

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property**DRAFT**Historic name: Los Angeles County Law LibraryOther names/site number: LA Law Library and Mildred L. Lillie BuildingName of related multiple property listing: N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. LocationStreet & number: 301 W. 1st StreetCity or town: Los Angeles State: California County: Los AngelesNot For Publication: ☐ Vicinity: ☐**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this ___ nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___national ___statewide ___local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

___A ___B ___C ___D

Signature of certifying official/Title:**Date**_____
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official:**Date**_____
Title :_____
**State or Federal agency/bureau
or Tribal Government**

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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- ☐ entered in the National Register
☐ determined eligible for the National Register
☐ determined not eligible for the National Register
☐ removed from the National Register
☐ other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private: ☐
Public – Local ☐
Public – State ☒
Public – Federal ☐

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s) ☒
District ☐
Site ☐
Structure ☐
Object ☐

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	buildings
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	sites
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	structures
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

EDUCATION/library

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

EDUCATION/library

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT: Late Moderne

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Concrete, Stone

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The Los Angeles County Law Library occupies a rectangular shaped property on 1st Street between Hill Street and Broadway in downtown Los Angeles. The library building is part of a grouping of government buildings organized along a mall that comprise the Los Angeles Civic Center. The Late Moderne style building includes an original portion on the south completed in 1953 and an addition on the north completed in 1971. The building is multi-storied with an irregular plan that reflects its internal uses. The various rectangular volumes range from two to six stories in height. The building is of reinforced concrete construction with flat roofs over short spans and steel-truss roofs over long spans. Flat parapet walls surround the roofs and define the volumes. The exterior is architectural concrete that has been painted and features a granite base, ceramic panels along Broadway on the east, and exposed aggregate concrete panels facing the mall on the north and Hill Street on the west. The property also contains a noncontributing utilitarian parking garage on the west completed in 1971. Minimally altered, the library building retains historic integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. The integrity of setting has been lost as the original landscaping was replaced and a new plaza was created after the period of significance.

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Narrative Description

Setting

The Los Angeles Law Library is a multi-story building that is inset into the northwesterly slope of the Civic Center mall. The Los Angeles County Courthouse is located across Hill Street to the west and the U.S. Courthouse is located across 1st Street to the south. The parcel to the east across Broadway is under development as a public park. To the north is a driveway to the subterranean parking garage for the Civic Center mall. There is a substantial grade change of approximately 45 feet from the upper northwest corner to the lower southeast corner of the property, which masks the true height of the building. The broad setting of the building includes mature *Ficus retusa* trees planted by the library on 1st Street in 1961. The immediate setting was redesigned in 2012 and includes a plaza with raised planters and beds at grade on the south and landscaping on the east and north.

Library

Contributing Building

Exterior

Constructed in two phases, the 1953 portion of the building consists of a six-story volume on the south, a two-story volume to the east, and double-height volume to the north. The building is set back from 1st Street on the south and Broadway on the east. The six-story 1971 addition is located on the north and is set back from the Civic Center mall. A driveway on Broadway leads to a receiving area within the lower level of the original portion of the building and as well as a semi-circular ramp to the two levels of parking under the addition.

All of the exterior walls are architectural concrete with deep joints that create a rectangular grid pattern. A broad band of Swedish Blue Pearl granite sheathes the lower portion of the walls. The six-story volume on the south intersects with the two-story volume to the east. The six-story volume is windowless because it contains book stacks, while the two-story volume has a band of steel sash windows on the second story wrapped by a protruding concrete frame. The main entrance is situated at the intersection of the two volumes. It is approximately 30 feet wide and consists of a non-original aluminum-frame system of doors, windows, and sidelights. Above the main entrance are the seals of the State of California and courts in which Los Angeles lawyers practiced. The seals are finished with gold leaf and set on 5 ½ foot precast concrete squares attached to the elevation. West of the seals is a sign with individual letters that reads “Los Angeles County Law Library.”

The east elevation is composed of three distinctive volumes. The south volume is two-stories in height and divided into nine identical vertical bays that are surrounded by a protruding concrete frame. Each bay has a steel sash window on the first and second story with decorative ceramic tile panels above. The tile has a blue grey color and a deeply contoured pattern that is set vertically in the center and horizontally on the sides. The middle volume contains the primary

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vehicular access to the building and includes a one-story portion in front and two-story portion to the rear. The front portion has a setback that functions as a loading zone with a solid metal rollup door and two sets of steel sash windows. The rear portion is windowless as it contains the library's reading room. The north volume is the east end of the six-story addition and is windowless. There are two parking levels separated from the sidewalk by a low concrete wall that is connected to the semi-circular concrete ramp.

The north elevation is the portion of the building that was added between 1968 and 1971 on what was previously a surface parking lot. The original portion of the building and addition are aesthetically cohesive as they were designed by the same architectural firm. The addition is windowless because it contains two levels of parking, a double height reading room and related spaces, and three levels of book stacks. Centered on the elevation are pre-cast exposed aggregate sculptured concrete panels. There is a total of six panels, which are attached in front of a wall trimmed in small ceramic tiles. In front of the decorative panels is a semi-circular planting bed.

The west elevation is partially shielded from view by a two-level parking garage constructed in 1971. It is similar in design to the north elevation. The center contains the same grouping of decorative panels. This portion of the elevation is actually an extension of the north addition and contains mechanical rooms and more book stacks. The north end of the elevation is the addition, and the south end is the original portion of the building. Both ends are solid concrete walls with a rectangular pattern like the other elevations.

At the east end of the south elevation are two large planters sheathed in granite that extend from the building. The main entrance is approached from this location by a broad flight of concrete stairs with a switchback leading to the plaza at the top. The plaza is elevated from 1st Street by a long retaining wall that is also sheathed in granite. There is a series of low concrete planters between the retaining wall and the sidewalk. The plaza is paved with concrete and includes a path that weaves through landscaping as it meets the sidewalk on Hill Street. Olive trees are planted between the south elevation and the path and are also used along the east elevation. The semicircular planting bed along the north elevation is supported by a masonry retaining wall and features eucalyptus trees at each end.

Interior

Level 1 of the original portion of the building is also called the lower level and is below grade on the west. It includes book stack level 1 on the west; equipment rooms, a bookbinding/repair room, a large collection management space for processing and maintaining the collection, and receiving and shipping facilities in the center, and the staff lounge and lunchroom on the east.

Level 2 of the original portion of the building includes book stack level two. The remainder of the floor plan is occupied by the added ceiling height for the rooms in the center and on the east described below.

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Level 3 is also called the main level, which is entered by patrons from 1st Street on the south. It consists of a lobby that is illuminated by indirect lighting within domes that are recessed into the ceiling and features a terra cotta tile mural with a map of California and the inscription “THIS LIBRARY IS DEDICATED TO SERVE THOSE WHO LABOR IN THE FAITH THAT OURS IS A GOVERNMENT OF LAWS AND NOT OF MEN.” It was custom designed for the lobby by Malcolm and Margaret Cameron who were husband and wife artists.¹ Built into the mural is a pedestal that holds a bust of Thomas W. Robinson, the director of the library from 1896 to 1938. There is also a cabinet for special exhibitions cantilevered from a central column.

Adjoining the lobby on the east are the executive offices, a training center classroom space that also serves as a board room, a staircase, and the rare book stacks. West of the lobby is the circulation desk with multiple book stack levels to the rear. The main reading room on the north was originally 7,200 square feet in area with a 19-foot-tall ceiling. The room is illuminated by cove lights within the coffered ceiling. What were once smoking alcoves on the north were removed for the addition in 1968, which expanded the reading room by 9,920 square feet. On the east is the reference desk and more offices for staff members. Both the new and old sections of the reading room are carpeted with built-in wood bookshelves along the perimeter.

The upper levels of both the original portion of the building as well as the addition are occupied by book stacks that are only accessible to library staff. All of the book stacks have a floor to ceiling height of 7 feet 6 inches. The shelving system is fabricated from steel attached to concrete slabs. There are thirty-five miles of shelving throughout the building. In addition to having no natural light to control the temperature, sensors turn artificial lights off when no motion is detected.

Alterations

The building is substantially intact from its construction between 1953 and 1970, although the setting was altered in 2012. Historic photographs document that many of the steel sash windows were originally covered by metal louvers, but they were removed at an unknown date. Beginning in the 1980s, a series of alterations were made for accessibility purposes. The main entrance doors were originally frameless glass with brass hardware. They were replaced in 1980 with an automatic sliding door system.² Plans dated 1983 indicate the men’s and women’s restrooms used by patrons on the main level were remodeled for handicapped access. In 1995, the staff restrooms on the main level were remodeled.³

¹ Malcolm P. Cameron (1902-1975) was born in Los Angeles and attended the California Institute of Technology. After graduating from Cornell University in architecture he practiced his profession in New York and Los Angeles. This was followed by a career as a lithographer, book illustrator, and sculptor in San Diego County. Cameron married Lois Margaret Dougherty in 1928. She was also a graduate of Cornell University and a sculptor. In 1962, the Camerons moved to Shaw Island in Washington State.

² LA Building Permit No. 1980LA144 and No. 1980LA96267.

³ LA Building Permit No. 1995LA33402.

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In 2012, the concrete portions of the exterior were painted a terra cotta color. Less visible changes involved waterproofing and replacing the roof material. Around this time, the landscaping was redesigned by designed Troller and Mayer Associates, the successor of the landscape architecture firm founded by the original designer, Ralph Cornell.⁴ The 1953 plans by Cornell suggest that at grade beds were originally lawns. A plan prepared by Cornell, Bridgers & Troller dated May 24, 1963, indicates that the lawn on the east was either not installed or already replaced with star jasmine. The 1963 plan called for gazania and Juniperus Sabina tamariscifolia. New irrigation and drainage systems were installed, and at grade beds were replaced with drought tolerant plantings. The plaza along 1st Street was created along with new retaining walls, planters, paths, trees, and lights. Created in 2012, the library's updated logo and signs spelling "LA Law Library" are affixed to retaining walls at the east and west ends. The green stone that originally paved the front entrance and extended into the lobby was replaced with concrete on the exterior and carpet on the interior. Interior improvements on the main level included moving the reference desk from the northeast next to the elevator to the former location of the photocopy center on the east side of the reading room and recarpeting.

Parking Garage

Noncontributing Building

The parking garage is of reinforced concrete construction and rectangular in plan. It is a two-level free-standing building narrowly divided from the library building on the west. Access to each level is separate, with the entrance to the lower level on the south and the upper level on the north. The portions that are above grade on Hill Street and Broadway are painted concrete. The parking garage does not contribute to the historical or architectural significance of the property. It has never been limited to library patrons and has no architectural style.

Integrity

The property retains all aspects of integrity except setting. The property retains integrity of *location* as the library building has not been moved. The property retains integrity of *design* as the form, plan, and style of the building are still intact. The addition did not negatively affect the integrity of design because it was designed in the same style and by the same architects as the building. As a result, the 1953 and 1970s portions blend together seamlessly into a cohesive design. The key materials from the period of significance are embodied in the concrete construction. The property retains integrity of *materials* because these features have not been removed. The construction of the building does not appear to have involved any innovative construction techniques. The property retains integrity of *workmanship* as the key materials remain unaltered. The property retains integrity of *feeling* because it still expresses its function and aesthetic from the period of significance. It still feels like a building constructed during the

⁴ Howard Troller and Samuel Bridgers began working with Cornell in 1953, and in 1955 they became his partners in the firm Cornell, Bridgers and Troller. With Cornell as the senior partner, Bridgers served as general manager and Troller as the director of design and planning. The firm completed several municipal projects throughout Los Angeles, including the City Hall East Mall, the campus for the Department of Water and Power, the Music Center, and the Civic Center Mall (renamed Grand Park), which was constructed above a parking garage north of the library building.

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post-World War II era. The property retains integrity of *association* because it possesses the physical features that link it directly to the library. The integrity of the immediate setting has been compromised by the replacement of the original landscaping by Ralph Cornell. Although the landscaping is not out of character with the historic architecture, along the 1st Street frontage the original lawns and plants have been replaced with concrete pathways and retaining walls. The broad setting has been changed by the demolition of the California State Building across Broadway and the construction of a new U.S. Courthouse across 1st Street.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☒ A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- ☐ A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- ☐ B. Removed from its original location
- ☐ C. A birthplace or grave
- ☐ D. A cemetery
- ☐ E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- ☐ F. A commemorative property
- ☐ G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

LAW

EDUCATION

Period of Significance

1953-1971

Significant Dates

1953

1971

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Austin, Field & Frye (architects)

James J. Barnes Construction Co.

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

Founded in 1891, the Los Angeles County Law Library is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and C. Under Criterion A, at the state level of significance in the areas of Law and Education, the library is the largest county law library in California. Its foreign and international law collection including rare books, manuscripts, and historical documents sets it apart from other public law libraries in the state. In addition to serving the courts and legal service providers throughout the state, the library is an important resource for the public and self-represented litigants. Under Criterion C at the local level of significance in the area of Architecture, the building is an excellent example of the Late Moderne style, reflected in its composition of solid rectangular volumes that successfully resolve the needs of the library and topography of the property. Additionally, the building is significant as an important work of the architectural firm of Austin, Field & Frye. The firm is recognized as a master of modern architecture particularly when it comes to Los Angeles government buildings. The period of significance is 1953 to 1971, which corresponds with the year the building was originally completed through a major addition.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

The Los Angeles County Law Library was determined eligible for the National Register in 2010 through the Section 106 review process for the Regional Connector Transit Corridor Project. It was identified as a contributing building within the Los Angeles Civic Center Historic District.

Criterion A: Law and Education

The Los Angeles County Law Library is eligible at the state level of significance as the largest county law library in California. With over a half million volumes, including print, media, microfilm, and microfiche by 1975, the library remains second only to the Law Library of Congress in the context of public law libraries in the United States.⁵ In addition to providing research facilities for legal professionals and government officials, the library educates the general public and assists those who cannot afford representation in using the collection (both print and electronic) to navigate the judicial system. It has played a key role in hundreds of thousands of legal cases, especially before online legal archives were created.

The roots of the library can be traced back to 1878 when a handful of attorneys founded the Los Angeles Bar Association (LABA) with the express purpose of establishing a law library.⁶ At the

⁵ As of 2025, the size of the collection is one million volumes.

⁶ William W. Robinson, *Lawyers of Los Angeles: A history of the Los Angeles Bar Association and of the Bar of Los Angeles County* (Los Angeles, The Ward Ritchie Press, 1959), 263. Lapses in meetings and dues caused the LABA to reorganize in 1880 and again in 1899.

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time, individual attorneys and law firms may have possessed common law textbooks and copies of statutes up to the current year, and there was no central collection in Los Angeles. The Los Angeles Public Library was founded in 1872 and became a City department in 1878. Collecting legal materials was not part of its mission. Law libraries are also maintained by schools of law, although the collections and services are oriented towards academics and students. In Southern California, the University of Southern California (USC) School of Law was founded in 1900, the Loyola University School of Law in 1937, and the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) School of Law was founded in 1949.⁷

The newly formed LABA attempted to establish a private law library based upon membership dues. Membership law libraries grew as the United States expanded westward, and by the 1850s most major cities east of the Mississippi River had a law association or membership law library. Membership dues alone, however, were not enough to support these law libraries. The expense of maintaining books when legal information began to grow rapidly led to the dissolution of many membership law libraries, and their collections were merged with county law libraries or law schools. Membership law libraries still in existence are located in Maryland, Massachusetts, Missouri, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Virginia.⁸

In 1886, the Law Library Association of Los Angeles incorporated with \$30,000 in capital stock.⁹ They issued 300 shares to investors for \$100 each.¹⁰ An advertisement for the initial offering boasted for \$100, the shareholder would receive access to \$10,000 worth of books.¹¹ As there were only ninety shares sold, the organization struggled and still managed to collect 4,649 volumes by 1891.¹²

Private law libraries in San Francisco and San Jose were similarly organized and underfunded. They arranged for special statutes for public funding that was limited to the counties in which they were located. Attorneys in Los Angeles could have done likewise and conceived a broader solution. They appealed to State Assemblyman John R. Matthews requesting that he sponsor a bill authorizing all California counties to use court filing fees to establish law libraries.¹³ On March 31, 1891, the California Legislature passed the Act to Establish Law Libraries, which

⁷ For more information on the history of the legal profession in California and law schools in Los Angeles, see Robinson, *Lawyers of Los Angeles*, 269-273.

⁸ Laureen Adams and Regina Smith, "The Evolution of Public Law Libraries," *American Association of Law Libraries Spectrum*, March 2006 https://www.aallnet.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/pub_sp0603_Evolution.pdf (accessed January 2, 2025).

⁹ "Articles of Incorporation," *Los Angeles Herald*, August 5, 1886.

¹⁰ "The Law Library," *Los Angeles Times*, September 13, 1887.

¹¹ "Catalogue of the Books Contained in the Law Library of the City of Los Angeles, 1890," Historic Building Box, LA Law Library Collection.

¹² "Solely for Lawyers' Benefit," *Los Angeles Herald*, January 30, 1893.

¹³ For more information on Matthews, see Benjamin Watson, "Origins of California's County Law Library System," *Law Library Journal* Vol. 81, No. 2 (Spring 1989), 245-247.

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became effective on April 25, 1891. Despite the name, a county law library is not part of county government; it is an independent state agency with a board of trustees.¹⁴

In a matter of days, the Los Angeles County Law Library was established, and the board held its first meeting on April 28, 1891. At that meeting, the board voted to purchase the book collection from the Law Library Association of Los Angeles. As attorneys also paid dues to use the library, the members of the association received a credit for dues owed.¹⁵ The library officially opened on August 10, 1891, in space within the Los Angeles County Courthouse.

Key Individuals

Several people have played significant roles in the history of the library, and three directors and one librarian stand out. Since its founding, the library has had numerous permanent and short-term acting directors. The tenures of the first two directors, William W. Stephens and Frank H. Howard, were relatively short and uneventful. Stephens was the son of Albert M. Stephens who was the first president of the LABA. He resigned after a year to practice law with his father.¹⁶ Howard was a well-known attorney and president of the Los Angeles County Board of Education and member of the Los Angeles City Library Board. One of his first acts as library director was to assemble all of the briefs filed in the California Supreme Court since its inception, which numbered 6,000 at the time.¹⁷ The library has the most comprehensive collection of California Supreme Court and Courts of Appeal briefs in the state.

The mysterious disappearance of Howard in 1896¹⁸ paved the way for the appointment of the third director, Thomas W. Robinson (1872-1938) who served until his death in 1938. A graduate of USC and active member of the legal community, Robinson was the treasurer of the LABA from 1906 to 1936 and the secretary of the California Bar Association from 1911 to 1927.¹⁹ He is credited with the growth of the library collection from 5,000 to 110,000 volumes, including many rare books.²⁰ So instrumental was he to the development of the library, a bust of Robinson graces the building lobby.

Thomas S. Dabagh (1904-1959) of the University of California Law Library at Berkeley became the fourth director in 1938. By this time, the library collection was the ninth largest in the

¹⁴ In Los Angeles County, the seven-member library board is comprised of five superior court judges and two lawyers appointed by the Board of Supervisors. The library director also serves as secretary of the board. Historically, the Chair of the Board of Supervisors filled one of the two seats not designated for judges. The last member of the Board of Supervisors to serve simultaneously on the library board was John Anson Ford, from 1952 to 1954. Since then, a member of the county bar has been appointed to the library board in place of the Chair of the Board of Supervisors.

¹⁵ "Solely for Lawyers' Benefit," *Los Angeles Herald*, January 30, 1893.

¹⁶ Robinson, *Lawyers of Los Angeles*, 265.

¹⁷ "A Very Ingenious Mind," *Los Angeles Evening Express*, July 22, 1892.

¹⁸ "A Protracted Absence," *Los Angeles Evening Express*, September 14, 1896.

¹⁹ "Taken by Death," *Los Angeles Times*, September 13, 1938.

²⁰ Gail H. Fruchtman, "The History of the Los Angeles County Law Library," *Law Library Journal*, 84, No. 4 (Fall 1992) 691.

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country. One of his initial projects was to make the collection more accessible through the creation and maintenance of proper catalogs.²¹ Dabagh introduced other services for the convenience of patrons, including small pushcarts for gathering books from shelves, a photocopying service, a messenger service to dues-paying members with downtown offices to deliver and pick up book requests, and a dictating machine service. He also established a new administrative position, that of business aide, to help manage the library's financial and property responsibilities. In 1949, ten years after his appointment as director, Dabagh left to become director of the law library and assistant to the dean at the new UCLA School of Law.²²

Forrest S. Drummond (1911-1997) served as director from 1950 to 1980 and is credited with developing the library's present-day physical facilities. He worked closely with the architectural firm and construction company on the new building between 1950 and 1953, and again on its expansion between 1968 and 1971. Additionally, he oversaw the development of branches in Torrance in 1967, Norwalk and Van Nuys in 1969, Beverly Hills in 1971, and Compton in 1980.²³ He visited public and academic libraries throughout the country taking notes and sketching floor plans to educate himself on the physical and technical requirements for the library. Correspondence preserved in the library collection also documents that Drummond was contacted by other librarians in the state for his design advice on space planning. Like the other directors, Drummond was active in professional library organizations. He was the president of the American Association of Law Libraries (AALL) from 1952 to 1953 and served as chair of the AALL Committee on the Index to Legal Periodicals from 1947 to 1952 and 1954 to 1970.²⁴

William B. Stern (1910-1972) was not a library director and played a notable role in its history. As the foreign law librarian from 1939 until 1970, he is credited with developing the foreign and international law collections and was a recognized authority in international law. The library has one of the best foreign and international law collections in the country, which differentiates it from any other county law library in the United States. Stern's employment by a public agency was initially questioned as he was not yet a naturalized American citizen. He escaped Nazi Germany in 1935 through the International Students' Service program. He attended the University of Texas and Johns Hopkins University before working for the Chicago Law Library.²⁵ In defending his selection, Director Dabagh said "Stern, who speaks several languages, and is familiar with the legal systems in many nations, is one of the best qualified men in this country for the highly technical work he is called to perform."²⁶ Stern became an American citizen in 1940.

²¹ The LA Law Library has a copy of the original printed catalog in the archives.

²² Fruchtman, "The History of the Los Angeles County Law Library," 692-694.

²³ The branch in Glendale opened in 1944 but closed in 1971. The branch in Beverly Hills closed in 2004. Earlier branches opened in Long Beach in 1929, Pasadena and Pomona in 1933, and Santa Monica in 1936. All of the existing branch libraries are located in county buildings, courthouses, or public libraries.

²⁴ Fruchtman, "The History of the Los Angeles County Law Library," 694.

²⁵ "Aliens Draw County Pay, Law Library Workers Explain Naturalization Status to Supervisor," *Los Angeles Times*, December 27, 1939.

²⁶ "Attack on Law Librarian Aides Called Despicable," *Los Angeles Dailey Journal*, December 28, 1939.

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Stern was a leader in several professional organizations, such as the AALL Executive Board from 1954 to 1958; AALL president from 1969 to 1970; *Law Library Journal* editor from 1953 to 1954; AALL Committee Chair on Foreign Law Indexing from 1959 to 1970; International Association of Law Libraries secretary from 1959 to 1962; and International Association of Law Libraries president from 1962 to 1965. He also testified in court cases in his capacity as foreign law librarian, wrote numerous articles for publication, and assisted in cataloging legal literature.

Collection

The historical significance of the library is rooted in its comprehensive collection, which is used for research purposes by scholars, judges, attorneys, and self-represented individuals. The collection contains many current and historical items that are difficult to find or prohibitively expensive for both legal practitioners and non-attorneys and has served as an important resource to ensure free public access to the law for all. By 1898, the library had completed the acquisition of all major case law of every state at that time and a sizable collection of textbooks and treatises. The collection of briefs and records was started in 1900. In 1905, the library collection climbed to 15,000 volumes. From these relatively modest beginnings started the development of a collection that has only a few equals in the country. Although the Library Director Robinson only had three aides for many years, he was able to rely on several book dealers and was in the position to make purchases almost as quickly as they became available.

By 1909, the collection had grown to 20,000 volumes. In 1912, an unusual collection of 2,908 volumes on American state session laws and statutes was purchased. By 1919, the collection exceeded 50,000 volumes and the library had an excellent collection of British Commonwealth historical materials. The rapid rate of development continued. In 1933, the collection passed the 100,000 mark and the library became one of the most utilized law libraries in the U.S. Within another decade, in 1943, the library had 160,726 volumes, including the nucleus of a sizable collection of foreign law books. In 1949, the collection consisted of 204,069 volumes, and at the end of 1957 the total was 306,711 volumes. By 1975, the collection contained nearly 600,000 volumes, making it the largest law library in the Western U.S. and one of the largest in the nation.²⁷

The library maintains a comprehensive collection of the statutes, session laws, and judicial opinions and decisions of California and other U.S. jurisdictions, both current and historical. The library acquires the local codes and ordinances for numerous cities and counties in California. The library also acquires and preserves a wide array of California, multi-jurisdictional, and subject-specific substantive treatises, guides, and self-help books covering most legal subject areas in California and U.S. law. The library is a selective depository for California government documents, including legislative history resources, such as Assembly and Senate journals, bills and analyses, and hearings and committee prints. The library is a depository for the California appellate courts, receiving, maintaining and, more recently, digitizing, the most complete collection

²⁷ Forrest Drummond, "The Los Angeles County Law Library: Its History and Operation," unpublished article, October 30, 1975, 6, Historic Building Box, LA Law Library Collection.

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of California appellate briefs in the country from 1858 to the present.²⁸ The library's collection of California ballot propositions and voter ballot pamphlets, which includes materials from 1908 to the present, is likewise unique and comprehensive.²⁹ The library is a U.S. federal depository library, one of only a small, select group of libraries chosen to continue receiving and preserving the primary law documents of the U.S. government in print.

In addition to the print collection, the library provides comprehensive access to popular, subscription-only legal databases at the library's public computer terminals. These electronic resources allow self-represented litigants to use paywalled legal research tools, normally available only to attorneys, to help them understand the legal system and represent themselves effectively. The comprehensive nature of these resources also provides practicing attorneys and scholars a near-peerless breadth and depth of legal information not available to them through their own resource subscriptions, all at a location central to the major area courthouses.

The library also maintains diverse special interest collections. The library collects and retains Los Angeles County legal newspapers, including the *Metropolitan News-Enterprise* and the *Los Angeles Daily Journal*; this collection dates from 1945 and is maintained in hard copy through the present, and in microfilm from 1888 to 2013. A diverse selection of materials from local agencies and organizations has been collected since the library's founding in 1891 and includes everything from materials concerning the desegregation process by the Los Angeles School Monitoring Committee to the crime and arrest statistics of the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department.³⁰

The library's rare and historical book collection includes materials that address the establishment of the continental United States, its colonies, individual states, and territories, with a special emphasis on the early history of California law, both before and after statehood. Also found in the library's rare book collection are documents that record the history and development of the legal community and the practice of law in Southern California. These items include such rarities as the criminal trial transcripts of defendant David Caplan, who was convicted of helping to bomb the *Los Angeles Times* newspaper building in 1910, and the subsequent trial of legendary attorney Clarence Darrow for attempting to bribe jurors in the case of Caplan's co-defendants, the McNamara brothers; a 1922 illustrated directory of members of the Los Angeles County bench and bar published by the *Los Angeles Daily Journal* newspaper, which includes attorney Clara Shortridge Foltz, the first woman to practice law in California; and a Spanish-language edition of the first California session laws of 1850-1851, the preface of which explains that the translation was ordered by the Secretary of State, due to the lack of distribution of certain laws in Spanish, and that the translator was to be paid an amount not to exceed fifty cents per page.³¹

²⁸ The LA Law Library also serves as a depository for the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit.

²⁹ Channa Cajero and Sandra Levin. "Gems from California's Legal History at LA Law Library," *California Legal History*, Vol. 14. (2019) 275.

³⁰ Cajero and Levin, "Gems from California's Legal History at LA Law Library," 276.

³¹ Cajero and Levin, "Gems from California's Legal History at LA Law Library," 276.

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The library's world-class global law collection began with the first purchase of foreign law books in 1894 and grew rapidly in parallel with the increasingly globally significant Los Angeles metro area itself in the years following World War II. The collection eventually grew to cover virtually every independent nation or jurisdiction in the world with an effort to assemble for each country its constitutional documents and related materials, basic codes, compilations of laws, session laws, court procedures, immigration and citizenship procedures, family law matters such as adoption, and legal periodicals. The library collects materials in the original language and English translations where available. In the area of international law, the library collects journals and treatises in areas such as commercial trade, transnational litigation, tariffs, and materials for entities such as the European Union. The collection also includes treaty series for the United States, various international organizations, and many foreign countries.³² Other comparable collections of foreign and international legal materials are held in academic libraries, and consequently are less accessible than the library's, which is freely available and open to the public.

Library Facility

When it was first founded, the library was housed in the recently completed Los Angeles County Courthouse at Spring and Temple Streets on what was then known as Poundcake Hill. In the early twentieth century the library moved several times: to the Merchants Trust Building at 203 S. Broadway in 1905, to the International Savings Bank Building at 116 Temple Street in 1909, and to the seventh floor of the Hall of Records in 1912. In 1926, branch libraries were established in the Hall of Justice and municipal court buildings to address the overcrowded conditions in the Hall of Records. In 1932, the library expanded to the fourth floor of the Hall of Records.³³ Additionally, storage facilities were used at 808 N. Spring Street.³⁴ Director Thomas W. Robinson is credited with the idea of consolidating the library into a single building that would allow for its future growth and proper management.

The construction of the library building is intertwined with the history of the County Courthouse. In 1933, the already aging Courthouse was damaged in the Long Beach earthquake. Beginning in 1934, Superior and Municipal Court judges used facilities at multiple locations in downtown Los Angeles, and in 1936 the Courthouse was demolished. In 1944, the Board of Supervisors resolved to build a new Courthouse and formed a committee to study the issue. After World War II, the County purchased the block bounded by Temple Street on the north, 1st Street on the south, Hill Street on the east, and Grand Avenue on the west with the intent of constructing a new Courthouse as well as a Hall of Administration facing each other across an open space.³⁵

³² Amber Lee Smith, "Where Do You Look for Foreign and International Law?" unpublished and undated article, Historic Building Box, LA Law Library Collection.

³³ The Hall of Records was demolished in 1973.

³⁴ Robinson, *Lawyers of Los Angeles*, 266.

³⁵ The County Courthouse was completed in 1958 and formally opened on January 5, 1959, while the Hall of Administration was not completed until 1960. The County Courthouse was renamed in 2002 in honor of Stanley Mosk, who was the longest serving justice on the California Supreme Court and earlier served as Attorney General of California. The Hall of Administration was renamed in 1992 in honor of Kenneth Hahn, the longest serving member of the Board of Supervisors.

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This plan would transform a large portion of Bunker Hill through the westward expansion of the Civic Center and create the existing east-west axis of government buildings that frame Grand Park. It took many years, however, for the plan to come to fruition. Additionally, there was no accord on whether there should be separate Municipal Court and Superior Court buildings, or a single building to house both courts. Meanwhile, the overcrowded conditions and disconnected facilities of the library grew worse. The situation was partially remedied in 1948 when another branch was established in the Law Building. This branch was later moved to the Ferguson Building at 3rd and Hill Streets.

Whether the Civic Center project included one building or two, the original intent was for the County to provide a dedicated space for the library. Director Dabagh was tasked by the library trustees with analyzing the advantages and disadvantages of constructing a separate building. He found that housing the library in a new Courthouse would be convenient for judges and most attorneys. Housing the library in a separate building would mean buying land; however, the trustees could control the design and plan for future growth. Dabagh also expressed concern that the County might find it necessary to economize in the construction of the new Courthouse, meaning the library would still lack appropriate facilities for its collection.³⁶

Although the enabling State legislation requires counties to provide quarters for law libraries, the Los Angeles County Law Library board decided to construct and maintain its own building with its cash reserves. In 1944, the library board withdrew its pledge of \$750,000 for the new Courthouse.³⁷ The following year, the trustees engaged architect John C. Austin to advise them on the identifying a property as well as the size and type of building needed.³⁸ By January 1946, the library's cash reserves had grown to \$800,000 and a parcel on 1st Street between Broadway and Hill was selected through a complicated deal involving the exchange and sale of library-owned, county-owned, and state-owned property.³⁹ Early concepts by Austin were for a much smaller building than the one ultimately constructed and oriented toward the intersection of 1st and Hill Streets with surface parking on Broadway.⁴⁰

In 1950, County Supervisor Leonard J. Roach proposed yet another plan for the Civic Center that would have consolidated the Municipal and Superior Courts and the library into a single twenty-story building facing Broadway on the same block that had been identified for the standalone library.⁴¹ Like the previously proposed plans for the Civic Center, the Roach plan failed to

³⁶ Thomas S. Dabagh, "Memorandum on New Quarters for the Los Angeles County Law Library," November 1944, Historic Building Box, LA Law Library Collection.

³⁷ "Library Offer Withdrawn," *Los Angeles Times*, January 5, 1944.

³⁸ "Letter from Forrest S. Drummond to Robert Field Jr., June 15, 1951," Historic Building Box, LA Law Library Collection.

³⁹ "Law Library Site Discussed," *Los Angeles Evening Citizens News*, Vol. 41, No. 254, January 11, 1946.

⁴⁰ "John C. Austin space study, February 1947," Historic Building Box, LA Law Library Collection.

⁴¹ "Roach Urges Revision of Courthouses Plan, One Judicial-Law Library Building Would Save Almost \$3,000,000, Official Says," *Los Angeles Times*, April 27, 1950.

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garner consensus and the library trustees retained the architectural firm of Austin, Field & Fry to prepare drawings and specifications for a building as planned.⁴²

It was believed that the library building would be completed by 1952, and a steel shortage as result of the Korean War postponed the project.⁴³ After obtaining clearance from the National Production Authority in 1951,⁴⁴ the library trustees received bids for the construction in April 1952 and two months later the ground was broken. The existing buildings were demolished, and the parcel was excavated.⁴⁵ The library building was dedicated by Superior Court Judge Edward T. Bishop on December 28, 1953. The estimated cost of construction had risen to \$1,200,000 for the building that was 90,000 square feet with shelving capacity for 500,000 volumes.⁴⁶ At the time, the library trustees included Judge Bishop, County Supervisor John Anson Ford, Municipal Court Judge James H. Pope, Superior Court Judge Frank G. Swain, and attorney-at-law Max Eddy Utt. Presiding Judge of the Appellate Department of the Superior Court Hartley Shaw was the president of the library board.

The library was the first building completed in the Civic Center since the construction of the old U.S. Courthouse (312 N. Spring Street) between 1937 and 1940. It was the only county in the United States that had its own building entirely devoted to law library uses. The expanding collection of books and court briefs necessitated an addition. In 1968, the library board once again retained the architectural firm of Austin, Field & Fry to design a six-story addition on what was a surface parking lot. Located on the westside of the original portion of the building, the estimated cost of construction was \$2,000,000. Completed in 1970, the addition doubled the shelving capacity and size of the reading room, providing for the needs of the library for thirty years. By 1975, the library was the third largest in the United States, after the Law Library of Congress and the Harvard Law School Library.

Criterion C: Architecture

Late Moderne Architecture in Los Angeles⁴⁷

The library building is significant at the local level as an important example of the Late Moderne style, which represents a transition between prewar and postwar Modernism. Early Modern

⁴² Charles C. Cohan, "Plans for County's Law Library Told, Details are Nearing Completion for Proposed Civic Center Unit," *Los Angeles Times*, July 8, 1951.

⁴³ Forrest S. Drummond, "The New Los Angeles Law Library Building," reprinted from *Law Library Journal*, American Association of Law Libraries, Vol. 47, No. 2, May 1954.

⁴⁴ The National Production Authority was a federal agency that managed the supply of materials and facilities necessary for defense mobilization.

⁴⁵ The corner of 1st Street and Broadway was previously occupied by the six-story Tajo Building developed by Simona Martinez Bradbury and named for her family's Tajo silver mine in Mexico. The Tajo Building at various times housed the USC Law School, the Los Angeles Stock Exchange and, for the first decade of the 1900s, the United States District Court for the Southern District of California.

⁴⁶ The cost was precisely \$1,199,397, plus \$95,000 for furnishings.

⁴⁷ Adapted from Architectural Resources Group, "Architecture and Engineering, 1850-1980; Theme: L.A. Modernism, 1919-1980," *Los Angeles Citywide Historic Context Statement* (Los Angeles Office of Historic Resources, August 2021), 91-103.

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styles, including Art Deco, Streamline Moderne, and PWA Moderne are collectively referred to as the Moderne movement. As epitomized by the stylized geometries and glitzy ornament of Art Deco; the sweeping, graceful curves of Streamline Moderne; and the muted Classical forms and motifs of PWA Moderne, the Moderne movement, had unequivocally fizzled out by World War II. These were architectural styles that bore a strong visual association with the societal values and economic conditions of the Depression era, for better and for worse. By the end of the war, architects and the American public began to gravitate away from these idioms, which were increasingly seen as outmoded and passé, and toward new modes of architectural expression that were more closely aligned with the International style.

The Moderne movement did not simply disappear from the American architectural lexicon overnight. It took time for architects and the public to accept and fully embrace this paradigm shift from familiar Depression era architecture to the more authentic and expressive qualities underpinning postwar Modernism. Since the imposition of building moratoria brought new construction to a halt during the wartime years, architects and designers were simply not able to experiment with new forms, styles, and motifs during this time as they otherwise would have. What resulted, then, in the very early postwar period, was a hybrid of those architectural styles of the late Depression years—Streamline Moderne and PWA Moderne—and the International style that was quickly coming into vogue. The aesthetic that emerged from this stylistic melding resulted in the emergence of a distinct architectural style known as Late Moderne. This style is considered to be the final phase of the Moderne movement and is seen as something of a transitional style between the older Modern movements and the Mid-Century Modern style that took hold in the early second half of the twentieth century.

As something of a fusion between earlier Modernist idioms and the quickly developing International style, Late Moderne buildings retain the same heavy massing, prevailing sense of horizontality, and use of materials to provide warmth of earlier Modernist stylings, and also borrow elements from International design like the rigid rectangular shape with sharp, angular corners. Building forms tend to be boxier than they are aerodynamic and consist of compositions of solid rectilinear volumes that are placed in balanced contrast to one another. Exterior surfaces are either characterized by large, windowless expanses or feature continuous horizontal bands of windows.

Other common features of the Late Moderne style pertain to decorative features and the application of ornament. Buildings designed in the style adhere to a distinctive ornamental catalog comprising fins, grids, and pylons, often with holes or squared voids “punched” into them. Commercial examples of the style typically feature prominent entryways and display windows that are exaggerated in size and are surmounted by a broad, curvilinear freeform canopy or soffit. Façades are often dominated by prominently soaring pylons that were emblazoned with neon or other visually prominent signage.

The bezeled window is perhaps the most readily identifiable exterior feature of Late Moderne style buildings. The typical bezeled window consists of a horizontal band of fenestration that is prominently set within a wide thick frame, often projecting from the wall plane. The frame is

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often composed of a material and color that contrasts with the adjacent wall surface and makes the band of windows “pop out.” Often, bezels would “extend beyond the windows to wrap around corners or dive into the ground in an inverted L-shape, giving the façade a look of tautness” and emphasizing its prevailing sense of horizontality.⁴⁸

After World War II drew to a close in the late 1940s, Late Moderne grew into a preeminent style of the Los Angeles area, proliferating in particular in commercial and institutional buildings, although private dwellings built in this period often incorporated elements of the style as well. In the early days, the term “Late Moderne” had not yet been formally introduced into the architectural vernacular. Buildings designed in the style were often described as “California Commercial” or “California Modern,” underscoring the oversized role that California—and particularly Southern California—played in creating and perpetuating trends in the Modern architectural movement.

Department stores, which were the epicenter for readymade fashion and therefore those wealthy enough to afford to keep up with trends and buy off the rack, had a strong impetus to keep up with fashionable stylings and several department stores during this early period had new buildings designed and constructed during this period. During the years just after World War II, they also finally had the money to invest. The most notable example, considered a preeminent example of the style as a whole, was the Mullen and Bluett store on Wilshire Boulevard (1947, demolished). Reflecting the prevailing pattern of decentralization of Los Angeles after World War II, some of the more prominent examples of the Late Moderne style were located outside of the Downtown core and were instead strung along Wilshire Boulevard and other major thoroughfares that crisscrossed the swiftly expanding city.

The library building embodies the distinguishing character defining features of the Late Moderne style in nearly every aspect of its construction: from its rectilinear shape and heavy massing, bezeled repeating windows, and scored contouring on its otherwise mostly bare outside walls to its artistic decorative flourishes. It cleverly utilizes the topography and while it appears to be a perfect rectangular prism from the street, in actuality its original volumes are built into a substantial 45-foot incline. Completed in 1953, it arrived at the peak of the Late Moderne style and represents an excellent example of its time. The building’s main six-story volume is largely windowless, as is a common aesthetic quality of many Late Moderne buildings. This feature also serves a practical purpose: the light would damage its collection of rare and historic documents and make the significant temperature control these collections require less efficient. The designer’s judicious selection of the Late Modern style resulted in a successful marriage of form and function.

The building possesses the classic bezeled windows along its two-story eastern volume at the east end of the south elevation and especially at the south end of the east elevation. Its contrast between its smaller two-story and longer six-story volumes creates an aesthetically pleasing composition when considered in totality and its long exterior projects the elegant stateliness

⁴⁸ Paul Gleye, *The Architecture of Los Angeles* (Los Angeles: Rosebud Books, 1981), 151.

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befitting an institutional building. Both are features common to Late Moderne commercial projects, giving it an imposing, though not unwelcoming presence. The building's decorative features are also notable for its style, with its striking scored concrete exterior, Swedish Blue Pearl granite sheathing at its foundation, signature pre-cast exposed aggregate sculptured concrete panels, and eight gold seals indicating the official bodies of law at the time of the building's construction. While most examples of the style have minimal ornamentation, the concrete panels in particular are highly modelled to create visual interest on the windowless elevations. The building's stacked block shape also exemplifies the asymmetrical balance earlier forms of Moderne architecture attempted to capture, a quality which had not been entirely left behind by Late Moderne. The success of the building no doubt led to the application of the style to the Los Angeles County Courthouse (1959) and Hall of Administration (1960).

Austin, Field & Fry, Architects

The library building is also significant for expressing an important aspect of the work of Austin, Field & Fry. Established in 1946 by the renowned architect John C. Austin (1870-1963), Austin, Field & Fry designed several of Los Angeles' most prominent postwar public buildings, including the Los Angeles County Law Library. At the age of 76, it is unclear what drove him to starting a new partnership instead of retiring like his peers. His new partners, Robert Field, Jr. (1902-1984) and Charles Fry (1906-1996), were both established architects in the Los Angeles area.⁴⁹ The firm soon occupied Austin's offices⁵⁰ in downtown Los Angeles and began work as early as September 1946, winning a contract for a new building with a library, classrooms, and administrative offices for Citrus College in Glendora.⁵¹ This proved to be a predictive project for the firm, as they would go on to design many more educational and institutional buildings as their reputation grew.⁵² The firm's practice expanded in the 1950s and 60s, as the postwar economic boom allowed substantial investment in architecture. Initially, they tended toward the Late Moderne style, with a preference for warm materials and a penchant for colonnades, floor-to-ceiling windows, and geometric patterns on elevations. As time passed, their work explored the Corporate International style, especially in the design of high-rise office buildings. While Austin had designed private residences in a number of styles early in his career, the firm rarely, if ever, stepped into the residential realm.

John C. Austin was born in Oxfordshire, England where he was an apprentice to architect Williams S. Barwick. He moved to the United States and worked as a draftsman for architect Benjamin Linfoot in Philadelphia from 1891 to 1892, before relocating to San Francisco where

⁴⁹ Albert Criz worked with the firm from 1946 to 1947 but does not appear to have been a named partner.

⁵⁰ At first, the firm was located in the Chamber of Commerce Building at 1151 S. Broadway, which was designed by Austin in 1925 and demolished in 1955. In 1949, the firm moved to a new building at 2311 W. 3rd Street, which was designed by Charles Fry (Los Angeles Building Permit No. 1949LA01552). The building was demolished in 1988.

⁵¹ "Citrus Union's Bond Issue Election Set," *Progress-Bulletin*, September 7, 1946. The building was completed in 1949.

⁵² Other early works included a classroom building in 1947 and gymnasium in 1948 for John Burroughs Junior High School in Burbank, Los Angeles Fire Station No. 71 at 107 S. Beverly Glen Boulevard in 1947, The Sun and Evening Telegram printing plant in San Bernardino in 1948, a gymnasium at Venice High School in Los Angeles in 1948, and Central Valley Junior High School in Sun Valley in 1949.

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he was a draftsman at the architectural firm of Mooser and Devlin from 1892 to 1895. Austin moved to Los Angeles in 1895 and became one of the city's leading architects.⁵³

By 1910, he and his second wife Hilda and five children had moved to Pasadena.⁵⁴ After settling into their new home, he fathered an additional four children, one of whom, Doris Usher Austin, tragically died when she was four years old. While it was clearly a difficult time for the burgeoning family, Austin continued to work through this period and designed seven private homes since listed as Pasadena Landmarks, including the Craftsman-style houses at 116 S. El Molino Avenue (1907) and 1165 Mar Vista Avenue (1915). He was involved in a multitude of partnerships before Austin, Field & Fry, working with men like John Cyril Bennett, Fitch Harrison Haskell, and Frederick Ashley.

By the time he partnered with Field and Fry, he was recognized as the dean of the architectural profession of Southern California. His projects during the 1920s and 1930 were mostly commercial and institutional buildings including: Hollywood Masonic Temple (1921), Hollywood Guaranty Building (1923), St. Paul's Catholic Church (1924), Chamber of Commerce Building (1925), Shrine Auditorium (with G. Albert Lansburgh, 1925-1926), Monrovia High School (1928), Los Angeles City Hall (with John Parkinson and Albert C. Martin, 1928), Memorial Branch Library (1930), California State Building (1932, not extant), Griffith Park Observatory (with Frederick Ashley, 1933), and NBC Radio City Studios (1938-1939, not extant). These and other buildings demonstrate Austin's mastery of a range of styles from Beaux Arts to Art Deco. Several buildings designed by Austin are listed in the National Register for their significance in the architectural history of Southern California.

On top of his professional work, Austin was a well-known civic leader. He was elected President of the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce in 1930 and caught the attention of President Hoover with a letter published in *The Los Angeles Times*, causing Hoover to appoint Austin to manage unemployment relief for ten Southern Californian counties during the Great Depression. He continued to advocate for the beautification of the city through his various positions, which included President of the State Board of Architectural Examiners, member of President Roosevelt's National Labor Board for Los Angeles, and President of the Los Angeles Humane Society. In 1949, he was recognized for his exemplary service with the first-ever Achievement Award by the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce. In 1958, he received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the California chapter of the American Institute of Architects. In 1963, Mayor of Los Angeles Samuel Yorty presented the 93-year-old Austin with a scroll of lifelong commendation for his distinguished architectural career.⁵⁵

Robert Alexander Field was born at the turn of the twentieth century, and, like Fry, experienced both World Wars and the Great Depression. Field grew up in Chicago, Illinois with parents Robert Field and Anna Field *née* Johannsen. Robert hailed from England and Anna from

⁵³ "John C. Austin, Dean of Architects, Dies: Distinguished Works Included Many of Southland's Famous Landmark Buildings," *Los Angeles Times*, September 5, 1963.

⁵⁴ 1910 U.S. Census.

⁵⁵ Gary Mendes, "John Corneby Wilson Austin," *Altadena Heritage*, September 17, 2023.

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Norway. By the age of eight, his father had passed away and the remaining family moved to Santa Barbara, California. The family moved again, this time a shorter distance, to Los Angeles.⁵⁶ Upon his graduation from Manual Arts High School in 1921 he began his apprenticeship in the Pasadena architectural firm of Marston and Van Pelt, and gained further drafting experience in the offices of architect Bertram Goodhue. During the 1920 and 1930, Field worked for some of the city's leading firms including Parkinson and Parkinson; Morgan, Walls and Clements; and, at different times, Walker and Eisen. In 1938, he passed the California Architects Board examination and received his license.⁵⁷ In 1939, he entered into a partnership with Edward Warren Hoak (1901-1978) known as Field and Hoak.⁵⁸ Shortly after the beginning of World War II, Field dissolved the partnership and enlisted in the Marine Corps, serving in the South Pacific and earning the rank of major.⁵⁹

Following the war, he returned to Los Angeles, established a private practice, and, in 1946, entered into partnership with John C. Austin and Charles Fry. Field was a longtime member of the American Institute of Architects and the chairman of the board of Austin, Field & Fry until his death. He also participated as a board member of the Salvation Army for twenty-nine years.⁶⁰ He personally signed off on the blueprints for the Los Angeles County Law Library, indicating he himself composed the design.

Charles Eugene Fry was born in Pasadena and grew up in the West Adams area of Los Angeles. After graduating from Manual Arts High School, he attended the University of Southern California and received a Bachelor of Architecture degree in 1929.⁶¹ In 1932, he married Marjorie Austin, the daughter of John C. Austin. It's unclear if he was working for Austin before the marriage; according to his World War II Draft registration card, Austin was his employer in 1940. Fry was a member of the American Institute of Architects, where he was eventually declared a Fellow in 1966, and served as the California Council of Architects in 1953.⁶²

Austin, Field & Fry produced many of the most iconic designs of the postwar period. At the outset, the firm focused on educational facilities with contracts for a variety of building types and campus plans in Arcadia, Burbank, Monrovia, and Sun Valley. Other early works include Los Angeles Fire Station No. 71 at 107 S. Beverly Glen Boulevard in 1947 and the Sun and Evening Telegram printing plant (not extant) in San Bernardino in 1948. One of their largest commissions was for the Union Oil Company Research Center (not extant) in Brea.⁶³ Completed in 1951, the

⁵⁶ 1920 U.S. Census.

⁵⁷ At the time, the qualifications for taking the examination were seven years of experience working as an apprentice or a degree from an approved architecture school plus three years of experience.

⁵⁸ Hoak was the chief designer of the Los Angeles Union Passenger Station for the architectural firm of Parkinson and Parkinson

⁵⁹ "Interview of Robert Field Jr." UCLA Library Center for Oral History Research, accessed January 22, 2025, <https://oralhistory.library.ucla.edu/catalog/21198-zz0008zqtr>

⁶⁰ "Robert A. Field," *The Monrovia Post*.

⁶¹ "Charles Fry, Obituary," *Los Angeles Times*, November 23, 1996.

⁶² "California Council of Architects," *Architect and Engineer*, September 1953.

⁶³ "Union Oil Plans Building to Replace Local Plant," *Wilmington Daily Press Journal*, July 20, 1949.

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\$5,000,000 project included twelve buildings with 120,000 square feet of floor space on a 100-acre campus.⁶⁴

As important and sometimes vast as these early projects were, the commission for the Los Angeles County Law Library was a high-profile commission. Although Field was the design architect, the commission was undoubtedly a direct result of Austin's previous Civic Center experience including Los Angeles City Hall and California State Building (not extant).⁶⁵ The library would be the first building constructed in the Civic Center since the completion of the old U.S. Courthouse in 1940. The development of the Civic Center had been stymied by competing plans, with the City preferring one and the County another. Since the library is not a City or County agency, it was able to move forward independently. Field had been designing in the Late Moderne style since the inception of the firm in 1946. The library building was the apotheosis of this phase of his career and undoubtedly influenced the design of the Los Angeles County Courthouse in 1959 and Hall of Administration in 1960. Those two buildings were designed in collaboration with four other architects, Paul R. Williams, William F. Stockwell, Jess E. Stanton, and Adrian Wilson.

The library building was completed in 1953 at the very beginning of Austin, Field & Fry's most prosperous period and is an excellent example of the high-quality of their designs. By the mid-1950s, the firm started moving away from Late Modern and toward other Modernist idioms. The Otis Art Institute and U.S. Custom House at the Port of Los Angeles, designed in 1957 and 1967 respectively, are later examples of the firm's work in the New Formalist style. Austin, Field & Fry continued forward long after the postwar period. Dale F. Barlow became a partner in 1979,⁶⁶ adding his name to the firm's title, and the firm kept producing work into the early 1990s. By the mid-1990s, however, the firm had dissolved. All its founding members had passed away and Barlow, 73, died in 1996. The firms' legacy will continue to live on, however, in the postwar urban landscape they helped to establish with their designs.

Conclusion

The Los Angeles County Law Library building is eligible under National Register Criteria A and C. Under Criterion A, the building is significant at the state level in the areas of Law and Education as the first and largest county law library in California. It has played an important role in hundreds of thousands of legal cases, especially before online legal archives were created. Under Criterion C, the building is significant at the local level as an excellent example of the Late Moderne style designed by the prominent architectural firm of Austin, Field & Fry. The library was the first building completed in the Civic Center after World War II and established the architectural style of other buildings including the Los Angeles County Courthouse and Hall of Administration.

⁶⁴ "Union Oil Plans Brea Plan for Research" *Los Angeles Times*, July 21, 1949.

⁶⁵ Austin's experience also included serving as vice-chair of the Civic Center-Union Station Committee formed in late 1937. He prepared a Civic Center scheme for the committee in 1938.

⁶⁶ "New Partner," *Los Angeles Times*, January 14, 1979.

Los Angeles County Law Library
Name of Property

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9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

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"Austin, Field & Fry." Architect Biographies. Los Angeles Conservancy. Accessed January 2, 2025. <https://www.laconservancy.org/learn/architect-biographies/austin-field-fry/>.

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Newmark, Marco R. "John C. Austin," *Historical Profiles – IV*, 342.

Robinson, William W. *Lawyers of Los Angeles: A history of the Los Angeles Bar Association and of the Bar of Los Angeles County*. Los Angeles: The Ward Ritchie Press, 1959.

Sanborn Map, 1951, vol. 2, sheet 271.

Watson, Benjamin. "Origins of California's County Law Library System." *Law Library Journal*, 81, No. 241 (1989) 241-252.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
☐ previously listed in the National Register
☒ previously determined eligible by the National Register
☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
☐ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- ☐ State Historic Preservation Office
☐ Other State agency
☐ Federal agency
☐ Local government
☐ University
☒ Other

Name of repository: Los Angeles County Law Library

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: 1.9 acres

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

Latitude: 34.054629

Longitude: -118.245648

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Assessor Parcel Number 5161-005-912, which corresponds with the **Boundary Map**.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary is that historically associated with the library building.

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11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Teresa Grimes and Annabelle Loveman
organization: Teresa Grimes | Historic Preservation
street & number: 40 Arroyo Drive, Unit 101
city or town: Pasadena state: CA zip code: 91105
e-mail: Teresa.Grimes@icloud.com
telephone: (323) 868-2391
date: February 2025; Revised March 2025

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Los Angeles County Law Library
City or Vicinity: Los Angeles
County: Los Angeles
State: California
Photographer: Teresa Grimes
Date Photographed: September 12, 2024

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1 of 11 Library, view facing northwest toward 1st Street and Broadway
- 2 of 11 Library, view facing northwest toward south and east elevations (1st Street and Broadway)

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- 3 of 11 Library, view facing northeast across plaza and toward south elevation (1st Street)
- 4 of 11 Library, view facing north toward main entrance on south elevation (1st Street)
- 5 of 11 Library, view facing southwest toward east elevation (Broadway)
- 6 of 11 Library addition, view facing northwest toward north end of east elevation (Broadway)
- 7 of 11 Library addition, view facing southeast toward north and west elevations, parking garage on right (Civic Center Mall and Hill Street)
- 8 of 11 Library addition, view facing southwest toward decorative panels on north elevation (Civic Center Mall)
- 9 of 11 Library addition, view facing southeast toward west elevation (Hill Street) and across upper level of parking garage
- 10 of 11 Library lobby, view facing south toward main entrance
- 11 of 11 Library reading room, view facing west

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for nominations to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

Tier 1 – 60-100 hours
Tier 2 – 120 hours
Tier 3 – 230 hours
Tier 4 – 280 hours

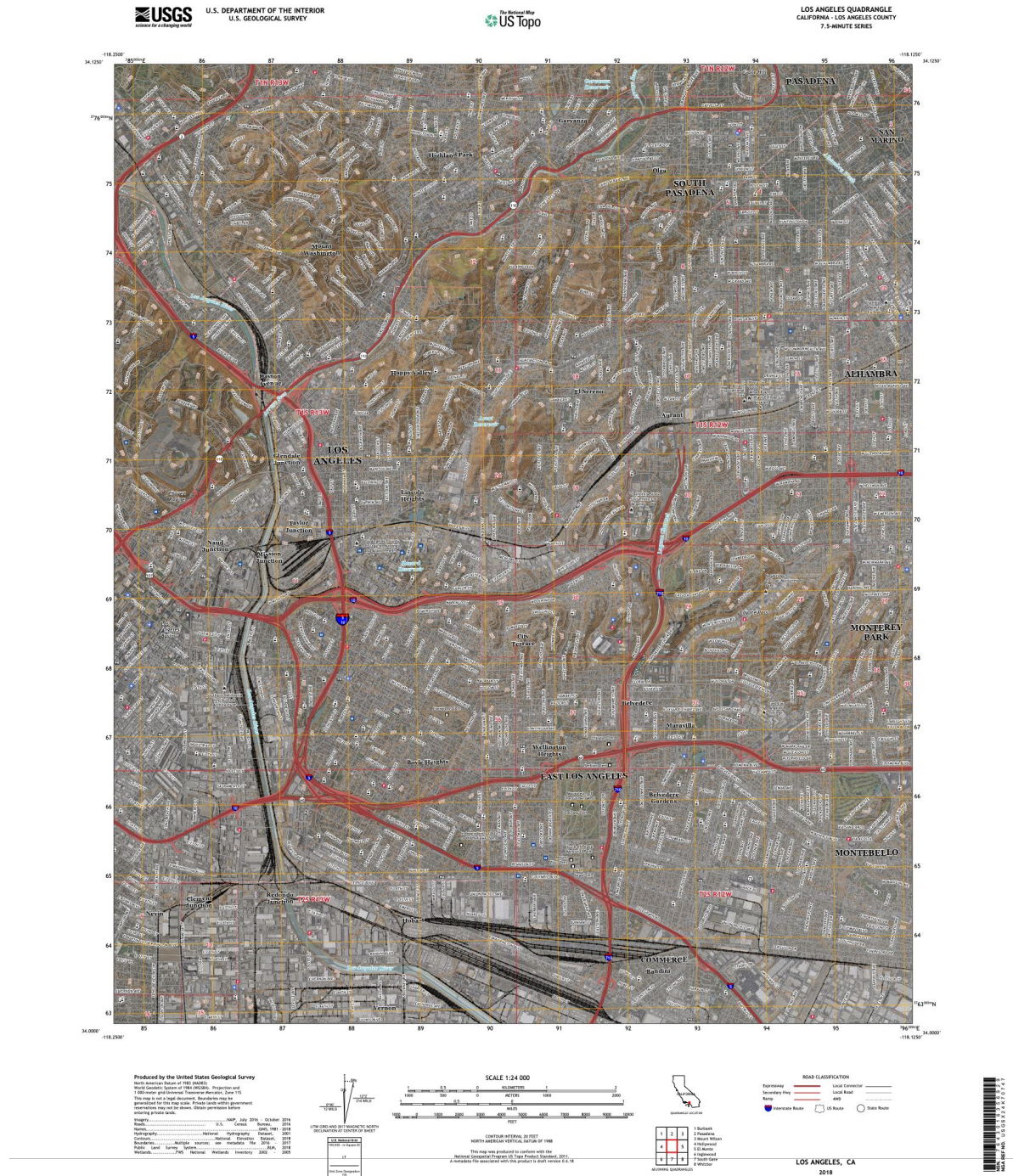
The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting nominations. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201 Oakridge Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525.

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Location Map

USGS Los Angeles Quad



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Boundary Map

Base map courtesy of Los Angeles Office of the Assessor, property boundary outlined in yellow



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Sketch Map/Photo Key

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Figure 1 When was first founded, the Los Angeles County Law Library was housed in the County Courthouse. Constructed in 1891, the building was damaged in the Long Beach earthquake in 1933 and demolished in 1936. In the background, Los Angeles City Hall is still under construction, 1928. Source: Los Angeles Public Library



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Figure 2 Looking northeast across the 1st and Hill Streets intersection, Los Angeles County Law Library on right and Hill Street Tunnel (not extant) on left, circa 1953. Source: Los Angeles Public Library



Figure 3 Looking west towards Broadway and 1st Street intersection, Los Angeles County Law Library on right and County Courthouse under construction on left, 1959. Source: Los Angeles Public Library



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Figure 4 Looking northwest at intersection of 1st Street and Broadway, 1969. Source: Los Angeles Public Library



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Photo 1 Library, view facing northwest toward 1st Street and Broadway



Photo 2 Library, view facing northwest toward south and east elevations (1st Street and Broadway)



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Photo 3 Library, view facing northeast across plaza and toward south elevation (1st Street)



Photo 4 Library, view facing north toward main entrance on south elevation (1st Street)



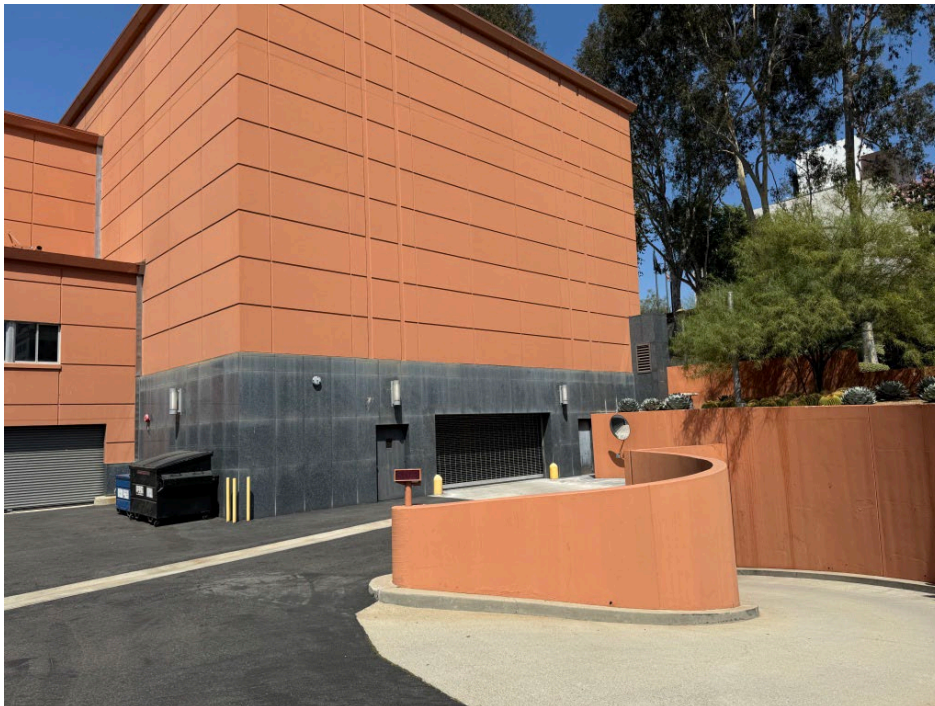
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Photo 5 Library, view facing southwest toward east elevation (Broadway)



Photo 6 Library addition, view facing northwest toward north end of east elevation



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Photo 7 Library addition, view facing southeast toward north and west elevations (Civic Center Mall and Hill Street), parking garage on right



Photo 8 Library addition, view facing southwest toward decorative panels on north elevation (Civic Center Mall)



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Photo 9 Library addition, view facing southeast toward west elevation (Hill Street) and across upper level of parking garage



Photo 10 Library lobby, view facing south toward main entrance



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Photo 11 Library reading room, view facing west

