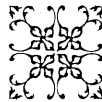


# THE TORONTO PUBLIC LIBRARIES

*By*

GEORGE H. LOCKE

Chief Librarian, Toronto



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INTERIOR OF REFERENCE LIBRARY, COLLEGE STREET, TORONTO—LOOKING WEST

*Wickson & Gregg and A. H. Chapman. Associate Architects.*



PUBLIC REFERENCE LIBRARY, COLLEGE STREET, TORONTO

*Wickson & Gregg and A. H. Chapman, Associated Architects.*

## The Toronto Public Libraries

By GEORGE H. LOCKE, Chief Librarian, Toronto.

WHEN I was planning the Wychwood Branch I was reproached by a gentleman in this city who said, "It doesn't look like a library." I asked him what a Library looked like. He said he didn't know but he thought it ought to have columns in front. I found out that he had seen the so-called typical Library of the Early-Carnegie days with columns in front, rooms on either hand, and a stack room in the back centre. Indeed it was an architect who told me that a Branch Library, indeed any library, should be classical in style. I couldn't find out from him whether it was Greek or Neo-Greek he favoured. The Wychwood Branch with its blood relations, the High Park and the Beaches, is unlike any Library I have ever seen. It struck a new note, so to speak, in library architecture, following as it does the English grammar school type of the time of Shakespeare. That was just what was in my mind for these three Branches were planned in the year in which was celebrated the tercentenary of Shakespeare. Not designedly, but appropriately there were three.

East Toronto was a little village community with the traditional school houses of durable, substantial, economic and recognizable architecture, and just as an offset to the logical buildings, I planned a house of English domestic architecture on a business street, with a spacious lawn and curtained windows, combining a pleasing exterior with a home like interior, as different as possible from the institutional character of the other public buildings. The upstairs with a great fireplace and gabled windows was for boys and girls only. It looked like an attractive village home.

Then Gerrard Branch, in the midst of a busy district, with no central theme for the neighborhood and no very attractive public buildings, was a different problem. I wanted a building with an English atmosphere, but not domestic, so I chose the later Georgian type and evolved a building still different from any other. I wanted a low, long room upstairs, with dormer windows for my Boys' and Girls' Room, with a club room off it. I got them and then planned the downstairs with reading room, books

around the walls, space for stacks as found necessary, a room for the librarians, kitchenette, and necessary entrances. I must have it on a main artery and as my lot was narrow, I placed the end next the main street with a large bow window facing south with a comfortable window seat. It is one of my most successful Branches.

These I have been describing are Community Branches with a limit of about 12,000 books and a circulation limit of about 150,000 per annum.

The Public Reference Library's great feature is the great Reading Room for study purposes, one of the best of its size and kind on the continent. It has a shelf capacity of over 5,000 books on the walls, easily accessible to everybody, has excellent lighting and is well ventilated. It is extremely popular and often in the winter every seat—over 200—is occupied by persons studying something of interest. The reserve stock of books in this Library is upwards of 90,000, and as the use of books in the



ENTRANCE HALL, PUBLIC LIBRARY, COLLEGE STREET, TORONTO

*Wickson & Gregg and A. H. Chapman, Associated Architects.*

Actually in Gerrard we placed 7,500 books on the opening and circulated 105,000 the first year. They are open to the public every day except Wednesday from 2 p.m. to 9 p.m.

The Dovercourt Branch was a different problem. It is a regional Branch, open every day from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m., and contains more books than an ordinary Branch, and in addition a special Reference Collection. It may have up to 20,000 books and circulate up to 275,000 a year. This particular building has been very successful, and in general design has been copied for small cities.

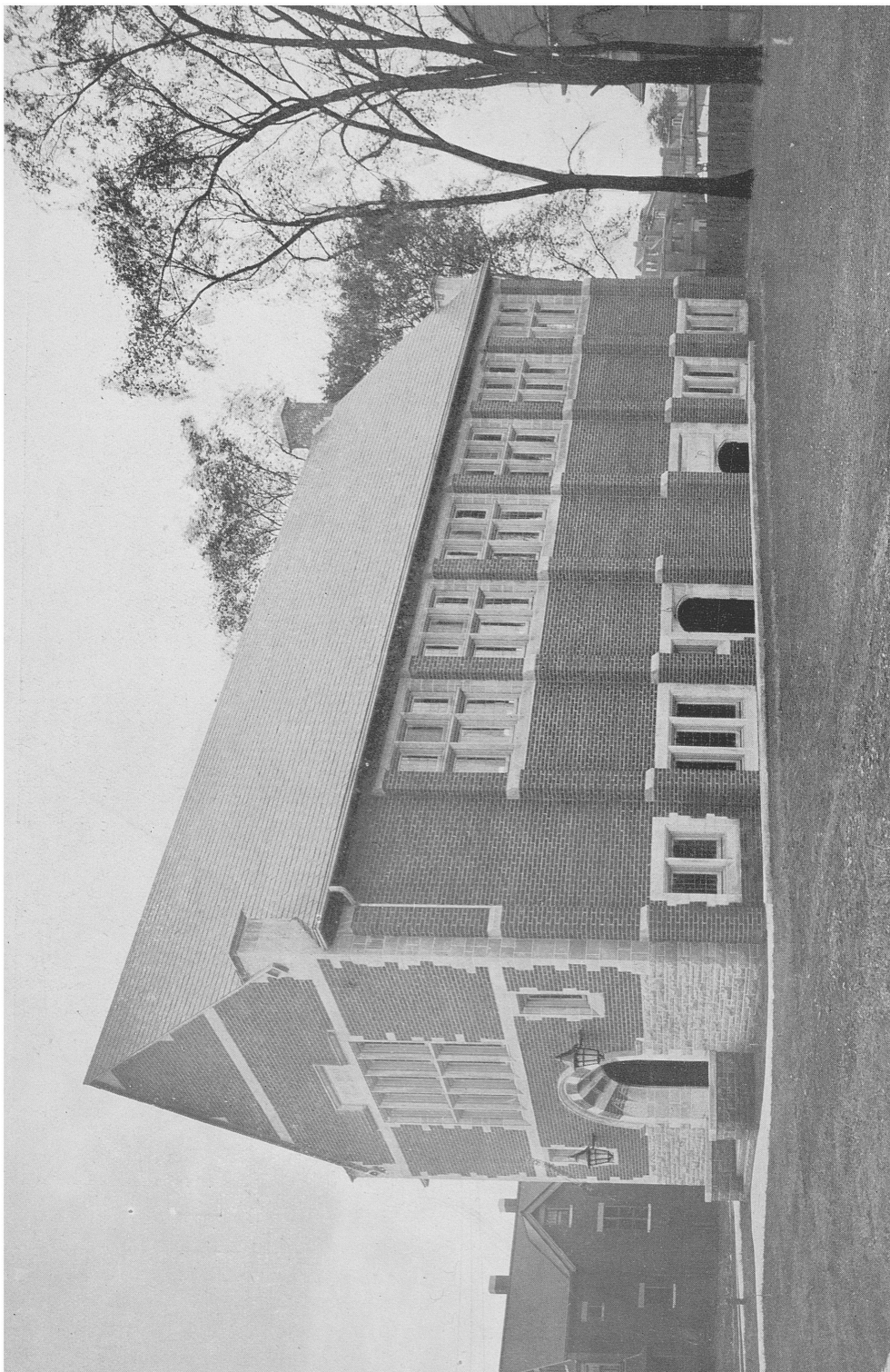
room is about 250,000 per annum it can easily be seen how an educational institution well appointed, well stocked, well kept and well administered is appreciated by the public.

In connection with all these Public Libraries there are gardens which help to make beautiful and attractive these centres of the community life, and in the case of both Wychwood and Earls court the silver cups awarded by the local Horticultural Societies for the best kept and most attractive grounds in connection with public buildings in the district were won by these Libraries.





INTERIOR OF REFERENCE LIBRARY, COLLEGE STREET, TORONTO—LOOKING EAST  
*Wickson & Gregg and A. H. Chapman, Associate Architects.*



HIGH PARK BRANCH, TORONTO PUBLIC LIBRARY  
*Eden Smith & Son, Architects.*

## How Library Ideals Affect Library Architecture

**L**IBRARY architecture in Canada is in its infancy and there are endless opportunities for architects of the future who possess a vigorous imagination and a passion for breaking new ground, in following up this interesting branch of the profession.

The types of library architecture which were in vogue during the last part of the past century and the first decade of the twentieth century are now distinctly passé—and justly so. Their early decline is due largely to the fact that library ideals have

devise a way whereby some cranny in the library might be converted into a club room.

A parallel development is taking place in Adult Circulating work. "Adult Education" has become the slogan of librarians throughout Great Britain, the United States and Canada, and the character of library architecture cannot fail to be affected by this movement. A lecture room will become a virtual necessity, with a stage (preferably an adaptation of the Copeau model) to provide for amateur theatricals. This lecture room should not resemble



A ROOM IN THE BOYS' AND GIRLS' HOUSE OF THE TORONTO PUBLIC LIBRARY

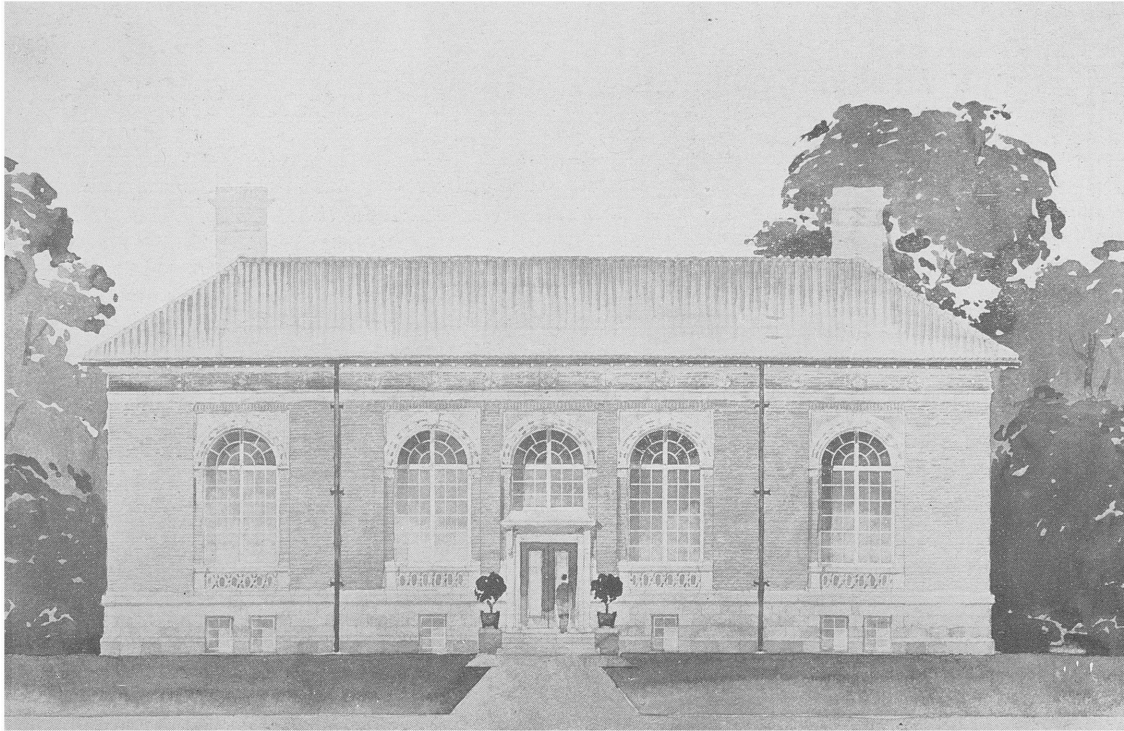
undergone a radical change within the last decade, and the natural result of this changed conception of the scope and method of library work is that the phlegmatic buildings of the past are no longer suitable for the successful undertaking of professional library service.

For instance, the rapid development of work with children was not foreseen by the architects or library boards who built the libraries of the '90's, and as a result many libraries either have no separate room for children, or the children are consigned to a dull, damp, basement—a most discouraging environment in which to undertake work which by its very nature demands light, fresh air, cleanliness and attractive surroundings. Then as the Story Hour grew in favour, club rooms became imperative, and the enterprising librarian racked his brain to

the chilly dungeons of the past generation, but should be a cheerful, spacious auditorium, with good ventilation and satisfactory lighting facilities. Club rooms will be as imperative in connection with Adult work as they are at present in work with children. Indeed too much emphasis cannot be laid on the inclusion of an extra room in a Branch library for its uses may be manifold. High School Reference work, Librarians' Round Tables and group meetings of various kinds could be carried on so much more satisfactorily in a room cut off from the main reading rooms.

The library building which endeavours to meet the requirements of this new conception of librarianship must be above all, adaptable. It must take into consideration the fact that library work is not static but dynamic, and it must be of such a shape and



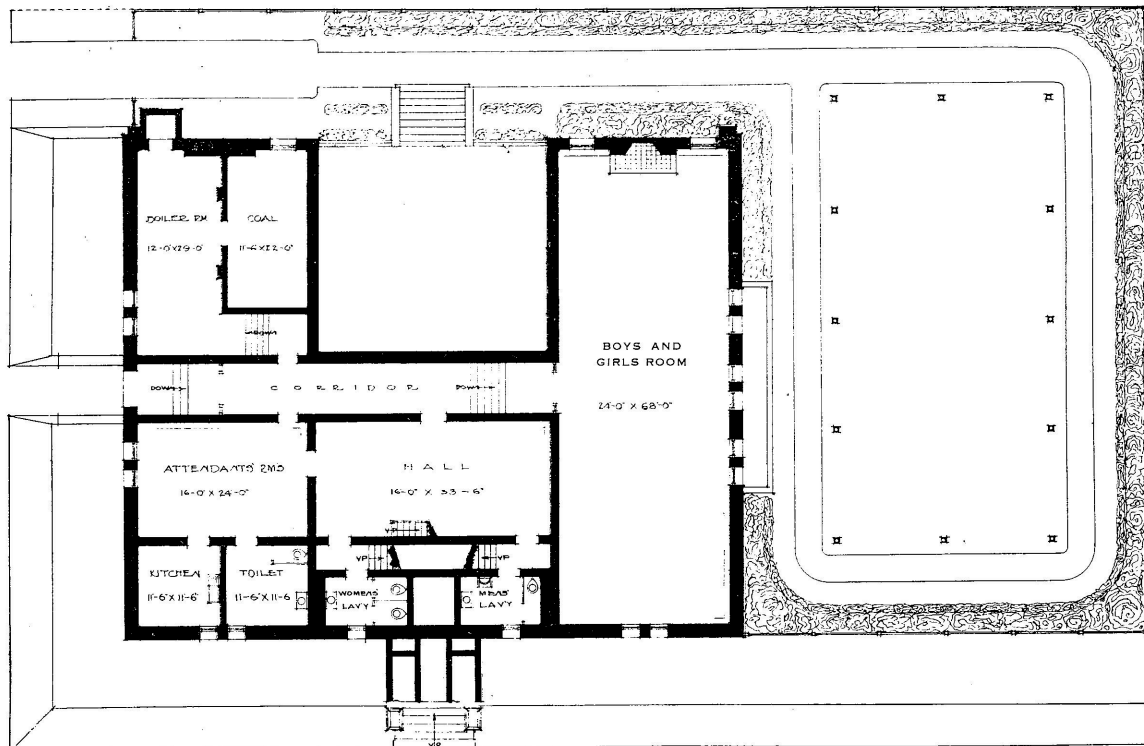


FRONT ELEVATION, DOVERCOURT BRANCH, TORONTO PUBLIC LIBRARY

*Chapman and McGiffin, Architects.*

yle that an extension could be added without destroying the symmetry of the building. It must be conceived by an imaginative brain, for adaptability impossible without imagination. The architect must realize that he is not called upon to plan a

mere house for books—but an intellectual home for the community. The Public Library is tending more and more to become the social centre of the community and it should express this fact in its architecture. It should possess a personality in keeping



BASEMENT FLOOR PLAN

DOVERCOURT BRANCH, TORONTO PUBLIC LIBRARY.

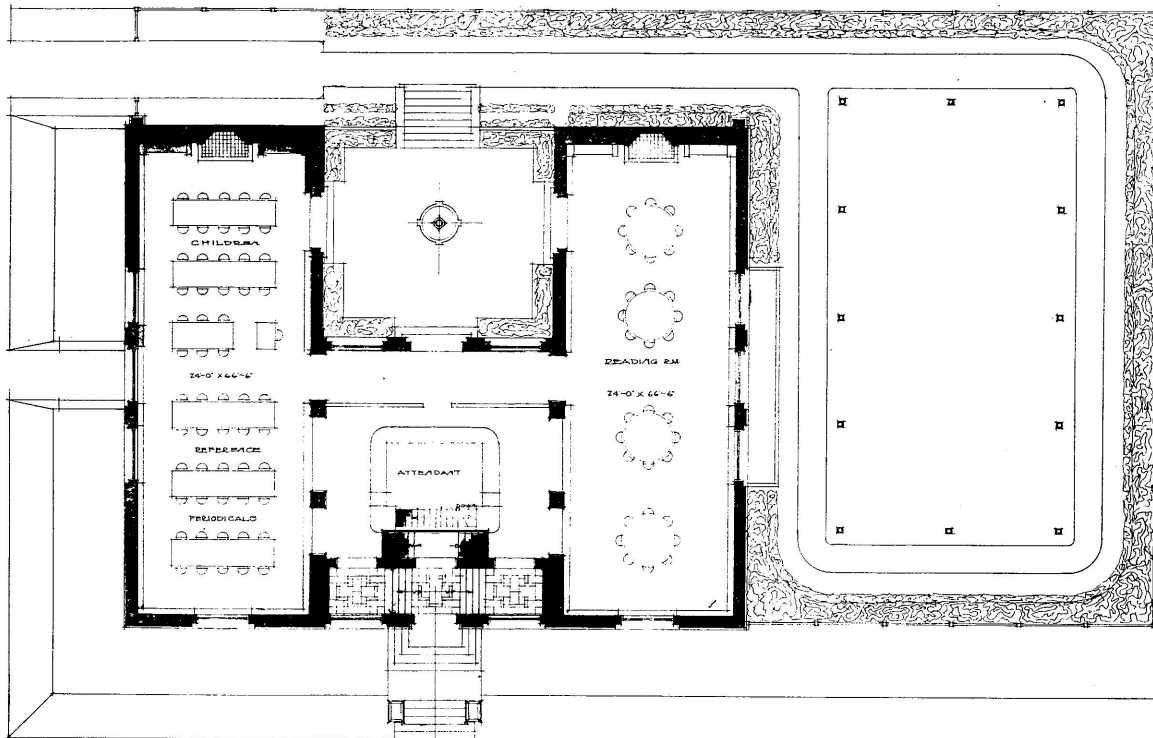


DOVERCOURT BRANCH, TORONTO PUBLIC LIBRARY  
*Chapman and McGiffin, Architects.*

with its environment, and, like a painting, should be a glorified expression of the tastes and characteristics of the community, rather than a photographic likeness.

An architect who would design a satisfactory building for a modern community library has an interesting task before him, and one which is by no means easy. Not only must he take all the foregoing ideas into consideration; the personality of the library, its adaptability, the various phases of the work which it essays to do, but he must always bear in mind that windows, radiators, and ventilation

must be so arranged to give a maximum of wall space for book shelves, since floor stacks are ugly and make the problems of lighting and administration more difficult. He must juggle in somehow a lecture room, a Children's room and an Adult reading room without placing either in the basement. Yet he must remember that ground space costs money, and also that a certain proportion of the lot must be reserved for an attractive setting. With all of these considerations kept in mind a satisfactory building could be erected at a moderate cost, but not without taxing the ingenuity of the architect to a considerable degree.



FIRST FLOOR PLAN  
 DOVERCOURT BRANCH, TORONTO PUBLIC LIBRARY.





BOYS' AND GIRLS' READING ROOM, DOVERCOURT BRANCH, TORONTO PUBLIC LIBRARY  
*Chapman and McGiffin, Architects.*



READING ROOM, WYCHWOOD BRANCH, TORONTO PUBLIC LIBRARY  
*Eden Smith & Son, Architects.*



BOYS' AND GIRLS' ROOM, EASTERN BRANCH, TORONTO PUBLIC LIBRARY  
*J. P. Hynes, Architect.*

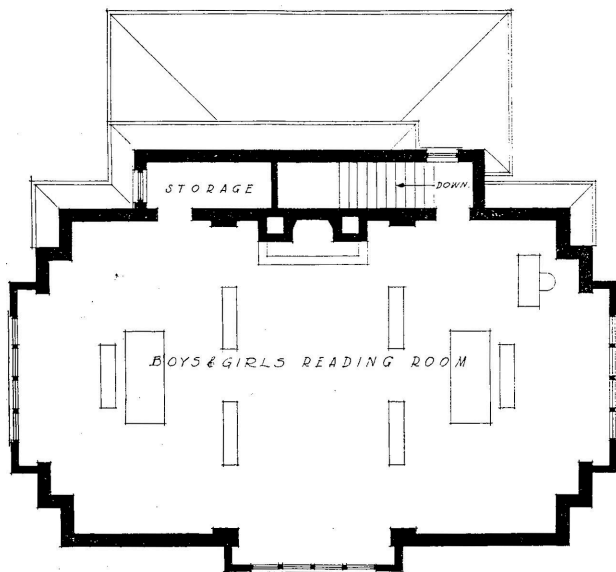


BOYS' AND GIRLS' ROOM, GERRARD BRANCH, TORONTO PUBLIC LIBRARY  
*Shepard and Calvin, Architects.*

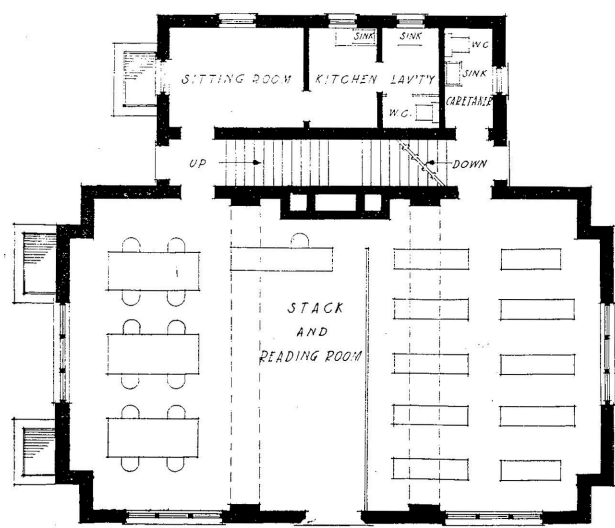


EASTERN BRANCH, TORONTO PUBLIC LIBRARY

*J. P. Hynes, Architect.*



FIRST FLOOR PLAN



GROUND FLOOR PLAN

EASTERN BRANCH, TORONTO PUBLIC LIBRARY

*J. P. Hynes, Architect.*



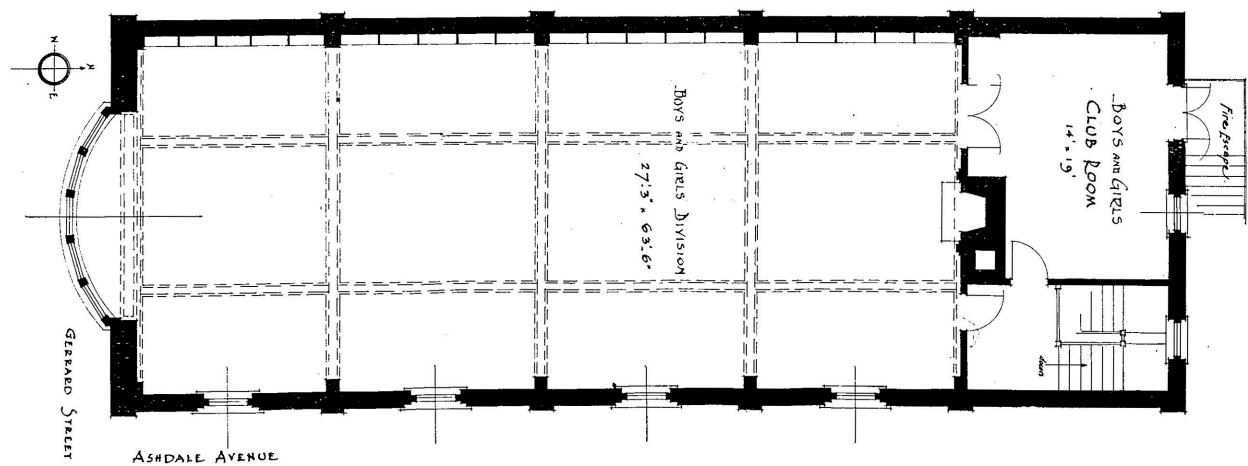
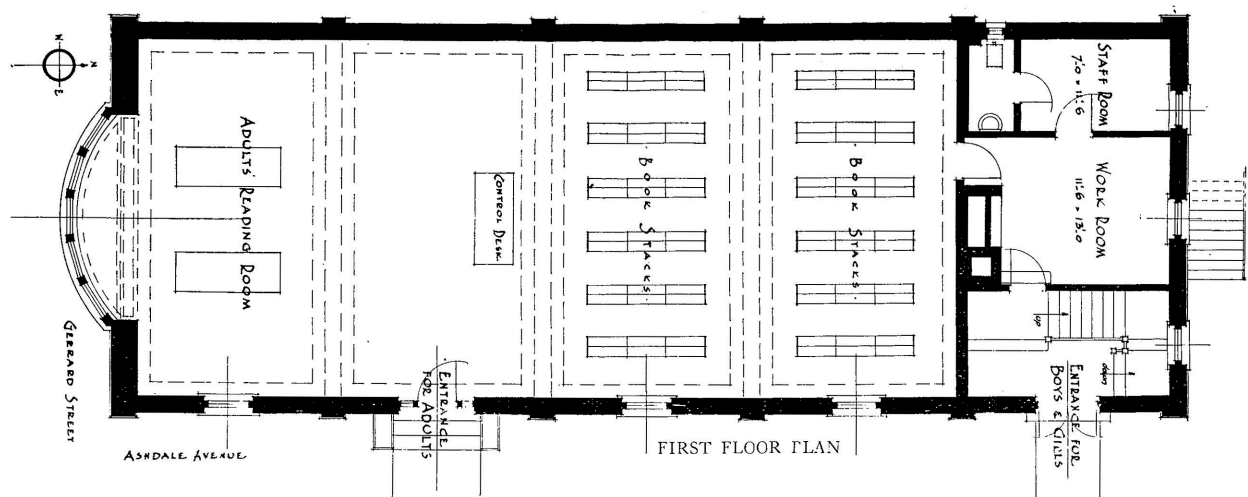


ENTRANCE, EARLSCOURT BRANCH, TORONTO, PUBLIC LIBRARY

*C. J. Gibson, Architect.*



GERRARD BRANCH, TORONTO PUBLIC LIBRARY  
*Shepard and Calvin, Architects.*



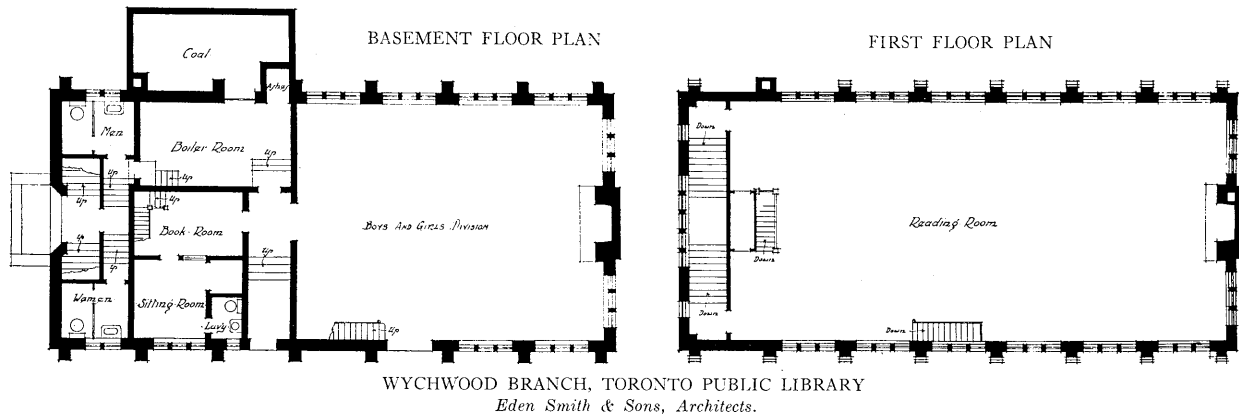


## Some Warnings in regard to the Planning of Libraries

NO Library ought to be planned for any size of a community without the aid of a librarian who has had experience in library planning. He is just as useful to the community which hopes to build as is an architect, because he can appreciate the problem from a professional point of view and can see the necessities from the social and practical point of view of the community to be served. Then

from it in our Libraries. The lecture room in too many of our Libraries is small, dark, poorly kept and unattractively finished.

What ought to be avoided in a community is a library building rising gaunt and naked with a flight of more or less concrete steps, with not a shrub to relieve the monotony and not a vine or a flower to lend colour to the drabness of the background. In



comes the architect to whom the problem is now put in plain understandable terms, and he is asked to make the proportionate spaces and house in the plan in such a way that the exterior will be attractive and the inside economically efficient, and with such building materials and finish as will make for comfort, attractiveness and a minimum of expenditure for maintenance.

One cannot expect Library Boards to know what is wanted. They are made up of men from as many vocations in life as there are members, and the bad examples of library construction are due almost entirely to a Board commissioning a local architect to build a library to cost say \$15,000, without any thought of asking the Inspector of Public Libraries or any of the active librarians of the province to give them any advice. It is a clear case too often of the blind teaching the blind—and the monument to their folly can be seen in too many of our towns.

We have got away from the basement school room in our churches, and I hope we shall soon get away

other words, what is necessary in library planning is that the exterior should be architecturally pleasing and inviting and the material of construction so adapted to its purpose that the cost of maintenance would be kept as low as possible. Buildings, like people, should be externally attractive if they are to be interesting—and above all this should apply to public buildings, which after all, but reflect the taste of the community.

Take away all unnecessary decorations, over-mantels, over-counters, partitions, mock marble pillars and large hallways, and plan a well proportioned room with books on the walls, small and few tables, a simple charging *desk* (not a great counter), simple lighting as near the books and the people as possible, and a combination of colours in the walls that make for harmony. Then take away all "Silence" signs and let the people come and talk about the books in an atmosphere of social happiness.



WYCHWOOD BRANCH, TORONTO PUBLIC LIBRARY  
Eden Smith & Sons, Architects.