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Charles Fletcher Lummis:

Los Angeles City Librarian

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by

Daniel Frederick Blitz

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

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Professor Jonathan Furner, Chair

This thesis investigates Charles Fletcher Lummis' overarching legacy at the Los Angeles Public Library, where he served as City Librarian from 1905-1910. Although Lummis lacked any formal library school training and was also inexperienced in professional librarianship, he nevertheless managed to transform his institution into one of the nation's foremost research libraries, as he earned himself a reputation as a daring and innovative librarian. And yet, despite his many achievements as librarian, he also presided over a very tumultuous period, with many people against him from the start. While some were opposed to the radical ideas put forth by a man they perceived to be an untrained outsider, there were also many librarians who admired Lummis' creativity and passion for his work. Lummis had a grandiose vision for the future of the Los Angeles Public Library, as well as the future of the library profession as a whole.

The thesis of Daniel Frederick Blitz is approved.

Mary Niles Maack

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INTRODUCTION

In addition to being a prolific author, newspaperman, journalist, explorer of the American Southwest, and founder of the Southwest Museum, Charles Fletcher Lummis was also the Los Angeles City Librarian for a tumultuous five-year period during the early 20th century. Widely regarded as an eccentric iconoclast who preferred wearing a sombrero and corduroys to typical business attire, Lummis' stormy tenure at the Los Angeles Public Library was controversial from day one. Indeed, Lummis has been terribly vilified for simply accepting the job in the first place during the summer of 1905. The main reason for such hostility is that his predecessor Mary Letitia Jones—a well-regarded graduate of Melvil Dewey's New York State Library School—was fired solely as a result of gender discrimination by four of five members of an all-male

library board. This overtly misogynistic lot evidently presumed that a talented and learned man such as Lummis would undoubtedly be far more capable in managing the day-to-day library operations—while also improving its collections—than a woman like Jones had ever been. When the news broke that the popular and proficient female librarian had been forced out to make room for a man, there was a tremendous public outcry—particularly from women’s groups. And making matters worse—at least insofar as public relations were concerned—Lummis lacked any actual library school training whatsoever, and had no library management experience.

Despite the objectionable manner in which Lummis landed his job as City Librarian—coupled with his glaring inexperience in professional librarianship—he is nevertheless credited with dramatically transforming the Los Angeles Public Library from a leisurely lending library into an exceptional reference collection which facilitated and encouraged scholarly research. Although he was not trained as a librarian, Lummis was well-read, well-educated, and well-traveled, and some people credit him with bringing many innovative solutions to the library field. Among his most notable achievements was the establishment of an excellent research collection which was especially devoted to the Southwest region—this was of course his main personal interest, as well. Bringing a fresh perspective to his position, Lummis also made many practical improvements to the library. Lummis was a successful leader in many ways, but he also had his share of character flaws and created a slew of enemies along the way.

This thesis intends to explore Lummis’ exceptional library career at the Los Angeles Public Library and his influence on other libraries and best practices in librarianship as a whole. His contributions to the field of library science have received inadequate recognition over time. Lummis was a historically important librarian, equipped with leadership abilities and a penchant

for innovation. Lummis was influential towards both his contemporary librarians, as well as future generations of librarians. Although his radical impact has seemingly been forgotten by most members of our profession, it is my assertion that that this topic is worthy of further investigation.



CHARLES F. LUMMIS.

LUMMIS IS CITY LIBRARIAN.

CHOSEN BY BOARD SUCCESSOR
TO MISS JONES.

Sequel to Long Quarrel Over
Whether Man or Woman Shall be
in Charge—Isidore Dockweiler and
"Mushy" Miller at Last Get Miss
Jones's Scalp.

REVIEW OF THE SECONDARY LITERATURE

Given the extraordinarily busy and adventurous life of the Renaissance man of the American Southwest, it is certainly understandable that Lummis' role as librarian has been considerably overshadowed by his many other astonishing accomplishments. Most scholarship has focused on his roles as reporter, editor, architect and builder, preservationist of the California missions, museum founder, and passionate defender of Native American rights. In regards to how Lummis performed as the Los Angeles City Librarian, some have lambasted the Harvard dropout as an egotistical buffoon who merely usurped his position from a fully trained librarian whose only shortcoming was that she lacked his male anatomy. Indeed, a number of the secondary sources (as well as the preponderance of contemporary newspaper articles) which relate in any way to Lummis' librarianship, have focused on the controversial firing of his predecessor, Mary L. Jones, in the summer of 1905 and the so-called "Great Library War" that engulfed the city for months. Nevertheless, others have argued that Lummis actually managed to distinguish himself as a brilliant, visionary, and innovative librarian who dramatically transformed the Los Angeles Public Library into one of the country's most respected institutions. They offer evidence to suggest that Lummis possessed a genius intellect, outstanding leadership abilities, and practical know-how, which allowed for aggressive implementation of new library policies.

Lawrence Clark Powell once stated that Charles F. Lummis' own record proved him to be "the most creative librarian California has ever known." Despite such high praise, Powell lamented how Lummis' significant contributions have since been nearly forgotten by the very

library he served.¹ Powell considered Lummis to be “the prime innovator, never again equaled,” among the Los Angeles Public Library’s head librarians.² In his essay “The Elements of a Good Librarian,” Powell wrote that a “good librarian sets an example just short of fanaticism. A single librarian of such stature does more to give librarianship professional status than a thousand play-it-safe and take-it-easy free-riders.” Powell then immediately proceeded to cite Lummis as the foremost embodiment of just such a “fanatically dedicated” librarian who positively transformed his library by openly challenging the status quo. Moreover, he also credited Lummis with authoring the “most exciting” library annual reports that he had ever read.³ Most interestingly, Lummis’ annual reports to the Los Angeles Public Library’s Board of Directors were routinely assigned as readings for Dr. Powell’s library school classes. Powell elsewhere opined that Lummis brought common sense to librarianship and gave the institution that he led “a shaking to its roots.”⁴

Dudley Gordon was undoubtedly the most preeminent Lummis scholar. While serving as President of the Southern California Historical Society—an organization headquartered at the Lummis home—Gordon was known to frequently dress up in corduroy suits, affectionately emulating the former resident’s trademark attire. In addition to writing one of the most celebrated biographies on Lummis—*Charles F. Lummis: Crusader in Corduroy* (1972)—Gordon also wrote two articles specifically pertaining to Lummis’ remarkable achievements as librarian. In 1961, Gordon’s article “Charles F. Lummis, Litt. D., Librarian Extraordinary, and Founder of the Bibliosmiles,” appeared in *California Librarian*. Then in 1970, *Wilson Library Bulletin* published Gordon’s “Aggressive Librarian: Charles Fletcher Lummis.” Both of these

¹ Powell, Lawrence Clark. *California Classics: The Creative Literature of the Golden State*. p. 301

² Powell, Lawrence Clark. “Life Was Learned in Los Angeles’ Library,” *Los Angeles Times*. May 11, 1986.

³ Powell, Lawrence Clark. *Bookman’s Progress: The Selected Writings of Lawrence Clark Powell*. p. 100

⁴ Gordon, Dudley. *Charles F. Lummis: Crusader in Corduroy*. p. 217

articles were soon thereafter recycled and more or less combined to form a short chapter in Gordon's 1972 Lummis biography. Of this biography's 344 pages, only ten are devoted to Lummis' career as librarian—these pages (213-222) can be found in Chapter Fifteen: "Lummis and the Bibliosmiles." The two articles were again regurgitated in Gordon's entry on Lummis in the *Dictionary of American Library Biography* (1978). Apart from these four aforementioned works, Gordon also briefly discussed Lummis' involvement with the Los Angeles Public Library in a 1959 article for *Arizona and the West* titled, "Charles Fletcher Lummis, Cultural Pioneer of the Southwest." In each of Gordon's pieces, his assertion is that Lummis demonstrated that one need not possess formal library school training in order to achieve tremendous success as a librarian. Furthermore, Gordon makes the bold assertion that Lummis lacked the "handicap of 99.44 percent of librarians—the reluctance to try something new."⁵

Prior to becoming librarian, Lummis had already been making suggestions to the Library Board of Directors for a number of years concerning future purchases of Spanish books and manuscripts relating to the history of California and the Southwest. Gordon contends that the subsequent purchases made by the Board—and based on Lummis' recommendations—gave the Los Angeles Public Library one of the most distinguished collections of Spanish American documents in the entire country. When he was hired as librarian, Lummis restored controversial publications that were previously banned by the library. As Gordon explains, Lummis was strongly opposed to censorship of library materials, believing that the public should be free to read what they so choose. And unlike some other scholars who questioned Lummis' financial management of the library, Gordon praised his good business-sense which helped the library save money on multiple occasions.⁶

⁵ Gordon, Dudley. "Aggressive Librarian: Charles Fletcher Lummis." *Wilson Library Bulletin*. p. 399

⁶ *Ibid.* p. 400, 403

Gordon expresses his admiration for Lummis' annual reports which carefully described the various problems that the librarian observed in both his institution and the overall field of librarianship as a whole, and what types of solutions he recommended to fix them. In three of Gordon's works, he writes admiringly of Lummis' "Why We Are Here" instructions to his staff. Part of these instructions stated that: "... we can have, and I wish you to help me make, the best library, in the world, not only of its size but of any size..."⁷ Gordon mentions how his friend Dr. Powell was heavily influenced by Lummis and that Powell often recited Lummis' inspirational "Why We Are Here" instructions when meeting with his own library staff. Gordon claims that "a considerable file of correspondence [Lummis] had with the heads of libraries in the public, private and university fields," indicate that many of his innovations for the Los Angeles Public Library "became standard practice over the country."⁸

Gordon also wrote the most extensive scholarship regarding the creation of Lummis' organization of subversive and playful librarians known as the Bibliosmiles. Though Lummis typically worked 18-20 hours a day, he always managed to squeeze in some time for some leisure activities like fishing.⁹ In 1906, when Lummis attended his first American Library Association convention in Narragansett Pier, Rhode Island, he found the majority of the other male head librarians that were gathered there to be a bunch of "pompous asses." The following year, he attended the A.L.A. Convention of 1907, which was held in Asheville, North Carolina. Arriving in his green corduroy suit, Navajo sash, Stetson sombrero, moccasins, and Indian bracelets, Lummis sought to remedy the miserable situation that he felt had enveloped all of American librarianship. Seeking out like-minded individuals who understood the value of

⁷ Gordon, Dudley. *Charles F. Lummis: Crusader in Corduroy*. p. 216

⁸ Ibid. p. 217

⁹ Gordon, Dudley C. "Charles F. Lummis, Litt. D., Librarian Extraordinary, and Founder of the Bibliosmiles," *California Librarian*. p. 19

having some playful fun, Lummis established the Bibliosmiles—A Rally of Librarians who are Nevertheless Human. This group was instantly successful and its members hailed from many prominent libraries from around the nation.¹⁰ Membership was limited to 30, and each year the Bibliosmiles would hold an annual dinner at the American Library Association convention in order to counteract their overly serious surroundings. The Official Password was ‘Cheer up, A.L.A.’ and they drank an ‘Official Dew’ of California apricot brandy. They also sang songs like “My Dewey ’Tis of Thee, Sweet Ex- of Albany.” Lummis felt this group had been created in just the nick of time.¹¹ He also established a Los Angeles-based chapter of the Bibliosmiles from the library staff. They typically drank brandy and ate lobsters when they met at his San Pedro fishing shack. Although Lummis resigned in 1910, the Bibliosmiles continued to hold meetings until 1920. The group was in Lummis’ own estimation, “the best joke of my ulterior decade.”¹²

Two of Lummis’ children, Turbesé Lummis Fiske and Keith Lummis collectively wrote a biography of their father titled *Charles F. Lummis: The Man and His West* (1975). Out of this book’s 230 pages, just 6 pages are devoted to his librarianship in a chapter titled “Despite Lack of Modesty” (p. 125-130). In addition to relying on their own memories of their father, the authors cite his librarian annual reports, his *Out West* and *Land of Sunshine* articles, and his personal journal entries as primary sources of information. Overall, they offer a favorable portrayal of Lummis’ library career, while acknowledging the considerable apprehension that many staff members felt about having this untrained eccentric cowboy (who was prone to swearing and drinking) suddenly in charge. The authors say that Lummis quickly won over the

¹⁰ Gordon, Dudley. *Charles F. Lummis: Crusader in Corduroy*. p. 218-221

¹¹ Gordon, Dudley C. “Charles F. Lummis, Litt. D., Librarian Extraordinary, and Founder of the Bibliosmiles,” *California Librarian*. p. 19-21

¹² Fiske, Turbesé Lummis and Lummis, Keith. *Charles F. Lummis: The Man and His West*. p. 129

support of his staff by raising their salaries, turning the place into a more collective and participatory-style organization, and instituting several practical improvements to the workplace environment. These included a lunch room, improved lighting, revolving desk chairs and typewriter chairs. Their father was also a strong advocate for equitable access to the library, and he argued that working class patrons ought to be treated with the same respect as any professor studying in the library. The authors list Lummis' significant contributions to the library such as the vast improvement of the reference collection, and the creation of the Department of Western History Material. They claim this department to be regarded by some authorities as "the most valuable contribution to the Los Angeles Public Library."¹³

Being extremely knowledgeable and well-read on a wide variety of topics, Lummis was adamant that it was his responsibility to direct patrons to the most useful and accurate reference books possible. And so, for certain volumes in the collection that he felt were terribly inferior, he began pasting labels that recommended alternative choices for library patrons to choose from. The library staff dubbed this Lummis' 'poison label'.¹⁴ Lummis' children include a 1908 journal entry where he explains the origin of this label:

... I am getting bitten with this new idea for the library and want to make a little poison label which will keep within the law of libel and the etiquette of science and still keep our patrons from leaning on text books that every library has to have but which are not in fact worth the match to burn them up. If it can be worked out satisfactorily, it will probably be the best of the several inventions I have made in this library.¹⁵

¹³ Ibid. pp. 125-126

¹⁴ Gordon, Dudley. *Charles F. Lummis: Crusader in Corduroy*. p. 214

¹⁵ Fiske, Turbesé Lummis and Lummis, Keith. *Charles F. Lummis: The Man and His West*. p. 127



The old Lummis and the new. "The world do move."

The A.L.A. was not amused with the ‘untrained interloper’ Lummis and they were quite dismayed by his many radical decisions, which they dismissed as “such unacademic declarations of policy!”¹⁶ Lummis himself was disgusted by the ignorance of the majority of easterners in the A.L.A. when it came to the history, geography, irrigation, agriculture, and indigenous peoples of the American Southwest. Over time, he gradually began to win over some of his detractors. Even the journal of the A.L.A. finally admitted that, “Despite lack of modesty, the record of actual work seems to be considerable.”¹⁷

Chief among Lummis’ later detractors was Professor Margaret F. Maxwell of the University of Arizona’s Graduate Library School. Maxwell’s article “The Lion and the Lady: The Firing of Miss Mary Jones,” appeared in a 1978 issue of *American Libraries*. Highly informative and well-researched, this work does make some very compelling arguments which demonstrate that librarian Lummis was in fact the beneficiary of a terrible injustice committed against his female predecessor. Maxwell carefully reconstructs the major controversy which followed the firing of Los Angeles City Librarian Mary Jones in 1905. However, the author’s presentation is very opinionated and undeniably one-sided—and at times, one might argue, somewhat mean-spirited. Evidently coming from a feminist theoretical perspective, it is Maxwell’s assertion that apart from women’s suffrage, not much has improved in regards to women’s rights since the time of Jones’ firing. She claims that Jones was replaced by Charles Lummis simply because the all-male Library Board was inherently sexist and misogynistic. And therefore, this group of powerful men believed that a fellow man was simply more qualified to run a large organization (such as a public library) than a woman.

¹⁶ Ibid. p. 126

¹⁷ Ibid. p. 129

Shortly after Jones' firing on June 21, 1905, the A.L.A. held their annual meeting in Portland, Oregon from July 4-8. Maxwell goes on to demonstrate that the firing of Mary Jones actually became a major topic at the A.L.A. meeting with numerous associations condemning her unjust removal. Moreover, after attending the annual A.L.A. conference in Portland, many librarians—including Jones' former teacher Melvil Dewey—came down to Los Angeles to voice their support for Jones. Maxwell also tells us how women's groups rallied around in support of Jones—and even Susan B. Anthony joined the cause.

Maxwell provides us with many citations so that we can see what primary sources she relied upon for her evidence and to help us understand how she came to her conclusions. By analyzing the citation notes at the end of this article, it appears she has managed to reconstruct most of this history from a plethora of contemporary newspaper articles—most notably the *Los Angeles Times*. She also cites *Library Journal* articles from 1905 which were especially helpful to her research concerning the Portland A.L.A. meeting and its aftermath. Articles from *Out West* are used to condemn Lummis with his own words which she dismisses as “incredibly lame.”¹⁸ Although the author does an excellent job of summarizing all these articles, her research might have been less one-sided had she also included more varied types of primary sources such as letters and additional library reports. Maxwell does, however, cite the 17th Annual Report for the Los Angeles Public Library (published in 1906), and she cites one 1901 journal entry by Lummis, as well as the mostly favorable biography of Lummis (written by two of his children). These last three sources were used to corroborate what few positive things Maxwell was compelled to write about Lummis.

Maxwell's article minimizes the legitimate improvements Lummis brought to the library, but overemphasizes silly things like his adding a spittoon to his office. Although it is perfectly

¹⁸ Maxwell, Margaret. “The Lion and the Lady: The Firing of Miss Mary Jones,” p. 271

reasonable to mention such amusing idiosyncrasies, it is also critically important to convey a balanced presentation. In addition to this, she (perhaps justifiably) accuses Lummis—a man who typically fought for the underdog—of hypocrisy, since Mary Jones was, of course, just such an underdog. However, the author’s insinuation that Lummis should have recognized that the firing of Jones was equivalent to the dispossession of Native Americans from their ancestral homelands seems somewhat excessive. What’s more, Maxwell’s spiteful line, “It is pleasant to record Lummis lasted no longer than Jones,”¹⁹ is obviously inappropriate. Maxwell also accuses him of incompetent management of library funds which she states led to his own resignation. In any event, this article is one of the best secondary sources available concerning the contentious battle between Mary Jones’ supporters (including the Mayor of Los Angeles) and the sexist library board that appointed Lummis.

Maxwell actually admits that the main crux of her paper relied heavily on the original research conducted by the Los Angeles Public Library’s bibliographer Armine Mackenzie some two decades prior to her own article on Mary Jones.²⁰ Mackenzie’s two articles that involved Lummis were titled “The Great Library War” and “The Human Encyclopedia” and both of these appeared together in the same April 1957 issue of *California Librarian*. At times, Mackenzie seems to portray Lummis as an eccentric egomaniac who made radical decisions and policy changes that were destined to disappear following his departure. He does concede, however, that some of Lummis’ innovations were years ahead of his time. As the first of his two titles would suggest, Mackenzie summarizes what the 1905 newspaper coverage had dubbed “The Great Library War,” pitting Mary Jones, her fellow lady librarians, women’s clubs, suffragettes, Susan B. Anthony, Melvil Dewey, and Mayor McAleer against the vilified Library Board and

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

the City Council. Mackenzie argues that Lummis' reputation as librarian would permanently suffer as a result of all the bad press concerning Jones' removal. Many of Lummis' innovations, Mackenzie contends, were overshadowed by all the turmoil that was going on at the time. As Mackenzie writes, "Although Lummis announced a new public library that would make Los Angeles the Athens of America, he was scarcely noticed in the uproar."²¹



Club women presenting their protest against removal of Miss Jones, to Mayor McAleer.

²¹ Mackenzie, Armine D. "The Great Library War," *California Librarian*. p. 89-90, 92

Mackenzie's research for "The Great Library War" relied on several different Los Angeles newspapers including the *Times*, the *Express*, and the *Examiner*. Citing the latter two as sources, he offers some fascinating details concerning the controversy. We discover that Charles Lummis' wife Eve was actually among the many ladies gathered at a July 28, 1905 meeting in the Women's Clubhouse. Mrs. Lummis likely felt extremely awkward when Susan B. Anthony gave a speech mocking the sexist library board for replacing a fully qualified woman with her husband. Mackenzie then recounts a most intriguing confrontation which occurred the following day at the clubhouse. Melvil Dewey and Charles Lummis were both invited to the reception. Dewey, the guest of honor, was dressed in evening attire, while Lummis wore his typical green corduroy suit. In front of all the other guests Dewey took this opportunity to stand up on behalf of his former student, by directly confronting Lummis and stating "that Miss Jones, being trained, should be supported by the entire nation." Lummis then took exception to Dewey's insinuation that he was unqualified to be librarian and countered with: "I am not a 'trained' librarian and I am glad of it. Now I would like to ask Mr. Dewey how many librarians in cities over 75,000 population are in charge of women?" With this narrow-minded remark Lummis betrayed his own sexist prejudices. Nevertheless, the two men did manage to bring themselves to shake hands before leaving that evening.²²

Mackenzie also includes some key factual information which Maxwell conveniently chose to omit. For instance, both Mackenzie and Maxwell mention a satirical speech given by a Mrs. Shelly Tollhurst to the Women's Clubhouse meeting, making fun of the library board and their appointment of Lummis and their unjustifiable removal of Mary Jones. But, Maxwell leaves out some of the overtly racist portions of this speech—presumably so she could portray these women in an entirely favorable light. The portion she omitted were the vile words of

²² Ibid. p. 91-92

elitism and white supremacy that follow: “We did not know then that the best qualification for a librarian was accurate knowledge of the aborigines (laughter). Perhaps ere long we shall see our library filled with Americanus, red Americanus, unwashed Americanus, and the imagination kindles with the thought that the whole Southwest Museum may even find its way to our public library.” Sadly, Mackenzie himself refers to this woman as an “effective speaker.”²³ The speaker feared the terrible prospect of minorities one day overrunning the Los Angeles Public Library—something that Lummis would not have minded at all.

Mackenzie’s second article, “The Human Encyclopedia,” recounts the story of Lummis’ hiring of Dr. C. J. K. Jones to be the inaugural director for the department of Reading, Study and Research established in 1905. This erudite man was purported to be a human encyclopedia, who Lummis believed could potentially become an extremely useful asset to all sorts of library users coming in with obscure reference questions. However, the newspapers soon reported that many of the female employees—whose own salaries were raised under Lummis—had grown resentful of this Dr. Jones and his \$125 a month salary. Mackenzie also tells us that Dr. Jones was forced to go under Civil Service after the library was moved to the Homer Laughlin Building in 1906. This meant that he needed to pass a civil service examination that could test his vast knowledge on a hodgepodge of topics ranging from agriculture, astronomy, and languages, to international law, and fairy tales. But, ‘the human encyclopedia’ failed the test and the newspapers salivated at this news—producing headlines like this one in the *Los Angeles Herald*: “High-Priced Research Director Fails to Pass Examination.” Dr. Jones did well with questions relating to religion and ethics, but he was stumped by questions relating to copyright law, love stories, and fairy tales. He defended his failing the exam by contending that it was unreasonable to expect him to be ‘omniscient’ and the Library Board agreed to allow him to stay on at his job.

²³ Ibid. p. 90-91

Sometime after this, Dr. Jones was given another opportunity to take a civil service examination, and this time he successfully passed it with topics ranging from literary criticism to atomic theory. Despite this achievement, negative newspaper editorials continued to attack ‘the human encyclopedia’ as an unnecessary and overpaid employee. The *Graphic*, for example, took shots at both Lummis and Dr. Jones with this line: “The Los Angeles Library is now governed by the prince of eccentric egotists and by a past master of abstruse erudition.” Meanwhile, a *Los Angeles Times* editorial went so far as to claim that Dr. Jones’ principal work activities as Director of Research consisted of watering the roof garden’s plants and feeding the library goldfish. And yet, Dr. Jones weathered this storm of negative publicity for a few more years until he finally resigned in 1910.²⁴



Dr. C. J. K. Jones in his study.

²⁴ Mackenzie, Armine. “The Human Encyclopedia,” *California Librarian*. p. 93-94, 126

There is also a short chapter devoted to Lummis in John D. Bruckman's *The City Librarians of Los Angeles* (1973). Bruckman offers some high praise for Lummis, describing him as a genius who brought 'quality' to the library. But, he also acknowledges that Lummis could be difficult for some to get along with, writing that Lummis was "sometimes erratic and always impatient," and that he "was not an administrator congenial to those members of the staff and the public who liked their library dull and quiet."²⁵ According to Bruckman, although the wide distribution of Lummis' annual reports helped the library attain a "national reputation as a progressive, innovative institution," some librarians around the country were offended by the "flamboyant tone" of these reports.²⁶ And while Bruckman praises some of Lummis' innovations, he also makes some rather disparaging remarks about his hiring of Dr. Jones as Research Director, as well as the 'poison label' and book branding innovations. Furthermore, Bruckman questions Lummis' treatment of his employees, and he also blames him for making some poor business decisions, such as his signing of an 'ironclad lease' at an exorbitant long-term cost to the library. He suggests that these factors led to Lummis' resignation in 1910, but concedes that people have varying opinions as to his library administrating abilities.²⁷ Lummis himself was once quoted with this bittersweet reminiscence concerning his time at the Los Angeles Public Library: "The place absorbed all there was of me. From a purely selfish point of view, that was six years wasted out of my life. But I have the satisfaction of knowing that the library can never go back to what it was."²⁸

²⁵ Bruckman, John D. *City Librarians of Los Angeles*. p. 32

²⁶ *Ibid.* p. 34

²⁷ *Ibid.* p. 33-36

²⁸ *Ibid.* p. 37

MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION

This thesis is chiefly concerned with investigating the following question:

What was Charles Fletcher Lummis' overarching legacy as Los Angeles City Librarian?

RESEARCH METHODS

I conducted the majority of my research at the Los Angeles Public Library. Their History Department has several dozen reels of microfilm of Lummis' correspondences and personal journal entries. Furthermore, various online databases such as ProQuest, Google Books, and "Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers" available on the Library of Congress website, were all extremely useful in locating primary sources.

My thesis relied on a historical research methodology for library and information science. I attempted to corroborate factual information from multiple primary sources whenever possible. Many of the secondary sources that I used were instrumental in helping me to locate additional primary sources for my research. In addition to investigating Lummis himself and the Los Angeles Public Library during the period of 1905-1910, I also strived to investigate the broader context of librarianship and library policy at this time.

The annual reports of the Los Angeles Public Library were certainly some of the most useful primary source materials I worked with. These reports were especially helpful in answering my questions concerning how Lummis improved the library, how he treated his staff, and what experiences he brought to the library profession. Since the majority of the reports were written by Lummis himself, I felt that I was able to gain a much better understanding of his

character, his motivations, and his absolute passion for his work and the expansion of the library. Beyond the annual reports, the contemporary newspaper articles from the *Los Angeles Times* and the *Los Angeles Herald* were also extremely helpful. Certain things that were missing from the annual reports, such as the circumstances of Lummis' resignation and the controversial firing of Mary Jones could be found in these newspaper articles. Letters written by Lummis during his time as librarian, along with his personal journal entries helped to fill in some of the gaps in the narrative.

CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND

To more fully appreciate the changes he brought to the library it might be helpful to consider the historical context of this period. When Charles Lummis first arrived in Los Angeles in 1885—following his long walk across the country—the city's population was approximately 12,000.²⁹ By the time Lummis became librarian in 1905, Los Angeles was in the process of undergoing rapid change and expansion. The city's population had grown from 102,479 in 1900 to more than 250,000 by 1905.³⁰ By this time Los Angeles ranked as the twentieth largest city in the United States.³¹ In 1910, when Lummis submitted his resignation as librarian, the city's population had reached 319,198.³² Of course, the swift growth of the city also justified the grandiose vision Lummis' had in mind for the Los Angeles Public Library.

As evidenced by his stone castle dwelling—which took fifteen years to complete—and his eventual establishment of the Southwest Museum, both the Hispanic and Native American

²⁹ Fiske, Turbesé Lummis and Lummis, Keith. *Charles F. Lummis: The Man and His West*. p. 29

³⁰ Bean, Walton. *California: An Interpretive History*. p. 350

³¹ Thompson, Mark. *American Character: The Curious Life of Charles Fletcher Lummis and the Rediscovery of the Southwest*. p. 273

³² Mayer, Robert. *Los Angeles: A Chronological & Documentary History*. p. 60

heritage of California were things cherished by Lummis. And like his friend and fellow outdoorsman Theodore Roosevelt, Lummis sought to preserve the American West.³³ The two men had first met years earlier while students at Harvard together. Their common interests produced a lifelong friendship, which led to Roosevelt making Lummis a presidential advisor concerning matters about the West and Native Americans in particular.³⁴ Lummis continued to advise President Roosevelt on occasion while he was Los Angeles city librarian.³⁵ Both men considered this vanishing frontier to be a symbolic antidote to hectic city life which they felt had subverted traditional values.

Prior to becoming city librarian, Lummis had become the quintessential advocate for self-discovery in Southern California, editing the magazine *Land of Sunshine*—which became *Out West* in 1902. In “The Lion’s Den,” Lummis’ column for the magazine, he championed the region that he had come to adore as a place where an alternative culture could arise in contrast to America’s other big cities. Like many idealistic college-educated Easterners who had migrated west, Lummis imagined that the region with its rich Spanish past could provide him with a clearer sense of purpose, identity, and stability. Moreover, Lummis envisioned that the Los Angeles Public Library should be able to serve a similar function for the city’s inhabitants who sought to improve themselves by discovering new things.³⁶

Some of the great changes in the field of library science can be traced back to 1876. That year witnessed the creation of the American Library Association. From that point forward the A.L.A. would hold annual meetings in which librarians from around the country would gather to

³³ Starr, Kevin. *Americans and the California Dream: 1850-1915*. p. 397

³⁴ Thompson, Mark. *American Character: The Curious Life of Charles Fletcher Lummis and the Rediscovery of the Southwest*. p. 1-2 , 11

³⁵ Fiske, Turbesé Lummis and Lummis, Keith. *Charles F. Lummis: The Man and His West*. p. 129

³⁶ Starr, Kevin. *Americans and the California Dream: 1850-1915*. p. 397-401

Also see: Starr, Kevin. *Inventing the Dream: California Through the Progressive Era*. p. 125

discuss current developments in the profession.³⁷ Charles Lummis would later have multiple conflicts with the A.L.A. during his tenure as librarian. Another major breakthrough for library science that occurred in 1876 was the first publication of Melvil Dewey's classification scheme. The system divided human knowledge into ten main categories and it was profoundly influential in public libraries during the coming decades.³⁸ When Lummis became librarian, one of his main initial criticisms of the Los Angeles Public Library's practices was its reliance on the Dewey Decimal System, which he deemed inadequate for genuine research libraries with its inexplicable assignments of topics to certain categories. And so, Lummis modified the DDC system to the needs of the library's collections. He also came up with his own system to organize reference materials following branches of knowledge he developed himself.³⁹

The Los Angeles Public Library evolved out of the Los Angeles Library Association. Established in 1872, this association was made up exclusively of men who felt the emerging city deserved to have its own public library. One man in the group named John Downey owned a building in the downtown business district and offered up two of his vacant rooms to be used as a library. Later that year, Los Angeles chose John C. Littlefield to become the city's first librarian. Although he helped to improve the library in many ways, Littlefield was replaced in 1879 by the inexperienced Patrick Connolly. But the alcoholic Connolly did not last long in this position and was fired in 1880 for chronic absenteeism. Following this negative experience with a man at the helm, the library board decided to give a woman a chance when they appointed Mary E. Foy as city librarian. Interestingly, for a period of twenty-five years—from the summer of 1880 until the summer of 1905—seven consecutive women ran the Los Angeles Public Library. Three of

³⁷ Tucker, John Mark and Goedecken, Edward A. "History of Libraries," *Encyclopedia of Library and Information Science*. p. 2086

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Fiske, Turbesé Lummis and Lummis, Keith. *Charles F. Lummis: The Man and His West*. p. 126

these women, including Mary L. Jones of course, were forced to resign following conflicts with the library board.⁴⁰

Like many other cities around the country during the Progressive Era, educated women in Los Angeles gathered together to socialize in intellectual environments. These women wanted a place to express their opinions with other ladies and were now able to do so in book clubs that were not exclusionary to them because of their gender. Prior to winning the right to vote with the ratification of the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution in 1920, women felt a sense of shared empowerment in the clubs that they had not experienced before. These club women could now discuss literature, culture, social issues and reforms, and political activism with one another in a non-traditional social sphere. Begun by Caroline Severance in 1878, the Friday Morning Club was the first book club established in Los Angeles. By the mid 1890s more than six hundred of such women's clubs had sprouted up in California.⁴¹ The women's clubs of Los Angeles would play a pivotal role in defending Mary Jones upon her dismissal from the public library.

The feminization of many professions including librarianship had begun in 1880. The era of library schools produced a generation of female librarians who were devoted to public service. By 1900, females accounted for 75% of library employees in the United States. At the time of Mary L. Jones' tenure as Los Angeles city librarian, it was not uncommon for women to serve as directors for both public and academic libraries. But be that as it may, it must be acknowledged that as these occupations were being opened up to women so exponentially, many employers recognized this as an excellent opportunity to save money by paying salaries which were not

⁴⁰ Hansen, Debra Gold, et al. "At the Pleasure of the Board: Women Librarians and the Los Angeles Public Library, 1880-1905," *Libraries & Culture*. p. 313-315

⁴¹ Rolle, Andrew. *California: A History*. p. 183

commensurate with those of male employees.⁴² The discriminatory practices exemplified by four of the five men who made up the library board in the Mary Jones case, reflects a larger cultural zeitgeist in which women were still routinely marginalized and treated as second-class citizens by a male-dominated society.

First and foremost, Lummis' had a major financial motivation for seeking the job as City Librarian. He figured that a salaried position which paid \$250 a month could help bring much more stability to his household. After all, worrying about money had been a frequent source of tension between him and his second wife, Eve. The various monthly expenses that were required to maintain his stone castle home, El Alisal, were expected to be covered by this new source of income.⁴³

A CONTROVERSIAL HIRING

On June 21, 1905, the Board of Directors elected Charles F. Lummis to succeed Mary Jones. For several years there had been tension brewing between the female librarian and the Board. She had already been urged by a majority of the Board to resign on June 13, because as they explained to her, a man would be much better suited for her position. When Jones learned that she had actually been replaced by Lummis, she remarked to the press that the “directors seem as crazy after a man as though they were a board of old maids.”⁴⁴ Four of the five members of the Board—consisting of J. W. Trueworthy, Isidore B. Dockweiler, Foster C. Wright, and S. G. Marshutz—voted that Lummis should be the new Los Angeles City Librarian.

⁴² Hansen, Debra Gold, et al. p. 311-312

⁴³ Thompson, Mark. *American Character: the Curious Life of Charles Fletcher Lummis and the Rediscovery of the Southwest*. p. 272

⁴⁴ “Lummis is City Librarian,” *Los Angeles Times*. June 22, 1905.

The lone dissenter on the Board, Willoughby Rodman opposed the election of Lummis to the position because he argued that Mary Jones had not been formally investigated nor given a fair and public hearing. Rodman questioned the legality of her firing, but the Los Angeles City Attorney reassured the other four directors that the firing was perfectly legal. In any event, all five directors were in agreement as to the qualifications of their new librarian. They described Lummis as an accomplished and noted scholar and also “a practical leader” who knew how to “get things done.” In the opinion of the directors, such qualities were much more important than formal library school training. They felt Lummis could identify shortcomings in the library and come up with practical solutions for improvements.⁴⁵

LUMMIS AND HIS EMPLOYEES

Within his first couple months on the job, Lummis had enacted several major changes in the organizational structure of the Los Angeles Public Library. These changes affected virtually every member of the library staff. The new librarian was adamant that the institution’s reliance on rotating assistants, which had been the status quo for years, produced incompetent service in all of the departments. Lummis believed that service to the public might be greatly improved if permanent assistants were designated to work for each of the specific departments. Before August of 1905, the Cataloging Department was the only department in the library which had a steady assistant. In September, permanent assistants were assigned to nine additional departments, including two assistants for the Reference Department.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ *Annual Report of the Los Angeles Public Library – For the Year Ending November 30, 1905.* p. 3, 6-7
Also see: “Lummis is City Librarian,” *Los Angeles Times.* June 22, 1905.

⁴⁶ *Annual Report of the Los Angeles Public Library – For the Year Ending November 30, 1905.* p. 23-24

Lummis felt that one of the more egregious vestiges that had been leftover from his predecessors was an annual salary increase which was automatically handed out to all library employees regardless of their quality of work. This system, in his opinion, had made it so the staff had little incentive to put any extra effort into their jobs. In October of 1905, Lummis' new merit based system for employee salaries and promotions was put into effect. From then on, Lummis would see to it that "the increase of salary...be based on merit and efficiency only."⁴⁷ That being said, the Board of Directors had made sure that everybody's salary was enough to live on, and the monthly salaries of the attendants were raised to be commensurate with those paid in other public libraries.⁴⁸

Lummis sought to bring about a sense of collective spirit among his staff by establishing the Library Senate in 1906. Referring to this organization as "an experiment in democracy," the librarian hoped that it would facilitate better communication between the various departments, the Board of Directors, and himself. Lummis thought this would help to build up camaraderie and have everyone thinking first and foremost about the library as a single cohesive unit. He also believed that his staff should be encouraged to share whatever advice they had to offer, and not just gripe behind his back. On September 12, 1906 the Library Senate of the Los Angeles Public Library was officially instituted, and the librarian optimistically predicted that many other libraries would copy his democratic library experiment.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Ibid. p. 25-26

⁴⁸ Ibid.

Also see: "Seeks Approval of Promotions," *Los Angeles Times*. October 4, 1905.

⁴⁹ *Eighteenth Annual Report of the Los Angeles Public Library – For the Year Ending November 30, 1906*. p. 18-19

IMPROVING AND MODERNIZING THE LOS ANGELES PUBLIC LIBRARY

Charles Lummis' ambitious plan to dramatically upgrade the reference department was arguably his greatest contribution to the Los Angeles Public Library. When he first became librarian, Lummis was extremely critical of the state of the reference collection which he had inherited from his predecessor. Although he conceded that the materials in this department had managed to cover a wide variety of subjects, Lummis still believed that there was plenty of room for improvement. He declared that there were many gaps in the collection and opined that much of the existing material was outdated. Adhering to the principles that, "the first function of any library is not entertainment but instruction," and that "the bony structure of every library should be those departments whose aim is the diffusion of knowledge," Lummis dubbed the reference department to be the "The Backbone of the Library."⁵⁰

Lummis argued that a widespread problem with many public libraries—including the very one at which he landed his job—was having misplaced priorities which essentially neglected the reference function of the library. For this he chiefly blamed the "disease of a big circulation" which he perceived as "being endemic in the public library world" and thus detrimental to the funding of reference services.⁵¹ Moreover, he often stated that circulation alone was by no means a comprehensive measure of what materials or services are the most used since reference materials and services do not circulate. However, Lummis saw that a new trend towards building up reference departments was beginning to gain popularity in many institutions.⁵²

⁵⁰ *Annual Report of the Los Angeles Public Library – For the Year Ending November 30, 1905.* p. 12-13

⁵¹ *Annual Report of the Los Angeles Public Library – For the Year Ending November 30, 1905.* p. 12

⁵² *Ibid.* p. 12-13

In Lummis' own estimation, reference libraries were synonymous with the greatest—and most useful—libraries in the world. During his first year on the job, he frequently measured what he perceived as shortcomings of the library against the best libraries in the United States—most of these were located on the East Coast. Lummis advocated that the Los Angeles Public Library should strive to emulate the model of the New York Public Library. For many years the New York Public Library had placed a strong emphasis on reference materials, and these accounted for approximately 60% of their entire collection in 1905. In a sharp contrast to this statistic, upon Lummis' arrival only about 25% of the Los Angeles Public Library's collection were reference materials.⁵³ The reference department expanded exponentially under Lummis' tenure.

In addition to the enhancing the Reference Department, Lummis also established the Department of Reading, Study and Research in 1905. This new department was likewise intended to facilitate scholarly research while simultaneously reshaping the reputation of the public library as a serious institution and not solely a place to borrow novels for free. Lummis hired Dr. C. J. K. Jones to direct this department from its inception. He described Jones to be “a living encyclopedia” whose brilliance and versatile knowledge would allow him to accommodate the needs of innumerable types of patrons that might seek his assistance.⁵⁴ He had confidence the Jones would successfully collaborate with the head of the Reference Department to make the Department of Reading, Study, and Research “a new and living creature” for the library.⁵⁵

The creation of the Western History-Material Department at the Los Angeles Public Library highlighted Lummis' passion for preserving the heritage of the American Southwest. He complained that before he had become librarian, the library only collected newspaper clippings

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ *Annual Report of the Los Angeles Public Library – For the Year Ending November 30, 1905*. p. 14-15

⁵⁵ Ibid. p. 14

related to libraries, but did not preserve any newspaper clippings specifically related to the history and development of Southern California. Moreover, he lamented that the clippings that were kept were inaccessible since they were not indexed. Lummis stated that Los Angeles Public Library would follow the lead of some of the top libraries in the country which had already understood that it is a library's duty to preserve contemporary history. This department would be primarily devoted to establishing a local archive of California history. This archive was to be easily accessible to patrons so they could quickly find "anything and everything that anyone wishes to know about any phase of the growth and life of this community since 1854."⁵⁶



THE LIBRARY "BRAND" AND ITS APPLICATION

One of the more celebrated innovations Lummis brought to the Los Angeles Public Library was his usage of the branding iron. When he perused three inventories that had been taken during the five years before his hiring, he discovered that an enormous amount of volumes had been lost—and most of these presumably stolen. He determined that for every four books the library had acquired through purchases or donations over this time period, the library had lost one book. To counteract the rampant theft of books from the library, the non-conventional librarian concluded it was time for the institution to take a frontier mentality and begin to brand its stock. That is to say, in order to sufficiently identify that a given book belonged to the library, Lummis proposed burning an official LA Public Library brand into the top of every book in the

⁵⁶ Ibid. p. 15-17

collection. In his opinion, this branding technique was much more practical than the standard identification methods used by the American Library Association at the time. According to Lummis the rationale for the branding method was as follows: “Our paster, book plates, and catalogue numbers are easily removed by the dishonest, and as easily forgotten by the careless. The brand is always in evidence and cannot be removed without ruining the volume.”⁵⁷ The Library Board concurred with the librarian that this precautionary measure was needed to deter book thieves, and authorized him to start branding.⁵⁸

Lummis’ reform of the Registry Department in 1907 was designed to cut off all the bureaucratic ‘red tape’ that had so inconvenienced—or even discouraged—new applicants from becoming library members. The tedious registration process had been exacerbated by the library’s moving from City Hall to the Homer Laughlin Annex. Since the move to the new building during the spring of 1906, whenever a new visitor attempted to take out a library card they were typically forced to wait a couple of days before they could be approved and begin checking out books. This was because the Registry Department had to send an attendant over to verify the assessment roll which was still located at City Hall. Lummis realized he needed to come up with a plan to both simplify and speed up this process. He decided that the only requirement for a person to be granted a library card right on the spot was that their name be listed in a current directory for the city of Los Angeles—a copy of which would be kept at the registry desk. Lummis felt that providing good service to the public was of paramount importance to the library profession. And so, his ‘absurdly simple’ new rules were put into effect on November 4 of that year, and he claimed that the two-day application process had been reduced to a one-minute process. This Registry Department reform of 1907 was likely

⁵⁷ *Annual Report of the Los Angeles Public Library – For the Year Ending November 30, 1905*. p. 36-37

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

appreciated—at least insofar as the library patrons were concerned—as one of Lummis’ most noteworthy achievements as librarian.⁵⁹

ANNUAL REPORTS

Lummis attracted national attention to the Los Angeles Public Library with his annual reports which were regarded as groundbreaking and inspiring by many librarians from around the country. In fact, one librarian was so impressed, he asked Lummis to send him extra copies to share with his colleagues.⁶⁰ The reports varied in length, ranging from 59 to 120 pages, and each conveyed Lummis’ absolute passion for his work. In addition to including statistical data regarding circulation and membership numbers, and information concerning the various library departments—which were, of course, to be expected in any librarian’s report—Lummis used his reports to outline his bold plans for transforming the public library and for librarianship itself. With sections thoughtfully titled like “The Backbone of the Library,” “An Experiment in Democracy,” “Getting Down to the Facts,” “Lessons from Eastern Librarians,” “A Walking Information Desk,” “Cutting off Red Tape,” “The Public First,” “In Touch with the Profession,” and “Bonanzas in California History,” Lummis enthusiastically communicated his vision for improving his public library and potentially bettering the profession as a whole.⁶¹ While many were impressed with Lummis’ reports, others were offended and resented his insinuations that

⁵⁹ *19th Annual Report of the Los Angeles Public Library – For the Year Ending November 30, 1907.* p. 17-18

⁶⁰ Letter from John Cotton Dana to Lummis dated February 26, 1907, available in *Charles F. Lummis Manuscript Collection – MS.1.1.1006A*

⁶¹ *Annual Report of the Los Angeles Public Library – For the Year Ending November 30, 1905.* p. 12

Also see: *Eighteenth Annual Report of the Los Angeles Public Library – For the Year Ending November 30, 1906.* p. 18-19, 31-32

Also see: *19th Annual Report of the Los Angeles Public Library – For the Year Ending November 30, 1907.* p. 17, 20, 69

Also see: *20th Annual Report of the Los Angeles Public Library – For the Year Ending November 30, 1908.* p. 26

there were so many glaring inefficiencies which needed to be remedied within the library field.⁶² However, this excerpt from the annual report for 1906 exemplifies how Lummis inspired many of his peers:

WHAT WE ARE HERE FOR.

My instructions to this staff, many times repeated, with reference to the general character of the institution have been:

“We have found no millionaires; we cannot expect to compete in books and binding with the richest libraries in the greatest cities, with their \$5,000,000 buildings and \$5,000,000 stock. All that depends upon liberalities beyond our control. But we can have, and I wish you to help me to make, the best library in the world, not only of its size but of any size, in cheerfulness, courtesy, accuracy, and promptness with which every patron is given what he desires of anything this library has. Don’t wait for anyone to wake you up—*look* for a chance to be helpful. We do not have to ask any rich man to give us that. It is in our own hands. If anyone becomes impatient with you, that is the time for you to be patient. If you meet discourtesy, increase your own manners. The best capital in the world, in any profession, is consideration. It is also the first duty of all who serve the public. Don’t hurry, don’t worry; and never stop growing.”⁶³

OUTGROWING THE LIBRARY QUARTERS AGAIN AND AGAIN

From 1889 to 1906 the Los Angeles Public Library had been housed within the old City Hall building, rent free. Many library reports prior to Lummis’ had lamented that this was not a suitable location for a public library which had grown to 120,000 volumes by the time he took the helm during the summer of 1905. Of these undesirable accommodations, Lummis wrote, “We have room neither for our books, our work nor our public.”⁶⁴ During the several months he endured in these cramped quarters at City Hall, Lummis observed that the 7,700 square foot

⁶² “Librarians Aroused by Lummis’ Report,” *Los Angeles Herald*. April 5, 1909.

⁶³ *Eighteenth Annual Report of the Los Angeles Public Library – For the Year Ending November 30, 1906*. p. 46

⁶⁴ *Annual Report of the Los Angeles Public Library – For the Year Ending November 30, 1905*. p. 40

library space had to be shared between sixty members of the staff and a daily average of 2,300 visiting patrons, while the cellar and attic were used for overflowed storage. He argued that this was a disgraceful situation for both the library staff and the public alike, and it was unbecoming of a major American city to have a public library trapped in such inadequate quarters.⁶⁵

During March and April of 1906, the Los Angeles Public Library was finally moved out of City Hall and relocated to the Homer Laughlin Annex. Moving more than 150 tons of items, including some 120,000 volumes, along with the newspaper collection, and all the furniture and shelving, was a truly monumental task—and this was accomplished very smoothly despite rainy weather. Indeed, this move was believed to be one of the largest transferences of any American library collection up to that point. What was most remarkable about all of this was that the library was not even closed to the public for a single day during the moving process. To put this in perspective, in 1889 it took two months to move the library's collection of only 6,000 volumes into the City Hall building. The Library Board praised Lummis for systematically planning and personally supervising each and every step of the difficult transfer to the new building. They credited his many practical experiences concerning such matters as being invaluable to the whole operation, and reported that he, “made in black and white every specification for the furnishing and fitting up of the new quarters, and saw that the specifications were carried out.”⁶⁶

The Homer Laughlin Annex provided the library with more than three times as much floor space. A change of quarters had continuously been called for by successive librarians and library boards for over sixteen years.⁶⁷ In addition to giving the library a much larger venue to operate from—with nearly three miles of shelving space—the new building offered vastly

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ *Eighteenth Annual Report of the Los Angeles Public Library – For the Year Ending November 30, 1906*. p. 7
Also see: *Eighteenth Annual Report of the Los Angeles Public Library – For the Year Ending November 30, 1906*. p.16-17

⁶⁷ Ibid. p. 6-7

superior lighting and ventilation. It was also promoted as a “modern fire-proof” structure “with a higher percentage of window-space to floor-space” than any other public library.⁶⁸ The new reading room in the Homer Laughlin building was described by Lummis as being comparable in quality with the reading rooms of other prominent libraries around the country. While the City Hall library had only 9 tables with 128 chairs, the Homer Laughlin library boasted 22 tables with 226 chairs. Lummis proudly reported that this new building featured the “first Otis plunger elevator west of Ohio” and he commented on this elevator’s “admirable service.”⁶⁹

Lummis’ proudest innovation at this library building was the installment of two roof gardens. Thanks to the California weather, these roof gardens were the only ones in the world to be opened year-round. This managed to attract the attention of many envious librarians from around the globe. Each garden was filled with plants and benches so that patrons could enjoy the pleasant Southern California climate while reading a good book outdoors.⁷⁰ One garden was located on the same level as the first floor of the library, while the second and larger garden was located on the roof of the reference room. A section of this larger garden was reserved for female readers, while the rest of this garden was open to all the public—including the smoking public. One of Lummis’ ulterior motives for these gardens was to provide a section of the public library for smokers. He himself had declared his love for tobacco on many occasions throughout his life. He also believed that a public library should be welcoming to all sorts of people and make its readers feel comfortable and right at home. As Lummis wrote so forcefully, “For many years I have marveled greatly that public libraries—supported as largely as they are in proportion

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid. p. 16-17

⁷⁰ *Eighteenth Annual Report of the Los Angeles Public Library – For the Year Ending November 30, 1906*, p. 24-26
Also see: *Eighteenth Annual Report of the Los Angeles Public Library – For the Year Ending November 30, 1906*, p. 6-7

Also see: “Library Faces Greater Duty,” *Los Angeles Times*. April 29, 1906.

of taxpayers to smokers—should make a particular, and sometimes violent, effort to prevent smokers from reading.”⁷¹ Keeping in mind that these gardens were located at a temporary rented library facility, the Library Board anticipated that the plants could later be transferred to a permanent library building which would hopefully be constructed by the city in the future.⁷²

After spending more than a year in the Homer Laughlin Annex, Lummis stated that this temporary location would no longer be sufficient quarters for the library. In 1907, the librarian called for the Los Angeles Public Library to eventually have its own building. Lummis let it be known that he felt it was a shameful travesty that a prosperous and rapidly growing city the size of Los Angeles did not own a building exclusively devoted to housing the main collection of its public library.⁷³ During his inaugural address on January 7, 1907, newly elected Mayor of Los Angeles, Arthur C. Harper, had already called for the library to have its own building located in Central Park. The majority of comparatively sized American cities had constructed “fine public buildings” for their libraries. Mayor Harper recognized that the public library should be both a “source of pride” and an “actual asset” to the city of Los Angeles. In his speech, the Mayor also demonstrated his enthusiastic support for a new library building with the following statement: “While we have more than our share of urgent civic problems, we should no longer neglect this fundamental one.”⁷⁴

On February 25, 1908, Lummis wrote that the Los Angeles Public Library could not wait any longer for a brand new building to be constructed and it would already have to move out of the Homer Laughlin Annex to larger quarters. When the library first moved to this temporary facility in 1906, it was mistakenly assumed that this location would have no trouble housing the

⁷¹ *Eighteenth Annual Report of the Los Angeles Public Library – For the Year Ending November 30, 1906.* p. 24-26

⁷² *Ibid.* p. 6-7

⁷³ *19th Annual Report of the Los Angeles Public Library – For the Year Ending November 30, 1907.* p. 16

⁷⁴ *Eighteenth Annual Report of the Los Angeles Public Library – For the Year Ending November 30, 1906.* p. 93

collection until the library were to have its own building. But, as Lummis explained, no one had anticipated that such an “astonishing growth in the internal use of the library” could transpire in such a short amount of time.⁷⁵ It had not even been two years since the move from City Hall to the Homer Laughlin Annex, and the library once again found itself in the same overcrowded predicament. Nevertheless, Lummis was pleasantly surprised to discover that having a larger library space had actually translated into a much larger usage and demand by the public. In response to this, the Board of Directors ruled that the library would once again be relocated, and this time to a then state-of-the-art \$1,750,000 building located at Eighth and Broadway.⁷⁶

In September of 1908, the Los Angeles Public Library was successfully moved from the Homer Laughlin Annex to the Hamburger Department Store building. The move began at 7 a.m. on September 7th and amazingly concluded by 9:15 p.m. on September 9th. Once again, the library was not closed for a single day during the moving process, and the entire collection was open to the public on the morning of September 10th. The Hamburger building provided the library with three times as much floor space as the previous building. The stunning success of the library had necessitated two moves in less than three years. Thus, the physical space for the library had multiplied by approximately nine times in this short period. The installation of a new roof garden was also under way at this new facility, and this one was to be 4 ½ times the size of the previous gardens.⁷⁷ Lummis’ new garden would offer extraordinary panoramic views of the city and its surrounding landscape—unlike the previous gardens which mostly offered views of the back walls of neighboring buildings. This new department store building was supposed to be both fire and earthquake proof and the library surely benefited from its ten elevators—eight elevators were for passengers while two were for freight. The library itself was located on the

⁷⁵ 19th Annual Report of the Los Angeles Public Library – For the Year Ending November 30, 1907. p. 14-15

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ 20th Annual Report of the Los Angeles Public Library – For the Year Ending November 30, 1908. p. 6-8

third floor of this building, and Lummis deemed it to be an “admirable location for the largest public library west of St. Louis.”⁷⁸

EXCHANGING IDEAS WITH FELLOW LIBRARIANS

Lummis recognized that there was an inherent value in communicating with his fellow librarians from all around the country. Indeed, this activity would become an integral part of his professional development as a librarian. Throughout his librarianship, Lummis exchanged many correspondences with some of the great minds of the field. These included such prominent American librarians as John Cotton Dana, Herbert Putnam, Adelaide Hasse, and William Parker Cutter—to name just a handful. In addition to writing letters to his contemporaries, Lummis also enjoyed spending time with his fellow librarians in person. And whenever he visited another major metropolitan area, Lummis made sure to visit its library to see if he could take away any valuable knowledge from its practices. As Lummis once wrote, “What distinguishes a Profession from a ‘job’ is not more the technical training than the spirit of willingness to help, and to be helped by, your fellows.”⁷⁹

Even prior to becoming librarian himself, Lummis—being a well-known book-collector, writer, and journalist—frequently corresponded with some well-known librarians. For example, in the spring of 1905, Lummis exchanged a couple of letters with John Shaw Billings. Billings, the first director of the New York Public Library, wrote to Lummis, explaining that he was very interested in acquiring a set of his *Southwest Society* bulletins to add to his library’s collection. Lummis responded that he would gladly fulfill Billings’ request, and also assured him that he

⁷⁸ *19th Annual Report of the Los Angeles Public Library – For the Year Ending November 30, 1907*. p. 14-15

⁷⁹ *Ibid.* p. 70

would add him to the society's mailing list. He also explained to Billings more about how his society was passionately committed to the preservation of the American Southwest and that its extensive collections were destined to become a part of a future museum in Los Angeles. The Southwest Society's mission to preserve cultural heritage, was exemplified, Lummis explained, by its recording of approximately 600 old Indian and Spanish folk songs which could then be enjoyed for posterity. Quite pleased that such a prestigious library had taken an interest in a publication which celebrated the cultural diversity of the Southwestern region of the country, Lummis wrote Billings that he would like to count the New York Public Library as a new member of the society.⁸⁰

When Lummis established the Department of Western History in 1905, he wrote that he was inspired to do so by some of the more forward-thinking libraries in the country. The Los Angeles Public Library, he acknowledged, was especially indebted to the examples set by the Wisconsin State Library, the Massachusetts State Library, and the California State Library. These libraries understood just how important the preservation of contemporary history would be for future historians. Lummis sought to emulate the 'magnificent leadership' demonstrated by the Wisconsin State Library on this matter. In addition to the many scholars who wrote inquiries to the Los Angeles Public Library regarding the creation of this new department, some librarians wrote Lummis, as well. The librarian from the State Library of Massachusetts, C.B. Tillinghast, not only wrote to congratulate Lummis for his preservation of newspaper clippings, but also offered him advice pertaining to the specific methods Tillinghast used at his library.⁸¹

Seeking to increase the efficiency of the Los Angeles Public Library, Lummis did not hesitate to initiate contact with his fellow librarians. He hoped to gain valuable insight from

⁸⁰ Letter from John Shaw Billings to Lummis, dated April 25, 1905 & Letter from Charles F. Lummis to John Shaw Billings dated May 6, 1905 both available in *Charles F. Lummis Manuscript Collection – MS.1.1.352*

⁸¹ *Annual Report of the Los Angeles Public Library – For the Year Ending November 30, 1905.* p. 16-18

their experiences and diligently surveyed their opinions on various library policies. For instance, in early September of 1905—just a couple months after he had been sworn in as librarian—Lummis sent out a personal letter addressed to the heads of the first one hundred American libraries, asking whether or not they used Dewey Decimal Classification or if they used some kind of modified version of it to accommodate the specific needs of their collections. For those who used Dewey, but who did not fully employ the system in their libraries, Lummis requested that they provide him with an outline of the modified classification system they had put in place, and asked them to explain their rationale for taking such an approach. Out of the one hundred libraries contacted, sixty-six responded to Lummis. Of these, twenty-eight libraries indicated that they did not use Dewey at all, while twenty-nine responded that they used a modified version of Dewey. Only nine of the libraries who replied claimed that they employed the Dewey system almost literally. Lummis noted that the New York Public Library, Harvard College Library, and the Library of Congress, were among the twenty-eight libraries that did not use it. Based on the responses to his survey about the Dewey scheme, he determined that the “most scholarly libraries in the United States do not use it—nor the most important.”⁸² Lummis admitted in his report that much as he would have liked to rid his library of the Dewey system altogether, budgetary constraints forced him to opt for a modified version of Dewey instead.⁸³

When other librarians wrote to Lummis about current events that affected the profession as a whole, he earnestly replied to them. In early April, 1906, Lummis received a letter from William Parker Cutter—nephew and biographer of Charles Ammi Cutter—concerning W.P. Cutter’s advocacy for the formation of a Library Copyright League, which could be directly funded by librarians and their governing boards. Very committed to ensuring the well-being of

⁸² *Annual Report of the Los Angeles Public Library – For the Year Ending November 30, 1905*. p. 29

⁸³ *Ibid.*

libraries, Cutter argued that all librarians needed to rally together to form an organization whose purpose would be to prevent ‘hostile’ copyright legislation from successfully passing through the United States Congress. He believed that the American Library Association was much too bureaucratic and lacked the proper financial resources to combat this proposed copyright bill in a timely manner. As an outraged Cutter explained to Lummis, the bill was going to seriously curtail every American library’s ability to import books.⁸⁴ Lummis responded to his letter, promising that he would present Cutter’s case to the progressive Board of Directors of the Los Angeles Public Library and urge them to help in this cause to avert such ‘ignorant legislation’ from going forward. But he admitted that the library was unlikely to offer any significant financial support to Cutter’s copyright league, because they were just finishing up a costly move of the collection from City Hall to the Homer Laughlin Annex.⁸⁵

Since 1890 the Board of Directors of the Los Angeles Public Library had instituted a policy that the Head Librarian was expected to attend the American Library Association’s annual conference every year. And so, in the summer of 1906, Lummis traveled to Narragansett Pier, Rhode Island to attend the 28th annual conference of the A.L.A., where more than 900 of his fellow librarians were also in attendance.⁸⁶ Despite all of the commotion that his sudden appointment as librarian had produced during the association’s 27th conference in Portland, Oregon the previous summer, Lummis still felt it was his duty to represent his institution. Furthermore, he also hoped to learn from his contemporaries who were trying to advance the profession.

⁸⁴ Letter from W.P. Cutter to Lummis, dated April 1, 1906 available in *Charles F. Lummis Manuscript Collection – MS.1.1.987*

⁸⁵ Letter from Lummis to W.P. Cutter, dated April 12, 1906 available in *Charles F. Lummis Manuscript Collection – MS.1.1.987*.

⁸⁶ *Eighteenth Annual Report of the Los Angeles Public Library – For the Year Ending November 30, 1906*. p. 31-32

In addition to making the trip to the A.L.A. conference during that July of 1906, Lummis also took the opportunity to visit a score of libraries during his cross-country travels. These visits allowed him to bring back a plethora of ‘suggestions of utility’ which could then be put in place at the Los Angeles Public Library—according to the Board of Directors.⁸⁷ Lummis had an extremely busy itinerary for this thirty day trip which spanned some 9,000 miles, but he later concluded that his effort had not been altogether futile. His library ‘inspections’ included stops at the Providence Public Library, the Boston Public Library, the New York Public Library, the Astor Library, the Lenox Library, the Geographical Society Library, the Newark Public Library, the Washington, D.C. Public Library, the Library of Congress, the Chicago Public Library, and “every prominent reference library in the Eastern States.”⁸⁸

During this 1906 whirlwind tour of America’s libraries, Lummis recorded his most memorable impressions in his daily journal entries. To his surprise he found that the libraries of New England were blessed with even less attractive quarters than his own institution. However, he was not at all surprised by the considerably worse weather that he encountered.⁸⁹ After taking a train from Boston to New York City on July 16, Lummis caught up with a couple of his old acquaintances, Tessa Kelso and Adelaide Hasse, the following day. Both ladies had previously worked at the Los Angeles Public Library a decade before Lummis took the helm. Kelso was formerly the head librarian, while Hasse worked as one of her assistant librarians. After taking the two out to lunch and then waiting for a thunderstorm to subside, Lummis accompanied Hasse over to the New York Public Library’s central office, which gave him a chance to make a

⁸⁷ Ibid. p. 12

⁸⁸ *Eighteenth Annual Report of the Los Angeles Public Library – For the Year Ending November 30, 1906.* p. 31-32
Also see: *Charles F. Lummis Manuscript Collection – MS.1.2.28 & MS.1.2.29*

⁸⁹ Lummis’ journal entry for July 16, 1906 available in *Charles F. Lummis Manuscript Collection – MS.1.2.28 & MS.1.2.29*

thorough inspection of its library practices. And somehow, he also managed to make trips to Scribner's as well as two other publishing houses on this very same day.⁹⁰

This busy vacation schedule continued the next day. With his archaeological mentor Adolph Bandelier as his guide, Lummis toured the Astor Library, the Lenox Library, and the Geographical Society Library. He truly regretted not having more time to spend at each of these fascinating locations. However, Lummis was fortunate enough to meet with a librarian whom he considered to be the 'foremost bibliographer in America' at the Lenox Library. Wilberforce Eames was very accommodating with his guest and showed Lummis some of the Lenox collection's greatest treasures.⁹¹

From New York, Lummis headed over to Newark, New Jersey. When he arrived at the Newark Public Library he was very disappointed to learn that John Cotton Dana was out of town. Nevertheless, Dana's 'mighty nice' female librarians were happy to give Lummis a tour of the library. These ladies were already familiar with Lummis before meeting him, because Dana had previously distributed copies of his Annual Report of the Los Angeles Public Library to them. Dana apparently thought so highly of Lummis' innovative approach to librarianship that he assigned the annual report as a textbook to his employees. Just as Dana had valued the creative solutions articulated by Lummis in his report, Lummis felt that he himself had learned some useful practices from visiting Dana's library. After this, Lummis traveled to Washington, D.C. and then to Chicago, before finally heading back to Los Angeles.⁹²

⁹⁰ Lummis' journal entry for July 17, 1906 available in *Charles F. Lummis Manuscript Collection – MS.1.2.28 & MS.1.2.29*

⁹¹ Lummis' journal entry for July 18, 1906 available in *Charles F. Lummis Manuscript Collection – MS.1.2.28 & MS.1.2.29*

⁹² Lummis' journal entries for July 18 and 20, 1906 available in *Charles F. Lummis Manuscript Collection – MS.1.2.28 & MS.1.2.29*

With a section titled ‘Lessons from Eastern Libraries,’ included in his next annual report, Lummis reflected upon some of the main things that he learned from his month-long trip during the summer of 1906. In the report, Lummis spends far more space summarizing the lessons about what to avoid. He noticed that many Eastern Libraries had foolishly overemphasized impressive exterior architecture, but neglected their poorly lit and poorly ventilated interior reading spaces. Of his visits to such libraries, Lummis remarked that he “did not find a reader who was comforted for his dark corner by remembering the noble Corinthian columns on the outside of the building.”⁹³ Although Lummis felt that the Los Angeles Public Library could strongly benefit from the things he learned regarding the construction of library interiors, he lamented that his library currently did not have adequate funding to begin constructing their own building.⁹⁴

Most importantly, Lummis learned to avoid what he considered to be an ‘insolence of office.’ He absolutely abhorred the pompous and elitist behavior, which he felt was habitually exhibited by so many members of his profession at the time. He criticized how—in some of the wealthiest American libraries he had inspected—many seated attendants clearly appeared as though they did not want to be bothered with assisting ‘mere’ patrons. Lummis further clarified his position on this matter writing, “Perhaps nothing more instantly ruffles a patron that to be patronized; and I intend to have it understood in this library that our employees are to serve the public—not to tolerate it.”⁹⁵

Although Lummis had had his share of quarrels with the many ‘pompous asses’ whom he perceived to be plaguing librarianship, he still believed that it was his ethical duty to see to it that his library was actively involved with major organizations which were devoted to advancing the

⁹³ *Eighteenth Annual Report of the Los Angeles Public Library – For the Year Ending November 30, 1906.* p. 31-32

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

profession. Considering that the Los Angeles Public Library had practiced a seventeen-year-long tradition of sending its head librarian to represent the institution at each annual American Library Association convention, Lummis found it decidedly ironic to learn in November of 1906, that his library had never actually been of a member of the A.L.A. Once he realized that this was the case, he contacted the Board and they had the library join the organization immediately. Envisioning how his library could play a more active role in the advancement of libraries nationally, Lummis began at this time a futile effort to bring the A.L.A. conference to the city of Los Angeles in 1908.⁹⁶

The library also joined the California Library Association in 1906, and would likewise become a very active participant in the statewide organization. Lummis noted that several of his staff had also taken out C.L.A. memberships.⁹⁷ On January 4, 1907, Lummis took a train out to Redlands where he attended the annual meeting of the C.L.A. He was joined there by a number of delegates from his own institution. And Lummis conceded that of the approximately seventy-five ‘honorable’ librarians who were in attendance—with the exception of “some old maids of both sexes”—many seemed to be nice and interesting people to converse with. He wrote that he was particularly impressed with the head librarians he encountered from the California State Library, the Stanford Library, the Sacramento Public Library, and the Oakland Public Library. State Librarian James L. Gillis befriended Lummis and introduced him to some members of his talented staff including a law reference expert and the head of the State Library’s history-material department. On January 6, Gillis and one of his staff spent a couple hours ‘joyfully’ touring the Los Angeles Public Library.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ Ibid. p. 53, 55

⁹⁷ Ibid. p. 53

⁹⁸ Lummis’ journal entries for January 2, 5, and 6, 1907 available in *Charles F. Lummis Manuscript Collection – MS.1.2.43 & MS.1.2.44 to MS.1.2.47*

As time progressed, Lummis' reputation as a brilliant and creative librarian had grown prodigiously among many of his peers. On January 28, 1907, Lummis wrote in his journal that he still frequently received warm letters from Eastern librarians—and these letters were often in reference to his library reports. Indeed, he received letters from librarian Bernard R. Green, of the Library of Congress, as well as Harvard University Librarian William Coolidge Lane, on that very day.⁹⁹ In Green's letter, he expressed to Lummis that he looked forward to his next visit to the East. He had learned many interesting and valuable things when he visited the Los Angeles Public Library in December, but regretted not having had an opportunity to meet with Lummis in person on that occasion. As Green further explained, some first-hand guidance from Lummis on library affairs would have been most invaluable to him and the Library of Congress.¹⁰⁰ Lane's letter praised Lummis' new report summary that appeared in *The Herald*, and also congratulated Lummis for taking the library "in so many good directions," while introducing "a great many common sense ideas."¹⁰¹

In a letter dated January 25, 1907, librarian Joseph F. Daniels also let Lummis know just how much he admired the advance newspaper summary of the annual report:

...the obvious intelligence used in directing the library as a machine of public service is what strikes me and I am sure that it must so impress the thinking people of Los Angeles... That you were mistaken for a simple and picturesque figure that had accidentally wandered into public life through one of those unaccountable shifts of rapid adjustment for which the social forces seem to have an affinity, is no longer the point of view of the Los Angeles public nor the library world, and it is reason for congratulation.¹⁰²

⁹⁹ Lummis' journal entry for January 28, 1907 available in *Charles F. Lummis Manuscript Collection – MS.1.2.44 to MS.1.2.47*

¹⁰⁰ Letter from Bernard R. Green to Lummis, dated January 22, 1907 available in *Charles F. Lummis Manuscript Collection – MS.1.1.1773*

¹⁰¹ Letter from William Coolidge Lane to Lummis, dated January 22, 1907 available in *Charles F. Lummis Manuscript Collection – MS.1.1.2559*

¹⁰² Letter from Joseph F. Daniels to Lummis, dated January 25, 1907 available in *Charles F. Lummis Manuscript Collection – MS.1.1.1014A*

Lummis proudly wrote in his journal entry for February 11, 1907, that copies of the 18th Annual Report of the Los Angeles Public Library had been sent out in the mail, and that “the whole edition will soon be on its way throughout the country.”¹⁰³ On February 26, John Cotton Dana, of the Newark Public Library, wrote a letter in which he expressed his gratitude to Lummis for sending him a copy of this ‘most interesting’ report. What’s more, Dana asked if Lummis wouldn’t mind sparing another half dozen copies of the report, so that he could then “pass them ’round.”¹⁰⁴ And a couple months later, Lummis received a letter from Stanford University Librarian Melvin G. Dodge, also thanking him for a copy of the report, which he found to be “interesting and suggestive reading.”¹⁰⁵

In May and June of 1907, Lummis again represented the Los Angeles Public Library at the 29th Annual Conference of the American Library Association. This year, over 400 delegates from nationwide gathered together at the conference in Asheville, North Carolina. Lummis believed it was important to maintain good ‘foreign relations’ and to keep in touch with what was going on in the profession. In Asheville, Lummis tried but failed to secure the 30th Annual Conference for Los Angeles the following summer—which would wind up being held in Lake Minnetonka, Minnesota. Lummis was then led to believe that the 31st Annual Conference was likely to be held in Los Angeles in 1909—but this would not come to fruition, either. With the encouragement of the Library Board, Lummis again visited many libraries while on this 1907 trip. Lummis summarized his annual tour of libraries, writing that he “studied the public,

¹⁰³ Lummis’ journal Entry for February 11, 1907 available in *Charles F. Lummis Manuscript Collection – MS.1.2.44 to MS.1.2.47*

¹⁰⁴ Letter from John Cotton Dana to Lummis, dated February 26, 1907 available in *Charles F. Lummis Manuscript Collection – MS.1.1.1006A*

¹⁰⁵ Letter from Melvin G. Dodge to Lummis, dated April 18, 1907 available in *Charles F. Lummis Manuscript Collection – MS.1.1.1150*

reference and other libraries of Washington, New York, Boston, Cambridge, Chicago, and other leading Eastern Cities; and endeavored to learn what might be of use to this Western library.”¹⁰⁶

Some might argue that the most noteworthy occurrence at the Asheville conference was in fact Lummis’ establishment of the Bibliosmiles – A rally of Librarians who are Nevertheless Human. This playful organization of subversive librarians was limited to thirty members, but its charter class included some of the most significant librarians in the country such as John Cotton Dana and W.P. Cutter. It was determined that their annual meetings would conveniently—and very appropriately—coincide with those of the A.L.A. The primary intent was to act as a “mild protest against the solemnity into which the profession has fallen...” And so, the Bibliosmiles was born amidst another solemn A.L.A. conference. Lummis described this birth with reference to biblical scripture: “that grave and reverend body [the A.L.A.] enjoyed an unexpected parthenogenesis, (*vide*, Isaiah 9-6).”¹⁰⁷

In 1907 Lummis also devoted a large amount of his time to communicating with other American libraries about best practices and library policies. During this year, he sent out many circular letters addressed to seventy-five to one hundred of the top public and reference libraries in the country—and he soon discovered that their aggregate experiences could in time greatly benefit the Los Angeles Public Library. Lummis asked each library to share with him their experiences concerning such matters as: cost of circulation, registration methods, payroll, open shelves, civil service restrictions, library furniture, card stock, and many other challenges that were commonly faced throughout the profession. He then tabulated their responses to the questionnaires regarding these and many other categories.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ *19th Annual Report of the Los Angeles Public Library – For the Year Ending November 30, 1907.* p. 9, 69

¹⁰⁷ *19th Annual Report of the Los Angeles Public Library – For the Year Ending November 30, 1907.* p. 69

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.* p. 70, 73-74

Having found that one of the greatest obstacles to making the Los Angeles Public Library run more efficiently was an excessive amount of restrictions put on the Library Board regarding spending, Lummis surveyed other libraries to see if they had to deal with any similar degree of micromanagement from their city auditors. Lummis was convinced by the responses he received to this letter, that he was indeed stuck in *the* library with more bureaucratic red tape than any other in the country. With this being the case, he concluded that his ‘excruciatingly methodical’ library also needed to be “the wisest and most economical in the country.”¹⁰⁹

In addition to focusing on his own growth and professional development in librarianship, which he achieved by seeking out and learning from other members of his profession, Lummis also encouraged his staff to expand their own horizons, as well. For example, he recommended that the Library Board institute a new policy, beginning in 1908, which would allow one of the young women librarians to travel across the country and take the grand tour of the magnificent Eastern libraries over a three to six month period. Or they could instead choose to study at one of the Eastern library schools during such a sabbatical trip. They were to receive full pay during their journey, and would also be provided with a small stipend for living expenses. Lummis felt that department heads ought to be given top priority for this extraordinary privilege, and he was very confident that it would be a most profitable expenditure for the library. He believed that there was always much to be learned from traveling and associating with other librarians across the United States, because one is bound to occasionally encounter some clever librarian who has come up with some new and useful invention or technique. Yet, Lummis was also just as adamant that any woman chosen from his staff who had experienced the “hardships of a frontier

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. p. 73-74

library...will not be in danger to become infected with the foolish fads of which there are many in so-called 'Library Science'.”¹¹⁰

Lummis traveled to Lake Minnetonka, Minnesota for the 30th Annual American Library Association Conference which lasted from June 22-27, 1908. This time he looked forward to the somber occasion with the ulterior motive that he would also be able to enjoy the annual meeting of the Bibliosmiles. After fleeing from an A.L.A. banquet in St. Paul, Lummis was accompanied by fellow Bibliosmile Gillis and they stopped by the Minneapolis Public Library together. After their tour of the library, they attended the first Annual Banquet of the Bibliosmiles. The members enjoyed 'splendid' food and fine wine, and Lummis brought along some Apricot brandy. Unfortunately, several members, including Dana, Green, and Kelso, were unable to make it to Minnesota. Some of the librarians who were in attendance for the celebrations included Charles R. Dudley of Denver Public Library, W.P. Cutter from Forbes Library in Northampton, Francis Drury from the University of Illinois, Harold Leupp of the University of Chicago, George W. Peckham of Milwaukee Public Library, and Gillis of the California State Library. Lummis enjoyed participating in festivities by playing his guitar and singing songs with Dudley.¹¹¹ Such happy times were short-lived though.

During the next evening, Lummis was informed by the 'stupid' Council of the American Library Association that Los Angeles' bid to host the Annual meeting of 1909 had been rejected. "They turned it down for Louisville—Louisville in June!" wrote an infuriated Lummis in his journal.¹¹² A more subdued Lummis would later take a less hostile tone in his annual report when discussing this matter. In the official report, he explained that the Council merely considered it to be too soon to have another transcontinental conference after the Portland

¹¹⁰ Ibid. p. 76

¹¹¹ Lummis' journal entry for June 29, 1908 available in *Charles F. Lummis Manuscript Collection – MS.1.2.6.5*

¹¹² Ibid.

conference of 1905. Lummis also recounts how he made an impassioned plea for the conference to be held in Los Angeles:

It was urged upon them that this national Association of Librarians had never met in nor seen the most important quarter of the United States, the arid Southwest; that its members are nearly all unfamiliar with the greatest economic problem before this government today, the reclamation of the arid lands; and know nothing personally about those vital phases of American history, geography and development about which they are consulted daily—such as irrigation, orange growing, fruit packing, the Pueblo Indians, forest preserves, the Great American Desert, National Parks, the Cliff Dwellers, Spanish America and many other things involved in the Southwest with which they would become more or less acquainted by a visit to Los Angeles.¹¹³

As he did in each of the two previous years, after leaving the A.L.A. Conference, Lummis proceeded to embark on yet another cross-country journey touring America's libraries in 1908. While in Minnesota, in addition to visiting the Minneapolis Public Library, he visited the St. Paul Library. Lummis then traveled to libraries in: "Boston, Cambridge, New York, Chicago, Newark, Washington, New Haven, Montreal, Providence, and other public and reference libraries in the East; with special reference to methods which might be available for the Los Angeles Public Library."¹¹⁴ On July 3, Lummis visited the Boston Public Library where he discussed the policy of closed shelves, among other things, with a couple of the librarians. When he visited the Harvard College Library on this trip, Lane was out of town, but Lummis still extracted some useful information from one of the assistant librarians. Regarding these library visits, Lummis wrote: "I've caught several mighty good ideas in the East—from people who don't dare use them, and rather apologize for having them. But I can use them."¹¹⁵ But, he was much less complimentary towards the New Haven Public Library, which he deemed to be a

¹¹³ *20th Annual Report of the Los Angeles Public Library – For the Year Ending November 30, 1908.* p. 48

¹¹⁴ *20th Annual Report of the Los Angeles Public Library – For the Year Ending November 30, 1908.* p. 49

¹¹⁵ Lummis' journal entry for July 3, 1908 available in *Charles F. Lummis Manuscript Collection – MS.1.2.6.7 to MS.1.2.69*

rathole. Located in a poorly lit, antiquated old church building, with poor air circulation, Lummis found this library to be even less hospitable than the Los Angeles Public Library's old quarters at City Hall. Lummis must have found it somewhat amusing that this library bragged about having an open shelves policy, when he noted, "it has about three persons patronizing it, and about six attendants."¹¹⁶

In contrast, Lummis was thrilled to once again have a chance to spend some of his time at the Newark Public Library. This year, Dana was available to entertain Lummis, and he and his assistants gave Lummis a detailed tour of the entire collection, which Lummis credited with teaching him several useful things. Lummis also praised Dana for having the "best organized public library in the country."¹¹⁷

Lummis visited the Library of Congress in mid July of 1908. He was honored to be given a personal tour by its famous director Herbert Putnam. Given such a pleasant display of warm hospitality, Lummis perceived that Putnam must have now had a more favorable opinion of him, since just three years earlier he had butted into the Great Library War by siding in favor of Mary Jones.¹¹⁸

Lummis' overall impression was that none of the libraries he visited on this 1908 trip—with the Chicago Public Library being the one exception—could compare to the massive crowds of patrons that now overwhelmed the Los Angeles Public Library on a daily basis. Coming to the realization that the reading public of Los Angeles was then the most active in the country emboldened Lummis all the more. Since his patrons were the most prolific library users, he felt

¹¹⁶ Lummis' journal entry for July 7, 1908 available in *Charles F. Lummis Manuscript Collection – MS.1.2.6.7 to MS.1.2.69*

¹¹⁷ Lummis' journal entry for July 24, 1908 available in *Charles F. Lummis Manuscript Collection – MS.1.2.6.7 to MS.1.2.69*

¹¹⁸ Lummis' journal entry for July 14, 1908 available in *Charles F. Lummis Manuscript Collection – MS.1.2.6.7 to MS.1.2.69*

that they deserved the best service possible. Lummis believed it was his responsibility to “take advantage of every improvement in library work devised by other libraries...” and that he “should try to devise further ingenuities of business and of scholarship for more effective service to meet this unparalleled demand.”¹¹⁹

“poison label”

**“There are more reliable works on this subject.
Consult, for instance, _____.”**

In 1909, Lummis continued to seek the advice of other librarians. He was especially interested to hear their opinions regarding the appropriateness of a specific library policy he recently implemented. Recognizing that his ‘Literary Pure Food Act’ or ‘Poison Label,’ as he and his staff jokingly referred to it, might be considered somewhat controversial, he wanted to find out what various libraries thought about the idea of placing warning labels on library textbooks that were considered to be obsolete or factually inaccurate.¹²⁰ Lummis elsewhere stated that this warning label was “not censorship, nor any other partisan procedure, but rather a sort of ‘Glorified Cross-Reference,’ to be employed with the same tact which is necessary in all other functions of a public library.”¹²¹

Lummis sent out a letter and questionnaire to seventy-five American libraries, asking them whether or not they agreed with his philosophy that it was the library’s role to advise its patrons on a given reference book’s dependability. There were several more specific questions asked in the questionnaire. Lummis wanted to know whether or not the libraries felt that they

¹¹⁹ *20th Annual Report of the Los Angeles Public Library – For the Year Ending November 30, 1908.* p. 49

¹²⁰ *21st Annual Report of the Los Angeles Public Library – For the Year Ending June 30, 1909.* p. 29-39

¹²¹ *Ibid.* p. 38

would bear any responsibility if the textbooks they provided to patrons gave them inaccurate information. He also asked the libraries whether there was any justification for advising patrons to read particular works of fiction, when librarians are not encouraged to recommend one factual history or scientific text over another. Furthermore, Lummis wanted to know how many libraries would have any objection to inserting a plate featuring either a warning label or cross-references. He also sought their opinion as to whether the A.L.A. ought to develop a uniform system for the evaluation of textbooks.¹²²

Of the thirty-two libraries that responded to Lummis' questionnaire, twenty-nine answered that they would feel responsible for giving inaccurate information in textbooks. Most libraries responded that they did not see any justification for treating fiction and non-fiction so unequally when it came to advising patrons. However, one library felt it was justified since it can be very difficult to evaluate a textbook's factual accuracy. And most of the libraries responded that they had no objections to inserting plates in books. One who had no objection offered the caveat that the librarian inserting such a warning label must be completely positive about the factual inaccuracy of the textbook. Another thought it sounded like a complete waste of time and effort. And Dartmouth College replied that such determinations ought to be made by school boards and educators, and not by librarians. However, there was a nearly unanimous consensus regarding Lummis' proposal to have the A.L.A. establish a uniform system to evaluate the factual accuracy in textbooks.¹²³

¹²² Ibid. p. 29-39

¹²³ Ibid.

(Note: The A.L.A. now opposes using labels that discourage readers from using certain books)

MARKETING THE LIBRARY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Whether people came to the Los Angeles Public Library merely for casual recreation or to better their minds, Lummis advocated that his institution must strive to treat everyone equally and provide the same level of outstanding service to anybody who visited the collection—and do this regardless of which socioeconomic class a visitor belonged. After all, the public library, in his estimation, ought to be committed to helping its patrons fulfill their “desire to learn—to learn *anything*—but at the same time and in due proportion, to give full service to those who wish to appear to have learned, and to those who have time to kill.”¹²⁴ While he conceded that a public library differed from a strictly reference library like the Library of Congress, which catered almost exclusively to specialists, Lummis nevertheless believed that the main purpose of helping scholars find what they are looking for was something all libraries had in common. However, Lummis redefined ‘scholar’ for his public library to not only refer to an erudite professor, but also working men, clubwomen, schoolboys, and anybody who wished to learn something.¹²⁵ The Los Angeles Public Library exemplified the concept of ‘the People’s University,’ where anyone could become a student—and many did.¹²⁶

The Reference Department established a subdivision devoted to the Applied Sciences in 1908. Lummis believed this would do more practical good for the community than any other part of the library, and he predicted that within five years this would become the most used portion of the entire collection. The library spent more than \$2,000 purchasing the most up-to-date textbooks, encyclopedias, dictionaries, and maps to help build up this subdivision. With these materials at their disposal, Lummis contended, any adult or child who had ever dreamt of

¹²⁴ *Eighteenth Annual Report of the Los Angeles Public Library – For the Year Ending November 30, 1906.* p. 55

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ *20th Annual Report of the Los Angeles Public Library – For the Year Ending November 30, 1908.* p. 65

becoming an electrical engineer, a chemist, or an assayer would now be able make their dreams come true at their public library.¹²⁷ A year later, he stated that the Reference Department could boast to having the best resources relating to the applied sciences of any collection within 3,000 miles.¹²⁸

Community outreach was one of Lummis' major obsessions. During his first year on the job, he knew that there were many citizens of Los Angeles who had still never bothered to visit the Los Angeles Public Library. Of course, he hoped to soon change this. As Lummis wrote, "There is no way to force professional men and mechanics into these rooms. There may be a way to carry these rooms to them—and that is what this library is now endeavoring to do."¹²⁹ Lummis was devoted to reaching out to multiple constituencies, and he attempted to persuade each and every one of them that the public library was a wonderful 'utility' that they really ought to be taking advantage of. In his opinion, there needed to be a much more concerted effort to market the library's many strengths to people who could clearly benefit from them. He wanted to demonstrate to all the different types of professionals in the city—e.g. doctors, lawyers, bankers, store managers, mechanics, architects, contractors, carpenters, painters, etc.—that the public library had things that could help them prosper in whatever trade they pursued. In 1905, the library further illustrated its commitment to outreach by sending out comprehensive lists of the thousands of architectural photographs in the collection to "every architect and contractor in the city," while pleading for them to take advantage of such valuable resources.¹³⁰

Lummis identified two primary underserved user populations for his library's outreach efforts: the 'laboring' class and the 'business' class. He acknowledged that every other public

¹²⁷ Ibid. p. 25

¹²⁸ *21st Annual Report of the Los Angeles Public Library – For the Year Ending June 30, 1909.* p. 41

¹²⁹ *Annual Report of the Los Angeles Public Library – For the Year Ending November 30, 1905.* p. 14

¹³⁰ *Annual Report of the Los Angeles Public Library – For the Year Ending November 30, 1905.* p. 14-15, 20

library was likewise seeking out new methods to compel the members of these two classes to become more active library users. Lummis argued that the people falling into these two broadly-defined categories—with their varying ‘tastes and needs’ from one another—were in fact the groups who needed the resources provided by public libraries the most. Reading rooms, branch libraries, deposit stations, and playgrounds were all designed by public libraries to reach out to the laboring class.¹³¹

Los Angeles had a higher proportion of branches to its population than bigger cities like New York and Boston.¹³² At the time when Lummis took over in 1905, the Los Angeles Public Library system included ten branch libraries: Macy, Central, Vernon, Garvanza, Pico Heights, Boyle Heights, Washington, East Main, Highland Park, and University.¹³³ But, in 1906, the Macy Street branch was shut down, since it had averaged an extremely low circulation of just 18 volumes per day over the span of a number of years. Moreover, the hours were adjusted for the remaining nine branches to correspond with their circulation figures.¹³⁴

In 1907, Lummis described how the branch libraries—which he claimed had fallen into shocking disarray under his predecessors—had been vastly improved and brought up to standard following more than two years of arduous effort involving organizing, weeding, and cataloging of the materials in these branches. Under Lummis, a new library department was established to administer all of the branch libraries. He considered each branch to be just as important as the main library, and pointed out that branches were more likely to serve regular patrons. Lummis expressed his desire that the branch librarians and the branch users become well-acquainted with one another, so that services could be tailored to the specific needs of the local area. Although

¹³¹ *20th Annual Report of the Los Angeles Public Library – For the Year Ending November 30, 1908*. p. 79

¹³² *19th Annual Report of the Los Angeles Public Library – For the Year Ending November 30, 1907*. p. 33-36

¹³³ *Annual Report of the Los Angeles Public Library – For the Year Ending November 30, 1905*. p. 30-35

¹³⁴ *Eighteenth Annual Report of the Los Angeles Public Library – For the Year Ending November 30, 1906*. p. 37

the public library wanted to reach out the laboring classes through its branch libraries, given its budgetary constraints, any further expansion of the branches was not possible at the time.¹³⁵

The multiplication of deposit stations throughout the city of Los Angeles was deemed to be a much more viable—and less costly—option for the extension of the library’s services to the laboring class than building more branches. Each deposit station was loaned or donated books from the library. Lummis hoped that people who were unable to make regular usage of the main library or its branches could instead benefit from this rather meager alternative. An orphanage, a medical library, Polytechnic High School, the Los Angeles Public School Library, and the Home Telephone Company were five deposits stations added in 1907. Lummis claimed to be most gratified by the addition of a deposit station at this telephone company. As he explained this company’s 300 employees—mostly overworked female telephone operators—were more deserving of this privilege to easily access this loan of 100 books than any well-to-do club-woman who could easily afford to buy any novel she wanted. He hoped that additional deposit stations could soon be installed in the city’s department stores. In his opinion, the library was obligated to give the laboring class who couldn’t afford to buy their own books ‘a fair show,’ so that they too could discover the benefits of the public library.¹³⁶ The deposit stations carried the usefulness of the library to the people who needed it the most, according to Lummis.¹³⁷

In 1910, the Los Angeles Public Library system had expanded to include some thirteen branch libraries. The Moneta branch was added in 1908. The San Pedro Public Library—a Carnegie building—and the libraries at Wilmington and at Terminal Island were annexed by the system in August of 1909. During that same month the Highland Park branch discontinued and

¹³⁵ *19th Annual Report of the Los Angeles Public Library – For the Year Ending November 30, 1907.* p. 33-36

¹³⁶ *Ibid.* p. 36-38

¹³⁷ *21st Annual Report of the Los Angeles Public Library – For the Year Ending June 30, 1909.* p. 22

the collection was consolidated into the Garvanza branch. And then in February of 1910, the Hollywood branch—another Carnegie building—was also annexed by the city of Los Angeles.¹³⁸

The Los Angeles Public Library reached out to children of the laboring class with an extension program headed by second assistant librarian Nora A. Miller. Her staff—working in conjunction with the Los Angeles City Board of Education—was responsible for holding Story-Hours at certain public schools around the city where it was felt that children would most benefit from them. Lummis reluctantly went along with this Story-Hour program, but he maintained that under ideal circumstances a public library should serve a different function from that of the home or the school. He felt that if children had been properly bred the ‘book-appetite’ by their parents and teachers, the library would not have to make up for those adults failing in their duties. The main job of the library, in Lummis’ opinion, was to supply books to people, rather than teach them to appreciate books. The homeschooled Lummis also stated that “the ‘Story-Hour’ and other fads of over-educated educators have no permanent place in the routine of the public library.”¹³⁹

Lummis tried to market the public library to the laboring class in 1909, by circulating a letter which emphasized some of the library’s most notable features. The words, “PLEASE POST” appeared at the top of the letter, because he wanted as many people as possible to be made aware of the library and its impressive collections. In addition to mentioning some of the more prominent aspects of the collection, and stating the hours of operation, the letter suggested that anyone who enjoyed reading or learning or who strived for self-improvement would inevitably find something in the library. Lummis promised in the letter that the more people

¹³⁸ 21st Annual Report of the Los Angeles Public Library – For the Year Ending June 30, 1909. p. 55, 67

Also see: Twenty-Second Annual Report of the Los Angeles Public Library – July, 1910. p. 7, 18-19

Also see: 20th Annual Report of the Los Angeles Public Library – For the Year Ending November 30, 1908. p. 68

¹³⁹ 19th Annual Report of the Los Angeles Public Library – For the Year Ending November 30, 1907. p. 41

learned at the library, the higher the salary they would be able to command. According to Lummis, his letter was "sent to, and posted in, every school, factory, railway, department store, and every other place where men and women work who might desire to increase their effectiveness or even to amuse their leisure."¹⁴⁰

PLEASE POST

LOS ANGELES PUBLIC LIBRARY

To YOU:

Do you CARE to READ?

Do you CARE to LEARN?

Would you like to put in part of your spare time in studying some trade or profession which would increase your earning capacity, and your usefulness in the world?

The Los Angeles Public Library is meant FOR YOU.

It has more than 30,000 novels. It has more than 30,000 books of reference, including the best text-books, encyclopedias, and dictionaries of all sorts, histories, books on art, architecture, chemistry, and the other applied sciences, etc. It has over 30,000 volumes of the best literature in English, Spanish, French, Italian, German, and other languages.

It has more than 2,300 maps covering every portion of the world, but particularly the West.

It has more than 8,000 of the best reproductions (by protographs or in color) of the foremost works of art and architecture. If you wish to travel around the world at home, ask for the stereographs.

Among the 3,108 publications it receives every month there are more than 40 magazines on Electrical Engineering and Mining; 20 on Architecture; 15 on Art and Photography; 20 on Business and Trade.

This library has the working tools for you, whatever you wish to learn. It is here for YOU.

It is open from 9 a. m. until 9:30 p. m. every week day; on Sundays from 1 to 9 p. m.

It has not only the books but the people to help you find and use them.

Ask in the Reference Room for what you want. If you don't find it (and cheerful service with it) drop me a postal card.

Books are the last things that any human being can afford to do without. They are good for fun—which is worth having. But if you wish to build yourself up, every expert that ever lived stands ready here to help you.

The more you learn, the larger salary you will command.

Sincerely yours,

(Signed)

CHAS. F. LUMMIS, Librarian.

¹⁴⁰ *21st Annual Report of the Los Angeles Public Library – For the Year Ending June 30, 1909.* p. 45

In Lummis' opinion public libraries throughout the United States had failed to adequately reach out to their business communities, and he believed that this failure explained why so many merchants were apathetic to libraries. He felt he had to meet this challenge head on by better educating local businessmen about the public library and convincing them how exactly it might be advantageous to the businesses around the city. Many did not realize that the library was not solely a recreational place to borrow the latest novel. Moreover, Lummis contended that if the business community were to discover just how much the library could be worth to them and their financial well-being, they would surely be more inclined to enthusiastically support having their tax dollars fund the construction of its very own library building in the future, and allow the library to be less miserly with its acquisitions. He envisioned presiding over the first public library which established close ties with its business community. In Lummis' opinion, the majority of local businessmen would find it "a revelation to discover what this public library can do for him in anything he wishes to know about oil wells, or wireless telegraphy, or mines in Mexico, or methods of irrigation, or the shipment of oranges, or almost anything else."¹⁴¹

Lummis hoped to convince thousands of local businessmen that the Los Angeles Public Library was a great place where they could come not only for entertainment purposes, but for their professional needs, as well.¹⁴² And so, in 1908 he devised a plan to reach out to the business class, by sending out a letter, which he composed, to the businessmen residing within both the city and county. As he explained, the library sought to become much more useful to the community it served. His letter marketed the public library as a tremendously valuable asset which could greatly benefit this particular group of potential users and even bring more profit to

¹⁴¹ *20th Annual Report of the Los Angeles Public Library – For the Year Ending November 30, 1908.* p. 22-23

¹⁴² *19th Annual Report of the Los Angeles Public Library – For the Year Ending November 30, 1907.* p. 41-42

them in their businesses. Touting all the wonderful resources readily available in the library—pertaining to fields including irrigation, mining, and electrical engineering, etc.—Lummis’ letter asked its recipients whether they were aware that Los Angeles now had one of the top public libraries in the country. He also asked them what they were getting out of it, and implied that they were really missing out on something special. Included with each letter was a membership card which he persuasively encouraged them to fill out.¹⁴³ Hundreds of new memberships resulted from this outreach effort. Then in the following year, the library sent out another 2,500 copies of virtually the same letter—the only differences were that these letters indicated some increases in membership and circulation from the previous year—and these 2,500 copies, along with 2,500 blank membership cards, were sent to a railroad company to be distributed among its employees once they received their paychecks.¹⁴⁴

The public library was also committed to accommodating the city’s foreign immigrant population whose primary language was something other than English. Circulation records show that foreign language books were checked out from the Department of General Literature 11,810 times in 1909. French, Spanish, Italian, and German literature were some of the main strengths of this collection, but the library planned to refocus its collection development to better satisfy readers of Russian as well as the Scandinavian languages. A deposit station was also added to specifically serve the needs of Los Angeles’ growing population of Russian immigrants.¹⁴⁵

Hoping to draw larger crowds inside the Los Angeles Public Library, Lummis very astutely initiated a far more comprehensive schedule of library programming beginning in 1906. He correctly anticipated that people would be better motivated to spend more of their precious free time at the public library if it were transformed into a more vibrant place wherein members

¹⁴³ *20th Annual Report of the Los Angeles Public Library – For the Year Ending November 30, 1908*, p. 79

¹⁴⁴ *21st Annual Report of the Los Angeles Public Library – For the Year Ending June 30, 1909*, p. 44

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 22, 41

of the community could gather to enjoy special events together. So now, in addition to going to the library for books, the public could come to hear lectures or peruse temporary exhibitions—both encompassing a variety of subject matter. Furthermore, those who had not previously been to the public library might show up to attend a particular program, and then decide to take out a membership once they saw all that the institution had to offer.

The Reference department began offering a series of lecture courses in 1906. These lectures covered far-ranging topics from religion, architecture and art history, to the Mojave Desert and the history of the Jesuit missionaries in Baja California. To make such talks more compelling for the attendees, lantern slides were occasionally included as visual aids, as well. Aside from these interesting courses, there were also more practical lectures devoted to better familiarizing patrons with what resources the library had, and how best to use them. In addition to offering lectures within the library, the Reference department was also requested to give talks pertaining to the library's resources at schools and clubs.¹⁴⁶

Special exhibits multiplied under Lummis. The library installed an exhibition display space during the summer of 1906. These popular series of exhibits helped to highlight various examples of the literary, typographical, and artistic treasures from the library collection. Mindful of all the added attention such special exhibits had brought the library, Lummis wrote that: "No business in the world can get along nowadays without publicity. If the library is a 'business,' it should learn the universal lesson."¹⁴⁷ Perhaps the most famous and successful series of special exhibitions which ran during Lummis' librarianship were the autograph displays. But, in order for these exhibits to materialize, a collection of autographs first needed to be acquired. The city librarian dutifully wrote to a plethora of authors, artists, politicians, and other famous people,

¹⁴⁶ *Eighteenth Annual Report of the Los Angeles Public Library – For the Year Ending November 30, 1906.* p. 73-74

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.* p. 36

urging them all to contribute their signatures—on uniform stationery provided by the library—and send them back so that their autographs could eventually be put on display under glass for an admiring public. Nearly all of the names Lummis wrote to granted his request. Among the autographs he acquired were those of his friend President Theodore Roosevelt, industrialist-turned-philanthropist Andrew Carnegie, and the popular painter and sculptor of western subject matter Frederic Remington. Artists like Remington were also encouraged to contribute signed sketches to the collection, as well. Signed letters written in 1796 and 1801 by two long deceased former presidents, John Adams and John Quincy Adams, were also graciously donated to the library's collection by the former head of the Union Pacific Railroad.¹⁴⁸

CALIFORNIA AND THE SOUTHWEST

Arguably Lummis' most enduring legacy at the Los Angeles Public Library was his firm commitment to growing the library's collection of Californiana and Americana. Lummis was particularly interesting in preserving an accurate historical record of Southern California and the entire Southwestern United States. Through some generous donations and a series of shrewd purchases coupled with several fortunate turns of events, the library quickly accumulated one of the world's most preeminent collections on these subjects. Numerous library departments, including the Reference Department, the Department of Reading, Study and Research, the Department of California and Spanish-American History, and of course the Western-History-Material Department, each were instrumental in bringing Lummis' bold vision for the library to

¹⁴⁸ *19th Annual Report of the Los Angeles Public Library – For the Year Ending November 30, 1907.* p. 60-61

fruition. Lummis wanted to make the public library a central workshop with excellent resources for scholars to investigate the history of the region.¹⁴⁹

In the years prior to Lummis becoming city librarian, the Board had already begun plans to build up the library's collection of materials relating to Californiana and Americana. Such plans were no doubt taken into consideration when the Board decided to hire Lummis—one of the top experts in both fields. Lummis was specifically entrusted with expanding the library's holdings relating to California history, the history of the American Southwest, and the history of all of Spanish America. He must have found it ironic and extremely embarrassing that scholars seeking out the best sources on California history at that time would have a better chance of finding what they were looking for in Providence, Boston, New York City, Chicago, London, or Berlin, than they would have in Los Angeles. Lummis wanted this to be remedied immediately. Under his direction the Los Angeles Public Library was destined to possess an incomparable reference collection when it came to Californiana and Americana. This library was clearly the most logical location to place such an emphasis, since its region was so inextricably linked with these histories. By the end of 1905, the library had already managed to acquire many of the most important examples of Californiana.¹⁵⁰

As director of the department of Reading, Study, and Research, the living encyclopedia Dr. C. J. K. Jones was especially knowledgeable on matters pertaining to California and the West. If a visitor needed to know something about alkaline soils, irrigation, oil drilling, mining, cacti, yuccas, California legends, or many other things related to the golden state, Dr. Jones was an expert on most things Californiana.¹⁵¹ Jones stated that he not only fielded reference

¹⁴⁹ *21st Annual Report of the Los Angeles Public Library – For the Year Ending June 30, 1909.* p. 40

¹⁵⁰ *Annual Report of the Los Angeles Public Library – For the Year Ending November 30, 1905.* p. 18-20

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.* p. 14, 50

questions from locals, but also answered inquiries from people from all over Southern California, Arizona, and New Mexico.¹⁵²

When Lummis established the Western-History-Material Department in 1905, he determined that its first task would be to chronicle the contemporary history of the local community and preserve that history for future generations. In his mind, some of the best, most readily available, and ‘more or less accurate’ records depicting the development of Los Angeles and the daily life of its inhabitants could be found in the many different newspapers published in the city which dated back more than a half-century. Lummis was flabbergasted that the library had only been preserving newspaper clipping which related to libraries—and these articles mostly recounted the high turnover of former librarians and the ensuing squabbles. He was adamant that the preservation of contemporary local history and the history of Southern California would no longer be neglected under his watch.¹⁵³

The Western-History-Material Department received available historical files from each local newspaper and these were said to have dated ‘as far back as possible.’ Lummis devised an inexpensive and convenient system to preserve these newspaper articles and make them both accessible and searchable to the public. The articles covered all aspects of human activity in Southern California and the Southwest. From the social life and customs of people living in the region, to education, mining, irrigation, oil wells, roads, and the agricultural industry, these clippings began an important archive in the Los Angeles Public Library. After articles were clipped, they were placed into a particular scrapbook depending on how they were classified. Each scrapbook was given a locally assigned subject heading, and each scrapbook contained an index to the articles in the back. Moreover, the entire series of scrapbooks was indexed in the

¹⁵² *19th Annual Report of the Los Angeles Public Library – For the Year Ending November 30, 1907.* p. 94-95

¹⁵³ *Annual Report of the Los Angeles Public Library – For the Year Ending November 30, 1905.* p. 15

library's card-catalogue. This local archive contained biographical information of the important men and women in California history. Lummis predicted that within a few years time, it would only take a couple of minutes for any library patron to find out the minutest factual information concerning the history of the local area dating back to 1854. He believed that it was the library's duty to future generations of historians, to save our local history.¹⁵⁴

By 1906 the unprecedented Department of Western History-Material had attracted the attention of both scholars and other librarians alike. Lummis noted how some of these librarians scoffed at what they must have perceived to be a most peculiar new department. Nevertheless, Lummis himself was quite proud of his successful innovation. After all, he figured that in just one's year time, the department had already "saved, classified, and made accessible ten times more of the history of this city than was ever saved by this Library before in its thirty four years."¹⁵⁵

The massive earthquake which struck the San Andreas Fault on Wednesday April 18, 1906 unleashed catastrophic destruction upon the city of San Francisco. In addition to the horrendous damage caused by the quake itself, the subsequent fires left much of the city in smoldering ruins. Most of San Francisco's libraries were decimated and some of the greatest collections of Californiana were lost. Fortunately the Los Angeles Public Library had purchased many such priceless items in San Francisco prior to the catastrophe.¹⁵⁶ Following this great tragedy, Lummis declared that his library now faced a greater duty and was obligated to fill in the void and serve the reference needs of people along the Pacific Coast. In his own estimation,

¹⁵⁴ Ibid. p. 15-17

¹⁵⁵ *Eighteenth Annual Report of the Los Angeles Public Library – For the Year Ending November 30, 1906.* p. 29

¹⁵⁶ Ibid. p. 75

Los Angeles now had “practically the only considerable library of reference west of Denver.”¹⁵⁷ No other significant reference library could be found within 2,000 miles, he contended.¹⁵⁸

In addition to making important acquisitions relating the history of California, the Southwest, and Spanish America, it was also critically important that such works be expertly cataloged so they could be made more accessible to scholars. The library specifically hired a man named Mr. Will M. Tipton to assist the Catalogue Department as they prepared to catalogue the prized collection of Spanish works. Tipton was a foremost expert on the Spanish language and was also very knowledgeable about the history of the Southwest, and his cataloging efforts were most invaluable to scholars.¹⁵⁹

In 1907 the Bureau of American Ethnology, in Washington, D.C., loaned Lummis a copy of Father Pedro Font’s diary which described the Spanish explorer Captain Juan Bautista Anza’s expedition of 1775-1776. This expedition entailed an overland journey from Sonora to Alta California, where he and his companions ultimately founded a settlement called San Francisco. Lummis was thrilled to have a copy of such an important historical document concerning the Spanish colonization of California.¹⁶⁰ Since this 672 page typewritten copy of the diary was previously inaccessible, its loan to the Los Angeles Public Library was likely much appreciated by scholars of California history. In the following year, the library had this copy compared to the original diary manuscript located at the John Carter Brown Library in Providence, Rhode Island. There it was certified to be the only accurate copy in existence, making it an extremely valuable research tool which was also much easier to read than the handwritten original.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁷ “Library Faces Greater Duty,” *Los Angeles Times*. April 29, 1906.

¹⁵⁸ *Eighteenth Annual Report of the Los Angeles Public Library – For the Year Ending November 30, 1906*. p. 54-55

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.* p. 57, 62, 64, 74-75

¹⁶⁰ *19th Annual Report of the Los Angeles Public Library – For the Year Ending November 30, 1907*. p. 58

¹⁶¹ *20th Annual Report of the Los Angeles Public Library – For the Year Ending November 30, 1908*. p. 31

The Historical Society of Southern California generously donated to the Los Angeles Public Library its collection of many of the hard-to-find files of California's earliest newspapers in 1907. This permanent loan—which encompassed the most sizeable collection of Southern California newspapers known to exist—was one of the most valuable donations that the library had ever received. In return for housing the society's collection, the library agreed to provide binding for the all the files. The scrapbooks of newspaper files were among the most actively used historical resources in the reference room. Despite the popularity of the newspaper clippings, the Department of Western-History-Material was forced to make do with an inadequate number of assistants, and this unfortunately halted the indexing of the completed scrapbooks.¹⁶²

In the years prior to his appointment as city librarian, Lummis had already begun assisting the Los Angeles Public Library to acquire important Spanish works. By 1908, the library had accumulated an excellent collection on Spanish America. Works relating to the regions of California, Arizona, Mexico, and New Mexico were among the greatest strengths of this collection. Lummis had long been devoted to acquiring resources that were often extremely rare and expensive, and difficult to find, but ultimately indispensable to scholars. Among the many great acquisitions of 1908, the library attained certified copies of the 'Ramirez Collection,' which included works relating to California history such as the Diaries of Junípero Serra. A 1,137 page original manuscript was also purchased in Mexico in 1908. This manuscript described a little known chapter in California history involving American contraband traders invading the Spanish settlements along the Pacific Coast in 1812. A private collector in Chicago also lent the library a 339 page manuscript that same year, and this detailed the history of the Jesuit Missions in Baja California from 1697 to 1737. This was written by a Scottish-Spanish

¹⁶² *19th Annual Report of the Los Angeles Public Library – For the Year Ending November 30, 1907.* p. 56-57, 95

missionary named William Gordon.¹⁶³ The library then had the work transliterated by an expert linguist, and accurately copied by typewriter. Then the typewritten copy was bound and placed in the library collection so that it could be utilized for scholarship.¹⁶⁴

A copy of the Report of the Warner's Ranch Commission was another important item acquired by the library in 1908. This 300 page typewritten document described some recent local history in which the Indian rights advocate Lummis was directly involved. This report detailed the eviction of the Cupeño tribe of Native Americans from Warner's Ranch and their relocation to Pala Valley—with Lummis' assistance—in 1903. He noted that his was the only public or reference library to secure a copy of this document, and obviously wanted their story to be preserved in the historical record.¹⁶⁵

Most interestingly, in 1908 a temporary exhibition space was installed on the sixth floor of the Hamburger Department Store Building in order to house some of the main highlights of the Southwest Museum collection—this space was just above the reference room of the Los Angeles Public Library. Although it had been founded the previous year, the Southwest Museum's iconic building would not be completed for several more years. And yet, as Lummis knew in his heart, both the public library and his museum each deserved to have its own new building in the near future. The Southwest Museum exhibition was open from 2 to 4 p.m. every day but Sunday, and it was certainly very convenient for library patrons to access. The museum exhibits featured what Lummis considered to be California history's most valuable relics, and other archaeological treasures of the Southwest. Furthermore, Lummis also persuaded the

¹⁶³ *20th Annual Report of the Los Angeles Public Library – For the Year Ending November 30, 1908*, p. 26-28, 30-31

¹⁶⁴ *21st Annual Report of the Los Angeles Public Library – For the Year Ending June 30, 1909*, p. 47-48

¹⁶⁵ *20th Annual Report of the Los Angeles Public Library – For the Year Ending November 30, 1908*, p. 32

Library Board to allow him to display the museum's most valuable paintings inside the library itself—these paintings originally decorated some of the California missions.¹⁶⁶

Things took a turn for the worst for the Department of Western History-Material in 1909. The lack of attendants forced the department to shut down for most of the year. It eventually reopened, and then resumed its duty of answering any reference questions relating to California and the American West. Lummis pointed out that with this department, the Los Angeles Public Library had done more to preserve local history than any other public library. He was, however, very pleased that many smaller public libraries in Southern California had begun to follow his example in preserving local history.¹⁶⁷

A SUDDEN RESIGNATION

On Friday March 4, 1910, the Library Board's President Dockweiler received a letter of resignation from Charles Lummis. In his resignation letter, Lummis expressed his gratitude to Dockweiler for having given him the opportunity to run the Los Angeles Public Library in the first place. Lummis conveyed that despite the tremendous personal toll the position had taken on him, he felt that it still had been a very worthwhile experience, because he had actually managed to get some noticeable results. He emphasized that he still cared a great deal about the library's well-being, and hoped to serve the institution in an unpaid volunteer capacity in the near future. He believed that his expertise in historical materials belonging to the library might be extremely beneficial to the many scholars who would come to use the collection. Lummis wrote that he

¹⁶⁶ Ibid. p. 57

¹⁶⁷ *21st Annual Report of the Los Angeles Public Library – For the Year Ending June 30, 1909.* p. 24-26

aspired to continue to be useful to the Los Angeles Public Library for the rest of his life.¹⁶⁸ As he put in his journal: “I won’t say to Hell with their library because while I am alive I shall be glad to do what I can for it. They have a lot of stuff there that isn’t worth anything without my hand on it, but I will attend to it.”¹⁶⁹

A special meeting was held by the Board of Directors on Saturday March 5, 1910, and there they decided to grant Lummis’ request to resign. Although Lummis desired to leave his position as soon as possible, he also wanted the library to have a smooth transition period. So, he and the Board all agreed at this meeting that March 31, 1910, would be his final day serving as Los Angeles City Librarian. He explained in an interview that he planned to continue to serve the local community but in his own way—and free of political quarrelling. Or as Lummis put it, “I would rather work for Los Angeles for nothing, and escape politics.”¹⁷⁰

There were indeed a great many reasons which motivated Lummis’ resignation. The desire to become rededicated to both his literary and critical work was certainly one key factor in his reaching this decision. He lamented that his passion for writing had been terribly neglected during his six years employed at the public library. He only wrote two articles for pay during his entire tenure as librarian. He anticipated that his resignation would allow him to finally finish writing the eight books he had put aside—each of which he had nearly completed writing *before* becoming librarian. He cited his loss of financial income during the past six years as being another important consideration when making his decision to resign. He felt obligated to earn more money for the sake of his children.¹⁷¹ Dictating his resignation letter gave Lummis a sense

¹⁶⁸ “Resignation of Lummis Accepted; Board Changes,” *Los Angeles Times*. March 6, 1910.

¹⁶⁹ Lummis’ Journal entry for March 2 1910 available in *Charles F. Lummis Manuscript Collection – MS.1.2.130 to MS.1.2.132*

¹⁷⁰ “Resignation of Lummis Accepted; Board Changes,” *Los Angeles Times*. March 6, 1910.

¹⁷¹ “Librarian Lummis Suddenly Resigns,” *Los Angeles Times*. March 5, 1910.

of gratification. He acknowledged that although some people would be disappointed with his decision to quit, others would be pleased to see him go.¹⁷²

Lummis explained in an interview that he had endured many personal sacrifices as a result of his librarianship, and decided the job was simply no longer worth all the trouble. He claimed to have worked an average of more than twelve hours each day during his nearly six years at the library, and he wanted to have a lot more free time to pursue his many hobbies and interests. More than anything else, Lummis intended to now devote his time to his main personal obsessions. These obsessions included returning in his quest to preserve the California missions and save them for future generations to enjoy, working to better the living conditions on the American Indian reservations, and, most conspicuously, getting the Southwest Museum up and running.¹⁷³ In his journal, Lummis expressed relief that the time-consuming position as City Librarian would soon be put behind him:

Wow! But I feel pretty good. After a little while I will be able to build house and get out-door exercise which I haven't had for a long time and finish up my books and write new ones and write articles and to roof and restore the missions which need it pretty bad; and pay more attention to the Sequoya League. I have also a suspicion that I will get up and catch a trout this spring the first time in many years... Last night the longest and sweetest sleep I have had in eight months--- nearly four hours. I felt so relieved that I let go all holds and got a good rest. It will seem fine when I don't have to bother about anything in the library and do as I please.¹⁷⁴

Although, Lummis had no doubt grown considerably weary of working at the library, it is also apparent from various newspaper accounts of the time that he was effectively compelled to resign. Indeed, it appears Lummis was actually forced out by Mayor George Alexander and his

¹⁷² Lummis' Journal entry for Thursday March 3, 1910 in *Charles F. Lummis Manuscript Collection – MS.1.2.130 to MS.1.2.132*

¹⁷³ "Librarian Lummis Suddenly Resigns," *Los Angeles Times*. March 5, 1910.

¹⁷⁴ Lummis' Journal entry for Wednesday March 2, 1910 available in *Charles F. Lummis Manuscript Collection – MS.1.2.130 to MS.1.2.132*

cost-cutting administration which viewed Lummis' public library as an overly expensive waste of tax dollars. The Alexander administration felt that Lummis had engaged in wasteful spending as librarian and they wanted to find someone else who could reduce the cost of the library, while making it run more efficiently. Lummis and the Mayor had also been at odds as to what library funding they should seek from Andrew Carnegie. The Mayor felt that Carnegie would only be willing to contribute money that would benefit the branch libraries, while Lummis believed that he could somehow convince Carnegie to help fund a brand new building for the central library.¹⁷⁵

The *Los Angeles Times* reported it had become common knowledge that the Mayor had been after Lummis' 'scalp' for some time. According to some of Lummis' closest friends, he opted to resign rather than endure a long drawn-out 'political scuffle' that would likely culminate with his firing anyhow. And since his position at the library had already required of him "a heavy sacrifice of time and money," he decided he had finally had enough.¹⁷⁶

Mayor Alexander was unhappy with Lummis' management of the library and wanted to take the library in another direction. The Mayor wanted to make the library more like the way it had been before Lummis' librarianship. That is to say, the Mayor believed that the public library needed to reestablish itself first and foremost as a circulating library while deemphasizing its role as a scholarly research institution. The administration let it be known that a dramatic shift in the library's collection development policy was on the horizon, and that Lummis' successor was expected to greatly reduce the acquisition of scholarly books used for researching technical

¹⁷⁵ "Resignation of Lummis Accepted; Board Changes," *Los Angeles Times*. March 6, 1910.

¹⁷⁶ "Librarian Lummis Suddenly Resigns," *Los Angeles Times*. March 5, 1910.

subjects. Instead, the library would be “run more for the benefit of the young lady at the ribbon counter with the assisted coiffure...”¹⁷⁷

By reshaping the Library Board, Mayor Alexander sent a clear message to Lummis that it was just about time for him to resign. The Mayor’s recent appointments of two new members to the Library Board, Shelly Tollhurst and W. C. Patterson, coupled with the reappointment of George M. Giffen in the past week, put control of the library’s future firmly in the hands of the Mayor and his administration.¹⁷⁸ All three of these appointees were openly hostile to Lummis. The club woman Shelly Tollhurst had been one of his most vocal antagonists during the uproar following the removal of Mary Jones in 1905. When asked whether or not he had known that these new members were opposed to Lummis when he appointed them, the Mayor simply answered in a silent affirmative with his trademark wink. Aside from these three Library Board members, there was Henry M. Newmark—who was already on the Board—and he too had an unfavorable opinion of Lummis. This left just I. B. Dockweiler as Lummis’ sole remaining ally left on the Board.¹⁷⁹ The Board also voted to elect Newmark as their new president, replacing Dockweiler who had served in that role for the past six years. The Mayor and his administration anticipated that Dockweiler would soon follow Lummis out the door.¹⁸⁰

Although Lummis was not compelled to finally offer his resignation until March of 1910, there were many preceding events dating back to 1905, which would ultimately lead to this outcome. The furious uproar that erupted towards Lummis following the unfair ousting of Mary Jones never fully subsided, and old adversaries like Tollhurst eventually came back to haunt him. Interestingly, some of Lummis hiring decisions would also come back to haunt him. Dr. C. J. K.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ “Resignation of Lummis Accepted; Board Changes,” *Los Angeles Times*. March 6, 1910.

¹⁷⁹ “Majority of Board Opposed to Librarian,” *Los Angeles Herald*. March 8, 1910.

¹⁸⁰ “Resignation of Lummis Accepted; Board Changes,” *Los Angeles Times*. March 6, 1910.

Jones, the ‘walking encyclopedia,’ for instance, became greatly resented by much of the library staff. They envied what they deemed to be his unjustifiably high salary. However, it was the hiring of a Miss Julia W. Blandy in 1906, which would cause Lummis and the library the most trouble down the road. She earned a reputation for being incapable of getting along with her fellow employees. Her employment produced some bitter infighting among the staff and led to multiple trials before the Civil Service Commission, giving the Los Angeles Public Library a great deal of negative publicity, and this culminated with investigations of Lummis’ management of the library. As a result of these incessant upheavals, the library was dubbed ‘The House of a Thousand Scandals’ by the *Los Angeles Times*.¹⁸¹

Miss Blandy had previously worked at the Astor Library in New York. Most impressed with a letter he received from her inquiring about positions at the Los Angeles Public Library, Lummis replied that he wanted to offer her a job. Blandy began her tumultuous employment under Lummis in September of 1906. There was a great amount of tension between Blandy and the other young women working in the library, because they viewed her as an unwelcome intruder and foreign interloper and objected to the way she was constantly given what they perceived to be preferential treatment at the expense of veteran employees who came from the local area. When Lummis appointed Blandy as emergency principal of the branch libraries in April 1907, it nearly caused the other young women employees to go on strike. The Library Senate argued that this position should have been assigned to one of the many ladies who had already served the local community and its library for some time. This turmoil was then further exacerbated by the curious decision to appoint Blandy as the permanent Superintendent of Branches, despite her scoring behind five local applicants in an examination for this position

¹⁸¹ “Scandal Spark Arouses Ire,” *Los Angeles Times*. January 8, 1909.

held by the Civil Service Commission. Her colleagues became increasingly resentful of her, because they felt she was once again the beneficiary of overt favoritism.¹⁸²

Although Blandy had been a thorn in the side of the library ever since her arrival, things soon took a turn for the worse. In August of 1908, she threatened to bring charges against the directors of the Library Board before the Civil Service Commission, for failing to address certain demands she made. She claimed the Board had ignored her complaints and this was detrimental to her work as Superintendent of Branches. The Board, however, treated her threats as a joke, knowing full-well that it was Mayor Harper, and not the Civil Service Commission who had jurisdiction over them.¹⁸³ While the Board may have viewed this as an empty threat, Blandy did, however, go and press charges against four co-workers before the Civil Service Commission on November 10, 1908. Longtime Assistant Librarian Celia Gleason, and three library attendants—Anna Madison, Margaret Bloomer, and Florence Turner—were the four women charged with ‘heinous misdemeanors’ by Blandy. The charges they faced ranged from ‘incompetency,’ and ‘insubordination,’ to ‘making false statements’ and failing to follow library rules. The most egregious charges were pressed against Gleason, whom Blandy had accused of systematically interfering with the department of branches “with malicious intent to kill the work” while also “falsifying statements in her accounts to the city auditor.”¹⁸⁴ Although the Board of Directors had hoped they could keep a lid on all the turmoil brewing at the public library, a public trial before the Civil Service Commission would cause it all to boil over. Both the Board and the library staff insisted the charges were without merit. Moreover, some members of the staff

¹⁸² “Fair Colleagues Protest in Vain,” *Los Angeles Herald*. June 29, 1907.

Also see: “Fair Rival Loses Race,” *Los Angeles Herald*. August 11, 1907.

Also see: “Library Board has Fun with Employe’s [sic] Threats,” *Los Angeles Herald*. August 19, 1908.

Also see: “Library Skeleton Out of the Closet,” *Los Angeles Times*. December 16, 1908.

¹⁸³ “Library Board has Fun with Employe’s [sic] Threats,” *Los Angeles Herald*. August 19, 1908.

¹⁸⁴ “Members of Library Staff Face Charges,” *Los Angeles Herald*. November 11, 1908.

indicated that this squabble was merely Blandy's way of retaliating for not receiving a pay raise she had requested a few weeks earlier.¹⁸⁵

In the trial against Miss Gleason, Miss Blandy testified that Lummis had opined that the Assistant Librarian had left the branches in a 'state of chaos' and that he felt they could greatly benefit from Blandy's creativity. Blandy also testified that Gleason frequently interfered with her branch work by transferring attendants from one branch to another or given furlough days, without her authorization, and Blandy suspected that it was in fact Lummis who was behind the plot to undermine her. She further accused Gleason of being openly disrespectful to her on numerous occasions, and cited various examples. Blandy surmised that Gleason might have been conspiring to destroy Lummis' administration of the library, by engaging in 'malicious mischief' with the branch accounts. She even went so far as to keep a 'Journal of Obstructions' in which she recorded all of Gleason's alleged abuses.¹⁸⁶

Blandy's attorney surprisingly called Lummis to testify as a witness for his client, and the City Librarian helped to destroy Blandy's case against Gleason. Lummis took responsibility for moving the attendants around the branches without informing Blandy because he found her to be 'impossible' to deal with, because she was impatient and disrespectful to him and the rest of the library staff. He also contradicted her claims that Gleason had acted with malice towards her. Lummis testified that Blandy habitually made frivolous complaints. He returned to the stand the following week, and testified that Blandy was a 'temperamental' employee and a dismal failure as the Superintendent of Branches. In stark contrast, Lummis testified that Gleason had done an excellent job and conveyed that she had no trouble getting along with the staff. Some members of the Civil Service Commission were not very fond of Lummis, and at times made it seem like

¹⁸⁵ "Library Stew Boiling Anew," *Los Angeles Times*. November 11, 1908.

¹⁸⁶ "Library Skeleton Out of the Closet," *Los Angeles Times*. December 16, 1908.

Also see: "Library Quarrel Becomes Serious," *Los Angeles Herald*. December 23, 1908.

he was the one who was actually on trial during the two days he testified. For example, when asked by one of the commissioners, the nervous Lummis admitted under oath that the library had indeed become divided into factions. Another thing that came to light as a result of this trial was that a stenographer on the library payroll was working at Lummis' home. Lummis was also questioned about his frequent absences from the library.¹⁸⁷

The principal ally of Miss Blandy was Dr. C. J. K. Jones. Called as a witness for Blandy, Dr. Jones' testimony supported her claims that there was a widespread 'lack of discipline' and rampant 'insubordination' among the women employed by the Los Angeles Public Library. Dr. Jones had kept a diary noting all library infractions he had observed over the previous year and a half. Such atrocious crimes included Miss Gleason showing up nine minutes late to work one day. Dr. Jones also testified that Gleason was rude and disrespectful to him. He complained about having to put up with noisy co-workers, as well. Worse yet, he once discovered an empty whiskey flask in the workroom—insinuating that some of the women employees were drinking on the job. Offended by this outrageous accusation because the alcohol had only been used in a pudding recipe, the female staff responded by coming up with a song in which they mocked Dr. Jones and his nosey behavior. In addition to all of this, Dr. Jones portrayed both Lummis and the members of the Library Board in a negative light, stating that they ignored his numerous letters demanding that they address what had become an intolerable working environment. In some particularly damaging testimony, Dr. Jones revealed that Lummis had been absent from the library some seventy-eight days during the previous year.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁷ "What Did He Really Mean?" *Los Angeles Times*. December 30, 1908.

Also see: "Commissioners Very Weary," *Los Angeles Times*. January 5, 1909.

Also see: "Librarian Lummis Questioned Closely," *Los Angeles Herald*. January 5, 1909.

¹⁸⁸ "Scandal Spark Arouses Ire," *Los Angeles Times*. January 8, 1909.

Also see: "Sight End in Library Row," *Los Angeles Times*. January 23, 1909.

Numerous witnesses aided Miss Gleason in her defense. In addition to Lummis, the President of the Library Board, I. B. Dockweiler also supported Gleason as a model employee. Miss Anna Beckley's testimony refuted Dr. Jones' accusations that Miss Gleason had been the culprit in a practical joke played on him and that Gleason had tampered with a safe in his office, explaining that it was she herself that had opened the safe to retrieve a valuable book and she inadvertently sprung a trap the paranoid Dr. Jones had set up.¹⁸⁹ Miss Gleason took the stand and successfully convinced the commission that the charges made against her were baseless. The trial against Assistant Librarian Gleason concluded after thirty-five hours of testimony.¹⁹⁰

The next trial, this time addressing Blandy's charges against the library attendant Anna Madison did not take nearly as long the Gleason trial. Blandy accused Madison of refusing to follow her instructions on how to file the library's card catalogue. Madison testified that she was not trying to be insubordinate but explained that she had refused to follow such instructions, because Blandy's instructions contradicted the modified Dewey Decimal Classification System that Lummis had put in place in the cataloging department. The Civil Service Commission concurred with Madison that she was not being insubordinate, but was simply devoted to following proper library procedures. This trial produced the same result as the previous one. And so, the Civil Service Commission had exonerated both Miss Gleason and now Miss Madison of all the charges Miss Blandy made against them.¹⁹¹ Following these two acquittals, Blandy's attorney asked the commission to dismiss the charges his client had made against the two remaining defendants, Miss Bloomer and Miss Turner.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁹ "Witness Aids Miss Gleason," *Los Angeles Herald*. January 23, 1909.

¹⁹⁰ "Library Tangle Nearly Settled," *Los Angeles Herald*. January 26, 1909.

¹⁹¹ "Second Library Trial Promises Short Session," *Los Angeles Herald*. March 4, 1909.

Also see: "Civil Service Finds Miss Blandy's Charges Are Without Justification," *Los Angeles Times*. March 5, 1909.

¹⁹² "Library Blaze Now Lurid," *Los Angeles Times*. March 17, 1909.

For the well-being of the library, and following such embarrassing public proceedings, Lummis—with the Library Board’s authorization—pleaded with Miss Blandy to resign, but she refused, and defiantly threatened to take the matter even ‘higher up’ and would see to it that the library undergo a needed ‘renovation,’ if anyone dared to undermine her work again.¹⁹³ There was one portion of Blandy’s testimony which the Library Board found especially bothersome. She revealed that the trials against Gleason and Madison could have been easily avoided had the Board simply agreed to increase her salary as she had requested. Furious with Blandy for her smearing of the institution in retaliation against them, the Board wanted to get rid of her. But, they did not want to have to prefer charges against her with the Civil Service Commission and waste more time on another exhaustive trial. Instead, the Board devised a plan to remove the troublesome employee by abolishing her Superintendent of Branches position altogether. On the evening of April 6, 1909, they carried out this plan and Miss Blandy was no longer employed by the library. Furthermore, the Board contemplated taking the same course of action against Dr. Jones by removing his position of Director of Study and Research.¹⁹⁴

All this unwanted attention before the Civil Service Committee led to many unforeseen ramifications for Lummis and the public library. Some of the commissioners now believed that further investigations might uncover many ‘other things’ regarding the library department. They felt that a ‘house cleaning’ might soon be in order.¹⁹⁵

By early 1909, the Los Angeles City Auditor, William C. Mushet, became one of the harshest critics of the library department’s management. Mushet deemed the public library to be

¹⁹³ Ibid.

Also see: “High Pressure on Connell,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 24, 1909.

¹⁹⁴ “Library Storm Again Lowers,” *Los Angeles Herald*. March 18, 1909.

Also see: “New Crisis? Will Miss Blandy Reign?” *Los Angeles Times*. April 1, 1909.

Also see: “Miss Blandy Defies Library Commission,” *Los Angeles Herald*. April 2, 1909.

Also see: “Library Snarl Bobs Up Again,” *Los Angeles Herald*. April 8, 1909.

¹⁹⁵ “Library Storm Again Lowers,” *Los Angeles Herald*. March 18, 1909.

one of the most profligate departments in the ‘profligate city.’ The Auditor suggested that the library had too many employees and paid out salaries that were too high. After all, he pointed out, approximately two-thirds of the income of the city was used to pay its employees. Lummis was very offended by the Auditor’s attack on his institution and insisted that the Mushet was obviously unknowledgeable when it came to running a library. The City Librarian defended his employees against the City Auditor’s attacks, explaining that the library was made up of some extremely hardworking people who earned their salaries by offering some of the best service of any public library in the country—and he provided statistical data to support such claims. He showed that his library was run more cost efficiently than the public libraries of Boston, New York, Providence, and Chicago. According to Lummis, 46% of his library’s expenses went to paying salaries; whereas, most libraries paid at least 50% to salaries. He likewise justified the number of employees the library had, explaining that good service required an adequate number of personnel.¹⁹⁶

By the spring of 1909, Auditor Mushet had made some additional allegations relating to extravagancies in Lummis’ management of the library. The disgruntled former employee, Julia Blandy, had recently accused Lummis of overdrawing \$13,000 in library funds, and this led the Auditor to carefully reexamine library demands to the city for any irregularities. Mushet cited that Lummis had tried to bill the city \$14.25 for 360 cigars which he provided to the men that had participated in the transfer of the library’s main collection to the Hamburger Department Store Building.¹⁹⁷

On April 7, 1909—the day after her position was abolished—Julia Blandy made several charges against both Lummis and the Library Board. She accused the City Librarian of financial

¹⁹⁶ “Lummis ‘Jumps’ On City Auditor,” *Los Angeles Herald*. January 5, 1909.

¹⁹⁷ “Will Investigate Library Expenses,” *San Francisco Chronicle*. April 10, 1909.

mismanagement and ‘misapplication of funds.’ Moreover, Blandy made due on her promise to go higher up: this time she sought the Mayor’s assistance in the matter.¹⁹⁸ Mayor Alexander—who had just been elected—promised her that he would reopen the investigation of the library as soon as possible. Foreshadowing the eventual resignation of Lummis, the Mayor indicated at this time that whoever he appointed to replace Director Marshutz on the Library Board might be able to solve the ‘library problem.’ At that time, besides the departing Marshutz, two of the directors supported Lummis, while another two felt he had worn out his welcome. So a new member opposed to Lummis’ management could help to sway the balance of power on the Board.¹⁹⁹

Along with the Mayor and the City Auditor, City Council President Niles Pease also decided that the charges of financial mismanagement needed to be investigated. Pease made it clear that he sided with Blandy against Lummis in this matter. Pease believed that ‘drastic measures’ were required and he was determined that Lummis needed to be ousted from his position at the library. The *Los Angeles Herald* accurately predicted that with “the guns of Mayor Alexander, President Pease of the city council and City Auditor Mushet trained on the library there is likely to be an upheaval at some time in the near future.”²⁰⁰

For his part, Lummis felt that it was his duty to protect both his own reputation and the reputation of the public library by repudiating the latest series of ‘baseless’ accusations coming from Miss Blandy. He now very much regretted importing Blandy from the East Coast. Blandy had been a mediocre cataloging clerk prior to arriving in Los Angeles, but he wanted to give her an opportunity because he admired the way she expressed herself in her first letter to him. He

¹⁹⁸ “Library Snarl Bobs Up Again,” *Los Angeles Herald*. April 8, 1909.

Also see: “Mum Regarding Selections,” *Los Angeles Times*. April 1, 1909.

¹⁹⁹ “New Member Key to Library,” *Los Angeles Times*. April 11, 1909.

²⁰⁰ “Train Guns On Public Library,” *Los Angeles Herald*. April 11, 1909.

Also see: “Librarian Lummis May Lose His Job,” *The San Francisco Call*. April 12, 1909.

had once considered her to be his own protégé, but had come to regard her as the main problem faced by the public library—both during her employment and now after her firing. Lummis went so far as to say that Blandy was the most insolent employee that the library had ever had. He vehemently denied that he had mismanaged library funds and challenged Blandy’s accusation that he did not spend enough time at the library, noting that he was constantly occupied with library work regardless of whether or not he was at the main library building.²⁰¹

In early June of 1909, Blandy and Lummis each shared their differing perspectives on the management of the library by writing in to the “Public Letter Box” forum in the *Los Angeles Herald*. Blandy sent her letter to the paper first, and in it she stated that she agreed with frequent letters to this paper that routinely denounced the lack of decent service at the Los Angeles Public Library. She claimed that she had also received many letters from taxpaying citizens which shared such criticisms about how the library had deteriorated under Lummis. She claimed multiple people had expressed sentiments like this to her: “I never go to the public library anymore; you can’t get anything or any attention these days.”²⁰² The former Superintendent of Branches explains that there are in her opinion some glaring reasons for the ‘general lameness’ of the public library. She asserts that the library had become overextended and inefficient to patrons because it was subdivided into twenty-six parts, including ten branches along with fifteen deposit stations. As a result many when people wanted to check out a certain book they discovered it was unavailable in the main library, because the only copy had been sent off to one of the twenty-six locations. The inefficiency in the library could also be blamed on cataloging that was not being kept up-to-date according to Blandy. She that books that were no longer in the collection, were still listed in the card catalogue. One of Blandy’s main objections to

²⁰¹ “Last Word in Library Fuss,” *Los Angeles Times*. April 18, 1909.

Also see: “Lummis Denies Mismanagement,” *Los Angeles Herald*. April 18, 1909.

²⁰² “Former Employee [sic] Tells of Library Mismanagement,” *Los Angeles Herald*. June 1, 1909.

Lummis' management was that the buildup of the reference collection had been "at the expense of the circulating library."²⁰³

When Lummis responded to Miss Blandy's letter to the *Los Angeles Herald*, he dissected and denied the validity of everything she wrote. He accused Blandy of recruiting her friends to send in anonymous letters to the paper disparaging the library in retaliation for her firing. Lummis dismissed her latest complaints against the library as being just as 'childish' and 'false' as all of her earlier accusations. In response to the ironic suggestion from the former Superintendent of Branches that the branches and deposit stations ought to be shut down—since they hinder the main library's circulating collection—Lummis passionately advocated their purpose of reaching out to various user populations throughout the city. He also chastised her on this point for not caring about the needs of poorer library patrons living miles away who cannot afford to travel to the main library at Eighth and Broadway on a regular basis. If anything, he argues the library needs to do more to reach out to users. Lummis was especially offended by Blandy's assertion that public library books should not be dispersed to the branches and deposit stations, because "everyone would have the same chance of getting them," if they were simply kept in their 'proper' place on the bookshelves of the main library. Lummis felt that with this statement, Blandy revealed her elitist attitude. She could not comprehend that there were many people outside of her privileged class who could not have the same chance of getting books if they were all kept in a centralized location. Of course, he also disagreed with Blandy's antipathy towards the reference collection he had helped to build up, proclaiming that it was the glory of any public library. However, Mayor Alexander and the newly constituted Library Board saw

²⁰³ Ibid.

things differently, and agreed with Miss Blandy that Lummis had taken the library in the wrong direction.²⁰⁴

Constantly having to battle for his vision of what of a public library ought to be, was a recurring source of frustration for Lummis. In his mind, the main purpose for such an institution was to offer an excellent reference collection to facilitate scholarly research. His intransigence on this position created considerable tension, and he indicated in his journal that this was a key factor that motivated his resignation: "... I feel mighty good at getting out of this treadmill where I am always having to fight for anything that at all looks scholarly or up-to-date."²⁰⁵

CONCLUSION

Charles Lummis' contributions to the Los Angeles Public Library were quite immense. As librarian he strived to make the library the best it could possibly be. He was a workaholic who transformed his institution into one of the best scholarly research libraries in the country. Membership and library usage increased tremendously during his brief career as librarian.

Lummis understood that community outreach was one of the most important things the library could do for the city of Los Angeles. By marketing the public library as the people's university more and more citizens were made aware of all it had to offer them. The people of Los Angeles recognized the public library as a place that could help them to better their own lives. Lummis wanted the library to offer the same quality service to anyone who visited. He believed that the public library ought to be a place for everyone. And he viewed the branches

²⁰⁴ "Charles F. Lummis Gives His Side of the Library Case," *Los Angeles Herald*. June 6, 1909.

Also see: "Librarian Lummis Suddenly Resigns," *Los Angeles Times*. March 5, 1910.

²⁰⁵ Lummis' Journal entry for Thursday March 3, 1910 in *Charles F. Lummis Manuscript Collection – MS.1.2.130 to MS.1.2.132*

and deposit stations as wonderful ways to reach user populations that might not find the central library to be as convenient a destination.

His passion for Native American and Spanish American culture greatly influenced the collection development of the public library during his tenure. Lummis helped to build up the reference collection and the Department of Western History-Material. The library acquired many noteworthy treasures relating to Americana, Californiana, and the Southwest. Many consider this to be Lummis' most important contribution to the Los Angeles Public Library.

Though Lummis presented himself as a maverick, he was nonetheless more than willing to learn from the experiences of fellow librarians. His vast amount of correspondences with other members of the profession proves that he was eager to exchange ideas in order to improve his own institution. Like many other librarians of the time, Lummis traveled around and visited other libraries so he could see firsthand what new ideas he could take back with him. This was an integral part of his professional development.

Lummis was by no means a saint. To the contrary, he was a deeply flawed individual whose marital infidelities were downright excessive. The manner in which he landed his job as librarian in the first place was certainly most unfortunate. His predecessor, Mary Jones, was outrageously fired simply because of her gender. Throughout his librarianship, one scandal after another seemed to plague the institution. Though the flamboyant Lummis helped to improve the library in a wide variety of ways, it is evident that he may not have been the best manager. He lost control of the library staff and they resorted to bitter squabbles between warring factions. Such turmoil combined with frequent public humiliations of the library and Lummis' alleged financial mismanagement paved the way for his resignation. His overly confrontational personality and nonconventional methods no doubt rubbed many people the wrong way, but he

truly did know how to get things done. Lummis' lasting legacy was a grand and idealistic vision for improving an institution that would become a vital asset to the rapidly growing city of Los Angeles.

EPILOGUE

Following Lummis' decision to resign as Los Angeles City Librarian, the Library Board began its search for a suitable replacement. Determined to avoid selecting another individual without formal library experience this time round, the Board was committed to finding a highly qualified candidate with a proven track record in managing a city library.²⁰⁶ The quest to appoint a successor dragged on for months. One member of the Board lamented: "The condition of our library, which ought to be the finest in the country, is a joke."²⁰⁷

On March 15, 1910—ten days after the Library Board received Lummis' resignation letter—Dr. C. J. K. Jones confirmed to the press the rumor that had been swirling around that he himself hoped to be considered for the City Librarian position. Dr. Jones claimed that many of the city's prominent men favored his candidacy. He touted his qualifications by noting his long period of dedicated service to the Los Angeles Public Library. In addition to serving as Director of Study and Research for some four years, he pointed out he had previously served as President of the Library Board. However, Dr. Jones seemed oblivious to the fact that one intended goal of the abolishment of his Director of Study and Research position on January 1, 1910, was that the Board no longer desired his services to the library.²⁰⁸ Alas, he did not get the head librarian job.

²⁰⁶ "Library Will Be Headless: No Action is Taken to Fill Place of Lummis," *Los Angeles Times*. March 26, 1910.

²⁰⁷ "May Shanghai A Librarian," *Los Angeles Times*. May 17, 1910.

²⁰⁸ "Doctor Jones is Willin' to be City Librarian," *Los Angeles Times*. March 16, 1910.

During the summer of 1910, the Los Angeles Public Library finally filled the vacant City Librarian position by appointing Mr. Purd B. Wright. With fourteen years as Librarian of the Free Public Library of St. Joseph, Missouri on his résumé, Wright brought with him an ample amount of managerial experience.²⁰⁹ He was also a friend and fellow Bibliophile of Lummis. Wright began his job as Los Angeles City Librarian on August 6, 1910. Interestingly, despite the Mayor and Library Board's desire to take the library in a new direction, Wright actually echoed Lummis' views stating:

The library has ceased to be a place where only small boys and girls secure story books. The library has risen to a place among the educational institutions and gives advantages to men in all walks of life who wish to better themselves while earning a livelihood.²¹⁰

Mr. Wright did not last very long at the Los Angeles Public Library, and his successor Everett R. Perry was subsequently appointed City Librarian on September 8, 1911. For more than two decades Perry served in this position until his untimely death in 1933. A great many things were accomplished under Perry's long tenure—most notably the construction of the Central Library building in 1926.²¹¹ But, in a letter to W. P. Cutter dated July 20, 1917, a resentful Lummis confided his displeasure with Perry's management of the library:

I wish to God you had the job here instead of the deafy-minded gentlemen who holds it down – clear down. It's now a summer resort for the feeble-minded who want the latest novels. Almost all of my old girls have gone off in disgust and found better places elsewhere in the city or in the state; and I believe that every one of the twenty or so who sought and received my recommendation have got a better job than they had in this emasculated library.²¹²

²⁰⁹ *Twenty-Second Annual Report of the Los Angeles Public Library – July, 1910*. Los Angeles: 1910. p. 7.

²¹⁰ "New Librarian Wants Building," *Los Angeles Herald*. August 6, 1910.

²¹¹ *Forty-Sixth Annual Report of the Board of Library Commissioners of the Los Angeles Public Library – For the year ending June 30, 1934*.

²¹² Letter from Charles F. Lummis to W. P. Cutter dated July 20, 1917 available in *Charles F. Lummis Manuscript Collection – MS.1.1.987*

Although it was long overdue, Lummis must have been pleased once the Los Angeles Public Library finally had its own building to house its main collection in 1926. Throughout his librarianship Lummis had repeatedly campaigned for a brand new building to be constructed specifically for the Public Library. Though, he failed to achieve this goal while at the helm, the rapid growth of the library collections and increased library usage under Lummis undoubtedly helped to pave the way for the building's eventual construction. By 1914, the Central Library had outgrown the Hamburger Department Store Building and the collection was relocated to yet another temporary facility—the Metropolitan Office Building—where it remained until the new building opened twelve years later. Before the Central Library could have its own building, the city of Los Angeles needed to raise funds to be set aside for its monumental construction. And so, in 1921 a bond measure was put on the ballot and passed by the voters to fund the brand new Central Library building, as well as some new Branch buildings.²¹³

On June 19, 1921, the *Los Angeles Times* published an opinion piece written by Lummis concerning the present state—as well as the history and the possible future—of the Los Angeles Public Library. In this article, Lummis hailed the recent passage of the bond measure. The great city would no longer be deprived of having its own library building. But, he also questioned the proposed site for the building and cautioned the local citizenry to closely monitor whatever architectural design emerged, so as to ensure that the building would indeed meet the needs of its patrons:

Everybody wants a Public Library building. Everybody is ashamed that Los Angeles hasn't one. Everybody is willing to help pay—and pay handsomely—for a public library that would be a beginning of our City Beautiful; a monument in architecture, a model in arrangements for the requirements of the public, and for the complicated machinery of a modern library for circulation, reference and research. And so, though bent till we creak under the burden of taxation, we have

²¹³ *Forty-Sixth Annual Report of the Board of Library Commissioners of the Los Angeles Public Library – For the year ending June 30, 1934.*

just now cheerfully and overwhelmingly voted two and a half millions to clear Los Angeles of the dishonor of being the only large city without its own library building; to give fit quarters to an institution of vital importance to all classes. So far, so good. But we haven't finished our duty to the Public Library by voting to assess ourselves for bits a year for it! If we are not to be sorry and ashamed in later years we must follow with a more than passing interest and scrutiny the spending of this money on the location and architecture of the Public Library. We have not been treated with entire candor, certainly, in the securing of our votes for "library building and necessary lands."²¹⁴

In addition to keeping up-to-date with the occurrences of the Los Angeles Public Library in the years after his resignation, Lummis also continued to exchange letters with librarians—and especially his fellow Bibliosmiles. For example, in Lummis' letter to W. P. Cutter dated January 30, 1916, he writes, "I often think of you, and wish we had nothing so good to do as to revive the Bibliosmiles and get together."²¹⁵ The following year, he again wrote Cutter and inquired how he and other Bibliosmiles were doing.²¹⁶ Both men carried on their tradition of addressing the other in their letters with "Dear Fellow Bibliosmile" as late as 1924. That year Lummis wrote Cutter, informing him that it had been some time since he had any Bibliosmiles out to visit him at El Alisal, and hoped that invited him to come out to see him.²¹⁷ In a letter sent by Lummis to John Cotton Dana in 1917, he expressed his appreciation to the Bibliosmiles for providing him with the most cherished memories from his library years:

Far as I am out of that strange old world, and glad as I am to be relieved of that Population, I remember every day the Mitigating Circumstances – and the few real men that made my Librarianship something less than a Hissing. And I am grateful to every one of them for the kindness they showed me, a rank outsider; and the very qualities that made them so human are the very qualities that make me love them to this day.²¹⁸

²¹⁴ Lummis, Charles F. "The Humanities. The Public Library." *Los Angeles Times*. June 19, 1921.

²¹⁵ Letter from Lummis to W.P. Cutter, dated January 30, 1916 available in *Charles F. Lummis Manuscript Collection – MS.1.1.987*

²¹⁶ Letter from Lummis to W.P. Cutter, dated June 26, 1917 available in *Charles F. Lummis Manuscript Collection – MS.1.1.987*

²¹⁷ Letter from W.P. Cutter to Lummis, dated October 12, 1924 available in *Charles F. Lummis Manuscript Collection – MS.1.1.987*

²¹⁸ Letter from Lummis to John Cotton Dana, dated July 1, 1917 available in *Charles F. Lummis Manuscript*

Just as the Bibliosmiles did not stand the test of time, many of Lummis' outlandish library innovations fell by the wayside. The 'poison label' designed to discourage readers away from inaccurate or inferior textbooks, and the branding of books with a cattle brand to prevent book theft, were among his ideas subsequently discontinued by the Los Angeles Public Library. These likewise failed to be implemented as best practices in librarianship.²¹⁹

Lummis' acquisitions of rare materials related to the history of California helped to lay the foundation for what is arguably the "finest research collection" in the Library to this day—the Californiana collection.²²⁰ John D. Bruckman, the Collection Development Manager of the Los Angeles Public Library from 1968-1979, wrote that although the Library had been criticized by some for not having "a single memorial to Lummis," shelves of rare books originally acquired by Lummis memorialize his legacy. As Bruckman asks, "What greater monument could any bookman have?"²²¹ Thankfully, these priceless materials for scholars survived the massive fire at the Central Library in 1986. Lawrence Clark Powell shared his reflections of the damage done by the disaster in an article he contributed to the *Los Angeles Times*. Powell expressed his relief that Lummis' acquisitions were not lost: "Lummis was the man who collected rare Southwest materials, probably the library's greatest treasure, then and now. That treasure—books, maps, manuscripts—escaped the flames."²²²

Collection – MS.1.1.1006A

²¹⁹ Bruckman, John D. *The City Librarians of Los Angeles*. p. 34

²²⁰ Los Angeles Public Library website's page on Californiana Rare Books:
http://www.lapl.org/central/rb_californiana.html

²²¹ Bruckman, John D. *The City Librarians of Los Angeles*. p. 36-37

²²² Powell, Lawrence Clark. "Life Was Learned in Los Angeles' Library," *Los Angeles Times*. May 11, 1986.

Appendix

Chronology:

- 1859** **March 1.** Charles Fletcher Lummis is born in Lynn, Massachusetts.
- 1877** Lummis begins his freshman year at Harvard.
- 1880** The city of Los Angeles' population is only 11,183.
- April.** Lummis marries his first wife, Mary Dorothea Rhodes.
- 1881** Lummis drops out of Harvard during his final semester.
- 1882** Lummis moves to Chillicothe, Ohio to work on his father-in-law's farm. His wife remains in Boston to finish medical school.
- 1885** **February 1.** Following his 143 day 'tramp across the continent' (in which he walked some 3,507 miles on foot from Cincinnati) Charles Lummis finally arrives in Los Angeles.
- 1889** The Los Angeles Public Library's collection of just 6,000 volumes is relocated to City Hall.
- 1890** The city of Los Angeles' population is 50,393.
- 1891** **March.** Lummis marries his second wife, Eve Douglas—five weeks after divorcing his first wife.
- 1900** The city of Los Angeles' population reaches 102,479.
- 1901** **September 14.** After President McKinley finally succumbs to an assassin's bullet, Vice-President Theodore Roosevelt (a life-long friend of Charles Lummis) takes the oath of office—becoming the 26th President of the United States.
- 1902** Los Angeles Public Library staff is now considered part of the civil service system, and is no longer directly answerable to the city council.
- 1904** **November 8.** Teddy Roosevelt wins a landslide election and remains President.
- December.** Los Angeles elects Owen McAleer as its new Mayor.
- December 8.** In a vote of 9669 to 6492, Los Angeles residents vote to build a new library building in Central Park. However, this does not materialize due to an injunction filed by the owner of a lodging house at this location.

1905

February 21. The fourth transcontinental railroad connecting to Los Angeles is completed.

June 21. On this Wednesday evening the Library Board fires Mary Jones and hires Charles Lummis.

June 27. At 3:50 PM on this Tuesday afternoon, Lummis takes his oath of office—and officially becomes Los Angeles' new City Librarian.

July 4-7. American Library Association conference is held in Portland, Oregon.

July 31. On this Monday afternoon, Los Angeles Mayor Owen McAleer announces that he has removed four men from the Library Board (Trueworthy, Dockweiler, Marshutz, and Wright) in response to their baseless firing of Jones. However, the members of the City Council would soon strongly oppose this and the Library Board members were allowed to remain at their posts.

October. A merit system for salaries is put into place at the Los Angeles Public Library.

1906

March 13. Susan B. Anthony dies at the age of 86 in Rochester, New York.

March – April. The Los Angeles Public Library is moved from the old City Hall building to the Homer Laughlin Annex Building.

April 19. San Francisco Earthquake strikes on this Wednesday morning.

July. Lummis attends 28th annual conference of the A.L.A in Narragansett Pier, Rhode Island.

September. Miss Julia Blandy comes to work at the Los Angeles Public Library.

September 12. Lummis' Library Senate is officially instituted at the Los Angeles Public Library.

December. Los Angeles elects A.C. Harper as its new mayor.

1907

April. Lummis appoints Julia Blandy as emergency principal of the branches.

May and June. Lummis attends the 29th Annual Conference of the American Library Association in Asheville, North Carolina.

June 29. Civil Service examination held for applicants interested in superintendent of branch libraries position this Saturday.

August 24. One of Lummis' young Native American servants was shot and

killed by his troubadour at El Alisal. Lummis considered this an act of self-defense, while his wife disagreed and believed it was cold-blooded murder.

November 4. Lummis' major reforms in the Los Angeles Public Library's Registry Department begin to take effect—dramatically easing the registration process for new library members.

1908 Henry Ford's Model T is unveiled.

June 22-27. Lummis attends the 30th Annual American Library Association Conference at Lake Minnetonka, Minnesota.

September 7-10. Los Angeles Public Library moved from Homer Laughlin Building to the third floor of the Hamburger & Sons Department Store Building.

November 3. William Howard Taft wins the American presidential election.

November 10. Miss Julia Blandy brings her charges against four co-workers before Civil Service Commission on this Tuesday.

December 15. Civil Service Commission trial against Miss Gleason begins.

1909 Suspecting her husband Charles of being unfaithful to her, Eve Lummis assisted by family friend, Charles Moody, uncovers volumes of Charles Lummis' diaries written in Greek (which Moody then translated). This confirms that Lummis was indeed a philanderer who secretly may have had sexual relationships with anywhere from 20 to 50 women. This revelation destroyed their marriage. Taking two of her children—sixteen-year-old daughter Turbesé and four-year-old son Keith—along with her, Eve left El Alisal and began divorce proceedings. Charles' nine-year-old son, Jordan, was the only child who stayed with him.

March. Following the first recall movement in the country, Los Angeles Mayor A.C. Harper is removed from office with the election of George Alexander as Mayor.

April 6. On this Tuesday evening, the Library Board abolishes the Superintendent of Branches position in order to fire Miss Julia Blandy.

1910 The city of Los Angeles' population reached 319,198.

January 1. Dr. C. J. K. Jones resigns as Director of Study and Research. The position is abolished.

March 4. Friday. Lummis resignation letter received by Library Board President Dockweiler

March 5. Saturday. Special meeting of Library Board receives Charles Lummis' resignation letter.

April 1. Lummis' resignation takes effect.

August 6. Purd B. Wright begins his job as Los Angeles City Librarian.

October 1. Los Angeles Times building destroyed and 20 men killed by bomb planted by union members.

1911 **September 8.** Everett R. Perry appointed librarian.

1914 Southwest Museum opens to the public.

1926 Central Library building constructed.

1928 **November 24.** Charles Lummis dies in Los Angeles.

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