

The Librarian presented his report as follows:

In compliance with the requirements of our by-laws, I now lay before you my report for the year 1894.

Before proceeding to the work of the library for the past twelve months, it will not be out of place for me to refer briefly to the general scope and purpose of a public library.

As a social institution the modern library is a development from its predecessors. In early times the idea obtained that a library was for the storing and preservation of books for the use of scholars, not an institution for the dissemination of knowledge.

It was not until after the Reformation that the idea dawned that a library should be for the use and good of the general public, that people might become better educated and more capable of guiding themselves in social and political duties. To Franklin more than to any man in the country do we owe the origin of this idea. Through him was established in 1732 the Philadelphia Library Co., the first subscription library on this continent; and from this the moderns public library, catering to many, not the few, maybe be said to have sprung.

In 1847 Mayor Josiah Quincy of Boston, made a proposition to the City Council, that they ask the Legislature for permission to lay a tax to establish and maintain a library. The request was granted, and this was the first movement of the kind in any country. Other states soon followed the example of Massachusetts so that to-day there are few not having special library laws. There are in Massachusetts at the present time over 200 libraries, having 2,000,000 volumes, with a growing tendency towards such administration. We shall make the books accessible to all with a view to more general utility.

Mr. Ticknor who was instrumental in shaping the policy of the Boston public library at its inception shows that he saw clearly what the library of the future would be, when in 1851, writing to Edward Everett he said "I would establish a library which differs from all free libraries yet attempted. I mean one in which any popular books, tending to moral and intellectual improvements shall be furnished in such numbers of copies that many persons can be reading the same books at the same time; in short, not only the best books of all sorts, but the pleasant literature of the day, shall be made accessible to the whole people, when they most care for it, that is, when it is fresh and new. I would thus, by following the popular taste—unless it should demand something injurious—create an appetite for healthy reading. This appetite once formed, will take care of itself. It will in the great majority of cases demand better and better books."

These words written more than forty years ago, state the principle on which the free library system of our time is based.

Mr. Fletcher in his admirable little book "Public Libraries in America" notes four distinct steps in library legislation.

1st. The act of incorporation of society libraries.

2nd. The legislation establishing district school libraries, which were instituted in some twenty-one states beginning with New York in 1835.

3rd. Township libraries supported by taxation.

4th. State aid to libraries – the law granting such aid was passed in 1890 by the Massachusetts legislature. The law also provides for a commission of five persons appointed by the governor to advance library interests in this state. Towns accepting the provisions of the law are entitled to certain funds from the state treasury. Now that these four steps have been taken, each an advance over what preceded, it is believed that at no distant day, every town in the commonwealth, by legislative enactment, will be obliged not only to establish but to support a free library, except town provided for through private benefaction.

Such are some of the facts connected with the evolution and growth of the library system in America. Surely such marvelous results could not have been attained had not the library as an institution filled a deep want in the moral and intellectual life of the people.

Circulation: -- the library is now entering upon its third year of active operations under most encouraging circumstances. The past twelve months have witnessed a growing interest on the part of the town's people, and from the phenomenal circulation of books we may judge that the library has succeeded in satisfying the popular desire.

Readers may be grouped into two classes, those who read for amusement, and those who read for instruction; and perhaps it is not going too far in saying that the former end is just as legitimate as the latter; for it is no small service that literature renders when it lifts us into another region of ideas away from the hum-drum and tedium of everyday existence, even if it is not to us the instrument of mental enlargement.

It may be seen from appendix A. that in every department there has been a substantial increase in the number of books taken, which amounted to 51,991 during the year.

One of the most significant and pleasing features of the work is the very large extent to which the young people of the town are using the books, not only for entertainment but for instruction. In the public schools to-day subjects are studied rather than text-books, and this makes it important that both teaches and pupils should have access to a larger collection of books than can be provided for the schoolroom. It has not been an uncommon sight to see from five to fifteen pupils from the public schools in our reference-room during the noon recess, looking up some special subject that has been assigned them, and this practice of browsing among the books, and finding out for themselves what has been written, will be of much benefit to them in after years. The library and reading room ought to supplement the work of the public schools, by furnishing pupils the means of extending their studies and of broadening their views. The taste, the moral tone of a community may be raised by the mere presence in its midst of a treasure-house like this of good books. Of the 51,991 volumes given out last year from forty-five to forty-eight thousand circulated in Fairhaven. It may be interesting to know that the largest number given out on any day of the year, was 307 on Saturday, April 14th. The next largest was one week later, on Saturday, Feb. 10th, [sic] when 300 were given out. 240, 249, 259 were given out on April 21st, Jan. 13th and Feb. 3rd, respectively.

The smallest number given out was 48 on Wednesday, July 4th, 70 on Wednesday April 4, 72 on Wednesday May 30th, 82 on Thursday Feb. 22nd, and 87 on Wednesday April 8th.

The average for the year was 142. 79 per cent of the whole circulation was fiction, a small decrease in comparison with 1893. in speaking of the large circulation of fiction in our public libraries Mr. Fletcher says "To the masses of people, hard worked as well as those lapped in luxury and pining for something to kill time, the novel comes as an open door into an ideal life in the enjoyment of which, even in fancy, one may forget the hardships of real life. This craving for the romance of literature which is missed from life will be met in some way; it is the province of the public library to meet it with a supply which is wholesome and ennobling in order that it may not turn to other sources furnishing only that which degrades or is lacking in good influence."

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	General works.	Philosophy.	Religion.	Sociology.	Philology.	Natural science.	Useful arts.	Fine Arts	
Jan.	66	20	42	36	2	46	153	108	+
Feb.	97	24	64	49	6	73	146	88	+
March	141	22	56	35	2	63	132	131	+
April	150	21	47	24	5	59	114	89	+
May	128	14	34	22	3	38	83	65	+
June	117	11	27	26	0	56	69	68	+
July	106	14	30	20	3	39	67	52	+
Aug.	134	7	25	35	6	25	78	51	+
Sept.	118	15	41	30	7	35	55	54	+
Oct.	104	11	45	22	2	31	63	60	+
Nov.	163	13	45	34	5	40	69	70	+
Dec.	160	14	47	34	3	58	76	73	+
	1484	186	503	367	44	563	1105	889	

	8	9			
	Literature.	History.	Biography.	Fiction.	Circulation by months.
Jan.	121	321	119	3823	4857
Feb.	104	327	111	3802	4891
Mar.	114	356	133	4171	5356
April	89	258	111	3642	4589
May	92	213	84	3095	3871
June	99	194	78	3183	3928
July	76	190	94	3182	3873
Aug.	87	185	95	3213	3941
Sept.	83	204	103	3058	3805
Oct.	105	251	55	3542	4091
Nov.	143	315	81	5336	4512
Dec.	160	361	99	3394	4479
	1273	3173	1163	41241	

Total circulation, 51,991.

Accessions. During the year 1129 volumes were added to the library, 925 by purchase; 204 by donation. It has been the aim to furnish the latest and best books in the varied fields of science, literature and art. Among the more important purchases may be mentioned "Character Sketches of Romance, Fiction and the Drama," 4v.; "Memorial history of Boston," 4v.; "The Riverside Natural History," 6 v.; "Book of the Fair," 5v. Among the donations may be mentioned "The Library of American Literature," 11v., presented by Mr. W. E. Benjamin; 20v, presented by Mrs. B. F. Duff and added to the Duff collection in the Trustee's room; 15 v. in French presented by Miss Clara Bennett of New Bedford. The School Committee turned over to the library in Oct. 50 v. from the Rogers School. These books were presented some years ago to the school by Mr. Charles Lancaster.

In catering to the popular demand for books the Book Committee and Librarian have never lost sight of the fact that they are required to exercise and accept full responsibility for the moral character and influence of the library.

Class	No. added during 1894
0. General Works,	53
1. Philosophy,	6
2. Religion,	23
3. Sociology,	62
4. Philology,	4
5. Natural Science,	36
6. Useful Arts,	35
7. Fine Arts,	51
8. Literature,	120
9. History & Travel,	119
Biography,	58
Fiction,	530
	<hr/>
	1097
Duff Collection,	27
Not numbered,	5
Total,	1129

There are 10164 volumes now in the library.

Registration. During the year 467 persons have applied for cards, making a total of 2204 on Jan. 1st. 403 are held by non-residents. Owing to the large numbers of cards now out the coming year is not likely to show any great increase.

Re-Binding. A large circulation involves considerable wear and tear of books. As the library grows older the expense of keeping the books in repair will gradually increase. During the year 1894 331 books were sent to the bindery, and the sum of \$121.43 paid on this account.

Additional Privileges Granted. A radical change in the rules of the library was made in Sept. last when the public were given free access to the shelves of the stack-room with the privilege of removing the books for inspection. This has added to the educational influence of the library and with few exceptions the privilege has not been abused. The practicability of such a step has been much discussed in library circles and in most places the privilege is still denied; but the tendency is towards greater freedom and the best library of the future will be the one having the fewest restrictions, consistent with the care of the property it may possess.

An additional privilege has also been granted teachers in the public schools in allowing ten books on each school card instead of four. This is another step in the right direction and is undoubtedly appreciated.

Book-Lists. Many patrons desire to select their books at home. To meet the case of such I have from time to time printed lists in the Fairhaven Star, also on leaflets. These have been distributed gratuitously. As the lists are first put into type for the paper, there is only small extra charge for leaflets.

Cataloguing. The work in this department has been carried forward as rapidly as possible with the time that could be devoted to it. All fiction to the letter K. has been catalogued by authors and titles. The printed cards from the Library Bureau have greatly facilitated the work.

With thankful recognition of the kind advice and assistance given by members of different committees I have the honor to be

Very respectfully,  
(Signed) D. C. Stevens,  
Librarian.

It was voted that the report of the Librarian be accepted and recorded.