

**Books, Buildings
and Social Engineering**



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Early Public Libraries in Britain from Past to Present
**Alistair Black, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign,
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Public libraries have strangely never been the subject of an extensive design history. Consequently, this important and comprehensive book represents a ground-breaking socio-architectural study of pre-1939 public library buildings. A surprisingly high proportion of these urban civic buildings remain intact and present an increasingly difficult architectural problem for many communities. The book thus includes a study of what is happening to these historic libraries now and proposes that knowledge of their origins and early development can help build an understanding of how best to handle their future.

Contents

Preface; Introduction; Part 1 Contexts: The public library and society, 1850-1939: Periodisation, social control and social engineering. Part 2 Periods of Public Library Design: Pioneer public library buildings, 1850-1883; Public library buildings in the age of serial philanthropy, 1883-1914; Modernism and the public library between the wars. Part 3 Thematic Studies: Readers help themselves: the open access revolution; Children's libraries; The library as monument and machine. Part 4 The Past in the Present: New for old?; Conclusion; Appendix; Select bibliography; Index.

About the Author

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