

# New Jersey's New Archival Facilities

By KENNETH W. RICHARDS\*

*New Jersey Department of Education*

THIS fall New Jersey is dedicating a new State Library-Archives Building. Together with the new State Museum, including an auditorium and planetarium, and the new Administration Building of the Department of Education, it will constitute what has come to be known as the cultural center.

The decision to erect these new buildings has presented an unparalleled opportunity to develop a unified educational-cultural center for New Jersey. The new center will, in effect, serve as a permanent memorial to New Jersey's 1964 Tercentenary. From the beginning of the State Tercentenary Commission's planning, a cultural center has been the chief project among its announced goals. This goal was realized when legislation in 1960 authorized the Teachers' Pension and Annuity Fund to invest some of its capital in the construction of these buildings for the Department of Education. The total expenditure for the center will be \$11½ million, and the Library-Archives Building will cost approximately \$2,800,000.

This article is devoted primarily to provisions concerning the archival functions of the Division of the State Library, Archives and History and to the planning of the new Library-Archives Building. As the new building will be a multipurpose one, however, it will be necessary to present some of the functions of the entire division in order to make clear the overall planning.

The most challenging aspect in planning the new Library-Archives Building was in the very nature of the division's operations. No other State, for example, has the same combination of functions as those of the New Jersey State Library. State legislation charges the Division of the State Library, Archives and History—a part of the State Department of Education—with the follow-

\*The author is the Head of the New Jersey Bureau of Archives and History and has served as building coordinator for the new State Library-Archives Building. On Oct. 4, 1963, at a session on archival buildings and equipment of the 27th annual meeting of the Society of American Archivists, at Raleigh, N.C., he spoke informally on some of the matters discussed in this paper.

ing responsibilities: to maintain a general reference and law library, to provide legislative reference and research services, to promote library service throughout the State, to maintain New Jersey's official archives, and to supervise the retention of the public records of the State and its political subdivisions. These responsibilities are assigned to four bureaus:

1. The Bureau of Archives and History, which acquires and maintains permanent State documents. In addition, it exercises general supervision over the storage, retention, and destruction of public records. As part of this function it maintains storage centers for semicurrent State records and conducts a microfilm program for all State agencies.
2. The Bureau of General Reference, which serves the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of State government. It maintains an extensive book collection, with emphasis largely on governmental subjects and on New Jersey history and genealogy. It is the official repository for all State reports and many Federal publications.
3. The Bureau of Law and Legislative Reference, which serves all branches of State government. It maintains the statutes and related materials of all the States, the *Reporter* series, and a large collection of legal texts, references, and related documents. It also provides reference and research service to the legislature.
4. The Bureau of Public and School Library Services, which serves the municipal, school, county, association, and institutional libraries in the State. Its services include: (a) giving advisory assistance, (b) supplementing local collections, (c) circulating traveling library collections, and (d) maintaining a deposit and exchange collection.

In order to assist the architect, Frank Grad & Sons of Newark, in designing the new structure the library staff, working closely with the Director, Roger H. McDonough, prepared a *Report on the Program and Building Requirements of the New Jersey State Library*. This 42-page report consists of a detailed statement of the functions, policies, and space requirements of the bureaus of the State Library. From it the architect was able to translate the division's program into preliminary drawings reflecting its requirements. Keyes Metcalf, former director of the Harvard University Library, served as general consultant on the building, and Albert H. Leisinger of the National Archives served as special consultant on archival functions and arrangements.

The design of the building provides for three floors above ground, a basement, and a subbasement. Flexibility was a prime consideration in programing and designing the new building. The building therefore was designed on a system of modules featuring movable partitions, nonsupporting walls, and freestanding stacks.

Stack and work areas are multipurpose and interchangeable. The subbasement will contain the shipping, storing, and receiving areas and some stack space. The basement floor will be devoted to the Bureau of Archives and History and will contain the archives stack area, the searchroom, the microfilm unit, and offices. The main floor will house the administrative offices, the law and general reference reading room, and the archives exhibit area. The second floor, except for a staff lounge, will be devoted entirely to book-stacks. The third floor will house the Bureau of Public and School Library Services and the Technical Processing Section. The building's total area is approximately 100,000 square feet, and provision has been made for future expansion when this becomes necessary.

For the Bureau of Archives and History, the formulation of its space requirements presented problems for which, unlike those of the library, there were few standards to rely on. Previously the Bureau had chiefly been concerned with operating records storage centers, issuing authorizations for records disposal, microfilming State records, and records management. Adequate facilities had never been available for the Bureau to perform effectively its true archival role of preserving the State's noncurrent permanent records. As a result, most of New Jersey's permanent records were still kept, under less than ideal conditions, in the agencies that had created them.

In the early stages of our planning and in the *Report on the Program and Building Requirements of the New Jersey State Library*, the Bureau specified that space should be provided for: (1) administration and operations, (2) housing and servicing the State's permanent noncurrent records, (3) prime protection of a small group of important historical documents, (4) service to patrons who wished to consult the archives, and (5) exhibition of important New Jersey documents.

The article "American Archival Architecture," by Victor Gondos, Jr.,<sup>1</sup> was of particular help in formulating specific space requirements for such functional areas as shipping and receiving and photoduplication. It also was a good guide to many of the essential features of a modern archival building. As a further guide, the plans of other archival buildings, collected by the Society of American Archivists' Committee on Buildings and Equipment (of which Mr. Gondos is chairman) and deposited in the National Archives Library, were obtained and studied.

<sup>1</sup> *Bulletin of the American Institute of Architects*, vol. 1, no. 4: 27-32 (Sept. 1947).

How much space to allocate for the archives stack area, however, posed a serious problem. First, we knew that the cost per square foot for our new building would be high. We knew also that the permanent records on file in State offices were so voluminous that we could not hope to obtain enough space to accommodate all of them. Finally, we knew that many of the permanent records were not subject to heavy reference request. So we decided to restrict our archival storage facilities in the new building to a select core of particularly valuable archival materials and to records of high reference value. After a careful study of existing archival buildings, a tabulation of permanent materials that we wished to house in our new building, and an estimate for future expansion, we arrived at a figure of 10,000 square feet for the archives stack area. It is anticipated, however, that a new records storage center will be constructed in the near future to care for the semicurrent records and the permanent records not transferred to the main building.

In order to provide the specific details set forth in our requirements, the architect worked very closely with our staff. Inevitably there were many changes and revisions during the early planning stages. As a matter of fact, the final design bears little resemblance to the preliminary sketches. We are extremely pleased, however, with the final design, which meets all of our major requirements.

A comparison of the square footage requested in our program statement for each area and the amount actually provided by the architect may be of interest:

<i>Area</i>	AREA IN SQUARE FEET	
	<i>Requested</i>	<i>Provided</i>
Administration	700	874
Exhibit	3,000	2,604
Archives stack	10,000	10,208
Vault	500	144
Archives preparation	800	840
Searchroom	1,500	1,478
Photoduplication and repair	1,000	1,240
Microfilm unit	1,250	1,490
	<hr/> 18,750	<hr/> 18,878

The total area allocated to the Bureau of Archives and History, including auxiliary space, amounts to over 20,000 square feet. This does not include areas that serve the entire division, such as shipping and receiving space and the staff lounge.

While our new building is a multipurpose one, housing bureaus concerned with library as well as archival functions, the archival functions were never "shortchanged" for the benefit of the library functions. The Director of the State Library and the heads of the other bureaus completely agreed on the needs of the Bureau of Archives and History, and the Bureau received the space and facilities that it requested.

In view of the fact that we do not contemplate records storage in this high-cost area and in view of the limitations we have placed on the type of material that we shall house in the archives, I believe that our new facilities will prove highly satisfactory. The new Library-Archives Building, together with our proposed records storage center, should provide the State with a progressive records administration procedure for housing semicurrent records in less costly space and cheaper containers in the records storage center pending their eventual disposition, and for transferring selected noncurrent, permanently valuable records to the archival depository.

Special mention should be made of the State Library's showplace—the archives exhibit area. This room, on the main floor, will be devoted exclusively to archival materials and will, I am sure, attract thousands of visitors each year. The State has never had facilities for the proper display of its priceless documents. Because we realized that an archives exhibit area could be an effective educational tool, we decided that we should emphasize the display of documents insofar as we could. Therefore, the exhibit area was a key element in our planning. A central "shrine" will feature New Jersey's most important documents, such as our State constitutions of 1776, 1844, and 1947 and our official copy of the U.S. Bill of Rights. We also plan to devote an exhibit case to each of New Jersey's 21 counties. A few other cases will contain changing exhibits, each related to some unified theme.

To any who soon may be planning a new archival building, may I say that you will find it to be an interesting and challenging task. I could, of course, list many suggestions drawn from our experiences that might be of help. But, in order to stress its importance, I shall suggest only one thing—the preparation of a detailed program statement. As Victor Gondos, Jr., states in his "American Archival Architecture," already cited,

the most perplexing problem that will be likely to confront the architect is the difficulty of getting the statement of a coherent, detailed program on the

basis of which workable plans can be made, so that groping in the dark and losing an unconscionable amount of time and effort may be avoided.

I believe that we too should have had a much more difficult task if we had not prepared our program in advance. In our many meetings with the architect the usefulness of our program statement was evidenced on numerous occasions. In addition, it served as a policy statement that enabled us to request changes and obtain them if they were necessary. It has even been helpful in preparing this article. The value of a comprehensive program statement cannot be overstressed.

We hope that in future years many members of the Society of American Archivists will be able to stop in Trenton to visit our new Library-Archives Building and the related buildings. I believe that we shall be pleased with our new facilities. By the time of the Society's meeting in October 1965 we should know the shortcomings as well as the virtues of our new building. We shall be happy to show you the building, and we hope that you will be pleased with what you see.

---

### ***Inscrutable***

A reel of microfilm is inscrutable. It reveals nothing of itself through immediate observation. Unlike books or manuscripts, there is little to be gained by picking it up. There are no apparent content sheets or indexes. You cannot browse through microfilm. Its shape or colour gives no indication of its contents. A register on microfilm loses its identifiable characteristics. It is no longer the large morocco volume at the end of the third shelf. Instead it is a sequence of 120 frames at the 17 foot mark of reel 1789. In short, because of its physical properties, microfilm requires far more detailed finding aids than comparable manuscripts originals. To be used, microfilm must be located, charged out to the research worker and scanned. This scanning process, if the material is not precisely analysed in a finding aid, can be a very arduous, wearisome and frustrating task. Especially if the research worker has been given the wrong reel in the first place. And the most frustrating aspect of working with microfilm is that if the reels are not accurately marked, and the contents analysed on a list or finding aid that the user can study, the user may have to go through the whole reel before he realizes he has been given, or what is also more likely, he has asked for the wrong reel.

—SAM KULA, "The Preparation of Finding Aids for Manuscript Material on Microfilm," in *Canadian Archivist Newsletter*, vol. 1, no. 2:7 (1964).