

The John Crerar Library

a brief historical perspective

Randolph St. 1921 - 1961



Contention with the City of Chicago, about a permanent location in Grant Park lead to the construction of a new building on the northwest corner of Randolph Street and

Michigan Avenue. Planning was interrupted by WWI, delaying building until 1919. The library finally moved into the new space in 1920 and reopened in May 1921 with seven stack floors, two reading rooms, and commercial space.



John Crerar Library 1984-present

A merger agreement signed in 1981 allowed for a new building to be constructed on the University of Chicago campus "to insure the continuity of a great intellectual and cultural treasure, a uniquely dimensioned resource of scientific, technical, and medical information ready for use by the citizens of Chicago and of the world at large. This new organization has offered bright opportunities for higher levels of service using rapidly changing technologies.

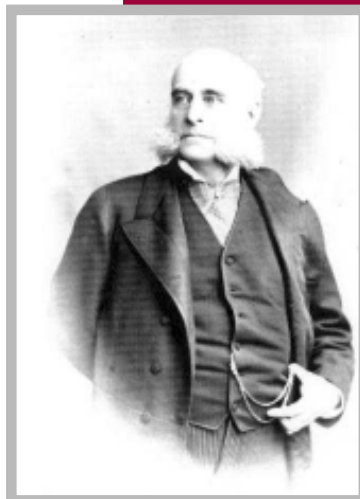
Marshall Field Annex 1897 - 1920

CREATION—The John Crerar Library was first opened at the Marshall Field Annex, located on the corner of Wabash and Washington streets. This library was served by a staff of 22 and contained around 11,000 volumes and 171 journals. User complaints (something no library should be without) included requests for a Bible and works of Shakespeare.



Illinois Institute of Technology 1962-1984

The Crerar Library was contracted to provide library service for the Illinois Institute of Technology. This new library was housed in a new, \$2 million building designed in the modern style by Skidmore, Owning, and Merrill. With this new location, Crerar Library added a "built-in" constituency to its user group; although college students, and particularly IIT students, frequented the Randolph Street Library. The new building also provided greater space to display collections while still maintaining a considerable amount of material in closed stacks.



Mr. Crerar (1827-1889) was born in New York City of parents who had migrated from Scotland. At the age of 18 he entered the iron importing business, and in 1862 he moved to Chicago to operate a railway supply company, Crerar, Adams & Co. His financial success was immediate and he quickly became one of the city's leading businessmen. Mr. Crerar was actively involved in a wide range of civic and philanthropic activities during the remainder of his life. A large portion of his estate was left "for the erection, creation, maintenance and endowment of a free public library."