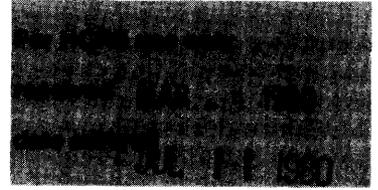


**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**



**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 John Willard Brister Library

and/or common Same

2. Location

street & number Memphis State University ^{campus} Alumni Drive not for publication

city, town Memphis vicinity of _____ congressional district Eighth

state Tennessee code 047 county Shelby code 157

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"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<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 The State University and Community College System/State Board of Regents

street & number 1161 Murfreesboro Road

city, town Nashville vicinity of _____ state Tennessee 37217

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Shelby County Registrar's Office

street & number 160 North Main Street

city, town Memphis state Tennessee 38103

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Memphis Landmarks Commission Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date January 1978 federal state county local

depository for survey records Memphis Landmarks Commission

city, town Memphis state Tennessee 38103

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input 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		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Located on the south side of Alumni Drive, east of Patterson Street between Johnson Hall and the mall area on the campus of Memphis State University in Memphis, Tennessee, the John W. Brister Library is a modest interpretation of the Neo-Classical Revival, a style considered highly appropriate for public buildings in the early twentieth century. However, instead of the more formal polished stone wall surface usually associated with Neo-Classical Revival buildings, the Brister Library was constructed of red brick laid in stretcher bond with concrete used as an accent material in window sills, keystones, coping, columns and the raised foundation. When built in 1927, the library was rectangular--140' long and 60' wide--and had two stories plus a basement story and a flat roof encircled by a decorated parapet. Because of the need for additional space to house the growing collection of materials, three wings have been added in the past twenty years to the rear or west facade. The first two were added at the ends of the facade while a third was built between the two and projects slightly beyond them. All have a red brick veneer and are four stories in height; but because of the slope behind the original building, they do not rise above that section's roof line. A fourth addition, also of brick, was attached to the rear of the north facade; one story in height it provides access for the handicapped via a ramp which connects the addition to the sidewalk along Alumni Drive. A fifth addition was recently added to the rear section of the south facade for the original building. This is a two-story passageway constructed to connect the original library with the new high-rise library facility.

An impression of horizontal symmetry is created by the massing arrangement of the Brister Library's main (or east) facade, in which a central and two end pavilions are separated by two rectangular wall planes. The five divisions are linked by a concrete entablature, which is composed of a denticular cornice over a plain frieze and architrave. The entablature is continued around the side (north and south) elevations.

The central pavilion, which rises two and one-half stories, dominates the main facade. Approached by a concrete flight of steps, four two-story concrete Ionic columns at the front of a shallow porch support the entablature, the frieze of which bears the inscription "John Willard Brister Library". Above the entablature is a pediment with a semi-circular window in the concrete tympanum and denticular horizontal and raking cornices. Immediately behind the pediment is a brick parapet--of the same height as the pediment--defined by a concrete base and concrete coping.

The section of the facade behind the portico contains three bays. These bays are defined by four concrete pilasters aligned directly behind the four columns. On the first story a double leaf paneled door with transom is flanked by engaged Ionic columns under an entablature with a denticular cornice. Above the entablature is a curved broken pediment, also having a denticular band. In the center of the pediment is a stylized pineapple sculpture. The entire frontispice is of concrete. On either side of the entrance is an oval window accented with a concrete voussoir on each side and at the top and bottom. In the second story there are three windows, all double hung sash with concrete sills, wood surrounds, and flat brick arches with concrete keystones; the center window is eight over eight while the windows at each end are six over six.

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/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1927 **Builder/Architect** George W. Mahan, Jr.

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The John W. Brister Library, constructed in 1927 and later named for the man who had served as president of West Tennessee State Teacher's College (as Memphis State University was called from 1925-1936) from 1913 to 1918 and from 1924 to 1939, is significant in two respects. Architecturally, the building illustrates how prominent Memphis architect George W. Mahan, Jr., adapted the Neo-Classical Revival style to suit the needs and budget of an educational institution. The Brister Library is also significant for the educational services provided to the mid-South, where it has enjoyed the reputation of having that region's foremost collection of professional literature.

Reflecting the classical influence on formal education in the early twentieth century, the John W. Brister Library is architecturally significant as a modest expression of the Neo-Classical Revival as evidenced by the shape, scale, symmetry and decorative elements of the building. The architect of the Brister Library, George Mahan, Jr., designed a number of significant Memphis buildings during his sixty-year practice (1907-1967) and is said to have been a leader in re-shaping the Memphis skyline. Among the buildings that he either designed or planned are the Exchange Building (already listed on the National Register), the Hotel King Cotton, Poor Clare Monastery, and the skyway and dining rooms of the Peabody Hotel. After 1910 he began specializing in churches and schools and was responsible for a number of such buildings in West Tennessee and North Mississippi.

From its beginning in 1927, the Brister Library has been generally recognized as the primary library of the mid-south region. For a comparable collection of professional literature it would be necessary to travel to St. Louis or New Orleans. The Brister Library also contains many notable personal collections. John W. Brister contributed his entire library as did the school's first president, Seymour Mynders.

It should also be noted that the Brister Library is important as a link to the formative years of what is now Memphis State University. Of the nine buildings constructed on the campus from 1912 to 1927, the Brister Library retains the greatest degree of architectural integrity, the others having been greatly altered or absorbed by additions. Only the rear sections of the Brister's exterior have been altered. The interior has undergone a great deal of modification, but the lobby with its richly decorated vaulted ceiling and massive marble pillars has been preserved.

The boundaries of this nomination include only that land occupied by the building.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet rec'd 6/27/80

10. Geographical Data

UTM NOT VERIFIED

Acreeage of nominated property 3/4 acre

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

Quadrangle name Southeast Memphis

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A

1	6	2	3	2	0	7	1	0	3	8	8	9	8	9	0
Zone			Easting					Northing							

B

Zone			Easting					Northing							

C

Zone			Easting					Northing							

D

Zone			Easting					Northing							

E

Zone			Easting					Northing							

F

Zone			Easting					Northing							

G

Zone			Easting					Northing							

H

Zone			Easting					Northing							

Verbal boundary description and justification

The nominated property is outlined in red on the attached map.

See revised UBP on continuation sheet rec'd 5/15/80 KO'C

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 Kay Benton/Preservation Planner

organization Memphis Landmarks Commission

date September 27, 1979

street & number, 22 N. Front Street

telephone, 901/528-2834

city or town Memphis

state Tennessee 38103

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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

Herbert L. Hrygar

title Executive Director, Tennessee Historical Commission

date 3/6/80

For HCRS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Carol D. Shull

date 7-11-80

Keeper of the National Register

Attest: *Kristin J. O'Connell*

date 6/30/80

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The end pavilions, which project only slightly from the adjacent wall planes, feature brick quoins at both corners. A recessed panel in the middle of each pavilion is decorated at the top with the concrete relief of an open book bearing the inscription "AD 1927". An arched denticular cornice interrupts the entablature that spans the remainder of this facade above the central section.

The two wall planes that link the three pavilions are each four bays wide. All windows--except the windows in the basement story, which have only plain wood surrounds--feature the same decorative trim as those in the second story of the portico. First-floor windows are eight over eight; second-floor windows are twelve over twelve. Rectangular concrete panels are centered between the first and second story windows in each bay.

Above the entablature which encircles the original elevations of the library is a brick parapet punctuated by rectangular openings containing rows of spindle-shaped balusters. Each of these openings is aligned with the windows in each bay. Above the end and center pavilions there are no such openings.

The south elevation of the original building is five bays deep. The first, third and fifth bays (moving east to west) have windows in the basement and first story. These are identical respectively to those in the basement and second story of the recessed walls of the main facade. The second and fourth bays, however, contain two-story round-arched openings. In the second bay a pair of nine over nine double hung sash windows with a concrete sill, labels, a wrought iron balconet, and a flat brick arch with keystone occupies the lower two-thirds of the opening. Above the window is a blind arch accented with a keystone and a double row of headers. A semi-circular band of concrete within the arch further emphasizes the curved head. In the fourth bay the arch contains a fanlight over a pair of windows, each containing two rows of three lights. Behind the south elevation, a passageway has been built connecting the Brister Library with the highrise addition built in the last few years. The north elevation is nearly identical to the south elevation except that there are only four bays, the fifth bay having been covered by a square brick addition providing handicap access at the west end of this facade.

The original west elevation of the library was removed to permit construction of three new rear wings. The windows in these additions are rectangular band windows with aluminum frames and fixed sashes. The present west facade has two entrances in the basement story of the center and north additions.

Interior renovations to the Brister Library have drastically altered its original character with one significant exception. The lobby, the most impressive section of the original interior, has been retained. The only alteration has been a repainting of the walls and ceiling. The eclectic mix of decorative elements within the lobby has resulted in a highly distinctive space that manages to successfully blend massive pillars with finely carved plaster work and woodwork.

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The two-story mezzanine lobby is divided into three bays by a pair of marble pillars on both the east and west side. Featuring carved wood acanthus-leaf capitals with copper egg and dart moldings, these pillars also help support the balcony which extends around the east, north and west walls. The marble pilasters aligned behind the pillars further accent the three-bay division. The central bay of both the east and west wall contains a doorway framed by carved wood pilasters with classical capitals, an entablature and a pediment.

Classical symbolism is evident in the low relief plaster ornamentation used in the three ribbed vaults where muses studying are surrounded by griffins and urns. Transverse bands between the vaults and the bands connecting the pillars employ urns, swags, and fleur-de-lys around male cameos, one of which may be Mr. Brister.

Other decorative elements include marble wainscoting, ornate wrought iron railings for the balcony and the stairway on the south wall, and running molding along the ceiling.

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Brister Library at Memphis State University

Jones, Otis H. "Memphis State University, First Half Century [1912-1962]."
Memphis: [circa 1970].

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date entered

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Verbal Boundary Description

Brister Library

Beginning at a point along the south right of way of Alumni Drive 150 feet south of Patterson Street, the boundary line proceeds south 180 feet, then east 200 feet, then north 180 feet, then west 200 feet along the south right of way of Alumni Drive to the point of beginning.

Parking

Central Ave.

Parking

Norriswood

Norriswood

Pk.

Watauga

Patterson St.

Zack Curtin

Midland

TRACK FIELD

ADMIN

TENNIS COURTS

Miss. Val. Col. entrance

Mynders

Pk.

BRISTER LIB.

MALL

UNIV. CENT.

Parking



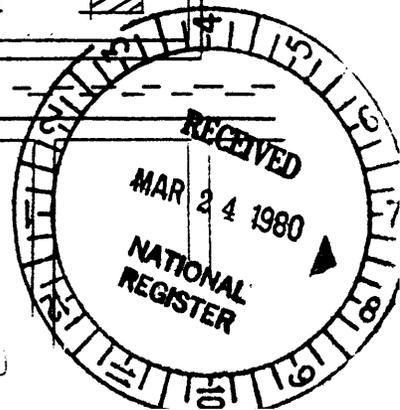
Walker Ave.

Southern Ave.

Pk.

Pk.

Parking also along streets



JUL 11 1980