CHAPTER III

THE BOSTON ATHENAEUM: 1869-1880

Boston and the Athenaeum

When Charles Cutter left Boston as an infant to live with his grandfather, the Hub, as it was called, still had the likeness of a large pleasant town. When he returned in order to take up his duties at the Boston Athenaeum in 1869, extensive changes had already occurred. The population had swelled from 93,000 in 1840 to 250,000 in 1870. Immigration, especially of the Irish, was the major factor. While only two-sevenths of the total population were foreign-born in 1840, by 1850 that proportion had increased to almost one-half, settling down thereafter to about one-third for the remainder of the century.¹

Increased vitality in sea commerce before the Civil War brought extensive warehouse construction in the wharf areas. Between 1845 and 1847 nine such structures were built in Pearl Street alone. The combination of warehouse construction and the need for new housing brought about major changes in residential housing patterns. As the older sections

became less desirable to the wealthy and to the established middle-class, they sold their properties for profitable commercial ventures or for low income housing to newer arrivals. Slums developed especially in the Ann Street and Fort Hill sectors. The narrow neck of land south of the business district was continually expanded and became a first resort for those moving out of the more congested older sections. But by the 1860's the South End was disregarded in favor of new land-fill locations in the Back Bay area south and west of the Common, an area where the most well-to-do could build palatial homes. The new Back Bay or the older and greatly dignified Beacon Hill could be pointed at with pride as the fair face of the growing metropolis.1

Population changes in the city were only one part of the picture, however. As new markets opened up in the nation, a shift from port-supply industry to manufacturing industries occurred in the whole Boston area. The suburbs, too, many containing manufacturing centers, experienced the growth of immigrant population after 1850. Cambridge, for example, increased in population from 8,400 in 1840 to almost 40,000 by 1870. However, with many wealthy and middle-class residents also moving to the suburbs, the growth of commuter transportation tied the whole urban area together.2 Cutter, who lived in Cambridge at the beginning of this period, would

1Ward, "Nineteenth Century Boston," pp. 47-54; Whitehill, Boston, A Topographical History, chs. V-VII.

find it not inconvenient to commute to his new place of business, although he mentioned in his letter of acceptance that the need to do so would among other things make the larger Athenaeum salary not so attractive as it might have seemed to the trustees. He apparently rented a room just over Beacon Hill for a while during 1870, perhaps to dispense at least in part with the problem of the daily ride. 1

Though the city changed drastically, in the years through the 1870's, the Athenaeum changed little in its general mood, aside from growth. It had been founded early in the century for the express purpose of literary advancement among gentlemen of learning. 2 In 1803 Phineas Adams, a Harvard graduate of 1801, started the publication, The Monthly Anthology, or Magazine of Polite Literature. The periodical was one among various early efforts to promote a distinctly American literature although with all due recognition of British superiority in the literary field. But it was taken over by the Rev. William Emerson shortly after its inception. He enlisted many Boston area associates to do the writing, and changed its name to The Monthly Anthology and Boston Review. In 1805 these gentlemen organized their group formally as the Anthology Society and shortly afterward engaged in two projects that resulted in the Boston Athenaeum

1 The Boston Directory, LXVII (1870-71). He boarded at 7 Derne Street.

2 Unless otherwise noted, material for the early history of the Athenaeum is taken from Josiah Quincy, The History of the Boston Athenaeum, with Biographical Notices of its Deceased Founders (Cambridge: Metcalf and Company, 1851).
library. They collected a library of donated periodicals, and they sponsored a public reading room. The May 1806 prospectus for the proposed reading room stated,

The Editors of the Anthology in presenting the following proposal for the establishment of a Public Reading-room in this town, by subscription, to be called The Anthology Reading-room, flatter themselves, that a project which may be made so auxiliary to literature, and so useful to the public, will receive ample patronage from the liberal gentlemen of Boston. The projected Plan will not only afford the subscribers an agreeable place of resort, but opportunities of literary intercourse, and the pleasure of perusing the principal European and American periodical publications, at an expense not exceeding that of a single daily paper.¹

In late 1806, with a large amount of money collected from subscriptions, it was voted to incorporate the reading room and library together. This action resulted in the formal establishment of the Boston Athenaeum in 1807, the actual example and name having come from the Liverpool Athenaeum in England. The founders considered the new institution a public institution and accordingly appealed for the patronage of the gentlemen of Boston:

It is a subject of high congratulation to record the establishment of an institution in the metropolis of New England, which will be useful to various classes of our citizens; which will assist and facilitate the researches of the learned, attract and gratify the ingenuous curiosity of strangers. Let men of leisure and opulence patronize the arts and sciences among us; let us all love them, as intellectual men; let us encourage them, as good citizens. In proportion as we increase in wealth, our obligations increase to guard against the pernicious effects of luxury, by stimulating to a taste for intellectual enjoyment; the more we ought to perceive and urge the importance of maintaining the laws by manners, manners by opinion, and opinion by works in which genius and taste unite to embellish the truth.²

¹Ibid., p. 7. ²Ibid., pp. 9-10.
The first home of the new library was in Scollay's Buildings between Tremont and Court streets, but it was only temporary. The Corporation finally settled on the purchase of a house in Tremont Street. The library was moved to the new location in 1809 and remained there until 1822.

The goal in collecting books accorded with the stated purposes of the institution. Those purposes, broadly including the advancement of scholarship as a condition for the growth of the national character and identity, necessitated gathering books in all important fields. The connection was well expressed in the "Memoir of the Boston Athenaeum" sent in the summer of 1807 to every likely subscriber:

The value of learning, whatever incidental evils it may produce, is admitted by all who are qualified to judge upon the subject. Besides the dignity and satisfaction associated with the cultivation of letters and arts, and which constitute their worth to the individual, they have unlimited uses in respect to the community. Speculative and practical philosophy, history, polite literature, and the arts, bear an important relation to all the conveniences and elegancies of life, to all the good institutions of society, and to all the great interests of man, viewed as a rational and social, a moral and religious being. Not only, however, should those deep investigations of science and exquisite refinements of taste, which are necessarily confined to a few, be held in respect, as connected with the general welfare; but that love of intellectual improvement and pleasure and that propensity to reading and inquiry, which are capable of being diffused through considerable portions of the community, should be regarded with interest and promoted with zeal among a civilized and flourishing people. They belong to the regular progress of society.  

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1Ibid., p. 30.
Accordingly, the library attempted to provide contemporary periodicals, both foreign and domestic, the literature of commerce, government and politics, and to assemble a strong collection of American historical materials. That such collecting was successful came about through the indefatigable efforts of William Smith Shaw, the librarian from 1807 to 1823.

After a slow period of growth the institution expanded rapidly under new leadership in the 1820's. Several special collections were added. James Perkins gave his mansion in Pearl Street to the institution as its third home, and it remained there from 1822 to 1849. A building housing a lecture hall and art exhibit gallery was constructed on the same property in 1826 and the first loan art exhibit was held in May 1827. The Athenaeum subsequently became the city's foremost patron of the fine arts, actively engaged over the years in both the purchase and exhibition of paintings and sculpture. Eventually, out of its efforts, the Museum of Fine Arts was established in 1870.¹

The library was opened to limited circulation in 1826. An author catalog was printed in 1827 followed by

supplements in 1830 and 1833 and a cumulative supplement in 1840. A manuscript catalog of 1,181 volumes of bound pamphlets was completed in 1831, providing for them both author and "scientific" (i.e., subject) access.¹ By the end of 1843 the collections had increased to more than 32,000 volumes besides pamphlets, and the total value of the properties to more than $144,000.

In 1839 in the face of the encroachment of warehouses in the Pearl Street area, a proposal was made that the Athenaeum move to a more suitable section of the city. No action was taken, however, and by 1843 the situation had become even more severe. In terms of its own self-image, Josiah Quincy summarized,

In 1842, the population of the city had greatly increased, and Pearl Street had become almost entirely occupied by warehouses. The position of the Athenaeum of consequence became incompatible with the main design of that institution, ready and easy access to a great public library being in a manner essential to its usefulness. A general desire began to be expressed for its removal. It was obvious, also, from the annual reports of the state of the several departments, that, while the books and the collection of the Fine Arts were increasing annually, the productive property of the institution was gradually diminishing, and the diminution in the proceeds of the exhibitions of paintings was, unquestionably, in a degree attributable to the local situation of the Athenaeum.²

Accordingly, new shares were issued as part of a plan to finance a new building. The property finally acquired was at the now familiar 10½ Beacon Street location up against

¹Quincy, History of the Boston Athenaeum, p. 129.
²Ibid., p. 156.
the Old Granary Burial Ground. Actual construction got underway in 1847 and in the summer of 1849 the collections were moved to the new location. Difficulties in the disposition of the Pearl Street property and a greatly inaccurate estimate of the cost of construction, however, prevented the completion of the building by the time of the move. By June 1848 the exterior of the Paterson plainstone structure had already exceeded the whole of the original $70,000 estimate. Rejecting a move on the part of some to become a public institution in exchange for public funds, the proprietors resolved the difficulty temporarily by completing only the main second floor library hall, connecting it to the entrance vestibule by means of an iron staircase. The remainder of the building was completed in the following five years. William L. Williamson, using contemporary descriptions, has summarized the final result.

Located almost in the shadow of the State House, the three-story structure extended 114 feet along Beacon Street. Set back ten feet from the street, the building was constructed of Paterson freestone in a modified Palladian style. A large entrance opened into a spacious lobby on the left of which was a room occupied by the Library of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. Directly ahead from the lobby was the entrance to the Sculpture Gallery and, off to the right, the door to the periodical reading room. On the right of the lobby was the famous Sumner staircase which, though admired by visitors, was of such proportions that it took up almost one-fourth of the whole building. Mounting these stairs and entering through double doors from the second-floor landing, the visitor came into the main library quarters. This handsome room with its high, ornately decorated ceiling, extended the full length of the building. Being at the rear, its windows looked down from the heights of Beacon Hill over the old Granary Burying Ground and, beyond it, to the business center of the city. The entrance from the stairway opened into the smaller west section
of the Library--the so-called Oval Room--where, on shelves lining the walls, were housed the encyclopedias, bound periodicals, and other sets. Here, a charging desk was so placed that the attendant faced the entrance and also, by looking to his right, commanded a view through an archway down the main axis of the Library into the east end of the room. This larger compartment was divided into thirteen alcoves on each of two levels, housing the main book collection. An iron gallery, reached by five spiral staircases, made the book shelves accessible even though they extended almost to the ceiling. Long tables for readers were ranged down the open center of the room. Opening off to the left were doorways to two rooms in the front of the building overlooking Beacon Street. One was set aside as the Librarian's workroom and the other, often called the North Room, was used to house miscellaneous collections. None of these library rooms would normally have been seen by the casual visitor. He would have been more likely to proceed up the Sumner Staircase to the skylighted third floor where the Fine Arts Committee housed its popular exhibitions of paintings, including the Athenaeum's prized Gilbert Stuart portraits of George and Martha Washington.

The total cost of the building was more than $190,000. A series of short term notes not only did not solve the problem of financing but caused considerable discord among the proprietors. Finally, in 1855 a new series of shares was issued, bringing the needed capital to free the institution from debt. That series also brought the total number of shares to 1,049, the number maintained for the remainder of the century.

Meanwhile, the issue of whether or not the Athenaeum should go public was resolved in 1853 just as the building was being completed. A renewed effort in that direction was led by the city Fathers and by George Ticknor along with

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seventy-three other Athenaeum proprietors. Ticknor's appeal centered on the financial condition of the Athenaeum, the inappropriateness of having two separate libraries in such close proximity, and his estimate that four-fifths of the proprietors considered the rationale of the Athenaeum to be that of a public library in the first place. A highly impassioned plea by Josiah Quincy, Sr., however, called the proprietors to their original purposes and the merger idea was soundly defeated.¹

Quincy explicitly appealed to the proprietors to retain the trust of the funds and goals bequeathed to them by the original incorporation. He decried the political nature that control of the institution would develop under a public administration. Such control would effectively subvert the high ideals of their institution. He also implicitly called forth the justifiable pride of the proprietors in the intellectual and cultural tradition out of which the Athenaeum had sprung.

The tradition itself was a mixture of social relationship, wealth, manners and scholarship. Early nineteenth century commercial wealth, conservative and Federalist in its origin, had combined with an advancing Unitarian moral philosophy to produce an elite community that saw itself as a resource of progress and improvement for the reordering of

the nation. One writer has summarized the community's spirit as the formulation of "a set of beliefs that constituted a personal ethic and also defined its role in society as a republican aristocracy which stabilized as it transformed." Wealth was not sought for its own sake. A gentleman pursued the search in conjunction with his personal development of character. Ideally a balanced character included honor and integrity, responsibility and trust, a genteel manner, and an enlightened sense of social responsibility. The collective need for these virtues gave him his rationale for the support of culture and the patronage of cultural institutions such as the Athenaeum.

The accomplishments of the Athenaeum were by 1853 considerable. In 1845 John Bromfield gave the institution an outright gift of $25,000, three-fourths of the income of which was to be used for book purchasing. As a result, the collections increased rapidly in size, numbering by the time of the move in 1849 more than 50,000 volumes. The Athenaeum had also developed a fine arts program. In a day when American artists were struggling for some sort of collective identity, the Athenaeum along with other like institutions of the genteel became a patron of the growing native art movement.

2 Ibid., pp. 440-46.
3 Harris, The Artist in American Society, pp. 94-104, passim.
In the realm of genteel literature and patrician history, the Athenaeum also had its revered memories both before 1853 and afterward. Barrett Wendell, whom Cleveland Amory has described as the Brahmin of Brahmins, inspected the circulation records of the Athenaeum and from them drew a sentimental vignette of the prominent users of the Athenaeum during the course of the nineteenth century. The list is impressive. Beginning with Nathaniel Hawthorne he goes on to mention Rufus Choate, George Barrell Emerson, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Edward Everett, George Ticknor, Samuel Gridley Howe, Josiah Quincy, William Hicking Prescott, Richard Hildreth, George Bancroft, John Gorham Palfrey, Jared Sparks, and Dr. Alexander Young. Francis Parkman, who held a share from 1853 until his death in 1894, was active as a trustee, serving on the library committee for most of those years. Bronson Alcott, William Ellery Channing, and James Freeman Clarke frequented its halls, as well as George Hilliard and Oliver Wendell Holmes. Then too there were the Nortons, the Lodges, the Lowells, the Cabots, and many more.¹

The Athenaeum patrons were active in other Boston area efforts at cultural or humanitarian uplift. Harvard University, the Boston Athenaeum, the Massachusetts General Hospital, and even the lesser known Hopkins Trust had many

of the same members on their boards of directors. By their interrelationships, they forged a strong intellectual community of humane interest, with the Boston Athenaeum as one of the focal points.

The intellectual and social tradition out of which the Athenaeum emerged formed one aspect of the general ethos of the institution. The work of the librarians formed still another aspect. Their roles grew as the library grew and they both affected it and were affected by it. William Smith Shaw, the first librarian, served from 1807 to 1826 and was primarily a bibliophile. The Athenaeum was his whole life; so much in fact, that he came to bear the nickname "Athenaeum Shaw." He carried the institution through its dark early years and collected donations widely, including large numbers of valuable pamphlets. But his zeal in collecting was not matched by his grasp of organization. By the time of his death in 1826, the records of what he had collected for the Athenaeum and what he had collected for himself had become so confused that a special committee was appointed in order amicably to settle the problem with the executor of his estate.¹

Little is recorded of the second librarian, Dr. Seth Bass. He served from 1826 to 1846 as librarian, and from 1846 to 1847 as assistant librarian. During his term the

¹Quincy, History of the Boston Athenaeum, p. 109. See also the separately paged memoir of Shaw in the same work, especially p. 42.
only early printed catalogs and supplements of the collections were made, but he did not possess the confidence of the trustees. Upon the receipt of the Bromfield gift and in the light of a proposed new building they desired to make a change. Quincy related,

The increase of the capital of the institution, and the prospective annual enlargement of the Library under the operation of the Bromfield fund, as well as the new arrangement of its several departments and the improvement in the administration which would be requisite on a removal to the projected building, made it obvious to the Trustees that some person, specially suited by learning, taste, and judgement, ought to be invited to take the place of Librarian; and Charles Folsom, formerly Librarian of Harvard University, being considered to possess these qualifications, as well as great interest in and acquaintance with such labors, was unanimously chosen, Dr. Bass being now made Assistant Librarian.

Charles Folsom thus succeeded Dr. Bass as librarian in 1846 and served until 1856. His philosophy of librarianship was more thought out and advanced. In a letter to Samuel Atkins Eliot, a close friend and also a proprietor, he described what he thought to be the best approach for a librarian to take towards the Athenaeum.

He began with his understanding of the "public" nature of the library; that is, its openness to enquiring scholars. Together with Harvard, the Athenaeum made Boston into an Athens of intellectual resources. The librarian was to be the custodian of the intellectual treasures. He must

1 Ibid., p. 170.

2 The letter, dated October 27, 1845, is contained in Theophilus Parsons, "Memoir of Charles Folsom," in Massachusetts Historical Society, Proceedings, XIII (April, 1873), 28-34.
have an appreciation of books as oracles and as works of art, the latter especially with regard to binding and lettering. And he must understand that the library provided a "sanctum" for the perusal of the books. Consequently, the librarian must intelligently frame and courteously enforce the rules for the library's use. This aspect of the Athenaeum's librarianship, he claimed, had already been adequately accomplished in the past.¹

A second aspect of the librarianship needed to be developed, however. If the library was indeed public, then the librarian must be also a dispenser of its knowledge. By dispenser, Folsom did not mean simply one who found particular volumes or checked them out to the patrons. Rather, the librarian must have "an ability to 'bring forth, out of the treasure' committed to him, 'things new and old'." He must know the general contents of the books themselves "so as to be able readily to follow out subjects, and to put inquirers upon the right track."² He must abridge the labor of the inquirers, both the novices and those of superior mind. He must, in short, be a human index to the collection, a reference librarian in a more disciplined sense than had previously been required. In this way the "public" nature of the library could best be served.

There is a sense, therefore, that with Folsom the Athenaeum stepped out in a new direction, that of being a

¹Ibid., pp. 29-30. ²Ibid., p. 30.
workable and accessible research collection for a wider audience of scholars than simply those among the proprietors. It was not as if other scholars had not already made use of it. Now, however, such a goal became a conscious part of its program, and more important, a stated aspect of the duties of the librarian. Folsom's views seem to have been accepted as the rationale for a new choice of librarian, and in fact may have been the reason for his candidacy. His views also seem to have informed the general rhetoric of the Athenaeum's renewed emphasis on its "public" self-image of the 1840's, although the concept of "public" was limited to a narrower community of scholarship than the public in general.

Under Folsom's leadership the library grew rapidly in size so that by the time of his retirement in 1856 its collections numbered about 60,000 volumes. His exacting standards in collection-building aimed at purchasing the best scholarly works in a systematic and well-considered manner. When later writers spoke of the golden age of the Athenaeum, that is, the years of its greatest influence in the literary and intellectual community, they especially referred to the mid-nineteenth century years. During his term a special subscription fund was raised to purchase a portion of General Washington's library. An attempt was also made to begin a new catalog of the collection. As early as 1852, the trustees approached Ezra Abbot, then at work on his Cambridge High School library catalog, to make
a catalog for the Athenaeum. In 1854 Abbot was hired as Folsom's assistant, but for unexplained reasons, the project was never accomplished, and perhaps never begun. In 1856 when Folsom resigned, Abbot also resigned, to accept the assistant librarian's post at Harvard College.

William F. Poole became the fourth librarian in 1856. His experience had come in the bustling circulating libraries at Yale and in the Boston Mercantile Library Association where dispensing had included, especially in the latter, a large number of popular novels. Of course, Poole was an accomplished bibliographer and his compilation of an index to periodical literature and of a usable and quickly made printed catalog seemed to be the skills that the Athenaeum needed greatly at that time.

Poole's biographer, William L. Williamson, writes that during Poole's years at the Athenaeum (1856-1868), both the library and the librarian had obvious effects on each other. On the one hand, the Athenaeum tempered Poole's youthful zest for the larger circulation and activity of a general public library by subjecting him to its slower pace and more reserved scholarly atmosphere. It doubtless encouraged his own scholarly bent, an interest that flowered in a series of historiographical writings. On the other hand, Poole, while accepting the change of pace, introduced to the Athenaeum a greater degree of organization than it

1For a concise sketch of Poole's work at the Athenaeum, see Williamson, William Frederick Poole, pp. 24-44.
had previously known. In comparison with Folsom, who was more concerned with the librarian's scholarly reference role, Poole was equally concerned with the library's internal operations. He made a new shelf arrangement almost immediately. He helped to plan a new much-needed catalog of the collections. He oversaw building alterations. He increased the staff and began the use of female personnel, the latter strongly objected to by Folsom. He helped in the growth of the collections so that by 1868 another 20,000 volumes had been added. And he played a major role in gathering Southern documents during the Civil War years, making the Athenaeum's collection of Civil War material one of the best, if not the best, in the nation.

One aspect of Poole's work, the catalog project, was a failure. Poole outlined the plan for the catalog shortly after he arrived on the scene, but Charles Russell Lowell, Jr., a brother of the poet, James Russell Lowell, was engaged to do the actual work on the project. But the work was not completed during Poole's term of office, although for one brief point in 1861 and again in 1866 it seemed ready. Williamson suggests that the failure to produce the catalog was caused by several factors, the most important of which was "the confused and ill-defined administrative organization of the institution."¹ That is, despite the better organization that Poole brought, the administrative lines between the

¹Ibid., p. 33.
librarian and the trustees had not been adequately clarified and that fact had its most immediate effect on completing the catalog. Administratively, the trustees had enough of a voice in the actual operations so that the librarian was not always in control of the situation. It was just that situation that Charles Cutter specified as having to be corrected. In his view the librarian was to have the sole responsibility for assigning work and for operating the library as a single unit. In short, the administrative lines of authority would have to be clarified. Poole resigned early in 1868, although he stayed on during the remainder of the year.

In January 1869 Cutter brought a still different approach to the librarian's post. He had an intense concern for the internal operations of the library with a decided emphasis on scientific principles. That did not mean, however, that Cutter gave any ground in the librarian's reference function. He had already established his credentials as a scholar and bibliographer. His academic work at Harvard College and Divinity School was of a very high quality. He had been active as an indexer, a writer, a translator, and a bibliographical expert, the latter both with George Sabin and in his own book reviewing. Finally, he was accepted in the intellectual and social community through his

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1 Letter, Cutter to Charles Deane, November 21, 1868, BA.
acquaintance with some of its leading members and his close association with Ezra Abbot.

He had also, however, established his credentials in the area of librarianship. He had been a maker of catalogs and had gained a reputation as an expert in cataloging by his involvement in Abbot's Harvard catalog project. He had gained considerable administrative ability while at Harvard and had had the opportunity to observe the administrative needs of a major library. And he brought with himself exacting standards of accuracy and a growing penchant for professionalizing the work of the librarian. In short, he came as a strong administrator and as an accomplished bibliographer with a strong desire to organize a library in such a complete manner as to achieve its fullest potential.

1869-1873

Charles Cutter's first five years at the Athenaeum were a time of administrative transition for the institution. When the Beacon Street building had been opened in 1849 it was thought to contain enough space for decades of growth. But the Bromfield fund for acquisitions, supplemented with a like amount from the estate of Samuel Appleton in 1853 as well as with other smaller gifts, caused that hope to be short-lived. New book purchases were seriously crowding the shelves within two decades. The overcrowding also put pressure on the Fine Arts Committee for the use of its first floor sculpture display area and the third floor exhibition galleries.
The beginning of a solution was suggested in January 1866 in the report of the Fine Arts Committee. It called for the erection of a separate exhibition building. A year later the Library Committee reiterated the idea, suggesting the use of the Athenaeum's Tremont Place property. The trustees approved the course of action, and in anticipation of it, during 1868 had the sculpture hall fitted with book shelves.¹

The final solution of the space problem took a slightly different course. In November 1869 the Athenaeum received a bequest from the estate of Colonel Timothy Bigelow Lawrence (1826-1869) of an extensive collection of armor and weapons. Lawrence's widow promised to help with the expense of fitting out a display room for them. In response, the trustees voted to form a special committee to pursue the founding of a museum of fine arts. Similar interest shown by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, holder of a collection of architectural casts; by Harvard, whose library had an undisplayed collection of prints bequeathed by Francis Calley Gray (1790-1856); and by the American Social Science Association, interested in the public educational use of sculpture reproductions, converged at the same time. The Museum of Fine Arts was incorporated the following February. By May 1870 land was awarded to the new

¹Whitehill, Museum of Fine Arts, pp. 5-6.
institution by the City of Boston, in the new Back Bay area facing what would eventually become Copley Square.  

Although the building did not open to the public until the centennial date of July 4, 1876, its anticipated existence relieved the pressure on the Athenaeum library and caused other changes to take place. Exhibitions held at the Athenaeum during the intervening years were done in the interest of and under the auspices of the new museum. In late 1872 after the destruction of the Lawrence arms collection in the great Boston fire of November 9th (they had been stored in a warehouse in Pearl Street), precautions were taken to protect the Athenaeum against fire hazards. These included placing additional fire extinguishers in the building and running a water line to the top floor. The existence of the Museum also further emphasized the narrowing scope of the Athenaeum's collections. Although the Fine Arts Committee received other gifts of paintings and artifacts to expand their permanent loan collection to the Museum, they turned more explicitly to collecting books on the fine arts and to securing photographs of great works of art. In 1873

1Ibid., pp. 6-10.

2Boston Athenaeum, Report of the Standing Committee at the Annual Meeting, January 14, 1873, Records of the Proprietors, MS, BA. Unless otherwise noted the annual reports of the various committees of the trustees of the Athenaeum are contained in the Records of the Proprietors and are in manuscript form. They will be cited hereafter only by title and date. Material taken from the manuscript records of the regular meetings of the Trustees, the Fine Arts Committee, and the Library Committee will be cited as Records of the Trustees, Records of the Library Committee, etc., with the appropriate date of the meetings.
the first mention is made of the purchase of such photographs, an activity that would actively involve Charles Cutter in many of the succeeding years.¹

If, however, the emergence of the Museum of Fine Arts caused changes in the Athenaeum itself, even more so did the new style of leadership that Cutter brought. Whereas Poole had administered the library with something less than close supervision of the employees, Cutter preferred a more tightly knit operation. He sought to establish very quickly his control over the situation. Having a penchant for details and an overwhelming desire for accuracy, he watched his employees closely, requiring of them his own no-nonsense attitude. His method, however, in keeping with his more reserved nature, tended to be less in verbal confrontation than in the indirect writing of orders or in the mien of authority that he presented when he would turn up unexpectedly in a staff situation. A later reminiscence of his manner stated,

Never idle himself, he seemed to sense it when his assistants were not using their time to the best advantage. He did not take them verbally to task about their derelictions, but would leave sharp little notes at their desks, calling attention to the point to be noted. For example, one girl was stamping plates in an illustrated volume. The intervals between the stampings gave evidence of too careful scanning of the plates themselves, so the note which she found at her desk read: "It is not necessary critically to examine each plate before stamping."²

¹Annual Report of the Fine Arts Committee, January 12, 1874.
²"As it Was in the Beginning," p. 238.
Mary Abbie Bean, who had been employed by Poole, left the Athenaeum in the summer of 1869 to work at other libraries. Both she and Poole wrote to Charles Evans to obtain for their use samples of Athenaeum supplies. But Evans, quite willing to oblige his friends, got into trouble with the new librarian. Perhaps irritated by the resulting depletions, Cutter apparently soon had the employees signing for various items, including door keys. It was perhaps the appearance of sternness that caused the Reverend Frederic H. Kent to remark after Cutter's death that few persons got to know him intimately, an acquaintance with him being difficult to establish. Kent added to his own statement, however, that the appearance was deceiving. Though possessed of a quiet reserve,

those who did know him well would agree that not his reserve but his unfailing, gentle courtesy, was the better sign of the warm heart within. His rare refinement of mind and purity of heart, with a delicate sense of humor and quick sympathy, made him a delightful and stimulating companion. . . . He was a man who gave rather than sought sympathy, never esteeming his own cares or pleasures of interest to others. They are not a few who can tell of his discovery of some hidden need, and proffer of service so full of tact and of a delicate friendliness, that it disarmed pride, and made obligation to him a joy. He was, said one of his assistants to me, a man whom it was a pleasure to work with and for; his directions were given with unfailing considerateness, and his appreciation of faithful work was discriminating and generous. . . . His was the deeper spirit of brotherhood which does not dissipate itself in superficial geniality, but gathers intensity and effectiveness through wise conservation for the moment of specific opportunity.2

1 Holley, Charles Evans, p. 24.
2 Frederic Houston Kent, He Served His Own Generation; A Sermon in Memory of Charles Ammi Cutter . . . [Northampton, Massachusetts, 1903?]
Others spoke of both his quiet but reserved helpfulness and his intense desire to get to the essential matters of the moment. Charles K. Bolton later noted that an account of the Athenaeum during Cutter's administration commended the institution for its "courteous treatment of visitors, the absence of red-tape, and freedom from surveillance." ¹

Although the public and those employees who came to revere Cutter felt comfortable with his reserved and business-like style, those who had worked for William F. Poole understandably felt a tension as the new administrator took over. Mary Bean became piqued by Cutter's ideas and methods. In her letters to Evans she referred to Cutter as "his majesty" and warned her younger friend not to use the Athenaeum's stamps or he would get into trouble. She also asked Evans to defend her and Harriet Ames from what may have been by Cutter a low estimate of their work. ² Evans himself must have gotten along only fairly satisfactorily. With regard to the requirement to sign for items, he wrote to Bean that Cutter was "the king of the goats." ³ His attitude may also have further spurred Poole's own personal feeling of competition with Cutter and the Boston librarians. In attempting to persuade Evans to come to Indianapolis, Poole boasted that his own influence there was "worth 40 Cutters." He warned that to remain in library work in

¹ Charles K. Bolton, "The First One Hundred Years of Athenaeum History," in The Athenaeum Centenary, pp. 48-49.
² Holley, Charles Evans, p. 24. ³ Ibid.
Massachusetts, Evans,

would be under the shadow of Winsor, Cutter & Abbot, and must do everything as they do it, or you don't understand your business. (I don't do my business in that way. I wish you could see some letters I am writing to Winsor.) Nobody can make a mark in a library in the vicinity of Boston. Fletcher is just far enough away to be independent and to be a man, as he is. ¹

Regardless of the reactions to the man and his methods, Cutter himself seems not to have been personally troubled by such ruffles. He always remained very cordial to those who disagreed with him. Under Cutter, Evans continued to receive annual increases in salary, and when Evans finally resigned from the Athenæum to move to the Indianapolis librarianship, the proprietors took up a collection and presented him with a gold watch and chain as a token of esteem for his courteous and faithful service. Many years later Cutter warmly referred to that incident in estimating Evans' worth, in a letter to Poole. ² Nevertheless, the style of the new administrator took its toll. My mid-1870 only Evans and William Price, the janitor, remained of the older staff. ³

¹Letter, W. F. Poole to Charles Evans, August 4, 1872, University of Illinois Library, Rare Book Room, Evans Papers. William I. Fletcher had worked at the Athenæum from 1861 to 1866 under Poole and was at the time of this letter at the Watkinson Library in Hartford, Connecticut.

²Letter, Cutter to W. F. Poole, May 25, 1892, Newberry Library, Poole Papers.

³In addition to those that left by 1870, Charles R. Lowell, Jr. died suddenly in June 1870. Charles Evans eventually left in 1872 and Price in 1876.
In replacing those who left Cutter assembled a new corps of workers, some of whom, like those under Poole, became librarians in their own right, and many of whom stayed with him for many years. Mary Jane Regan, affectionately known as Minnie, came to the Athenaeum in 1869 and remained in its service until 1916. She soon took over the work of the circulation desk. A contemporary spoke of her and the Athenaeum as closely identified.

I think Miss Regan became part of the Athenaeum as the Athenaeum became part of Miss Regan. But it was a Nineteenth Century Athenaeum, when people had leisure and no art galleries. Many women as well as men came regularly, looking over new books, talked to friends as well as to Miss Regan; it was like a club, a club with order and discipline maintained by Miss Minnie Regan; and very well she did it.¹

Emma Leonore Clarke also came in 1869 and continued until 1890, afterwards becoming the librarian of the Framingham Town Library. Sarah Peters Bowker joined the staff in 1872 for four years and later returned for another period in the 1880's. She married Richard Bliss in 1888, the librarian of the Newport, Rhode Island Redwood Library and a close associate of Cutter in the development of the Expansive Classification. As under Poole, it was not unusual to hire close relatives. Augusta Isabella Appleton, Sarah Cutter's sister and a member of the Cutter household, joined the staff in 1872, remaining until 1889. During the same period she did

¹Miss Dora Walton Russell, quoted in the memoir of Miss Regan, in Mary Jane Regan, Echoes from the Past; Reminiscences of the Boston Athenaeum (Boston: The Boston Athenaeum, 1927), p. 14.
bibliographical work for Richard Bowker, compiling the
American Catalogue volumes that covered the years 1876-1890.¹

Of course, not everything changed overnight with
Cutter's coming. Traditional procedures held sway in some
areas, as might be expected. The building of the book col-
lection continued with the same purposiveness and thorough-
ness that had been established under the administrations of
Folsom and Poole. The overall book budget was slightly
lower than that of the heyday of the mid-1860's when almost
$7,000 a year was being spent apart from binding. During
Cutter's first year that total had been reduced to $5,709
and in 1870 it was further lowered to $5,271. But by 1873
expenditures had again passed the $6,000 mark.² Even with
reduced means, however, Cutter was a part of a very privi-
leged situation. Only the wealthiest of libraries could
claim any substantial regular book budget and few could
boast of a sum so munificent.

The number of volumes added during the same period
varied slightly according to the number of donations.

¹Information on Athenaeum staff members is taken from
The Athenaeum Centenary, pp. 218-21. For Sarah Bowker's
marriage to Richard Bliss, see LJ, XIII (November, 1888), 353.
The work done by Augusta Appleton on the American Catalogue,
besides being mentioned in the works themselves, was a cause
of occasional comments in the correspondence between Cutter
and Richard Bowker. In the playful humor that sometimes
appeared in his personal letters, Cutter at one time wrote,
"If you kill my sister-in-law, I shall sue you for damages." His comment concerned Bowker's overworking her. Letter,
Cutter to R. R. Bowker, May 12, 1884, NYPL, Bowker Papers.

²Information on expenditures is taken from the Annual
Reports of the Library Committee for the relevant years.
Donations, however, were not very significant in the total program of a library that could afford to buy what it needed. The library often had copies of the volumes given. As a result, Cutter carried on a significant exchange program with other institutions. In late 1869 he was in communication with Addison Van Name of the Yale University Library concerning 132 volumes of English state papers which he desired to sell or exchange. An 1872 series of letters to Van Name reveals the usual methodology employed. The librarians would exchange duplicates lists and wants lists and send cartons of books to each other on the basis of the lists. Cutter included in his duplicates references to other volumes of special series and inquired of Van Name if he should acquire them for Yale if he happened to run across them. The institutions kept running accounts with each other, keeping value totals of the books exchanged. They rarely settled accounts with money payments. Rather they simply supplied each other with other needed volumes.

Cutter was authorized by the Library Committee to buy books at many of the book auctions taking place during the period. The usual procedure was for a member of the committee to check the sale catalog himself, or to recheck Cutter’s own marking of it. The desired items were then checked against the Athenaeum’s catalogs to be sure that

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1Letter, Cutter to Addison Van Name, October 12, 1869, and four letters written August and September, 1872, Yale University Library, Librarians' Correspondence.
they were not already held by the library. Subsequently, either a member of the committee or the librarian would go to the auction to do the bidding. At first the auctions authorized for Cutter seem to have been mainly at the firm of John Leonard then located in Boston in Bromfield Street. On May 9, 1871 Cutter participated in the sale of the noted library of Henry B. Humphrey. Beginning in January 1872 the authorizations to bid at auctions increased dramatically, many of them taking place in New York City at the firms of Bangs & Co. and George A. Leavitt. It would seem to have been a particular delight for Cutter to be able to make an occasional trip to New York, for there he would have had the opportunity to see George Sabin. Sabin had used Cutter's services on the Dictionary of Books Relating to America while Cutter was still at Harvard. During the 1870's Sabin was busy making sale catalogs for the above two firms and occasionally served as the auctioneer at the sales themselves.

There were difficulties in this procedure for buying books, however. There was, of course, an unavoidable control of the procedure by the Library Committee. It was typical of libraries to hold such close reins over their librarians because of the trustees' desire to control the purse strings.

1 Authorizations for Cutter to purchase at book auctions are recorded in the Records of the Library Committee beginning with the entry for November 7, 1870. For a description of the thriving book auction business of that era, see Clarence S. Brigham, "History of Book Auctions in America," in George L. McKay, American Book Auction Catalogues, 1713-1934, A Union List (New York: The New York Public Library, 1937), and especially pp. 12-16, passim, for Sabin's work.
In the case of the Athenaeum it was also because some of the members of the Library Committee were accomplished bibliographers in their own right. Charles Deane, one such member, was an officer of the Massachusetts Historical Society. Another member of the committee, Francis Parkman, was a noted historian. It was not until later years that Cutter gained more freedom to purchase without restriction and at his own discretion. It was as if he had to earn his wings in the matter.

Another difficulty centered in the problem of the library's existing catalogs. There were three such alphabetical sequences to go through, the main slip catalog being compiled by Charles Lowell, Poole's 1866-68 card supplement catalog, and the pamphlet catalog. Cutter used the existence of multiple alphabetical sequences as an argument against any catalog that would require supplements. His reference to that work is descriptive of the procedures involved.

You [the Library Committee] lately put into my hands an auction catalogue--that of W. E. Woodward,--to mark (under Mr. Parkman's supervision) for purchase. It contains a very full collection of town histories, (682 no's.) and it seemed to me desirable to procure everything of that sort which we have not. Now it took two of our young ladies--both quick workers--3 days and a half in all to compare these 682 lots with our catalogues in order to ascertain whether we had or had not the books. And the reason was, that they had to look not only on Mr. Lowell's catalogue, but also on Mr. Poole's supplement and the tract catalogue. In other words two days ($2.66) were wasted simply because our catalogue is not in one alphabet, as every catalogue ought to be. Nor is this by any means a solitary case, though it is an extreme one. The catalogue of A. G. Greene's library, which Mr. Deane marked, gave almost as
much trouble. Since I have been here I have looked over on an average at least one catalogue a week and marked more or less on each.¹

Other library operations were also carried on with little change. The annual examination and recall of books, necessitating the closing of the library for a period of time during June, was carried on as usual. And the growth of the collections made necessary a constant shifting of the shelves as it had under Poole. In fact, within four months of his arrival, Cutter found it necessary to rearrange eleven alcoves before the annual examination, "the present confusion being unendurable."²

With the rearrangements came new shelf lists for each and the need to change the shelf marks in the catalogs, a problem he had been all too familiar with at Harvard. He suggested that leaving open space for new acquisitions was no more than a guessing game. "I left in arranging the alcoves [of the new gallery] nearly half of each shelf vacant. And yet twice within four weeks after they were arranged I was obliged to rearrange shelves which has been filled up by accessions."³

In keeping with Cutter's intense desire to get the situation under his control, however, there were other procedures that he changed. For 1869 the Library Committee

¹C. A. Cutter, "Librarian's Report on the Best Method of Copying Mr. Lowell's Catalogue," April 12, 1869, MS, BA.
²Ibid. ³Ibid.
could report that, "The Library has continued this year its steady growth in usefulness; indeed it has advanced with uncommon rapidity."¹ Perhaps part of the statement could be attributed to the increased detail by which the statistics were presented, a method introduced by Cutter and continued over the years. Cutter simply began to count more accurately and on a wider scale than had been done before. Circulation increased because of an increase in the number of proprietors using the library and because Cutter had challenged the existing loan period rules. In 1860 under Poole the trustees had authorized that all new books most in demand have their circulation period cut from two weeks to one in order that more people could borrow them. The likelihood that the new rule was not always helpful is suggested by later admonitions that patrons could not reserve the seven day books in advance, and that once such a book was returned it could not be checked out by the same person on the same or the next day. The basic problem was the inflexibility of the rule. Some books could not be conveniently read in a seven day period. And it is likely that it was all too easy to put all new books in that category rather than to show some discrimination on the basis of those that were most likely to be the more heavily used items. Cutter's protest of the "procrustean seven-day rule" was successful and varying loan periods of seven, fourteen, and thirty

¹Annual Report of the Library Committee, January 10, 1870.
138

days were affixed to different new books. The new policy resulted in the proprietors checking more books out than previously.

In 1870 Cutter continued his promotion of more open policies. The Library Committee reported,

On the representation of the Librarian that a little more could be conceded to the borrowers, the Committee have altered the rules which restricted to one volume the number of "new books" that could be taken out at once, so that a new work in any foreign language may be taken out at the same time with an English new book, and so that two volumes of the same work (and three if it is a novel) may be taken out at once.

In 1871 Cutter successfully argued the case for a second new English language book being allowed to the same person upon the payment of an extra $4.00 annual subscription rate. The action was tried and continued. Apparently the proprietors approved the changes. The use of the library increased. The number of shares used rose by 16 per cent during Cutter's first year and continued to rise, going from 501 shares in use in 1870 to 683 during 1873. The increase in annual subscription income that resulted was used to buy multiple copies of the heaviest used items.

Increased circulation caused concomitant problems, however. Circulation records had traditionally been kept in a large folio volume, one page to a patron's name. Because there was only one access route to those records, it was not

1Ibid. See also Annual Report of the Library Committee, January 7, 1861.

always possible to ascertain whether any particular book was checked out or simply lost. That was one of the reasons that the annual recall of books for examination was made. In 1866 Charles Jewett had introduced at the Boston Public Library the slip system of circulation in which a record of circulation was kept by individual works. In May 1868 Charles Deane reported on that system to the Library Committee, but no action on beginning it at the Athenaeum is recorded and it is not known exactly when it was instituted. By 1873, however, Melvil Dewey reported that both the ledger system and the slip system was being used there.\footnote{Melvil Dewey, [Diary], Bk. III, pp. 49-51, February 15, 1873, MS, CUL, M. Dewey Papers.}

To keep a double entry of course entailed more work. The Athenaeum did not use accession numbers and each time a book was checked out a new slip had to be made for it including full author and title. But the resultant savings in time during the annual examination began to be felt soon afterward.

Perhaps the most significant change that occurred in the administration of the library was the assumption of the direction of the catalog project by Cutter himself. Four months after beginning his duties Cutter was asked to give a report on how best to get the catalog finished. The record of disappointment on the project stretched back to 1851. In the intervening years the catalog had twice almost been printed, once in 1861 and again in 1866. But there always
seemed to be an impediment: either the lack of funds or a lack of assurance on the part of Charles Lowell that the catalog was ready to go to press. Cutter's April 1869 report was entitled, "Librarian's Report on the Best Method of Copying Mr. Lowell's Catalogue," and gave cost estimates for printing, making a slip catalog, or making a card catalog. His own preference was for the latter, but the trustees desired printing, no matter what the cost. The matter was allowed to rest for another year whereupon Cutter gave another report, this time on the necessary steps preliminary to printing the catalog.\(^1\) Cutter was apparently given complete control of the project at that time. The Library Committee minutes stress that Cutter,

expressed himself confident of being able to bring the Catalogue into a state fit to be printed with the force now employed, by the 1st of March 1872. It was understood that the Librarian is to change the employees now engaged upon that work, in case any change shall seem to be desirable.\(^2\)

Whether or not such a course came as a disappointment to Charles Lowell is not known, for Lowell died suddenly in June 1870. With regard to the catalog, Cutter had complete freedom to do with it what he wanted. He was not able, however, to stay within the limits of the "force now employed"

\(^1\)C. A. Cutter, "Report of the Librarian on Printing the Catalogue," MS, BA. This document is undated, but the projected time schedule included in its pages, as well as the entries in the Records of the Library Committee, establish that it was presented in March 1870.

\(^2\)Records of the Library Committee, March 14, 1870.
and during the next two years the staff increased consider-
ably as Cutter put all of his effort into the work. The
overall library budget subsequently began to rise and Cut-
ter began to personally spend more and more extra time on
the project.

Despite the heavy demands that the catalog made on
his extra time, Cutter still found time for other outside
bibliographical work. He continued his indexing work, do-
ing the indexes for one or two individual volumes of the
Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society. By
1872 he had completed an even more ambitious project,
making a ten-year index of the entire fifth series of the
Collections. For that work he received almost $600.1 The
trustees of the Athenaeum were mindful of his outside ven-
tures. They early expressed complete confidence in his
work and in 1870 raised his salary to $3,000. In March 1873
they rewarded his diligence in the catalog project with an
extra stipend of $500 to be paid yearly.2

1873-1880

With the administration of the library firmly in
hand, the next eight years at the Athenaeum were the most
significant for Cutter with regard to his own expanding
ideals of the way a library should function. His goal was

1 Massachusetts Historical Society, Proceedings,
XII (1871-73), 221.

2 Records of the Trustees, January 17, 1870, and
March 18, 1873.
to operate the library in such a way that all the various facets fit together in a system based on well-defined principles. Librarianship for him was the disciplined effort to discover and apply those principles; in effect, a profession.

Cutter was not alone in his professional striving. It was a time of far-reaching activity in the field of librarianship as a whole. He participated in the making of the 1876 Special Report, itself produced under the hand of the Commissioner of Education, John Eaton. He participated in the activity that led to the founding of the American Library Association at the national centennial celebration in Philadelphia in 1876. And during the late 1870's he became active in the leadership of the new organization and edited the professional bibliography sections of the Library Journal in its early years.

Indicative of the common front he established and perhaps most significant of all of his professional relationships in the growing library movement was his early friendship with Melvil Dewey. While a student at Amherst College, Dewey developed an interest in library matters. In February 1873 he made a tour of the Harvard College Library, the Boston Public Library, and the Boston Athenaeum. Dewey recorded in his diary that he went to the "beautiful building of the Boston Athenaeum and looked over its library with Mr. C. A. Cutter, the gentlemanly librarian."¹ Cutter, interested in

¹Dewey, [Diary], Bk. III, p. 49 (February 15, 1873).
those who showed interest in how a library operated, explained to Dewey his catalog project and gave the young man a printed sheet from it. Dewey recorded his impressions noting that it was a simplification of Abbot's Harvard card catalog in which, for example, horse, as a subject, was entered under its own name, and not under zoology, the inclusive class.

Other matters also caught Dewey's eye. He noted mechanical features of the card catalog, the beautiful aspects of the reading room, and the exceptional feature of open stack access to the books by the patrons. He described in detail the "charging system" (circulation records) noting with satisfaction that in addition to the older ledger system, Cutter had begun to employ the Boston Public Library's idea of keeping records also by the location number of the book. A drawback of the innovation, however, was that the Athenaeum, unlike the Public Library, did not use an accession number. Such a number, uniquely identifying at least each individual work, would have saved the labor of writing out fully the author, title and imprint information on each location number slip. It was a flaw that Dewey considered "crippling" to the system.  

1 Ibid., pp. 49-51. Three and a half years later, Cutter and Dewey together examined a new shelf listing system worked out by Miss Annie Godfrey (later, Mrs. Dewey). In his reply to her, Cutter explicitly referred to the great possibilities in using an accession number as a unique identification device. He warmly cautioned her, however, that she ought to consider its ramifications for all parts of the library as a system before adopting it; but, having done so, to forge ahead with its use. Letter, Cutter to Annie
The result of the visit was a personal and professional friendship that was to last for many years. In 1876 Dewey recorded many visits to the older man, obtaining advice on his then novel classification system and working with Cutter as well as with others on the organization of the 1876 conference and on the founding of the Library Journal. Even more significant was the relationship of the two men in the organization of a library business. Soon after the beginning of the American Library Association, Dewey desired to set up a company that would supply materials to libraries. He succeeded in founding a business of that nature, at first informally, but finally as a corporation, in 1879. His delay was probably due to his deep involvement in the American Library Association. He had apparently been thinking about it for some time and occasionally recorded observations that spoke of his sense of business markets. For example, as early as his 1873 visit to the Boston libraries, he had noted perceptively that all three of the major libraries had been in the habit of getting their catalog cards "of Amaziah Stowe, 93 Devonshire St."¹ In March 1879 he joined Frederick Jackson in incorporating the Readers and Writers Economy Company, bringing Cutter into it almost at the same time as a member of the board of directors. Accordingly, Cutter used the new company as a library supply company for the Athenaeum. Dewey's account

Godfrey, September 22, 1876, CUL, M. Dewey Papers.

¹Dewey, [Diary], Bk. III, p. 50, February 15, 1873.
book is replete with monthly entries for supplies to him. In another way the Athenæum played an even more significant role. To market such supplies, Dewey needed a place to experiment and an advertisement of use. The Athenæum provided both. Dewey could refer to the fact that Cutter was using this or that item at the Athenæum, and Cutter himself was not unwilling to try various products to see how efficient they really were.¹

Cutter's work in the profession and his relationship to Melvil Dewey form the backdrop for this period of his work at the Athenæum. In the library, however, it was business as usual and perhaps business even more than usual. Funds expended for books and periodicals, after reaching a high of $8,294 for 1874 began a three-year decline, reaching a low of only $3,625 in 1877. The decline was caused directly by increasing expenses for cataloging and library services to patrons, and indirectly by the financial state of the nation following the panic of 1873. Funds went back up to over $6,000 by 1880 and 1881, but not before the decrease had brought about expressions of concern on the part of various proprietors.

Book purchasing itself went on largely as it had in Cutter's first four years. The Library Committee attempted

¹Several untitled documents give the details of the progress of the company, among which the most useful is a summary of the formation of the company with minutes of the directors' meetings. The Athenæum's dealings with the company are recorded in M. Dewey's manuscript "Account Book," no. 2. All of these documents are in CUL, M. Dewey Papers.
to keep up with current publishing and at the end of 1875 could even claim that all good English books had been purchased promptly, as well as a sizable quantity of French literature. But that was when expenditures were still hovering just above $7,000. As the years passed and funds were spent for other things, the pinch in book purchasing was felt.¹

Careful attention was also paid to sale catalogs and their auctions. More than fifty authorizations by the library committee are recorded in the period. While some of the catalogs were marked by Francis Parkman or others, Cutter was occasionally directed to buy at his own discretion. Sometimes the sales were of major private collections. Whether or not Cutter went to all of these is not known, but he continued to make occasional trips to the auction houses themselves. The sales he frequented were limited to the auction houses of Boston and New York City. One exception occurred when he was authorized to spend £100 for books in London during the First International Library Conference in 1877.²

¹The statistics are gathered from the Annual Reports of the Library Committee. It is also significant to note that when special additional funds were received in 1879, the first suggestion for their use by Cutter was for purchasing more current literature. See his "Report of the Librarian for 1879," MS, BA, for an extended discussion of the matter.

²The first recorded instance of Cutter being authorized to buy on his own occurs in Records of the Library Committee, April 22, 1878. The authorization for the London purchases was made on August 27, 1877, and may have provided for the committee substantial confidence in his judgment.
Cutter carried out a constant exchange of duplicates business with other libraries. His correspondence with Samuel Haven and E. M. Barton of the American Antiquarian Society in Worcester, Massachusetts consisted of a mass of notes regarding lists of books to be exchanged, books wanted, and books for which each librarian was to be on the lookout. They had agreements to buy such desired items and then to exchange them. Cutter's attitude concerning duplicates was concise and businesslike, but not without an occasional hint of its being a necessary evil. After noting the value of a transaction with Van Name of Yale, he concluded, "Please send all and we will send you another list. Send your supplementary list. Let each library get rid of all that it can. Duplicates are dirt,—matter out of place." He was also not without an occasional bit of humor. In a note to E. M. Barton in 1886, he indulged in a doggerel rhyme:

I send Gleason Ballou
For 1852
And as 'tis for you
I'd like to ask 2
But shall have to say 3
Because, don't you see
I paid that to Libbie
As I live
C: A. C. 2

1 Letter, Cutter to Addison Van Name, April 19, 1879, Yale University Library, Librarians' Correspondence.

2 Letter, Cutter to E. M. Barton, May 26, 1886, American Antiquarian Society, Librarians' Correspondence.
With the Fine Arts Committee of the Athenaeum turning over the major parts of its art collections to the Museum of Fine Arts by 1877, the character of art materials in the library began to change. The Fine Arts Committee began to pay more specific attention to purchasing art reproductions and works on the subject of art. Consequently, the Fine Arts book collection became a busier department, so much so that the Library Committee could report that for 1878 that department, "owing to present interest in art matters," was used more than any other department of the library except perhaps those containing fiction and biography.¹

The Museum of Fine Arts had opened its doors on July 4, 1876. In a sense it was just in time, for regardless of the fluctuations in the expenditures on books, the collections continued to outgrow the shelving available for them. The need for space was a constant frustration to the librarian of any fast-growing library. It necessitated double and triple rows of books in the overcrowded sections. If the books were spread out over a wider area, the changed locations required that the alcove shelf lists be redone. Moving books also required the laborious changing of the shelf location marks in the various catalogs. Nevertheless, occasional decisions were made to provide more shelf space. In May 1873 the Library Committee authorized the removal of some of the Athenaeum's plaster casts in order to provide

¹Annual Report of the Library Committee, January 13, 1879. See also the Annual Reports of the Fine Arts Committee, 1877-79.
room for additional shelving. A year later they authorized Cutter's proposal of shelving against the columns in the sculpture gallery. But these were only temporary solutions for a collection that was growing on the average of almost 3,000 volumes a year besides pamphlets, engravings, maps, and other materials.

In September 1876, soon after the third floor picture gallery had been emptied of its holdings, Cutter proposed a plan for additional shelving that would have held off any immediate use of the third floor. He thought it inexpedient to make any permanent changes until the success of the addition being built for the Harvard College Library could be seen. The Harvard addition was the first American library to employ an iron stack. Cutter's plan for the Athenaeum was to enclose the north alcoves of the second floor reading room with an iron grating and to construct shelving within the fenced-off area for 30,000 additional volumes. The committee objected, however, that such a plan would deprive the readers of too much space in the reading room and would look very unsightly. In January 1877 the committee presented an alternate plan that called for alcove shelving for the south side of the vacated

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1. Records of the Library Committee, May 12, 1873, May 11 and 18, 1874.

2. Records of the Library Committee, September 18, 1876. See also the Records of the Trustees, February 21, 1876, where it is noted that a communication from the librarian concerning the same problem was read. Unfortunately, the contents of the communication are not known.
third floor. The new shelving was to hold the acquisitions of the next fifteen years. Afterwards, the north side of the floor would be shelved in the same manner for the acquisitions of still another fifteen years. The capacity of the floor based on an annual increase of 3,000 volumes, was estimated to be 104,000 volumes. In March the trustees authorized the changes to be made. By the following October they had been completed at a cost of just under $6,000.

It was an understandable move on the part of the trustees but it was inadequate for two reasons. First, they had no idea that the acquisition of books would dramatically increase after 1881. Second, they had not yet felt the full force of Cutter's own desire for a systematic shelf classification for the total collection. Perhaps Cutter himself did not realize the involvements that such a classification would bring. As early as 1876 he had been toying with the idea of the need for a scientific, general shelf classification system. It came about in conversations with Melvil Dewey in the spring of the year over the latter's new system at Amherst. At the Philadelphia American

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1 Annual Report of the Library Committee, January 8, 1877.

2 Records of the Trustees, October 15, 1877; Annual Report of the Library Committee, January 14, 1878.

3 Dewey, [Diary], Bk. V, various entries for April, 1876. See also, Letter, Cutter to Annie Godfrey, June 28, 1876, in which he states, "If I would [be?] starting a library I should use this system [i.e., Dewey's]; and I intend to try it in our projected extension, designed to hold
Library Association conference in October, he expressed publicly his belief that although a subject catalog was helpful, the books themselves needed to be systematically arranged on the shelves as an additional access route to their subject matter.  

While the changes were being made on the third floor of the building during 1877, he apparently convinced the Library Committee to hold off any expansion of already crowded shelves into the new area once it was finished, for they reported an action in July in favor of not shifting books but to put only new books in the new location for the present time.  

At the London conference in late 1877, Cutter again reiterated his previous stand for the need of a shelf classification in addition to the subject catalog. Finally during 1878 he began work on a new system of arranging the Athenaeum's collections. He described some of the features of the notation in the Library Journal in September of that year. The next summer he spelled out the main classes, the general procedures for further subdividing, and the full structure of the notation.  

During the remainder

125,000 volumes." CUL, M. Dewey Papers.

1 A.L.A. Conference Discussion, LJ, I (October, 1876), 105.

2 Records of the Library Committee, July 2, 1877.

3 London Library Conference Discussion, LJ, II (January/February, 1878), 270

of 1879 he further subdivided all the main classes with the exception of Law. He also did a pilot project at the Winchester, Massachusetts Town Library, arranging all of its small collection under the new system in order to determine its workability.  

The Library Committee was apparently won over by his logic, for it allowed him to begin some rearranging of the books in the new system as early as 1879. The Committee also allowed him to print at the Athenaeum copies of the new system--probably his 1879 Library Journal article in which he explained the system--for his own use. It was a bold new plan which even in its display of the main classes was much advanced over the rudimentary Dewey system so recently introduced. The stir that it brought to the library profession must have given the Athenaeum's leaders a sense of pride that their librarian was becoming so noted for his fundamental work in the field.

The new plan entailed hidden costs, however. It required that classification numbers be put on the spines of

the Boston Athenaeum, "LJ, IV (July/August, 1879), 234-43. (Hereafter cited as "Classification on the Shelves," (1879))
See also C. A. Cutter, "Decennial Report of the Librarian, January, 1879," MS, BA.

1Cutter, "Report of the Librarian for 1879."

2Records of the Library Committee, April 1 and June 17, 1879. The fact that he began putting books in the new classification as early as 1879 is implied in statistics he presented in 1884. The article mentioned is "Classification on the Shelves," (1879).
the books. To that end Cutter made extensive use of book labels produced by the Van Everen Company and distributed by the Readers and Writers Economy Company.\(^1\) Even more important, the new system made very obvious the requirement for the use of more shelf space. The older system of shelf marks for fixed locations eventually required more and more space for new acquisitions, but it tended to put off such requirements to future days. The new system required the space from the beginning, but with the benefit of not having to change the call numbers in the catalog when books were shifted. By 1881, however, it became apparent to Cutter that the space allowed in the refurbishing of the third floor would not be enough for the coming years.

Despite the lag in acquisitions during the mid-1870's, the total cost of operating the library rose during the period from 1873 to 1880. The increase came from work on the printed catalog and from a great increase in library services. Both factors led to a substantial increase in the staff. When Poole had left the institution at the end of 1868, the work force had numbered eight and had been at seven or eight for almost all of his thirteen years there. By the beginning of 1872 the work force under Cutter had already risen above ten and by the end of the decade it was

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up to almost twenty. It eventually stabilized at approximately twenty persons besides himself during the 1880's.¹

Work on the catalog had been going on seriously since 1857 when Charles Lowell had been hired. From 1860 to 1868 the cost of catalogers had amounted to $15,844. The greater part of that amount had gone to Lowell who was paid at least $1,200 a year after 1864. That was rather expensive cataloging judging from what was paid to Cutter in the same period at Harvard. Of course, Lowell's work was not confined strictly to cataloging. He also performed reference services. When he died suddenly in June 1870 the memorial to him from the trustees stated that he was greatly appreciated for that aspect of his work.²

From 1869 to 1872 the cost of catalogers amounted to $8,518, part of which was paid to Lowell before his death. For those four years, though, the average annual expense of $2,129 was more than $400 higher than the average annual expense of the previous nine years. And for the period 1873

¹"Members of the Staff," in The Athenaeum Centenary, pp. 218-21.

²The memorial described Lowell as "a faithful and devoted friend, who, by his liberal culture, his general information, his knowledge of books, and by his special bibliographical tastes, has been enabled to render important service in the department in which he has been so long employed;--while by his courteous manner, and by his readiness to assist all who approached him seeking information he has largely contributed to render available this increasing library; . . ." Records of the Trustees, November 21, 1870. The information on salary expenses is taken from the list of current expenditures included annually in the Records of the Proprietors.
to 1881 the total cost of catalogers rose to $27,180, or an annual average of more than $3,000. It was not a constant increase. From a high of $3,519 in 1874, the annual cost fell to only $1,802 in the difficult year of 1877. But in 1880 and 1881 in an effort to push the catalog to completion, Cutter hired extra help and the costs for catalogers during those two years alone were $8,617. Even with these high amounts the total cost was considerably less than it would have been if Lowell had lived, for Cutter had been able to hire more persons at lower annual salaries.

The total cost of the printed catalog included more than the cost of catalogers. The amount of time spent by Cutter himself in supervision and in actual cataloging could not in any way be calculated. He was paid an annual salary of $3,000 for all but the year 1869. In addition he was paid an extra annual stipend of $500 for the years 1873 through 1876. In February of 1877 that stipend was withdrawn to cut expenses, but at least a portion of it was reinstated for 1880 and 1881 when Cutter was allowed to work on the catalog at home.¹

Cutter's extra stipend was not calculated in the cost of catalogers. Instead it was included in the printing expenses of the catalog. In 1872 the decision was made to print the catalog in the building and accordingly equipment

¹Records of the Trustees, February 17, 1873; Records of the Library Committee, January 22, 1877, February 16, 1880.
was purchased and a compositor was hired. Cutter's extra work undoubtedly had to do with revisions of the proofs and with a general supervision of the printing, a job he had already had some experience with in his extra work on catalogs while at Harvard. The initial expense for a press and type elevated the cost of printing to $4,620 for the first year. For the next nine years the average annual cost hovered around $2,400, bring the total for the actual printing to $26,492.\footnote{Records of the Library Committee, January 22, 1872. The information on printing expenses is taken from the Records of the Proprietors. It includes $212 for the year 1882.} In addition, binding expenses, which were not calculated separately from the total binding budget, added even more to the total inasmuch as many copies of the catalog were either given away or sold for half price. The cost of printing the catalog was not all above the normal operation of the library, of course. Even if the catalog had not been printed it would have been necessary to hire catalogers. But the decision by the trustees to print was firm and the institution attempted to bear the cost of it within the income available during the years of its completion. It is therefore understandable why, after four years of the project, the trustees were feeling the pinch for lack of funds.

The second factor in the rise of the cost of operations for the same period lay in Cutter's expansion of services. This entailed changes in circulation rules, changes in the method of keeping circulation records, building...
alterations made to accommodate the circulation changes and the production of a new style accessions list. Cutter's overall goal for the library was to increase its service and its use as much as possible. He claimed after ten years that the Athenaeum was doing "twice as much for the proprietors as it was when I first took charge of it."\(^1\) When the Library Committee was not praising the catalog for the attention that it was bringing to the Athenaeum, or when it was not noticing the promptness and good selection of books that were being made available by the librarian, it took time to note with some approval that the library was more in use than ever before.

By Cutter's own calculations, he had increased annual circulation during his first decade by 30,000 volumes. Considering that the circulation for 1878 was 46,006, that would put circulation in Poole's last year at only 16,000 or so.\(^2\) The increases had come in part by changes in the loan periods made as early as 1869. But Cutter's campaign for more liberal loan provisions was felt throughout the decade. He succeeded in getting the variable loan period extended for all old books as well as for the new ones. He succeeded in getting the French and German novels which had been coming into the library in large numbers to be treated

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\(^1\)Cutter, "Decennial Report of the Librarian, January, 1879."

\(^2\)Ibid.
like English novels in the assignment of loan periods. He supported the attempt to provide a home delivery service, a device that he admitted would increase circulation but would decrease the actual use of the library building. He succeeded in having fines charged on the basis of individual books rather than on the proprietors' basic privileges. That is, books were to accrue fines at 5¢ per volume per day, rather than, for instance, a flat fee of one dollar at annual examination time if any books were kept out. Eventually this fines structure was extended to all books, and when books were lost the proprietor was charged only enough to replace the volume.

The change in the fines structure probably recommended itself for another reason. With increased circulation it resulted in a greater income from that source. In one instance, however, an innovation for direct extension of

1 Records of the Library Committee, April 1, 1879, April 20, 1880.
2 Records of the Library Committee, June 10, 1879; C. A. Cutter, Library Delivery Company], Nation, XXIX (July 24, 1879), 60; C. A. Cutter, "A New Plan for Library Delivery," LJ, IV (September/October, 1879), 375-76. The latter includes a circular from the delivery company. It is signed, "C: A. Cutter, Librarian; Neff and Denninger, Proprietors." The delivery company was the work of Oswald J. Neff who had to be bonded for the purpose. It also included the Boston Public Library in its circuit. Actually, Cutter may have felt some misgivings about his concern with circulation statistics. He knew that the loan period had a lot to do with increases. He also reported to the Association, "But we care little for circulation and much for the convenience of our readers." C. A. Cutter, "Communication," LJ, III (April, 1878), 79.
3 Records of the Library Committee, April 28, 1873, February 25, 1874; C. A. Cutter, "Registration and Collection
of privileges that increased revenue was vetoed by the Library Committee. In 1871 Cutter had championed the action that on the payment of an extra assessment of four dollars above the regular assessment of five dollars for the year, a proprietor could check out one additional new book at a time. This practice was followed until December 1873 when the Library Committee abolished it. When a special committee of the proprietors proposed in February 1874 that the regular annual assessment be doubled to ten dollars in order to raise money for printing the catalog, the idea never got out of the Library Committee.  

Cutter's measure of the use of the library did not reside wholly in circulation figures. He was also concerned about the number of proprietors' shares that were actually being used. The total number of shares in the Athenaeum was 1,049. Theoretically that suggested that there could be 1,049 assessments paid annually and at least 1,049 people using the library on a regular basis, besides members of a proprietor's family, up to two extra friends per share, and others with special privileges. The Library Committee reported for 1869 that shares in use had increased 16 per cent to a total of 501, a substantial increase over one year's time. But that was less than half the total.
number of shares. By 1873 the number of shares in use had jumped to 637. ¹

The increased number of shares used did not mean that there was a corresponding increase in proprietors' use. Before Cutter became the librarian it was not unusual for an occasional proprietor to assign the use of his share to someone who was not a proprietor. The non-proprietor would simply pay the annual assessment. Part of the increase in shares used during the early 1870's was really an increase in proprietors' shares assigned to outsiders. By 1875 the Library Committee began to list each category in their annual report. For that year the surprising totals were 674 shares being used, but of those, 175 were non-proprietors. Cutter's own goals were based on the assumption that since there were 1,049 shares in existence, a maximum of 1,049 shares could be in use. Therefore, it would be acceptable to assign them to others if the proprietors were not using them. ² He also knew that not only did some proprietors not use their shares, but there were a full 200 whose addresses were not even known. In February 1875 Cutter petitioned that those 200 shares be made accessible for him to assign to non-proprietors, but the Library Committee rejected the

¹Annual Reports of the Library Committee, January 10, 1870, January 12, 1874. The percentages for 1869 are included in the report for the first time and would seem to have originated out of Cutter's concern for such matters.

²Cutter cautiously hinted at his goal of maximum use several times, but stated it more explicitly in his "Decennial Report of the Librarian, January, 1879."
proposal. In addition, at the end of 1875 the trustees raised the assessment for non-proprietors to ten dollars, reasoning that since these people did not own shares, they were really obtaining privileges at only a small part of what a shareholder had invested. They also raised it for another reason. Whether or not the proprietors liked the idea of so many non-proprietors using the library, they could not deny that increased usage brought in more assessment income. In 1869 that income amounted to $2,585, an increase of 14 per cent over 1868. By 1873 the income had risen to $3,457 and by 1875 to almost $4,000. The annual report of the Library Committee for 1876 states that the increase in assessment income was "an addition which the continued expense of printing the catalogue made very welcome." By 1877 the Committee was listing total shares used and not used in their annual report and in 1878, the high water mark for this approach, the total of shares used for both classes of patrons reached 895.

But the Library Committee continued to resist outright acceptance of the idea of maximum use. In December 1875 Samuel Eliot, a member of the committee, proposed as Cutter had done earlier in the year, that the Library

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1 Records of the Library Committee, February 2, 1875; Records of the Trustees, December 20, 1875. See also Records of the Proprietors, January 10, 1876, where the increase was discussed at the annual meeting.

2 Annual Report of the Library Committee, January 10, 1877. The statistics are also taken from the annual reports of the committee.
Committee formally release the 200 dormant shares for use by non-proprietors. The proposal was again rejected even though the annual report of the Committee a year later—with income up because of raising the assessment rate for non-proprietors—stated, "there are more persons desiring to borrow shares than there are shares to be lent." The reason was most certainly the desire on the part of the trustees and the regular proprietors to preserve the quiet dignity for which the library was known. Even the liberality afforded to the proprietors had been achieved only after many years of tight restrictions. Earlier, upon consideration of a proprietor's request that the annual assessment be abolished and that a larger number of books be allowed to circulate at one time, the trustees expressed the opinion that the Athenaeum was not intended to be a public library of general circulation. Rather, they could state, of their special clientele,

They [the trustees] know of no large library which is thrown open with greater liberality, or which offers greater attractions to the student, the man of letters, or the man of leisure. After careful consideration they do not see that facilities afforded to proprietors can be increased, and they can only hope that the literary treasures in their keeping will be availed of by the proprietors, as liberally as they are afforded by the Athenaeum.

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1Records of the Library Committee, December 27, 1875; Annual Report of the Library Committee, January 10, 1877.

2Annual Report of the Library Committee, January 4, 1864. The original request is recorded in the Records of the Trustees, January 12, 1863.
That was 1863. The changes subsequently introduced by Cutter met with the approval of the trustees. Yet to open the doors to non-proprietors on the scale that Cutter envisioned would allow a wider class of persons to use the library, many of whom would not have the same affections and commitments for the institution that the proprietors had. The trustees balked at the idea.

With an increase in the use of the reading room came complaints about the regulation of the library. The presence of altogether unauthorized readers became noticeable and suggested that regulation had been lax. In November 1877 Cutter was directed to admit to the Periodical Reading Room only those with tickets furnished by the library and only those with users privileges. Surveillance remained a problem, however.¹ Two months later the Library Committee reported,

In the autumn another kind of appropriation of alien property was detected. For some time past various notices have been posted on the door of the Reading Room to the effect that it was "not a public reading room." But it was plain that the notice was disregarded by certain persons. Without any warning a keeper was put at the door; and on the first day 24 persons were stopped in their attempt to intrude into what was in effect a private room which they had been warned not to enter. For several following days five or six per diem were caught, but after all the trespassers had found what was going on the intrusion ceased.²

¹ Records of the Library Committee, November 12, 1877.
After the keeper was withdrawn for a while the 'intruders' began coming in again. In addition someone broke the latch on the door for easier ventilation. It was repaired, broken again, repaired again and broken a third time. The Library Committee could only say in a kind of dignified disgust that "it is unnecessary for them to characterize this act." In Cutter's decennial report he stated hopefully that the abuse had been curbed. But apparently it had not been, and in December 1879 the trustees appointed Henry Cabot Lodge, newly elected that year, a committee of one to draw up new rules for the regulation of the reading room. In January 1880 the trustees recorded,

that new rules had been drawn for its government, an attendant stationed in the room to enforce their observance and prevent the use of the room by outsiders, that the behaviour of those using the room had improved and that efforts were being now made to improve the lighting.

Even with the troubles that a busier library brought about, and with the restrictions placed on the use of proprietors shares by non-proprietors, it is apparent that Cutter continued to do everything possible to maximize the library's use.

Increased use of the library made it necessary to hire more attendants for the library processes involved. Increased use also prompted Cutter to revise, in the interest

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1 Ibid.

2 Records of the Trustees, December 22, 1879.

3 Records of the Trustees, January 19, 1880.
of efficiency, the processes themselves. One of those procedures was the method of charging out books and its record-keeping needs. As early as 1870 he had advised that there was a more efficient way to keep circulation records that would improve their accuracy and make the annual examination easier. By 1873 he had instituted a double entry system using both the traditional ledger to record books on loan, arranged by the patron's name, and slips that were arranged by the shelf number of the book. The shelf number record was useful, of course, for determining if a certain book listed in the alcove shelf list was checked out and for checking the shelves during the annual examination. But the system as it stood in 1873 had inconveniences. One was the necessity to write a new slip for each book each time it was checked out, for when the book was returned the slips were destroyed. A second was the call number itself. The books were located by alcove and shelf, but within a shelf, were not subarranged. Occasionally more specific shelf marks were used, but the practice was not consistent. When books were rearranged the new shelf location had to be recorded in both the alcove shelf list and in the public catalog and shorter marks made that task easier. With so much rewriting, however, it was inevitable that often the shelf lists, and consequently, the circulation slips were written illegibly or inaccurately.¹

¹Dewey, [Diary], Bk. III, February 15, 1873. Cutter referred to the problem of illegibility as having come from slips "scribbled hastily while several borrowers [were]
In December 1878 the Library Committee authorized Cutter's plan for a new approach to the problem. Its first phase was put into operation in early 1879 at the same time that he was beginning to work out his new shelf classification system. He saw the two innovations as integrally related. He first did away with the ledger and began keeping both files on cards. The attendants made out the cards and the patrons were required to sign their names on each of them. He kept the book cards charged to each proprietor behind thin zinc plates labeled with the individual's name and address. By requiring the patrons to sign cards for their books, however, he ruffled a few feathers. Some patrons, who for years had had their books checked out by attendants objected to signing for the same items, as if it were an affront to their dignity. But the Library Committee upheld Cutter in his innovation and perhaps did so because of his compelling argument, that, "The plan introduces for the first time precision into our knowledge of the library." He now knew the location of every book that was waiting to be served." "Report of the Librarian for 1879."

1Records of the Library Committee, December 24, 1878.


3"Decennial Report of the Librarian, January, 1879." See also, Letter, Mary E. Holmes to the Library Committee, January 11, 1879, BA. The letter was written on behalf of several female proprietors and complained that the new regulation would not increase security because "books lost from the Athenaeum are wilfully stolen, not by Proprietors, or Subscribers, but by strangers, who can without restriction, enter the Library and abstract them, with perfect ease, at
either checked out, on the reading table, or in the bindery. If not on the shelf or so recorded, it was lost. He was also able to avoid the problem of people who occasionally claimed no responsibility for certain books that were entered on their ledger sheets. He also considered keeping a file record of books on the shelves. In that way he could have at his fingertips a record of where every book was at any one time. A file record of books on the shelves remained, however, only in his thoughts.¹

The second phase of the new charging system was instituted a year later. He was allowed to put into the backs of the books a pocket with two prepared cards, each ready to be signed by the patrons. During that year he purchased and had inserted more than 100,000 pockets and 200,000 cards.² The effect was startling in its efficiency. No longer was it necessary to close the library for the annual examination. The examiners let attendants show them the records and were able to go through the library in almost no time at all.³

The Committee on the Examination of the Library reported in January 1879 their pleasure with the lessened amount of

¹Cutter, "Mr. Cutter's Charging System," p. 446.

²C. A. Cutter, "Annual Report of the Librarian [for 1880]," MS, BA.

³An interesting vignette of the annual examination is contained in Regan, Echoes From the Past, pp. 85-86.
labor. They found that "no diminution of security has attended the change made thus far, and they have no doubt that the proposed improvement will also be of unmixed advantage." They were also pleased at the possibility of keeping better control over books annually "unaccounted for."¹

Though an innovation such as Cutter's new charging plan might seem unexceptional to the present library world, in a day when the systematic treatment of library problems was in its infancy, it received a good deal of attention in the library world. He reported on it in the Library Journal and three years later when the new approach had become more widely accepted and its origins obscured, Klas Linderfelt could report at the Cincinnati American Library Association meeting,

As regards the origin of my system of charging and recording books, I may say that I am indebted for the groundwork of it to our esteemed colleague, Mr. W. E. Foster, of Providence, although I have lately heard that it really originates, like so many other good things in library work, with Mr. C. A. Cutter.²

Another area of increased costs related to library service in this period was building changes made to accommodate the different approach to the circulation system.

In January 1880 Cutter mentioned that he had been discussing

¹Report of the Committee on Examination for 1878, January 13, 1879.

a plan with various proprietors that would involve moving the delivery room (i.e., the main circulation desk center) downstairs to the main floor.¹ In April 1880 Samuel Eliot, again representing Cutter's innovations, presented the plan to the trustees. The move involved making a circulation center in the periodical reading room located on the west end of the first floor of the building. At that location all registration of books would take place. It was convenient because the room opened into the vestibule and proprietors would not have to climb the enormous Sumner staircase to get the books they wanted, especially the new acquisitions. A book lift and a message lift to the second floor would facilitate the paging of books. The change would also make the main reading room on the second floor quieter and more comfortable and would allow attendants to work later in the winter because gas lighting could be used on the lower floor. Its disadvantages were two, that new books would be away from the main reading room, and that the Periodical Reading Room, used for the annual meeting of the proprietors, would be displaced. The second objection was cared for by moving the annual meeting to the rooms of the American Academy of Science. The first objection was apparently only minor, for the trustees liked the plan and authorized the

¹Cutter, "Report of the Librarian for 1879."
changes immediately. They were made during the following summer at a cost of $1,000.¹

A final factor in increased costs for library service had to do with Cutter's beginning of a new recent acquisitions series. During Poole's administration and through 1871, a list of books recently acquired had been printed regularly. It may have been started in order to provide the proprietors with some sort of list in the wake of the failure to get the catalog printed. The context of Cutter's new series was different. During the early part of 1878 a public controversy raged over the acquisitions policy of the Boston Public Library. The controversy had to do with what sort of fiction, if any, should be placed in that public facility. After Justin Winsor had left the institution in late 1877, increasing pressure had been brought to bear in order to restrict both the purchase and circulation of sensational fiction.²

Cutter entered the fray not only by reporting the arguments in the Library Journal, but by contributing an article to the Boston Daily Advertiser. He wrote that although some of the fiction was not very good for patrons in need of education, still it,

¹Records of the Trustees, March 15 and April 19, 1880; Annual Report of the Library Committee, January 10, 1881. Cutter later reported the details of a message lift in "Lift for Call Slips," LJ, XIV (August, 1889), 359. A separate message lift might have been an afterthought. It was not authorized in the original plan.

²Whitehill, Boston Public Library, p. 120.
gives them pleasure; does them at least no harm; and being suited to them, brings them a certain amount of intellectual profit and a kind of moral instruction, and finally, that attracts them to the library, where there is a chance that something better may get hold of them.¹

In stating this 'ladder theory' of moral uplift, Cutter was only reflecting the general attitude of the library profession with respect to the mission of the library. To varying degrees, different libraries attempted to put feet on that attitude by making lists of best books for their patrons. In that spirit Cutter attempted to make a new style accessions list for the patrons of the Athenaeum, not because they so badly needed protection from "mulligan-type" fiction, but as an opportunity to affect reading habits to an even greater degree. The Library Committee itself supported the list. They reported,

A new bulletin of additions was commenced by the Librarian last September of a kind hitherto unknown in library economy, but promising to be of great assistance to you, because by means of brief notes, partly original, but generally selected from the best critical journals, it calls attention to books, and to some of the more important articles in periodicals which you might otherwise have passed by, gives sufficient indication of the character of many works to enable you to make a selection without coming to the Library when that would be inconvenient, and records when desirable, interesting facts in regard to the authorship or composition or origin or contents of the works mentioned. In


²"Mulligan-type" fiction refers to dime novels and sensational literature. See Whitehill, Boston Public Library, p. 120.
Cutter had taken a lesson from the earlier acquisitions lists. He considered them barren and uninteresting. With extensive annotations his aim was to be entertaining, "in the hope of making the list attractive and therefore of use." He was also aware of the example that it provided for the library profession. In the same month that the list began, he laid out examination copies during the International Library Conference in London and explained that the list functioned as a book selection and book reviewing vehicle for other librarians, as an aid to librarians in reference work with patrons, and as a help to the patrons themselves in making up their minds about what books to choose. For the future he had hopes that the list would become an accumulation of best reading. In addition, the list got even wider attention when Cutter began to publish it

1Annual Report of the Library Committee, January 14, 1878.

2"Annual Report of the Librarian [for 1881]," MS, BA.

3London Library Conference Discussion, LJ, II (January/February, 1878), 278; Cutter, "Report of the Librarian for 1879." The reference function was commended strongly in William E. Foster, "On Aimless Reading and Its Correction," LJ, IV (March, 1879), 79. In an anonymous communication entitled, "Mr. Cutter's Bulletins and the Coming Catalog," LJ, III (September, 1878), 260-61, the contributor stated, "I feel a confidence in ordering books from this Bulletin not equalled in selecting from any other list." Since Melvil Dewey had already authored the widely discussed article, "The Coming Catalogue," and was at that time the editor of the Library Journal, it might be assumed that he was the author of this puff, although it is simply signed, "F".
jointly with the Worcester Public Library in November 1878. In order to do so the Library Committee authorized Cutter to use the Athenaeum's type for both lists as long as the Athenaeum itself would incur no extra expense. ¹

Cutter was elated at the success of the venture. He could claim in his decennial report that over one-half of the Athenaeum's borrowers purchased the list at a subscription price of 25¢ per year and that he had received approval of the idea from over one hundred libraries and persons. ² He defended it in print when the London Academy magazine, using a single example, suggested that, "some of the annotations are perhaps more piquant than helpful." Cutter replied, "The criticism may be just, but the instance is ill chosen to prove it. It surely is helpful' to inform a reader that the book he is going to read is not wholly to be depended upon, because the author's opinions were determined by personal feelings."³ Cutter also made it available to those who requested it, having on hand more than enough copies for wide distribution.

¹Records of the Library Committee, September 23, 1878; "Notes and Queries," LJ, III (July, 1878), 200-01; (November, 1878), 346, where notice is given of the first number of the Worcester list with an explanation of the terms of the cooperative arrangement. In addition, Cutter explained in his "Decennial Report of the Librarian, January, 1879," that he had offered the same arrangement to the Boston Public Library, but they turned him down.

²"Decennial Report of the Librarian, January, 1879."

³[Editorial note on the Academy's criticism of the Boston Athenaeum's List of Additions], LJ, III (April, 1878), 74-75. The Academy's note appeared in its February 16, 1878 issue.
In perhaps only one area did Cutter use the *List of Additions* apart from its primary purpose. During the spring and summer of 1879 he championed in it the spelling reform measures advocated by Melvil Dewey and the Spelling Reform Association. The latter had been formed as a result of the international convention for the amendment of English orthography held at the centennial celebration in Philadelphia in 1876. Its first president was Francis A. March and the first secretary, Melvil Dewey, who set up its offices in Boston along with those of the Metric Bureau and in 1879 the Readers and Writers Economy Company. Dewey later wrote,

> Its membership included those who wished to spell scientifically by using new letters, those who would use digraphs or diacritics to supplement our incomplete alphabet, and those who would omit useless letters and simplify as far as practical without new letters, digraphs, or diacritics; but all were agreed as to the evil and saw the need of a remedy. A campaign of education was carried on in America, England, and in the English speaking countries of the British Empire. The result was to stimulate the natural tendencies to sluff off absurd and illogical letters.¹

Cutter's interest in the movement most likely came when the Athenaeum, perhaps through Dewey, acquired the first seven bulletins of the Spelling Reform Association in 1879.²

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² They are listed in, *Boston Athenaeum, List of Additions*, Second series (No. 24, April 1, 1879), 96. Their having been acquired at that time is consonant with Cutter's
In the April 22, 1879 issue of the *List*, he explained that due to a misunderstanding the printer had substituted the digraph *ŋ* for the consonants *ng*. He went on,

I had thought of using it, but not so soon. As the type occurs very frequently, and it would be troublesome to make the many alterations needed to restore *ng*, I have decided to let it stand, in this number. Readers will find it somewhat disagreeable, no doubt; but some may overlook the strangeness of the character in the interest of the experiment. The type cannot fail to be pleasing to all who care for accuracy of phonic representation.¹

In the next number of the *List* he withdrew the use of the digraph but in succeeding numbers he called for and received letters pro and con on the idea of spelling reform. The Library Committee did not, however, agree with this foray into such a controversial area and in June 1879 ruled that henceforth the *List* was to be done "according to the usual rules of orthography."² Although Cutter had to curtail spelling reform in the *List of Additions*, he did not lose interest in the movement. He reported to Dewey on another occasion that he would attempt to get signatures for one of the latter's spelling reform petitions, but that discouragingly, "Boston is a rocky soil, especially this part of it."³ Later on he could say that school children spent a short involvement in Dewey's commercial ventures.

¹ *Boston Athenaeum, List of Additions*, Second series (No. 25, April 22, 1879), 97.

² Records of the Library Committee, June 10, 1879.

³ Letter, Cutter to M. Dewey, March 24, [1883?], CUL, M. Dewey Papers. The letter has no year indicated but is likely from 1883 after Dewey had moved to New York City.
school life "learning the vagaries of an irrational, inconsistent orthography"; and his opinion of spelling reformers led him to say, "May their tribe increase."1 His own use of simplified spelling was more noticeable in his personal letters than in his publications, but he almost always applied the change in orthography to such words as "catalog" and "alfabet."2

In a sense this period was a time of great triumph for Cutter. His decennial report, written in January 1879, was not only well received by the officers of the Athenaeum, but was recommended for publication by vote of the proprietors. In it Cutter confidently reviewed the changes that had occurred at the institution in the previous ten years. He covered circulation privileges, the charging system, the beginnings of his classification system, and progress on the catalog. He then closed the report with an enthusiastic and predictive peroration:

So much for the past: as to the future, in the next ten years we may expect to see the printing of our catalogue finished, our supplement revised, our list of additions become large enough to be a "manual of best

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1 C. A. Cutter, "Common Sense in Libraries," LJ, XIV (May/June, 1889), 148; [Note on Linderfelt and Spelling Reform], LJ, VII (May, 1882), 93.

2 Cutter led the way in changing the word, catalog. See Melvil Dewey's comments in "Notes and Queries," LJ, IV (March, 1879), 100, and in Editorial, LJ, IV (May, 1879), 153. In a letter to Dewey concerning the 1883 A.L.A. Condensed Rules for Author and Title Catalog, he added a postscript: "I had noted and altered several things you speak of, but queerly enuf, had left all the catalogues." Letter, Cutter to M. Dewey, November 22, 1883, CUL, M. Dewey Papers. Cutter did not, however, use any amended spelling in his Boston Athenaeum reports or in his writing for the Nation.
reading," our stock of book increased by 40,000 well selected volumes, all the books rearranged in a more thorough system of classification and renumbered on a much more convenient plan, every improvement of management introduced which the inventive genius of American librarians discovers, provided it be applicable to our circumstances, our tables constantly surrounded by readers, and, possibly, all our shares used.

The public library has long since surpassed us in the number of volumes. It contains nearly all that we have and much more, and yet in the face of this our rooms are more and more frequented. This is enough to show that we have our place in the literary and educational system of Boston, and that we satisfy a want which no public library can satisfy.¹

Cutter was making a strongly self-confident boast. He had good reason for it and the proprietors themselves were becoming aware that their librarian was one of the leaders in the growing library profession. At the same annual meeting the Committee on Examination, after praising his new charging system, continued with their own praise of Cutter's overall work:

The examiners unite in attesting the admirable system and efficiency with which the Library is conducted. While they would accord due credit to the assiduous and worthy corps of assistants, they congratulate the Proprietors on having as their chief agent one so able and devoted to their service, and trust they will join the Committee in the earnest wish that his ten years of

¹Cutter, "Decennial Report of the Librarian, January, 1879." Interestingly, three days after the annual meeting, Cutter's report appeared in full in the Boston Daily Advertiser, January 16, 1879, under the title, "Boston Athenaeum; A Review of the Past Decade." Four days after that at the regular meeting of the trustees, the decision was recorded, "It appearing to the board that the report of the Librarian had been printed in full by the daily papers it was thought unnecessary to take steps to print the same in conformity with the vote of the Proprietors." Records of the Trustees, January 20, 1879. Perhaps Cutter was carried away by his enthusiasm. It seems likely that the printing intended by the trustees was to have been more elaborate.
The feeling on Cutter's part could only have been heightened when in mid-1879 two sizable bequests were received by the Athenaeum which seemed to open the windows of possibility with regard to what could further be done there. In May 1879 the trustees announced that George Bemis, a proprietor, had left to the Athenaeum a fund of $20,000, the income of which was to be used for the purchase of books, especially in the subject area of international law, and for the equipment and maintenance of the reading room. It may have been the immediate application of those funds that brought about the realization that the reading room not only needed new equipment, but also a more thorough regulation in order to bring it to the ideal that the fund suggested.

Within six months of the receipt of the bequest, a review of reading room policies was made.

The second bequest was received only one month after the first. In June 1879 the will of William Burley Howes, another proprietor and a resident of Beverly, Massachusetts, named the Athenaeum the beneficiary of $150,000 to be used in an unrestricted manner, "for library purposes." The

1Report of the Committee on Examination, January 13, 1879.

2Records of the Trustees, May 19, 1879.

3"Permanent Funds of the Boston Athenaeum, January 1, 1907," in The Athenaeum Centenary, p. 71. The amount of the bequest is listed there as $160,050, a slightly higher total than first was indicated. Perhaps the larger amount came as a result of the final execution of the will.
sum was staggering in its amount and brought to the Athenaum a heightened recognition of its privileged position. It also brought to Cutter even more acclaim. An unsigned note in the *Library Journal* read,

> Mr. Cutter is to be congratulated on such practical acknowledgement of successful administration as these last bequests, and so wide is the influence of his library as a center of library progress that these benefactions are really of national importance.¹

If he heard Richard Bowker's comment to Melvil Dewey a year later, that "if the government is run as well as the Athenaum library, I'm afraid there'll be no more occupation for scratchers," he might have been even more pleased for Bowker and Dewey occupied the inner circle of his friendship.²

What to do with the income from the Howes fund occupied the minds of the Library Committee from the start. But it occupied Cutter's mind even more pervasively, and in January 1880 he wrote a second major report that was also presented to the proprietors at the annual meeting. In it he outlined what the seven to seven thousand five hundred dollars of additional annual income might best be used for.

He began the report with a preliminary discussion of the problem of binding. He expressed the opinion that re-binding required because of the heavy use of the books was

¹ *LJ*, IV (June, 1879), 210.

² Letter, R. R. Bowker to M. Dewey, [undated], CUL, *M. Dewey Papers*. The letter was most certainly written about the beginning of August 1880, for Bowker mentions having been in London for a month (he went there early in July), and refers to the birth of Cutter's fourth child. Cutter himself wrote to Bowker of that event on July 7, 1880.
an inevitable expense of operating a library. To the extent that it signified active use of the library, this expense was even "to be earnestly desired." However, binding expense caused by the inadequate control of the air in the library was "an unmixed evil." The hot air furnace circulated air that was much too dry and that drew the moisture out of everything in the library, and especially from the book bindings. He related three partial remedies that he had already tried; that is, placing evaporating pans around the library; using buckram as a substitute for leather bindings; and treating deteriorated leather bindings with a mixture of glue and glycerine. He explained that he had learned of the latter remedy at the International Library Conference in London in 1877. In an aside he commended the support of the professional library association and of its publication, the *Library Journal*. The *Journal* was at that time going through severe financial difficulties and Cutter felt confident enough of his position at the Athenaeum to state aphoristically that it would be better to buy two subscriptions to the periodical than to allow it to cease.

Referring to the recent bequests, he outlined an extensive program of improvements. He called first for the purchase of more current literature including multiple copies of books if they were warranted by demand. Second, he

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1"Report of the Librarian for 1879." This report was also published as, "The Boston Athenaeum; Its Present Condition . . .," *Boston Daily Advertiser*, January 24, 1880. Parts of it were excerpted in "Progress at the Boston Athenaeum," *LJ*, V (February, 1880), 46-47.
suggested the systematic filling in of gaps in the literary and historical sections of the library's collections. In order to do so, Cutter suggested asking users and subject specialists alike as to what areas were weak and what individual books should be purchased. More important, he suggested that no comprehensive plan of purchasing should be attempted by the Athenaeum alone. Rather, all of the special libraries in the area should cooperate in purchasing expensive works, because, he argued, "Our resources ... are not yet large enough to release us from the necessity of choosing among many desirable works." Furthermore, cooperation should take into account the specialized nature of the individual libraries. He suggested particularly that further involvement in a cooperative purchasing plan already agreed upon in principle at a meeting of the librarians of Boston and vicinity should be pursued. The Athenaeum's special areas would be works in the fine arts and travel and scientific works relating to Africa.

In actuality, cooperation between the Athenaeum and other libraries and library projects was not new. Besides the issuing of the List of Additions in cooperation with the Worcester Public Library, the Athenaeum had already contributed $100 towards Poole's Index to Periodical Literature. And the Athenaeum had cooperated in making a union list of serial holdings that included the Harvard College Library,

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1Ibid.
2Records of the Library Committee, April 1, 1878.
the Boston Public Library, and sixteen other local institutions. Despite the promise that such cooperation in book purchasing seemed to offer, however, Cutter did not wish to put more faith in the proposal than it deserved. Book selection would still be difficult, and in cooperative book purchasing arrangements, especially for basic works, "each case must be decided on its own merits." To show the complexity of the factors involved, he made a formula of the problem:

Expressed mathematically the formula would be,

\[
\frac{a \times b}{c} = x
\]

in which \(a\) = the intrinsic value of the book, \(b\) = the number of persons likely to use it, \(c\) = the cost; or sometimes,

\[
\frac{(a \times b)}{c} - d = x
\]

in which \(d\) is a function of the other works which we wish to procure.  

A third area for future expenditures in Cutter's thinking had to do with supplying the library with adequate equipment and promoting efficient administrative procedures. In this category he suggested several improvements in the arrangement and type of equipment and argued for hiring even more assistants so that attention could be paid to more than just arrearages in the regular work. First among his priorities in that respect was the need to press even harder for the completion of the printed catalog.

1 Records of the Library Committee, May 20, 1878. See also the notice of its publication, in LJ, III (December, 1878), 376.

2 Cutter, "Report of the Librarian for 1879."

3 Ibid.
Cutter argued his administrative philosophy most extensively as the basis for efficient administrative procedures. He conceived of a library as a smoothly working system of arrangements. He was aware, however, that insisting on an extreme version of a systematic approach might arouse anxieties among the proprietors. Therefore, he framed his argument by playing down any insistence on the extreme. First, he fully described his ideal.

The advantages of a complete systematic organization, thoroughly carried out, with all the checks and balances of a nicely adjusted machine, in which all the necessary records can be kept and all the necessary questions answered with the least labor, in which much of the action shall be automatic and in which as many ends as possible shall be accomplished by a single means, need not be insisted on.\(^1\)

Next, he related that in the past the Athenaeum had come short of even basic systematic arrangements, but not to its detriment, for it had been a small library and not much used, and did not have much money to do so even if it had wanted to. "Consequently this has never been an ideal library; but by doing what was most important it has been made a very useful institution, even if it was not, regarded as a machine, anything to be proud of."\(^2\) He continued with his own strong statement of the present need.

But a large library, and especially one largely resorted to, neglects exact system at its peril. Arrangements which work perfectly well when there is plenty of time, break down utterly when there is hurry and pressure . . . I have therefore from time to time introduced modifications in detail in various departments, but nothing so radical and all pervading a nature, and nothing

\(^1\) Ibid. \(^2\) Ibid.
that will have so extensive an influence in every part of the library work, as the last three reforms, namely the new method of charging, the new notation, and the new classification, the whole intended to work in combination.¹

Cutter then described the progress that had already taken place in those three areas. His rationale for presenting the reforms in this manner was to appeal for some of the Howes legacy to be applied to the further development of each.

Finally, a fourth use that Cutter suggested for the income of the Howes legacy was to give special attention to the housing needs of the collection. He forecast that with increased acquisitions, the available book space would be used up in eight years, rather than fifteen. He suggested that a more efficient solution than the alcove arrangement presently occupying one-half of the third floor would be shelving patterned after Harvard's stack system. Incorporating that idea, he proposed two plans. The first entailed building an iron stack on the north side of the third floor of the present building. The second entailed constructing an entirely new building, built with a central stack, on the Athenaeum's Tremont Street property.

The success of the period was assured for Cutter as the officers of the Athenaeum authorized almost all of his recommendations except the building program. As it was shown earlier, both the second part of the charging system and the relocation of the delivery room were authorized.

¹Ibid.
during the coming months. The classification needed more work, however, and it was not until 1881 that extensive rearrangement of books in the new system got underway. Perhaps most encouraging was the special allocation of $3,500 made for the completion of the catalog. It allowed Cutter to finish the project by the beginning of 1882.¹

Activities in Cutter's life apart from the library also reflect the success of the period. His professional activity greatly increased with his intimate involvement in the leadership of the American Library Association. He attended and played a prominent role in the various annual library conferences and in 1877 traveled to the London International Library Conference. His involvement in such activities was apparently looked upon with favor by the trustees for they did not fail to give the leaves of absence necessary for attendance. He was also allowed to travel in May 1878 to the Rush Library of Philadelphia in order to consult with Lloyd P. Smith and others on the needs for a shelf classification there. By mid-1880 he was advising Frederic Leypoldt concerning the near demise of the Library Journal, an involvement that led to his assumption of the full editorship in 1881. He had already been editing its bibliography feature since its inception in 1876, a task for which he received regular remuneration.²

¹The results of the authorizations were briefly reported in his, "Annual Report of the Librarian [for 1881]," presented in February, 1882.

²Leaves of absence are regularly recorded in the
Cutter also participated in various amateur theatricals that his wife directed in the local town of Winchester, and he pursued his love of French culture and literature by holding an occasional French reading class in his home. In July 1880 his wife bore him yet another son, of whom he could jokingly say to his friend, Richard Bowker, "Its a boy,--a ten-pounder; and now as I can control four votes, I'm going to lay the pipes to run for governor or president." He also added, "Mrs. C. will be running her theatre next fall, and will cast you if you will return." 

1 Cutter moved his household to Winchester sometime during the 1870's but the date is uncertain. The fact that he acted in amateur theatricals was noted in "General Notes," LJ, I (March, 1877), 270, and III (March, 1878), 32. He made those performances as a member of the Good Will Club. In April 1879 he portrayed the character, Rodomont Rollingstone, in a performance of "Nine Points of the Law" presented by the Back Log Club. See Letter, Cutter to R. R. Bowker, September 22, [1880?], in which an old program is included. For the French reading class, see Letter, Cutter to R. R. Bowker, April 18, 1878, NYPL, Bowker Papers.

2 Letter, Cutter to R. R. Bowker, July 7, 1880, NYPL, Bowker Papers.
In perhaps only one area was there reason for disappointment and that had to do with the Readers and Writers Economy Company. The company had been incorporated in March 1879 by Frederick Jackson and Melvil Dewey. Jackson, who had supplied the working capital, moved to St. Paul, Minnesota for reasons of health during the following summer. Dewey signed a note payable to Jackson the following year. To have sufficient working capital, Dewey issued some of his own shares to others for cash on demand, but in so doing had to institute corporation meetings. At the first meeting of the stockholders on December 10, 1879, Dewey was elected both president and treasurer. On January 28, 1880, a special meeting of the board of directors voted to establish a special office of associate director. They elected four members for the office, one of whom was "Vice-president Cutter." During the remainder of the winter and the spring the directors met regularly carrying on the business of the company, including decisions to establish a factory, branch offices, and stock subscriptions in order to finance the expansions. Cutter's own part in the company eventually rose from twenty shares to one hundred shares, a total investment on his part of $1,150.

1Untitled Documents Relating to the Readers and Writers Economy Company], MSS, CUL, M. Dewey Papers. These include legal papers, the minutes of the director's meetings, and materials in Dewey's handwriting relating to the formation of the company and the legal dispute that developed.

2Ibid.
In May 1880, however, some agitation arose over Dewey's dual role as both president and treasurer, and also over what some of the stockholders felt were his obscure accounting practices. Dewey resigned as treasurer, but the seeds of discontent remained. By the fall a move on the part of the stockholders, Edward Wigglesworth and Herbert Coolidge, led to a special meeting in which it was voted to submit all of the company's records to an attorney in order to bring Dewey to court on charges of mismanagement. The move seemed designed to wrest control of the company away from Dewey. For some unknown reason, Cutter was persuaded to sign his name to the summons that brought Dewey to court. But Cutter, perhaps dissatisfied with the machinations of the whole affair, resigned his vice-presidential position on October 12, 1880, the day after the judicial summons was served.\(^1\)

The matter was settled out of court early in 1881 in terms not wholly unfavorable to Dewey. Nevertheless, he felt himself to have been robbed of a company worth $50,000 in business and good will. The situation had caused him intense personal anxiety and hurt. He stated, in a letter to Bowker before the settlement had been made, 

This thing turned out 10 times as bad as I feared when I wrote you. There was a deliberate conspiracy whose success depended on making me out a thief, 

\(^1\)Ibid. Dewey noted in his reply to the summons that Cutter had been "induced to sign the bill at the last moment without knowing anything about it." That is, he signed without knowing the intentions of the other two plaintiffs.
embezzler, and the work of defamation was most artfully done. Cutter had no hand in this but you can judge what men I have been dealing with that would circulate such stories when they had every book and paper in their own hands to prove them utterly false.

Six months later he expressed his concern over Cutter's personal loss in the debacle.

The toughest thing about the Ec. co. is that they will swindle poor Cutter, who is as nice as he can be, and innocent of all the rascality that had been and is going on. They got him to pay in $1,250 more making $2,500 in all and I fear will make it a dead loss to him.

I did all I could to save him but he says good naturedly, let it go, and we avoid the subject carefully when we meet, lunch, etc. Nothing is ever said to indicate that there was an Ec. co. ²

Cutter's loss was in actuality more than financial.

One of the projected ventures of the company was to have been the publication of his new classification for the Boston Athenaeum. Dewey himself apparently received from the settlement a portion of the library supply part of the business. ³

Almost immediately he established himself in a new business a few doors down Hawley Street from the old address. His decision to do so, however, brought a strong word from Cutter.

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¹ Letter, M. Dewey to R. R. Bowker, January 1, 1881, NYPL, Bowker Papers.

² Letter, M. Dewey to R. R. Bowker, June 6, 1881, NYPL, Bowker Papers.

³ A hand-drawn title-page of the projected publication reads, "Melvil Dewey's 35 Character Notation applied to Book Classification, by C. A. Cutter, with an enlarged edition of Dewey Index. Boston: Economy Company, 1879." MS, CUL, M. Dewey Papers. A notice of the possibility of the publication was given in "Bibliography," LJ, IV (March, 1879), 98. It is not certain whether Cutter's financial loss occurred in the settlement or in the subsequent demise of the original company.
Dear Dewey,

Having reflect upon the question which you asked me yesterday, but not having seen or heard from any member of the E. Co., I have come to a decided opinion and I now tell it to you, as you requested, frankly. I think that establishing yourself in Hawley St. is both inexpedient for you and unfair towards the Company;—inexpedient for you because it strengthens a suspicion of intended rivalry to the Company which the past has done too much to arouse and which you should desire to lessen;—unfair towards the Company because it must inevitably tend to the rebuilding in your hands of part of a business which you sold entire to the Company in the settlement.¹

Regardless of Cutter's admonitions, Dewey went ahead and set up his rival company, organized under the name of the Library Bureau. In January 1882 he succeeded in buying all of the remaining goods of the Economy Company, the latter becoming defunct.²

¹Letter, Cutter to M. Dewey, February 25, [1881], CUL, M. Dewey Papers. Although the year is not given in the date, it is established by the events in question and a postscript about the Washington American Library Association conference which was held February 9-12, 1881.