

# DATA SHEET

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

|                  |             |
|------------------|-------------|
| FOR NPS USE ONLY |             |
| RECEIVED         | MAY 29 1975 |
| DATE ENTERED     | AUG 6 1975  |

## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

### 1 NAME

HISTORIC

Old University Library

AND/OR COMMON

Architecture Hall

### 2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

NW Corner of 11th & R Streets

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Lincoln

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

Nebraska

VICINITY OF

CODE

31

COUNTY

Lancaster

CODE

107/09

### 3 CLASSIFICATION

| CATEGORY  | OWNERSHIP                                  | STATUS  | PRESENT USE                                     |
|---|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT               | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED        | <input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE            |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S) | <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE           | <input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED                 | <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE              | <input type="checkbox"/> BOTH              | <input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS           | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SITE                   | <b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>                  | <b>ACCESSIBLE</b>                                   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL |
| <input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT                 | <input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS        | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED | <input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT          |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED  | <input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED          | <input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT             |
|   |  | <input type="checkbox"/> NO                         | <input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL             |
|   |  |   | <input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY               |
|   |  |   | <input type="checkbox"/> PARK                   |
|   |  |   | <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE      |
|   |  |   | <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS              |
|   |  |   | <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC             |
|   |  |   | <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION         |
|   |  |   | <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:                 |

### 4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

University of Nebraska

STREET & NUMBER

14th & R Streets

CITY, TOWN

Lincoln

STATE

Nebraska

VICINITY OF

### 5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Register of Deeds

STREET & NUMBER

555 South 10th Street

CITY, TOWN

Lincoln

STATE

Nebraska

### 6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Historic Preservation in Nebraska

DATE

1971

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Nebraska State Historical Society

CITY, TOWN

Lincoln

STATE

Nebraska

## 7 DESCRIPTION

| CONDITION                                |                                       | CHECK ONE                                   | CHECK ONE   |
|--|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT       | <input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED | <input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED          | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD | <input type="checkbox"/> RUINS        | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED | <input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> FAIR            | <input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED    |   |   |

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### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The old University Library building has occupied a prominent position on the University of Nebraska's downtown campus since its completion 80 years ago. Formerly flanking the main, semi-formal approach to the campus' University Hall which terminated 11th Street across a large "green" north of "R" Street, the structure today encloses the west edge of the University's Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery Sculpture Garden. The Sculpture Garden is enclosed on its remaining sides by several contemporary buildings including the Music Building and Kimball Recital Hall on the south, Woods Art Building to the north and, perhaps most notably, Phillip Johnson's Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery on the east.

Planning began for the new Library Building in 1891 when drawings submitted by Messrs. Mendelssohn, Fisher, and Lawrie of Omaha were selected from those submitted by some of the most eminent architects in the state. Bids received on this first set of plans and specifications were rejected and the plans were referred back to the architects and a group of "outside experts" who undertook a careful and prolonged study of the building to reduce its cost without sacrificing the strength, durability and dignity of the design. Bids on the revised plans were accepted with A. Rosenberg of Omaha being awarded the contract. Work began in 1892 on the main portion of the structure with work commencing on the north wing in 1893. The total contract price of the building was \$110,000.

A three and one-half story red brick structure with basement, its T-shaped plan is basically symmetrical about its north-south axis. The main portion of the building forms the crossing of the T along the south with the north wing forming the stem. At the time of construction the symmetrical south facade was a prominent wall at the south approach to the campus, while the east facade was the prominent wall from inside the campus green. The external symmetry was broken at the east facade with the inflection of the entrance to this side. The ventilation tower at the junction of the main building and the north wing was also aligned slightly off center to the east. These two design devices as well as the fact that the entrance itself is aligned symmetrically with the main portion of the building, made the overall symmetrical character of the plan and elevations ambiguous and created a somewhat picturesque character to the whole.

Structurally the building is masonry bearing walls throughout. The main portion of the building (130 x 65 feet) is internally supported by heavy timber construction with 6" solid wood plank flooring.

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The north wing, constructed to be fireproof and capable of supporting heavy loads, has reinforced concrete columns and beams with a steel roof structure. The interior functions at the time of completion were consistent with the structural features. The main portion of the building was occupied by the library reading room on the first floor with classrooms and seminar space on second floor and in the basement. The University's 35,000 volume book collection was located on the first floor of the north wing. The second floor of the wing was occupied by the Art Department for classroom and gallery space. Skylights over this wing provided natural light to the gallery space. The Nebraska State Historical Society originally occupied the basement of the wing.

Stylistically the building is sympathetic to the Richardsonian Romanesque style of the era. Characterized by broad, low arches, octagonal shapes, high hip roofs, projecting dormer windows and a fondness for towers, the style was popular in the United States from the late 19th century through the first part of the 20th century. The Old University Library represents a simplified but dignified version of this style.

Over the 80 years of use, the building has serviced a variety of University functions while basically maintaining the structure's integrity. Modifications are as follows:

1895 Building was opened for use. Functions included library proper, State Historical Society, and the Art Gallery.

1938 Construction of a suspended ceiling above the second floor north wing, concealing the skylights. Also there was some modification of interior non-load-bearing walls.

1945 The library moved out upon completion of the University's new facility, Love Library, and the building serviced the Architecture Department and as classrooms for other departments.

A new set of stairs servicing the three levels were added to the northeast corner of the wing.

1946 New lighting installed throughout the building (drop cord and florescent).

1947 Remodeling of interior non-load-bearing walls with new doors and frames.

1953 Repair work on the east (main) entrance. This included

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new doors, frame and hardware. Main stairway at southeast corner was repaired, including new vinyl treads and nosing. The stair landing and entrance foyer were retiled. The existing walks surrounding the building were removed and replaced with new walks. The interior was modified to better accommodate the Department of Architecture (second floor), the Extension Division (first floor), and the Bureau of Audio Visual (basement).

1954 Suspended ceiling added to the first floor of the south (main) side.

1956 Ventilating fans added to first floor.

1970 Darkroom added to second floor of the north wing.

1972 Remolding of first floor, south side into gallery for the Department of Architecture.

1973 Fire escape added on west side.

Currently the building is solely occupied by the Department of Architecture. The first floor serves as the department's administrative offices, gallery, and library. The basement and second floor is assigned to faculty offices, design studios, and classrooms. The building has a total usable area of 31,657 square feet and a volume of 157,402 cubic feet.

The building shows no evidence of settling or structural failure, attesting to its original strength and stability of design. The exterior appearance has weathered the 80 years in good condition with the mortar joints sound and not in need of repointing. The stone lintels have no major flaws, however some of the stone detailing, especially over the main entrance, are in need of replacement. The timber framing members are sound at all observable points and the roofing and gutters are free from leakage. The interior partitions have been modified over the years to better adapt to various activities. In such cases the work has been competently handled so as not to critically disturb the nature of the structure.

## 8 SIGNIFICANCE

| PERIOD  | AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW |   |   |  |
|---|--|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC          | <input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC  | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING     | <input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499            | <input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC     | <input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION           | <input type="checkbox"/> LAW                    | <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599            | <input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE             | <input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS              | <input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE             | <input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION   | <input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY               | <input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799            | <input type="checkbox"/> ART                     | <input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING            | <input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC                  | <input type="checkbox"/> THEATER             |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899 | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE                | <input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT | <input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY             | <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION      |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-     | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS          | <input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY               | <input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT    | <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)     |
|   |  | <input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION              |   |  |

SPECIFIC DATES      1891-95      BUILDER/ARCHITECT      Mendelssohn, Fisher, & Lawrie

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The conception of this building should be viewed within the context of the times. During the early 1890's, as Nebraska plunged into economic depths, the prospect of securing additional money from the legislature seemed remote. Yet despite the economic distress and general anti-intellectual mood present in the Statehouse, a few determined men in the academic and governmental community succeeded in obtaining sufficient funds for the construction of a much needed Library. Chancellors Maclean and Canfield, along with Regent Morrill, were especially instrumental in this venture, which in itself was considered quite an accomplishment. The presence of this new facility symbolically represented the University's emergence into its so-called "Golden Age".

Having just celebrated its 15th anniversary, the university opened to the public its new Library on Dec. 10, 1895. Experts hailed it as "one of the best appointed university buildings of its kind in the United States" and "at this time the State of Nebraska did not possess a more thoroughly constructed or more economically built edifice than this one".

In terms of its architecture, the new Library is not a pure representation of any one style but rather expresses the transitional nature of the profession in that day. The building does offer fine examples of the sort of complimentary features from the fashionable trends of the Romanesque Revival and the works of H. H. Richardson. Probably the economy and the state of the arts were two of the more prominent forces which significantly affected the final design.

During the 1880's there was an emergence of an esthetic desire for order in opposition to the massiveness, roughness and complexity of the Romanesque/Richardsonian movements. This Renaissance was a rising tide of restraint and discipline in smoother textures and detailing. Mendelssohn, Fisher, & Lawrie, like other vernacular imitators, continued to draw from the more established works of the day, but not without incorporating the new sensitivities. Thus the Library, with its greater symmetry and order of massing and its smoother texture of the brick surfaces, becomes a conscious expression of a trend that would soon change the essential character of the art.

**9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Board of Regents: University of Nebraska, Eleventh Biennial Report, Lincoln: by the University, 1893.  
 Hitchcock, H.R.: The Architecture of H.H. Richardson and His Times, Cambridge, Mass: M.I.T. Press, 1965.  
 Manley, Robert N.: Centennial History of the University of Nebraska, Lincoln: Univ. of Nebr. Press, 1969.  
~~Smith, Elms Burr: "The Campus Architecturalis" in Nebraska Alumnus, Dec., 1969.~~

**10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than one UTM OK HL  
 UTM REFERENCES

|   |      |         |          |    |      |         |          |   |      |         |          |  |  |  |  |
|---|------|---------|----------|----|------|---------|----------|---|------|---------|----------|--|--|--|--|
| A | 14   | 69.3    | 490      | 45 | 20   | 80      | 0        | B |      |         |          |  |  |  |  |
|   | ZONE | EASTING | NORTHING |    | ZONE | EASTING | NORTHING |   | ZONE | EASTING | NORTHING |  |  |  |  |
| C |      |         |          |    |      |         |          | D |      |         |          |  |  |  |  |

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

| STATE | CODE | COUNTY | CODE |
|-------|------|--------|------|
| STATE | CODE | COUNTY | CODE |

**11 FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME/TITLE: Bill Donovan Architect I  
 ORGANIZATION: Dept. Administrative Services, State of Nebr. DATE: May 1970  
 STREET & NUMBER: 15th & J Streets TELEPHONE: (402) 471-7111  
 CITY OR TOWN: Lincoln STATE: Nebraska

**12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION**

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL  STATE  LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE: Martin D. Knott  
 TITLE: State Historic Preservation Officer DATE: 5/23/75

**FOR NPS USE ONLY**

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

R. W. Moseley DATE: 8/6/75  
 DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST: W. M. [Signature] DATE: AUG 4 1975  
 KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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State funds for the construction of the Library came mainly from Nebraska's agricultural tax base and at this time the farmers were experiencing considerable economic hardships. Out-state representatives impressed upon the University that Nebraskans are accustomed to "hard work, frugality and economy". The appropriation for the building fund was to say the least not extravagant. Though this certainly limited some of the richness in detailing and finishes, it insured the most for the money without sacrificing stability and dignity. It stands today as a tribute to those who gave in times of hardship for the betterment of their state.

This building is deeply rooted into the history of the University community. It has adequately adapted to a variety of functions and has serviced some of the most essential components of a growing University. The steps to the main entrance have always been a focal point of student gatherings. It was from these steps that Cancellor Andrews, back in May of 1901, confronted an angry mass of students and stopped a class conflict in which the "wildest kind of disorder gripped the Campus".

Besides being the oldest existing building on the City Campus, it is also considered the most romantic. The building has many varied architectural characteristics which make it a pleasure to view from every angle. The two three foot high copper owls which adorn the third floor window on the south facade offer a certain delight not found anywhere else on campus. Inside, the great stairway and entrance hall with its rich wood detailing is of a quality unique to the City and certainly not feasible to duplicate today. The building exists today as one of the very few remaining examples of the Richardsonian Romanesque Style of Architecture in Lincoln.