

**A DECIMAL SYSTEM FOR  
THE ARRANGEMENT AND  
ADMINISTRATION OF  
LIBRARIES**

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A decimal system for the arrangement and administration of libraries by Nathaniel B. Shurtleff

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**NATHANIEL B. SHURTLEFF**

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# DECIMAL SYSTEM

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OF

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NATHANIEL B. SHURTLEFF.

- Ut primum -

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THIS  
MEMOIR  
OF  
A DECIMAL SYSTEM FOR LIBRARIES  
IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED TO  
JOSHUA BATES, ESQUIRE, OF LONDON,  
THE FRIEND AND BENEFACTOR,  
WHO  
BY TIMELY AND MUNIFICENT ENDOWMENTS  
HAS ESTABLISHED ON A FIRM AND PERMANENT BASIS  
THE PUBLIC LIBRARY  
OF THE  
CITY OF BOSTON,  
IN WHICH  
THE SYSTEM HAS BEEN  
DEVELOPED AND DEMONSTRATED.

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## P R E F A C E.

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THE following remarks on the subject of libraries are not written to present a new theory. They are intended only to be descriptive of a system which the writer has introduced into the Public Library of the City of Boston, with the approbation of his co-laborers in the Board of Trustees, and which has been in practical operation there since the summer of 1852.

The Trustees of the Library, from the establishment of the Board until the present time, having intrusted him with making "all arrangements and regulations needful for circulating the books and using the library," he has had the opportunity of originating from the very commencement the arrangement and working machinery of a large library, which exhibits a fair promise of extending its usefulness in the most liberal manner for the benefit of a great community of readers. Having, in consequence, informed himself of the various modes of arrangement and management of the principal libraries, and having perceived in them what he considered many and great defects, he was led to perfect a library system which he had elsewhere

introduced to a limited extent, and adapt it to the wants of a large public library. The result of the attempt may be learned from the following pages, and may be witnessed in successful operation in the Public Library above named.

As chairman of various committees it fell to him to propose, not only the system of arrangement hereinafter described, and which he believes to be new; but the method of preparing the library for use, which, although some of its details may have been practised before, is original in its routine; and also the general administration of the library, including the internal arrangements of the edifice, and the various operations for conducting the several departments, which also is prominent among the peculiarities of the library in Boston.

And, as the remarks are chiefly written to elucidate the system and furnish the necessary directions in carrying it out where it has already been adopted, and not in making it extensively known, indulgence is asked for the concise manner, and perhaps too abrupt style, in which they are submitted.

Boston, *May*, 1856.

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