

**New York Public Library (Stephen A. Schwarzman Building), Main Reading Room (known as Rose Main Reading Room) and Catalog Room (known as Bill Blass Public Catalog Room), third floor.**

476 Fifth Avenue (aka 460-476 Fifth Avenue, 1 West 40<sup>th</sup> Street, 11 West 40th Street, 2 West 42nd Street), Borough of Manhattan

Block / Lot: 1257/1

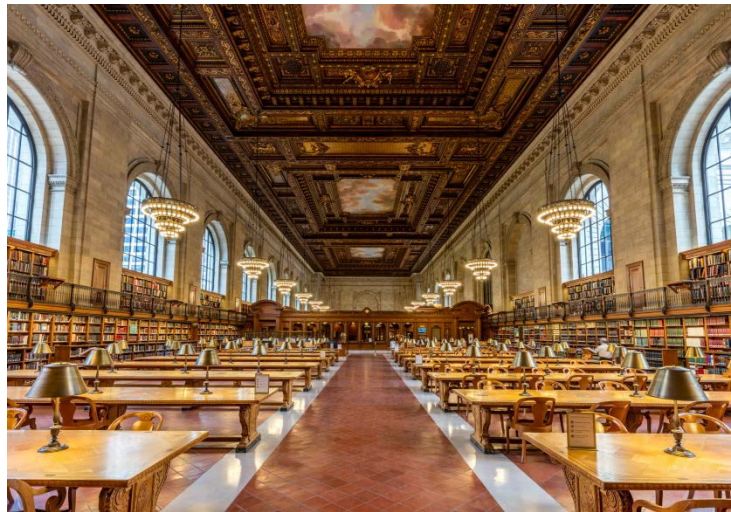
Built: 1900-1911

Architect: Carrere & Hastings

Style: Beaux Arts

Actions: Item Proposed for Calendar June 6, 2017

The Rose Main Reading Room and the Bill Blass Public Catalog Room, on the third floor of the New York Public Library Stephen A. Schwarzman Building, are among the finest public interiors in New York City. Masterpieces of Beaux-Arts design, they are the library's principal public research spaces, central to its civic and intellectual role and to the experience of the scholars and writers who study there.



John Shaw Billings, the library's first director, conceived the building's general plan and the placement of the Main Reading Room on the third floor, atop the library stacks and elevated above the city streets. Carrere & Hastings won the 1897 architectural competition and realized Billings' vision with their elegant Beaux Arts plan, designing a magnificent reading room as the culmination of a dramatic ceremonial route from Fifth Avenue. The New York Public Library opened in 1911, and became an Individual Landmark in 1968; its primary circulation spaces including Astor Hall, the central stairs and third floor McGraw Rotunda, were designated as New York City's first Interior Landmark in 1974.

The Bill Blass Public Catalog Room and Rose Main Reading Room are the primary destinations for visitors, especially students and scholars who use the library's world-renowned research collections. The grand volumes are distinguished by their impressive scale and symmetry, fine finishes, and artistic craftsmanship including carved woodwork, glazed and gilded plaster ornamentation, and electric chandeliers. Both have 52-foot tall ceilings and large arched windows that fill these rooms with natural light. The Public Catalog Room is 81 feet long and 67 feet wide, and the nearly two-block long Main Reading Room is 297 feet long and 78 feet wide. Of particular note are the molded plaster ceilings, immense fields of decorative relief that frame colorful murals of illuminated clouds, originally painted by James Wall Fine.

Closed for repairs and restoration in 2014, these Beaux Arts masterpieces were reopened to the public with great fanfare in 2016, which presents a wonderful opportunity to celebrate their architectural, civic, and cultural significance, and to complete the ceremonial route to the Library's primary public reading room.



Bill Blass Public Catalog Room

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