Institute in Chicago, which later became the University of Illinois Library School. She was hired by Jones at her graduation in 1897, arriving at Nebraska to serve her first professional year under Epes. On June 7, 1898, the same day they accepted Epes' resignation, the Board promoted Wing to "First Assistant in the Library."  

In July she returned to "the east" for a while, perhaps to visit relatives. Under Wyer she was promoted to Assistant Librarian, which she still was when she left the library in September 1901 in order to marry Professor DeWitt B. Brace in October. This faculty romance was noticed by the students of the day, and duly recorded in the Senior Class Book of 1902. The humorous section on Professor Brace includes the following:

> Love is a strange phenomenon... It is difficult to study love in that [it]  

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103 *Nebraska State Journal* (Lincoln), 22 July 1898.
incapacitates [the observer] for minute and accurate observation.\(^{104}\)

The reader was further encouraged to "outline Prof. Brace's theory of love" and "write a short discussion on matrimony."

D. B. Brace was "very reserved, yet friendly..., unassuming," even-tempered, "calm and dignified, yet resourceful." Elizabeth Wing Brace had two children when her husband died of "blood poisoning" four years later in 1905.\(^{105}\) The widow raised the children alone, dying September 2, 1926.

In addition to the full-time staff, Epes had the help of Mary H. Ames, the "unclassed" student hired on Mary Jones' recommendation for the Engineering Library, and four other student assistants. Emile Fauquet, a senior from Cedar Bluffs, was hired to replace Mr. Muller in shelving books. He stayed on for three years, being listed as a senior again the following year, and as a graduate student the year after. He may well have stayed yet another year, since students were no longer listed at that point. In the fall of 1901 Flora Metcalf was hired to work nights "in place of Mr.

\(^{104}\) Senior Class Book, 1902, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1902), 59-60.

\(^{105}\) Nebraska State Journal (Lincoln), 2 October 1905.
E. Fauquet." He is listed in the yearbook as being a "gentleman from West Virginia, with a fierce disposition" who "carefully controlled all justifiable impulses to eject noisy and talkative students from the Library." James Ernest Boyle, a sophomore from Boyle, Kansas, presumably had similar duties. "Kind-hearted and tender, but very exacting," Boyle worked for three years in the library. He graduated in 1900, and the yearbook suggested that he would become a missionary. Wilbur Osborn Ayer, a junior from Table Rock, worked in the library only that one year. Sara Anna Burrows, a sophomore from Lincoln, was hired in April 1898 to replace Bertha Quaintance as stenographer. She does not seem to have remained past one year under Epes, either, leaving in October to work at the Lincoln city library.

A Librarian of National Eminence

James Ingersoll Wyer was born at Red Wing, Minnesota, on May 14, 1869. His family moved to Concordia, Kansas, where Wyer graduated from high school. The family then moved back to Red Lake Falls, Minnesota, where the father started a bank, in which Wyer worked. He soon returned to Kansas, where he spent six more years working in a bank, with steady promotions. However, the depression of 1893, which
forced foreclosures on his friends and neighbors, convinced him that he wanted another line of work. Wyer married May Tyner in 1894, at Concordia, but was already planning a new career. His high school principal had been an Amherst classmate of Melvil Dewey, and undoubtedly joined others in giving advice to the young man. 106

In the spring of 1895, Wyer contacted Dewey about the New York library school. In August he took his wife and four month old son to Minneapolis where he enrolled at the University of Minnesota for a year, to meet the library school's entrance requirements. While Wyer studied in Minneapolis, he worked in the public library. 107

George MacLean was on the University of Minnesota faculty until he became chancellor of the University of Nebraska in 1895. Apparently he left for Nebraska before Wyer arrived, but he knew at least one member of the banking family: Malcolm Wyer, James' younger brother, said he "had met President MacLean in Minneapolis, where he had been on the faculty of the

107 Ibid., xxxiii.
University of Minnesota. During Wyer's first year in library school in New York, MacLean was already asking around for a replacement for the unfortunate Mary Jones. MacLean spent his summers at Lake Minnetonka, where he apparently received an unequivocal recommendation of Wyer from the head of the Minneapolis Public Library. Thus, the position in Nebraska was offered to J.I. Wyer after his first year in library school, immediately after Jones' departure. Wyer refused until he had completed his degree, a year later, in 1898. Already in library school Wyer was handling positions of importance. He was one of two students Dewey sent to Lake Chatauqua in the summer of 1898 to set up the Library School exhibit at the American Library Association meeting. Wyer also was at the top of his library school class academically, and in July after that first year he earned first place in the examination for Library Assistant at Albany.

111 Karl Brown, "James Ingersoll Wyer," in New York State Library School Register, xxxv.
Wyer was appointed Acting Librarian on August 3, 1898, and started work on September 1. He had been hired right out of library school at $1,360, the same salary Jones and Epes had had. At the December 1899 Board meeting, Bessey asked:

Is it not about time for the Board to change the title of the Acting Librarian? . . . In the case of Mr. Wyer, he is actually the librarian of the University. He has all the duties and responsibilities and we are entirely satisfied with the work which he is doing. Moreover, he is regarded by his fellow librarians in the country as one of the strongest men in his profession, and yet we retain the title of Acting Librarian.

Wyer was subsequently promoted to Librarian and Assistant Professor of Bibliography. In the fall of 1900 a "new department of library economy and bibliography" was created for him. In 1902 Wyer addressed the issue of definite academic rank for the assistant librarian and first assistant in the library. That year he was also given the rank of

112 Board of Regents, Fourteenth Biennial Report, 40.

113 Charles E. Bessey, Report to the Board of Regents, 12 December 1899, Ms, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

114 Nebraska State Journal (Lincoln), 24 August 1900.

115 Library Board, Minutes, 26 April 1902, Ms, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.
full professor, "Librarian and Professor of Bibliography." His salary was also raised to $1500. This was a very progressive situation for the time. While many colleges classed the head librarian as faculty, conferring formal academic titles or ranks on them was very rare. Other library staff members generally held no rank or academic position at all.

Thus, Wyer's treatment by the Nebraska administration showed considerable foresight.

Despite the lack of progress under Epes, Wyer had inherited a state-of-the-art institution. The Library building was only three years old, the collection had been entirely cataloged with the Dewey Decimal Classification, and the collection was well selected by the criteria of the day. The staff included an assistant with a library school degree as well as trained full-time help. Wyer's contribution was not so much in the technical inner workings of the library itself, but rather in the national respect and prominence he brought to the institution.


In 1902, while still at Nebraska, Wyer became secretary of the American Library Association, maintaining the office of the organization in his home. He held that position until 1909, when he became first vice president, and then president of ALA the following year in 1910-1911. Obviously, Wyer attended the meetings of that association each summer. While at Nebraska, he wrote an expansion of the Dewey Decimal Classification for the subject of agriculture, and publications on various topics came frequently from his hand. He also compiled a Bibliography of the Study and Teaching of History. In the summer of 1899 he was a lecturer at the Wisconsin library school. In 1903 he taught at the Minnesota library school. In 1904 he was a guest lecturer at both schools. In 1905 he was called on to organize and assist with the Louisville (Kentucky) Public Library while its director was seriously ill. Also in 1905, he was the first graduate of the New York Library School to be granted the M.L.S. degree. The master of library science degree was "given only for distinctly recognized fitness and character, five years of marked success in library work after receiving the degree of B.L.S., contributions to professional literature of recognized worth, and such

118 New York State Library School Register, 31.
other conditions as the faculty may require."\textsuperscript{119}

In all of these activities he advanced the prestige of the University of Nebraska, although the frequent absences were possible only because of previous development of the library and a well-trained staff.

Wyer was a leader in the local library community as well. He served as vice-president of the Nebraska Library Association in 1898-99\textsuperscript{120} and as president in 1899-1900.\textsuperscript{121} He was instrumental in the founding of the Nebraska Library Commission, and served as its first president from 1901-1905, frequently appearing in the press in support of library legislation and the establishment of public libraries. From 1902-1905 he was one of the board of trustees of the Carnegie public library established in Lincoln while he was there.\textsuperscript{122} He was a frequent speaker on the subject of travelling libraries and the importance of access to books.

In addition to professional activities, Wyer was an active participant in the campus community. He

\textsuperscript{119}Nebraska State Journal (Lincoln), 15 December 1905.

\textsuperscript{120}"Modern Library Methods," Nebraska State Journal (Lincoln), 5 December 1899.

\textsuperscript{121}"The New President . . ." Omaha Bee, 14 January 1900.

\textsuperscript{122}"J. I. Wyer, Jr., Promoted," Nebraska State Journal (Lincoln), 19 May 1908.
promoted the establishment of the Daily Hesperian and was on the board of directors of the Daily Nebraskan, helping out in financial emergencies. He supported campus athletics, often being one of only two or three to accompany the team to away games. In 1900 Wyer represented the faculty in the negotiations to retain the football coach. In 1901 he was proposed as manager of the football team, and he was chairman of the football committee for several years. On a more serious note, Wyer was chairman of the drive to obtain matching funds for the Temple Building for student activities.123

It is evident that Wyer was popular with the students of the time. Frequent poems about him in the student annual attest to this. Charles Compton, who graduated from Nebraska and later studied under Wyer in New York, said that none of his college teachers "surpassed Mr. Weyer in clarity, interesting presentation and ability to hammer home important facts."124 When Wyer first arrived, he was hailed by the press as "a western man, knowing the west and

123Karl Brown, "James Ingersoll Wyer," in New York State Library School Register, xxxvi.
124Charles Compton, 27.
understanding its people." One of his first acts was to urge the students to make use of the library staff and services. Since the library was apparently the favorite trysting place for young couples, as well as a primary point for social exchanges, one of Wyer's more onerous duties was to maintain order. That he did so firmly but with understanding is evident. The serious students appreciated this:

The impartial manner in which Professor Wyer deals out suspensions to those students who persist in abusing library privileges is commendable.

In 1903 he effectively stopped the practice of fraternity hazing in the library by consultation with the chancellor and the Pan-Hellenic Congress.

Wyer's involvement in the community of Lincoln was also extensive. The city of Lincoln at that time had a population of over 40,000, with 35 miles of streetcar tracks. Transportation was convenient, with

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125 "At the State University," Lincoln Evening News, 10 September 1898.
126 Lincoln Evening News, 17 September 1898.
127 "Editorial," Scarlet and Cream, 6 December 1901, 8.
128 "No Initiations in the Library," Lincoln Star, 19 October 1903.

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60 passenger trains and 58 freight trains passing through the town daily. Wyer was a well-liked member of the First Congregational Church, and served as its treasurer. He was a leading tennis player in the city tournaments. His life-long interest in stamp collecting led to many conversations and friendships, as well as occasional publications of interest to philatelists. An avid interest in games, puzzles, and limericks was also part of his multi-faceted personality. Wyer seems to have understood the state he lived in rather well. Ten years after leaving, he wrote back:

I wonder . . . whether it is the Burlington or Union Pacific, Lincoln or Omaha, that is bossing the Cornhusker State at the moment.

Today we might ask "Con-Agra or Mutual of Omaha?"

However, the observation still seems current.

While Wyer clearly had much success at Nebraska, he also met with discouragement. His first few months on the job were plagued by eye trouble, which required him to remain in a dark room, so that he did not

129 James L. McKee, Lincoln, a photographic history (Lincoln: Salt Valley Press, 1976), 33.
130 Karl Brown, "James Ingersoll Wyer," in New York State Library School Register, xxxvi.
131 James I. Wyer, "Letter," Nebraska Alumnius, January 1914, 125
effectively start until November. Even though he wrote
the decimal expansion for agriculture, when he asked
the Board for fifty dollars to print it in 1899, they
refused for lack of funds. 132 The administration was
not pleased with the frequent trips he thought
necessary to support the national library movement,
preferring that he stay closer to home. 133

His budget was also a disappointment. Less than
two years after his arrival, Wyer was desperately
requesting that funds for both salaries and materials
be increased. 134 In fact requests for more
departmental book funds grew increasingly frequent.
Two years later requests to reinstate the library
science course and to raise salaries were also
refused. 135 His own salary was still not high enough
to maintain the level of activity he considered
necessary in his position. In the spring of 1905 the

132 Charles Bessey, Report to the Board of
Regents, 12 December 1899, Ms, University Archives,
Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

133 Karl Brown, "James Ingersoll Wyer," in New
York State Library School Register, xxxvii.

134 Charles Bessey, Report to the Board of
Regents, 10 April 1900, Ms, University Archives, Love
Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

135 Library Board, Minutes, 12 November 1902, Ms,
University Archives, Love Library, University of
Nebraska, Lincoln.
library board did recommend a raise from $1,500 to $2,000, but legislative action did not support this.

Starting in April 1905, Wyer took a four month leave of absence without pay to continue helping at the Louisville, Kentucky, library. The last thing he did before leaving was write a letter to the chancellor outlining procedures in his absence and urgently requesting steel shelving be ordered, even if the $7,500 appropriation for that purpose had not yet passed, because they would need the summer to complete the installation before school started. On his departure for Kentucky the newspaper noted:

Wyer . . . may resign his post here, as the position to which he goes is very tempting. The university people are hopeful of retaining his services, but a considerable advance in salary will be necessary to hold him and no assurances can be given him in advance of the action of the legislature.

The raise was not forthcoming, but still Wyer stayed nominally at Nebraska. In June of 1905 Wyer was again on the East Coast, making arrangements for the Portland, Oregon, ALA meeting, as secretary of that

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136 James I. Wyer, Letter to Chancellor and the Board, 24 March 1905, Ms, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

137 Nebraska State Journal (Lincoln), 21 March 1905.
When he returned to Nebraska in August, he fired off another letter noting that "no appropriation has been made" for the steel shelving. He added:

Books are now literally piled on the floor and we are holding many hundred volumes at Central, because of present insufficient shelving. Tables and chairs now used have been picked up from different places all over the campus.

In September he again wrote, recommending "with special force" the acquisition of steel shelving, which was not discussed by the Board in the spring "for lack of time." The shelving problem wasn't solved, however, until the arrival of the next librarian.

In mid-November Wyer tendered his resignation, effective January 1. On December 30 he was still on the job writing a letter detailing staff arrangements in his absence. Within two years Wyer was earning

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139 James I. Wyer, Letter to Chancellor Andrews, 17 August 1905, Ms, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.
140 Ibid., 18 September 1905.
141 James I. Wyer, Letter to the Board of Regents, 15 November 1905, Ms, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.
142 James I. Wyer, Letter to Chancellor Andrews, 30 December 1905, Ms, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.
$5,000, more than triple his Nebraska salary, so he was undoubtedly right: the University of Nebraska was unable to afford a librarian of national prominence on its staff.

Wyer's career after leaving Nebraska was mainly centered around the New York State Library, where he labored for thirty years. His appointment in 1906 was as reference librarian and vice-director of the Library School. In 1908 he became State Librarian and Director of the Library School, a position he held through the disastrous fire of 1911 and through the rebuilding process. Wyer's books on government documents and reference service were classics in the field and still in use a generation later. He remained with the library school until it moved back to Columbia University in 1926. Wyer stayed on in Albany as State Librarian until 1938, when he retired to Salt Lake City, where he was actively involved in philately and genealogy, as well as supportive of the library profession. Wyer died in 1955.

Throughout his career, Wyer was active in increasing the stature of the library profession through American Library Association work, as vice-president (1906-07) and president of the New York Library Association (1913-1914), as president of the National Association of State Libraries (1913-14), as
president of the Association of American Library Schools (1915), and by supporting other libraries and library schools throughout the country.

**Assistants under Wyer**

When Wyer started at Nebraska he had Wing as a professional librarian, Compton as "First Assistant," and Mary H. Ames as the "unclassed" student in charge of the scientific books. In addition he had just taken on Clara Angelina Mulliken, a junior from Fremont, in a nearly full-time position. She replaced Sara Burrows, who had been stenographer for the library for a few months under Epes. Mulliken was working six hours per day, six days a week, so she had nearly a full-time load. \(144\)

Clara A. Mulliken continued to work for the library for seven years. During her undergraduate years she was a member of the Delta Gamma sorority, the one founded some years earlier by Elizabeth Wing, with whom Mulliken was now working. Her second year on the staff, she was listed as "Assistant in the Library." Although she was only a senior graduating in 1900, she

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\(143\) New York State Library School Register, 31.

\(144\) James I. Wyer, Letter to George MacLean, 30 September 1898, Ms, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

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still made $350, which was considered a full-time salary. In 1901, when Elizabeth Wing left to get married, and Nellie Compton was promoted to Assistant Librarian, Clara Mulliken was also promoted to First Assistant in the Library. At that point her salary had gone up to $540. She is probably the "Library Assistant employed at the Central Library" who was working 6 1/2 hours per day six days per week and granted 1/2 day vacation every two weeks in 1902.145 In that same year, the Library Board noticed that she "had no academic standing whatever" and that her name appeared in the catalog "among occasional lecturers and miscellaneous unclassified assistants." She was then promoted to "First Assistant in the Library, with the rank of Instructor."146

Mulliken was the first trained reference librarian at the University of Nebraska. She received extensive training from Wyer in the area of reference, and was finally formally promoted to "Reference Librarian with the rank of Adjunct Professor" in 1905. At that time Wyer reported that she had "done some

145 Library Board, Minutes, 26 April 1902, Ms, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.
146 Ellery W. Davis, Report to the Library Board, 4 June 1902, Ms, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

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graduate work . . . showing . . . a real aptitude for this . . . work" and that she had been "zealous in outside studies under my direction in bibliography and reference work." An increase in salary to $900 was recommended to the Board but her imminent departure makes it difficult to determine whether that was approved. During Wyer's summer absence, Mulliken held the title of "Superintendent of the Reading Room and Reference Desk."147

On September 2, 1905, Wyer relayed her request for leave of absence to the Chancellor:

I . . . recommend that she be given nine months leave of absence to begin October 1st for the purpose of spending the year at the New York Library School.

She has saved enough in her seven years' work with us at the small salary to do this and her zeal and interest in the work are such that she is willing to spend her savings in this way. I think we should encourage all these willing Jacobs who are serving seven years for their Rachels.148

Since her departure was listed as a nine months "leave of absence" and her replacement was called a "temporary appointment," it can be assumed that the University

147James I. Wyer, Letter to the Chancellor and the Board of Regents, 24 March 1905, Ms, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

expected Mulliken to return in 1906 as its other New York trained Nebraskans had.

However, from 1906 to 1908 she had employment at the Rosenberg Library in Galveston, Texas. Perhaps she did not feel obligated to return to Nebraska, with Wyer gone. Perhaps the University was unwilling to extend her leave of absence to finish the degree. Whatever the case, Mulliken graduated from library school in 1907. She stayed one more year in Galveston and then became the librarian of the El Paso, Texas, public library. Mulliken married Frederick W. Norton in September 1908, which effectively removed her from the library field. She died in 1949.  

Wyer's first year staff at Nebraska also included six hourly students. J.E. Boyle and E. Fauquet remained from the Epes administration. George W. Kline, a junior from Nora, remained on the staff for two years. Cliffton J. Platt, a senior from Lincoln, worked on the staff only that one year. His yearbook description suggests that he was a debater and planned on a career in the law. G.A. Johnson, a freshman from Oakland, and A.C. Lee, a sophomore from Lincoln, also stayed only the one year.

149 *New York State Library School Register*, 437.
In 1899 the year started out with Wing, Compton, Mulliken, and Ames, but a staff position was added in the agricultural library. Emma V. Shearer is listed as an "irregular" student from Tilden, but she was hired specifically for the agriculture library. At the December Board meeting, Bessey supported Wyer's request for an assistant "in charge of the consolidated libraries of Agriculture, Horticulture, and the Experiment Station . . . united in the new building on the farm." By April Wyer had filled that position with Emma Shearer who had been working in the Lincoln city library. It is interesting to note that she had "had instruction in library work under Miss [Mary] Jones at the Los Angeles public library." Shearer spent six months over the summer in 1901 organizing the library at the State Normal. Two years later Shearer received promotion to "Library Assistant with the rank of Assistant Instructor," at the same time

150 Charles E. Bessey, Report to the Regents, 12 December 1899, Ms, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

151 Charles E. Bessey, Report to the Board, 10 April 1900, Ms, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

Mary H. Ames of the Engineering Library did. Shearer resigned about the same time that Ames did in 1903.

The second year of Wyer's administration he had Boyle, Kline, and Fauquet as experienced student help. In the fall he hired three new students: James E. Baker, a junior from Red Oak, Iowa, Lewis E. Cottle, a senior from Decatur, Illinois, and E.P. Tyner, a preparatory student from Concordia, Kansas. The yearbook related that Cottle spent his time "in the library ferreting out sequestered student property and curling his mustache." Tyner was the younger brother of J.I. Wyer's wife. No doubt he stayed with the librarian as a part of the family. He was still working for the library in 1905, but left before Wyer did. From the poetry in the Sombrero, it seems likely that Wyer had a reputation for firing students frequently. Therefore, it is possible that Cottle and Baker departed in that fashion, or, perhaps, the library simply had more work than the previous staff could handle. In either case, two more students were hired in January: Turner O. Rinker, a junior, and C.K. Payne, a freshman, both from Lincoln.

After 1900 there is very little mention made of the student help at the library. The institution was growing: the full-time staff was larger and the student help changed frequently. In 1901 the major
change in staff was the marriage of Elizabeth Wing and the subsequent promotions to fill her spot. That same year Flora Metcalf was hired to work evenings, replacing Emile Fauquet. Metcalf was a Brown graduate and had been a librarian in Iowa for two years, so she would have been eminently qualified.¹⁵³

In 1903 Emma Shearer left the Experiment Station library and was replaced by Edna Clara Noble. That same year Mary Henderson Ames left the Engineering Library and was replaced by Letha Daniels. Noble was fortunate in that shortly after her arrival that position started to be paid out of land income, so that she was paid fifty percent more than the equivalent position in the Mechanic Arts building. Noble was still in the same position at Ag Hall in 1910. Letha Daniels remained in charge of the Engineering Library until 1905. That fall she returned to the Central Library for a year before resigning in 1906, to be replaced by Florence Waugh.

In 1905 R.E. Towne, a student, replaced Daniels in the Engineering Library for a couple of months in the spring. In the spring Mabelle Benton Beattie had been hired for evening work. The following fall she

¹⁵³ Ibid.
was assigned to the Mechanic Arts Hall branch. She remained in charge of that library until 1910.

The last major staff change under Wyer was his hiring of Clara Craig to replace Clara A. Mulliken as a "temporary appointment" for the year 1905-06. Craig was born near Craig, Nebraska, and attended the University of Nebraska, graduating in 1903. The Senior Book of 1903 describes her as "a sweet, modest, retiring girl, with blue eyes and fair hair." She may have worked under Wyer as a student, although the record is bare in that time period. In any case she went directly to the New York Library School, graduating in 1905. Her first year appointment was as "Library Assistant" as befitted her temporary status. In 1906 Craig was promoted to the permanent position of "Reference Librarian." Clara Craig was the first library school graduate to be hired as a reference librarian at the University of Nebraska. She was president of the Nebraska Library Association in 1924.

Another Librarian Trained in New York

Walter K. Jewett arrived at Nebraska in the spring of 1906, shortly after J.I. Wyer left. Seven years later Professor Fling would say:
To succeed an unusually able man is one thing; to fill his place quite another. Dr. Jewett did both.

Walter Kendall Jewett was born in Fitchburg, Massachusetts, in 1870. He graduated from Brown University in 1891, and from Harvard medical school in 1894. Thereafter he did some travel and study abroad. The profession of medicine was apparently his father's idea, and after a few years of practice in Fitchburg, Jewett decided to change careers. He enrolled in the New York Library School in Albany in 1903. Although his subsequent employers refer to him as a graduate of the school, the library school records show that after the requisite two years, he had only a "1st year certificate" in 1905. Nevertheless, he left the school for a position with the Weather Bureau, and for the first few months of 1906 he worked as senior assistant in the John Crerar scientific library in Chicago. He had become personally acquainted with Chancellor Andrews who had been president of Brown while Jewett was there. In May, 1906 he accepted


155 New York State Library School Register, 60.

156 Nebraska State Journal (Lincoln), 12 April 1906.
the position of librarian at the University of Nebraska.

Jewett was described as "genial" and "lovable" with "an alert mind," "sunny disposition," and "merry wit." "He took life seriously, but not tragically." He was married, but had no children. Jewett had traveled extensively including Europe, but he had never before been in the West. According to Compton, he was "amusingly amused" at everything Western. Jewett was president of the Nebraska Library Association in 1908.

Under Jewett's administration the library doubled its size, while still maintaining a high level of quality. After Jewett's death, Fling described the librarian's accomplishments:

Handicapped by limited resources and unable to compete in the purchase of books with the richer institutions . . . he realized the vast importance of a large and well-chosen library for a great university and he was ambitious to give to the University of Nebraska a collection of books that would be ranked among the best in the country.

157 Fling, 98.
158 Nebraska State Journal (Lincoln), 12 April 1906.
160 Fling, 98.
While Jewett was perhaps excellent at developing the library collection, his views on library service were not as progressive as Wyer’s had been. He retained the problems of socializing in the library, including "fudge and chocolate parties." ¹⁶¹ Six months after his arrival, Jewett removed the newspapers from the reading room, saying that "The library is not for a general study hall." He further stated:

The reading room is for reference purposes solely. Students are not supposed to come to the library for any other reason except to use the references to be found on the shelves. ¹⁶²

This action brought disapproval from the faculty, and the students were "up in arms." A few years later, in 1911, due to loss and disappearance of books, Jewett closed the stacks of the library to all but professors and graduate students. ¹⁶³

Jewett died while he was the librarian at the University of Nebraska. In the spring of 1913, he suffered an illness of seven weeks duration.

¹⁶¹ "Poor Light," Lincoln Evening News, 26 October 1906.


¹⁶³ Library Board, Minutes, 2 March 1911, Ms, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.
culminating in his death on March 3. It makes an interesting postscript to this time period that Jewett's replacement was Malcolm Wyer, the younger brother of James I. Wyer. According to Malcolm, he had been offered the job earlier, when his older brother left Nebraska, but at that time he had had only one year at the University of Iowa, under MacLean, and he wanted to continue his work there.

**Assistants under Jewett**

The period from 1906 to 1910 was a time of relative stability in staff. Wyer had left Compton as Assistant Librarian, Clara Craig as Reference Librarian, Edna C. Noble in the agriculture library, and Mabelle B. Beattie in the science and engineering library. All four of these staff members remained in their same positions for the final years of this study. In 1907 Clara Glidden was hired for the law library, although the next year she went to the Central Library and Harriet Wilson took over at the law library. In 1909 Adelaide C. Rood became yet another library assistant. When Letha Daniels resigned in 1906, she was replaced by Florence Edith Waugh, who resigned a year later, being replaced by Adelaide C. Rood.

The major growth in professional staff came in the spring of 1908 with the hiring of Marion Cinderella
Bell as cataloger. Since the administration of Mary Jones there had not been a full-time trained cataloger at the library. The growth in acquisitions greatly increased the significance of the cataloging process.

Jewett reported to the chancellor in November:

The great increase in the amount of work performed by the staff of the library has necessitated the employment of an additional cataloger this year and before long further increases of the staff will be imperative.\(^{164}\)

While funds for student help remained similar to previous years, the listing of occasional names gives no sort of comprehensive picture.

"There Were Giants In the Earth"

Reviewing the staff patterns for these two decades, several topics take on added importance. The most obvious of these is the quality of the librarians.

In 1906 Professor Fogg stated:

There are many reasons why our library is greater than others of the West. The chief one of which is its good management. Since it was re-organized in 1892 it has been managed by competent persons and now ranks higher than many others in the west.\(^{165}\)

\(^{164}\)Walter K. Jewett, Report to the Chancellor and the Board, 23 November 1908, Ms, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

\(^{165}\)"University Library in Care of its New Chief," Lincoln Evening News, 1 May 1906.
For comparison, it should be noted that most colleges and universities were appointing their first full-time staff member during the years from 1877 to 1910. Significantly, however, very few of these "librarians" had had any formal training. Most were recent graduates, faculty wives, or anyone who was available. This was in a time when many colleges had no full-time librarian at all, and those that did still often had the librarian in a custodial position.166

At the University of Nebraska, for seventeen of the nineteen years in question there was a graduate of the New York Library School administering the library. Nebraska's position was unusual, perhaps even unique, in relationship to that library school, then considered the best in the country. When Mary Jones and Mary Robbins graduated in the 5th graduating class they were within the first 100 graduates of that school. So at least 2 percent of the graduates up to that time worked for the University of Nebraska. Edna Bullock, in the seventh graduating class had 138 graduates before her, thus maintaining the percentage. By the time Wyer graduated, in 1898, there had been 200 graduates, but already four of them were working or had been working

for Nebraska, still a 2 percent average. The University of Nebraska was only one institution, and literally thousands of new public as well as academic libraries were looking for library school graduates, so that percentage could not be maintained indefinitely with any reasonable standards of turnover. Nevertheless, in the following ten years four more New York students, as well as graduates from other institutions, graced the halls of the Nebraska University.\footnote{New York State Library School Register.} This is an impressive record. Downs studied twenty leading university librarians who rose to prominence after 1900. Of these, he found that only six had had graduate study in library science, but of those six, five had studied at the New York State Library School.\footnote{Downs, "Role," 495.}

The staff was impressive for more than academic qualifications. Mary Jones and James Wyer were outstanding pioneers in the profession, both being considered at the top of their class in library school, and both being nationally recognized for their accomplishments. Jewett died at the age of 43, and was unable to fulfill his full potential, but he seemed to
be of slightly lesser caliber than the first two librarians. At Nebraska, even the subordinate positions were filled with personnel of high quality. Mary Robbins in particular left a later record of high achievement. Consider for example the year 1908: Mary Robbins was president of the American Library Association. James Wyer was the 1st vice president. They must have worked together often in the course of their duties. One wonders what mutual reminiscences they might have shared about Nebraska.

In addition to personal achievement Nebraska librarians were outstanding in encouraging others to join the profession. Jones in particular seems to have served as a role model for many young Nebraska women: Edna Bullock, May Prentiss, Nellie Compton, Elizabeth Wing, Emma Shearer, perhaps even Clara Mulliken and Clara Craig. Compton and Wyer both not only encouraged their student workers to continue in librarianship, but each was also enthusiastic enough to convince a younger brother to pursue that career. Charles Compton became the director of the public library in St. Louis and an ALA president. Malcolm Wyer ultimately became the director of the Denver Public Library. J.I. Wyer clearly encouraged the aspirations of Prentiss and Craig. Bullock herself is credited with encouraging her assistants to take up the career of librarianship.
Both the personal excellence and role-modelling capabilities of Nebraska librarians were affected by yet another factor: the position of women in society and within the profession of librarianship. The views of turn-of-the-century librarians on this subject are relevant here. Professor George Howard discussed the preponderance of women in the liberal arts:

> It does not mean a sex difference in mental capacity . . . In the last analysis, the problem is economic and social . . . The fundamental cause of sex segregation lies deeper . . . Men are shunning the liberal arts because they fancy there is "no money in them."\(^a\)

Melvil Dewey, the "father of librarianship," did not believe women were equal, just cheaper. He thought women should be paid less than men because they had "poorer health," lacked "business and executive training," and lacked "permanence in their plans." He concluded:

> [A man] adds something to his direct value; just as a saddle horse that is safe in harness . . . will bring more . . . than the equally good horse that can be used only in the saddle."\(^b\)

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\(^a\) *Nebraska State Journal* (Lincoln), 20 January 1906.

At the University of Nebraska, Chancellor Canfield was known to publicly champion the rights of women, but he was also a realist. As the librarian at Columbia he advised a college administrator:

You will find the women by far more satisfactory than the men, at the prices you must pay. It is worth everything to secure permanent service in your library staff; and an ambitious and active young man will either overburden your payroll with his demands for increased salary or will leave you; whereas your ambitious and active young woman will take it out in bettering her service.

He deplored the state of affairs, but noting the influx of women into the field, he actively discouraged men from entering the profession, since only a few choice administrative positions could be left for them.

Even Mary Jones admitted to some reverse discrimination on the basis of sex when she wrote:

I have further favored the young women rather than the young men since they are better adapted as a rule to such work and further because so few opportunities are offered them in the way of remunerative labor.

This may explain why she had a part in developing so


172 Mary L. Jones, Letter to C. H. Morrill, 19 February 1896, Ms, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.
many librarians. The male students Wyer hired were no
doubt cognizant of many more career options.

Wyer himself was also aware of the problem of an
abundance of women in the field. He said before
leaving Nebraska:

Women greatly outnumber the men in American
libraries . . . Undoubtedly women are
employed more generally than men because
their labor can be had cheaper, yet . . .
many of the most important qualities . . .
are possessed by women in a far higher degree
than by men.

This particular point must have bothered him for some
time, because nearly twenty-five years later he
published an article criticizing the general practice
in academic libraries of discriminating against
qualified women. "Undeniably," he stated, "for a
generation men have been replacing women as librarians
of college libraries." He continued:

Within my own experience, men have replaced
women as librarians at Northwestern, Chicago,
Kansas, Nebraska, Illinois, Iowa, New
Hampshire, and within the past two years at
Syracuse, Ohio, Delaware, Pomona . . . Those
doing most library placement work in this
country can cite numbers of cases where men
not only of limited library experience but of
no library experience or training have been
chosen before women of unquestioned ability,
professional training and pertinent
experience.

Furthermore, Wyer concluded, "I am also a bit curious

173 "Much Merit in Free Books," Nebraska State
Journal, 5 June 1905.
as to the reasons for such consistent male preference. I have never heard one given." For what it may be worth, Nebraska seems to have been well ahead of other academic institutions in replacing a woman librarian with a man.

To the extent that an institution can be judged by the quality of the people it can attract as staff, the University of Nebraska did an excellent job. To the extent that it is judged by its ability to retain those people the record is mixed. Robbins left after only two years, probably having to do with funding, or perhaps an easterner's distaste for western society. Jones stayed for five years but left because of sex discrimination. Wyer remained for seven years, but left over budget and salary problems. Mulliken did not return, largely because of better opportunities elsewhere. While many talented people stayed for several years out of loyalty to their alma mater, Compton and Craig were the only ones who had a very lengthy career at Nebraska, and Compton was the only one of the trained and encouraged young women who did not go back for further training. It could be argued that the training she had was at the hands of people

who would later be famous for training librarians, Jones in California and Wyer in New York.

Nevertheless, while well-trained at home, she was the only one who did not have a degree to make her training transferable to better opportunities elsewhere. Since this study covered only part of Craig's career, there isn't any way to draw conclusions about her decision to stay.
CHAPTER IV
THE NEW LIBRARY BUILDING

The change to a professional staff made many differences in how the library was administered, but for the casual observer the most obvious change in the library was its move into a new building in 1895. The late nineteenth century and early twentieth century were a time for extensive library construction. The immense growth of collections required it. The public libraries led the way with grants from the Carnegie Foundation. Larger and more established colleges and universities, such as Harvard and Yale had already had a building designated for the library, but joined the trend in providing additions or entirely new buildings during this period. In academic libraries, however, by far the greatest observable change came from the newer universities and colleges, almost all of which built their first building to be designated a "Library" within a decade or two of 1900.

The University of Nebraska was no exception. As Manatt's policies drew the University closer to university status, the collection was growing, both in
size and utilization. A building designated as the library would greatly add to the university aspirations of the institution.

**Early Requests for a Library Building**

Even before the library was moved to the larger, first floor rooms in University Hall, there was agitation for a library building. In the fall of 1886, the student newspaper suggested that it was "impolitic to ask for very much," but still maintained that both a library and a gymnasium/armory were needed.\(^1\) In December the Regents chose to ignore the library building recommendation "till some future time," in deference to the armory/gymnasium,\(^2\) which was duly granted the following spring.\(^3\) The subject was not closed, however, which may have lent impetus to the move into larger rooms in 1889.

Almost as soon as the library had been moved into the more spacious rooms on the first floor of University Hall, the shelf space and table space were found to be inadequate. In 1890 the Library Committee's annual report listed the improvement wrought by the

\(^1\) *Hesperian*, 22 November 1886.

\(^2\) Ibid., 22 December 1886.

\(^3\) Ibid., 15 April 1887.
move within University Hall, but at the same time, Chairman Little voiced the need for a new building. While the new space was adequate for the library "in its present size," room for future growth was a necessity. The committee was particularly concerned with the possibility of a loss of the already valuable collection by fire.  

Acting Chancellor Bessey relayed this request to the Board, stating that "the greatest need for the near future" was for a "proper building for housing the books." He continued:

No institution has a right to expose to unnecessary risk a library such as we must gather here.

In the spring of 1891 Bessey again referred to the need for a building "in which to house permanently and securely the library we now have." Bessey emphasized the point further:

I trust that you will urge upon the legislature the appropriation of a sum of money for a fire proof library building . . . If it is impossible to secure enough to erect the whole of the building at this time, I

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4 C. N. Little, Report of the Library Committee to Acting Chairman Bessey, 1889-1890, Ms, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

5 Charles Bessey, Report to the Board of Regents, 1889-1890, Ms, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.
think it advisable to secure enough to begin its erection. It will take about $100,000 to complete it, and if we can do no better than to secure $50,000 at this time, it will be greatly to our advantage.

In addition, Bessey noted the constrained space of the State Historical Society library, also housed in University Hall, and suggested that it be moved into the new library building "for a term of years, at least."⁶

This apparently yielded results, since the 1891 legislature appropriated $37,000 for the start of construction. In June the Board "passed an order looking to the erection of a library building at an early date."⁷ A Library Building Committee was formed, consisting of the Chancellor, the President of the Board, and Professor Little. Little "gave the closest possible attention to all details; without which the institution and the state must certainly have suffered both delay and loss."⁸ With the assistance of a committee of the faculty, preliminary plans and specifications were drawn up and submitted to four

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⁶ Charles Bessey, Report to the Board of Regents, 1890-1891, Ms, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Board of Regents, Eleventh Biennial Report (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1892), 8.
architects, two in Lincoln and two in Omaha. The firm of Mendelssohn, Fisher & Lawrie from Omaha submitted the accepted plan.

Canfield Supervises Early Construction

Planning for the new library building was underway in the summer of 1891 when Chancellor James H. Canfield arrived. The advertisement readied for prospective students stated that a new library building was "under way." Three weeks after his arrival, Canfield had a "long conference" with Professor Little about "plans and specifications."

Already in his first conferences, Canfield was pressing for an overseer or ombudsman to guarantee a solid structure, unlike the constantly repaired and poorly built University Hall. In her book The Professor's House Willa Cather described the problems of frontier university architecture:

The architect had had a good idea . . . But after it was begun, the State Legislature had defeated him by grinding down the contractor to cheap execution . . . Ever since it was finished, plumbers and masons and carpenters

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9 C. H. Gere, Report of the Library Building Committee, 5 May 1891, Ms, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

10 Canfield's diary, 18 July 1891.
had been kept busy patching and repairing it.

Canfield wanted no such problems with the library. He "insisted that a competent, practical workman should be appointed foreman, in interest of the university: to be backed by the Board to the last letter, in securing an honest building."\(^\text{12}\) Canfield wrote, "It seems almost impossible to cure the radical defects of 'public work,'"\(^\text{13}\) but he seemed bent on trying. A month later, in August, Canfield emphasized the same point, seeking "a suitable person as inspector of all labor and materials as to quality."\(^\text{14}\)

The time Canfield himself spent on the new building was extensive. During one week in August 1891 he devoted two mornings and one afternoon to conferences and meetings about plans for the library. His work was not restricted to formal meetings. When Canfield met the architect by accident on a train trip, he continued the planning process with what time was available.\(^\text{15}\) On the way back from a vacation in the

\(^{11}\)Willa Cather, *The Professor's House*, (New York: Knopf, 1925), 143.

\(^{12}\)Canfield's diary, 21 July 1891.

\(^{13}\)Ibid., 29 October 1891.

\(^{14}\)Ibid., 18 August 1891.

\(^{15}\)Ibid., 28 March 1892.
East he spent his available time "examining new buildings with a view to getting hints for our Library building."\textsuperscript{16}

The Building Committee submitted the architectural plans to 12 construction firms for bids, again evenly divided between the two cities: 6 in Lincoln and 6 in Omaha. The month of September was allowed for preparation of the bids, which were to be opened on September 23.\textsuperscript{17} Then the planners concentrated on questions of lighting and heating. Canfield's attention to details caught a "serious error" in high rather than low pressure steam heating plans, fortunately in time to consult the architects. On the 23rd they opened the bids. Unfortunately, all of the bids were higher than hoped for, so they went back for bids using the cheaper "pressed brick" rather than stone.\textsuperscript{18} Further reductions were possible by using pine instead of oak in some locations, and by covering the floors with maple rather than oak. These

\textsuperscript{\begin{footnotes}
\item[16]\textit{Ibid.}, 20 July 1892.
\item[17]\textit{Library Building Committee, Letter to the Board of Regents, September 23, 1891, Ms, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.}
\item[18]\textit{Ibid.}, 22 December 1891.
\end{footnotes}}
reductions brought their own estimate down to $75,000.\textsuperscript{19}

By the end of September they had staked out a place for the building on the southwest corner of the campus. Canfield was attempting to arrange a "quadrangle" of campus buildings to give the campus a purposeful appearance. The library building was to delineate the western side, with University Hall at the "head" of the quadrangle.\textsuperscript{20}

In mid-January of 1892, the plans were completed after a long meeting with the Building Committee and the architects. These revised plans were re-submitted for bids at the lowest possible cost "without sacrificing strength, durability and dignity."\textsuperscript{21} By April, sessions with the architects granted approval of the committee's choice of location. Canfield noted that the architects made "a good impression."\textsuperscript{22}

Again, on May 7 the committee opened the bids on the revised plans. The lowest bid, from A. Rosenberg of Omaha, was still $80,948, with plumbing and heating

\textsuperscript{19}Canfield's diary, 23 September 1891.
\textsuperscript{20}Board of Regents, \textit{Eleventh Biennial Report}, 8.
\textsuperscript{21}Canfield's diary, 16 January 1892.
\textsuperscript{22}Ibid., 2 April 1892.
bringing the price closer to $100,000. This was several thousand dollars more than had been planned for. Canfield found this "rather discouraging," but the committee members did not give up. Finally, on July 2, after more conferences, they signed the contract and schedules. A. Rosenberry of Omaha was the lowest bidding contractor.

While faced with permission to build the Library, but insufficient appropriation to do so, the Board decided to begin and request further appropriations at the next legislative session.

It was thought wise to take the funds already in hand, lay the foundation for the entire building, and complete the wing as far as that could be done. This would leave the portion of the building erected, enclosed and properly protected against the results of winter weather, until work could begin again in the spring.

The Building Committee decided to "push the work as rapidly as possible . . . with the distinct understanding that if the legislature shall not see fit to grant . . . additional appropriations from the Board of Regents, Eleventh Biennial Report, 9.

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23 A. L. Biehn, "The Development of the University of Nebraska, 1871-1900" (M.A. thesis, University of Nebraska, 1934), 114-115.
24 Canfield's diary, 7 May 1892.
25 Ibid., 25 June 1892.
26 Board of Regents, Eleventh Biennial Report, 9.
general fund" the building would simply be left standing.  

Since construction was about to begin, Canfield had a "successful" meeting with "Weeks" about "borrowing" G.P. Smith as Superintendent of Construction for the library building.  

Apparently his duties were to make sure that the construction quality was as good as specified. The Board later noted that "his experience, ability and industry have secured absolutely honest work from the ground up." In August he had Canfield examine the stone for the library building with "Drexel Co." The next day they called a conference with the Building Committee on substituting sandstone for limestone in the basement. Smith had apparently "condemned" stone, brick and cement. Canfield cautioned Smith "to keep his temper, and just stand quietly by the specifications." The committee decided to substitute Ohio Sandstone.

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27 Canfield's diary, 2 July 1892.
28 Library Building Committee, Report, 14 June 1892, Ms, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.
29 Canfield's diary, 25 June 1892.
30 Ibid., 13 August 1892.
31 Ibid., 16 August 1892.
By September when the students returned to campus, the local newspaper noted with satisfaction that "the walls of the new library building" were "rising rapidly." There were some minor delays in construction materials, as noted by the local newspaper:

The stone furnished for the water-table for the new library building is not quite up to specifications and some of it has been necessarily rejected. This has caused a slight delay in the advancement of this work, which it is hoped will soon come to an end. The iron pillars and floor joists for the lower floor are in place, and everything is in shape to push the work rapidly. It is hoped to get the roof on the north wing before cold weather stops the work.

The Building Committee was also "in favor of pushing on." Canfield complained:

The work of getting this building in good shape for winter seems interminable.

By January, the newspaper noted that "unsettled weather" had made it too "dangerous to . . . put a

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32 "Editorial," Nebraska State Journal (Lincoln), 11 September 1892.

33 Nebraska State Journal (Lincoln), 2 October 1892.

34 Canfield's diary, 3 October 1892.

35 Ibid., 7 November 1892.
steel truss roof in place."\textsuperscript{36} The walls were then
"covered and protected from the weather and the
work...suspended till spring."\textsuperscript{37}

\textbf{The Library Without Enough Space}

The library was already crowded in the two rooms
in University Hall. Originally one room had been for
bookshelves, while the other was the "reading room."
Within two years of the move, all of the History and
Political Science books were moved into the reading
room, thus exacerbating the already crowded
conditions.\textsuperscript{38} A year later, in 1892, it was reported:

The library, occupying the first floor of the
north wing of university hall, also no longer
begins to furnish sufficient places \textsuperscript{39} for those
who wish to use the reference books.

By 1893, Mary Jones reported a gratifying
increase in student use of the library, which increased
the space problem in University Hall:

There are seldom vacant seats at the tables,
and it has been found necessary to exclude
students from the library rooms except for

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{36} \textit{Nebraska State Journal} (Lincoln), 8 January 1893.
\item \textsuperscript{37} Ibid., 22 January 1893.
\item \textsuperscript{38} James H. Canfield, Report to the Board of
Regents, December 1891, Ms, University Archives, Love
Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.
\item \textsuperscript{39} \textit{Nebraska State Journal} (Lincoln), 25 December 1892.
\end{itemize}
the use of library books . . . The larger facilities to be enjoyed when the new building is completed are looked forward to with interest.

To increase the discomfort of the students, the Library's location on the north side of University Hall at times made it almost too cold for occupancy.

By that time a complete rearrangement had been necessary, to give more floor space. Evening hours had been introduced to help with the increased demand for library services, but electricity had not yet come to University Hall. In April 1893 the student newspaper commented on the "miserable light in the library in evening."

The gas burned is of a poor quality we judge since it gives such a poor light, and, besides this, there is always a flickering of the exposed light caused by the breeze which circulates through the library when it is sufficiently ventilated.

The following fall the situation had not been significantly improved.

The alcoves are as dark as the region of chaos and unformed things, and on even the brightest days the librarian moves about with her priestly taper among the little tin gods.

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42. *Hesperian*, 16 October 1893.
It is no wonder that the threat of fire was a prime motivation for seeking a new library building.

Thirty to fifty students utilized the library in the evening, while Canfield reported counting 133 people working among the book stacks all at the same time. In addition, Canfield noted:

The increasing number of volumes on the shelves in the library and the large number of students crowding into the reading room made it necessary to strengthen the floors of these rooms from below.\(^{43}\)

In the fall of 1894, the enrollment of the University increased yet again. The newspaper reported:

The pressure on the buildings is so great that some of the students are saying that it will be necessary to run iron binding rods through the structures to keep them from exploding.\(^{44}\)

Later in October it was noted:

A student has to watch his chance to get a seat in the library at all, and all the time he is studying he knows that he is keeping someone else from work.\(^{45}\)

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\(^{43}\) James H. Canfield, Report to the Board of Regents, December 1893, Ms, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

\(^{44}\) Nebraska State Journal (Lincoln), 6 October 1894.

During the winter of 1894 the crowded conditions and poor ventilation of the library rooms caused several complaints. After the 1894 elections, a newly elected senator visited the library.

He declared that the state of the air, in spite of the fact that the windows were open, was not only injurious but absolutely dangerous and warned the librarians that if they continued to work six and eight hours a day in that polluted atmosphere they would soon be classifying books in another world, where the library appropriations were more substantial.

Shelves full of books stretched high up the walls. "One-fourth of the books" were "above the reach of the students." In "Every nook and corner" of the library's rooms was full, the newspaper reported:

At one end there is even a little scaffold built to hold bound magazine literature, and up this Romeo's ladder the obliging librarians trip and do the balcony scene half a dozen times a day.

**Legislative Abandonment**

The Library at the University of Nebraska had the misfortune to need expansion at the height of the Populist Party fervor sweeping the state. While

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46 *Nebraska State Journal* (Lincoln), 19 December 1894.

47 "Items of Interest from the State University," *Lincoln Call*, 17 January 1895.

48 *Nebraska State Journal* (Lincoln), 18 November 1894.
progressives talked of noblesse oblige and built monuments for the state, low farm prices and crop failures combined with bank failures to create the populist movement. Of thirteen banks established in Lincoln in the last thirty years of the century, only one survived. The 1890 election gave the populists control of the legislature, as a culmination of rural agitation in the 1880's. This gain was solidified in the election of 1892, when a coalition of Populists and Democrats organized the legislature.

To understand the role this political upset had on the Library, it should be understood that Canfield was a Republican, like all of the establishment leaders of his day. The unofficial mouthpiece of the Republican Party was the Nebraska State Journal, located in Lincoln. This paper was rabidly supportive of the local University, its editor being Charles H. Gere. Gere was clearly identified with the University, having served on the Board for ten years, the last six of them as president. While Canfield was personally immensely popular with the people in the state as well as with individual legislators, there was still

considerable sentiment equating University expenditures with elitist Republican excess. On the other hand, Canfield's outspoken and independent views about practical education had alienated many of the state's conservative political leaders. Republican fear of the growing threat of Populism made compromise difficult.

In February, 1893, Canfield's time was spent at the legislature, trying to obtain passage of the rest of the funding for the library building. When the bill was in the House "there was a mutual agreement that the completion of the Library building shall be taken up when the bill reaches the Senate."50 He soon reported, "Legislative matters look a little blue. Nothing can be done, however, more than I did." On February 18, Canfield tried yet another tactic, drawing up another bill for a library building, "in case amendment of H.R. 207 fails."51

During this time Canfield spent part of each day at the Capitol, or with the governor. On the 22nd, he testified before the Senate Finance Committee "urging the completion of the Library building."52 By the

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50Canfield's diary, 6 February 1893.
51Ibid., 18 February 1893.
52Ibid., 22 February 1893.
next day he had finished drawing the alternate Library bill "to be introduced in [the] House to 'hold the ground' if [the] Senate should not act." Canfield addressed the Senate as a whole in the afternoon of March 1 on the Library Building. A week later "after adjournment" he drove two senators to view the unfinished library building. After an hour's inspection and discussion, Canfield was told, "You ought to complete your building."

In the afternoon of March 14, the Senate amended House Roll 207, by adding $72,100 from the state general fund, for completion of the Library building. Canfield added:

Now it must pass in Senate (amendment being in Committee of the Whole, only) -- and then doubtless to House and Conference Committee.

While this was progress of sorts, the amendment had been passed before Canfield could get to the statehouse. Luft had not been able to find Canfield's letter when the time came, "so worked from memory" and

53 Ibid., 23 February 1893.
54 Ibid., 1 March 1893.
55 Ibid., 8 March 1893.
56 Ibid., 14 March 1893.
it was "badly worded." Nonetheless, Canfield felt legislative matters were in "fair shape."\(^{57}\)

However, by the end of March disaster had struck. There was "a sharp fight" in the House, which ended before Canfield could get there to sway the lawmakers. The House refused to concur with the Senate amendment, with a vote of 51 to 35. By the time Canfield got there he "was assured by many who voted 'no', that they would agree to anything coming from a Conference Committee."\(^{58}\) Four days later Canfield and Morrill agreed to settle for $50,000 "to clear up with our contractor" if they couldn't get the full $72,000. If both those options "seemed sure to fail" they would try at least for the Mechanic Arts building they had been hoping for.\(^{59}\)

By April 6, the House and Senate were locked in a struggle. The House agreed to accept the salaries, if the Senate would back off of the amendments. Since this was abandoning the library appropriation, Canfield resolved "to break this":

I worked at it and around it all day -- but

\(^{57}\)Ibid., 28 March 1893.

\(^{58}\)Ibid., 31 March 1893.

\(^{59}\)Ibid., 4 April 1893.
made no 'trades' whatever. This matter must stand on its own merit.

The next day a conference committee was formed, but "no compromise was possible," and the day passed in a "wrangle." Opposition to the amendment was led by Representative Casper, the fusion leader, who averred "that it had been the studied effort of the university people to get an appropriation, start a building two or three times as large as the amount would build and then come begging for enough to complete the work."

Representative Stevens declared "that the appropriation was a robbery . . . [of] the farming classes. Representative Ford asserted that the university "did not help the farmers . . . He said that the proper schooling for the present day was the kind that teaches the relation between capital and labor." Canfield was accused of grandstanding:

Stevens hunted me up on the floor of the Senate -- charged me with having "had the Senate in the hollow of your hand" for thirty days -- said I had obstructed all legislation for a month -- and that there would now necessarily be an extra session -- all chargable [sic] to me. Said he knew that I

60Ibid., 6 April 1893.

61"In the House," [from University scrapbook, Newspaper not identified], 9 April 1893.
wished to be U.S. Senator two years hence, but this had killed me, etc.

On April 8 there was still the possibility of an extra session, but Canfield refused:

I announced that the University neither demanded nor wished an extra session -- but would accept the appropriations and put the results and responsibility where they belonged.

Canfield and Morrill reported back to the Board that they "found it simply impossible to secure any amount from the state general fund . . . in behalf of the Library building" though they had "pressed the matter with all possible power."

Having been balked on actual construction, Canfield continued to work on library matters. On May 17, he persuaded the architects to accept his "interpretation of specifications" and to withdraw their claims for damages. In June they "began work on the new stacks in the library." Instead of watching the completion of a new library building that summer, Canfield spent several days settling accounts with the various contractors, and taking

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62 Canfield's diary, 7 April 1893.
63 Ibid., 8 April 1893.
64 Ibid., 17 May 1893.
65 Ibid., 12 June 1893.
possession of the half-built structure. He reported:

The records of the Building Committee will show, I think, very successful management. It is no small matter to break a contract in two, settle up all accounts, and get out without loss and without a law suit. Regent Morrill was good enough to specially commend my management of this matter, from start to finish. He says "You have earned your salary, in this alone."66

"That Melancholy Ruin"

When school started in 1893, the north wing of the Library building was in place, but still surrounded by mounds of earth and forests of weeds, with an incomplete southern front. That summer the wing had been roofed and enclosed, provided with a rough floor in the basement, and given one coat of plaster, including "fire-proofing" for the basement.67 The space was so badly needed that the collections of the Nebraska State Historical Society were moved into the basement, occupying "commodious though as yet inelegant rooms."68 A make-shift heating system was installed

66Ibid., 1 August 1893.

67James H. Canfield, Report to the Board of Regents, 12 December 1893, Ms, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.


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with the funds left over after settlement with the contractor. According to the Hesperian, the library staff was "baffled but not defeated." The Historical Society was not the only entity with "unkind thoughts of the parsimonious legislature."

As the election of 1894 rolled around, the Journal waxed eloquent on the subject of the half-finished library building:

The university library building is taking its place as a recognized ruin. True certain subterranean activities still burrow on in the basement, but the total impression remains of an abandoned, useless and decadent structure. In the spaces around it nature is taking her hand in its absorption. The mounds thrown up by the builders are covered with grass and waving weeds . . . a strange contrast with the ordered cleanliness of the rest of the grounds.

In October it continued in the same vein:

That melancholy ruin on the campus is a standing reproach to the poor judgment and parsimonious disposition of the last Nebraska legislature . . . The new legislature will be elected to correct mistakes and errors, and they undoubtedly will not allow that glaring mistake to disfigure the campus another year.

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69 Canfield, Report to the Board, 12 December 1893.

70 Hesperian, 27 September 1893, 6.


72 Nebraska State Journal (Lincoln), 8 October 1894.
The student newspaper also had something to add to the vilification of the legislature.

The independents have builded themselves a monument more lasting than brass in the unfinished library building, which stands on campus like some Old World ruin or a last surviving relic of the Chicago fire. ... [It] is still a lasting memorial of the consumate meanness and sublime pig-headedness of the last Legislature of the great People's Party.

Just before the election the Journal fired one last salvo:

If the next legislature were compelled to meet and transact business in that library [in University Hall], their first bill would be to get a room where they could breathe without endangering their lungs. 74

Completion of the Library Building

Perhaps it was the embarassing and accusatory presence of the abandoned library, perhaps cracks were showing in the fusion of Populists and Democrats, or perhaps even the populists no longer viewed university funding as elitist in nature. For whatever reason, a Republican-controlled legislature passed the necessary appropriations with dispatch in the spring of 1895.

Immediately after the election in November, in anticipation of new appropriations, the Building

73 Hesperian, 27 September 1893.

Committee requested bids for the completion of the library. The plans were this time much more specific as to building materials so that the new section would "correspond in every way with the part already standing." Bids were opened February 1, 1895. This time a Lincoln contractor, Grace & Kelley, bid the lowest figure.\(^75\)

On March 19, in "one of the most interesting and exciting sessions the house has yet enjoyed," Senator Munger's bill for $73,000 to finish the library building passed with a 51 to 35 vote.\(^76\) Despite aspertions on the morality of Lincoln and the University students, it was generally agreed that to leave the construction unfinished would be "ridiculous" and "no economy." The bill fared as well in the Senate, and on March 27, 1895, it passed on its third reading with only three negative votes. The Journal observed that "those who voted against the bill are all populists."\(^77\) The governor signed the bill and the

\(^{75}\)"Ready in September," \textit{Nebraska State Journal} (Lincoln), 7 February 1895.

\(^{76}\)"Waged a Hot Fight," \textit{Nebraska State Journal} (Lincoln), 20 March 1895.

\(^{77}\)\textit{Nebraska State Journal} (Lincoln), 27 March 1895.
contractor was waiting to start construction immediately.

Construction commenced during the summer, and the first week of September 1895, Mary Jones and her staff started to move the collection into the new "fire-proof" wing of the Library. The paper reported:

The removal of the library is a tedious work. It is done by boys, who carry the books . . . nineteen volumes at a load . . . It requires an average of just seven minutes for each one of the seven boys to make a trip from the old to the new . . . which enables them to remove about 1500 volumes a day."

The law library books were left in the University Hall rooms which were to become the new home of the law department. Otherwise, all 20,000 volumes in the Central Library were moved to the new location by October.

While the building was not totally complete, a stairway built to a north window of the stack room allowed access to the completed north wing, where the books were being placed on the newly installed shelving. Nellie Compton later remembered that

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78 Ibid., 10 September 1895.


80 Lincoln Evening News, 28 September 1895.
temporary entrance:

During the first weeks of the term that entrance was used by everyone. When the football team won a great victory and students were scouting for materials for a bonfire they tore down this wooden stairway. Fortunately the front entrance was finished and it was possible to go through to the stack room that way until the reading room was completed and furnished.

The newspaper noted the arrival of "200 cane bottom chairs with rubber on the bottom of each leg" in early October. 82 In late October the new steam heating system was ready to be turned on "much to the relief of the students." 83 By the end of November 1895 Mary Jones had moved into her new "handsome and conveniently equipped" office, and the move into the Library building was complete. 84

The new building was formally accepted from the contractors by the Board of Regents early in November. 85 The Library Building Committee made its final report on December 10, 1895, relating that the

81 Nellie Compton, "Memories," (March 1937), 11.
82 Nebraska State Journal (Lincoln), 5 October 1895.
83 Ibid., 23 October 1895.
84 Ibid., 22 November 1895.
85 "Accept the Building," Lincoln Evening News, 9 November 1895.
entire appropriation had been used for construction. It should be noted that none of the original Committee members remained. Morrill had replaced Gere as President of the Board, MacLean had replaced Canfield as Chancellor, and Dales had been appointed when Professor Little resigned in April.86

The Library was formally opened on December 10, coinciding with the meeting of the Board of Regents. This was MacLean's first report to the Board, in which he stated:

I cannot pass by this occasion without congratulating you, and through you the state, upon the completion of this building so admirable for its purposes.87

The New Library

Despite the wait, the new building was one the University and the state could be proud of. Albert Watkins wrote that Nebraska's early public buildings generally "had to be propped up or burned down to keep them from falling down."88 As the oldest building

86Library Building Committee, Report to the Board, 10 December 1895, Ms, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.
87George MacLean, Report to the Board of Regents, 10 December 1895, Ms, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.
88Albert Watkins, History of Nebraska v.3 (Lincoln: Western, 1913), 296.
still standing on the University campus, this building is the first refutation of that claim. The close attention to detail and the insistence on quality paid off in a structure of durability. Of the first five buildings built on the campus, only the library remains. In 1975 the building was included in the National Register of Historic Places maintained by the National Park Service, "a fitting tribute to a venerable old building."  

Built in the Romanesque style of architecture then popular for academic libraries, the building was a handsome and imposing structure on campus. Many libraries built at that time were adopting the cruciform structure in imitation of church architecture. The University of Nebraska Library was a modified form of this cruciform style, resulting in a nearly "T" shaped building, with three floors. The prominent north wing of the building contained the stacks, while the reading room occupied the cross arm.

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89 In 1945 the library collection moved to Love Library. The 1895 building is now Architecture Hall.

90 James L. McKee, Lincoln, a Photographic History (Lincoln: Salt Valley Press, 1976), 126.

portion of the structure. The entrance was at the eastern end of the cross arm, with wide steps leading up to the middle or "second" floor. The large south-facing portion of the building, containing reading, seminar, and recitation rooms, was 130x5 feet in size. The north wing was 50x75 feet. Within the building was a 20x20 foot "vault" area with additional protection from fire. This design "with service and reading areas on the broad front and a multitier bookstack to the rear" would become standard for college libraries within a few years by the time the University of Illinois had finished their new library.

The Library had an "interesting" combination of architectural features. Two owls adorn the south side of the building, on the edge of the roof. They originally had an unobstructed view of the city. One distinctive feature is the "minaret" on the north wing. This was originally intended to provide ventilation for

92 Ibid., 32.
93 Board of Regents, Thirteenth Biennial Report, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1896), 19
the stacks, which it did poorly. However, it added a certain mystery to the romantic architecture.\textsuperscript{95}

Inside the Library, between the reading room and the stacks wing were two small offices, one on either side. The western office was completely glassed in. This was the original office of the librarian, referred to as "the Wire Cage" during Wyer's administration. The opposite small office was the cataloging room. An alcove in the northeast part of the stacks was also used as a work room, since the original plans had been sadly deficient in work areas. This room was nicknamed "the Red Room" because it was occupied by "two vivacious red haired assistants" for several years.\textsuperscript{96}

While the new building was called "The Library", the middle floor was the only one devoted primarily to library use. The basement was already occupied by the Nebraska State Historical Society, but also included the departments of philosophy and education. The main floor also contained classrooms for English literature and American history. The top floor had been designed for use by the art department, and had natural

\textsuperscript{95}McKee, 127.

\textsuperscript{96}Nellie Compton, "Notes on the History of the University of Nebraska Library, 1869-1919" TMs, [photocopy], University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.
skylighting built into the plans. Other classrooms, including those for political science, were there as well.

The Board of Regents stressed the temporary nature of this arrangement, saying that the upper floor was only "temporarily" being used for the art department, and that "a number of rooms" were being used for lectures and recitations, although "intended ultimately for the library." Malcolm Wyer later quoted the President of the University of Minnesota: "In a university nothing is more permanent than temporary quarters." This proved to be an apt observation, since librarians would be working for decades to gain these areas ostensibly built for library use.

Space Problems in the Library

While the number of students and faculty at the university was increasing greatly, individual students eventually graduated and moved on. The library, on the other hand not only acquired growing numbers of books, but made a distinct effort to retain the entire

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98 Board of Regents, Eleventh Biennial Report, 9.

collection. A research library can expect to require a doubling of space every twenty years.\textsuperscript{100} This problem was particularly acute at the University of Nebraska, since so much of the "library's space" was occupied by other departments.

Under the Epes administration, the reading room became overcrowded, so that "not more than two-thirds of the students could find room for study."\textsuperscript{101} Often it was "impossible to find a seat anywhere in the library," which created a "real hardship."\textsuperscript{102} That summer of 1898 the reading room was enlarged by removing the American History room.\textsuperscript{103}

This apparently alleviated the situation for a time, since a lunch room for women was established in the Library basement by the dean of women in the winter of 1899.\textsuperscript{104} Within two years, however, Wyer was requesting the use of the lunchroom space for student lockers, thus relieving the congestion problem so

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{100} Keyes D. Metcalf, "Spatial Growth in University Libraries," \textit{Harvard Library Bulletin} 1 (Spring 1947), 135.
\item \textsuperscript{101} \textit{Omaha Bee}, 30 July 1898.
\item \textsuperscript{102} "A Larger Reading Room," \textit{Lincoln Evening News}, 3 September 1898.
\item \textsuperscript{103} \textit{Lincoln Evening News}, 24 September 1898.
\item \textsuperscript{104} Ibid., 21 January 1899.
\end{itemize}
ineptly handled by Epes. At the same time he was endeavoring to fit the vault out as an extension of the reading rooms, although the lighting was insufficient.

In the fall of 1901, Wyer was looking for further expansion room, this time recommending "strongly" that the rooms occupied by Political Economy and Philosophy be vacated to make room for a faculty study room and a library seminar room. These rooms were apparently in the basement. The following summer the Library Board again requested additional space. The College of Medicine was seeking a place for the medical library and reading room. By this time expansion onto the third floor was requested, displacing one of the rooms used by the Department of European History. While some of these requests for expansion may have been honored, most were not. In 1909 and again in 1911,

105 James I. Wyer, Letter to G. H. Ellsworth, Assistant Superintendent of Buildings and Grounds, 23 March 1901, Ms, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

106 Library Board, Minutes, 18 December 1901, Ms, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

107 Library Board, Report to the Board of Regents, 4 June 1902, Ms, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.
Jewett was still reporting the "greatest need" for a separate faculty research room. 108

The librarians' efforts could no longer keep up with growth in the book collection and the size of the student body. By the fall of 1902, the newspaper ran yet another article on overcrowding in the library. Of course, the problem was greatly increased by the coal strike and the attempt by many students to remain in the library all day until ten o'clock, rather than paying to heat their rooms. 109 The Library Board responded by naming a committee to ascertain which additional rooms could be "vacated for Library use." 110

The following fall, Wyer again considered it "imperative" that more room be provided. The Department of Political Economy apparently still had one small room left in the building, and Wyer suggested that either that one or the Historical Society's museum be provided for library use. 111 This suggestion was


109 "The Library is Overcrowded," Lincoln Star, 1 November 1902.

110 Library Board, Minutes, November 1902, Ms, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

not followed, but in the spring of 1904 Wyer renewed the request, with even more uses for the space: a room for debaters' research, a duplicates department, and a faculty study room. Wyer considered that year to be a good time for the move, since most of the Historical Society's collections were in St. Louis at the World's Fair, and would not have to be "moved" but only returned to a different location.  

The annual squabbling over space was not adequate for the library's needs. By 1906, under Jewett, "every available inch of wall space" was used for books and "the tables were crowded with students." At that time there was even some talk of an addition to the library building, although it would be decades before more library construction would be undertaken. In 1919, Nellie Compton reported that there had been "absolutely no expansion of space for library use since that time [1895]." In fact, the growth in the book

112 James I. Wyer, Letter to the Chancellor and the Board of Regents, 30 May 1904, Ms, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

113 "Need Library Room," Lincoln Star, 23 October 1906.

114 "Regents Discuss Finances," Nebraska State Journal (Lincoln), 23 October 1906.
collection left even less room for tables, chairs, and students. 115

Other Physical Problems in the Library

While competition with other departments over space took up a lot of energy, finding shelf space for the book collection was even more challenging. In 1895 when the library building was new, the original appropriations had provided extensive shelving as well. However, by 1900 the Library Board was concerned with a discussion of means for acquiring more shelving. 116

By 1904 Wyer was entangled in an effort to double the size of the stacks area by purchasing an "all steel book stack 7 feet high" covered by "a glass or mezzanine floor" on which the old shelving could then be placed. 117 This project would cost $8,000, which required a special item in the budget. The request was denied, so Wyer spent at least part of his last summer at Nebraska directing a project to pack away and store duplicate and worn books in order to make room for new


116 Library Board, Minutes, 23 November 1900, Ms, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

117 James I. Wyer, Report to the Library Board, 11 November 1904, Ms, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.
ones. While the additional steel shelving stacks were finally forthcoming in 1908, maintaining shelf space in advance of the growing collection was a perennial problem. In a typical fashion, appropriations for the steel shelving were not adequate to complete the project, so the 1909 report of the Board of Regents includes a request for funds to finish the work.

Other problems developed with the Library building as well. Students complained of a lack of heat and "deadly draughts" as well as of inadequate lighting. Students warned each other that "it would be well to bring a lamp, an eye-shade, and a pair of glasses along if you expect to consult reference books at night." Wyer suggested that the reading room was "so dark that it is almost a crime," and that students were "taxing their eyes" constantly. The vault room had no light at all, except in the evenings, and

118 Lincoln Star, 29 August 1905.
120 Lincoln Evening News, 2 December 1897.
121 "Pointers," Sombrero, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1895), 247.
no windows. The situation remained poor, so that library lighting was still an object of complaint under Jewett. The lights were "unreservedly bad" and "not powerful enough to make reading easy." In addition, they were said to "flicker and waver spasmodically." 

Canfield and Jones had insisted on the best quality available in 1895. Since funding was seldom available for minor improvements or replacements, the durability of high quality materials was essential. Mary Jones said once, when returning to Nebraska for a visit, "They thought I was terribly extravagant to insist on cork carpet at $2.00 per square yard for the reading room, but I notice it is still in use." The same carpet, somewhat patched, was retained at least until 1933, and probably considerably thereafter.

Conclusions

The library of the University of Nebraska was indeed fortunate in the support it received from the faculty and regents. While Canfield was exceptionally

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122 James I. Wyer, Letter to Chancellor Andrews, 8 December 1900, Ms, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

123 "Poor Light," Lincoln Evening News, 26 October 1905.

124 Nellie Compton, "Notes."
active in supervising the construction and very able in negotiations with the legislature, the original authorization to start construction of a new building had been requested and granted before Canfield arrived. The faculty Library Committee in general, and Acting Chancellor Bessey in particular, can be credited with this innovative act that placed Nebraska in the forefront of other universities of the time. Although politics lengthened the construction period to four years, Nebraska's library was still one of the first and most outstanding of the dozens of college and university libraries being constructed in those few decades.

However, the physical upkeep of the library required more than a building designated as "the Library." The repair and maintenance budget never seemed to match the original generosity of providing the building, partly due to setbacks in the statewide economy, partly due to political currents. In addition, the inability of classroom building to keep up with enrollment required that library space be used for other purposes, thus weakening the impact of the original move to build a library.

Nevertheless, the brick structure was not the heart of the library. For that one must look deeper into the collection housed therein. Professor Little
had already gone to Stanford by the time of the opening ceremony, but he wrote back:

May its honest walls soon shelter and forever keep a library that shall make Lincoln the center of scholarship for the great plains country.

125 C. H. Little, Letter to Chancellor MacLean, 13 December 1895, Ms, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.
The hiring of a professional librarian and the construction of a new building were both at least partly due to the increasing size of the library. It is true that growth of the library had been slow and steady for the first two decades of the university's existence, but a compounding of the increase in size was experienced by later librarians. As the variety and diversity of courses offered increased, and as the faculty and even the number of departments increased, the demand for library materials also increased. It was indeed remarkable that these additions were also selected with care to form an admirable library.

Collection Growth

The number of volumes in the University of Nebraska library grew rapidly from 1891 to 1909.\(^1\) While the growth had not been so obvious in the early years, the collection had already been doubling in size nearly every five years. When Smith took over the library in 1886 there were 7,000 volumes in the

\(^1\)A graph of the collection size appears in Appendix D.
collection. There were slightly over 14,000 volumes when she relinquished the position five years later. There were over 39,000 volumes in the various collections when Mary Jones took over in 1892. She not only cataloged all of the older material, but increased the size of the collection to 35,000 five years later. Of course, Epes did not increase the volume count at all during his tenure, but Wyer took the collection from 35,000 to 70,000, a doubling in seven years. Jewett did the same over his seven years at Nebraska.

Another way to look at this growth, is to divide the early years of the library into smaller periods. The first seven thousand volumes were added slowly over a sixteen year period. However, in the ten years between 1885 and 1895 20,000 volumes were added, and another 20,000 volumes were added each five years thereafter. This is not exponential growth, but it is substantially more than in the earliest years of the University. It is difficult to pinpoint a date for these increased acquisitions. 1888 or 1889 seems to be the beginning of the trend, corresponding with the beginning of graduate courses and seminar instruction.

It should be mentioned at this point that statistics about the size of the collection vary greatly in these early reports, depending on who was citing them. In the 1890 reports, Smith stated that
10,704 books were cataloged and "about 700" were unclassified. Little's report combines these figures to report "11,412"[sic]. However, the Regents report to the public rounds these figures up to 12,000. Since their previous biennial report had bragged of "over 11,000", this overstatement of the facts may have been necessary, but it does give some sense of the unreliability of the statistics.

In comparing this collection growth to other libraries of the time, this steady increase appears to be the norm. Yale went from 50,000 to 500,000 volumes between 1876 and 1910, but the steady growth curve almost matches that of Nebraska exactly. Berkeley and Wisconsin also show very similar curves, with their volume count being much closer to that of Nebraska. For all of these major research libraries rapid collection growth was starting around 1900, but these early signs of growth do not appear significant compared to the millions which were added later.  

According to Fremont Rider, who has studied library growth at various academic institutions, the time period in which a doubling of collection size

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occurs is significant. He claims that college and university libraries have doubled in size every fifteen years, on the average, no matter what time period is being discussed. He also claims a direct correlation between library growth and educational effectiveness:

Whenever the growth of a library has slackened you always find that its college has been slipping; on the other hand, if any library has spat ahead of the fifteen year average during any given decade, . . . its college, for some reason, has been taking on a new lease of life.

By this criterion, the University of Nebraska was lively indeed. From 1883 to 1898 the library was doubling every five years, or roughly three times as fast as "normal". From 1893 to 1908, this rate slowed down to doubling in ten years, although that, too, was a rate well above the norm of doubling in fifteen years.

The University of Nebraska had over 90,000 volumes in 1910. This was a collection larger than that of many other universities, but it was not yet of a size to adequately support graduate research. In 1913 Guy Stanton Ford suggested that a collection of 200,000 would be minimal for support of a modest PhD. program. Only nine American university libraries could

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meet that criterion at the time, and the University of Nebraska was not one of them. However, the steady growth of Nebraska's book collection indicated an early attempt by the faculty to try to achieve an adequate quantity of volumes. It was this obvious effort rather than the actual possession of an adequately sized collection that gave the University of Nebraska its reputation for fine graduate education.

While observing this growth in the book collection, it should be kept in mind that the student body was also growing rapidly. For the period from 1890 to 1909 the number of volumes per student hovered around 20, rising only slightly to 24 in 1909, and never approaching the 34 and 36 volumes per student reached in 1889. It should be noted that in the late 1880's the University was already emphasizing research and increasing the library collection, before the phenomenal growth in the student body started.

The number of current periodical subscriptions at the University of Nebraska was also outstanding. A continuous effort to obtain complete sets is apparent, and by 1900 "nearly 600" current subscriptions were

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4Edelman and Tatum, 222.
acquired. By way of comparison, Iowa State had only 200 subscriptions, and the University of Iowa had only 213. It is true that the University of Michigan already had 775, but Stanford and Illinois had only 334 and 414 respectively.

Departmental Libraries

Collection growth of the whole was not so obvious from the perspective of the central library, since twenty to thirty percent of the collection was scattered in various departmental libraries. Departmental libraries were started in imitation of the German seminar libraries, and continued by the pressures of space and faculty prestige. In the famous libraries of Wolfenbuettel, Halle, Gottingen, and Leipzig, the central libraries were seldom any better stocked nor any more accessible than American libraries. However, during the nineteenth century German professors developed the seminar concept, where small working collections of relevant books were gathered together in one room for each particular course. Continual reference to the sources enhanced

5"Gathering Great Library," Omaha Bee, 22 May 1900.
6Shiflett, 127.
the educational process. By 1893, the three Prussian libraries alone had over a hundred seminar libraries, each with over a thousand titles.7

On a smaller scale, this practice is what the American professor in the "new university" was trying to imitate. According to the historian Bestor,

the scholarly achievements of the great universities of Germany . . . were in the minds of those who commenced the reconstruction of American higher education.8

To show the influence of the German model on the University of Nebraska, it is relevant that during the formative 1880's a significant number of the faculty had earned their PhDs in German universities. In 1883 thirty-one percent of the faculty PhDs were from German universities; in 1898 the percentage was twenty-nine. A correspondingly large percentage of the PhDs also came from Johns Hopkins University, the newly founded institution in Baltimore which was based on the graduate research model.

While there are many arguments in favor of decentralized "seminar" instruction, there is little doubt that such segmentation of the collection leads to

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8Bestor, 169.
duplication and less uniform processing. Decentralization in acquisition also leads to a lack of balance in the collection and an emphasis on immediate curricular needs at the expense of long-range collection development. In early libraries there was a definite advantage to departmentalization, since centralized collections were neither accessible nor any more efficient than the departments. However, once library service developed to the point that large collections became usable and library administration improved, centralization became more attractive. Edelman and Tatum have written:

> It is almost unanimously agreed that administrative and later physical consolidation of library resources and services has increased efficiency . . . and has greatly improved the utility of the university library as a research instrument. 9

While efficiency at the expense of "quality" may not sound like a good argument, no research library has ever been able to satisfy its appetite for books, with the possible exception of the Library of Congress. The sheer volume of available material balanced against limited budgets has long made efficiency a prime objective, where accessibility can still be maintained. In his classic text on reference, Wyer further stated

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9 Edelman and Tatum, 226-27.
the case against departmentalization:

The strongest argument against departmental libraries is the narrowness that comes from the habitual use of a part as against the breadth that comes with the constant use of the whole.¹⁰

Libraries at the turn of the century struggled to locate some of the purchasing decisions in the central library. Unfortunately, the departmentalization of libraries was deeply entrenched and difficult to work against, considering the subordinate position librarians had in relation to faculty. Harvard was one of the first to achieve some sort of control. As early as 1877 some sort of centralization was called for, but it wasn't until 1880 that the departments were required to purchase their books "through the Librarian of the University."¹¹ Even with centralized purchasing, however, the lack of space in central libraries and the geographical spread of the campuses made departmental or branch libraries a necessity on many campuses.¹²


At the University of Nebraska the attempt to centralize the collection began even before a professional librarian was hired. In the spring of 1892, when Canfield discussed removing McMillan and hiring Jones with several faculty members, Professor Wolfe didn't want to make changes until "a revolution" could come, "by which he means the return of all department libraries." There was some indication early in Jones' administration that these libraries would be consolidated in the new building but the library had neither the money, the power, nor the space to implement that idea. It would have taken money, because at that time a significant proportion of the departmental libraries were the private possessions of the professors, and thus would need replacing in the central library. It would have taken political power, since possession of a departmental library was considered highly desirable and prestigious by the faculty. It would also have taken more space than the new building provided, since such a large percentage of the building was relegated to other departments.

Wyer established a formal policy that no more departmental libraries would be started without the

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13 Canfield's diary, 10 May 1892.
direction of the librarian, thus finally cutting off the source of proliferation. Up until that time, each new full professor tended to have a new department established, and one of the goals of each department seemed to be to provide a departmental library.

Physical consolidation of the departmental libraries began fairly early, with Greek and Latin combining into a classical library. When the university was housed in one or two buildings, the libraries were not physically far apart, and the separation between rooms was not inconvenient. As the libraries moved with their departments out into new buildings, however, there was a strong incentive to combine them in groups, if not to consolidate them with the central library. The Botany and Zoology libraries combined when they moved to Bessey Hall. In 1899 after the move into the new Mechanic Arts Hall, the Hesperian reported:

Six departmental libraries, those of Civil, Electrical and Mechanical Engineering, Agriculture, Mathematics, and the Agricultural Experiment Station have been consolidated in the new room under the care of Miss M. H. Ames of the library staff.  

This last consolidation inspired Wyer to write an expansion of the Dewey Decimal Classification System in

14 Hesperian, 6 January 1899, 6.
the subject of agriculture. Many departmental libraries remained, however. Purchasing, cataloging, and binding differed in each library, requiring a staff familiar with many different procedures to handle the material. Hours and circulation procedures also varied, causing confusion and frustration to the students using the libraries.\textsuperscript{15}

Unfortunately, the lack of space in the Library building caused the library staff to actively condone the decentralization, dividing up and storing various collections all over the campus for many decades. This legacy of divided collections has not been totally eradicated, nor is it unique to the University of Nebraska. Moreover, the necessary duplication and inefficiency brought about by these circumstances created confusion in the statistical record about the exact size of the library.

\textbf{Book Selection}

Decentralization was not the only library trend imported from the great German universities. Christian Gottlieb Heyne, the librarian of Gottingen University, stated in 1810:

\textit{Proper selection rather than mere numbers of}

\textsuperscript{15}Nellie Compton, "Notes."
books is what makes a university library real worth.

The visible quantitative measurement of a library's growth is only one sign of its development. Which books are chosen with limited resources is also significant. That the University of Nebraska had limited resources is obvious. The method of selection is less obvious, in fact it is greatly obscured by the passage of time. This is unfortunate, since there is little doubt that the end result of the selection process worked well.

From the beginning it was "the policy of this University to gather together a great working library, made up in large part of complete sets and rare works." As early as 1891, Ellen Smith reported that the University Library was "pronounced by good judges an exceedingly well selected library." Professor Bennett of Wisconsin State University had assured her that there was "far more available material" in Nebraska's 13,000 volumes than in Wisconsin's 20,000. She also said that "many visitors from the East" had

16 Edelman and Tatum, 223.
17 Charles Bessey, Report to the Board of Regents, 1889-1890, Ms, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.
made favorable comparisons with libraries in older colleges there.\textsuperscript{18}

The only noticeable criticism of the Library collection came from the student newspaper in 1891:

From a very excellent source comes the suggestion that the literary societies of the university start a library of literature. The university library, while it contains many volumes of books of reference, and of scientific works, has very few books of a literary nature. There is not a single one of Dicken's works in the library. What is true of Dicken's works is true, in whole or in part, of the works of Thackeray, of Victor Hugo, of Longfellow, of Scott, and of nearly every writer whose works are the life of literature.

Fortunately, the arrival of a professional librarian allowed for a liberalization of this policy. A year after Mary Jones started work, the newspaper noted approvingly:

Among the valuable additions to the library are a beautiful little set of Jane Austin, several of Robert Louis Stevenson's novels... a long needed set of Dickens... It is evident that there has been a wise movement on the part of some person or other to provide the library with fiction that it has long needed.\textsuperscript{20}

\textsuperscript{18}Ellen Smith, Letter to the Board of Regents, 30 May 1891, Ms, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

\textsuperscript{19}Hesperian, 1 April 1891, 2.

\textsuperscript{20}Ibid., 16 October 1893, 10.
Under the Jones administration the Library was also reputed to be "well-selected," containing "no old lumber" in an "unusually good" collection. The correspondence of Mary Jones indicates an ongoing effort to supply missing issues, obtain complete runs of periodicals, and fill in gaps in the collection. The student newspaper went so far as to suggest that "the limitation of library funds has one good effect, it guarantees the best of books." D. L. Thornbury, a Nebraska student from 1897 to 1902, remembered

I did my studying at the library. Its librarians had been discriminating in selection of books because of limited funds. I doubt that there was a better library for its size anywhere.

By the mid-twentieth century, those interested in improving the sets and collections from this time period found to their surprise that very little improvement was necessary or possible. The quality of book selection done with admittedly limited resources was exceptional.

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21 *Nebraska State Journal* (Lincoln), 18 November 1894.

22 *Hesperian*, 15 November 1888, 8.

23 D. L. Thornbury, "My Years at Nebraska," *Nebraska Alumnus*, December 1937, 5.

Faculty Choices

Reliance on the faculty for book selection was a nearly universal policy in American colleges and universities in the nineteenth century. No one on the campus had as much access to book publishers or research. There were no handy reviewing sources, no standard bibliographies, and few if any indexes and compilations. To decide which publications were essential required extensive knowledge of the subject and probably other correspondents in the field. The faculty were the only possible members of the campus community to be able to provide these ingredients. They not only had the ability, but they also had the incentive. Before the advent of librarianship, no one else had as much of an interest in developing the collections. "Good scholars need good libraries, and good libraries attract good scholars." 25

Although the University of Nebraska had no coordinated or written selection policy in effect during this time, it is clear that most of the purchases were determined by the faculty. According to Nellie Compton:

Most of the books have been bought on the recommendation of professors who were interested in securing the best material in

25 Edelman and Tatum, 237.
print in their own fields. Occasionally this has resulted in an extreme specialization... But these special collections are so extremely valuable... that it has been felt to be the wisest thing.26

Allocation of the book budget was the primary responsibility of the faculty Library Committee, and, after 1897, of the Library Board. The politics of faculty departments being what it was, there was little consideration given to which departments depended more on publication, nor to which departments had started with poorer collections in need of build-up, nor even to which fields were expanding or shrinking in publication quantity. The records indicate that the Library Committee generally took the amount budgeted to the library for materials, divided it evenly by the number of departments, and that was the allocation of funds.

Under the administration of the faculty Library Committee, there were generally from 3 to 8 "half departments" or departments which were less well established, which received smaller than normal portions of the budget. However, for the remainder of the departments the portion was equal. Thus, in 1888 Greek and Latin each received the same amount as all of the Modern Languages put together, Botany and Geology

received equal amounts, and there was no allocation for the other biological sciences. (Zoology later turned out to be a subset of Geology.) Some of the departments solved the problem by splitting up. By 1891, History had split into American and European History, each getting a full share. English split into Literature and Rhetoric; Modern Languages divided into German and French. In 1892-93, all of the Zoology books were still coming from the Geology fund, but Botany had retaliated by splitting into two departments: Botany and Horticulture.

Under Mary Jones there was a brief effort to adjust these rigid departmental allocations to allow more funds for departments with the greatest need. In October of 1896, Jones' last year, the Library Committee met and "considered the use of books in the various departments, particularly with reference to the books at present available for the use of the department, the cost of the books used in the subject, [and] the necessity of multiple copies for large classes." The Committee assigned departments from 0 to 3 points which were used to determine approximately half of the allocation. Thus the new division of funds varied from 20 dollars each for Art and Music to 112 dollars each for American and European History. The next Faculty Meeting resoundingly rejected this plan,
returning to flat allocations by department: 66 dollars to "whole" departments and 33 dollars to "half" departments. During the spring semester the Library Committee again tried to divide the funds more rationally. "It was resolved that distribution of funds be not on a horizontal basis." A week later, the minutes of the Library Committee show that a point scheme was adopted and approved by the Board of Regents. Eight departments sent in no requests and thus were left out entirely.

Nevertheless, departmental politics prevailed. When the Library Committee met on September 28, 1897, Jones having already left and Epes not yet arrived, the division of funds was strictly by department, fifty dollars each, with several special allocations for "overdrafts" on departmental funds, and for professors "not having been given an appropriation for books in the April distribution." That this was due largely to considerations of faculty prestige is evident by the

27 Library Committee, Minutes, 12 October 1896, Ms, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

28 Ibid., 19 May 1897.

29 Ibid., 24 May 1897.

30 Library Committee, Report, 28 September 1897, Ms, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.
widely disparate numbers of students in each department. In 1894, departmental attendance varied from 710 in English, an obvious requirement, to 18 in Horticulture, clearly a specialization. Yet the library funding for those two departments remained the same.

According to Nellie Compton, when Wyer became librarian, he finally changed this practice.

J. I. Wyer persuaded the Library Board to try the experiment of leaving the fund undivided, spending for each department as requested as far as could be done fairly. This made it possible to rotate purchases of expensive items, a department which received a large share one year being expected to restrict their purchases later.

These departmental expenditures vary widely: in 1898–99, from $21.94 for Philology to $497.26 for Zoology. While the amounts spent increased and the departments proliferated, the comparative amounts continued to vary greatly. In 1909–1910, they varied from $19.84 for Agricultural Chemistry to $1,381.27 for Law.

Portrait of the Selectors

Since the faculty of the University were primarily responsible for book selection, it would be appropriate

\[31\text{"Some Interesting Data," The Nebraskan, 2 November 1894.}\

\[32\text{Nellie Compton, "Notes."}\

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to examine the faculty for the relevant two decades. Willa Cather, a student at the University at this time, described the faculty as

oddly assorted; wandering pioneer school-teachers, stranded ministers of the Gospel, a few enthusiastic young men just out of graduate schools. There was an atmosphere of endeavor, of expectancy and bright hopefulness about the young college... 33

Beyond a simple description, studying the faculty size and its academic credentials is valuable. As can be expected, the number of faculty members rose dramatically, along with the number of students and the number of books in the library. Lists of all the faculty are not available for each year of the study, but looking at the faculty at five year intervals reveals some interesting data. Leaving out the part-time instructors, and the M.D.s from the short-lived medical college, as well as the law faculty, the core of the faculty rose from 17 in 1883 to 25 in 1888, then to 37 in 1893. By 1898 there were 61, and in 1903 there were 94. A mere five years later that number had risen to 154. While the actual numbers rose precipitously, the percentage increase in faculty remained at approximately 55% every five years, with a slightly larger increase in later years. Thus there is

33 Willa Cather, My Antonia (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1926), 292.
no specific date which shows a change in the faculty, merely a steady progression.

As the faculty grew, however, it was no longer possible to have an intimate little Library Committee which could claim to know and understand the problems of all the other departments as well. This growth as well as the contention between departments may have been part of the reason the Board of Regents established the Library Board to oversee the library, rather than leaving it in the hands of the faculty Library Committee. By 1907, the Board was lamenting that "to many a professor, his own department looms larger than the university itself."^{34}

In addition to their numbers, the academic achievement of the faculty is important. Analyzing the faculty in five year intervals, the number of PhD. degrees and master's degrees steadily increased, much as the pure number of faculty did. However, the doctorates as a percentage of faculty did not vary significantly. The highest percentage of doctorates on the faculty was achieved in 1888, at the height of administrative plans for university change, but yet again before the influx of students and before the new

^{34}Board of Regents, *Eighteenth Biennial Report* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1907).
"non-academic" subjects required many more faculty, many of them in fields that had not previously bestowed academic degrees. By 1893 the faculty had levelled off at around 35 percent doctorates. When those with master's degrees are added, the figures are increased to around 65 percent of the faculty with advanced degrees, but in 1910, still only 62 percent had a graduate degree.

The viewpoint of the faculty, as indicated by where the advanced degrees came from, is also relevant. As mentioned earlier in this paper, many of the Nebraska faculty had done graduate work in Europe, or at Johns Hopkins or Harvard, where "new university" indoctrination was rife. Of the thirteen doctorates on the faculty in 1893, for example, three had come from Yale, three from Johns Hopkins, and four from German universities. In addition, Bessey had studied at Harvard, Fossler was German by birth, and the Electrical Engineering degree, while not a doctorate, was nevertheless from Johns Hopkins. In 1898 the numbers had increased to four from Johns Hopkins and six from German universities, with the addition of three from Cornell and one from Harvard. Unfortunately, later catalogs do not list the sources of all of the faculty degrees. Sometimes it is possible to trace individuals, and the strong graduate
and research influence is obvious, but comparative statistics are impossible without complete information.

**Gifts and Exchanges**

Academic libraries were growing not only by purchases, but also by the acquisition of gifts of private libraries, and by the exchange of research publications produced by the university faculty. Large gifts of private collections were the primary method of rapid library growth at this time. Harvard was known to suggest to its alumni that the library would welcome a copy of anything that had ever been printed. "Acquisition became almost a frenetic activity."  

During the first decade of the twentieth century, fully forty percent of all library accessions at the University of Texas were gifts. This source of acquisitions was an important one for many growing institutions at that time, particularly in regard to area history collections.

Nebraska was not so fortunate in receiving gifts. Wyer reported that the largest donor the library had

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35 Shiflett, 124.

was the federal government. In 1901, Simon Kerl of Oakland, Nebraska, gave the first significantly large private collection to the library. This collection contained 1,824 volumes, primarily concerning education and poetry. The gift was originally intended to be a separate, non-circulating collection, but eventually it was classified, cataloged, and circulated according to customary library usage. In 1905 the Nebraska State Medical Society donated its 3,000 volume collection to the University Library.

Gifts from professors were also important sources of material. Professor George E. Howard was a nationally recognized authority in the field of history and sociology. When he returned to Nebraska from Stanford he had just finished his book on marriage. The papers, books, and materials he had gathered for that book were donated to the University of Chicago, probably a significant loss for Nebraska.

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37 "University Notes," Nebraska State Journal (Lincoln), 11 April 1901.
38 Nellie Compton, "Notes."
40 H. J. Winnett, Letter to H. B. Ward, Dean of the College of Medicine, 23 May 1905, Ms, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.
41 Nebraska State Journal (Lincoln), 26 September 1904.
Fortunately, Professor Howard later donated his private library to the University of Nebraska in 1918. Later gifts came from Professors Caldwell, Jones, and Bruner, and from Chancellor Andrews. It should be noted that these bequests came at the end of collegiate careers, so that during the two decades examined here, gifts were not yet a large proportion of the total acquisitions.  

Exchanges were also helpful to the University, but heavily dependent on faculty research output. Shiflett states that "the growth of university presses . . . gave libraries a source of wealth unassociated with budgets." Unfortunately for the University of Nebraska, the relationship to budgets was all too clear. The University often did not have the money to publish faculty research, and the early publication of the University Studies was sporadic at best. Nevertheless, J. I. Wyer set up an exchange department during his administration, to deal with this growing source of acquisitions.

Gifts and exchanges were beneficial to increase numbers. However, the continuous assistance of the

42 Nellie Compton, "Notes."
43 Shiflett, 130.
faculty, the librarian, and adequate appropriations was necessary to provide balanced and reliable coverage of essential material.

Conclusions

Although it is clear that exponential increases in the size of the library collection were not yet present, the library was growing steadily in size from 1891 to 1909. By 1900 Wyer could proudly proclaim:

The university library is the largest reference library in the whole tier of states from Texas on the south to North Dakota and for a considerable territory east and west... And if the library becomes in time all that it should and may reasonably be expected [to be], it will attract scholars from other states.

While the quantity of books equaled or exceeded that of many other research libraries, the quality was clearly exceptional. During this time period collection development at the University of Nebraska seems to have been outstanding, yet still within the mainstream of academic library growth patterns. An exemplary interest in library matters taken by a faculty well trained in research techniques contributed to this collection development, even if this interest was often attributable to empire-building rather than altruism.

44"Gathering Great Library," Omaha Bee, 22 May 1900.
CHAPTER VI
ACCESS TO THE COLLECTION

For early academic libraries, selecting, acquiring, and storing books were the primary goals. A reasonably friendly and responsible custodian provided all the service the faculty needed, and student use was minimal. As the libraries grew and demand for books grew, the various fields of librarianship developed as well. It was no longer enough to merely provide a good book collection in an adequate building. With a large and complicated collection and with increasing demands for library materials, access to the collection became just as important as the books themselves. Services that had been totally unheard of in the mid-nineteenth century became necessary and eventually widespread by the twentieth century. Libraries increased their hours, opened their stack areas to students, and varied their circulation policies to improve physical access. Systematic cataloging procedures, formal classes of library instruction and reference librarians increased the user's ability to find the information needed. Finally, reserve systems made the books in greatest demand more accessible, while questions of access to other collections through interlibrary loan were
explored. At the University of Nebraska these modern library practices were in their infancy during the two decades under study.

**Hours of Availability**

According to Shiflett, "much of the pressure to liberalize access to the college and university libraries came directly from the faculty." At the University of Nebraska, Professor Howard, the newly appointed librarian, was the first to greatly increase the library hours. The early records show that the library was open only once a week, for a few hours, allowing a few items to be checked out. During the 1880's, the library was open six hours a day for five days a week. Then in 1888 an extra hour was added in the morning, making four hours in the morning and three in the afternoon. This was similar to the hours then available at Yale, and about half the hours of service at Dewey's Columbia.\(^2\)

In 1891-92, at Canfield's behest, three additional hours, from 6:30 to 9:30 were added at night. Gere's *Journal* reported that this was "what

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\(^1\)Shiflett, 131.

the students long prayed for."\(^3\) Lulu M. Green was the student assistant who was in charge of the library at night. Significantly, while she was on duty, the library was "for reference purposes only, no books being drawn under any circumstances."\(^4\) By that time the library was open from 8:30 to 5:00 every day except Saturday, when it closed at noon. These additional hours nearly doubled the weekly accessibility, increasing from around 30 hours per week to over 60. The evening hours were pronounced a "great success," with the number of students attending in the evening "steadily increasing."\(^5\)

While the library remained in University Hall no changes were made in the hours, but Mary Jones greatly increased the time the library was open when it moved to the new building. In 1895-96 the library stayed open through the supper hour as well as the noon hour, from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. every weekday, and from 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. on Saturday. This made a total of 83 hours per week, the same as Michigan and seventy-three percent more than the hours available at

\(^3\)Nebraska State Journal (Lincoln), 1 November 1891.

\(^4\)Ibid., 8 November 1891.

\(^5\)Ibid., 22 November 1891.
Yale or California. These two increases in the number of hours open were the significant changes in accessibility during these two decades.

In 1898 the students circulated "a petition requesting that the library be opened at the same hour on Saturday that it is other days." Epes' unfortunate relationship with the student body is obvious from the 

Hesperian's cryptic comment

The library authorities will not strengthen their cause by applying epithets to the circulators of the petition.

Under the Wyer administration in 1899, it was reported that the students were "talking of petitioning the faculty to keep the library open until 11 o'clock in the evening." However, it seems that nothing came of that attempt, either. Jewett did finally increase the Saturday hours by opening at 8:00 a.m. rather than 9:00 a.m. in 1907-08, but other than that no alterations are recorded.

In fact the only major difference between these hours and the modern hours of access is the addition of


7 Hesperian, 18 March 1898, 8.

8 Nebraska State Journal (Lincoln), 13 March 1899.

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Sunday hours. At the turn of the century, however, Sunday was still sacrosanct. In 1907 Jewett wrote in answer to an inquiry from the librarian at the University of Michigan:

> Once in awhile, some individual has expressed the wish that the Library were open on Sunday, but in the absence of any considerable demand, we have never given the matter any thought.

**Closed vs. Open Stacks**

In addition to the liberalized hours of access, the students at the University of Nebraska were allowed the free use of the library stacks, an "open" stacks policy. The earlier and more conservative policy of many nineteenth century libraries was to "close" the stacks, requiring all users to request the book wanted, so that a library page could find it and later return it to the stacks. This policy reduced the student access to the books, but it also reduced the possibility of loss. With limited budgets and the expense of lost books coming directly from the librarian's small salary, the attraction of closed stacks is obvious. Nevertheless, by the 1890's open stacks were an entrenched policy at Nebraska. Jones did nothing to

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9Walter K. Jewett, Letter to the librarian of the University of Michigan, 13 March 1907, Ms, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.
reduce student access to the books. In fact, with the
great increase in hours available, she also greatly
increased student contact with the book collection.
This liberality created some problems, as suggested by
the case of Claude Bell, a student in 1895, who
"evinced his fondness for the study of natural history
by carrying off three works on the birds of North
America." On Chancellor Canfield's complaint he was
arrested and charged with grand larceny although the
charges were later dropped.10

In the fall of 1898, when Wyer first arrived in
Nebraska, one of his first changes was to close the
stacks, thus bringing Nebraska into line with the
majority of academic libraries at that time. The
following notice appeared in the newspaper:

Hereafter in the university library a new
system will be adopted in the distribution of
books to students. Formerly students were
allowed to go into the book rooms and help
themselves. But this will not be permitted
any longer. It will be necessary to apply to
the librarian's desk for any book, and it
will be obtained for the person applying, by
an assistant. In this manner a much better
record can be kept of the whereabouts of the
books and it will be easier to have a fair
use of them by all the students.11

10 *Lincoln Evening News*, 21 March 1895.

11 *Nebraska State Journal* (Lincoln), 13 August 1898.
The independent students of this frontier university did not tolerate those conditions for long, however. The second year of Wyer's administration the policy was changed again to permit student access to the stacks. Wyer showed some misgivings as well as pride in reporting this fact:

One democratic feature which distinguishes our University library from almost all other libraries of its class, is that all students are given absolutely free access to the shelves.
So radical a step as this is still somewhat in the nature of an experiment. Its value in bringing the student into direct contact and familiarity with all the resources of the library cannot be doubted, and it is hoped that the additional expense of administration which the practice entails, and some abuse of the privilege which has been observed among the students, will not necessitate its restriction or abandonment.  

The liberal open stacks policy remained through Wyer's administration. That this policy was more liberal than that of neighboring universities is supported by the testimony of James E. Boyle, a student assistant under Wyer who went to Lawrence, Kansas, after graduation in 1900.

On busy days we have twenty-five students at once studying in the Library. The reason for this small number is because of certain strict regulations, and because no freshmen

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or sophomores are allowed in the stack room. And so, of the 30,000 volumes, a few, a very few, are used.

In 1901, in an article in the Scarlet and Cream, Wyer made it clear that he understood the problems inherent in an open stacks policy:

Experience has shown that a course in practical ethics is much needed by some users of the library.
It is not honorable to hide books for your own use.
It is not honorable to carry books away without permission and proper charging.
It is dishonest to steal books, and there is no other term which will account for the disappearance of some of our books...
It is vandalism and is likewise a sad commentary on the bringing up of a boy or girl when pictures and pages are torn from a book, when margins are marked in a book not your own, when articles or paragraphs are cut from numbers of periodicals.

Nevertheless, Wyer affirmed his belief in "a distinct educational advantage in thus encouraging contact between students and books." He added that the true student and scholar would "love to browse among books" and he encouraged "large use of the library aside from regular class work." In his biennial report that year, Wyer also stated, "The actual loss of books, inevitable in any library, is not larger than in some

similar institutions where books may be used only under restrictions."^{15}

Jewett took over the library with an open stacks policy, which he retained for the time of this study, although he did later attempt to close the stacks again before his death. The problem of theft continued to plague the library at Nebraska, as it has other academic libraries during this century.

**Circulation**

Oddly enough, while the hours of accessibility were nearly tripling, the circulation policy was becoming more conservative. In the early library, while the faculty had free access with individual keys, students had only brief access to the library, and were allowed to check out books for a week at a time. The first record of circulation, "Record of books loaned and returned, 1871-1877," is primarily a record of faculty check-out, although two sections in the back, labelled "Ladies" and "Gents," list students borrowing books. The 1874 "Record" starts with dates spaced at one week intervals, but by the fall term the books were checked out two or three times a week, still for one

week intervals. For the 1874-75 academic year, the student circulation averaged 25 books per month. The 1880-86 circulation record contains a laconic note, dated February 13, 1879, and probably penned by the youthful George Howard who had just taken over the library:

> The Chancellor [Fairfield] removed a number of books from Library to Committee room in Commercial. I not being present did not receive the number.

Since librarians of that time were held personally responsible for all books missing at the annual inventory, Howard's concern is obvious.

While the early circulation records are not particularly relevant to the present discussion, they do provide some interesting comparisons. For example, in Chancellor Manatt's last year at Nebraska, he checked out 160 books from the library. During Canfield's first year he checked out only one. Perhaps Canfield had a larger personal collection, perhaps he was less likely to formally record his borrowing, or, considering the evidence of his diary, he probably simply had little time to read. By contrast, the

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16 Circulation Librarian, "Record of Books Loaned and Returned," ca. 1880-1886, 149, D, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.
1887-1892 "Record" showed that Professor Wightman checked out 14 books, Professor Bessey, 129, and Professor Caldwell checked out 274.

As the University became larger and demand on the library's limited resources increased, the policy was established and frequently reiterated that the library was intended for "reference." By this it was meant that the materials were to be used within the library and not removed. Heralding this restriction was the Journal's prediction at the addition of evening hours in 1891:

It will doubtless follow as a natural result that the library will become a reference library only even during the day. Many a student, who has gone hastily for a single though necessary reference in some volume, only to find it 'out,' will return thanks for the turn in affairs that puts all books within easy reach at all times. 17

Predictably, in the spring of 1893, a year after Mary Jones had come to the University, she obtained permission from the Library Committee "to call in all books at present in the hands of either professors or students." Since the library was intended "for reference and not for loan," a new circulation policy was established. Students were not permitted to remove any book from the library without the written

17 Nebraska State Journal (Lincoln), 1 November 1891.
permission of the professor in that specific subject area. Even with the instructor's permission, if the book was in frequent use, the student could only have it for one day (24 hours). Back issues of periodicals, with the instructor's written permission, were checked out for two days or less. Those books which were "seldom called for" could be checked out for up to three days, with the requisite professorial approval. Since the books could be taken to the students' living quarters only with the greatest difficulty, it is no wonder that the library was always crowded with students. This policy also put quite a burden on professors, not only in writing permissions, but also in obtaining books they might want themselves, since the same rules applied to them "in any other department than their own."

At the end of Wyer's first year in Nebraska these rules were modified to some extent and formally printed as "Regent's Rules Governing the Circulation of Books." Students still needed the written permission of the head of the department to draw out a book for as long as a week, but they were limited to only one book with this privilege. Without written permission they could take up to two books out of the library, but only at closing time (10:00 p.m.), and they had to be returned when the library opened the next morning at 8:00 a.m.
This circulation privilege clearly had little benefit, except on Saturday, since the library was closed all day on Sunday. Periodicals were no longer allowed to circulate at all.

While student restrictions remained rather severe, the faculty restrictions were lessened considerably. Members of the teaching force down to assistant instructors could check out up to ten books for two weeks at a time, with no restrictions as to department. Heads of departments were not limited as to the number borrowed, and they had a full two months before returning or renewing the books.

While retaining all the materials within the library was the stated policy, the exceptions to that rule made this policy less than uniform in enforcement. The demand for books coupled with open stacks and restricted circulation led many students to defy the regulations. The unfortunate Mr. Bell, who was arrested for stealing books in 1895 made that his defense:

He knew it was against the rules of the university to take books away, but says the rules were violated daily by students and nothing was ever said about it.\[18\]

\[18\]Ibid., 23 March 1893.
While entrance to the library and even access to the book shelves were considered important, the privilege of using books outside of the library was not yet well established. As late as 1930 Wyer wrote that "the lending of books has always been... [a] small part of college library work."\textsuperscript{19}

Cataloging

Even after a student had permission to enter the library, to go into the stacks, and to check out a book, he or she still needed to be able to find the specific book wanted. According to Justin Winsor, a library without a good catalog is a "mob of books."\textsuperscript{20} As academic libraries grew, the problems of disorganization became apparent. In the 1880s, as soon as the size and usage of the library began to increase, the need for a catalog in the library at Nebraska became evident. The spring semester of 1889 brought a request for a "printed catalog." The \textit{Hesperian} remarked plaintively, "At least there ought to be some way in which a student could find out what there is in the library."\textsuperscript{21}

\textsuperscript{19}Wyer, Reference, 189.


\textsuperscript{21}\textit{Hesperian}, 1 April 1889, 6.
Another column that same semester extolled the virtues of the Dewey Decimal Classification, a system "so simple and so comprehensive that it is equally suited to a library of fifty volumes or to a library of several thousand volumes." Furthermore, the author suggested that the Dewey classification be adopted by the University of Nebraska, and concluded with a polemic on "Columbia's" library school. However, these suggestions did not come to fruition until after Mary Jones arrived.

The first catalog at the University of Nebraska was one invented by Ellen Smith. This classification scheme was an arbitrary assignment of letters to groups of books (with no subdivision), each group being designated by an individual professor. While such classification has some temporary value, it soon becomes out of date. Toward the end of her tenure as librarian, Miss Smith took a count of the books under her classification. The size of the different subject areas varies from 1,210 in the letter V (a combination of "Engineering, Math, etc." ) to 5 in the Department of Law, to which she had not yet assigned a letter,

\[22\] Ibid., 1 February 1889, 2.
apparently. The smallest of her original lettered
categories at that time was F (Literary Translations) with 139 volumes.

The clear need for further subdivision is evident from her list where the large (848 volume) P, Political Science & International Law, had a smaller P2 listing (Woman's Studies) with 17 volumes. Further subdivisions were the H2 section (Railroads) with 111 volumes broken out of the 1,041 volume section on American History, and the T2 section (Physical Culture) with 19 volumes subsidiary to the 239 volume section on Education. These subdivisions may have been deemed necessary because the sections had become large and unwieldly, although some of the other sections were even larger. Perhaps they were added because new faculty members had been hired, or because Smith forecast these as growing areas for the future. For whatever reason, the need for subdivision was recognized.

The institution's early emphasis on a Latin School is perhaps shown by the large size of the Q, Latin Language, section (932 volumes) and the P, Greek Language, section (1024 volumes). These sections are seven and eight per cent of the collection, respectively. Other remnants of university history are shown by the fact that eight per cent of the collection is devoted to theology and ecclesiastical history.
While the need for further subdivision and growth is the most obvious drawback of Smith's classification, there are other problems as well. It is obvious that developing a logical and reasonable grouping of ever-changing categories of knowledge is difficult under any circumstances, but these particular groupings defy explanation. Why are Germanic and Romance Languages the first two categories, while Latin and Greek appear toward the end? Was it because of previous shelving in the available alcoves? Why are there separate letters (D and E) for English Literature and American Literature, which are then followed by a letter (G) for Shakespeare and the Drama? What is meant by "J, Institutional History"? That particular section has nearly 400 volumes, so it can hardly refer to just the University of Nebraska.

Ellen Smith tried to defend her system in a letter to the Hesperian, suggesting that although a "printed" catalog was not available, a "written" one was. She claimed that "any student may find the name of the author and the title of every book in the library" in it. However, even she admitted the difficulty of finding a book, when she suggested that students would "save much time . . . by asking for the books they wish
to use, instead of trying to find them when they are on
the shelves."

In any case, the problems enumerated here help to
explain why this catalog was not adequate for long,
although it remains evidence of the generally
acknowledged need for a subject catalog. In fact, in
1890, when the Library Committee first pointed out the
need for a new library building, it also requested a
catalog of the collection. The creation of this catalog
was clearly the foremost priority of the new
professional librarian.

In 1892, Mary Jones' first summer after library
school, she went through the entire library,
reclassifying all the books according to the Dewey
Classification. She penciled in these temporary numbers
on the bookplates and then rearranged all of the books
in sequence according to the new number. Jones later
told her student assistant "that all through that summer
she dreamed of books falling on her until she was fairly
black and blue." Once the books were arranged in
approximately the correct order, she then started a
shelf list card catalog, occasionally revising the

23Ibid., 15 November 1889, 6.
classification as she made permanent cards. At the same time, an accessions book was started, binding records were initiated, and book plates printed. "In short [Jones] got the library started according to library school methods."25

The second year of Jones' administration she got authorization from the Library Committee to "re-arrange" the library according to the Dewey system and to continue the card catalogue in that method. Since a good share of this work was already completed by that time, this may have been a retrospective authorization, or simply to support her efforts in disputes over departmental libraries. She also requested and received recognition as being "in authoritative and responsible control" of the library "with the advice of the Library Committee."26

The first shelf list was completed in two years, and by 1894 Edna Bullock started a classed catalog, then considered to be the best type of catalog for academic libraries. Mary Jones reported in 1895:

Originally the catalog was classed. It was found that the students would not use it and

25 Nellie Compton, "Notes."
26 Library Committee, Minutes, 27 October 1893, Ms, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.
the dictionary catalog was started by simply translating the classification number.

The new subject catalog was therefore arranged alphabetically. Author-title and subject cards were kept in separate files. The first subject entries were direct "translations" of the Dewey classification number, but later the Library of Congress' list of subject headings was used.28

One of the major problems encountered in the initial cataloging of the collection was the opposition of the professors. While all the faculty wanted a usable catalog, each had his own preference as to how the books in his department ought to be arranged. Few were happy with relying on the new decimal classification as published. At the very least they added to or altered the Dewey system in their areas, and some insisted on using entirely different classifications. For years this caused considerable confusion in the departmental libraries, since later books were classed strictly according to the Dewey classification, and were no longer consistent with the

27 Mary Jones, "Cataloging," Ms, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

28 Nellie Compton, "Notes."
older modifications. In her remarks to her successor, Mary Jones noted rather apologetically:

Many variations from the D.C. have been made . . . Let it be noticed that these radical changes have been made with the protest of the library staff which has always entertained orthodox views on the subject. This is one of the cases in which professors have prevailed.

Library Instruction

Once a catalog was developed and the arcane language of librarianship was introduced, it became imperative that the library users be educated to use that catalog. Significantly, the first attempts at library instruction came from Mary Jones, who also introduced the science of librarianship to the University. Since Jones spent most of her five year administration retrospectively producing a card catalog for the library, her early courses were designed to train catalogers. Nellie Compton, a student in one of these classes, reported that Jones, the librarian, and Robbins, the cataloger, gave these short courses two or three different times.

These courses were primarily to train assistants for the university library but a

29 Ibid.

30 Mary Jones, "Classification," Ms, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.
number of those who took the work continued in library work, some of them later going to library school. Flora Bullock, Anna Fossler, Mary Horne, Mariel Gere, [and] Mazie Ames were among those in the earliest classes.

Even though developing trained assistants was Jones' top priority, she had planned to extend bibliographic instruction to a wider range of students before circumstances forced her departure. The 1896-97 university catalog describes a course "on the use of the library" which contained a description of area libraries; "directions for using the catalogue"; "books of reference, bibliography, and indexes"; and "methods of reading and research." In her notes to her successor, she explains the instruction which she had envisioned:

The general lectures for the students, announced for next year, were to be simply such general directions as would enable them to intelligently use the library. These were planned primarily for the freshmen though other students were to be admitted. No such course has yet been given owing to the incomplete state of the catalog and the insufficiency of the force but we were convinced that time would be saved in the end by . . . explaining the use of the library to the students.

These progressive suggestions were probably lost on the

31 Nellie Compton, "Notes."

32 Mary Jones, "General Remarks," TMs, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.
inept Mr. Epes, but J.I. Wyer carried on the policy of library instruction.

According to Nellie Compton, Wyer "gave a course in cataloging and a course in reference once or twice." She added that Charlotte Templeton, Marian Bell Fleck, Clara Mulliken Norton, and Clara Craig were in his classes. Compton considered Wyer to be "an excellent teacher . . . but his best teaching was done in training those who worked with him in the library." Wyer himself reported on one of these early classes, given to fourteen students in 1901.

The work was taken by those desiring to enter library schools or to fit themselves to engage intelligently in library work in this state. The experiment served two useful purposes. 1. It created a body of slightly trained workers upon which this library could draw to fill vacancies and in fact two appointments have since been made to the staff of the university library and one to the Omaha public library from this class. 2. It prepared trained workers to take a part in the rapidly growing library development throughout the state.

Unfortunately, Wyer decided that the time and laboratory room required for these courses was more than the library could spare. He concluded:

Although a strong demand for the instruction has persisted it has been discontinued and will not be resumed unless your board feels

33 Nellie Compton, "Notes."

that it is a line of work for which you wish to make additional and suitable provision.\textsuperscript{35}

He had presented "a number of letters urging the resumption of the course" to the Library Board in November of 1902, but the Board chose not to recommend any extension of this activity, and the matter was tabled.\textsuperscript{36}

Although discouraged from providing formal instruction on library use, Wyer continued his practice of giving one or two annual lectures on "How to Use the Library." At the beginning of each school year he explained "some of the technicalities of the system of classification . . . , the card catalogue, and such other things as will make the library more useful."\textsuperscript{37}

Apparently Jewett continued this practice, since he gave at least one "short" lecture explaining "some of the intricacies of the library system" the first October he was at the University of Nebraska. This talk was pronounced "opportune," since the new students


\textsuperscript{36}Library Board, Minutes, 12 November 1902, Ms, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

\textsuperscript{37}\textit{Nebraska State Journal} (Lincoln), 12 September 1899.
were "much handicapped in their efforts to find reference books." 38

Reference Assistance in using the "reference books" was essential in the University, particularly since many students did not hear the annual lectures, and formal course instruction in library organization was scarce at best. The concept of reference assistance provided by a trained librarian was a relatively new one. In the major research libraries of this period, if reference assistance was being provided, "it was being done only on an informal and part-time basis." 39 In fact, "reference service was only an idea in the minds of a few progressive and imaginative college librarians" in the time before World War I. 40

Reference was also a less visible service, and hence one that was often postponed under the stress of too little time. Mary Jones noted at her departure:

The force of the last five years has been

38 Lincoln Star, 9 October 1906.
39 Rothstein, Development, 14.
expended toward making the catalog. The reference work remains to be developed.

Understandably, Epes made little improvement on that state of affairs, but Wyer developed the field of reference as Jones had done for the cataloging of the library. His courses not only tended to produce reference librarians instead of catalogers, but he also encouraged the students' use of the staff for reference questions. In his 1901 introduction to the Library, Wyer advised the students to "promptly make your wants known" and not to "be afraid to ask questions." He enumerated all the things the librarian could show or explain to the neophyte, and suggested that "library attendants can often save half an hour of your time by the use of one minute of their own." He concluded by saying:

The librarian and his assistants are, first of all, entirely and cheerfully at the service of every student and nothing will give them more pleasure than to be of use in any way.  

This concept of dedicated reference service was beginning to be noticed at other institutions, which led to the following much-quoted complaint:

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41 Jones, "General Remarks."
42 Wyer, "The University Library," 5.
43 Ibid., 6.
Never ask a librarian anything you don't really want to know. [They] are a breed apart . . . Long weeks after you have quite forgotten your casual request, here comes the information inexorably tracking you down. 44

J. I. Wyer was to become an expert in the field of reference. His career at the New York State Library was centered on reference instruction. He not only taught reference at the Library School for many years, but also wrote a textbook on the subject, which was considered the standard text for a generation or more. In this book he stated his belief that "reference work is the chief service function of the college library," 45 a belief that he put into practice at the University of Nebraska. In 1901, he told the University students:

All catalogues, indexes, instructions and devices are, after all, superficial and unsatisfactory as compared with a good reference librarian. 46

**Reserve Books**

Finding the right books was not the only problem faced by students. Restricting circulation and designating the library for "reference only" were not

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44 Charles Ferguson, as quoted in Rothstein, "Reaction," 115.

45 Wyer, Reference, 189.

46 Wyer, "The University Library," 5.
sufficient to keep the books in the highest demand readily accessible.

According to Compton, "the first attempts at reserving books were made during the latter part of J.I. Wyer's administration."\(^4^7\) Already in 1901 Wyer was reporting the use of reserve shelves "labeled with the name and number of the course."

The effect of this is that most students, especially in the larger classes, will find all their required reading on the reserve shelves and will not be obliged to go to the book room.\(^4^8\)

By 1905 Wyer was reporting "the perfection of the plan for 'Reserved Books,'"\(^4^9\) and 1,500 volumes were placed on the reserve shelves each semester.

Wyer's reserve system was voluntary. The books were placed on separate shelves in the reading room, with a large red label pasted on the cover, telling the year, the semester, and the course for which it was reserved. The students were admonished to replace the books on the reserve shelves where they had found them. Unfortunately, the labels had to be replaced each

\(^4^7\) Nellie Compton, "Notes."
\(^4^8\) Wyer, "The University Library," 5.
semester "until a book might carry several thicknesses of labels."  

After Jewett's arrival, "it became increasingly apparent that the labels had no effect in keeping books from disappearing." Therefore, a counter "with grill" was built across one of the alcoves in the reading room, and a closed reserve system with two-hour charging period was instituted. Jewett reported to the Board that this "greatly increased" efficiency in the library:

The books reserved for class use have been placed in custody of an attendant whose sole function is the care of this portion of the library. A delivery counter has been installed in one end of the reading room and the reserved books shelved behind it. They are issued only on signature of the borrower and must be returned within two hours.  

An unfortunate consequence of the closed reserve system was noted by Compton:

There was an increased disappearance of all sorts of books from the stacks — there seemed to be a feeling that what was not reserved was free and, if you didn't take it some one else would.  

50 Nellie Compton, "Notes."  
52 Nellie Compton, "Notes."
While the reserve system appears to have begun to function in a fashion similar to that used by the majority of academic libraries today, the problem of an appropriate circulation policy had not yet been addressed. Jewett's response to this problem was to close the stacks entirely within a few years. However, there were also pressures from outside the library portending a liberalization of access to the library.

**Access for Outsiders**

Many citizens of the state were well aware that they were building a useful library in Lincoln. Added to these were a growing number of alumni who had become accustomed to the the privilege of using the university library. Together these made a potent political force for allowing access to the library for ordinary citizens. When Mary Jones started her work as librarian, Gere's newspaper announced:

> It should be remembered that these books are accessible to any citizen of the state needing to use them. The university library ought to be the Mecca of every person in Nebraska who is seeking special information or doing special literary work. 

This hopeful opinion that all citizens should have the same privileges was apparently not shared by all of

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53 *Nebraska State Journal* (Lincoln), 20 November 1892.
the Regents, however. By 1897, after a request from the York Public Schools, "a resolution passed by the Board of Regents forbade the loan of books to other than those connected with the university."54

Nevertheless, the alumni had privileges, and in 1895 the Library Committee was recommending "that graduates of other institutions so far as known to be reliable, be given the same library privileges as our own alumni."55 These privileges were considerable. In 1899 "resident alumni" were allowed to borrow two books for two weeks at a time, while registered students were only allowed to take two books overnight. Even with the written permission of the department head, the students could only have one book for one week, a quarter of the latitude allowed the resident alumni.56

By the spring of 1900 the library was loaning "a great many books to students in various parts of the state," not only those who were "doing university work"

54 Library Board, Minutes, 1 November 1897, Ms, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

55 Library Committee, Minutes, 6 December 1895, Ms, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

56 "Regent's Rules Governing the Circulation of Books," (Lincoln, University of Nebraska, 1899).
but also those who were "studying privately." The Regents' policy of 1899 clearly gives the librarian authority to grant permits to "non-residents and persons outside the University." Although they had been concerned about use by those outside of the university, they clearly had decided to permit general use of the library in individual cases. By 1899, Wyer was determined to print a Union List of Periodicals. Once made available to Nebraska schools and students, it probably greatly facilitated the use of the library by others in the state. Part of the impetus for this change of policy no doubt came from the library's obvious need for opportunities to supplement its own collection.

By the time Jewett became librarian, the lending of books all over the state had become institutionalized. Jewett reported in 1906:

The library maintains cordial relations with the Nebraska Library Commission and on the recommendation of the secretary of the commission, lends books to individuals throughout the state when this can be done

57 "Gathering Great Library," Omaha Bee, 22 May 1900.

58 Library Board, Minutes, 29 November 1898, Ms, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.
without inconvenience to our immediate constituency. 59

The subject of inter-library cooperation usually arises when an institution becomes aware that its collection is not adequate to meet the demands of its users. The early brochures printed for the University take note of the extensive collections available to the students. Careful reading shows that these collections were not just the University's, but rather the collections of the Nebraska State Historical Society, the legislative library, and later the growing collection of the Lincoln public library. It was only after the turn of the century that the university library became large enough to talk of itself without constant reference to other libraries available in the city.

In addition to entire collections, the library often needed to borrow individual books from other libraries. This early interlibrary loan was informal, since few published catalogs were available. The earliest example of this is a letter written by Mary Jones in 1895, thanking Melvil Dewey for lending her library a book for a month and including stamps for the

A year later she wrote to Jane Addams requesting the loan or sale of publications to help Lincoln establish a "settlement house." While infrequent, these solitary letters seeking assistance were increasingly common. Along with the need to resort to other libraries in the town, these occasional demands for otherwise unavailable books lent rational support for the lending of books to those outside of the University itself.

Conclusions

Jones, like many of the early library pioneers, had a practical and experimental approach to librarianship. With little historical evidence to rely on, she tried out many different approaches to problems in an attempt to find the best solution under the circumstances. In addition to changing circulation policies and abandoning the suggested classed catalog, she also felt free to shelve the 400's (Philology) next to the 800's (Literature) for foreign languages: the separation of the textbooks and literature of various

60 Mary Jones, Letter to Melvil Dewey, 19 January 1895, Ms, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

61 Mary Jones, Letter to Jane Addams, 4 April 1896, Ms, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.
languages is a problem that librarians and users have long discerned in the Dewey Classification.

J. I. Wyer also displayed an attitude of experimentation at the Library. His experiments at bibliographic instruction and closing the library stacks were matched only by the speed of his decision in dropping the ideas when they did not fit the circumstances. Whenever thwarted by financial constraints or apathy, Wyer readily developed innovative approaches to improving the library. Modern librarians, facing collections decimated by assorted attempts at reclassification and inundated with a barrage of conflicting proposals and suggestions for improving service, may well find themselves envying the flexibility and freedom of these early pioneers.

Jewett, on the other hand, displayed a more deductive or didactive approach to changes. He not only left a record of fewer alterations in services, but when confronted with opposition to his removal of newspapers from the reading room, he was "inclined to smile at the protest." Jewett declared the problem to be that "most people" had a "misconception of the purpose" of a library.62 When students resorted to

theft to get books out of the library, rather than considering a more liberal circulation policy, he reinstituted the closed stacks policy which had already failed for Wyer a decade earlier.

In addition to flexibility and experimentation, the early librarians revealed an awareness of their own status as pioneers in an embryonic profession. Their eagerness to improve and develop access to the library is evident, despite the many obstacles. Wyer summed up this attitude in his first report to the Board of Regents:

The work of American libraries is recognized as distinctly a great educational movement. . . Nebraska has excellent foundations laid in this work upon which may be reared, if the state deals liberally with herself, a superstructure from which influences for culture and education may go out to the remotest corners of the state and the northwest.

CHAPTER VII
SUPPORT FOR THE LIBRARY

"If the state deals liberally with herself . . . ."
This, of course, was the key stipulation if the University of Nebraska Library were to maintain and improve on its potential greatness. In looking for evidence of liberal support from 1891 to 1909, the backing of the Library Committee or Board and the opinions of the chancellors were significant, as well as the actual financial appropriations.

The Library Committee

For most of the period under study, the Librarian was directly responsible to the Library Committee of the Faculty. This was a tradition at the University, and the earliest "librarians" had been chairmen of the Library Committee themselves. The duties of the Library Committee were essentially to meet, generally once annually or biennially or whenever funds were appropriated, and to distribute the money between the various departments. It is clear that these committee members took their job seriously, thoughtfully considering the goals of the library and its needs, as Professor Little's letters requesting a new building, a subject catalog, and other improvements attest.
Nevertheless, before a professional staff arrived, one meeting a year generally sufficed to cover any questions that arose.

The Library Committee in 1891-1892 serves as an example of these early representatives of the faculty. Its members were Professors Sherman, Nicholson, and Wightman. While Nicholson had only a Masters degree, he had been at the University of Nebraska for nearly ten years. Sherman had also been at Nebraska for the same length of time, and had a fifteen year old PhD. from Yale, a relatively conservative institution. Wightman was a new member of the faculty with a recent PhD from Johns Hopkins. Together they made a Committee leaning toward conservative, old-fashioned scholarship, with a lot of collective experience at Nebraska to rely on and with enough leavening to support progressive improvement. Significantly, these same men formed the Library Committee for the 1892-93 year as well. Thus Mary Jones' first year was served under the benign and experienced influence of men who had concurred in her appointment, two of whom had probably known her as a student at the University.

The Library Committee changed in 1893-94. Professor Sherman remained on it, Bessey was added to represent the sciences, and Edgren, the new Romance Language professor, replaced Wightman. Bessey had been
at Nebraska nearly as long as Sherman, with a PhD from the University of Iowa. Edgren had received a PhD from Yale twenty years before, even though he was a new member of the Nebraska faculty. Again, conservative, old-fashioned scholarship was the hallmark of the Library Committee with many years of experience represented. This committee of three men remained for two years, serving in 1894-95, also.

During these first three years of the Jones administration, the Committee met only two or three times a year with little on the agenda other than splitting up the book budget between departments. All of the Committee decisions were apparently submitted to the full faculty for approval, so the Committee itself wielded little power, anyway. For these three years the Library Committee had an average of 1.2 meetings per semester. Therefore, for the whole time Canfield remained as chancellor, the Library Committee remained stable, experienced, and virtually inert.

A significant change occurred in the 1895-96 Library Committee. Since it is not known whether the committee members were elected by the Faculty or appointed by the Chancellor or selected in some other fashion, the cause of this change is not readily apparent. It could have been due to MacLean's antagonism toward a female librarian, or to some of the
faculty's stated objections to taking orders from a "mere slip of a girl." It might have been at least partly caused by the political debates and turmoil of prairie populism. Whatever the cause, MacLean was not the only problem confronting Mary Jones in 1895.

The new Library Committee consisted of Davis, Ward, Fling, and Wolfe. This committee sported two PhDs from Leipzig, one from Johns Hopkins, and a very recent scientific one from Harvard. Of these professors, Wolfe had the longest seniority at the institution: six years. This experience did not suggest stability, however. From the earlier discussion of the departmental libraries to the political "silver question" and right down to his dismissal in 1897, Wolfe's career was characterized by dissent and turmoil. Of the remaining three committee members, Fling had been at Nebraska for four years and Davis and Ward had both been there for only two years. For the first time that year the librarian was named on the committee, but that seems like small consolation considering the people she had to work with. Primed for conflict as the committee was, it did not remain stable for two years, as the others had. The redoubtable Wolfe remained, as did Davis, but Fling and Ward were replaced by Adams from English and Owens from Electrical Engineering. Significantly these two new
members were not equipped to challenge Wolfe: Owens had an Electrical Engineering degree rather than a PhD, and Adams had only a bachelor's degree from Michigan. The new members had arrived in Nebraska more recently than those they replaced.

During these two rather exciting years culminating in Jones' departure, the Library Committee became much more active. Tiny details were scrutinized, including over-ruling the librarian about details of the Library's business practices. In November 1895, shortly after the advent of the contentious new Library Committee, Jones wrote to her periodical supplier:

> I have been directed by the library committee to ask you for a revision of your prices on foreign periodicals... I am aware that this is not the time to commence an investigation of this sort... but I was not directed to do it until yesterday... I further wish to say that I have impressed upon the committee the faithfulness with which our commissions... have been executed and the difficulty that will be entertained in transferring orders to another firm...

The Library Committee continued to argue over suppliers and prices. A month before Jones handed in her resignation, Prof. Davis, Chairman of the Library

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1Mary Jones, Letter to Stechert Co., November 1895, Ms. University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.
Committee, wrote to Chancellor MacLean reporting that "after some discussion" the committee had decided to stay with the same binder, yet requesting the approval of the Board of Regents. There was apparently little justification for this interference with the librarian's choice of binderies.

In the discussion came out a rather protracted experience of Professor Ward in trying to get binding reasonably done. He found no better terms than those of Neumann [the Library's binder at that time].

For the two years from the fall of 1895 to the spring of 1897 the Library Committee met an average of 5.8 times per semester, compared to 1.2 meetings per semester in the previous three years.

The Library Board

The dissension and referrals to the Board of Regents may have disturbed not only Jones, who left that spring, but also the Board members. It is also likely that nationwide inflationary pressures and increasing numbers of periodicals to be bound, coupled with the economic hardship in Nebraska during the 1890's may have required a strenuous effort to reduce costs at the Library. For whatever reason, in the

2Ellery W. Davis, Letter to Chancellor G. E. MacLean, 20 May 1897, Ms, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.
summer of 1897, at the departure of Mary Jones, the Board of Regents removed the responsibility of library operation from the faculty and established a Library Committee of the Board of Regents. This was referred to as the Library Board. They politely invited the Library Committee of the Faculty "during its natural life" to sit as "corresponding members of the Library Board," but the authority clearly rested with the new Board.

The Library Board as a subset of the Board of Regents was short-lived. The members in 1897-98 were H.L. Goold, George F. Kenower, and Charles Weston. They had the less than enviable position of supervising the brief ill-fated tenure of John Epes, along with the worsening economic situation. The Board was still working on details: in February they made a "special appropriation of 64 cents." During that year they met an average of 6.5 times per semester, the highest number of meetings required by any of the Library Committees or Boards. There was even an intention at the beginning of the year to make Library Board meetings weekly, although this never happened. It is

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3 Library Board, Minutes, 9 October 1897, Ms, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

4 Ibid., 21 February 1898.
perhaps understandable that the exhausted Board members were willing to pay a little extra to get Epes out of their way a little early.

For the next three years the Board of Regents had only one of their members, Regent Morrill, on the Library Board. The Chancellor and Deans Sherman and Bessey were made ex officio members of the Library Board as well. Chancellor MacLean served for 1898-99 on this newly constructed Board, but Chancellor Andrews served on the 1899-1901 Boards. In 1900-01 Dean Davis, who had been the Chairman of the more contentious 1896-97 faculty Committee, was added to the Library Board as well. The original form of faculty supervision was no longer feasible, since a University Senate replaced the general faculty meeting as the means of faculty governance in the spring of 1899.  

The Library Board was still dealing with the minutiae of library operation during these years. In February 1899 "the librarian reported bids on binding... and submitted samples of work. . ." For these first three years of Wyer's administration, while the Board of

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5 Biehn, 147.

6 Library Board, Minutes, 21 February 1899, Ms, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.
Regents still deemed it necessary to keep one of their members in close contact with the Library's functioning, the Library Board met an average of 3.3 times per semester. This is less often than the 6.5 of the stressful Epes administration, but not yet back to the tranquil 1.2 of the early Jones administration.

Perhaps Wyer was able to convince the administration of his professional competence. At any rate there was a lessening of supervision, and there was even some evidence of support for his staff, as evinced by the order to call in all keys not held by library staff in the fall of 1899. The Library Board in 1901-02 had the Chancellor as the only representative of the administration. The Librarian was again listed on the Board, this time as chairman. Deans Bessey and Davis were still on the Board, but Dean Sherman had been replaced by Dean Ward. The Board met twice each semester this year.

The Committee of the Library

Presumably because there was no longer a member of the Board of Regents on the Library Board, it was decided to change the name yet again. From 1902-05 the Committee of the Library consisted of the Librarian as

Ibid., 15 December 1899.
Chairman, the Chancellor, and Deans Bessey, Davis, Ward, Sherman, and Pound. For these final three years of Wyer's administration, the supervision seems to have been very loose, at best. The committee met less than once a semester.

In 1905, just before Wyer's departure, Dean Burnett was added to the Library Committee, making the Committee include all the deans. It remained structured in this pattern for three years, with the Librarian as Chairman, the Chancellor, and all of the deans. The number on the committee gradually rose, as the number of deans increased. Such bureaucratic details were relatively unimportant, however, as the Committee was still meeting less than once a semester.

From 1908 to 1910, the Librarian was demoted to Secretary, and the Chancellor became the Chairman. This was totally irrelevant, since the Committee did not meet at all for those two years. The last entry in the Library Board Minutes volume reads:

On Dec. 12, 1911, the Board of Regents abolished the Library Board and placed the Library under the charge of the Librarian. (signed) W.K. Jewett.

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8Ibid., 11 December 1911.
Chancellor Canfield

The Library Committee/Board was not the only source of support for the University Library. The librarians' relationships with the various chancellors were also important to the growth and development of the library. According to Rita Guerlac, historian of Cornell's library, a university library needs a forceful and imaginative Librarian and a President who believes in the Library and its central importance to the intellectual life of the University.

During these two decades, four chancellors served the University of Nebraska, and gave varying degrees of importance to the library.

Chancellor Canfield was probably the most avid supporter of a modern library. Such support is indeed rare, and his interest came at an opportune time. Eugene M. Johnson suggests that Canfield was largely responsible for the changes in the library in 1891 and 1892. However, Canfield cannot be credited with the original impetus for building a new building, nor even with the first requests for organizing the collection.


in keeping with modern librarianship. While Canfield was clearly in sympathy with others on the University faculty who had started the Library's progress, he also provided the attention to detail and passionate concern which were essential to the eventual success of the project. The building would no doubt have been much less well-built, and possibly not even have been finished, without Canfield's able leadership and direction. His appointment of the first professional librarian, followed by substantial moral support of her necessary activities lay a good basic foundation for the future growth of the Library.

Canfield was an able politician, often mentioned for various political posts which he adroitly avoided. According to Nellie Compton, Canfield "had personality plus, short, dark, dynamic."\(^\text{11}\) During his five years in Nebraska, the University trebled in attendance and importance . . . Through the very period of Nebraska's darkest days financially and industriously, '89-95, the populist legislatures voted large sums for the university's maintenance and improvement . . . \(^\text{12}\)

According to Caldwell, Canfield brought to Nebraska a

\(^{11}\)Nellie Compton, "Memories," April 1937, 16.

\(^{12}\)"Chancellor Canfield," *Nebraska State Journal* (Lincoln), 6 October 1901.
necessary "centralization of power" in the administration which "brought forth results that were simply amazing."\textsuperscript{13}

Canfield was not only politically astute, but also a good judge of the abilities of his subordinates. He provided the vision to blaze new trails, but invariably chose dedicated and capable people to carry out the ideas. Where those he designated did not have the power or authority to force adequate results, as was often the case in the construction of the new library, Canfield was not at all averse to handling even the tiniest details himself.

Canfield presided over a University that was rapidly expanding, enthusiastic, and buoyantely hopeful, in the face of one of the worst economic depressions to ever hit the state. That this optimism came at least partly from the young and enthusiastic chancellor cannot be questioned. That he directed this energy in great part to the Library, was to the great good fortune of that part of the institution as well. Canfield envisioned Lincoln as "the Mecca of every scholar and every professional man in this state."\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{13} Caldwell, 34.

\textsuperscript{14} Nebraska State Journal (Lincoln), 19 July 1891.
He well understood the importance of a library to the new university idea. At the dedication of the new Library Building in 1895, Canfield wrote, "Good books are the best men and women at their best. They are the wisest and most helpful companions."\(^{15}\)

An anecdote revealing Canfield's backing of the library is provided by Edna D. Bullock:

Campus gossip of the period related that Professor B--- stormed into the chancellor's office and asked: 'Does this mean that I am required to ask a mere girl whether I may take a book from the library?' . . . And the campus grapevine said that the chancellor replied: 'Professor B--- you are a valued member of the faculty; I should regret to have to accept your resignation, but you will conform to the rules of the University or resign.'\(^{16}\)

Bullock places the incident after the McMillan year and in Mary Jones' administration, with the possibility that Nellie Compton may have been the "mere girl" in question. Whenever it happened, the incident reveals the active support Canfield gave the library.

Canfield lived his belief in the importance of libraries. He left the presidency of Ohio State to become librarian at Columbia University. In 1899, the media intimated that Canfield had been suggested to

\(^{15}\) James H. Canfield, Letter to Chancellor MacLean, 5 December 1895, Ms, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

\(^{16}\) Bullock, "Four Decades,". 10.
McKinley for the post of Librarian of Congress. Despite much premature euphoria in several locations, this honor was not forthcoming. Canfield's daughter, Dorothy Canfield Fisher, said later of his appointment to Columbia that "even his fabulous vitality [was] beginning to show signs of wear."\(^{17}\) It would indeed be ironic if Canfield sought a restful haven in a library for his last decade of life, since the idea of the library as a sinecure for aging faculty was never acceptable to him. Nevertheless, Canfield's years of service to one of the foremost academic libraries in the country attest to his contribution to librarianship.

**Chancellor MacLean**

While Chancellor Canfield was remarkable for his political acumen and support of the Librarian, MacLean was equally remarkable for his antagonism. MacLean was a Presbyterian minister and a scholar, who had studied in multiple places in Europe. Twelve years at the University of Minnesota could not transform him from the basically Eastern scholar that he was. Antagonizing people with his accent and with his dismissal of three

\(^{17}\)Dorothy Canfield Fisher, "A Librarian's Creed: James Hulme Canfield," *Columbia University Columns* 2 (November 1952), 2.
professors in 1897, one of whom was the populist 
Wolfe, MacLean was actually "hissed" by the students 
in the spring of 1897. He disclaimed responsibility 
for the dismissals, but his report to the Regents of 
that year clearly showed that he had recommended the 
firings.

While his popularity with students and Nebraskans 
did not match that of Canfield, MacLean was also 
clearly working for the advancement of the University 
into a major institution. This type of advancement 
necessitated a modern, well-run library. It was 
MacLean's misfortune that he could not envision this 
type of progress with a woman in charge. The sexist 
friction clearly interfered with their professional 
relationship. In addition to taking orders from the 
new Library Committee, Jones was also being criticized 
by MacLean. She wrote to the bindery shortly after 
MacLean arrived:

Since writing you this morning I have had a 
conversation with the chancellor . . . As he 
has been here but two months it is the first 
time any of your bills have come to him . . . 
[He] pronounced them more than we were able 
to afford . . . Of course I set before him 
the superior quality of your work and the 
rare intelligence you show in executing all

18 *Howard Courier*, 8 May 1897.
19 *Nebraska State Journal* (Lincoln), 29 April 1897.

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orders. But the fact remains that if the work can be done for less price, we must have it.

While the strife with Jones and her ultimate departure were definitely a setback for the Library, the appointment of Wyer was extremely advantageous. Epes' career in Nebraska may not appear very admirable, but he was a man and he did hold the position open until Wyer could graduate from library school. These were the two characteristics that MacLean found most necessary. MacLean left for the presidency of the University of Iowa the year after Wyer came to Nebraska, so he did not get to enjoy the benefits of his excellent appointment for long. Nor did he have much opportunity to deal conservatively with the library, a policy that would have antagonized Wyer no less than it did Jones.

Chancellor Andrews

Chancellor Andrews was one of the leading educators of the day, and had apparently been offered the position of chancellor before Canfield had taken it. Having just accepted the presidency of Brown

20 Mary Jones, Letter to Neumann Bros., November 1895, Ms, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.
University, Andrews declined, but in 1900 when the position was offered again, he accepted. It might also be noted that when Andrews finally accepted, much of the work of placing Nebraska in the forefront of American universities was already done. Compton described Andrews as "tall, straight, soldierly, severe." Andrews was not involved in the pioneering attempts to modernize the library, but he clearly recognized and applauded the advances. When he visited Lincoln to consider accepting the chancellorship in 1900, he stated:

Another thing that struck me and which shows the wisdom of whoever has brought the organization to its present place is the perfect centralization exhibited. For instance the different departmental libraries are parts of the university library and additions come only through the librarian... This is an important matter in a large institution.

Andrews' previous expansion of the graduate program at Brown University and his later support of the graduate school at Nebraska are indicators of the derivation of his support of a strong central library.

21 *Nebraska State Journal* (Lincoln), 4 December 1899.


23 *Nebraska State Journal* (Lincoln), 12 April 1900.
Unfortunately, while Andrews clearly had the advancement of the University at heart, his appointment by a "populist" Board of Regents placed him squarely in the middle of political turmoil. As the *York Times* was quoted in the *Journal*:

The fact is Chancellor Andrews was a free silver advocate and a pop, when the pop board of regents brought him to Nebraska. When the bottom dropped out of that heresy he had sense enough to see what had happened and rolled up his breeches and waded ashore . . . He is erratic but he is pretty smart and is evidently very much interested in the state university.\(^{24}\)

The polarization of the state did not allow Andrews the freedom to adopt Canfield's apolitical "entire political creed," which consisted of doubling the number of students at the university. Andrews had never been known for quiet diplomacy anyway. When he accepted the position at Nebraska, the Omaha Bee quoted a bit of doggerel which had first appeared in the *Chicago Times-Herald*, including the lines: "Where he sojourns there commotions / Are... certain to arise." The verse continued, "He must either fight or bust," and suggested that he was "going to Nebraska, / To set all the plains aflame."\(^{25}\)

\(^{24}\) Ibid., 14 March 1904.

\(^{25}\) "E. Benjamin Andrews," *Omaha Bee*, 22 April 1900.
While Andrews' disputes with the politicians in
the state were obvious, the gradual demise of the
Library Board minutes leaves little written record of
his relationship with Wyer. That Andrews wanted to
lend his support to libraries seems evident: he was
invited to address the Iowa State Library Association
in 1900 on the subject of reading.26 Nevertheless,
Wyer's correspondence is replete with requests for more
funding and more allowances for professional absences.
While Andrews wished to help the library grow, it is
possible that he was simply unable to discern just what
was necessary for that professional growth. Andrews
hired Dr. Jewett as Librarian, providing staff
promotions and prestige as asked, but he neglected to
require a completed degree from Jewett. Considering
the tenor of his correspondence with Wyer, it is
possible that Andrews was just doing all that was
possible given the financial limitations which were
becoming all too clear by that time.

Chancellor Avery

Like Chancellor Andrews, Chancellor Avery left
little record of his relationship with the Library.

26 Nebraska State Journal (Lincoln), 20 October
1900.
Samuel Avery had been at the University through much of the period of the Library's growth. He was a student when Canfield arrived, and a graduate student for the first two years of Mary Jones' administration. After obtaining a PhD at Heidelberg, he was an assistant professor during the Epes episode and while Wyer was first settling in. After two years in Idaho, he returned as an analytical chemistry professor, until he was made Acting Chancellor in December 1908. He was offered the official chancellorship the next spring.

The Board of Regents claimed to have conducted a long quest for "a distinguished scholar," but had finally given up and appointed Avery. The Chairman of the Board even apologized at the inaugural banquet in front of Avery and all his friends, saying they had made a careful search but had been unable to find the man they wanted, and so had appointed Avery.\textsuperscript{27} Their dissatisfaction with Avery as representative of the institution may have been feigned, but it may have been indicative of the plight the University had found itself in a mere four years earlier. Just as they could no longer afford a distinguished librarian like Wyer, perhaps they could no longer afford a chancellor of the caliber they had hoped to obtain.

\textsuperscript{27}Manley, 188.
While Avery had been at the University for most of the two decades under study, he had never served on the Library Committee or Board. None of the library records show any particular interest taken by Avery. While he had the requisite accouterments of scholarship, he does not seem to have pushed the University in an obviously scholarly direction. Perhaps the financial situation simply made that impossible. Or perhaps Avery, an astute student of Nebraska politics, realized that the pressures applied by his predecessors had risked careers and shortened tenures. Whatever Avery's purposes may have been, his appointment came so late in the two decades under study that its effect on this aspect of Library history is minimal.

**Populist Pressures and Financial Support**

The University as a whole was undergoing serious financial difficulties in the 1890's. While Canfield was able to buffer the effect of the state's economic depression on the University to some extent, the full force of this deprivation was felt in the later 1890's.

According to the historian Albert Watkins, "the populist revolution had broken out with great force in
1890.″ As "the culmination of more than a decade of agrarian and radical agitation," this populist revolt controlled the legislature elected in 1890. With a great many items on their agenda, and with little or no experience in politics, the populist legislature of 1891 did not show much decrease of support for the University. In fact in the fall of 1891, two Republicans were elected to the Board of Regents. By that time, Canfield, the able politician, was in office, presenting the University as a "people's university" with "practical" courses designed for farmers' children. His speeches all over the state and his efforts to increase the number of students at the University definitely helped to deflect the populist perception of the University as an elitist institution run by and for wealthy Republicans.

The 1892 election was not so clear-cut, providing none of the parties with a clear majority. During the 1893 legislative session, a fusion of the silver Democrats and Populists led to the passage of much populist legislation, including the defeat of the completion of the University Library building. Rifts

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in this alliance were apparent, however, and in 1893, Republican candidates for regents were again successful. In 1894 the Republicans regained control of both houses of the legislature, which was no doubt largely responsible for the prompt passage of the funding for completion of the Library. Despite this generosity even in hard economic times, the Republicans were also angered by Canfield's seeming courtship of the populists.

By 1895, the economic stress of the state was being severely felt in the University. Although Republican and progressive enough to finish the Library building, the legislature avoided controversy and confrontation with the economic problems. Its most "lasting contributions were selecting an official state flower and choosing a state nickname."30 While Canfield had been able to deflect the wrath of the populists by greatly increasing the student body, the legislature was unwilling to grant a corresponding increase in funding for the University. In March the "mushroom growth" of students was blamed on "the extension of the institution's work to fields that properly do not belong to it." The University was further admonished:

30 Ibid., 72.
By lopping off the sideshows and technical schools which the taxpayers ought not to be called upon to support the attendance can be brought down to a reasonable number.\textsuperscript{31}

Some more progressive supporters suggested that Canfield left Nebraska because of inadequate funding:

He [Canfield] had spent his whole energy . . . to building up a big attendance at the university, and to have a legislature fail to provide for any growth whatever . . . was too much for him to contemplate.\textsuperscript{32}

Evidently such pessimism was not entertained by MacLean, at least at the beginning of his administration. His welcoming address to the students in 1895 credited the legislature with a generosity not always in evidence:

When I compare this with other states and see the appropriation made here I see promise for the future. Think of the munificence of last year's legislature in view of the drouth-stricken condition of the state. See yonder library building rising like a dream, the gift of thousands of dollars in a time when they could little be spared. I welcome you to the bravest and most liberal state.\textsuperscript{33}

Nevertheless, the straitened finances of the University were real. Adding to the institution's financial woes, the farm situation was such that much

\textsuperscript{31} Omaha Bee, 5 March 1895.
\textsuperscript{32} Lincoln Evening News, 11 April 1895.
\textsuperscript{33} "Chancellor Welcomes Students," Nebraska State Journal (Lincoln), 21 September 1895.
of the land income was not coming in, as renters were unable to pay as stipulated. In MacLean's April report to the Board he reported the steps he had taken to reduce costs:

Where it was a living possibility to reduce the amount of assistance in a department, I have done so . . . In the budget for current expenses, materials and equipment, I have practically cut off about sixteen thousand dollars that the departments asked for, warned as they had been that they must ask for a minimum sum . . .

I propose that we do just as little as possible in order to meet the requirements for instruction . . . Let us then turn to the legislature for the proper enlargement of what we have begun.

Unfortunately, for the University, the legislature to which they appealed had again changed its nature.

The election of 1896 brought back the fusion of the Populists and Democrats, aggravating the University's already poor financial situation. Andrew Draper suggested that "American pioneering conditions are specially calculated to enlist the interest of the people in education." Unfortunately, interest does not always translate into support. It did not help the University's situation that, of 62 professors, fully 56

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34 George MacLean, "Report to the Board," 16 April 1896, Ms, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

35 Andrew S. Draper, "State Universities of the Middle West," Educational Review 13 (1897), 314.
were "against free silver" and only five were "for" it, i.e. populist. In 1897, for the first time a Populist and a Silver Republican were elected to the Board of Regents. Also in 1897, Wolfe, an outspoken populist, was dismissed. The legislature meeting in the spring of 1897 was not disposed to treat the University generously. By February of 1898, the populists were attacking the University under MacLean, charging that it had gone "backward" in comparison to other universities since Canfield's administration. The concurrent charge that MacLean "failed to encourage the employment of women in the faculty" rings true. The populists also held it against MacLean that he had dismissed one young female librarian, 'a dear girl,' and replaced her with a man from the East. This particularly infuriated the Populists, who hated MacLean's preference for eastern scholars and teachers.

Consequently, populist animosity toward MacLean's administration probably affected the University adversely during this time of populist strength.

By 1898, the control of the legislature had swung back to the Republicans, but populism was still strong.

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36 *Nebraska State Journal* (Lincoln), 16 October 1896.

37 "Attack on the University," *Omaha Bee*, 15 February 1898.

38 Manley, 120.
Then in 1899, a Democrat and a Silver Republican were elected to the Board of Regents, giving the fusionists a majority on that body for the first time. This election struck consternation into the hearts of the faculty. Lists of the employees of the institution, showing their salaries and politics were known to be about. Many thought the newly elected regents would undertake "a revolution in the affairs of the university." Even Wolfe, ousted from the faculty two years before, had unfounded hopes of reinstatement, possibly even as chancellor. These hopes and fears had a reasonable basis, since the populist board of regents in Kansas had already put a populist in the presidency of Kansas State, dismissed all of the faculty, and rehired only those who were amenable to free silver. Fortunately, the Nebraska Board did not take such radical steps.

While the populist-fusionist control of the Board had an ostensible effect on the University, the legislature was controlled by the Republicans from 1898

39"Shaking in their shoes," Omaha Bee, 3 December 1899.

40"Criticises Doctor Wolfe," Omaha Bee, 22 November 1899.

to 1908. While this era of "progressivism" was nominally not populist, most of the "progressive reforms" had been promoted by the earlier Bryan Democrats and the Populists during the previous decade. It was not an easy time for the University, since its "populist" Board had selected Andrews as Chancellor to serve during the Republican legislatures of the early 1900's. Andrews was a controversial "free-silverite," dismissed from the presidency of Brown for his outspoken economic views. His opinions helped his cause with the populist Board, but did little for his popularity with the Republican faculty or legislature. While progressive Republicans supported many of the previously populist reforms, purely political antimosity still separated the groups. In 1906, Andrews suggested that the University had "improved 50 per cent since the turn of the century," but appropriations did not keep up with that rate.

42 Cherny, 114.
43 Manley, 150.
44 Lincoln Star, 6 October 1906.
Nellie Compton described the Library's early funding structure:

The statute passed by the Nebraska legislature February 15, 1869, which provided for the founding of the University of Nebraska, contained a clause providing for the establishment of a library, through the appropriation for that purpose of certain regularly received University fees. While the amount in the beginning was small it was constant, and growing with the growth of the school it has been the chief source of library income, though for many years added appropriations from the general University funds have been made by the regents.

Just as Compton suggested, the annual expenditures of the library for these two decades were steadily rising. However, they also appear to be quite erratic, due at least in part to the biennial nature of legislative funding. The early budget of around $5,000 in 1892 reflected the small student body and relative poverty of the legislature. The rise to over $21,000 in 1910

45 The record of annual expenditures for the Library is unfortunately not entirely complete. While the total library budget is known for some years, the variations in accounting practices make year-by-year comparisons difficult. The 1903-04 composite salary expenditure is not known. To obtain the amount spent on books, the Library Committee records for division of the budget were used from 1891-1898. After the fall of 1898, the Wyer administration and its successors kept meticulous records of the actual amount spent on books for each subject area. The totals for these years were used to show later materials budgets.

showed not only the increase in state spending, but also an increase in the size of the student body paying matriculation fees. During the first five years of Wyer's administration, the ratio of these two sources of funding was 55 percent from matriculation and diploma fees and 45 percent direct appropriations from the legislature.  

The financial requirements for developing and maintaining a university library were evident at an early date. Bessey's report to the Board of Regents in 1891 concluded that the library was "the most important single department in the whole University" and requested "in addition to the matriculation and diploma fees . . . not less than $5,000 a year for the purchase of books." While this level of expenditure was not reached for nearly ten years, the library did have several years of more than $3,000 per year, the amount Bessey recommended "at the very least."

Unfortunately, by the mid-nineties the financial situation of the University was also being felt in the 

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47 James I. Wyer, Letter to the Chancellor and Board of Regents, 18 November 1902, Ms, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

48 Charles Bessey, Report to the Board of Regents, 1890-91, Ms, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.
Library's book budget. MacLean later explained:

In '95 and '96 there came a great necessity for the University to retrench somewhat in order not to incur a deficiency. Its income was falling off with the going down of the assessment roll of the State and with the lapse of payment of funds due to the University. People who had lands and so on did not pay up their leases and so on; and all the Departments here were called upon to come in and retrench... It is very hard to get Professors to retrench.

It is also very difficult to get librarians to retrench, especially with fixed or rising costs of subscriptions, binding, and processing. This difficult time in the library budget is revealed in the first apparent dip in the otherwise upward trend of spending for books.

By 1899 a one mill levy had been established for the University, with the hope that it would make funding more consistent and less irregular. At least for the library expenditures on books this levy ushered in a time of wildly erratic spending. This was partly due to the decision to defer spending of the statutorily mandated fees, possibly to cover deficits in spending in other areas of the University. At any rate, after 1900 the librarian's reports frequently

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49 From the report of a meeting of Chancellor MacLean and members of the State Historical Society, seeking an increase in Prof. Card's Horticultural budget, 13 January 1898, Ms, University Archives, Love

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requested authorization to "anticipate" the use of the already accumulated money by several weeks to allow for the lag between ordering and paying for book orders. Furthermore, in 1900 Bessey reported "an almost total cessation of book purchases and an accumulation of unbound periodicals, and he requested an additional $1,000 to alleviate this problem.\textsuperscript{50}

Ever on the alert for possible ways to increase the library's budget, Wyer requested that the "incidental fee" started in 1901 be increased to add to the funds available for book purchases. He suggested that other universities were charging considerably more for that purpose.\textsuperscript{51} While these sums were not forthcoming, in April of 1901 the Board of Regents set aside a "grant" of $2,500 to be available for spending in October. The Library placed orders to arrive in the fall, anticipating this money, but in June the grant was withdrawn.\textsuperscript{52} This overexpenditure was to haunt the budget for several years, over which repeated

\textsuperscript{50}Charles Bessey, Report to the Board of Regents, 10 April 1900, Ms, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

\textsuperscript{51}James I. Wyer, Letter to Chancellor Andrews, 26 January 1901, Ms, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

\textsuperscript{52}James I. Wyer, Letter to J. S. Dales, 11 January 1902, Ms, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.
cessation of book purchases was required. By 1903 a small "library fee" had been instituted, but it resulted in less income than the normal appropriation, which had been foregone in favor of the fee.

In addition to maintaining the numbers of books, the library had the problem of allocating these resources among an increasing number of departments. Eleven new departments were created during the first six years of the Wyer administration alone. Not only was each department's share of the resources dwindling, but each newly created department was anxious to obtain a basic collection in its subject area. In 1902 Wyer suggested that for these reasons an average annual increase of $5,000 should be considered.

Instead, by 1904, for unexplained reasons, the second downward dip in the money available for book resources occurred. By May of 1904 Wyer reported that he had been "unable to order a new book for six weeks" and had "on hand already orders . . . for books wanted in next year's work . . . [costing] more that we shall have available."\(^53\) By December the Library Board was submitting urgent requests to the Board of Regents.

For some reason the annual appropriation supplementing

\(^{53}\)James I. Wyer, Letter to the Chancellor and Board of Regents, 30 May 1904, Ms, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.
the fees was not forthcoming that year. Wyer stated that "for purposes of advanced study and research, [the library] should contain not 65,000 volumes but 150,000." He further cited the distance from other great American libraries, averring that students and faculty should be able to come to Nebraska "without the certainty that all chance for creative scholarship must be left behind."

This effort by the Library Board, further reported by the Board of Regents appears to have been a last plea for continuing a library of unusual national stature in Nebraska. Wyer wrote:

The University Library is not only the largest reference library in the state but in this entire region. There is a great opportunity here to build up the most notable reference library between the Mississippi river and California and no one thing will add so much to the renown of the University as an easy supremacy in library facilities.

This supremacy we now hold by a narrow margin, becoming less each year as Iowa (this year spending $10,000 for books) and Missouri (this biennium spending $35,000 for books) are increasing their book funds while our own is decreasing.

The culmination of this request was that the Board asked for an additional $10,000 for new book purchases

54 James I. Wyer, Letter to the Board of Regents, 12 December 1904, Ms, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

55 Ibid.
to at least match the growth of their peers in other institutions. This request was denied, along with the requests for shelving, etc. that were made at the same time.

The number of volumes added by purchase in 1904 were 82 percent of the number added in 1900. This trend continued until Wyer's departure, although another rapid increase in library expenditures did occur after Jewett became librarian. Still, the problem of enough money to provide the necessary material was a continuing one. In 1909 the librarian's report suggested a $5,000 increase per biennium for the library budget.

**Library Salaries**

Looking at the salary graph, two anomalies are all that are apparent: the unusual rise in salaries at the end of the Canfield's chancellorship, and the abrupt increase in salaries immediately following Wyer's resignation. Even in the midst of the depression of the 1890's, the University increased its expenditure for library salaries. This was done partly through an increase in the library budget, and partly by diverting funds from the materials budget. Organizing and cataloging the library for the first time was a very labor-intensive process. Even though
Jones was paid only at the level of adjunct professor and her staff was paid considerably less, she was training and hiring an increasing number of people to get the catalog finished in just five years. The rise at the beginning of the Jewett administration is less easy to explain. Although the number of the library staff gradually increased, there was no abrupt increase in numbers at that time. However, all of the staff, including the librarian did receive a large raise shortly after Jewett's arrival. Perhaps it took Wyer's departure for the administration to finally believe his constant assertions that staff salaries needed to be increased.

While total salary expenditures show an indication of financial support for the library, individual salary levels at various positions probably had more significance for the actual operation of the library. While inflationary pressures were reported, particularly at the end of this two decade period, the salaries at the University remained remarkably stable. Professor McMillan, in his one year as Librarian, received $1,500, listed in the payroll as "Librarian and assistant." This was $500 less than the typical salary granted a full professor, but $300 more than Smith had earned the year before. When Mary Jones was hired as "Assistant Librarian" she received a salary of
$1,200, the same amount that Miss Smith had received. This salary was quickly raised, under Canfield's influence, to $1,320 and then to $1,360, where it remained for the rest of her stay at Nebraska. Significantly, at no time did anyone attempt to reduce her salary. It remained at the level of adjunct professor, the academic rank which her position had been assigned. Epes received virtually the same salary, as did Wyer when he first arrived in Nebraska. Wyer received a raise to $1,500 in 1901, when he was promoted to Full Professor, and he retained that rank and probably that salary until his resignation. Jewett received the salary of $2,000, later $2,100, which was the salary paid professors at Nebraska by that time.

Since the amount paid the librarian was the same as that paid a professor, the adequacy of professorial salaries is brought into question. In the 1890's, when the professors' salary was already $2,000, Canfield complained to the Board of Regents about losing so many talented professors to higher offers, adding, "It is a great pity the state cannot meet the competition."56 Rather than bemoaning the state of faculty salaries,

56 James H. Canfield, Report to the Board of Regents, 6 June 1893, Ms, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.
when MacLean took over he confidently reported to the Board:

I have not ventured, in consideration of the financial condition of the country and the University, to recommend a single advance in salary ... Comparison with our neighbors shows we are getting a maximum of service for a minimum of pay.

This salary of $2,000 did not differ greatly from that of other institutions, especially in the economically pinched 1890's. President Harper of the University of Chicago studied over 100 institutions in 1893, and found that the average salary was $1,470. He recommended that that be raised to $2,000, with the most highly paid men receiving from $4,000 to $7,000. The highest paid men at Nebraska were receiving the hoped-for "average" of $2,000, but with no substantial increase in sight. Magazines of the day were reporting faculty salaries at the "big universities" of from $3,000 to $5,000.  

However, the situation ten years later was not as flattering to Nebraska. By that time other western universities were paying professors 3 or 4 thousand

57 George MacLean, Report to the Board of Regents, 16 April 1896, Ms, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

dollars, while Nebraska remained rooted at 2 thousand. Government statistics showed a rise in the cost of living of 25 to 35 percent in seven years, while the professorial salaries remained where they had been "fixed twenty-five years ago when the university was an experiment, the student body small, and the educational plant far less elaborate."59

Discussion of this top level of salaries does not confront the major issue, which was the dilution of the academic ranks with large numbers of instructors and less-than-full professors, all of whom earned considerably less than the top salary. A 1909 article commented on the reduced purchasing power at the level of instructor:

The average [college] teacher of 1908 is but sixty to seventy percent as well off as was his colleague of twenty years ago.60

This typical salary for instructors at "most" colleges was listed as $1,000, which was the equivalent of the Nebraska assistant professor. Instructors at Nebraska were receiving $800, which was more than the $725 reputedly received at Johns Hopkins, but still less than the norm.

59 Nebraska State Journal (Lincoln), 8 March 1905.
60 Bowman, 46.
A step beneath the official instructors were the long-suffering graduate students. In 1899, when professorial raises were under attack by the populists, it was point out that "of the staff of 179 . . . 59 were advanced students who were paid 20 cents an hour."\textsuperscript{61} Actually, Nebraska salaries may have been falling behind those of other institutions at all levels. The 1905 report of the Board of Regents suggested that Nebraska salaries were from $200 to $1,000 behind those of Iowa Minnesota, Ohio, Wisconsin, Michigan and Illinois, for all of the levels from instructor to department head.\textsuperscript{62} In 1909, salary expenditures for the 1907-8 biennium at the University of Nebraska were compared with those at the University of Wisconsin. Nebraska spent only 57 percent as much on wages and salaries.\textsuperscript{63} This trend would continue for quite some time. A 1926 survey of 26 large research libraries revealed that Nebraska had the lowest per capita expenditures for salaries.\textsuperscript{64}

\textsuperscript{61}\textbf{Lincoln Evening News}, 7 March 1899.

\textsuperscript{62}\textbf{Board of Regents, Seventeenth Biennial Report}.

\textsuperscript{63}"\textit{A Crisis in University Affairs}," \textbf{Nebraska State Journal}, 9 March 1909.

\textsuperscript{64}\textbf{American Library Association, A Survey of Libraries in the United States} (Chicago: ALA, 1926), 206.
There was a much wider fluctuation in salary for the library assistants, as well. During Jones' administration, the Cataloger made from $600 to $1,000, with a one year gap in 1896-97 when they did without a Cataloger, just before Jones' resignation. Bullock, as Cataloger under Epes, was back down to $600. When Elizabeth Wing was promoted from Assistant Cataloger at $480 to Cataloger at $600 in 1898, she must have been impressed, although the next year she was promoted to Assistant Librarian at $720, a position she retained until her marriage two years later. This position of Assistant Librarian was then held by Nellie Jane Compton at the same salary until Wyer left and it was gradually raised to $1,000, exactly half that of the Librarian. It is interesting that the second-in-command position in the library was called "Cataloger" under Jones, and changed to "Assistant Librarian" under Wyer. The third position went from "Assistant Cataloger" to "First Assistant in the Library" to "Reference Librarian." By the time Jewett hired a "Cataloger" again in 1908, she was paid $100 less than the Reference Librarian, and $300 less than the Assistant Librarian.

While distinctions between professional and clerical help were not definite, the level of "Library Assistant" comes closest to fitting that term. It
first appeared as a designation for students, and began to apply to full-time help in the Wyer administration. These people received from $38 to $40 per month, generally for ten months. While the monthly salary was not a great deal less than the twelve month people, summer jobs for young women were not prevalent. This unpaid vacation while the University was not in session made these salaries significantly less than the monthly salary would indicate. Under Jewett, these positions were increased to twelve months, with a paid vacation. Most of these positions were managing the many departmental libraries, or assisting with the processing in the main library. Personnel in these positions seem to have been quite interchangeable, moving their location up to two or three times a year. One interesting discrepancy can be noted: in 1906 it was suggested that the assistant at the farm library could be paid at least partly out of the land funds rather than the library budget. From that time on, she received 50 percent more pay than the other departmental library assistants, even more than the newly hired "Cataloger."

The hourly student help is difficult, if not impossible, to trace. However, it is known that from 1893 to 1897 the standard wage for student help was 12 1/2 cents per hour, or, in the case of "trained"
student catalogers, 20 cents an hour. When students were few and work was plentiful, individual students could make up to $20 or $30 per month. This was not bad, considering that the full time clerical staff was making only $30 per month. The clerical staff ostensibly were paid at the same rate as students, but with six day weeks they may have put in more hours for the pay.

When Canfield first arrived at Nebraska, he gave the Christmas Eve service at the Episcopalian Church, in which he reported the "crime" of women working in New York's sweat shops for "$5 per week." The newspaper went on to summarize the address, stating that "men ought to aim at the abolition of women's work, except in the home." The women working in the University Library at that time considered themselves very fortunate to be earning five dollars per week, and were actually in a better financial condition than many of the other students at that time.

While clerical staff earned barely a tenth of a full professor's salary, it was still a living wage by student standards. This was quite adequate, as Edna D. Bullock related about this time period:

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65 Jones, "Assistants."

66 Lincoln Herald, 26 December 1891.
Beefsteak cost at retail 25 cents for three pounds, beef liver and hearts were given away. Three dollars a week would pay for meals at the best student boarding houses. The "bachelors" and the boarding clubs spent considerably less on food. Rooms were correspondingly cheap. One woman in the class of '88 had $150 a year. She was thoroughly comfortable and not at any disadvantage whatever because of financial limitations. Most of the students were under similar or more severe limitations.

D. L. Thornbury, a student working for Dr. Brace in the physics storeroom for ten cents per hour, calculated his cash expenses for 1897-98 to be $56.00. The next year he spent $63.00. Understanding the library's support is perhaps easier if it is compared to another University activity which was just beginning in the 1890's and becoming firmly entrenched by the end of the first decade of the twentieth century: football. By 1901 the Athletic Board was paying the football coach $2,000 with authorization to go to $2,500. This was more than a full professor's salary for only three months work, since at that time the coach returned to New York to his law practice when the football season was not

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68 Thornbury, "My Years," January 1938, 6.
69 Ibid., December 1937, 5.
underway. This was more money per month than the chancellor was earning. The *Nebraska City Tribune* noted sarcastically that "when the football coach and his assistants are able to draw more money than the chancellor of the university, it is a sure sign that the education of the state is not being neglected."\(^7^0\)

According to the historian Manley, Nebraska had gained "national recognition" with the football teams from 1900 to 1905.\(^7^1\) While funding for library materials was starting to decrease compared to other academic institutions, the football program gave a nearly self-supporting source for the national eminence that the University had enjoyed under Canfield.

**Conclusions**

Shortly after Wyer had arrived in Nebraska he reported to the Board of Regents on the need for more library books:

> If the best men are to be brought here and kept here, the library must afford them means to keep their work abreast of the times, and their coming to the west, far from the larger libraries, must not mean the suicide of creative scholarship.\(^7^2\)

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\(^7^0\) *Nebraska City Tribune*, 8 November 1902.

\(^7^1\) Manley, 298.

While all of the chancellors shared that belief, their support of the Library varied in form from the active, positive position of Canfield, to the ambivalent support of MacLean, to the benignly conservative Andrews. In fact, the relationship between librarian and chancellor seems to have had a clear effect on the library morale and also on the addition of library services.

The steady increase in funding for the library was also essential but does not appear to have been radically different from that of other libraries at the same time. The primary difference seems to have been that Nebraska established sources of library funding beyond incidental gifts and bequests at a relatively early time. While Nebraska's funding was not exceptionally large, it started at the very beginning of the institution and kept increasing. By the end of the period in question, other universities were also funding their libraries, often with a more lavish hand, which may have contributed to an eventual loss of stature for Nebraska.
CHAPTER VIII
THE DEVELOPMENT OF A UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

It cannot be claimed that any American institution had a "university library," when the University of Nebraska was founded. The kind of comprehensive and balanced collecting necessary to develop a research oriented library had simply not occurred to many people before 1880.¹ Therefore, the suggestions of the faculty at the University of Nebraska in the late 1880's, bent on establishing a "great collection" for research, were some of the first such suggestions to be heard on this continent.

Twenty years after these timely goals were set, the University of Nebraska had a library which rivaled those of the coasts and was admittedly in advance of most state universities in the Central States. This paper has examined the staff of that library, the building of a new library building, the development of the collection, the addition of modern library services, and the administrative and financial support given to the library. In looking at the who, when,

where, what, and how of the library's development, it is also appropriate to ask, "Why?" Why did the library develop such preeminence? Which of these several contributing factors was most important in developing the reputation of a progressive, modern library?

Of Paramount Importance

Starting in the reverse order of discussion, many people would tend to look for the "bottom line." The financial resources of the institution are often the determining factor between a large and prestigious Harvard and a small and insignificant state college. While a modicum of money was clearly necessary to hire librarians, buy books, and build a building, the financial situation at Nebraska was not significantly better than that of her neighbors. The distressed economy of Nebraska in the 1890's was not a source of generous funding. In his 1893 report to the Board of Regents, Canfield compared Nebraska with Cornell, pointing out that Nebraska had more than 600 courses on 230 different subjects, compared to Cornell's 812 courses on 343 subjects, but that Nebraska achieved this high level of output with half as many buildings and one third the number of faculty. He concluded:

It is very evident that Nebraska has not as yet appreciated the necessities of its University as well as the members of the Faculty have appreciated and responded to the
demand upon them for unusual labor under embarassing circumstances. It is this spirit on the part of the Faculty that has won for the University its high place in the educational world.  

If the reports of the Board of Regents can be believed, the state even fell well behind normal levels of support in later more prosperous years. While this lack of funding may have had a detrimental long-term effect, it must be admitted that the Library at the University achieved most of its preeminence, not because of generous financial support, but in spite of a scarcity of resources.

The collection and services developed at the University were exceptional for their time. For example, a student who transferred from the University of Nebraska to the University of California at Berkeley, wrote back, "The library [at Berkeley] is far behind ours." While other libraries later achieved these levels, Nebraska had been one of the first with more than one trained librarian on the staff, one of the first and best reference departments, one of the first to be completely classified in Dewey, etc.

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2 James H. Canfield, Report to the Board of Regents, December 1893, Ms, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

3 Nebraska State Journal (Lincoln), 8 September 1900.
Nevertheless, the growth curve of the Nebraska collection does not vary greatly from that of other academic institutions. The dynamic exponential growth later experienced in large research libraries had not yet begun in 1909. Nebraska's early start in planned development coupled with the early development of librarianship by trained librarians gave the institution its advantage in this area.

The Library built in 1895 is another possible source of superiority. However, almost all academic institutions were building libraries at that time. Again, Nebraska was one of the first, but fifteen years after the building was built, hardly a university existed without its fairly new "library building." In fact, by 1920, most of those building concurrently with Nebraska had planned or built another, larger library or at least a large addition. The Carnegie grants made this feat even less impressive in the public sphere. What stands out in the Nebraska building is the fact that it was built early in the building spree, and the fact that it was built to be not only monumental but also usable.

Thus, one ends up with the only other area examined in this study: the people. Here, the difference between Nebraska and other institutions is evident. Ross, a historian of the land grant colleges,
said that "the chief lack... was in personnel," pointing out the difficulty of finding and keeping trained people in the new fields being developed. Edward Holley, a historian of academic libraries in land-grant institutions, suggested that any improvement in libraries was "related to the presence of the right people and the money to accomplish their tasks." As already indicated, the amount of money needed to accomplish the labor intensive tasks of organizing the early university library was minimal. Therefore, the progress of an academic library at that time was almost entirely dependent on the quality of its staff. Fortunately, the University of Nebraska attracted and retained some of the best librarians in the country.

Even before the unusually early arrival of trained librarians, Chancellor Canfield's interest in developing a research library made the University of Nebraska stand out from other institutions. The early hiring of Mary Jones and the ongoing insistence on hiring trained librarians, particularly those from the first and foremost library school in the country, gave the University of Nebraska a head start in forming a

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4 Ross, 104.

research library. The complete cataloging and classification of the library under Jones was nearly as significant as the new building in establishing the library's reputation. These factors helped to make Nebraska an attractive location for Wyer to come to, and his contributions of reference service and national and statewide leadership added to the already significant reputation of the institution.

If the people the University attracted were the most important factor in developing the library, then it is also interesting to note why such exceptional people came to Nebraska. Mary Jones clearly was at least partly attracted by loyalty to her alma mater. Her parents lived relatively close to Lincoln and she knew many of the people with whom she would be working. The very fact that she was being hired, and Canfield's obvious interest, gave her an opportunity to develop a state-of-the-art institution, an opportunity that few capable people could resist. A new building was also being erected when she came. Her reasons for coming are clear, although her reasons for leaving are less complimentary to the university. She stayed for two years after MacLean's declaration of opposition to women, so discrimination alone was not enough to force her out. Yet the lack of funds, the faculty wrangles, and the lowered salaries must have taken their toll.
People of her caliber are seldom without professional opportunities and options, and her departure was probably inevitable.

Building on the success already achieved, Wyer was no doubt attracted by the library developed under Jones. As Acting Chancellor Bessey reminded the Board in 1899, the best employee was one "who demands and must have the means for carrying on his work." That the library was already cataloged and in a new building no doubt led him to believe that further exceptional support would be forthcoming. His reasons for leaving are probably hidden in that statement, for it is clear that support was not provided to the extent that Wyer thought necessary. Whether Wyer could have resisted returning to New York, even with a competitive salary is a moot point. Nevertheless, Wyer's departure marked a significant reduction in the abilities of its staff.

Jewett came to librarianship later than the other, two, although he was nearly the same age as Wyer. Yet many librarians who started after he did are still referred to as "pioneers" in the field. J. I. Wyer's younger brother, Malcolm, is an example of that

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6 Charles Bessey, Report to the Board of Regents, 7 August 1899, Ms, University Archives, Love Library, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.
phenomenon. Jewett did not excel in library school, and in fact did not even finish the full degree of B.L.S., much less a master's degree as Wyer had. Nor was Jewett nationally recognized. His obituary in the American Library Association annals stated only that he had been a member and attended four conferences in his ten years as a librarian, presumably without distinction.\(^7\) Jewett was not of the same stature as the earlier librarians, but whether this was due to less interest from Chancellor Andrews, less financial support in terms of salary, or simply an aberration is unclear.

**Over-riding factors**

Probably the most significant factor in this saga was time. The faculty and student agitation for improved library service pre-dated Canfield as well as Jones, and was no doubt instrumental in putting the University of Nebraska on the progressive, modern path of library development long before more traditional institutions realized the importance of the goal. Ascertaining which services are important and necessary to achieve future goals is the essence of leadership.

By focusing on a new building and on a catalog, and hence a trained librarian, the University of Nebraska displayed true leadership in this field.

This brings up the second most important factor in the library's development. Not only did a few faculty members and administrators realize the necessity for creating and supporting a research library, but the institution had the flexibility to act on that need relatively quickly. Other, older institutions were not able to develop their libraries with such single-minded purpose. Those which did develop modern research facilities were often hampered by a bureaucracy of faculty and administration who were still firmly entrenched in deductive classical education. Dividing their resources lessened the impact of research development.

Even after recognizing the problem, and fortuitously being flexible enough to be able to change, the development of modern librarianship at the University of Nebraska would not have been possible without a significant amount of dedication and hard work. In citing those responsible for this transformation, Chancellor Canfield comes to mind. His timely efforts at the very beginning of this era made a firm foundation for later development. The librarians,
Mary Jones and James I. Wyer, were also instrumental in seeing these ideas developed into a superior library.

The final over-riding factor necessary is adequate funding. While extravagent financial support is not always a necessity for all advances, minimal financial support can be critical. For example, the decision to classify the library by the Dewey system was dependent on Jones’ ability and willingness to spend her summer doing so, while MacMillan had refused when Canfield suggested it to him. Funding was necessary to hire the best people, but developing all of the services of modern librarianship was primarily dependent on the first three factors. During a period such as the first half of the twentieth century, when building a large collection was probably the most significant task of the library, obtaining adequate funding and donations may well have been the primary objective. However, from 1891-1909 the development of library services through capable librarians was probably more important.

Having a building built in 1895 and a collection fully cataloged and classified by the Dewey Decimal system are no longer criteria by which a modern research library is judged. The collections of that time now seem paltry when compared to those claimed by even small colleges today. And the services offered by
modern research libraries bear little resemblance to their humble beginnings a hundred years ago. Nevertheless, these ultimate factors still remain as useful guides to those who would wish to build a superior institution: being early to recognize necessary services, being flexible enough to change old patterns to develop those services, and utilizing a determined and dedicated staff to achieve those goals, always with at least adequate financial support.
APPENDIX A

CHANCELLORS AND LIBRARIANS

Chancellors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Allen R. Benton</td>
<td>1871-1876</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edmund B. Fairfield</td>
<td>1876-1882</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry E. Hitchcock (acting)</td>
<td>1882-1883</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irving J. Manatt</td>
<td>1884-1888</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles E. Bessey (acting)</td>
<td>1888-1891</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James H. Canfield</td>
<td>1891-1895</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George E. MacLean</td>
<td>1895-1899</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles E. Bessey (acting)</td>
<td>1899-1900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Benjamin Andrews</td>
<td>1900-1908</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samuel Avery</td>
<td>1909-1927</td>
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Librarians

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>George E. Howard</td>
<td>1878-?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellen Smith</td>
<td>1886-1891</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George McMillan</td>
<td>1891-1892</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary L. Jones</td>
<td>1892-1897</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John D. Epes</td>
<td>1897-1898</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James I. Wyer</td>
<td>1898-1905</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nellie J. Compton (acting)</td>
<td>1905-1906</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walter K. Jewett</td>
<td>1906-1913</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX B

PHOTOGRAPHS OF LIBRARIANS

ELLEN SMITH

Custodian of the Library
1886 - 1891
MARY LETITIA JONES
Acting Librarian and Adjunct Professor of Bibliography
1892-1897

NELLIE JANE COMPTON
Assistant Librarian
1894 - 1936
JAMES INGERSOLL WYER

Librarian and Professor of Bibliography
1898 - 1905
WALTER K. JEWETT

Librarian
1906–1913
APPENDIX C

LIBRARY BUILDINGS AND FLOOR PLANS

University Hall
1871

Library
1895
University Hall

1871 - 1889 marked recitation room 18, second story
1889-1895 marked Library

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2. Stalls for the common herd.
3. Politicians’ rest room.
5. Feminar room for girls of both sexes.
6. Wire cage and mime museum.
7. You ask for a book. Two results: (1) She tells you to hunt it yourself; (2) Or else she goes away, comes back in about an hour and says it’s out.
8. The great unknown!
9. The funny man’s private apartments.
11. Spoon holders.
13. ?
14. Barh reception room. Book cases and various other kinds of “cases.”

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Humorous Library Directory
from the 1906 Senior Book
## APPENDIX E

### BOOKS PER STUDENT

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Books</th>
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<td>7,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>1885-86</td>
<td>311</td>
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<td>23</td>
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<tr>
<td>1886-87</td>
<td>339</td>
<td>7,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>1887-88</td>
<td>334</td>
<td>8,000</td>
<td>24</td>
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<tr>
<td>1888-89</td>
<td>345</td>
<td>11,600</td>
<td>34</td>
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<tr>
<td>1889-90</td>
<td>384</td>
<td>14,000</td>
<td>36</td>
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<td>1890-91</td>
<td>570</td>
<td>14,200</td>
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<td>1891-92</td>
<td>883</td>
<td>19,700</td>
<td>22</td>
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<td>1892-93</td>
<td>1,086</td>
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<td>ca. 20</td>
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<td>1894-95</td>
<td>1,550</td>
<td>27,000</td>
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<td>1895-96</td>
<td>1,506</td>
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<td>21</td>
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<tr>
<td>1896-97</td>
<td>1,653</td>
<td>35,000</td>
<td>21</td>
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<tr>
<td>1897-98</td>
<td>1,915</td>
<td>35,000</td>
<td>18</td>
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<tr>
<td>1898-99</td>
<td>1,946</td>
<td>40,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>1899-1900</td>
<td>2,207</td>
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<td>1900-01</td>
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<td>1901-02</td>
<td>2,289</td>
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<td>1902-03</td>
<td>2,360</td>
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<td>2,513</td>
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<td>1904-05</td>
<td>2,728</td>
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<td>1905-06</td>
<td>2,914</td>
<td>70,000</td>
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<td>1906-07</td>
<td>3,130</td>
<td>73,000</td>
<td>23</td>
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<td>1907-08</td>
<td>3,237</td>
<td>78,000</td>
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<td>1908-09</td>
<td>3,611</td>
<td>85,000</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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Order Librarian. Book accessions and correspondence. MSS. 31/9/2 and 31/9/1.

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The University of Nebraska maintained a scrapbook of newspaper clippings, primarily of the Lincoln and Omaha papers, for the entire time covered in this study. The following newspapers have been quoted from this source, available in the University Archives.

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**Lincoln Evening News**


**Nebraska City News**

**Nebraska State Journal** (Lincoln), Jan. 1890-Dec. 1910


In addition, the student newspapers of the time are available on microfilm, also in the University Archives.

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**Scarlet and Cream**
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Interview


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