

**HAND-BOOK TO THE NEW
YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY,
ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS**

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Hand-book to the New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations by Various

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**HAND-BOOK TO THE NEW
YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY,
ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS**

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HAND BOOK

TO THE

NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY,

ASTOR, LENOX AND TILDEN FOUNDATIONS.

NEW YORK

1900.

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REGULATIONS.

The Astor Building, 40 Lafayette Place, and the Lenox Building, Fifth Avenue and 70th Street, are open daily, excepting on Sundays, Independence Day, Christmas, and New Year, from 9 A. M. until 6 P. M.

The Reading rooms and the Exhibition rooms are free to all persons; but children under the age of fifteen years must be accompanied by adult.

In the Reading room of each Library Building certain shelves are set apart for books of reference, which readers are allowed to take down and examine at their pleasure. For all others an application must be made by filling out and signing one of the blanks provided for the purpose.

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I.

HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION, WITH
STATISTICS.

The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations, was formed by the consolidation, on the 23d of May, 1895, of the three corporations, "The Trustees of the Astor Library," originally incorporated January 18, 1849, "The Trustees of the Lenox Library," originally incorporated January 20, 1870, and "The Tilden Trust," originally incorporated March 26, 1887.

The consolidation was effected under the provisions of Chapter 541 of the Laws of 1892, as amended by Chapter 209 of the Laws of 1895.

In the agreement for consolidation it was provided that the name of the new corporation should be "The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations"; that the number of its trustees should be twenty-one, to be selected from the thirty-three members of the separate boards; and that "the said new corporation shall establish and maintain a free public library and reading room in the City of New York, with such branches as may be deemed advisable, and shall continue and promote the several objects and purposes set forth in the

respective acts of incorporation of 'The Trustees of the Astor Library,' 'The Trustees of the Lenox Library,' and 'The Tilden Trust.'"

The first meeting of the trustees of the new corporation was held May 27, 1895. The remainder of the year was taken up largely with discussion of problems relative to the business organization and future policy of the new corporation. In December, Dr. John Shaw Billings, U. S. A. (retired), was chosen Director, but he did not enter fully upon his duties until June, 1896. The general policy determined on is set forth in the succeeding section relative to the future of the library and the new building, on page 58.

At the time of the consolidation the Astor library owned its site and buildings, had an endowment fund of about \$941,000, producing an annual income of about \$47,000, and contained 267,147 volumes. The Lenox library owned its site and building, had an endowment fund of \$505,500, producing an annual income of \$20,500, and contained about 86,000 volumes. The Tilden Trust possessed Mr. Tilden's private library, containing about 20,000 volumes, and an endowment fund estimated at \$2,000,000, making the total number of volumes in the New York Public Library 373,147, and the total endowment fund about \$3,446,500.

Since that time the annual accessions to the library, by purchase and by gift, have been at

the rate of 26,000 volumes and 25,000 pamphlets, and the joint libraries now contain about 500,000 volumes and 175,000 pamphlets. Of these about 350,000 volumes and 100,000 pamphlets are in the Astor building, and 150,000 volumes and 75,000 pamphlets are in the Lenox building. Statistics of the number of volumes in various departments are given in the chapter on "Special Collections," page 56.

Certain departments have the benefit of special endowments; thus a fund was given by Mr. Jacob H. Schiff for the purchase of Semitic literature; a fund known as the "James Owen Proudfit Fund" is devoted to works on naval history; and the "Richard L. Dugdale Fund" to works on sociology and economics.

Even at the time of consolidation the shelving in both the Astor and the Lenox libraries was insufficient and overcrowded, many of the shelves being double banked; since that time over 30,000 feet, or six miles, of shelving have been added, being placed in the available rooms, and filling up most of the alcoves at the Astor building.

Electric light has been introduced into both library buildings, and the hours of opening, which were formerly from ten A.M. to four P.M., have been extended, and are now from nine A.M. to six P.M.

The number of readers during the calendar year 1899, was 115,426, and the number of vol-