the period called a library, study, or den. The "library" in the American home gradually ceased to occupy consolidated space in a specifically named room and became a collection of books housed throughout the house. Thus, in the context of this study, the American home library is both a collection of books and a physical space.

Robert Darnton, the Princeton historian, cites scholars who "share a conception of literature...[as] something that happens every time a reader reads a book. It's an activity—in fact, the act of reading." A burgeoning body of knowledge continues to document the nature of readers and reading, promoting Darnton to comment on the "where" of reading. American impressionist paintings depict men and women reclining on chaise lounges, in hammocks, or on garden benches. As we move away from the intimacy of the boudoir and into the more readily identifiable space in the home known as the library, the den, or the study, Darnton advises: "The general understanding of reading would be advanced if we thought harder about its iconography and accoutrements, including furniture and dress."

To such queries we may add: What did the rooms or spaces look like? What types of furniture accompanied the act of reading? Why is this forty-year period regarded retrospectively as the halcyon days of book buying, of book collecting, and of the development of the home library? Darnton emphasizes the importance of library catalogues as source materials for such analysis: "To go over the list of libraries in Jefferson's library is to inspect the furniture of his mind, and the study of private libraries has the advantage of linking the 'what' with the 'who' of reading." Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson both owned, even by today's standards, impressive private libraries; Jefferson's being in excess of six thousand volumes.

The Commerce of Books: An American Tradition

By 1890, the American home library symbolized a continually evolving Anglo-American tradition. The American home library tradition had its genesis at least by 1675, with books on travel, exploration and discovery, law, medicine, Bibles, and almanacs found in the earliest colonial homes. By the 1750s, imported and indigenous books and periodicals were commonplace. By the mid-1750s, in New York City, Philadelphia, and Boston—given the absence of public libraries—impressive private libraries existed among the citizenry's learned and affluent. Studies of intellectual circles that were based on commonality of interests suggest members' will-
ings and ability to loan and buy books. Learned societies emerged to respond to specific interests and goals: scientific, artistic, trade, etc. The growth and importance of this emerging print culture is well documented, especially for the post-Revolutionary decades. Our nation's unprecedented population growth and westward expansion was paralleled by the advancing technology of the printing press. Along with these developments came sophisticated book distribution networks, aided by a vast railroad transportation system and special postal rates for printed materials. Thus urban and rural populations were able to buy books cheaply and quickly.

During this time, readers throughout the land were serviced by circulating libraries, and throughout the nineteenth century rural reading clubs proliferated. A recent study demonstrates the vitality and dynamism of "a new mass culture of reading and writing," one in which "reading becomes a necessity of life." Although Gilmore's study deals with an earlier period and circumscribed places, his findings would have been broadly applicable throughout America during an entire century (1815-1915).

Nineteenth-century Americans were fascinated by the lives, contributions, and beliefs of America's founding fathers. Franklin and Jefferson personalized the American love for travel. This love, driven by an emerging biblio-psychia and thirst for knowledge, led many educated and affluent citizens to visit the great English and Continental libraries. British country house visits were commonplace for Americans "doing" the requisite Grand Tour.

As American curiosity and interests widened, beginning in 1830, publishers such as Harper Brothers began to publish books in series, each series being termed a "library." By 1879, Harper was responding to some midwestern competition; its Franklin Square Library of 1878 was designed to counter competition by the Chicago Donnelly firm's Lakeside Library and the New York Munro's Seaside Library. By 1879, one popular Harper author, Jacob Abbot, had seven series totaling seventy-two volumes.

A relevant subgenre of this series format so popular in the third quarter of the nineteenth century is the phenomenon of railroad literature: cheap reprints designed for railroad travel reading. Houses such as A.K. Loring of Boston (Railway Companions Series); Peterson of Philadelphia; Putnam and Appleton of New York; and the notorious and colorful New Yorker, Frank Leslie, published huge editions. Leslie produced four series of railroad literature, often reprinted from his journal contributions. In 1877, after a well-publicized transcontinental train journey, during which he ob-

served a lacuna in travel literature—light in weight, subject matter, and cost—he created his Home Library of Standard Works by the Most Celebrated Authors. The Home Library, despite its name, was targeted for railroad travelers. Distributed through the American News Company network and priced at ten and twenty cents per copy, this fiction was displayed at newsstands and kiosks and hawked through the trains by train boys. Leslie's book production tripled in 1876-77, at the height of the "Silver Seventies" of rail expansion. The majority of the 35.5 million people who attended the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition undoubtedly arrived there by train and were, at least to some extent, a captive audience for the culture of print. Also contributing to this heightened interest in the commerce of printed materials was the Chautauqua program, a forerunner in the organizational "in" of reading circles, particularly throughout America's rural areas. The Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle (CLSC), founded in 1878, was a four-year program of directed home reading. By 1891, 180,000 were enrolled, and by 1918 membership in CLSC reached 300,000. In its first twenty years, 10,000 local circles were formed, 34 percent of which were in villages of less than 500 population and 50 percent in communities of 500 to 3,500 in size. Even train crews on western railroads organized circles! The monthly Chautauquan was one CLSC journal, begun in 1880, that summarized the content of the reading lists of the Home Reading Series. Other Chautauqua-sponsored series were the Chautauqua Library of English History and Literature, the Garnet Series, the Chautauqua Text-Books, and the Home College Series. Indeed, the CLSC was the first book-a-month club in America.

"And Everywhere, Books": The 1893 Columbian Exposition

The Columbian Exposition had a major impact on the growth in bookbuying, the marketing of books, and the way in which Americans furnished their home libraries. Therefore we shall explore in considerable detail the impact on those Americans in attendance, particularly in comparison with subsequent American world's fairs. We can theorize that this exposition's books and the interior architecture selected for their display, including furnishings and other accoutrements, impressed Frank Lloyd Wright, who, in the next thirty-five years, invariably included a provision for book placement in his residential designs. He, in turn, vastly influenced (and continues to influence) several generations of residential architects, from his
peers among the house plan catalog architects of the turn of the century (fellow members of the Chicago Arts and Crafts Society) to the Taliesin apprentices of 1910-20 and their students practicing today. American serial publishing was duly noted at the dedication ceremonies of the Chicago World's Fair on October 21, 1893, when the Honorable Chauncey M. Depew of New York State described Americans as a nation of newspaper readers.20 Depew attributed the existence and growth of a serial series press to indigenous enthusiasm as well as material prosperity.

No subsequent American world's fair of our period appears to have contained as many books and related displays as the 1893 Chicago Exposition. The 1913 Panama Pacific International Exposition, held in San Francisco, contained many of the same interior architectural features surrounding displays of books and other accoutrements of literacy as the 1893 exposition. The well-known rare book dealer John Howell held court in an Elizabethan bookshop near Funk and Wagnalls' entranceway, which consisted of quartered oak flanked by Corinthian columns and a Palladian pilaster. Above the interior bookshelves of the latter, lithographs hung on silver-gray burlap walls. A revolving stand in the middle contained lithographic plates. A writing table and "all needful stationery" were provided for the comfort of the visitor.

In 1935, when the Century of Progress International Exposition opened in Chicago, fair attendance reached 48.8 million visitors. Kroch's 128-page catalog of a model library of four thousand books, printed by Donnelly in an edition of one hundred thousand copies, included selections from a consortium of publishers. At this model library, visitors were ushered into "luxurious" red leather chairs. Travel books were prominent among the genres, which included fiction, children's books, and foreign books. Another "comfortably furnished" room was occupied by five religious publishers.21

Two architectural styles predominated at the 1893 Columbia Exposition: the neoclassical Beaux Arts revivalist styles and the lesser known but more broadly applicable Arts and Crafts aesthetic that was to be widely publicized via the mail-order catalog. The presence of book exhibits at this fair did not escape the attention of twenty-six-year-old Frank Lloyd Wright, whose firm, Adler & Sullivan, had been invited by Daniel Burnham to design the Transportation Building.22 Awhi in a sea of Beaux Arts eclecticisms, the Transportation Building's central portal, the "Golden Gate," which Wright worked on, evinced certain characteristics of Wright's famous horizontal line, a line that emerged later in his concept of home li-

Home Libraries

..biry design and in his placement of books throughout the common areas of a home. In Wright's mind, images of childhood building blocks became linked to images of his family's books and their placement in his mother's home. Thus his childhood exposure to books became as architecturally intriguing as it was intellectually stimulating.

Boots were displayed throughout the Columbian Exposition grounds. The American Library Association displayed a model collection of five thousand volumes. Publishers, including Harper, George A. Fyrmpton, Funk and Wagnalls, and the medical publisher William Wood put on an impressive display. "Tiffany & Co. displayed illuminations on parchment, and copper and steel engravings. The J. Ottman Lithographing Company demonstrated the entire process of making lithographic plates and printing lithographs."22

Because women supported circulating libraries and literary clubs, the Lady Managers of the Woman's Building insisted on a library, a large west room on the second floor, its location recommended and interior decor executed by Candace Wheeler, a Tiffany associate, author, and author-editor of two popular "how-to" books: Principles of Home Decoration and Household Art.24 This library contained dark oak bookcases, wash leather green upholstery, Italian Renaissance furniture placed against blue-green walls, busts of notable women, a huge leaded-glass window, and heavy blue drapes.25 Wheeler felt that "a library was 'not only to hold books' but to make people feel 'at home in a library atmosphere.'"26

A plaster and gilt frieze occupied space between bookcase tops and ceiling, with a ceiling painting executed by Wheeler's daughter. The decor of the room was well received. One critic stated that the colors created a "general tone that invited rest and quiet and suggested elegance, literary ease." The Art Amateur described the room as "reposeful, quiet and cheerful... It must be reckoned among the very best bits of interior decoration in the Fair."27

The Woman's Building Library also displayed fine bindings. Of particular note among decorated publisher's cloth covers produced for a mass market was the G.P. Putnam display with bindings by Alice C. Morse. Publishers' Weekly of July 1, 1893, described the booth of a New England binder and book-cover designer, Sarah Whitman, as:

built on the order of a Greek temple, finished on the inside in olive green and old English Oak. Windows of amber-stained glass give a soft, restful light to the interior. A large, cheerful tiled fireplace occupies the far end,
and is flanked by comfortable, old-fashioned straightback settees. The room was designed as an ideal American library by Mrs. Henry Whiting, of Boston, who has designed many of the original book-covers of this house. Over these cases are placed the busts of some of their authors—Holmes, Longfellow, Emerson, Hawthorne, Lowell, Whittier, and Harriet Beecher Stowe.23

In the Manufacturers Department, suites of furniture thought appropriate for the home library were displayed. Exhibitors included Dean & Company, Chicago; Berkley & Gay Furniture Company of Grand Rapids, Michigan; the Indianapolis Furniture Exchange; S. Karpen & Brothers, Chicago; and the Rockford, Illinois, Furniture Exchange. Desk supplies included stationery, bookbinding materials, printing papers, inks and pens, writing implements, bookbinding leathers and velum, and embossed leather for furniture, wall decoration, etc.24 By 1900, library furniture was readily available in New York City retail furniture stores. R. J. Horner & Company devoted an entire floor to library furniture and display of a model library.25

At the same time that Frank Lloyd Wright indulged his love of books at the fair, he perceived the eastern architectural establishment’s preference for Beaux Arts architecture.26 Coincidentally, in the year of the fair (1893), New York City witnessed the founding of the Beaux Arts Institute of Design by American architects who had attended the Paris Ecole des Beaux Arts. The institute’s curriculum, modeled after that of the Ecole, influenced several generations of American architects. The first American Ecole student was Richard Morris Hunt, architect of many home libraries, the most famous being the George Vanderbilt library of twenty thousand volumes at Biltmore, a Beaux Arts chateau at Asheville, N.C.27 It may not be accidental that between 1890 and 1930 provision for a library in American homes was executed by a coterie of architectural practitioners who emerged from the Beaux Arts schools to relocate throughout America. This Academic Revival movement—replete with frequent literary and neoclassical illusions—had a measurable effect, as a dominant design thrust, on home libraries of this period.

One American Beaux Arts architect whom Wright encountered at the 1893 fair, who incorporated a separate library room in many New York City town house designs, was the Chicagoan Emery Roth, a draftsman on the fair’s design staff. Roth’s unpublished autobiography reveals the international flavor experienced by Wright: “There were men of all nationalities among the hundred or more draughtsmen: Frenchmen from the Ecole des Beaux Arts, Norwegian Moderns, Germans from the famous Wagner School, and above all the pick of America.”28

Wright later continued that enthusiasm when he rejected a grant-funded period of study at the Paris Ecole for a self-designed two-year European stint that included a residential year in Italy.29 Many of Wright’s built-in bookcases and their placement bear a resemblance to drawings published in folios of architectural interiors of the time30 or in Arts and Crafts interiors depicted in emerging periodicals such as House Beautiful (1896), The Craftsman (1901), House and Garden (1901), and American Homes and Gardens (1903).31

Around 1890, Frank Lloyd Wright’s mother, Anna Lloyd-Jones Wright, of Welsh ancestry, lived in a home in Madison, Wisconsin, described by a Wright biographer as “an oasis of simple good taste.” Wright described this Gotham Street cottage as containing “new-laid, white, waxed maple floors, the cream-colored net curtains hanging straight beside the windows. The centers of the rooms floors covered with India rugs—cream-colored ground with bright-colored patterns and border. Maple and rattan furniture. And everywhere, books.”32 What led Wright’s mother to disperse her books throughout the house?

Books in “Close Companionship”: Their Placement in the Home

In 1878, Clarence Cook published The House Beautiful, a taste manual at once acerbic, opinionated, and popular. It appeared after the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition, at which, as at the 1893 exposition, the public demonstrated a renewed interest in books and home libraries. (Wright’s parents had attended the Centennial Exhibition.33)

Cook declares that “these chapters are not written for rich people’s reading.” Since very few are privileged to have single-purpose rooms such as a library, then the living room (formally the parlour) must “admit the ornament of life—casks, pictures, engravings, books, chief nourishers in life’s feast.” To provide for the accommodation of books, Cook recommends a rectangular living room table with two shelves below for folios, and large books of prints and atlases.

Cook discusses the importance of a stand for print portfolios, describing it generically as “the most troublesome member of the living room ornaments, and yet the one we can least do without.” He further shows a “little movable”: book shelves cam letter pad cam cupboard, the latter “for
books that are too valuable to be handled by everybody. Another example is a "writing-table with book-shelf above and drawers at the side."

Cook reserves his most cutting aside for the bookcase: "Hardly any piece of furniture is more troublesome to bring into harmony with the conditions of our modern room than the bookcase... We want to have our books in our living room... We want our books... in close companionship, and where we can get at them easily." Cook elaborates: "For lovers of books, however, a house without books is no house at all; and in a family where books make a great part of the pleasure of living, they must be where they can share in the life around them and receive some touches of the humanity they supply and feed."

Cook argues against solid or glass doors on bookcases because "they are inhospitable and hinder close acquaintance." To protect against dust he recommends a curtain of thin silk affixed with metal rings to a metal rod running along the entire bookcase front and designed to hold four hundred to five hundred books, depending on size.39

A decade earlier, the British Charles Eastlake's Hints on Household Taste had favored the library as a separate room, furnished with oak, and consigning "silly knick-knacks" to the drawing room. Eastlake, too, recommended leaving the oak light (as Wright did with his famous white and "honed" oak). The Eastlake look was medieval in feeling—heavier, thicker, fussier. Eastlake preferred scalloped and gilded leather valances as "dust ruffles" for the shelf edges. He favored black-stained mahogany with white inlaid finishes and admonished the reader to avoid "bright and violent hues" in paint colors.40

Each decade from 1890 to 1930 had its dernier cri among domestic economy manuals.41 Ogden Codman and Edith Wharton's The Decoration of Houses (1897), which contained a chapter "The Library, Smoking-Room, and "Den," was written to counter the influence of Eastlake and Cook. Richard Guy Wilson states that "the book, which sold very well and was reprinted in England and later in America, helped change taste in decoration on both sides of the Atlantic."42

Edith Wharton's two personal libraries, first at Land's End in Newport, Rhode Island, between 1894 and 1897, and later at The Mount in Lenox, Massachusetts, in 1900-1901, represent the continuing refinement in home library design espoused in The Decoration of Houses. Ogden Codman supervised the remodeling of Land's End. Its library contained "delicate Louis XVI paneling, medallion scroll work, and leathage but was set off with the overstuffed furniture and dark bookcases that would be attacked
in *The Decoration of Houses.* Wharton differed with Codman over his selection of library wall color at Newport, preferring "a uniform pink" to his "dark red." She remained the final arbiter of color choice for the library at Land's End.

The Mount's renovation was consigned to a Beaux Arts architect from Providence and New York, Francis L. V. Hoppin, whose library there "received perhaps the most attention" of any room in that house:

Louis XVI style dark oak cases filled with leather-bound sets of books reach to the ceiling on three sides, while a tapestry dominates the other. The carving in the overdoor panels and bookcases is more elaborate than suggested in *The Decoration of Houses.* A portrait of Edith's great-grandfather Stevens hung over the mantel. The furniture, such as a lit de repos or Louis XVI chairs brought from Newport and two Regency-style writing tables, were background—as stated in *The Decoration of Houses*—to the books and the conversation that would take place.44

Codman's 1916–17 library at Haubois, in Jericho, Long Island, in the home of Walter and Eunice Maynard, remains his exemplar of timeless elegance and taste. It was paneled in black and gold Directoire boiserie... and the recessed shelves filled with leather-bound books provided an important element of color and texture... As stated in *The Decoration of Houses,* "a room should depend for its adornment on a general harmony of parts, and on the artistic quality of such necessities as lamps, screens, bindings, and furniture."45

**Library Aesthetics: Beaux Arts and Arts and Crafts**

Let us examine two home libraries designed on a smaller, more intimate, more manageable scale than the libraries of Codman and Wharton. These two libraries, exemplars of (1) the Neo-Georgian/Beaux Arts tradition and (2) the Arts and Crafts aesthetic tradition of home library interiors, represent the prevailing trends from the turn of the century to 1930. Although the following examples may be thought elitist in being designed by architects, similar examples appeared simultaneously in the house plan and mail-order catalogs of the period and in articles in the periodical press.46

In 1903, Robert Todd Lincoln, son of the late President Abraham Lincoln and president of the Pullman Company (an exhibitor at the 1893 fair),
commissioned the Boston and Chicago architectural firm of Shepley, Rutan and Coolidge to build a twenty-four-room Georgian Revival house in Manchester, Vermont. This was his home for six months of every year from 1907, when the house was completed, until his death at eighty-two in 1926. The plans included a library and an office. On the architects' blue prints, the library is termed "the den" and is 244'6" x 12'7.6". The office is 11" x 12". The south wing library has French doors facing east (commanding a spectacular view of the Green Mountains), adjacent to a loggia with awnings and Ionic columns, furnished with wicker, and overlooking formal gardens. Opposite the loggia wall is a windowed west wall; a south wall interior door leads into Lincoln's "home office," a southwest 1908 addition.

The library and office wallpaper is a "raspberry sherbert" grasscloth (an original sample survives on an inside wall of an office cabinet). The original lined drapes are a velvet russet pintuck of 1903. The floors are quarter sawed white oak. The four-shelf-high bookcases follow the Cook specifications in length and height, leaving room at the top for Oriental vases, figurines, busts, and globes. Much of the furniture was inherited from Mrs. Lincoln's family her father was U.S. Senator James Harland of Mount Pleasant, Iowa, who was also president of Iowa Wesleyan University and died in 1899. It was heavy and dark, with a tinge of linearity suggestive of an Arts and Crafts influence, as in the modified wing chairs. The appointments dating from around 1900 include an eighteenth-century-style tripod tilt-top table with decanter and glasses; a mahogany book table on cabriole legs; a humidifier; a bronze and marble inlaid; a William-and-Mary style settee; an Oriental rug; a tufted upholstered sofa; and a brass electric lamp with silk shade.

Books appear throughout the house. Bookcases reside in almost every bedroom, and a regal neoclassical glass-door bookcase dominates a parlor wall. The second-floor stair landing terminates in a sun-filled 18' x 20'6" sitting room (designated a bedroom on the blueprints), painted white and housing two glass-door bookcases, a secretary-bookcase, comfortable upholstered settees and chairs, and magazines such as International Studio (1927), Needlecraft (1934), and Town and Country (1935).

The concept of a second-floor sitting room at the head of the stairs or centrally placed on the second floor persisted throughout the 1920s, a vestige of the English "living hall." A splendid example is the 1928 second-floor sitting room of Carter's Grove, an eighteenth-century Williamsburg, Virginia, plantation house. The owners, a socially prominent diplomat and his wife, undertook the transformation of this space as both her office and a center for family life.

Concurrent with this Beaux Arts eclecticism, which included a den, library, or study, the lesser-known English Arts and Crafts movement emerged and rapidly gained proponents in Boston, New York, and Chicago, particularly among the anonymous architect-draftsmen of the vernacular mail-order house plan catalog. So numerous were these catalogs that rural and suburban American homeowners soon were as accustomed concerning home library design as were those who engaged an architect. As Stevenson and Jandl relate, "Little is known about the architects of most Sears houses, but this much is certain: Sears houses followed rather than set architectural styles."

As stated earlier, Frank Lloyd Wright, working at this time in the Arts and Crafts tradition, appears to have incorporated his Colburn Exposition experiences into a home library aesthetic and thus immeasurably influenced succeeding generations of architectural purveyors of home library designs. Some members of the Chicago Architectural Club at the turn of the century had house plans published in the architectural press and new homeowner magazines. Frank Lloyd Wright was not only a member of this club but also a founding member of the Chicago Art Institute and Crafts Society in 1897, 1897. Wright's employment, first with J.L. Silsbee on a single-story house and then with the fad of Adler & Sullivan, further exposed him to domestic architecture in the Richardsonian style, reinforcing his beliefs about the placement of books in the home. By the opening of the Colburn Exposition, Wright was partially practicing independently, having undertaken ten private home commissions, most of which had libraries. (These were his "booblegged houses," as he termed them, for they were planned and/or executed while he was still in the employ of Adler & Sullivan.)

In Wright's Blossom House—his only Palladian-Colonial one—the library was positioned left of the front hall and was hardly wider than the hall itself. His 1894 Dutch Colonial Bagley House in Hinsdale, Illinois, contained a separate octagonal library connected to the main house by a covered passage. Manson elaborates: "It has an octagonal roof of low pitch; it is lighted by means of a continuous clerestory, permitting uninterrupted shelf-space below. Although somewhat incongruous in its Dutch Colonial context, it makes a very functional library." Three other Wright houses of this period position the library centrally among the three rooms spanning the front of the houses. The floor plans suggest that the main en-
trance is through the library doors.54 These square, centrally-placed libraries all include huge, sweeping five-sided bays, indications of Wright's desire to merge indoors and outdoors.

The "back to nature" movement in domestic architecture was chronicled by a Wright competitor, Hermann Valentin von Holtz, in his 1913 book, Modern American Homes. A majority of the four plans shown in this book reflect the Prairie School's dedication to an organic approach, as shown in the fluidity and use of interior space with respect to the placement of books.57 Designed to be built at moderate cost by city dwellers moving to the suburbs or building second homes, these houses featured wide portals, lack of interior doors, and sufficient built-in seating and storage space (so designated on the plans) to allow homeowners maximum autonomy in the selection of interior reading sites. Among Wright's notable Prairie houses revealing dispersal of books throughout the premises are the following.

Glenloprend, Kankakee, Illinois (1906). For B. Harley Bradley. The living room has a built-in bookcase adjacent to the bay window wall, and a desk is placed in front of the banquette under the bay.58 This placement anticipates features of the Francis Little house, executed twelve years later, a house which, so far as books are concerned, makes Wright's ultimate design statement.59

Darsem D. Martin House, Buffalo, New York (1904). One end of the living room is a library area: a banquette sofa with high sides is flanked by a book-topped table on one side and, on the other, a tall four-shell bookcase for folio-size volumes.60

Ray Evans House, Chicago, and the Abern Cooley House, Riverside, Illinois (both 1908). In both, library furniture is a dominant presence in the living rooms. The Evans golden oak library table, now in the Chicago Art Institute, matches the interior woodwork of the living room.61 The Cooley library table is of mammoth proportions (almost 39' deep, 85'1/2" long, and 28'1/4" high). Like his other Prairie School living rooms, the Cooley living room, as pictured in Wright's portfolio of architectural drawings,62 in design concept resembles the library-hall, living room-library, and den interiors depicted in the 120 Intérieurs en Couleurs.63

Meyer May House, Grand Rapids, Michigan (1909). This house features a living-room bookcase situated perpendicular to the fireplace, creating an angular anchor not seen before in Wright living rooms.64 The placement heralds the architectonic placement of folio volumes on the lower shelf of

Fig. 34. Frank Lloyd Wright (1867—1959), living room, Meyer May House, Grand Rapids, Mich., 1909. Courtesy of Steelcase, Inc.
Precisely who influenced whom or who borrowed from whom may never be known, for there were many Arts and Crafts practitioners who placed books throughout the home: Will Bradley, first in Boston, then in New York; Gustav Stickley, first in western New York and later in his Craftsmen commune in Morris Plains, New Jersey; the Roycrofters in East Aurora, New York, near Buffalo. What is known is that artists, architects, bookbinders, and printers enjoyed collaborative efforts, social and professional, in such Arts and Crafts Society chapters as Boston, where the Beaux Arts architects Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue and Ralph Adams Cram consort with socialite binder Sara Whitman, printer Daniel Berkeley Updike, and authors Oliver Wendell Holmes, James Russell Lowell, and Charles Eliot Norton. In fact, Wright reveals in his autobiography that he grew "to love the smell of printer's ink." Indeed, in 1906-9 he printed a book entitled The House Beautiful, which reflects the influence on him of William Morris and Louis Sullivan. This endeavor was a logical expression of Wright's naturalism, as he mirrored a Modus Operandi initiated by confreres in New England.

The Midwest became the largest center for the dissemination of the Arts and Crafts aesthetic for home library decor, primarily through the presence of Sears, Roebuck, Montgomery Ward, and numerous other creators of mail-order house plan catalogs. Moreover, as the hub of the rail transportation network, this was a likely region for millwork vendors and other specialty manufacturers, e.g., sash and door and furniture makers, as they were well positioned geographically to obtain raw materials. The president of the Muscatine, Iowa, Sash and Door Company (founded in 1889) had, by 1901, built himself a grand home library. Another Muscatinean had to settle for something less grand: a modest hall library corner.

E.L. Roberts & Company published a 1903 millwork catalog featuring an Arts and Crafts library interior in "unselected" birch, with a wood-beaded stairwell. The customer was asked to specify whether "with or without bookcase." ²⁷ The Charles P. Limbert Company, cabinetmakers of Grand Rapids and Holland, Michigan, in its Book No. 119 (circa 1906) offered several versions of an Arts and Crafts home library, characterized by Mission style bookcases, settees, and rocking chairs, like Wright's. Desks of this type began to exhibit open bookshelves on their sides and bottoms, and the classic geometric rectilinearity in the treatment of chairs, walls, sconces, windows, and doors.

A previous study discusses the millwork and house plan catalog vendors' depiction of home libraries in greater depth.²⁸ Suffice it to say that people...
in every geographical area of the country were able to be serviced by mail-order vendors throughout the 1920s. One such catalog, recently discovered, incorporates the American tradition: The Palm Beach architectural firm of Seelig & Finkenstein owned a 1927 catalog reflecting the placement of books in living room areas. Issued by Economy Planning Service, obviously for a geographically specialized market, its "Toledo," "Barcelona," "Milano," and "Carcassonne" house models, all designed for southern city lots forty to fifty feet wide and containing no more than six rooms, each made provision for books against a living room wall, on shelves, or in cases to either side of the fireplace—"right where one wants books—by the foyerside."

Each model’s prose description, below a charming sketch, made mention of the provision for housing books. "An attractive feature likewise is the fireplace with its accompanying nook, seats and bookcases," read one. And for the "Carcassonne": "The fireplace is the heart of most of the French homes... as in this plan, the fireplace is usually recessed in a nook... this feature is the principal one in the living room... with the attendant effect of 'homeiness'."

Conclusion

"Comfort" and "hominess," standard descriptors for home library decor, are as applicable today as they were at the turn of the century. Residential interiors do not change as quickly as clothing fashions. And it is fair to postulate that home library decor changes even less rapidly, as anyone who has ever moved a home library can guess.

The two predominant modes of home library decor remained the ones prevalent throughout the 1920s. The neoclassic, eclectic Beaux Arts style for the library in the home was seen in architectonic, pilastered, floor-to-ceiling linear bookcases executed in dark, elegant, and sometimes exotic woods, derived from Greco-Roman models and embellished by Renaissance and rococo furniture styles replete with thick upholstery and floral-patterned fabrics, accented with the obligatory Oriental carpet, and accessorized with the artifacts of travel.

The Arts and Crafts home library aesthetic was based on simplicity of line, elimination of detail, and a heightened respect for materials. Objects were preferably handmade boxes, in America, could be machine-made. These qualities tended to enhance, not diminish, the presence of books. The forty-year period under consideration was a golden era, literally and figuratively, of the decorated book cover and its contents. Open shelves, uncarved cases, and golden oak and paler wall colors enabled these often resplendent expressions of American home culture to display their properties instead of being upstaged by an architectural presence (as pediments and colonnades are wont to do).

Indeed, a most remarkable book entitled American Home Culture appeared in Chicago in 1925. Created as an etiquette manual, its pictorial content almost exclusively refers to home libraries. Thirty-five examples from Washington, D.C., to Chicago are interspersed through chapters on how to visit, how to travel, how to serve tea, how to give and attend a ball or reception. The book aims, as its lengthy subtitle states, to be "a complete guide to correct social forms and artistic living—to represent the very best in the home life of intellectual America." The authors quote Sidney Lanier: "Three things are essential to a real home—music, fire, and love. By this he no doubt meant that the ideal home is founded on culture, comfort, and courtesy... All wise statesmen are agreed in declaring that the perpetuity of a government depends on the home life of its people."

H. Allen Brooks, a preeminent historian of the Prairie School, in describing why its design precepts long outlasted its creators, relates: "The greater sense of restfulness, relaxation and repose, and the new richness to be experienced in living, were benefits which the average client assuredly did not foresee and probably never wholly attributed to the architect. He got more than he asked for, but hardly realized it. He 'loved' his house, but didn't know exactly why."

This inquiry into the nature of the American home library between 1890 and 1930—why it came into existence, what it looked like, and where books were placed in the home—may help to explain why we love our houses and the books within them.

Notes


25. From Art Amateur, as quoted in Weimann, Fair Women, 375.

Mich., to Mrs. Wills away from von Holst: "I have seen the plans and it is a crime to waste an opportunity like his [Wills'] on stuff so weak . . . . Wills will do it all he can to hold him, of course, but the client is to decide whether he goes on with the thing as it is or whether he wants an original." Frank Lloyd Wright, Letters to Clients, ed. Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer (Fresno, Calif.: The Press at California State Univ., 1986), 17–18. Herman Vanoni von Holst, Country and Suburban Homes of the Prairie School Period (New York: Dover, 1981), plates 24, 25, 29, 31, 34, 36, 41, 51, 60, 63, 67, 68, 72, 82, 84, 87, 91–93, 97. The characteristics of Wright's "natural organic unit" included:

- a house that was completely suited to its setting: low, horizontal lines; broad overhanging eaves; bands of leaded glass windows; an open plan with a central fireplace and rooms opening up to each other; corners dissolved in glass, the latest mechanical equipment, materials left unadorned, furniture in harmony with the architecture, a house designed for its occupants and its setting (Deborah S. Haight and Peter F. Blume, Frank Lloyd Wright: The Library from the Francis W. Little House [Allentown, Pa.: Allentown Art Museum, 1978], 8).


60. Hanks, FLW: Preserving, 61.

61. Ibid., 84.


63. 120 Interieurs en Couleurs.


66. Hanks, FLW: Preserving, 82.


68. Stevenson and Jandl, House by Mail, 19.

69. Picturesque Muscatine: A Booklet Descriptive of the “Pearly City” of Iowa (Muscatine, Iowa: H.W. Lewis, 1901), 133.


73. Economic Planning Service, Spanish and Italian Homes of Real Character and Distinction (West Palm Beach, Fla.: Economic Planning Service, ca. 1927), 22, 34, 40.

74. A recent term embracing the concept of leisure hours spent at home in pursuit of library-type activities is "couch potato." See David Blum, "Couch Potatoes: The New Nightlife," New York 20, no. 28 (10 July 1987): 16. An April 1986 Gallup poll revealed that one-third of all Americans chose to stay home. Most watched TV, but some read.


76. Ibid., 5–6 of preface.

77. Brooks, Prairie School, 65.