

SURVEY-INVENTORY FORM  
COMMUNITY CULTURAL RESOURCE SURVEY

1. NAME

Historic Seattle Public Library - Columbia Branch

*Carnegie Library  
of Washington - R*

and/or Common  
Same

2. LOCATION

UTM References:

Zone 10 Easting 553730

Street & Number

Seattle South

Northing 5267440

4721 Rainier Avenue South

1:24,000

- not for publication

City, Town

Seattle

- vicinity of

State

Washington

County

King

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership: public private both

Status: occupied unoccupied work in progress

Present Use: agriculture commercial educational entertainment government  
industrial military museum park private residence  
religious scientific transportation other: Library

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

Name

City of Seattle

Street & Number

600 - 4th Avenue

City, Town

Seattle

- vicinity of

State

Washington 98104

5. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

6. FORM PREPARED BY

Name/Title

J.H. Vandermeer, Historian

Organization

Office of Archaeology & Historic Preservation

Date

August 1981

Street & Number

111 West 21st Avenue

Telephone

(206) 753-9685

City or Town

Olympia

State

Washington 98504

## 7. DESCRIPTION

Condition: excellent good fair deteriorated ruins unexposed  
Circle one: unaltered altered  
Circle one: original site moved date \_\_\_\_\_

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Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance  
attach photo

This one-story building is situated near a busy thoroughfare in a park-like grassy area that slopes gently upward from the street. It is a brick structure with terra cotta trim, including a dentilled cornice, frieze and large quoins. Fenestration consists of large multipaned casement windows under arched transoms with decorative terra cotta keystones. The building has a gable roof of slate, with parapets extending upward at the gable ends. One eye-catching feature is the beautiful vents on the gable ends, but the most impressive feature is the beautiful design used for the windows. These plus the red brick and the classical elements make this building identifiably Georgian.

Verbal boundary description: Columbia Supl. #1,  
block 55, lot A

Acreage: Less than one

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## 8. SIGNIFICANCE

Specific dates 1915

Builder/Architect W. Marbury Somervell  
and Harlan Thomas

### a. History

(A general history of the Seattle Public Library and its buildings follows the inventory form for the West Seattle Branch.)

The Columbia Branch opened in 1909 in the main room of the building that had served as town hall before Columbia City was annexed to Seattle two years earlier. In 1911 the Carnegie Corporation offered \$70,000 for two more branch libraries in Seattle. The land for a branch in the Columbia neighborhood was purchased with \$2,500 contributed by citizens and \$2,000 of city money. This cleared the way for construction to begin, and the building opened in December 1915. It continues to serve its original purpose.

### b. Evaluation of Significance

This building is a well-preserved example of a Carnegie Library and has been an important focus for the intellectual and social life of the neighborhood it serves. The architects are both well known locally. The historic importance of this building was recognized by placement of it on the National Register as a structure of pivotal importance to the Columbia City Historic District.