

## Free Classicism in the Edwardian library

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Previous research into the Edwardian public library has concentrated either on the libraries endowed by the philanthropist Andrew Carnegie, individual architects or the more statistical aspects of library history. My thesis collates the works of affiliated architects who produced three or more buildings across the UK. This creates a database of nearly fifty libraries, illustrating two library 'greats', Henry Hare (1861-1921) and Maurice Adams (1849-1933). It simultaneously objectifies the lesser-known figures of Rhind of Glasgow and the city architect J. Thomson of Dundee. Geographical concentration is heavily biased to east and west London, but encompasses Scotland, the Midlands, Wales, Lancashire and Yorkshire.

The buildings show diverse architectural styling grouped under the generic term of free classicism; this was based on but did not conform to the classical formulae of the orders. Described as 'obstinately individualistic' they range from the 'nationalised' Elizabethan Renaissance, the Arts and Crafts, Queen Anne, the neo-Baroque and finish with stripped classicism. Despite this tectonic melange the buildings harbour signifiers of national, intellectual and ecclesiastical intent; they are used as thematic models to decode meaning.

Seminal international models, Sansovino's Venetian library (c.1537), the Parisian Bibliotheque Nationale (c.1854) and the Boston Library (1857) are relevant architectural precedents; closer to home the historic duet of Newcastle's Literary and Philosophical Society (1825) and the neighbouring Miners Institute provide educational comparatives. H. G. Wells' and Arnold Bennet's novels, with their snap shot reviews of Edwardian social issues, newspaper reportage, parliamentary reports and library committee minutes condense into a cultural package. Internals in the form of plan and authority constructed with a Foucauldian interpretation are set against the external forces of politics and citizenship, which, with the new found vote, was an important binding phenomenon. Allied to this the issue of freedom; the 'free' libraries were a political metaphor for the libertarian issues that dominated the period. The race of nations and supremacy of empire created a political necessity for the libraries. Sculptural linguistics, such as Schenck's statues of Milton and Shakespeare at the Hammersmith library (1905) acted as semiotic bait. The Edwardian sculptor, often marginalised, is objectified by the research, which aims to map new meanings and connections to the Edwardian library.