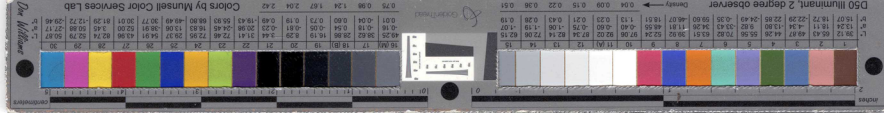


Astor Library Dec 2^d. 1856

Dear Sir

Yours of the 28th Nov. was not received until yesterday, which will explain my delay in answering. When the Trustees of the Astor Library were preparing to erect their Library Edifice great pains were taken to procure the Books which contained Plans of Libraries & similar Edifices already in Existence & Plans from Architects for the one to be erected. But of the former nothing satisfactory was obtained. I went with confidence after having seen & examined all the great libraries of Europe, that there is not one which can be taken as a Model for a Library Edifice in one of our large cities. That of the British Museum is vastly too extensive & combines too many other objects - the Library of the London Institution is nearest to a model of any one in the British Metropolis - The Advocates Library in Edinburgh is splendid, but not economical in its internal arrangement - The Bodleian & Radcliffe at Oxford, the University Library at Cambridge do well when they are, but would not do at all for your purpose - All the Library Edifices at Paris are bad; the Saint Genevieve which was built 1047 - 52 is a huge Edifice, excessively hot in summer & terribly frigorific in winter & without very badly contrived to economise room, which however was no object with them - The Dresden Library is a museum of sculpture Porcelain &c &c &c being a library - The Berlin is a cold, damp building, the Italian libraries are all bad, in a



word by the simple precept of setting aside, what is unsuited
you would come to the conclusion, that you can take no
model from abroad. To come nearer home, the new Boston
Library has much to recommend it, & the Astor library I
think still more, altho this is far from perfect. My view of
the subject is this; having determined what extent of ground
you have to build on - make the exterior of your building
as simple as possible, depending upon good proportions &
manifest adaptation to its purpose, for the effect upon the
eye of the beholder. Make the interior also as plain as possible
all carving, stuccoing & ornaments of every kind are nothing
but dust traps - the proper ornament of a library is its
books & it needs nothing else - at the same time I would allow
nothing unsightly. If your interior is divided into two stories,
I do not think our plan can be essentially improved - it gives
as great facility of access as can be had for the height of the
building - to increase the capacity of the shelving, I would
have no cornices to the book cases & I would have the shelves
moveable; it is impossible otherwise to effect a systematic
arrangement, without great loss of space. I suppose you have
a copy of Shurtleff's ^{revised} system of libraries, it is deserving of notice,
& has many good suggestions in it, but it is hardly practicable.
Mr Alexander Saelzer of this city was the Architect of our
present building - Mr F. Thomas is the Architect of the Enlarge-
ment, which is a mere double of this, with some changes in
the interior. You will find in the volumes of the Builder &
of the Revue d'Architecture published by Daly in Paris, all that
is recent on the subject of libraries. Papworth & Halburde & the
other specialities on libraries are not the thing for us - at any

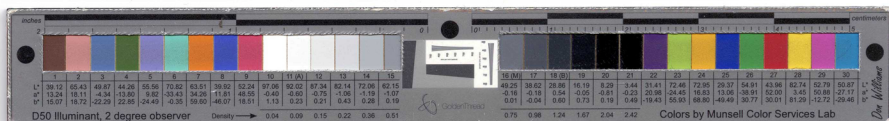
time, when you desire information that I can furnish
it will give me great pleasure to do it, provided
you do not give me the addition of M. D. or any
other D.

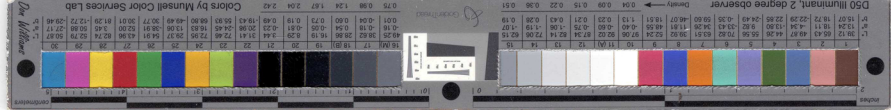
very respectfully,

Yrs

Jos. G. Laguerre

I have forgotten one point - books are not endangered by
wooden shelves, if a library is fire proof in other respects, there
is no probability of losing it by its shelves - iron shelving for
books is worse than a fire.





J. J. Eyre
Dec 1/86

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