

Art and Architecture at the Main Library

Building Information

- Begun 1924, completed 1929, dedicated October 18, 1929
- Architect: Charles A. Platt (1861-1933)
- Style: Georgian, complementing other buildings on campus
- Part of grand mall plan
- Original building was 300 by 230 feet with expansion room of 300 by 465 feet.
- First bookstack was built to accommodate about 1 million volumes. Now holds approximately 6 million.

Sculptures

1. "Daughters of Pyrrha"
 - 1933
 - in front of east entrance to Library
 - sculptor: Lorado Taft (1860-1936); carved by Walter Zimmerman, a Chicago sculptor
 - fragments from vast unfinished Fountain of Creation which was originally planned for east end of Midway in Chicago
 - of Indian limestone
 - Pyrrha was the daughter of Epimetheus and Pandora. Pyrrha, the first mortal-born woman married her cousin, Deucalion, and survived the Flood with him. Her daughters were Pandora and Thyla; each had children by Zeus
 - Companion sculptures are: "Sons of Deucalion" on south side of Foellinger Auditorium
 - Note: Spellings of Pyrrha on the plaques are incorrect
 - Purchase 1937, Lorado Taft Collection
2. "Dr. Gallaudet and His First Deaf-Mute Pupil"
 - 1888
 - sculptor: Daniel Chester French (1850-1931)
 - north end of central corridor (Wright Street entrance)
 - plaster cast from the Lorado Taft collection (Bronze casting 1889 at Gallaudet University and 1924 at American School for Deaf)
 - Gallaudet, who brought sign language to the U.S., is represented showing the letter "A" to a deaf girl, Alice Cogswell
 - funds for the memorial were raised by Gallaudet's son, Edward, and came from the deaf in every territory and state in the country
 - purchased 1937
3. "The Pioneers"
 - 1928
 - South entrance of Library
 - sculptor: Lorado Taft (1860-1936)
 - plaster cast, bronzed; original in elmwood
 - depicts strength of pioneer family
 - Inscribed: "To the Pioneers/Who Bridged the streams/Subdued the soil and /Founded a State."
 - purchased 1937

4. "Katherine Lucinda Sharp Memorial"

- 1921
- hallway outside the Library and Information Science Library, 306 library
- bronze plaque, low-relief, half-sized portrait from photograph, 48" X 35 1/2"
- sculptor: Lorado Taft (1860-1936)
- Sharp (1865-1914), Director of the Library School from 1893 to 1907, is credited as the "founder" of the Graduate School of Library and Information Science, though the graduate programs weren't introduced until 1911. Until 1978, the Library School was located on the third floor of the Library.
- gift presented by the Library School Alumni, 1921
- Inscribed: "Nobility of character and grace of person were united with intellectual vigor and scholarly attainments. She inspired her students and associates with sound standards of librarianship and ideals of service."

5. Lloyd Morey (1886-1965)

- University Comptroller (1916-1953); President of the University (1953-1955)
- 1955
- bronze head, 17" high
- originally located in niche in wall of east foyer, **temporarily missing**
- Sculptor: Egon P. Weiner (1906-87)

Murals

- 1928
- above marble staircase on second floor
- Artist: Barry Faulkner (1881-1966)
- Art deco murals of the four hemispheres--western, eastern, polar, and celestial. In the center of each of the paintings are maps to represent the regions, while the corners contain figur representative of these regions.
 - Eastern -- The figures in the eastern hemisphere are those representing Egypt and India
 - Western-- The western hemisphere is portrayed by figures of the Mississippi and Amazon Rivers
 - Polar -- The north wind is shown blowing back the ships that are attempting to cross the arctic regions, while death and fame hover, the "explorers' constant companions", hover over figures of Peary and Byrd.
 - Celestial -- The celestial hemisphere is represented by a number of constellations together with a number of ancient astronomers in the corner. Two female figures represent Day and Night. Ptolemy, the celebrated Greco-Egyptian astronomer of antiquity, squints through a telescope. Copernicus charts the universe. The astronomy faculty were quite concerned at the possible ridicule the university would encounter at the use of the spy glass, but no further objections were raised.

Stained Glass Windows

- 1925-1927
- 27 printer's marks in window
- designed by J. Scott Williams (1887-1975) of New York
- installed by Henderson Bros, New York
- In Reference Library, second floor

Wood Carving

- date (uncited)
- fumed oak carving
- Above Reference Room door, second floor
- designed by Charles A. Platt, executed by the Baumann-Poe Manufacturing Company.

James Audubon's Birds of America

- display case in foyer outside the Reference Library, second floor
- 1985 Facsimile by Abbeville Press of original edition
- published between 1840-1844
- the "elephant folio". A complete double elephant folio set brought \$396,000 at Christie's in New York in 1977. In October 1982, 434 prints from a double elephant folio, sold individually, brought \$1,541,265. The top selling print was the Wild Turkey....Male at \$32,000. A set bound in 5 volumes was sold at Sotheby's in New York in June 1989 for \$3.96 million, the highest price ever paid at auction for an illustrated printed book (The Collector, Sept. 1989, p. 20)
- original has been renovated and is no longer in bound format.
- print changed weekly

Portraits

1. Thomas Jonathan Burill (1839-1916)
 - Professor of Botany (1868-1912); University Vice-President (1879-1912); Acting
 - Regent (1891-1894); Dean, Graduate School (1894-1905)
 - 1899
 - Oil on canvas, 30" X 25"
 - East Entrance, Library
 - Artist: Newton Alonzo Wells (1852-1923)
2. Andrew Sloan Draper (1848-1913)
 - President of the University (1894-1904)
 - 1901
 - Oil on canvas, 48" X 33 1/2 "
 - East Entrance, Library
 - Artist: Newton Alonzo Wells (1852-1904)

3. John Milton Gregory (1822-1898)
 - First University Regent (President) (1867-1880)
 - 1881
 - Oil on canvas, 46 1/2" X 38 1/2"
 - East Entrance, Library
 - Artist: Peter Roos (1850-1919)
4. Edmund Janes James (1855-1925)
 - President of the University (1904-1920)
 - 1929
 - Oil on canvas, 69 1/2" X 48 1/2"
 - East Entrance, Library
 - Artist: Ralph Clarkson (1861-1942)
5. David Kinley (1861-1944)
 - President of the University (1920-1930)
 - 1926
 - Oil on canvas, 72" X 53 1/2"
 - East Entrance, Library
 - Artist: Paul Trebilcock (1902-1981)
6. Selim H. Peabody (1829-1903)
 - University Regent (President) (1880-1891)
 - 1922
 - Oil on canvas, 39 1/2" X 33 1/2"
 - East Entrance, Library
 - Artist: Leopold G. Seyffert (1887-1956)
7. Robert Downs (1903-1991)
 - University Librarian and Dean, Library Administration (1943-1971)
 - 1988
 - Oil on canvas, 44" X 26"
 - Left side above Circulation Desk, second floor
 - painter: Mary Phelan (1953 -)
8. Hugh Atkinson (1933-1986)
 - University Librarian, 1976-1986
 - 1988
 - Oil on canvas, 44" X 26"
 - Right side above Circulation Desk, second floor
 - Painter: Mary Phelan (1953-)
9. Harris F. Fletcher (1892-1979)
 - Professor of English (1926-1961)
 - 1943
 - Oil on canvas, 19" X 15"
 - Rare Book & Special Collections, 346 Library
 - Artist: Zlatoff-Mirsky

12. William Abbott Oldfather (1880-1946)
 - Professor of Classics (1909-1945); Head (1926-1945)
 - 1942
 - Oil on canvas, 31" X 26"
 - Classics Library, 419A Library
 - Artist: James D. Hogan (1899-1973)
13. Sitter Unknown
 - 1905
 - Oil on canvas, 30" X 25"
 - University Archives, 19 Library
 - Artist: Newton Alonzo Wells (1852-1923)
14. Seward C. Staley (1893-1991)
 - Dean, College of Physical Education, 1937-1961
 - 1950
 - Oil on canvas, 35 1/2" X 30"
 - Applied Life Studies Library, 146 Library
 - Artist: James D. Hogan (1899-1970)

Acknowledgements: Much of the information on this page came from Muriel Scheinman's *A Guide to Art at the University of Illinois*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995.