200 Years of Shared Discovery:
The Bicentennial of Ohio University Libraries
“The surrounding country was then covered with dense forests... The bluff and the bottoms were heavily timbered with hickory, walnut, ash, poplar, and other trees indicative of good soil...”

edges of the pages...
“... while the course of the tortuous Hockhocking [River] was marked as far as the view extended by the gigantic sycamores that grew thick-set and lofty along its edge.”
— Charles Walker, 1869
Like folded pages precisely sewn

Wood and paper foundations

Mature

Into legacies

Of creativity and thought
Imagine OHIO without a library or without its books. In 1804, when the Ohio Legislature established Ohio University, it was little more than a grand conception in the middle of a great wilderness. The first move toward constructing a building on campus was the opening of the Academy in 1808. But it was not until 1811, seven years after OHIO’s conception, that the first official set of books was purchased.

On June 15, 1814, another milestone was reached: The Board of Trustees officially titled their collection of books the “Library of Ohio University” and established a list of seven rules designated to govern the usage of OHIO’s first library.

Since then, the Libraries has grown to incorporate 3 million volumes, comprehensive electronic resources and world-renowned special collections. Ranked among the top 100 research libraries in North America, Ohio University Libraries is a member of the prestigious Association of Research Libraries.

The 1814 Board of Trustees resolution that is cited in the minutes began the 200-year tradition of aiding academic excellence that defines Ohio University Libraries and continues to be celebrated today.
Resolved, that all Students, who have not had the benefit of a School education, be admitted to the use of Libraries and Reading Rooms, for the purpose of studying such branches of Knowledge as they may judge best calculated for their mental improvement. And for that purpose, the Library is open to such Students, provided they have the recommendation of their Professors, and pay an annual fee of $2.00.
The instruction of young boys, eight or nine years of age, from the American revolutionary generation rigorously concentrated on the study of Greek and Latin. Those same boys, in turn, demonstrated a polished proficiency in those studies for entrance into college.

A man much in the mold of the revolutionary generation was Manasseh Cutler (1742-1823), best remembered today as the father of Ohio University. As a young man, Manasseh was “placed under the instruction of Rev. Aaron Brown, in order to obtain a sufficient knowledge of Latin to enable him to study medicine” (Cutler). Manasseh entered his freshman year at Yale in 1761.

During Manasseh Cutler’s time at Yale (1761-1765), he developed an interest in the emerging field of botany. This 126-page, leather-bound journal titled, “Book XI. Description and Notes on American Indigenous Plants,” was handwritten by Cutler during the years 1793-1797. The journal contains his research, sketches and notes of various plants and their uses and is part of the Manasseh Cutler Collection in Alden Library’s Mahn Center.

Manasseh Cutler (1742-1823), known as the father of Ohio University, was an ordained minister, a Yale graduate and father of seven children: Ephraim, Jervis, Mary, Charles, Lavinia, Elizabeth and Temple (Ancestry.com). Cutler was instrumental in forming the Ohio Company, which purchased 1.5 million acres of land in the Northwest Territory. This land purchase set the groundwork for the document, An Act Establishing an University, and eventually the establishment of Ohio University.

This “small trunk, its deerskin cover cracked and peeling with age,” (Ohio Today) housed in the Mahn Center in Alden Library, was on display during the rededication of Cutler Hall in 1947. The trunk was a “gift of Charles G. Dawes, former vice-president of the United States” (The Post) during the Republican administration of President Calvin Coolidge. Legend has it that the traveling trunk belonged to Manasseh Cutler.
The revolutionary generation was enamored of the classics—Cicero, Horace, Virgil and Plutarch to name a few. It is from here that they obtained their knowledge of history. The history of ancient societies contained valuable lessons for the emerging nation of America.

In the late 1700s and early 1800s, many prominent Americans were not only readers but also collectors of books. It was a time when a single shelf of books represented an enormous collection, and libraries, as we know them today, did not exist.

Private libraries, nevertheless, did come to the new land of America with the first European Colonies. These private libraries contained very few books, which were mostly of a religious nature. However, as the Colonies grew and a new country took shape, so too did private libraries. As early as the 1670s, there were booksellers in Boston “to aid the buyers of books” (Harris). Private libraries became commonplace among professionals, government officials and large landowners.

Much in this tradition was the mid-17th century founding of Yale College, when clergymen, intent on establishing a tradition of European-style liberal education on American shores, endeavored to establish a college in New Haven, Connecticut. The college was named to honor Welsh merchant Elihu Yale, who donated more than 400 books along with other goods, helping to found both the infant institution and its first library.

It was as an undergraduate browsing Yale’s library shelves that Manasseh Cutler happened upon a book written by Linnaeus, an early publication in the new field of scientific research called botany. “Few, if any, scholars at Yale or Harvard had, at that time, given the subject any attention” (Cutler).

This discovery led to Manasseh Cutler’s lifelong interest in the study of botany and eventually to his role as one of the early members of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. Manasseh graduated from Yale College with high standing in 1765.

The importance of books to the revolutionary generation was amply demonstrated by President John Adams’ establishment of the first Library of Congress in 1800. In 1815 after a fire destroyed the original collection, Thomas Jefferson sold his personal library, containing more than 6,000 volumes, to the Library of Congress.

Clearly, Americans valued books and reading, and this mutually shared sentiment soon expanded beyond the physical boundaries of the New England states into the lands of the American West. The written word not only helped mold the thoughts and actions that characterized the American Revolution, but was also instrumental in guiding the revolutionary generation that would later form universities and libraries in what was then called the Northwest Territory.

Northwest Territory
Pictured is a facsimile of the front page of a 1793 edition of The Centinel of the North-Western Territory, published in Cincinnati until 1796. The newspaper "was the first product of the printing press anywhere north of the Ohio River and west of the Allegheny and Blue Ridge mountains" (Rare & Early Newspapers). The desire of New England-educated gentlemen living in the Northwest Territory to read eventually led to the establishment of social libraries in Colonial America.
The main activity of the book world in the early years of America was centered almost entirely around three cities: Boston, New York, and Philadelphia. Most books were locally produced and were distributed in the publishers’ bookshops. However, no single publisher was able to produce all the necessary books, so they engaged in a barter system, exchanging books or even printed sheets between other publishers.

America’s history of printing books began as early as 1639, in Cambridge, Massachusetts, when the first printing press reached the American Colonies. The earliest newspapers and books originated in Boston shortly thereafter.

Closely aligned with the printing press were the paper mills. In the early 1800s very little differed from the processes of 16th century Europe. In America, craftspeople used old rags to produce paper that began an extensive process of fermentation to reduce the rags to pulp. The pulp, hand dipped into wooden molds to form sheets, was then placed under pressure, dried and finally bundled for printing or writing.

The last step in producing fine books was bookbinding, which was divided into three stages. The first stage was the “preparation.” The presses’ loose-printed pages were assembled, folded and collated. Next, the pages were “forwarded.” Once here, the cover boards were sewn and attached to the printed pages.

This fragile rare book, printed in Boston in 1805, is hand-bound in solid brown leather. The volume measures 4" x 6.75" and originally contained 240 pages, the last 14 pages of which are now missing. This book is not wrapped around a traditional cover board, as is customary for bookmaking. Written by Daniel Staniford (1766-1820), it bears the impressive title, “The Art of Reading: Containing a Number of Useful Rules; Calculated to Improve the Scholar in Reading and Speaking.” The title page also informs us that the book was “Designed for the Use of Schools and Families.” Today, it must be handled with extreme care by scholars of a very different kind.
The bookbinding’s “finishing” stage was the final process. The covers of fine books were enclosed in delicately formed leather that was sometimes tooled, stamped and occasionally rendered in gold leaf.

The early American bookmakers created bindings of remarkable quality, and their books have lasted for centuries. Those books are still enjoyed today by countless book collectors, and some are housed in Ohio University Libraries’ Mahn Center for Archives and Special Collections.

The beautifully crafted book pictured here shows one of the 28 fold-out maps contained in a two-volume set, “The American Universal Geography, or, A View of the Present State of all the Empires, Kingdoms, States and Republics in the Known World, and of the United States of America in Particular,” written by Jedidiah Morse (1761-1826). These volumes were published in Boston by Thomas and Ebenezer T. Andrews in 1801-1802 as geography textbooks, and they demonstrate the remarkable quality of bindings by early American bookmakers.
The volume pictured here was printed in Boston in 1795 by Samuel Etheridge for David West. A small volume, it measures only 3.25” x 4.75.” As this photograph discloses, the cover consists of brown leather stretched over exposed wooden boards—note the rough twine that attaches the pages. Originally written in Dutch as “Katechismus der Natuur” by Dr. Joannes Florentius Martinet (1729-1795), it was translated into English as “The Catechism of Nature: For the Use of Children” by John Hall. It contains 99 extremely brittle leaves, and it is now kept in an archival envelope for protection.
“Be it enacted by the general assembly of the State of Ohio that there shall be an University instituted and established in the Town of Athens... within the limits of the tract of land purchased by the Ohio Company of Associates, by the name and style of the Ohio University.”

18th February, 1804
Ohio University, the oldest university in the Northwest Territory, had its origins in Boston on March 1, 1786 in the Bunch of Grapes Tavern. There, Manasseh Cutler and Rufus Putnam formed the Ohio Company of Associates whose purpose was to purchase western lands and promote settlement.

A year later, Cutler persuaded Congress to create a 46,800-acre land grant for a “university” to members of the Ohio Company as part of the sale of the newly opened Northwest Territory’s 1.5 million acres.

This vast territory, acquired from the British at the end of the Revolutionary War, was indeed a wilderness. Its many rivers and dense, unending forests were largely uncharted. For centuries, that land had been the Native Americans’ favorite hunting grounds, before treaties forced their surrender to the United States.

In spite of the hardships encountered in the wilderness, late in 1799, General Rufus Putnam and a committee of veterans laid out “with compass and chain” (Martzolff) the town of Athens and the campus of the “university.”

In June 1804, the first Ohio Governor Edward Tiffin, General Putnam and other distinguished men who formed the core of the Ohio University Board of Trustees “traveled 50 to 100 miles, by blind paths or Indian trails through dense forests” (Martzolff) to the small village of Athens. It was there that the trustees began preparations for establishing an institution of higher learning.

The campus, high on a bluff overlooking the Hockhocking River (the current Hocking River) was a visually impressive site, but it was also an isolated one. The University’s remoteness and inaccessibility defined this area for generations.

A decade later, in 1814, the Library of Ohio University was established.
Pictured here is a photostat of the official map of the two college townships made by Dudley Woodbridge, under the direction of Rufus Putnam. According to the map’s text, written by Putnam, “This plat is executed, in part, from a survey made by Levi Whipple in 1800” under Putnam’s direction and “appointed by the Territorial Legislature,” and in part, from an August 1804 survey that was appointed by the Ohio University Board of Trustees. The two largest sections of land labeled B1 and B2 were procured for the establishment of the University and the eventual home of Ohio University Libraries.

Pictured is a formal portrait of Rufus Putnam (1738-1824). With the expressed support of General George Washington, Putnam was promoted from the rank of colonel to that of brigadier general near the end of the Revolutionary War. Putnam was among a group of approximately 250 officers who actively petitioned Congress to grant land in the western territories in payment for their services. It was Putnam who helped form the Ohio Company with the understanding that two “townships be set aside for a university” (Black). That university was titled the American Western University before it was renamed Ohio University in 1804. It was here that the first academic library in the Northwest Territory was established.
The Ordinance of 1787 established the government of the "Territory Northwest of the River of Ohio" (MSS 51). As noted by William Frederick Poole, "it fixed forever the immigration and the social, political and educational institutions of the people who were to inhabit this imperial territory…" It was also at this time that Manasseh Cutler and Rufus Putnam, founders of the Ohio Company and Ohio University, acquired 1.5 million acres of land in the newly established territory. Pictured is a land grant document, which bears the signature of the pioneer Rufus Putnam. The land grants document the transactions between the Ohio Company and individuals in the purchase of their land. Money raised from OHIO's land grants was the University's initial source of income and may have been used to purchase the first books for the Library of Ohio University in 1811.
“While bread was considered vital for the preservation of the body, a few books were often viewed as equally vital for the preservation of the mind,” wrote Michael Harris. In the early days of American settlements, there was a hunger for reading and in order to satisfy this desire, social libraries were created. Social libraries are explained as a voluntary association of individuals who contributed money to the support of a library through shared ownership, annual subscriptions and regular use. Social libraries were stored in one particular room or alcove, so “any person able to meet the established requirements, which usually involved the payment of money” (Harris) could use them.

Though the collections were generally open to the public, a fee was required because the libraries were funded and books were purchased by the patrons themselves. “Social libraries” is also a blanket term for the many forms of libraries funded by an association of individuals that changed and developed from the 1720s to the late 1800s. Subscription and circulating libraries are two types of social libraries. An early Ohio example is Ames Township’s Western Library Association formed in the early 1800s.
Subscription

Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790), the statesman, scholar, scientist and inventor, is responsible for the predecessor of today’s public library. In 1731, Franklin brought together 50 prominent men with a great interest in books and reading to create a subscription library.

Members of the famous Library Company of Philadelphia paid 40 shillings up front for the original purchase of the library’s books and an additional 10 shillings each year to have access to the books. The books purchased did not cater to the desires of popular culture, but rather represented the best of non-fiction and a few classics to enhance readers’ intellectual development.

The books could only be lent to those who had a subscription. Franklin’s idea caught on and spurred the development of similar social libraries across the early American Colonies.

“These libraries have improved the general conversation of the Americans,” wrote Franklin. “[They have made] common tradesmen and farmers as intelligent as most gentlemen of other countries” (Harris).

Circulating

Circulating libraries, which is a branch of the subscription libraries, began in Maryland in the mid-1700s. Circulating libraries filled their shelves with the “most popular and exciting works of fiction.” Even then, Americans had a strong desire for fiction and romance novels. Their thirst was quenched by the circulating libraries, which rented books to patrons for a small fee, some allowing any number of books to be rented at a time. The circulating libraries that survived into the late 1700s also commonly sold books including “primers and textbooks, prayer books, and dictionaries” as well as copies of almanacs and local laws (Harris).

The circulating libraries took on various forms including the “Book Boat” which traveled New York from Albany to Buffalo in the 1830s and 1840s, tying up on the wharfs and renting out its literature ranging from sermons to joke books. Eventually circulating libraries fell out of favor due to the concerns raised about “the influence of such trash on the thoughts and actions of readers—especially female readers” (Harris).
The Western Library Association (Coonskin Library) in Athens County, Ohio, is one of the earliest examples of a successful social library founded in the Northwest Territory—an honor that is not only significant for the township of Ames, Ohio, but also for Ohio University, which shared its earliest pioneer families, its educational background and its history of books.

In 1797, the settlers were, with very few exceptions, New Englanders, and a large portion of the men had served as officers in the Revolutionary War. It would be difficult to find a more educated community in the Northwest Territory.

Among the individuals touched by the Coonskin Library’s influence was Archibald Brown, a member of the Ohio University Board of Trustees; the “father” of OHIO’s Alumni Association and the first salaried librarian for Ohio University. His association with Ohio University was an illustrious one that lasted well over six decades, and began with the influence of the first library in Ames Township.

Archibald, the youngest of 10 children, was barely over a year old when the Brown family moved from Waterford, a settlement near Marietta, to their new home in Ames Township. The 80-mile water route to the Brown family home was an arduous seven-day trip, but a good solution to solving the transportation problem of moving domestic goods without roads. Archibald’s father, Capt. Benjamin Brown, traveled with the family’s belongings in pirogues (large dugout canoes) down the Muskingum and Ohio rivers, up the Hocking River and finally to Federal Creek.

The remainder of the Brown family joined the family of Ephraim Cutler, founder of the Ames settlement and son of Manaosh Cutler. The two families traveled on horseback through 20 miles of hand-cut paths that were cleared months earlier by Capt. Brown.

"The Scottish Chiefs: A Romance," by Miss Jane Porter, is a treasured piece of the Coonskin Collection in the Mahn Center. A leather cover is still held intact by strings on the inside of the front cover. On the first page are the words, "The Property of the Western Library Association," the formal name of the Coonskin Library in Ames, Ohio. The title page of the book includes these words by Ossian: “There comes a voice that wakes my soul. It is the voice of years that are gone; they roll before me with all their deeds.”

Archibald G. Brown (1798-1892) came to the University at age 14 to enroll at the Academy where he became a charter member of the Athenian Literary Society. Brown graduated in September 1822, and from 1823 to 1825, Brown was employed as principal of the Academy. He later became a trustee of Ohio University in 1841 where he served for 51 years. In 1859, Brown organized the Ohio University Alumni Association.

In the photograph above, taken on the steps of the Athens County Courthouse in 1867, Archibald G. Brown is fifth from the left, on the bottom row.
As the Ames community grew, parents worried that their children were not being properly educated. Although a small handful of children did attend school inside Ephraim Cutler’s home, the school term was irregular and erratic, at best.

In the autumn of 1801 or 1802, a public meeting was held and “the intellectual wants of the neighborhood became the subject of the conversation. It was suggested that a library would supply what was needed,” wrote Ephraim Cutler. Unfortunately, the settlers had little money to purchase and to transport the relatively costly books from the East.

“So scarce was money I can hardly remember seeing a piece of coin until I was a well-grown boy” (Hollow & Stone), Archibald said.

The project’s finances were, indeed, a perplexing problem. After extensive discussions, however, the settlers agreed to send their furs, in trade, for books from the city of Boston.

“I well recollect a large collection of bear skins, a wonder in my eyes, [that were] brought to my father’s house to be taken by Samuel Brown” to Boston, wrote Archibald. The proceeds from the furs were “to purchase books for the library. There may have been coonskins [raccoon furs] in the collection, but they were too numerous … in those days” (MSS 51) to take much notice.

“The History of America” by William Robertson, D. D., principal of the University of Edinburgh and a member of the Royal Academy in Madrid, was among the original 51 books in the Coonskin Library Collection. The book, published in London, features a fold-out map of the southernmost parts of America as it appeared in 1803. Contents include the history of Virginia to the year 1688 and of New England dating back to 1652. Today the book is stored in the Mahn Center at Ohio University Libraries, where it can be viewed and read, but not circulated due to its fragility and historical value.
A few years earlier, Benjamin Franklin had pointed out that "outside of Boston, there is scarcely a bookstore in all of the colonies worth mentioning" (Nicholson). So of course, that was the communities' selected book destination.

Samuel Brown, cousin of Archibald, and his wife headed East in the middle of May 1803, and they were gone for about eight months. While in Boston, the couple met with Thaddeus Harris, Harvard librarian and a recent visitor to Ames, and Ephraim's father, Manasseh Cutler. Both men, well fitted for the task, helped to hand-select books for the small pioneer library.

"I well remember, though very young," wrote Archibald of Samuel Brown's return home on horseback, "coming to my father's house very early one morning, about the last of December, I think the day after Christmas 1803" (MSS 51). The neighbors gathered, maybe eight or 10 men with their wives and children, to wait the unveiling of the books. "I was there," wrote Thomas Ewing, graduate of OHIO, "at the untying of the sack and the pouring out of the treasure" (Nicholson). Everyone was in awe—as if a goldmine had been discovered.

At a cost of $76.50, (today’s value: $1,498.69) it was an impressive collection of 51 books for the small community. History books were the main staple that formed the list. Among the books purchased, 10 volumes were written by Goldsmith, a popular author for the time, who wrote not only about history, but also about poetry and nature.

Some half-a-dozen books contained religious reflections and moral essays, and "for the inquisitive seeker of facts there was ready Harris' Minor Encyclopedia, in four volumes," wrote Ephraim's granddaughter Sarah Cutler. "While Morse's Geography and his Gazetteer with their maps supplied any student with a vast amount of information concerning the world."

Those books became affectionately known as the Coonskin Library.

"The traces of [the Coonskin Library and] its influence are [still] visible in the surrounding community, and it has to a great extent given tone and character to that community," wrote the members of Athens County Pioneer Association in 1882.

This influence is a unique chapter in the history of the Northwest Territory and in the history of libraries and Ohio University.
This old building (1900) was built in 1824 by John Walker who leased the ground of Ohio University. In it, in 1825, Archibald Brown published The Athens Mirror and Literary Register (Peters #4), which was the first newspaper in Athens County. Brown was admitted to the bar in 1834 and served as the recorder for Athens County for 13 years. He was appointed Presiding Judge of the Eighth Judicial Circuit in 1850 and was elected as a member of the Constitutional Convention in that same year.

On the northwest corner of the post office lot, on West Union Street, being the northwest corner of Inlot No. 60, in the City of Athens, there stood, for many years until 1910, a two-story brick building that was fraught with more than ordinary significance. For in it was published the first newspaper to have been published in Athens County, "The Mirror"; "The Athens Messenger" of today, which, since 1825, just one hundred years thereafter, has been housed in its own fine building just across a driveway from the birth-place of its ancestor, "The Mirror."
<table>
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<tr>
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* Source: Unknown Newspaper, December 2, 1875, Mahn Center, Ohio University Libraries
The first move toward constructing an actual building on campus was not until April 5, 1806 when the Ohio University Board of Trustees made plans for the Academy.

The two-story brick structure sat close to where Galbreath Chapel sits today. One room up and one room down, a clapboard roof, and three or four small windows per floor, the building was finished in 1808 for a total cost of $500. Jacob Lindley, a Princeton graduate, was not only the sole teacher, but also the administrative head of the school and the president of the Board of Trustees.

The Academy was originally meant for university studies, but as students arrived, it became obvious that they were unprepared for university work, so the Academy took on a dual role as a preparatory school. An ad in The Ohio Gazette and Virginia Herald from August 11, 1808 called it an “appendage to the said university.” Three students enrolled for classes: John Perkins, Joel Abbott and Brewster Higley.

In May of 1809 the Board of Trustees appointed a committee to look into buying books and the “necessary apparatus” for experiments. The apparatus of the period consisted of scientific instruments such as telescopes, protractors and moving models of the solar system.

It was Lindley’s cousin Stephen Lindley, a minister from Marietta, who gifted him with the book “Johannis Cocceji ... Commentarivs in Librum I Jobi ...” The rare book is an Arabic to English translation of the biblical book of Job written by a 15th century theologian and published in 1644. For its time, the book was quite controversial because of the author’s interpretation of the biblical story. It is believed to be one of the earliest books held by Ohio University Libraries. Inside one can see handwritten notes in the margins thought to be done by one of the Lindleys.

This map of the Ohio University campus at the beginning of the 1800s was used in The Ohio Alumnus (1932) to illustrate that the campus was “first laid out from time to time between 1800 and 1804 in compliance with the Act of 1799, and consisted of two tracts, ‘B1’ and ‘B2’, of 3.60 acres each.” On the northern portion of the College Green where students now sit, study, or just soak up the sun, sheep once grazed. Many other changes can be seen here as well, such as street names. In those days it was “Mulberry Street,” rather than Park Place, flanking the south side of the “B1” plot where the Vernon R. Alden Library now sits.
From the beginning, books were important for the instruction of students. Jacob Lindley’s purpose, as the sole instructor, “was to give his pupils [the] basic skills in writing, mathematics, public speaking, geography, Latin, Greek, logic and philosophy” (Hollow).

In 1810, a year later, the committee appropriated $308 worth of funds, and finally in 1811—the University purchased its first books. They were expensive, and the trip to get them was difficult, but the trustees’ desire to own and to provide access to them was the beginning of the first Library of Ohio University.

In 1812, the trustees continued to increase OHIO’s Library when they allocated $300 to seek “classical and professional books and other apparatus that may be deemed necessary” (Minutes) for the institution.

Although the Academy’s library first began to flourish in 1811, the Ohio University Libraries is dated 1814. That was the year that the trustees “adopted, for the Library of Ohio University” (Minutes), its first rules and regulations.

This composition of Library rules marked a significant point in the history of the University Libraries because it was the first time that the Board of Trustees officially titled their collection of books “The Library of Ohio University” and established a list of seven rules to govern OHIO’s Library.

Two such rules were: “No student shall be allowed to have in his possession more than one book at any one time,” and, “No book shall be used by a student without being previously covered with a wrapper of paper” (Minutes).
The Academy, open to students in 1808, was the only building on campus until the Center Building, today’s Cutler Hall, was erected almost a decade later. Solomon Miles, an 1816 alumnus of the Academy, wrote that the library was located in the northwest corner of the building. This pen and ink drawing, by OHIO alumnus Mike Major (1971), is what Ohio University’s first building, the Academy, might have looked like.
“I enter the [Academy] building and there I see the heavy tables and benches where we used to thumb the Lexicon and ply the pencil and slate in solving the knotty problems of Arithmetic and Algebra. There stands the rostrum and the little poplar pulpit. I see as of old the small library in the northwest corner of the building, with its terrestrial and celestial globe standing in the window and a small case of surveyor’s instruments, the only apparatus of the then infant college.”

It is with an air of fondness that alumnus, Solomon S. Miles (1816), reminisced about the Academy and its first library.

While students were enrolled in the Academy’s preparatory school, in the same building, University students were also doing work leading to the Bachelor of Arts. To receive a degree, students needed “proficiency in Virgil, Horace, Cicero, Xenophon, Homer, the Greek Testament, geography, logic, arithmetic, algebra, conic sections, natural philosophy, the general principles of history, jurisprudence, English, grammar, rhetoric, belles lettres, criticism, and more pragmatically, surveying and navigation” (Hollow). The first two graduates in 1815 were John Hunter and Thomas Ewing. Ewing later became a U.S. Senator, the Secretary of the Treasury and the Secretary of the Interior.

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At this time, when there were only 14 students enrolled, it was already apparent that the Academy building would not be adequate for the growing school. So, the trustees began to make plans for the “College Edifice,” a three-story structure with all the comforts the small Academy did not have—labs, dorms, offices, lecture halls and—a library. 

This gray granite sundial marks the site of the first Ohio University building, the Academy, which was erected in 1808. It was on this land that the long-standing reputation for academic excellence at Ohio University began when Thomas Ewing and John Hunter became the first OHIO graduates. The sundial was erected in 1907, a century after the Academy was built.
Pictured here are the book plate, title page and leather cover of one of the earliest acquisitions of the Ohio University Library. Published in London in 1803 and bearing the title, "The Modern History of Hindostan..." (plus a very extensive subtitle), it was authored by Thomas Maurice, a noted British scholar and historian. The author’s signature appears on the dedication. This volume is described in the Libraries’ catalog as "bound in full brown calf [leather, and] stamped in gold" on the spine. These images reveal how wonderfully well this old book has withstood the ravages of time.
Thomas Ewing (1789-1871), one of the first graduates of Ohio University, was a successful attorney, United States Senator, Secretary of Treasury, Secretary of Interior, presidential adviser and father of four children: Ellen, Thomas Jr., Hugh and Charles. He was also foster-father of the famous William Tecumseh Sherman. In 1813, Thomas Ewing wrote a letter to his friend and classmate John Hunter. An avid reader, Ewing was in Gallipolis, perhaps during the War of 1812, when he wrote “…I have found some books here that are worth perusing. I am now reading Bollins Bellephithe [sic] an excellent book though I labour under a great disadvantage in reading it for want of the Latin.”
Ohio University. Laws & Regulations of the Academy.

1. The Academy, being principally designed to afford a regular course of instruction and discipline preparatory to a collegiate course, is made subject to the same general laws and regulations. The particular charge of its government, internal economy, is committed to the President & the Preceptor of the Academy. The care of instruction, to the Preceptor.

2. The course of studies shall be such as may be judged best suited to prepare students for the collegiate course. The following books shall be made: Latin, Salmiarius; Cassius’ Commentaries, four or more books; Virgil’s Chief Poems, and four or more books; Oden, Georgics, and four or more books; Cicero’s Orations, eight or more, and the lost. History, Plutarch; Cato, Caesar, Livy, and a part of the Greek Testament. The Grammar of the Latin and Greek languages must be faithfully studied. English Grammar; Arithmetic; Geography. Other branches of learning will be attended to, when requisite, and expence. Exercises in Declamation, Composition & Reading shall be required, in rotation, by class, or weekly, any afternoon of each week.

3. Every student on becoming being admitted into the Academy, shall give his parent or guardian in the register of the Academy, a written evidence of a dissenting to keep the laws & officers of the University. He shall then enter the name & age of the same, residence of his parent, or guardian, or the register of the Academy. Each student under the age of twenty-one years, shall choose one of the officers. For this purpose, the Bursar, who shall act as his guardian, shall take the care of this business. The Preceptor shall give no instruction in the University, but shall be instructed in the University, and shall give instruction in the University, with the consent of the Preceptor. He may make his deposit or the balance on the case may be.

4. All students under the age of sixteen years of age, or if any, shall be required to study during the study hours of the day, in the Academy, on duty by their own play. They shall not absent themselves, or from the duties of the Academy, or study in private rooms assigned by the Faculty.
b. Every student, when summoned for any cause, or prevented by some indisposition, from attending the services, shall immediately present himself to the Preceptor, and, when present, perform every service in the same manner as the other members of the body shall be required to do. He shall also attend the evening exercises of public worship as on the Sabbath in the same manner as college students.

7. Accurate rolls of all the students of each class will be kept, and all absences from duties of deficiencies in exercises carefully noted. An extract from theseRolls, as well as to each student, will be transmitted to the preceptors or guardians, at the close of each term.

5. The Terms are the same as those of College. At the close of each term, all the students shall be examined on all the studies of the Term.

Once a year there shall be an exhibition of a selected number of students. At the close of each Term, every student, if examined, shall be required to pass from a term to another, or to be dismissed in the Term for failure on the part of the Preceptor.

9. A student may be promoted from a lower to a higher class for distinguishing himself in any of the studies of the Term, but he shall be found competent, or in corrigible defects shall be dismissed.
11. To enforce the foregoing principles, the general order of good conduct of the students and their discipline, presumption and violence shall be enforced, which failing, a course must be laid upon punishment sufficient but proportionate to the nature and aggravation of offenses. A penalty, such as the following, is a step, diseases, from a step to the lower grade, punishment, administered in presence of a class, punishment in presence of all the students, fines, disgrace, the student's own correction, suspension or expulsion shall be inflicted to every minor offense in any of which the student is guilty.

12. The President's authority to inflict any of the above penalties or with the advice of the President, except correction, suspension or expulsion, shall not be frustrated without the consent of the Faculty.

13. Fine shall be inflicted for abuses of parents, of government, of property, of persons, of the building, of furniture, for causing damage or doing damage to property. Damages done to property shall be assessed double upon the individual or individual or corporation which therein the whole body of students.

14. A student who shall be found, without the advice of the President, to be guilty of misbehavior or any other act, shall be subjected to punishment as prescribed in the regulations.
This 1815 document announces the first degrees ever given by Ohio University. The recipients, Thomas Ewing and his classmate John Hunter, were examined in the “different branches of Literature, to wit—Grammar, Rhetoric, Natural and Moral Philosophy, Logic, Geography, Astronomy and the various branches of Mathematics” and were deemed “entitled to a degree of Bachelor of Arts and Sciences” (Minutes) by a committee that included the OHIO Board of Trustees members.
A Fictional Tale

Imagine the richly colored fall foliage in Ohio.

The year is 1814...

What a journey that had been, more than a week up from Marietta in that rough craft they wanted to call a boat. But now at last, scrambling up the muddy bank off the Hockhocking, Josiah’s excitement overcame his weariness.

Through the green humidity on the ridge above him, he could discern the outlines of the Academy, distinguishable as the only brick building around, surrounded by a rough field where cows were grazing, and edged by huge poplars.

“Hurry, Patch!” he called to his brother, taking off at a trot. Patch, burdened with his brother’s leather trunk, came along with a limp and a will.

Josiah burst into the door of the small building, hat in hand. Patch nearly ran him over from the momentum of the trunk.

“Is the Master here, please?” he asked of the child in short pants he found there.

“Yes, sir. Upstairs, sir,” said the boy. And Josiah, along with Patch, climbed the staircase.

Three rows of heavy tables lined with little slates faced an officious wooden pulpit, and — “Blessings beyond blessings!” exclaimed Josiah—a whole corner full of books in leather bindings with tooled titles: Plato, Cicero…

“Young sir?” queried the schoolmaster. Josiah quickly made his introductions, presenting the letter from his father. After receiving his instructions and learning when and where to be on Monday for the start of lectures, he let his curiosity get the better of him.

“And the library, Master, may I use the books of that library?”

“Of course, if you are over twelve, which I see you are, and you promise to use them in a responsible manner.”

“Yes, sir, my father has some of his books from his days at Yale, so I know how to care for them. But he could only bring out a few when he came after the war—this is more books than I have ever seen in one place.”

“I appreciate your enthusiasm, young man,” said the stern-faced Master. “Don’t worry, your studies here in preparation for university work will take you through all of these and more. Our little clutch of books may well become a nice library someday.”
The College Edifice

Cutler Hall • Ohio University
First Print 11/OCT/47

edged by poplars

Room to Grow
The colonists who came to America brought with them the tradition of book plates, an ownership label printed from either an engraved or etched block or a letterpress. During the days of the College Edifice (1818-1905), the Ohio University Library was growing. With each new volume, a mark of ownership was added.

When the College Edifice opened in 1818, it afforded the University room to grow.

On May 19, 1818, the president of the University, Jacob Lindley, said, “The Trustees determined to proceed in an important work without delay, and they have, in the course of the last year, erected a spacious and substantial edifice, of brick, eighty-two feet in length, and fifty-one feet in breadth, three stories high, [that is] sufficient with their former building, for the convenient accommodation of more than one hundred students” (VFM 1818).

The expense of each term in the Academy was $3, and the college courses taught at the College Edifice cost $4, which included “tuition,
room-rent, use of the library and servants’ hire,” (VFM 1822) read the earliest known catalog of the young University and its new structure.

In 1819, builders were still finishing the upper floors where they created 15 dorm rooms, two literary society halls and three recitation rooms. The library was soon situated in the southwest corner of the third floor.

The final cost of the building was a staggering $17,806. The trustees, sensing an economic calamity on the horizon, sought alternate ways to defray the cost of the College Edifice by turning to “subscriptions” or donations “to unloosen the purse strings of able citizens and bring balance of the fund” (Martzolff) that was due.

That same year, 1819, Joseph Dana, a language teacher who was fairly new to the school, was sent to the East to raise money for the University. During his tour, he purchased “rare and valuable classical books to the amount of $237” (Minutes). Despite the high costs, Dana said that those books were “indispensable to complete a library such as this University ought to possess.”

In 1820, the Board of Trustees “allowed A. G. Brown (1822) for services as [a] Librarian the sum of $15.00” (Minutes), in addition to his teaching salary, making him the first “official” librarian.

The College Library, said Archibald, is “well selected and valuable. It has lately received [an] accession of books to the amount of one thousand dollars” (Mirror, 1825).

Among the early books owned by the Ohio University Library is this 1709 vellum-bound Greek Bible, “Vetus Testamentum, ex Versione Septuaginta Interpretum.” Frederick Hall, a professor and author who visited the campus in 1837, wrote, “No one, however, fixed my gaze so strongly as a copy of the Septuagint. I have never seen that venerated volume in more sumptuous trappings, except in a single instance, and that was in the Royal Library, collected by the Third George of England and presented, by his successor to the British Museum.”
The “Library” in which Archibald worked was not a Library like that of modern day. Lending was not its primary function; reading was. Previously, the Library had been staffed by a succession of faculty who had other duties to worry about, so the Library was only open one hour a week for checking out one book at a time.

The Library continued to grow, little by little. In 1827, the trustees reported the small collection had grown to 1,000 volumes. But even as early as the 1850s, students and trustees began asking for a better library facility and voicing their concern over its lack of new volumes. In 1855, the Ohio University Library was described as “small and of the same size as a student room.”

In 1878, the two literary societies’ libraries merged and donated their books respectively to the Ohio University Library. In 1885, in the first official count, there were 7,000 volumes stacked everywhere in a very small space in the College Edifice.

Through the 1880s and 1890s, a slow but steady growth can be charted: 8,000 books in 1890; 12,000 books in 1893; and 15,000 books in 1895. The influx of new materials also increased when OHIO became an official government depository in 1886. The number of library books continued to rise, until they finally outgrew the space.

In the fall of 1901, President Alston Ellis reported to the trustees that the Library of Ohio University “was a fire hazard” (Minutes), and that something had to be done.

Archibald noted that besides the University Library, there were two literary societies composed of students, and each had a valuable collection of books. These libraries were “for the use of their members, [and] together contained about 800 volumes” (VFM 1827).

Those literary society libraries were a big selling point in college catalogs, and for many years, trumpeted as important additions to a student’s tools.

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Pictured are editions of the Ohio University “Circular” for 1882-83 and 1885-86. Designed to give information to prospective students, these publications can provide a wealth of historical data. From the 1882-83 edition, for instance, readers learn that the University’s physical structures consisted of three buildings. “The main building [College Edifice] has been thoroughly remodeled... [and] new and handsome rooms have been provided in it for the library and museum.” By 1885-86, it was written that the “Reading room is supplied with about fifty periodicals—American, English and German...” and that “The united libraries contain over 7,000 volumes.” Then, as now, both the University and its libraries were continuously growing in size and scope.
The use of engraved or printed paper labels to identify an owner and to mark the possession of a book is almost as old as printing itself, beginning around 1470 in Germany. Therefore it was not a new trend when the members of the Athenian Literary Society placed a book plate inside the front cover of each book to make it known that the Athenians were the owners.

The members of the Athenian Literary Society wrote in the 1910 Athena yearbook that “there is no more important part of a student’s education than the ability to use and to express what he has learned.” Their “aspirations” to literary attainments and “desire for true culture” were valued characteristics that contributed to the high standard of the oldest literary society of the “Old Northwest” and made it “a privilege as well as an honor to be an Athenian.”
In the early years of Ohio University, literary societies were a favorite pastime of university students. Two well-known societies, the Athenian and the Philomathean, each had a room in the College Edifice and their own collection of books.

The societies were much like debate teams. Members wrote essays, held speech contests and practiced “recitations,” the primary form of exam of the era, in which a student must stand alone and answer questions on the assigned readings with direct quotes or quick rebuttals.

As a student of Ohio University’s Academy, Archibald G. Brown became a charter member of the first literary society named the Zelothian Society, which later morphed into the Athenian Society. The Athenian began in 1819 and was followed by the Philomathean in 1822. Literary society members had a sense of society pride and could be heard stating their mottos or engaging in their societal yells.

The library room [of the Philomathean Society] was not much more than a dozen feet square; being so near the roof its ceiling had to [be] made slanting and at the back part was so low that a tall man could scarcely stand erect. The books were arranged on shelves placed all around the sides of the room except where the door stood and a small space on the west side occupied by a single half-moon window.

On library day, the librarian shut himself up in this room with an assistant, if one was necessary, and those desiring books presented themselves at the pigeonhole through the door and called for what they wanted. The collection in this famous library embraced about 1,300 volumes.”

With education and competition as the basic literary society values, it was no wonder that each society required its own study and meeting space, which often included a members-only library.

Despite the cramped quarters and borrowing rules, the societies’ library collections were large for the time and very valuable to the students.

The two literary societies’ libraries merged with the University’s Library in 1878, but the societies themselves continued to be active into the early 1900s.

In the University yearbook of 1892 the author of the Athenian Literary Society wrote, “Our work shall have been well done if any reader feels a new thrill of interest and pride, or is moved to investigate what might have been written.”

The legacy of OHIO’s early literary societies lives on today in the University Archives held in the Mahn Center for Archives and Special Collections in Alden Library, a feat that would surely make their members proud.

This decorative book plate found on the inside cover of “An Essay Concerning Human Understanding” by John Locke, published in 1803, marked the property of the Philomathean Society. The merger of the literary societies’ collections with the University Libraries and the evolution of Ohio University Libraries over time are shown by the second and third plates found inside the book cover. It is likely that a “Carnegie Library” plate is concealed under the Chubb Library book plate.
In the late 1800s the members of the Athenian Literary Society ended the tradition of their “members-only” library by agreeing to merge their library collection with the newly established room designated to house the Library of Ohio University. The Society’s “Memoranda of Advantages” expressed the benefits of the agreement in the students’ own words: “A more convenient and pleasant room, with fire, tables, chairs and bookracks; More frequent access to books; … [and] The benefit of, say, $100 worth of new books each year, instead of the number now annually purchased by the Society.”
In the early 1900s, the steel baron Andrew Carnegie was providing money to communities in order to construct libraries. Although libraries of higher education were not his typical investment, a committee from Ohio University convinced him to partially fund a new library building, with the promise that OHIO would guarantee access to the public. This was no hardship as the trustees had, from the beginning, allowed “all students of Law, Physic, or Divinity residing within the Town Plat who have been members of the University for one year, or more, or any Teacher of a school within the above limits” (Minutes) to use the books.

The new Carnegie Library was dedicated on June 14, 1905. It was beautifully constructed: a stained-glass dome allowed natural light to brighten the entrance, and the floor of the second level was made of glass. There was also a vestibule, an area where hats, wraps and umbrellas were left to avoid clutter and distraction in the study areas.

The Carnegie Library was the first to resemble a modern day library. There were circulation privileges, book shelves, government documents and children’s books. With a larger library came a larger variety of rules and systems that were used to manage the use of materials.

Charles Matthews, the first full-time librarian at OHIO, began creating the first card catalog in the first building solely established as an Ohio University Library. The western corridor of the building was soon filled with “files of cards” or a library catalog. It was a new and daunting concept. Students and faculty were expected to browse through drawers and drawers that contained bibliographic cards. Each card represented a book or magazine that was owned by the Ohio University Library.

A pamphlet from Carnegie Library gave an insight into the rules of the day. The “stacks” were open 8 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. but closed earlier on weekends. Fines for overdue books ran as high as 2 cents per day, and a reserve system was already in place for overnight use of specific materials.

As promised to Andrew Carnegie, both OHIO students and Athens residents were welcome in the Library, and even nonresidents could “draw books upon showing satisfactory references” (General Rules).

Despite its beautiful construction and successful library practices, Carnegie was destined to be the shortest lived of Ohio University’s libraries. According to Thomas Hoover’s book, “The History of Ohio University,” Carnegie Library “was in no way fitted for a library. Even when built, it did not begin to house all the volumes belonging to the University.” Hoover continued by writing, “Almost every corner was piled high with important documents.”

Along with the University, the Library of the early 20th century was growing more rapidly than planned. After just 20 years in Carnegie Library, the collection had nearly quadrupled to 72,000, well beyond the planned capacity of the building.

Once again, the Board of Trustees stressed the need for a new library, and this time, the Ohio Legislature agreed.
This architectural sketch reveals the innovations characteristic of the development of the modern library such as the cataloging, reserves and reading rooms. The plan also demonstrates the ultimate inadequacy of the design, featuring a massive rotunda and foyer, which offers little accommodation for library materials. Library buildings of the time tended to feature "blatant architectural excesses... at the expense of the actual purpose of the library" (Jones). The design of Ohio University’s first library building, although impressive to behold, was no exception to this lack of foresight.
In this interior view of Carnegie Library, the library's earliest card catalog sits against a grand marble pillar. The drawers held index cards listing each book in the library's collection using the Dewey Decimal System. “Chosen as being the one used, more perhaps than any other, in modern libraries both public and technical” (Athena 1911), the Dewey Decimal System made it easier for library patrons to pinpoint the location of the books they desired to find on their own.

This pamphlet from 1928 explained the general rules and regulations of Carnegie Library. Many were typical of libraries today, while others may now seem a bit odd, such as “[only] two books at a time may be drawn; one only being fiction” and “bags and satchels for carrying books are prohibited.”
General Charles H. Grosvenor (1833-1917), a Civil War general, lawyer, Ohio House representative and member of the U.S. Congress, had an influential role in the development of the Ohio University Libraries. While serving in Congress, Grosvenor was the primary source of persuasion for the wealthy philanthropic industrialist, Andrew Carnegie, to provide funding for the first stand-alone library building on campus, the Carnegie Library.

Mrs. Louise Currier Grosvenor (1844-1939), wife of General Charles H. Grosvenor, was an avid reader. In her biography she stated, “Our reading consisted of Dickens and Thackeray. I was delighted over [“Tales of the Alhambra.” We read biographies – Washington Irving – Scott, Byron [and] Milton. People haven’t time to read the older works now.”
The Georgian-style architecture of the Edwin Watts Chubb Library, on the northwest corner of the College Green, was completed in 1931 with an ultimate storage capacity of approximately 250,000 volumes.

Included in its amenities were the Children’s Room, which housed a juvenile collection, and the stacks area where thousands of books were available to students and faculty alike.

On the main floor, Chubb Library housed the card catalog, the library office, the Reserve Reading Room, where faculty would have books specific to their classes set aside for student reference, and the Reference Department, which held the majority of the reference materials that were “to be used in the building during the day, but may be removed overnight” (Handbook).

Named for Edwin Watts Chubb, who served Ohio University as a professor, dean, and two-time acting president, Chubb Library eventually featured up-to-date technology with a Xerox machine available for student use and a rentable typewriter for speedy paper writing.

The new library continued to expand over the next 40 years. By the 1960s, however, at 17,500 students, the University had once again outgrown its library.
The Edwin Watts Chubb Library was the second stand-alone home of the Ohio University Libraries’ collections. Spread over two stories were book stacks, current periodicals, special collections and reference rooms where students could sit, read and study. The main library entrance from the College Green opened onto the Libraries’ main level. There, students could access the Reference Department, card catalog, library office and the Reserve Reading Room. However, the Smoking & Study Room and the Pleasure Reading Room on the ground floor were most likely the student-preferred areas of the Library.
Chubb Library was a productive place. Students studied silently and diligently, rarely, if ever, engaging in study groups. Multiple long tables were provided for library patrons in the Reference Room, reading rooms, rare book collection and other areas for individual study and quiet reading during library hours. The Library was open most days from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., a shock to modern-day students who fill the libraries for the frequent all-nighter.

Chubb Library’s “open stack policy” permitted all students, faculty members and residents of Athens to find their own books within the stacks that made up the core of the Library. Located in the stacks were tiny carrels. These small workstations were designated for University graduate students, but if they were unoccupied, all students could use them, as needed.
Prior to the advent of the personal computer and online catalogs such as OHIO’s ALICE, there was the card catalog. Card catalogs consisted of stacked drawers each holding hundreds of 3” x 5” cards. Upon each of these cards, librarians specially trained in cataloging painstakingly typed a wealth of information. In order to facilitate searches, the cards were systematically cross-referenced so that the relevant texts could be located based on any one of several possible starting points—author, subject, title, etc. Although this may now seem very complicated, the physical card catalog was, in its day, a powerful and effective tool in the quest for knowledge. Students are pictured being instructed in the use of the catalog. Also depicted are researchers conducting searches through the card catalog drawers.
The book card is now a thing of the past, but for students using Chubb Library from 1931-1969, it was a necessary step in the library borrowing process. Students, faculty and community members who possessed ID cards were able to borrow circulating library materials for up to two weeks at a time by simply printing their name on the book card in the pocket in the back of the book. The book card, which was kept on file in the Library during the period in which the book was checked out, allowed librarians and students alike to know who had the book and when it would be returned. Renewals were permitted as long as the student presented the volume in person. Renewal services and multiple checkouts proved useful for students like R.B. Westbrook who, as shown on the book card, checked out the book “Advertising Production Methods” by Albert W. Dippy at least three times.
A student engrossed in a reading project, his ruler ready at hand, ca. 1950s-1960s.
A class is held in Wolfe Garden, outside the fourth floor entrance of Alden Library in 1970.
When Vernon R. Alden came to Ohio University as its 15th president in 1962, he hoped to lead Ohio University to a “New Frontier” of excellence and national prominence in order to meet the needs of a student body that was expected to climb to 26,000 within the decade.

In 1963, a study by the Ohio Board of Regents showed that academic libraries in “Illinois and Michigan had about a third more basic requirements—[and] the state-assisted schools in Ohio about a third less. Ohio University was next to the bottom of the list with a 37% deficiency.”

In response, President Alden’s administration made the construction of a new library a priority over all other building needs for the University.

“We had to replace a couple of buildings, [Boyd Hall, a women’s dormitory and the old women’s gym on Park Place] and that was a bit controversial because we wanted the Library to be in a central location,” said Alden.

At seven stories high and as long as a football field, the Vernon R. Alden Library finally opened its doors May 23, 1969, beginning a new chapter in Ohio University Libraries.

In 1996, Ohio University Libraries earned its place among an elite group of major university and research libraries in the United States and in Canada as a member of the prestigious Association of Research Libraries (ARL).

Thanks to technology, and the ever-increasing emphasis that the Libraries is placing on shared resources, nowhere does the old blend with the new quite so seamlessly as in Alden Library.

As in the past, quiet study spaces still remain in Alden, but currently, the most heavily used areas of the building are collaborative workspaces. With the opening of the Learning Commons, a student-oriented and technology-enriched environment in 2004, the Library’s hours extended to 24 hours a day, 5 days a week in addition to its regular hours.

In 2010, the Libraries’ collections grew to 3 million items—ranking Ohio University as the 64th largest library in North America.

Alden Library fills many niches for many different researchers’ needs and creates a comfortable place for Ohio University students, faculty and community members to research, to study and to collaborate—day or night.

Though buildings, students, and times have changed since the first Library of Ohio University in 1814, OHIO’s Libraries has continued to set the intellectual tone of the campus and continued to contribute to the outstanding quality of education that the University offers.
At 17,500 students, the University had outgrown Chubb, which housed the Library since 1931. The Vernon R. Alden Library, seven stories high, opened on May 23, 1969 to begin a new chapter in the Ohio University Libraries’ history. Designed by the Cleveland firm Dalton Dalton Associates to meet the needs of the future, the big, airy Library expanded three years later, in 1972, with the building of the east and west wings. The attached floor plans feature the layout of the building prior to 1972.

Alden Floor Plan
In 1969, a student prepared for rain leaves Alden Library from the fourth floor entrance prior to the addition of the east and west wings in 1972.

Ohio University President Charles J. Ping (center) and Dean of Libraries Hwa-Wei Lee (right) look over a selection of Chinese books that were donated to the University Libraries, 1981.
Two students talk while sitting at a study carrel inside Alden, November 1979.

Students using the Libraries' resources, 1980.
The Computer Center at Ohio University’s Alden Library, 1982.

A student studies among stacked reference books, ca. mid-1990s.
A popular reading area for students was the newsprint section on the fourth floor of Alden, 1995.

DOS (Disk Operating Systems) computers, the first widely installed operating system for personal computers with a relatively simple interface, were used in the Libraries, ca. mid-1990s.
A female student uses a computer station in Alden Library. The image was captured for the 25th Anniversary of Alden Library in 1994.

Dean of Libraries Hwa-Wei Lee with barcode scanner in Ohio University's Alden Library, which led up to the launch of the ALICE online catalog in 1983.
A student approaches the Vernon R. Alden Library on October 27, 2009.
A reference and instruction librarian helps a junior in marketing use an Internet research database during an English 151 class for international students on September 28, 2011. At left: juniors in communication studies.
Sophomores in accounting study together before a final on the third floor of Alden Library on December 5, 2012.
Students study in the second floor Learning Commons in Alden Library on Tuesday morning, November 17, 2009.
A student does genealogy research inside the Mahn Center on the fifth floor of Alden Library on May 13, 2009.

A freshman in accounting talks on the phone with her boyfriend in China outside Alden Library on Friday afternoon, September 17, 2010.
A freshman in French education and a freshman in psychology study in the first floor stairwell of Alden Library on Thursday morning, September 23, 2010.

A freshman reads outside Alden Library on Thursday afternoon, September 30, 2010.
A senior in education and a freshman in psychology study inside the Libraries’ Café Bibliotech on Tuesday afternoon, October 8, 2013.
A Ph.D. student in instructional technology studies for final exams in the early morning hours of Thursday, November 18, 2010 on the second floor of Alden Library.

3,000,000th

*The Athena*. Athens, 1893.


Hall, Frederick. *Letters from the East and from the West*. Washington: F. Taylor, etc., 1840.


(MSS 09) Manasseh Cutler Collection, Mahn Center, Ohio University Libraries.

(MSS 51) Athens County Pioneer Association Collection, Mahn Center, Ohio University Libraries.


Topical Files, Mahn Center, Ohio University Libraries.

(VFM 1818-1827) Vertical File Manuscripts, Mahn Center, Ohio University Libraries.


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