

**FREE LIBRARIES AND
NEWSROOMS:
THEIR FORMATION
AND MANAGEMENT**

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Free Libraries and Newsrooms: Their Formation and Management by J. D. Mullins

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J. D. MULLINS

**FREE LIBRARIES AND
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ESTABLISHED 1816.

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CHIEF LIBRARIAN BIRMINGHAM FREE LIBRARIES.

[Read at the Meeting of the National Association for the Promotion
of Social Science at Birmingham, 1868.]

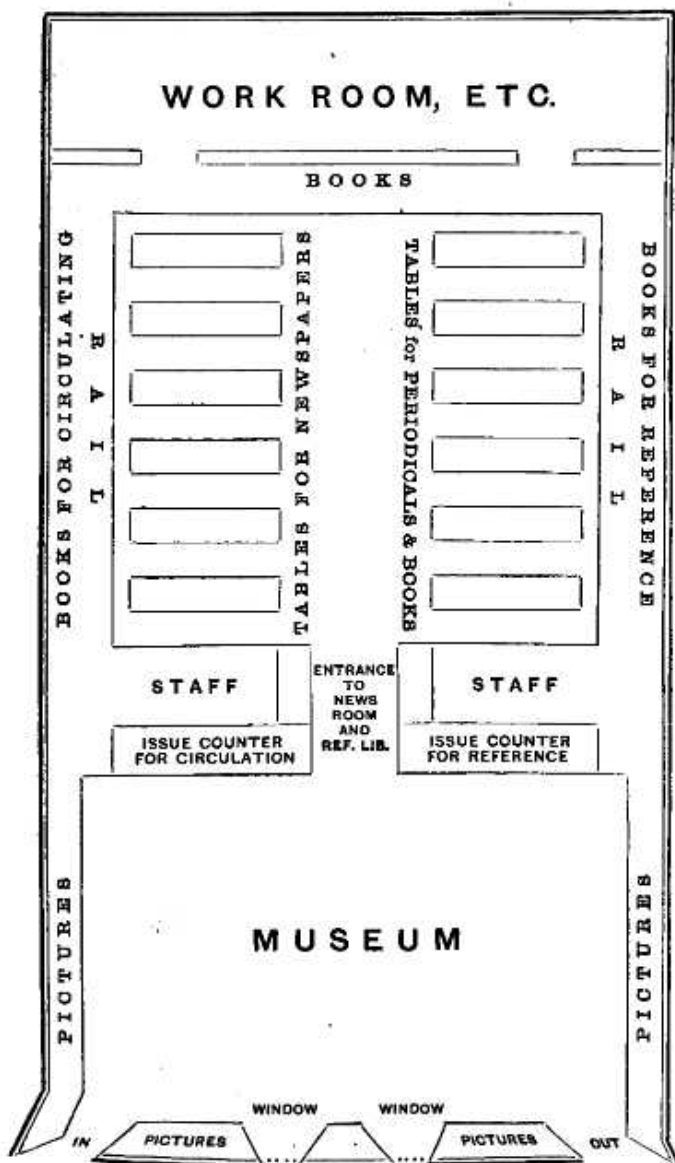
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1879.



P R E F A C E.

The writer has for some time past been constantly receiving applications from various parts of the country for particulars as to the Formation and Management of Free Libraries. A strong desire for their extension, as well as courtesy to the persons applying, have compelled him to write various letters, giving information and advice to the best of his ability. The following pages are simply a summary of these letters. There is a great need for an able popular Manual on the subject: for this he regrets that he has neither the time nor the power. These notes are published in the hope that some more competent person may be induced to prepare a more complete and valuable guide to the foundation and management of the greatest educational machinery of our age.

SUMMARY OF CONTENTS.

Necessity for Free Libraries and Newsrooms. Endowed Libraries. Subscription Libraries. Parochial Libraries. The Free Libraries Act and its Author. The adoption of the Act by Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham, etc. How are these Institutions Worked, and how are they Used? Newsrooms: their Uses. List of Papers, Periodicals, etc. Danger of introducing Denominational Papers. The Lending Libraries: their Use; character of Books suitable for them. The Reference Department: its Use. How to get the Act adopted. Style of Building for a Library, etc. Plan for small Towns of a Library, Newsroom, and Museum in one Chamber. How to Catalogue Libraries for Popular Use. Free Libraries, etc. for London. Free Libraries, etc. for small Towns and Villages.

APPENDIX I. The Free Libraries Acts and Amendments.

1. "Public Libraries Act [Ireland], 1855."
 2. "Public Libraries Act, 1855," [England].
 3. "Public Libraries Amendment Act [England and Scotland], 1866."
 4. "Public Libraries Act [Scotland], 1867."
 5. "Public Libraries Act [Scotland, 1867], Amendment Act, 1871."
 6. "Public Libraries Act [1855] Amendment Act, 1871" [England].
 7. "Public Libraries Amendment Act, 1877" [England, Scotland, and Ireland].
 8. "Malicious Injuries to Property Act, 1861," Section 39 [England and Ireland].
- " II. Rules, Regulations, and Forms for Free Libraries.
- " III. Copy of Requisition calling Meeting.
- " IV. Copy of Resolutions passed at Meeting.
- " V. List of Books suitable for Free Libraries.

NOTE.—The original Free Libraries' Act, 1850, is not reprinted here, as it is rescinded.

Free Libraries and Newsrooms.

FOR many years the United Kingdom has possessed in its various divisions Libraries easy of access to men of taste and learning. Some few of these have been called FREE LIBRARIES; that is to say, no money has been taken for admission to them, but usually some such introduction or recommendation has been required as has served as a barrier to the common people, and indeed to all but very earnest and persevering students. Other Libraries have been accessible on terms of subscription apparently suitable to all classes, but on an inquiry as to the number and condition of the persons using all the Literary Institutions known, it was found that they formed but a marvellously small part of the population, and that the great mass of the people, who stood most in need of information, were not reached.

Some men thought that there was nothing to be done in such a case but to leave ill alone, especially as interference meant expense. To others it appeared that wholesome reading and thought made much of the difference between the brutish and mischievous and the intelligent and useful of mankind; and that it might really be the truest thrift, as well as the noblest generosity, to carry the pleasures of learning and the influence of literature to those who did not care to come to them. It was thought to be not unlikely that what was spent on Free Libraries and Newsrooms might be saved in Workhouses and Gaols; and so the experiment was tried. The people had been mourned over and denounced for haunting this and that improper place for recreation—~~de-~~

nounced and mourned over in vain—until it occurred to some one that perhaps it might be worth while to provide something pleasant and good as a counter-attraction. The jaded merchant, the harassed tradesman, and the tired student, usually have the grateful change of pleasant homes, the various resources of society, of art, of music, and the like; the poorer classes, with similar capacity for pleasure, have no such provision; there are very seldom quiet rooms at home where they can read, even if they could get acceptable books.

Attempts to found and support Free Libraries by subscription have been made, but have met with little success. Such movements have had the brand of charity upon them, which has been to many an insuperable hindrance to their use. They have usually been sustained, too, by a party; and the style of the books and periodicals provided has been too often eminently parochial. The clergy and gentry of the neighbourhood have kindly given such books of their own as they did not particularly care to keep, and with a few purchases of works "proper for working people," the Library has consisted of the "Life of Colonel Gardiner," Doddridge's "Rise and Progress," "Alleine's "Alarm," the "Anxious Enquirer," the "Dairyman's Daughter," Pinnock's Catechisms, some volumes of the "Mother's Magazine," a few "Annual Registers," and a choice collection of funeral sermons. Now, without for one moment disparaging the excellent works named, or the class of which they are typical, it is really no wonder that Libraries of the kind described, kept in some church or chapel school-room by an occasional Librarian, have not been largely used. Let it be distinctly understood that no sneer is here intended at the kindly efforts which have been made to found Parish Libraries; but their promoters have admitted that they have been used rather by the better class of their people, who, having books, etc., of their own, could have done very well without the Library, and have failed to attract, to any considerable extent, the persons for whom they were specially intended.

There are some very noble traits in the character of the