



Photo by A. C. Summerville

South Branch

NEW LIBRARY BUILDINGS IN CHARLOTTE AND MECKLENBURG COUNTY

By HOYT R. GALVIN* AND A. G. ODELL, JR.†

Ten new library buildings were authorized by a vote of the people of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County in a bond election held on December 13, 1952. The expenditure of \$1,600,000 was approved in a joint City-County bond issue of \$800,000 for each governmental unit.

Projected for the building program were four city branches of approximately 4,000 square feet each; five other town branches of approximately 1,900 square feet each; and a new main building of some 60,000 square feet. As constructed, the Main Library has 58,859 square feet. When the upper deck of book stacks is added in the basement, the square footage will be increased to 71,059. If a third and fourth floors are added, and the building is structurally ready for such floors, the square footage would be increased to 95,259. The bond funds were to be used for sites, buildings, furnishings and equipment. Cost averages in round numbers were as follows:

	Sites	Buildings	Stacks & Furnishings*	Total
Town Branches	\$ 2,500.	\$ 23,000.	\$ 5,500.	\$ 31,000. (each)
City Branches	16,000.	56,000.	9,000.	81,000. (each)
Main Library	—	973,000.	127,000.	1,100,000.

* (Includes architect and interiors consultant fees.)

*Director of Libraries, Charlotte and Mecklenburg County.

†Architect for Main Library, Charlotte, N. C.

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Nine of the ten buildings have been completed. The 10th is one of the city branches for which a site has not yet been acquired. The following is a list of the buildings and the architects for each:

Cornelius Branch, Cornelius

James H. Benton, Architect

Davidson Branch, Davidson

James A. Malcolm, Architect

East Branch, Charlotte

R. Edwin Wilson, Architect

Huntersville Branch, Huntersville

D. M. Mackintosh, Architect

North Branch, Charlotte

James A. Malcolm, Architect

Pineville Branch, Pineville

Marsh & Hawkins, Architects

South Branch, Charlotte

Marsh & Hawkins, Architects

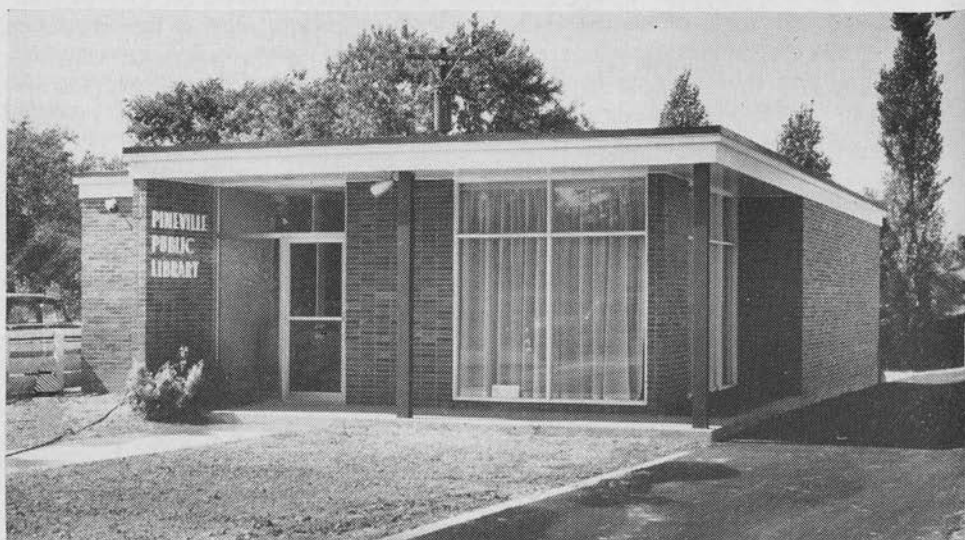
West Branch, Charlotte

D. M. Mackintosh, Architect

(Not constructed as this is published in May, 1957.)

Main Library, Charlotte

A. G. Odell, Jr., Architect



Pineville Branch

Photo by Tom Franklin's

Martin Van Buren of M. Van Buren, Inc., Charlotte, was engaged as the Interiors Consultant for all the library buildings. He was given a furnishings budget for each building and was paid on a fee basis as the architects were paid. The Interiors Consultant coordinated his work with the architects from the beginning of each project. This proved to be an excellent procedure.

Main Library Data

Problems: To provide a central library in the commercial heart of the city. This library would also serve as the point of service and control of eleven branch libraries and two bookmobiles.

Property: With a 110 foot frontage on North Tryon Street, the principal business street, the existing Carnegie Library built at the turn of the century was demolished in order to accommodate the new library. This property was approximately 75 feet from the corner of Tryon and Sixth Streets. The procurement of the corner property proved to be impossible, and resulted in an L-shaped piece of property, with the entire area being approximately 200 x 180 feet, but with a notch of approximately 90 x 72 feet at the corner of Sixth and Tryon, presently occupied by commercial buildings.

Pedestrian Access: It was desired that all pedestrians enter from a single main entrance on North Tryon Street, with chute for the return of books at night.

Vehicular Access: To provide drive-in return facilities for books and other library materials, and to provide easy pick-up of audio-visual materials and equipment, a driveway immediately off Sixth Street was provided where automobiles could turn in across the sidewalk and pause for service at a drive-in window. It was not anticipated that book lending service would be provided at this window since this would require more staff time than would be available for such service.

Service: In addition to the receipt and distribution of all new books for the library system by express and otherwise, it was desired to stock and maintain the bookmobiles from the central library. It was considered necessary to have a covered and heated area for this purpose. It was recognized that if bookmobiles and service trucks could turn off Sixth Street and enter that portion of the building at the rear of the property, they could exit by way of the alley (Garland Court).

Size Requirements: The central library at the present time has approximately 200,000 books. Since a much larger collection was needed, and since the building must house the principal information and research book collection for a large area of the Piedmont Carolinas, it was proposed that the building be designed so it could accommodate 500,000 books, but with provision for future construction for 350,000 volumes, or a projected grand total of 850,000. Some of the future expansion might be consumed for additional reading rooms, but a future book stock with additional reading rooms would be at least 750,000. It was decided to have two tiers of stacks in the basement which would accommodate 400,000 volumes. By getting as much of the book load in the basement as possible, it of course resulted in some structural economy. Approximately 75,000 volumes will be accommodated on the first floor and 25,000 on the second floor of the library

building, with structural provision made for the future construction, on the rear two-thirds of the roof, of a two-tier stack addition of 370,000 volumes.

Operation: This library is not large enough at present to justify a departmentalized arrangement. No load bearing walls were used, and many movable partitions were used so that a departmentalized arrangement is possible in the future.

Staff Work Space: In addition to staff offices and the Processing Division for ordering and cataloging, all of which are on second floor, work space was needed for personnel at the front check-out desk and at the information desk. First floor space was considered of premium value for public service. A small work space was provided behind the check-out desk on first floor and a large work space was provided in the basement stack area adjacent to two elevators, providing the needed requirements for staff work space.

Librarian Control: The size of the library warrants the use of several librarians thoroughly familiar with one or more departments and skilled in expeditiously handling specialized requirements. It was considered advisable to position these librarians as near as possible to the center of the library. Immediately adjacent to their position is a stair leading directly to the stacks below as well as an elevator going upstairs and to the stacks. A portion of the first floor ceiling was also eliminated immediately over the librarians' area in order that they might have some visual control of the second floor area.

Departments: The various book classifications are arranged on the first and second floors. The children's area is located at the front of the building so that the noise of their movement will not disturb the adult reading areas toward the rear of the building, and where it would have good control from the front check-out desk. On the second floor are such specialized departments as local history, rare books, conference rooms and a small auditorium. A number of local students spend day after day in these specialized book rooms. Older students are allowed to use the elevator under supervision of the librarians.

Exhibition Area: The principal exhibition area is on the second floor. The stair leading to the second floor was made as inviting as possible. Exhibits of paintings and other items are on continuous display.

Advertising: The glass front on Tryon Street is continually backed up by exhibits, placards, posters, etc., to stimulate the general public in the use of the library. In fact, one of the main reasons of the Library Board for maintaining the library in the heart of downtown rather than moving to the suburbs was to sell the library's services to the passing customer much as the nearby department stores sell merchandise.

Interior Design: A simple two story loft building, windowless, air-conditioned and properly lighted could conceivably have functioned as a library. Recognition was given to the fact that as a public building its appearance should proclaim this fact. In addition, the desirability of being able to see outdoors from a building was appreciated. Consequently it was determined to provide an interior court onto which the general areas could open and to provide windows for the administrative office suite on the second floor. It was felt that the front of the library should serve as a show window. An entrance court immediately off the sidewalk with the curved planting box on the exterior which continued through the glass wall to serving inside as a check-out desk was



Photo by Joseph W. Molitor

Entrance Lobby, Main Library

intended to draw the passerby toward and through the entrance. By providing these courts, it was possible to save two old and very large trees. In addition, it has proven an incentive to the local government officials to obtain and convert the corner property into a park. The minimum possible ceiling heights were maintained. However, in order to maintain a feeling of spaciousness, the interior of the main entrance area fronting on Tryon Street is two stories high. An additional portion of the first floor front ceiling is cut away so that the second floor gives a mezzanine appearance at the interior corner of the L-shaped structure. The circular or drum-like element was designed in the hope of giving further emphasis and character to the building as well as housing two of the main areas of activity, namely, the magazine reading room on the first floor and the small auditorium on the second floor. The name of the library is placed in metal letters around the upper perimeter of this drum and will be even more prominent and appropriate in the event the corner property is converted into a park.

Sun and Temperature Control: The entire building is provided with a year round air-conditioning system with electronic filters. An electronic vacuum grille acts as a floor mat within the main entrance vestibule, and the preservation of the two old trees plus the existence of taller structures to the south and southwest provide considerable protection from the sun for the glass areas. There are no windows on the left side and rear as the outlook from these sides is toward unpleasant surroundings. On the Tryon

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Street side, the afternoon is a considerable problem, and for this reason panels of translucent marble were set in the upper portion of this facade. From the inside luminescence is obtained from the afternoon sun during the day and from the outside some luminescence is apparent at night from the interior lighting. The children's area is protected by the low ceiling of the stair landing plus a drapery track for the addition of draperies if they prove to be needed. All glass is heat absorbing.

Acoustics: Acoustical fiber tile is used throughout the office, administrative areas, work spaces, meeting rooms, and similar spaces. In the main portion of the library downstairs as well as on the second floor, acoustical treatment is used by spraying acoustical asbestos fibers on the exposed concrete structure and duct work, sound absorption was also supplemented by the use of the continuous plastic luminous ceiling.

Lighting: Fluorescent lighting is generally used throughout, the principal exceptions being the auditorium and general reading room. Both are lighted with recessed down lights, and the magazine reading room is supplemented by floor and table lamps to enhance its character as a lounge.

Penthouse and Roof: The upper portion and roof of the library is visible from a number of hotels and taller buildings in the vicinity. Great care was taken to have a minimum of vents and other projections coming through the roof. All elevators are hydraulic, thereby eliminating penthouses and the cooling tower, smoke stack, and other similar elements are housed at one location within an enclosed free standing penthouse screen.

Structure: In addition to considerations of stability in catastrophe, the reinforced concrete flat slab assisted in obtaining minimum overall heights and maximum furred spaces. Reinforced concrete columns in the basement stack areas are approximately 20 feet high.

Exterior Walls: Aside from aluminum sub-frame glazed with porcelain enamel, heat absorbing glass or translucent marble, all principal walls are of precast concrete panels locally manufactured with variegated colored stones embedded in the surface.

Costs: Counting the basement stack area as a single floor level, although it accommodates two levels of stacks, the total square footage of the project is 58,859. This results in a unit cost of \$18.66 a square foot including all furnishings, fixtures, book-stacks, landscaping and fees.

1. Site preparation (demolition, tests, etc.)	\$ 5,448.50
2. General Contract—J. A. Jones Construction Co.	674,996.83
3. Plumbing Contract—A. Z. Price & Associates	21,249.00
4. Heating & Air Cond. Contract—Buensod-Stacey, Inc.	125,944.00
5. Electrical Contract—F. E. Robinson Co., Inc.	74,250.00
6. Steel Book Stacks—Remington Rand	46,704.74
7. Furnishings, Furniture and Equipment	81,000.00
8. Intercommunications System contract—Dixie Radio Supply	4,824.18
9. Landscaping—Carolina Nurseries, Inc.	2,247.00
10. Architects—A. G. Odell, Jr.	61,011.98

Total cost	\$1,097,676.23
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The membership of the Board of Trustees of the Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County throughout the promotion of the bond issue and the construction of the buildings did not change. Those Board members were: J. A. Mayo, Chairman; Dr. Roy B. McKnight, Vice-Chairman; James R. Bryant, Mrs. B. S. Howell, Dr. E. H. Garinger, S. Y. McAden, Phillip Van Every, J. W. Wilson.
