

**ENCYCLOPEDIA
OF LIBRARY
AND
INFORMATION SCIENCE**

VOLUME 15

EXECUTIVE EDITORS

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Harold Lancour

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ENCYCLOPEDIA OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE

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VOLUME 15

LIBRARY COMPANY TO LIBRARY REVIEW

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THE LIBRARY COMPANY OF PHILADELPHIA

On July 1, 1731, Benjamin Franklin and a number of his fellow members of the Junto drew up "Articles of Agreement" to found a library. The Junto was a discussion group of young men seeking social, economic, intellectual, and political advancement. When they foundered on a point of fact, they needed a printed authority to settle the divergence of opinion. In colonial Pennsylvania at the time there were not many books. Standard English reference works were expensive and difficult to obtain. Franklin and his friends were mostly mechanics of moderate means. None alone could have afforded a representative library nor, indeed, many imported books. By pooling their resources in pragmatic Franklinian fashion, they could. The contribution of each created the book capital of all.

Fifty subscribers invested 40 shillings each and promised to pay 10 shillings a year thereafter to buy books and maintain a shareholder's library. Thus "the Mother of all American Subscription Libraries" was established. The first list of desiderata to stock the shelves was sent to London on March 31, 1732, and by autumn that order, less a few books found to be unobtainable, arrived. James Logan, "the best Judge of Books in these Parts," had assisted in the choice, and it was a representative one.

Were one to draw up a list of the works most commonly found in colonial American—and probably provincial English—libraries, the early selection of the Library Company could serve as a pattern. In the earlier ecclesiastical and collegiate libraries of British America the choice of books was superimposed from without for theological or educational purposes and reflected the formal learning of donor or teacher. In the Library Company the desire for the book stemmed from the prospective reader.

By the time the library issued its earliest surviving printed catalog of 1741, the general mix of its collection was established for over a century. Excluding gifts, historical works broadly defined accounted for approximately one-third of the total holdings. These included geographical books and accounts of voyages and travels, which latter category the Library Company emphasized until comparatively recently. Literature—plays and poems mostly—comprised a little more than 20%, approximately the same proportion as science. Theology accounted for only a tenth of the titles. This was in marked contrast to the earlier libraries of Harvard and Yale, but a harbinger of other popular libraries which were founded later. Such a diminution of printed religiosity was a characteristic difference between a theological seventeenth century in the British colonies and a deistical eighteenth century. To conclude the selection, it should be noted that philosophy matched theology in numbers, and that economics and such social sciences, the arts, linguistics, and the indefinables accounted for the rest. Bought for many years through the agency of the Quaker mercer-naturalist of London, Peter Collinson, this was and long

remained the basic weighting of book selection until the decline of the proprietary libraries in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

The Library Company flourished because it adopted a purchasing policy responsive to the needs of its intellectually alert, economically ambitious, but nonelite membership. Its successful example was quickly copied along the Atlantic seaboard from Salem to Charleston. It was Franklin's opinion that "these Libraries have improved the general Conversation of Americans, made the common Tradesmen and Farmers as intelligent as most Gentlemen from other Countries, and perhaps have contributed in some Degree to the Stand so generally made throughout the Colonies in Defence of their Privileges."

The library soon became not only an increasing collection of books but also a full-fledged cabinet of curiosities in the Renaissance mode. Donors deposited in its rooms antique coins, fossils, fauna pickled in spirits, unusual geological specimens, tanned skins, and other oddities. In accordance with its role as an all-embracing cultural institution, the Library Company also participated in the increasingly popular scientific experimentation of its day.

At first housed in a room in the librarian's lodgings, the burgeoning accumulation became too much for private quarters. When John Penn sent an air-pump to the quasi-learned society, the directors had to take a major step to house it properly. The instrument arrived early in 1739. A handsome cabinet was commissioned for it. That glass-fronted case survives as the earliest extant example of American-made Palladian architectural furniture. Arrangements were promptly made to move the books, *schatzkammer*, and air-pump press into rooms on the second floor of the newly finished west wing of the State House. It was there that Franklin and his associates performed their first experiments in electricity, inaugurated when Collinson sent over a hollow rubbing glass to the library.

Suitably settled, the library could turn its attention to making known its holdings. Although broadsheet catalogs of the company's books may have been issued in 1733 and 1735, no copy of either survives. An existing small octavo of fifty-six pages, printed by Franklin and issued in 1741, lists the 375 titles then in the library. As eighteenth-century catalogs go it was a good one, the first American library catalog to give titles at some length as well as place and date of publication. Franklin wrote "A short Account of the Library" to fill a final blank page. No waste, no want. It should be noted that, among the descriptions of institutional operations, it was stated that the library was open Saturday afternoons from four until eight o'clock. Members could borrow books freely and without charge. Non-members could borrow books by depositing their value as surety "and paying a small Acknowledgment for the Reading." In the early days this latter fee was apparently either never collected or discontinued; it does not appear as income in the first financial reports.

A catalog available, the books shelved in the State-House wing, regular orders of books sent to the volunteer agent Collinson, and annual shipments received from London, the Library Company formally sought the patronage of the proprietors of Pennsylvania. What the directors really wanted was a handsome benefaction in

books or cash. They did get a plot of land for a hoped-for building of their own, and on March 24, 1742, a charter from John, Thomas, and Richard Penn, issued in their name by Governor George Thomas. This was printed in 1746, together with the by-laws and a supplementary catalog.

The first librarian, Louis Timothée, or Timothy as he became, left after a short tenure to become Franklin's printing partner in Charleston. For a very brief period Franklin himself took on the bibliothecal responsibility. He was succeeded by the erstwhile shoemaker and self-trained surveyor William Parsons, who served from 1734 to 1746. He was followed as librarian by Robert Greenway, who remained in office for 17 years.

The more important functionary of the institution was the secretary, at first the scrivener and amateur botanist Joseph Breintnall. He kept the minutes and wrote the letters ordering books to Collinson, who faithfully carried out the Library Company's requests for over a quarter of a century. After Breintnall's death in 1746 it was Franklin who performed the secretarial duties. Despite his mythical reputation as the careful, methodical "Poor Richard," he was careless about the company's records. When he went to England in 1757, first the schoolmaster Francis Allison and then young Francis Hopkinson served as secretary. When the latter took custody of the Library Company's box which Franklin had left with his wife, he found that the notes of minutes taken on separate pieces of paper during the printer-politician's years in office were scattered and imperfect. To create a permanent record Hopkinson copied into a book all the minutes of the company from the beginning. Lacunae exist for some periods in the 1740s and 1750s.

The books which flowed regularly across the Atlantic from the London bookshops were in subject matter the same mix as in the first shipments. There were recent works of history and travel, some poems, plays and novels, and standard vademecums and popularizations in the field of practical arts and sciences. As Franklin wrote concerning the College of Philadelphia, "As in the Scheme of the Library I had provided only for English Books," so in his college he provided only a good English education. Although Provost William Smith stressed a classical education more than Franklin had hoped, the members of the Library Company, with little Latin and less Greek, bought very few works not in English.

Treasures-to-be came in 1755 as a gift from Collinson in the form of his own copies of a score of seventeenth-century accounts of the newly established British colonies in America, among them such classics of the colonization period as Strachey's *Lavves* and Mourt's *Relation*. A new catalog was issued in 1757 and another in 1764. Among those who guided the destinies of the company in the years before the Revolution were the silversmith Philip Syng, Dr. Thomas Cadwalader, the builder-architect Samuel Rhoads, and a bit later the merchant-patriot Charles Thomson and John Dickinson, "the Pennsylvania Farmer."

The library kept growing, in part by absorbing some of its own progeny. The Union Library, founded in 1746, into which had been incorporated the much smaller Association Library and Amicable Library, was merged in 1769 into the Library Company. Duplicates—alas, any edition of the same title—were sold. The holdings

and members of the two institutions were consolidated. A new printed catalog with 2,033 entries was prepared and published in 1770. On this occasion the books were renumbered by size, beginning an accession series which is continued to this day.

In 1772 the library having "become large & valuable, a Source of Instruction to Individuals and conducive of Reputation to the Public," and much too crowded in its State-House rooms, the directors petitioned the Pennsylvania Assembly for permission to build on the State-House Square. The request was turned down. After much consideration and no alleviation of the space problem, agreement was reached with the Carpenters' Company in 1773 to rent the second floor of their new hall off Chestnut Street near Fourth. "The Books (inclosed within Wire Lattices) are kept in one large Room," Franklin then in London was informed, "and in another handsome Appartment the [scientific] Apparatus is deposited and the Directors meet."

It was a historic move. On September 5, 1774, the First Continental Congress met on the first floor of Carpenters' Hall. John Adams reported that the site committee had taken "a View of the Room, and of the Chamber where is an excellent Library." In anticipation of the meeting the Library Company had ordered that "the Librarian furnish the Gentlemen who are to meet in Congress in this City with the use of such Books as they may have occasion for during their sitting, taking a Receipt for them." Only one such receipt survives, showing that George Walton of Georgia took out and returned, among other books, Paine's *Common Sense*. The first day it met Congress recorded the credentials of the delegates. On the second day it formally expressed its thanks for the Library Company's courtesy.

The offer of its facilities was renewed when the Second Continental Congress met the following spring. The same formal offer of use of its library was made to the delegates of the Constitutional Convention in 1787. Until the capital was moved to Washington in 1800 the Library Company, long the most important book resource for colonial Philadelphians, remained *the* library of the national leaders of the United States, the *de facto* Library of Congress before there was one *de jure*.

During the war years, importations of books from abroad had ceased. With the peace in 1783 a flurry of orders went to London agents, Joseph Woods and William Dillwyn, whose successors served the library for many years. The seriousness of purpose of the library was reiterated when the directors told their correspondents that "tho we would wish to mix the *Utile* with the *Dulce*, we should not think it expedient to add to our present stock, anything in the *novel* way." It was with presumably unspent book funds that the Library Company in 1785 made what have proved to be the most valuable purchases in its history. At the sale of the effects of the Swiss-born would-be historian of America, Pierre Eugene Du Simitière, the library was the main buyer, securing most of his manuscript collections and almost all the volumes of broadsides, prints, and pamphlets offered at the auction. Du Simitière, with an eye to the future, had picked up ephemera from the streets. An unbelievably high percentage of the printed items he gathered is today unique, illuminating the Revolutionary era as only the informal productions of a period can.

When the Reverend Manasseh Cutler visited Philadelphia in 1787, he paid his respects to the institution which had "become the public library of the University and the city."

Every modern author of any note, I am told, is to be met with here, and large additions are annually made. The books appeared to be well arranged and in good order. . . . I was pleased with a kind of network doors to the book-shelves, which is made of a large wire sufficiently open to read the labels, but no book can be taken out unless the librarian unlocks the door. This is a necessary security from any persons taking books without the knowledge of the librarian. . . .

From the Library we were conducted into the Cabinet, which is a large room on the opposite side of the entry, and over the room where the Mechanical models are deposited [by the American Philosophical Society]. Here we had the pleasure of viewing a most excellent collection of natural curiosities from all parts of the globe.

Although the contents of the museum and the scientific instruments of the Library Company remained in its possession for some time, gifts to the cabinet fell off. There is no record of the disposal of any of the items, but only a very few of them have survived.

There was an upsurge of optimism after the government was established under the Constitution. Growth had continued and the library's rented quarters became inadequate. Negotiations with the legislature for ground and with the American Philosophical Society for some jointure of interests fell through. In 1789 the Library Company bought a piece of land on Fifth Street near Chestnut across from the State-House Square. A competition for the design of a building was held. An amateur architect, Dr. William Thornton, won it with plans for a handsome Palladian red-brick structure with white pilasters and balustrade surmounted by urns. A curving double flight of steps led up to the frontispiece over which, under a pronounced pediment, was an arched niche. This was filled by a gift from William Bingham, a statue of Franklin classically garbed in a toga—with his permission—carved out of marble in Italy by Lazzarini. The cornerstone, composed by Franklin except for a flattering reference to him, was laid on August 31, 1789. He did not live to see the building finished. The new quarters were opened on New Year's Day, 1791.

When the new library was in operation, conversations were held seeking an arrangement with the Loganian Library, housed on Sixth Street across the State-House Square. James Logan, who had come to Pennsylvania as William Penn's secretary in 1699 and in the course of years occupied many of the highest political and judicial offices of the province, was a bookman all his life. A linguist of competence in a bewildering number of languages, a classicist who in the margins of his books crossed swords with the greatest European editors, and a scientist who described the fertilization of corn by pollen, understood and used the new invention of calculus, wrote on optics and made astronomical observations, the Quaker virtuoso brought books to feed the wide-ranging appetite of his mind. By

the time he died in 1751, Logan had gathered over 2,600 volumes, chiefly in Latin and Greek, which was the best collection of books in colonial America.

In his later years he had decided to leave his books for the use of the public and establish a library, an American Bodleian. He designed and commenced a building to house it on Sixth Street and wrote an elaborate codicil to his will setting up and, with the rents of a property in Bucks County, endowing the institution. The original trustees had included his son-in-law Isaac Norris, Jr., but as a result of a disagreement with him, Logan canceled the codicil. In spite of his intention to frame another instrument, illness prevented him from perfecting it. Nonetheless, after his death his heirs carried out the old man's wishes. The Loganian Library was created in 1754 as a trust for the public with Logan's sons, William and James, his son-in-law John Smith, Benjamin Franklin, Richard Peters, Israel Pemberton, Jr., and William Allen as trustees. A second deed of trust, almost identical with the earlier one, was dated March 25, 1760.

A printed catalog of the Bibliotheca Loganiana, prepared by Lewis Weiss, an educated German immigrant, was issued in 1760 in which year the library was opened. Although Franklin in his promotional tract for the establishment of a college in Philadelphia had described Logan's library as a valuable book resource available to professors and students, little use seems to have been made of the scholarly works in the collection. In the eighteenth century there was little interest in the classics and advanced mathematical sciences on the part of merchants and artisans in Philadelphia. Moreover, two factors which made it unique contributed to its unpopularity: the library included few English works of belles-lettres and, at the opposite pole, almost no polemical theology.

In 1758 Dr. William Logan, a physician of Bristol, England, and the younger brother of James, died without issue and left much of his estate including his library to his nephew William Logan of Philadelphia. Dr. William's books included a high proportion of medical works, and in pre-Revolutionary days it may have been the largest and best—albeit somewhat old-fashioned—such collection in the colonies. When the American William died in 1776, he left from his inheritance such books as did not duplicate titles in the Loganian Library to that institution and the duplicates to the Library Company.

When the handsome Library Company building began to arise across the square from the Loganian Library, James Logan, Jr., the sole survivor of the original trustees, asked the General Assembly of Pennsylvania to vest the trust in the Library Company in order to make his father's benefaction more useful. By an act of March 31, 1792, the books and assets of the Loganian Library were transferred into the custody of the far more active institution. An addition to its just completed building was quickly erected as an east wing. There were almost 4,000 volumes in the Loganian Library which, after it was moved into new quarters, were listed in a new catalog published in 1795. The weightiness in pounds and in contents can be judged from the fact that almost one-quarter of the total number of volumes was in folio size.

A succession of functionaries of brief incumbency, including John Todd, Jr., the first husband of Dolly Madison, handled the operation of the library until Zachariah

Poulson, Jr. became librarian in 1785. Poulson was a printer, newspaper publisher, and excellent keeper of books and records. He compiled and printed an indexed catalog in 1789, kept admirable accounts of books borrowed, and set up "A Chronological Register" of shares which retrospectively listed the original and successive owners of each share from 1731 on. The register has been kept up and is still in use.

The number of shareholders had reached 100 in 1763 and remained at that level until the merger with the Union Library in 1769, when it jumped to 400. To pay for the Fifth Street building, 266 shares in 1789–1793 were sold or given to the carpenters, bricklayers, and others in partial payment for work done. The cost of a share was increased in 1793 from £20 fluctuating Pennsylvania money to \$40 in good Hamiltonian currency, and the annual dues were set at \$2. Thereafter growth was gradual, the membership rising to over 800 in the 1820s. Both members and non-members paid a fee for taking out books, but anyone was permitted to read in the library without charge. Penalties were levied for keeping books out overlong.

Poulson, who was responsible for getting the operational affairs of the institution on a workmanlike basis, served as librarian for over 2 decades. On December 3, 1801, in appreciation of the director's commendation of his services up to that time, he gave the library ten folio, thirty-seven quarto, and four octavo volumes of miscellaneous pamphlets, chiefly of the seventeenth century. These added over 1,000 titles to the library's holdings. The number in itself was important, but it was far outweighed by the comparatively recent discovery that all these volumes had once belonged to Benjamin Franklin.

The library's role in the life of Philadelphia was maintained. It was, and remained until late in the nineteenth century, "the City Library" or "the Philadelphia Library." Men of prominence were its members. Nine signers of the Declaration of Independence—Benjamin Franklin, Benjamin Rush, Francis Hopkinson, Robert Morris, George Clymer, John Morton, James Wilson, Thomas McKean, and George Ross—owned shares, and some of them served as directors. At the turn of the century those most active in the management of the Library Company were Richard Wells, Benjamin R. Morgan, William Rawle, Joseph Parker Norris, Robert Waln, and Samuel M. Fox, all of whom were leaders or participants in the civic and philanthropic activities of the city. They saw that the finances of the library were properly managed and that orders for books were sent regularly to London agents and, after the semiannual shipments were carefully checked, paid for. Local booksellers and publishers were also patronized, but it was the important new works from abroad—novels by Sir Walter Scott and Jane Austen, poetry by Lord Byron, accounts of Napoleon and his wars and descriptions of travels into the still "new worlds" of Africa and Asia—for which the Library Company was justly renowned. Philadelphia printers borrowed the English importations and used and abused them to such an extent that a by-law was passed in 1805 declaring that printers would be sued if they took the library's books apart in the course of reprinting the work. The same problem recurred in the second half of the twentieth century.

In addition to gifts of their own works by member-authors such as Charles Brockden Brown, a number of interesting accessions flowed into the library. In

1788, as secretary of the Pennsylvania Society for the Abolition of Slavery, Tench Coxe, later Hamilton's assistant in the Treasury Department, placed in the Library Company a handful of antislavery pamphlets sent the Society from England and France, remarking that he knew of no depository "so proper" for such material.

The directors were surprised in March 1799 to receive as a gift from a stranger, Henry Cox of Ireland, a black box containing a number of old books, manuscripts, and printed records. They had come down to him from his grandfather, Sir Richard Cox, lord chancellor of Ireland in 1703–1707, who had appropriated them. When William Hepworth Dixon, a British historian, saw the manuscripts in Philadelphia in 1866, he recognized them as part of the official Irish archives and suggested that they were of such paramount importance that they should be returned to England. The directors agreed and formally offered to Lord Romilly, master of the Rolls, several of the manuscripts containing correspondence between James I and the privy council of Ireland, orders of the council, and the diary and letterbook of the Marquis of Clanricarde, lord deputy of Ireland. The offer was gratefully accepted. In return the Library Company was given several series of British government publications of an antiquarian nature. Of greater import, however, was the discovery 30 years later of the "Mayflower Compact" which was generously sent back to Massachusetts by Queen Victoria's officials. *The Times* noted: "The precedent of the Library Company of Philadelphia just referred to, has unquestionably played a considerable part in determining the action of the Consistory Court." Inexplicably, the directors did not return a number of other valuable documents from the same source, including James I's original instructions of 1614 to his lord deputy of Ireland, Sir Arthur Chichester, and some dozens of unique Irish seventeenth-century broadsides.

A far larger gift came as the bequest in 1803 of the Reverend Dr. Samuel Preston, rector of Chevening in Kent. It is not known exactly why he chose the Library Company as the recipient of his book bounty. Preston was, it is true, a friend of the former Philadelphian, Benjamin West. It is further true that the clergyman was an ardent Whig who in 1783 had written to the directors congratulating them on the exploits of their fellow-countrymen and wishing the library well in the days to come. He may have been kin to some Philadelphia Prestons; a Samuel Preston held many offices in the city and province in the early decades of the eighteenth century. The collection consisted of over 2,500 volumes. It was the lifetime accumulation of a well-to-do, cultured gentleman cleric with an appropriate proportion of theological works, but rich in handsome and expensive works of topography and the fine arts. When the books arrived in America, Congress refused to remit the duties, which were begrudgingly paid.

The next major accession of the library was in 1828 upon the death of the Philadelphia merchant William Mackenzie. Little is known of the man except that he was wealthy, generous, and a true bibliophile. He was probably the first American to buy "collectors' items," which included such treasures as a Caxton, Jenson's Pliny on vellum, and a shelf-full of early romances of chivalry. In addition to rarities, among them some extremely valuable items of Americana, Mackenzie purchased the books of his day as they were published and bought heavily when im-

portant libraries were dispersed locally. As a result he was a major customer of the bookseller Dufief in 1801–1803 when the collections of Benjamin Franklin and of William Byrd of Westover were broken up and sold piecemeal. By his will Mackenzie left all his books before 1700 to the Loganian Library as well as another 800 volumes which the trustees could select from his French and Latin works. These amounted to 1,519 volumes; an additional 3,566 volumes were purchased on most favorable terms by the Loganian trustees from Mackenzie's executors. At the same time the Library Company acquired 1,966 volumes, mostly books in English.

In 1832 two large local libraries were added to the book resources of the Library Company. After the death of Zaccheus Collins, an amateur naturalist and longtime director of the library, the administrator of his estate offered his books for sale. For \$1,200 the collection, rich in works of botany and other fields of natural history, was purchased for the Loganian Library. At about the same time an understanding was reached with James Cox. Cox was an artist who had emigrated from London shortly after the Revolution. By chance, near his house on Almond Street in Philadelphia he met a woman who came from his own native village in England and who befriended him and made him her heir. When the lady died, Cox came into a modest fortune, which enabled him to buy books and more books which he did to the exclusion of all but the essential necessities of life. An eccentric bibliomaniac, he filled his house to overflowing with an accumulation of about 6,000 volumes, chiefly of a literary nature, including a first edition of Keats's *Poems* which he seems to have bought when it was first published. A solitary octogenarian, overwhelmed by the size of his collection, Cox agreed in 1832 to give it to the Library Company in return for an annuity of \$400. Two years later Cox died; his library proved to be a most unusual bargain.

In 1806 Poulson had resigned as librarian and been succeeded by George Campbell, who remained in office until 1829. These were the days of printed catalogs. Supplements came out regularly; a new "complete" listing was published in 1803; a Loganian supplement was issued in 1828; and then, of course, the addition of the Mackenzie books called forth another catalog.

In the spring of 1829 John Jay Smith was elected librarian. He was a man of broad culture and considerable energy, with a host of extracurricular activities such as the editing of a periodical, the promotion of Laurel Hill Cemetery, the practice of landscape gardening, and the collection of family and other early Pennsylvania manuscripts which he eventually gave to the library. He was a descendant of James Logan through Logan's daughter Hannah and proud of his ancestry. Through no fault of his, the only fire in the long history of the Library Company occurred early in Smith's incumbency. On January 6, 1831, heat from the fireplace in the Loganian room kindled a wooden beam hidden beneath a veneer of masonry. Before it was extinguished some of the contiguous woodwork caught fire, and a clock, the portrait of Logan, a bust of Penn, and some books were destroyed. The loss, covered by insurance, was not so great as had been feared at first. Few books were a total loss; some had their edges scorched; 1,403 volumes were rebound because their spines had been damaged.

A major catalog of the Library Company's books, arranged by subject, was issued in 1835, followed 2 years later by one of the Loganian Library. These, with

their supplements of 1856 and 1867, remained the basic finding lists of the library for over a century. Statistics were then printed showing that in the two collections there were 25,684 works in 43,884 volumes. In 1845 Smith noted that the number of books in the building had doubled in the 16 years of his administration, and "with the rapid multiplication of books in America, importations from England & the Continent, &c." he foresaw another doubling in the next 20 years. A new building was considered in 1846, and John Notman actually drew plans for it, but nothing came of that. Growing pains continued. When Charles Jewett published the first comprehensive survey of American libraries in 1851, the Library Company was one of only five institutions with as many as 50,000 volumes. The others were Harvard and Yale (both inclusive of their specialized graduate school collections), the Library of Congress, and the Boston Athenaeum. Only Harvard had more than the Library Company's approximate count of 60,000 volumes.

After over 2 decades as librarian, John Jay Smith resigned in 1851 and his son, Lloyd Pearsall Smith, succeeded him. He was more of a classicist than his predecessors and was known for his wit and his judicious spicing of conversation with Latin tags. "Custos librorum nascitur, non fit," he once wrote. Lloyd Smith was also the first to look upon librarianship as a career.

The library continued to grow. Smith noted in 1856 that the majority of the 18,000 volumes added since the appearance of the 1835 catalog had been purchased with the annual payments of the members. The quality and comprehensiveness of the library acquisitions were maintained, a little bit of the best of everything, but an emphasis on history, biography, and travel with a slowly increasing incursion of novels onto the shelves. American and foreign bestsellers, fiction and nonfiction, were ordered as a matter of course, but it is doubtful that any other library had the imagination—or the boldness—to buy when they were first published the then-little-regarded *Moby Dick* and *Leaves of Grass*. The Library Company did. Concern about the inadequacy of the Fifth Street building increased in pace with acquisitions. "Subscriptions for the erection of a Fire-Proof Building for the Library" were sought. The destruction of much of the Library of Congress made many institutions fire-conscious. By 1869 a substantial fund, including a legacy of almost \$50,000 from Joseph Fisher, had been raised; some lots were purchased in an attempt to assemble sufficient ground at the corner of Juniper and Locust Streets.

In 1869 Dr. James Rush died. He was the son of the physician-patriot Benjamin Rush and husband and heir of Phoebe Ann Ridgway Rush who had inherited a portion of her father Jacob Ridgway's immense fortune. They were childless. In accordance with Rush's will as presented to the directors of the Library Company by Henry J. Williams, Rush's brother-in-law, sole executor, and long-time director of the library, he left an estate of nearly a million dollars to the Library Company—under certain conditions. The original will had been drawn up in 1860, and in the remaining years of his life Dr. Rush added codicil upon codicil until he succeeded in obscuring his own somewhat eccentric wishes in a fog of words and admonitory clauses.

His original intention was clear. With his money the Library Company was to purchase a plot of adequate size "situate between Fourth and Fifteenth and Spruce

and Race Streets" and there build a "fire-proof building sufficiently large to accommodate and contain all the books of the Library Company of Philadelphia . . . and to provide for its future extension." He did not want anything fancy. Matters, however, were not permitted to rest there. In his second codicil Dr. Rush authorized his executor, at his discretion, to do whatever he thought fit. Mr. Williams asserted that on his deathbed Dr. Rush had expressed his specific desire that the library be built on a lot at Broad and Christian Streets toward the purchase of which he had made a payment. The executor announced his intention of carrying out the testator's last oral wishes.

Dr. Rush, who was a studious, somewhat misanthropic and definitely eccentric gentleman, set forth a number of curious stipulations and precatory provisions in his will, but he had a clear idea of what he wanted the Library Company, where he had spent many quiet, happy hours, to be. He wrote:

I know that an ostentatious library to keep up with the progress of our country, collecting too many books, may be like an avaricious man who accumulates money to the ruin of both his modesty and his intellect.

Let it [the library] rest in a modest contentment in the useful quality of its volumes for the benefit, not the amusement alone of the public, nor let it over an ambitious store of inferior printed paper, flap its flimsy leaves, and crow out the highest number of worthless books. Let it be a favor for the eminent works of fiction to be found upon the shelves; but let it not keep cushioned seats for time-wasting and lounging readers, nor place for every-day novels, mind-tainting reviews, controversial politics, scribblings of poetry and prose, biographies of unknown names, nor for those teachers of disjointed thinking, the daily newspapers, except, perhaps for reference to support, since such an authority could never prove, the authentic date of an event. In short, let the managers think only of the intrinsic value of additions to their shelves.

While such a Catonian opinion of the printed word would not have reflected the tastes of the membership at large and while other stipulations were somewhat aggravating, it was Williams's firm decision to build the new library in South Philadelphia, psychologically removed from the homes and businesses of the members, which aroused the most opposition. At a meeting of the membership in October 1869, it was voted to "accept the legacy of Dr. James Rush according to the terms expressed in his Will," with 378 of the 969 members abstaining, 298 voting in favor of the resolution, and 293 voting against it.

The directors of the Library Company were torn between a desire to benefit from the million-dollar bequest and their disapproval of Williams's plans for the site and the building. After several years, much bitterness, and a number of lawsuits, the huge Parthenon-like structure designed by Addison Hutton was erected at Broad and Christian Streets. In 1878 the Library Company reluctantly accepted the impressive edifice, named the Ridgway Library in honor of the original source of the funds which made it possible, and the Rush bequest. The reader-members, however, had no intention of going down to South Philadelphia to browse or pick up the latest novels and biographies bought for the library. By the time the Ridgway Library was completed, plans, energetically forwarded by Henry Wharton, were

well advanced for another building at Juniper and Locust Streets, a location more central and more convenient for most of the members. It was decided to use the Ridgway as a kind of storage house, although it was never so crudely phrased. The directors proceeded to relieve the crowded shelves on Fifth Street by moving to the new building “such books as, if destroyed by fire, could never be replaced” as well as all the Loganian books included in the 1837 catalog. Frank Furness, a popular architect who favored the use of bricks to create his individualistic kind of Victorian eclecticism, designed the in-town library where more modern books would be housed and the main lending aspect of the Library Company could be conducted. On February 24, 1880 the new Juniper and Locust Street library opened its doors. Soon afterward the Fifth Street property was sold.

Lloyd P. Smith, in whose home the plans for the first meeting of the projected American Library Association took place, was proud of his two “fire-proof” buildings. As one of the leaders in the new movement to professionalize librarianship, he wrote articles for the *Library Journal*, gave papers at meetings of the association, went with his peers to an international meeting in England, and developed a classification system for the shelving of the books in the two new buildings. The system used A for theology, E for jurisprudence, I for science and the arts, O for literature, U for history and biography, and Y for bibliography, with lower-case letters and numerals for divisions and subdivisions of the categories. Books were shelved by size—folios, quartos, octavos, and duodecimos—and by accession number within the ultimate subject classification and size.

This might have presented no problem had not the holdings of the Library Company been fragmented. The Library Company’s old books were housed in the north wing of the Ridgway building; the Loganian Library’s old books were ranged on the balcony which ran around the huge, open reading-room; the Library Company’s new books were in the uptown library. Each collection was arranged separately according to the Smith system, and as new collections came into the library each of these was also separately arranged. Duplicate catalogs and accession books had to be maintained for the two sites, for only the accession number appeared in the printed catalogs and on the handwritten paper slips which were used after 1856. The method was ponderous, but for the 100,000 volumes which the Library Company had, according to a government survey of 1876, it worked. Although a new shelving method was introduced in 1953, some of the library is still arranged according to Smith’s system.

The first considerable new accessions after the occupation of the Ridgway Branch were the library and papers of Dr. James Rush which were part of his bequest. These included almost all the books of his celebrated father Benjamin Rush, probably the largest and best medical collection in the United States at the time of his death in 1813, and the manuscripts of many of his writings and lectures, notebooks, ledgers, medical records, and a corpus of letters received. James Rush’s own books and papers were far from inconsequential; he had acquired valuable reference material for the works he wrote on the voice and on the human intellect. A latterday virtuoso and a wealthy man, he bought in addition extensively in the wide range of his interests, notably expensive, illustrated books on art and architecture.