

Old City Library is Bursting at the Seams

Bond Election Will Decide Its Future

In a space which should hold about 40,000 books, the Lawrence Public Library now has 70,000.

In a facility built to serve a population of 15,000, the library at Ninth and Vermont serves a community of well over 50,000.

"If you wanted to pick just one problem, space is really it," says head librarian Wayne Mayo. This year 4,000 books will be boxed for storage because there is no more room to display them. An additional 4,000 to 5,000 will be stored each year the library remains in its cramped quarters, Mayo says.

BUT THERE are other problems in the library built in 1904. Leakage from heavy rains causes mildew on the basement walls in the children's library and in the offices. Up to a foot of water last year flooded the library's storage facility in its sub-basement. Heating also is a problem in the 66-year-old facility.

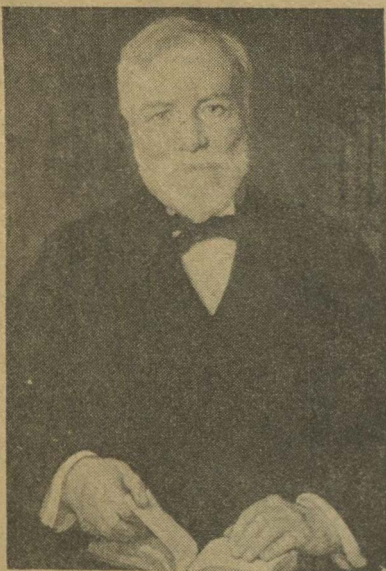
"The main floor is fairly easy to maintain at a level of warmth but downstairs the offices get cold in winter. We've installed supplementary blowers in the children's department and have to use electric heaters in the offices. . . ." says Mayo but adds that electric heaters put a strain on the building's electrical system. That, too, is inadequate.

So is the seating space for 29 when state library standards recommend over 100. The 18 steps required to reach the service area are more than some elderly or handicapped people can climb, library officials contend. Parking also is a problem.

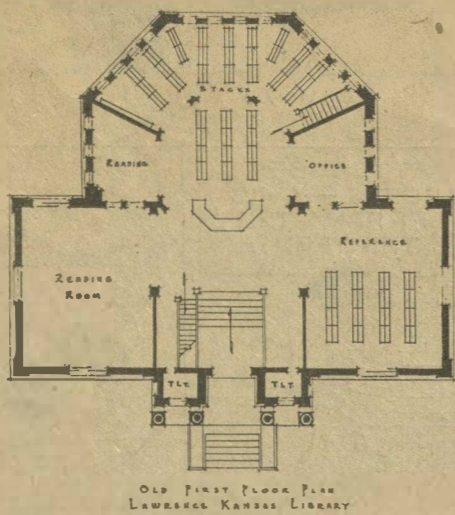
CITY OFFICIALS propose to replace the 1904 structure built with an Andrew Carnegie grant with a new two-story library on the south side of Seventh between Vermont and Kentucky. The proposed site is just north of the police and fire station.

A \$1,575,000 bond election March 3 will determine whether Lawrence residents agree to a 2.52-mill increase in property taxes for the new facility next year. The levy would amount to \$2.52 per \$1,000 assessed valuation on property. Bond proponents say this amounts to roughly \$11.34 per year on a home with a market value of \$15,000 to \$18,000.

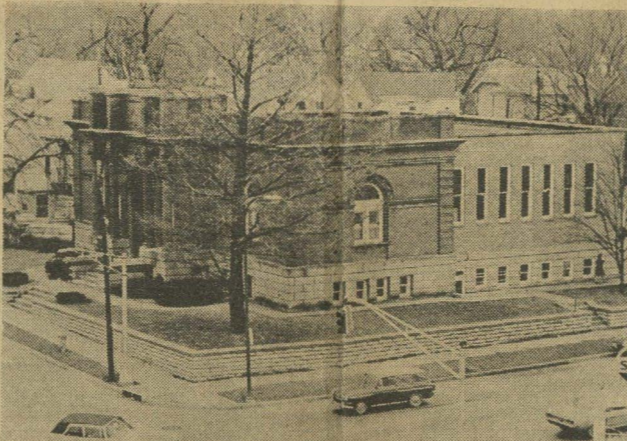
AS PROPOSED, the new library would offer both children's and adult services on the main level which could be reached without climbing steps. Floor space would be more than tripled with room for expansion to meet the anticipated needs of the city for the next 20 years, when branch libraries could be used to supplement it. Reading rooms, meeting rooms, office space, parking spaces and more display room for books would offer a more pleasant, quiet and functional library, officials say.



Andrew Carnegie started it . . .



Old City Floor Plan
Lawrence, Kansas Library



Plan was enlarged in 1937.
Back portion was squared off.



Librarian Wayne Mayo supervises as overflow books are hauled off to storage . . .

Photography by Will Hess
Text by Kristin Goff



Floor damage from water . . .



Adds to Mayo's scrapbook of problems.



Some end up at city water plant.