

# The Books Which Moved . . . Libraries

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If you recall a previous article on this austere subject (and you just might, at that) you will remember that the point was that SOME books DO change things. This is not, after all, so very surprising when you recall that God speaks to us through the medium of a Book. It is not just a teacher's prejudice that "books matter." Though this is a long step from saying how many books matter, and how these are best mastered.

## A Simple But Important Book

■ BUT the book which forms the second half of this series is just a human document, published in a small edition, privately by the authors. It is paper-bound, of less than 100 pages. The authors had it mimeographed in 1948 perhaps because no publisher was interested in it.

An interesting thesis subject might be the investigation of just how many important books started out this way: small, unattractive as business ventures, pushed hopefully into the world by someone who could not help wanting to be heard a little. As with men, so with books, the race is not always to the swift nor the battle to the strong. Take courage from it.

But as to this book: the authors were a librarian, Ralph Ellsworth, and an architect, Donald Bean. Their book was entitled *Modular Planning for College and Small University Libraries*.

The book is now out of print, but you can get a copy from University Microfilms, Ann Arbor, where it is produced from film by Xerography — process we will discuss sometime soon — at \$3.90. Most of the important books are like that: not very expensive to buy; but they take some reading often enough, before their real riches will out. But this is a simple book.

## Modular Planning

■ THE AUTHORS discuss a way of building, called *modular*. One way to understand it is this: supposing all of the walls in your home were removed, what would happen? Well, the second floor would drop down hard on your head. And the first floor would descend with some haste into the basement. And so, then, would you.

But supposing that a certain number of pillars began at the basement floor and went right on up through the house to the roof. And suppose that the floors and the roof were so made that they were supported by these pillars. If you used modern construction materials, the pillars could be 20 or 30 feet apart,

and could still carry each floor. And if you made the floors strong enough, you could then run the partitions for your rooms wherever you wanted them. What is more, when you tired of the room arrangement which you had, someone could move many of the partitions around until the living room was twice as large as before, and so on. You couldn't move every wall because stairways and plumbing facilities would be pretty well fixed. But if the heating ducts and the water pipes and the electric wires ran through the pillars on the floors you would have lots of freedom. You would call the partitions *curtains*, if you wished; and they would be *movable curtains because* the pillars carried all the weight of floors, roof, and utilities.

Well, that's modular planning. A building is so constructed that pillars carry the floors, services, and roof. This leaves the use of any floor entirely free choice, with the exception of stairways and other fixtures not so conveniently shifted about. You put in a wall of wood, or of tile, or — as they have done in the Pius XII Library at Saint Louis — even of marble; and, when necessary, down comes the wall for moving to another place. And in a matter of days, they say, all trace of the old room arrangement is gone; the new arrangement looks as if it had been there always; and the cost is surprisingly small.

## Libraries Grow by Leaps and Bounds

■ NOW, if you *really do* remember the previous article, you recall that Mr. Rider had shown that libraries grow by leaps and bounds in an effort to keep up with knowledge and the printing presses.

And, if *now* you put these two books together — Rider's and the one by Ellsworth and Bean — you soon get "four."

Build a library on the modular plan. Put in temporary walls for classrooms and other uses until the growth of the book collection requires the extra space, and then — one by one — take down the walls and let the books take over.

This is what Ellsworth and Bean said.

And by now hardly a library building out of all the dozens which are springing up all over the country is constructed in any other than the modular manner.

"Modular," by the way, comes from the word "module." And "module" is simply the area bounded by any four pillars, or some sub-division of that area.

In this manner two books moved the library world.

## New Calvin Library on Modular Principle

■ FOLLOWING in their steps the Calvin College and Seminary Library is being planned on the modular principle. Classrooms can occupy space enclosed by walls which later can simply be removed. Not only so, but as Ellsworth and Bean pointed out, book stacks and study areas can be moved and changed just as often as experience suggests the necessity of doing so. The pillars can be attractively decorated — in St. Louis they are covered with mosaic. They can carry prints and pictures, and they can be so enveloped by book stacks and screens that unless you are told to look for them, you will not know you are in a modular building at all.

It is no dream that a *library-classroom* building can be erected. The books suggested it, and now hundreds of buildings demonstrate it. We plan it with enthusiasm for the new Knollcrest Campus.

## Dusk

Bertha Prince Vander Ark

*It gently draws its curtain o'er  
The shining scenes of day,  
And gradually familiar things  
In darkness fade away.*

*'Tis almost imperceptible.  
The coming on of night,  
As shadows spread across the sky,  
Extinguishing earth's light.*

*Victoriously it settles down  
And lights a candle bright—  
A shining star illuminates  
The blackness of the night.*

Chicago, Ill.