



Won't the Brazilian Athens deserve a "Wedding Cake"? A building for the Maranhão Public Library¹

E não merecerá a Atenas Brasileira um “Bolo de Noiva”? Um prédio para a Biblioteca Pública do Maranhão.

¿Y no se merece la Atenas brasileña una “Tarta de Bodas”? Un edificio para la Biblioteca Pública de Maranhão.

Cesar Augusto Castro
Universidade Federal do Maranhão (Brazil)
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7650-895X>
<http://lattes.cnpq.br/2060977814636465>
cesar.castro@ufma.br

Luciana Nathalia Morais Furtado
Universidade Federal do Maranhão (Brazil)
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1874-9832>
<http://lattes.cnpq.br/0094306459208639>
lucianafurtado10@gmail.com

Samuel Luis Velázquez Castellanos
Universidade Federal do Maranhão (Brazil)
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0849-348X>
<http://lattes.cnpq.br/5639830901440817>
samuel.velazquez@ufma.br

Abstract

In this article we discuss the history of the Maranhão Public Library, with an emphasis on demands for construction of a permanent building to house its collections and serve its readers. First, we contextualize the library in the Imperial Period; next, we consider the debates that arose in the Republic; and then, we address the construction of a permanent building. To do so, we use several documental sources, highlighting reports of Library directors analyzed from the perspective of Cultural History. We conclude that the construction of the building for the institution constituted a movement generated for that purpose, which ends in the 1950s when the building was constructed and handed over to the society of Maranhão. The library has occupied the building in São Luís since then.

Keywords: Library history. Maranhão Library. Library building.

¹ English version by Lloyd John Friedrich. E-mail: lloydfriedrich@hotmail.com.

Resumo

Tratamos neste artigo da trajetória da Biblioteca Pública no Maranhão com destaque para as reivindicações para a construção de um prédio definitivo para alojar o seu acervo e atender seus leitores. Em princípio, tratamos de situar a Biblioteca no período imperial, depois, abordamos os debates estabelecidos na República e, em seguida, a construção da sua edificação permanente. Para tanto, utilizamos fontes documentais diversas com destaque para os relatórios dos seus diretores, analisados a partir da História Cultural. Concluímos que a construção do prédio da instituição se constituiu em um movimento que tem a sua gênese na sua criação e se encerra na década de 1950, quando é edificado e entregue à sociedade maranhense o prédio que a biblioteca desde então ocupa em São Luís.

Palavras-chave: História da Biblioteca. Biblioteca do Maranhão. Edifício da Biblioteca.

Resumen

En este artículo, discutimos la trayectoria de la Biblioteca Pública en Maranhão con énfasis en las reivindicaciones para la construcción de un edificio definitivo para albergar su colección y atender sus lectores. En principio, tratamos de situar la Biblioteca en la época imperial, luego, nos acercamos a los debates establecidos en la República y, posteriormente, la construcción de su edificio permanente. Para ello, utilizamos diversas fuentes documentales con énfasis en los informes de sus directores, analizados desde la Historia de la Cultura. Concluimos que la construcción del edificio de la institución se constituyó en un movimiento que tiene su génesis en su creación y termina en la década de 1950, cuando construye y entrega a la sociedad de Maranhão el edificio que desde entonces ocupa la biblioteca en São Luís.

Palabras clave: Historia de la Biblioteca. Biblioteca de Maranhão. Edificio de la Biblioteca.

Introduction

This study is within the set of investigations developed by the Núcleo de Estudos e Documentação em História da Educação e Práticas Leitoras – NEDHEL (Group for Study and Documentation of History of Education and Reading Practices) that aim at revealing the practices of subjects (librarians, typographers, editors, authors, etc.) and the spaces of social practices and of memory, such as libraries and reading rooms, in different time periods and places, including the Imperial Period to the 1860s of the Republic in the specific case of Maranhão.

For that purpose, we have drawn on a diverse set of documental sources, such as reports of the presidents / governors of the province / state, of the directors of the libraries, legal instruments (laws, decrees, regulations, etc.), catalogs, and the press (pedagogical and general), that contribute to placing ourselves within the institutions and daily practices of their workers.

We understand that the buildings, the furnishings, the catalogs, and other artifacts within the library institutions² constitute the objects of the material culture of the library, here understood, within the sense of Julia (2001), as the school culture, which is fitting for an understanding of this concept. They represent:

a set of norms that define knowledge to be taught and behavior to instill and a set of practices that allow the transmission of this knowledge and incorporation of these behaviors; norms and practices coordinated to purposes that can vary according to the periods (religious, sociopolitical, or simply socialization purposes). Norms and practices cannot be analyzed without taking into account the professional body of the workers that are called to obey these orders (JULIA, 2001, p.12).

The theoretical-methodological excerpts from Cultural History, centered on De Certeau (1994) and Chartier (1988), among other authors, help us consider the places of memory from the concept traversed by the notion of culture, worthy of being investigated by historians of library institutions.

Therefore, the aim is to understand the actions of the librarians and public administrators in establishing permanent facilities for the Maranhão Public Library in the 1950s. First, we discuss its creation in the Imperial Period and then the facts that led to the process of its permanent physical embodiment.

1. A building for the library

In this perspective, we present the processes and the debates that contributed to creating the current building of the Public Library from 1918 to 1951, particularly political-economic factors directly related to financial resources of government origin for its development. In addition, the innovative measures of the administrators were indispensable for resolving the structural deadlocks brought about by constant changes of address and small physical repairs.

A priori, we identify the contributory actions of the directors in favor of the institution, since they participated in the process of conceiving tactics for the purpose of modifying the Public Library and were the main promoters for creating the legislation for construction and

² We understand these as studies relating to the history of libraries (furniture, building, collection), differing from the library aspects related to the action of the subjects that act within the institutions and in outside movements (unions and associations, for example) and, finally, librarianship studies related to the profession, such as teaching, work market, etc.

the fulfillment of this norm. Said tactics can be understood as ways of acting through measures that break impositions so as to benefit the Library.

Significant factors in the history of the Maranhão Public Library were the constant changes of address in the city of São Luís and the neglect concerning problems of a structural and organizational nature. We are interested in understanding the path taken by the institution considering physical disorders, because material losses were notable throughout its history. In spite of these deficiencies, readers frequented the institution in search of knowledge.

Opportunities for creation of the Library are due to factors of a period of economic prosperity that date back to the reorganization of the Greater Pará and Maranhão Commercial Organization (Companhia de Comércio Grão-Pará e Maranhão) through measures of the statesman Pombal (MEIRELES, 1980). This situation favored those of greater means in Maranhão from the end of the eighteenth century, who sent their children to study in Europe. Upon returning to São Luís, they enriched the cultural practices of society, representing progress in their place of origin.

Accordingly, these aspects are relevant in the process of emergence of the Public Library on September 24, 1829, through the proposal made by Costa Ferreira³, and officially open to the public on May 3, 1831. The Library was set up in one of the rooms of the Carmo Convent, which consisted of a location that was inadequate and improvised for its organization and operation. In that period, “the position of director was under the command of Pastor Dr. Antônio Bernardo da Encarnação e Silva⁴, along with two employees, Alexandre de Morais Rego, in guard position, and a servant” (SILVA, 2008, p.23) at the cost of three hundred and fifty thousand “réis”.

Financial dependence on provincial resources hurt the operation of the library when, in 1835, the institution “entered into an ever-greater phase of decline as it did not have material resources available to grow at least in proportion to the growth of the city” (MORAES, 1973, p. 17). The situation of abandonment led to problems, worsening its physical structure, because “it was necessary to put on a new roof, the walls needed painting, and the place needed new furniture and modern works” (PINHEIRO, 2004, p.43). Restorations were requested by Trajano Cândido dos Reis – the Library director in 1844, who obtained negative responses, impeding physical and bibliographical growth of the Library.

The Library was attached to the Maranhão Lyceum School (*Liceu Maranhense*) in the 1850s and remained in its helpless state with the same low funding, which amounted to a negligible amount (“one ‘conto’ and two hundred thousand ‘réis’”), insufficient for its maintenance, “accumulating the disorders brought about in its facilities” (MORAES, 1973, p. 17). This state persisted when it was transferred to the Maranhão Literary Institute (*Instituto Literário Maranhense*⁵), remaining at this address until 1872, a period that we consider as a phase of relative “bibliographical and physical progress” upon incorporating important works of authors from France, Maranhão, and Brazil in its collection. Nevertheless, the Literary Institute was not able to maintain the Library, with the justification that expenses exceeded its budget, and handed it over to the *Sociedade Onze de Agosto*.

Its incorporation in a private entity had positive results “due to the commitment and zeal of the director of the *Sociedade*, Dr. Antonio de Almeida Oliveira, who was able to

³ Antônio Pedro da Costa Ferreira, the *Barão de Pindaré*, was born in Alcântara on December 16, 1778, and died in Rio de Janeiro on July 18, 1860. A bust of him is in the entrance of the Benedito Leite Public Library in honor of his conceiving of creation of the Provincial Public Library in 1826. Costa Ferreira held the following public offices: general representative, president of the province of Maranhão, and senator of the Empire, a position he held for 25 years and exercised upon his death (MORAES, 1995, p. 254).

⁴ Literary figure of Maranhão that was part of the first generation of the Athens of Maranhão (SILVA, 2008, p.23).

⁵ The Literary Institute, like the Library, occupied the Carmo Convent and had been created on March 25, 1865, directed by Antonio Henrique Leal and Antonio Rego with the aim of carrying out studies in history, geography, and ethnography of Maranhão and expanding teaching (CASTRO; PINHEIRO, 2006, p. 42).

lessen the damage caused by constant changes in physical space” (SILVA, 2008, p.26). This *Sociedade* was created for the purpose of offering Maranhão workers night school to begin literacy training and training in disciplines that would contribute to carrying out their work activities, such as mechanics, arithmetic, and geometry, among others. We can infer that the Library connected with private initiative was able to fulfill its main role of promoting culture, gaining a worthy environment and “[...] good operating conditions, dedicating space and equipment to the safekeeping of all parts of its collection” (MORAES, 1973, p. 20). However, because of financial difficulties, the *Sociedade Onze de Agosto* gave over its building in order to pay off its debts.

In 1884, by determination of the representatives and of the president of the province, the Provincial Legislative Assembly, which occupied one of the rooms of the Carmo Convent and held its sessions in the consistory of the Cathedral, granted by the bishops of the diocese, decided, through lack of necessary convenience and space, its transfer to the aforementioned building, where it continued; and for that purpose, it carried out some indispensable repairs. The transfer of the Assembly to the *Sociedade Onze de Agosto* ends up totally destabilizing its activities, especially the operation of the public library, and it returns to its first center of operations (Carmo Convent), which had been occupied up to then by the legislative authority (CASTELLANOS, 2011, p. 70-71).

Once again under public authority⁶, it resumed its history in the rooms of the Carmo Convent and remained abandoned, with poor conservation of its collection and physical and organizational disorder, contributing to a halt in its activities.

The history of the Provincial Public Library, through deterioration of its collection, by the absence of funding (for restoration and for operation), and by the non-existence of purchases of new material, seemed to have come to its end. Little by little, it ceases to exist, until arriving at the time of its disappearance, brought about by a general lack of concern, a reality that suggested to some that its existence was unnecessary (CASTELLANOS, 2010, p. 129).

The measures taken by the Province upon moving the Public Library to various places in São Luís led to organizational instability because of material losses in its collection, structural disturbances (from disorders brought about by moving and lack of space), an unhealthy environment, lack of physical conditions, and other problems.

With the Republic, in 1895, the institution is reopened and various legal provisions are created – projects and laws to ensure its structuring. Within this process, the figures of Benedito Leite⁷ and João Tolentino Guedelha Mourão⁸ stand out, politicians that presented measures in favor of the institution to the Legislative Congress, with nomination of Professor José Ribeiro

⁶ After bankruptcy, the *Sociedade Onze de Agosto* handed the Library over once more to provincial public authorities; that is, it returned to be maintained by public funding.

⁷ A Law Degree from the *Escola do Recife*, magistrate in various Districts of Maranhão, Treasury Inspector, member of two Governing Councils, Congressman, Federal Representative, and Governor of the State of Maranhão from 1906 to 1910; died on March 6, 1909, without finishing his term of office (VIVEIROS, 1960, p. 155).

⁸ Priest, Doctor in Canon Law by the Seminary of Saint Sulpice, Secretary of the Bishop of Pará (VIVEIROS, 1960, p. 155).

do Amaral⁹ as director, who made efforts directed to the acquisition of works, spread information of services through local periodicals, implemented new projects for reading, and created regulatory measures in 1898. In the face of deficiencies experienced since its creation in 1829 up to the beginning of the Republic, the public institution still tried to assume a place in society in Maranhão through users of the library and those with a passion for reading.

Due to inadequate appropriations, we observe that the solution to the structural problem would be the construction of an adequate location for its operation, along with the indispensable public commitment to making sufficient funds available to maintain essential services such as cleaning of the environment and the collection. We understand that from the accomplishments of the directors and from their requests, organizational growth, projects directed to reading, and the acquisition of works through purchases or donations were factors that aimed at increasing its activities in benefit of the society of Maranhão.

2. In search of a new location

Throughout its history and far-flung journey, the Library has required a space compatible with its activities. With the aim of maintaining the organization of books, the visits of readers, and updating of its collection, measures were taken by its directors, as described. In this chapter, we highlight the factors that contributed to delay in execution of Law no. 860 of 1918 in regard to the 1920s and 1930s. In spite of the physical conditions of the building and the limited nature of renovation projects, the Library was still able to carry out activities directed toward the population of São Luis. Since this period is marked by near disregard for the history of this institution of Maranhão, we have used the official government gazette (*Diário Oficial*) as a source of analysis.

Direction of the Library was under the responsibility of Raimundo Furtado da Silva, who assumed that function in 1923. As a result of political and economic factors, the physical situation of the Library had been set aside and forgotten until the middle of 1927, at which time it was transferred to the building on Rua da Paz (Paz Street). We emphasize that after creation of Law no. 860 of 1918, which determined the construction or adaptation of the building, there was no positive response from the state of Maranhão. We describe the factors that contributed to the delay in execution of this legislation. Therefore, we analyze the socio-political constructs involved, as well as the economic factors that contributed to the physical neglect.

In the middle of the 1920s, the Public Library continued on the ground floor of the Legislative Congress, with losses in the book collection and in the artistic collections of Arthur Azevedo. In order to avoid complete ruin of the artistic collections, the governor Godofredo Viana stated that “it would be good for the state to contract the History and Geography Institute recently founded in this capital city for organization of a museum, delivering all objects to it” (MARANHÃO, 1926, p. 40). The intention of the governor was to create the museum in the History and Geography Institute and to send the artistic collections that were in the Library there. The solution would be to rent a building in order to house the museum and the sections in reference to the History and Geography Institute.

These artistic collections were of inestimable value for their rarity and required physical care; yet they were neglected under the keeping of the Library. We observe that the alternative of the governor would be valid because otherwise the objects would be ruined, but would be conserved when placed in another environment. Thus, the question, why not organize the Library and preserve all the rare collections it had?

⁹ José Ribeiro do Amaral was born on May 3, 1853 and died on April 30, 1927. He was a teacher and historiographer, director of the State Public Library, a founding member of the Maranhão Literary Academy and its first president, and corresponding member of the Brazilian History and Geography Institute (LUZ, 1954).

We emphasize that libraries can prosper in an economically organized society in which the population is instructed, with stimulus from the government for its development, among other criteria judged to be important, so that a structure can be provided for these institutions (GOMES, 1983). These political-economic factors were seriously affected in Maranhão. This was due to changes in governors, to economic crises arising from external loans, to financing for services of water supply, sewage, light, and electric transport systems, as well as to other problems with social consequences, such as flooding of the Itapecuru, Mearim, and Parnaíba Rivers (1924) that destroyed crop fields and rail lines (with submerged tracks). This crisis lasted until the middle of 1926 (LIMA, 2010).

With the change in governing authority since the establishment of the Republic, which implemented a contrary system in the period from 1926 to 1930, we note that the governor Magalhães de Almeida had authoritarian characteristics, presenting a partisanship destructive to the people (LIMA, 2010). In his government, he adopted contingency spending due to the financial crisis and, in spite of his imperious style, he visited the Library in August 1927 and observed the physical deficiencies it was subject to and, for that reason, took actions, ordering the transfer from the building of the Legislative Congress to the Rua da Paz, naming Alfredo de Assis Castro as director.

In 1927, under the direction of Alfredo de Assis Castro – a highly prestigious intellectual from Maranhão – the Library left the ground floor of the Legislative Congress and was transferred to the building of the Rua da Paz; after that move, the Library came to receive more visits for it was near two schools. For better accommodation of the Library, some repairs were requested in the internal structures of the building. Assis Castro pointed out the poor state of abandonment the books and other objects were in (SILVA, 2008, p. 67).

The internal repairs requested were granted in the middle of 1928 through the petition of Assis Castro as a result of the procedure of cleaning the building and books (DIÁRIO OFICIAL, 1928). In regard to organization of the works, an inventory of the collection would be necessary since there were more books than contained in the catalog (FERNANDES, 2003), with the classification developed by Melvil Dewey¹⁰. These measures increased visits from children, due to the organization made in the collection, with greater accuracy in consulting books, and the building “became a center of reading and consultation in the Rua da Paz, with physical repairs to its structure” (DIÁRIO OFICIAL, 1929).

In relation to the transfers in location of the Library, numerous material losses stand out, such as objects of Numismatics, 4 medals and 129 coins (6 of silver and 123 of copper), objects that were part of the numismatics collection that the institution had in a complete form. In spite of these losses, the director facilitated means of organization of the Library, putting into practice the plan requested of him of enhancing the institution. In this regard, he commemorated the first centennial of the Maranhão Public Library in 1929 when he organized a solemnity in remembrance of its golden periods, and he described its history since the time of its creation on September 29, 1829.

Assis Castro organized the solemnity in the Public Library with the intention of recalling its importance throughout all the years of its existence. In the same year, there were acquisitions and donations of books; and visits to the Library were increasing through the organizational advantages of the collection promoted by Assis Castro, because of consultations and the number of works in the Library.

¹⁰The Dewey Decimal Classification System (DDC, also known as the Dewey Decimal System) is a documentary classification system developed by Melvil Dewey (1851–1931) in 1876 and, since then, enormously modified and expanded over twenty-two large revisions (www.wikipedia.com, 2012).

PUBLIC LIBRARY

The first centennial of the foundation of our Library occurred on September 24. Its illustrious director Dr. Alfredo de Assis Castro took the initiative of marking the event with a special session performed that day in which he read a complete study on the life of the important establishment, which is a glorious tradition of our land. The book collection was increased with some books bought by respective funding and with various donations, noteworthy of which are 185 volumes of legal works sent by the Municipal Government of Tury-assú and which belonged to the former governor Luiz Domingues, as well as a collection of railroad legislation of Brazil, from 1871 to 1919, offered by the director of the S. Luiz - Therezina Railroad, the engineer Teixeira Brandão. Reaping the benefits of its transfer to the building it is currently in, the Library has achieved more visits and has provided the public with ease of consultation and reading of the thousands of volumes that compose it. Visits to the library last year were from 4,712 readers (DIÁRIO OFICIAL, 1929).

The effort of the director in organizing the collection was a prominent aspect of his administration, because the works were disorganized among the changes of buildings, for the number of books was greater than what was listed in the catalog. However, at the end of the First Republic, Alfredo de Assis Castro left the position, and in his place, Raimundo Correa de Araújo was nominated and assumed direction on March 10, 1930.

In relation to the tenure of this director, in his communication to the general-secretary Demosthenes Macedo, he argued that while he remained on the board of directors of the Library, the constant desire was to fully and faithfully carry out the operational duties fitting to him, corresponding to the desires manifested by the governor of the state, Cesar Alexandre Aboud (DIÁRIO OFICIAL, 1930), although “upon effectively assuming the position, his misunderstandings as head of the state led to rough administration, containing leave of absence, suspension, lack of availability, transfers, etc. during this period” (MORAES, 1973, p. 40). Because of the disagreements between the director and the governor, matters related to the institution were of secondary importance and, in 1931, the Library was temporarily set up in another two-story building at no. 107 on Rua da Paz, beginning renovation, because the outside structure of its building threatened to collapse, and it returned to the repaired building in 1933.

In this period, financial difficulties arose in the state budget, which assigned no disbursements for acquisition of books and maintenance of indispensable services such as cleaning, disinfection, binding, etc. Thus, the director Correa de Araújo demanded an “increase in the salaries” of the public servants of the institution, which had been frozen since 1920. In this regard, Silva (2008) highlights that:

According to analysis of the reports, we judge that there was great dissatisfaction of the employees in relation to their salaries, which had been frozen since 1920. Most of the employees of the library assumed the function through love and commitment to culture and public education. Seeing the usefulness of this institution and, furthermore, through awareness of the lack of readjustment of salaries, the director Correa Araújo sent an official letter to the General Secretary of the State requesting an increase in the funds directed to payment of the employees of the Library; this request, however, was not met (SILVA, 2008, p. 69).

These manners of acting can be understood as their tactics because they understood that in serving the Library, they showed its considerable usefulness to society, even with salary difficulties. In this respect, we perceive the commitment of the director upon making the request for a salary increase for those who provided services to the Library; and through the strategies and tactics of Certeau, we seek to understand how the measures that provided for the operation of the institution were carried out. The measures used in the physical aspect were related to annual cleaning of the shelves and books. In this regard, the director Raimundo Correa de Araújo requested mending and repairs in the external part of the building (DIÁRIO OFICIAL, 1930).

His actions concerning the collection were directed to acquisitions and donations, which were routine activities that helped to maintain the number of visits of readers in the institution. These groups, mostly of children, were encouraged by the number of textbooks in the Public Library acquired by the director and by the location of the Library very near schools. The Library also opened on Sundays, leading to an increase in visits to the institution.

The positive results regarding visits of children were due to measures adopted by the director who affirmed that “our library, with the intention of assisting public instruction, will seek to acquire every textbook that the students of any course request to its board of directors” (DIÁRIO OFICIAL, 1931). There was also the determination to keep the Library in operation on Sundays (DIÁRIO OFICIAL, 1931) (see Table 2). Nevertheless, the female public had declined compared to the period of administration of Antônio Lobo, who innovated in creating a reading room reserved for women. In the official government gazettes (*Diários Oficiais*) of this period, incentives to students were more evident, through measures adopted for public instruction.

We believe that the increase in visits to the Library was due to the acquisition of new books, to the bindings made in the official press of books belonging to the institution, to obtaining textbooks serving as a support for public instruction, as well as operation on Sundays, and to being located near public schools. The growth in readers shows the positive results of the measures employed by this director, contributing to affirmation of the Library in society.

Captain Antônio Martins de Almeida (1935) affirmed that “sought by the government is construction of a building with all the architectural requirements, sanitary work locations that depend on extraordinary resources” (MARANHÃO, 1935, p.12). Although the number of visits had increased, we do not perceive effective improvements in relation to its physical structure. The inadequate facilities were also mentioned some time later by the state controller Paulo Ramos (1938): “undoubtedly regrettable was the situation the Public Library was in on the date of my investiture in the state government” (MARANHÃO, 1938, p. 4). The non-compliance with Law no. 860 of 1918 resulted in damaged collections and the terrible state of conservation of the building. The structural problems were recurrent over long periods and the argumentation of the directors was pertinent in the institutional history that culminated in the construction of the permanent place for this Public Library.

Given this situation, the governor ordered repairs to be made in the roof of the floor of all the facilities of the Library, including restoration of bookshelves and expansion of the reading room. Although Law no. 860 of 1918 refers to construction or adaptation of the building for the Library, in the following decades, the adjustments and repairs did not have the desired effect and the collections were larger than the structure of the building in which they were located. The solution to the century-old impasse would be to construct a permanent space for the institution.

This renovation was completed and handed over to the public on March 26, 1939, and the Library came to be well frequented. In this same year, it was supported by the state budget for restoration of the damaged volumes, more than 5000 in number, which was performed in the binding shops of the Official Government Press.

The number of visits increased in 1940, arriving at a total of 31,188 readers. We infer that this occurred as a result of the actions taken by Correa de Araujo. In spite of that, the physical evolution of the library did not go beyond repairs in its structure, and the strong need remained for construction of a building with all operational conditions for the Public Library, with ample space for accommodating people and collections.

We have exhibited the neglect of the Maranhão Public Library, because promotion of this institution was disguised and camouflaged because of the power relationships used by oligarchical groups who were not interested in functional improvements. We have emphasized that construction of the location appropriate for the Public Library was a constant in the discourses of its administrators. In the next chapter, we examine the figures that directly imposed the required construction of a permanent location.

3. An establishment worthy of cultural traditions

We have presented the history of the Public Library through its daily life in time and space, emphasizing the factors that contributed to organizational and structural advances. These factors collaborated to fulfill the dream of construction of a permanent building. Throughout its history, the Library enabled significant encouragement in construction of educational and cultural advances in the state with its reading rooms. However, the deficiencies indicated did not impede the directors from achieving their measures, though sometimes modest, but with higher intentions, including presumably the idea of the Library representing a cultural asset necessary for the state of Maranhão.

During the 1940s, the interchange of students from the librarianship course from Rio de Janeiro brought new methodologies that assisted in organization of the Public Library. The institution had the mission of instructing the general population as an extension of Public Instruction, a fact that promoted discussions regarding the construction of a space dedicated to that purpose.

It is noteworthy that the library movement of Maranhão, with the participation of Josué Montello, who coordinated the courses of the National Library, assisted students with a system of scholarships. The movement had the support of the governor Saturnino Belo, who proposed educational reforms in the 1940s; the governor “[...] observed that the library was not adequate regarding evolution in the librarianship area” (BOTTENTUIT; CASTRO, 2000 p. 43), and that it was necessary to train people that could change this situation. Among those from Maranhão who went to Rio de Janeiro to take the librarianship course, Aricely Moreira Lima stands out. She later assumed direction of the Library and remained in the position for four years (1948-1952), a period in which she actively participated in carrying out the aforementioned Law no. 860 of 1918.

From that time on, the primary factor in the struggle of this director would be to recognize the institution as a “great school”, that is, the contribution of the body to the school context. She thus promoted child, youth, and adult reading. These arguments highlighted the need for construction of a building for the library, as emphasized in an article published in the local press:

The educational problem is serious and attempts at resolution hope to achieve success. In the evolution of teaching, it has been proven that the library is the first great school democratically made for the people; let us put aside the notion of seeing the library solely as a book deposit. We feel the urgency of transforming this house into an active laboratory of intelligent minds. According to my official communication no. 65, directed to your excellency, on 16 June, 1948, I left no doubt of the alarming situation in which I came to find this house; I request Your

Excellency at this time to construct an adequate home for our State Public Library. I know that opposing opinions will arise to this measure held by me as urgent. [...] To request a home for this people, Mr. Governor, is not luxury; it is the same as requesting the creation of schools, hospitals, asylums, and all else of which we have pressing need (DIÁRIO POPULAR, 1951, p. 1).

The director argued in respect to several problems of the people that required immediate solution, both in essential services and in commitment to the Library. She made mention of the activity of past administrators, emphasizing the demands of earlier times. The governor then spoke out in relation to her petitions as a result of her persuasive arguments in which she warned of the critical situation of the structure and organization of the Library. In response, he gave his opinion regarding the importance of the institution, expressing his belief that it was directly linked to popular education and deserved to be considered in instructive programs, citing it as an integral part of the system (MARANHÃO, 1950).

Thus, the cartographer, draftsman, and designer João Magalhães de Araujo was hired in 1941 for one year by the General Secretary of State to design the Public Library, to be executed by the engineer Dr. Antonio Baima. The total cost was Cr\$ 3,850,000.00 and in accordance with forms that honored the cultural traditions of Maranhão (MARANHÃO, 1949). Construction work began in 1949, with a reinforced concrete structure of four floors, Doric style columns and a dome of extensive proportions of a monumental appearance, separate reading rooms for adults and children, special facilities for the director, and sections for classification and binding, ending the problem of physical space and promoting organization of the institution.

We highlight its physical structure because it brings us back to the desire of reviving the concept of the Brazilian Athens. In this respect, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the city of São Luís was known for its public figures, such as writers, artists, and politicians that gained intellectual notoriety. We highlight that “ancient Greece is considered by historians as a civilization of great cultural splendor, where philosophy, the arts, sports, technology, and other sciences were developed” (PEREIRA, 2007, p. 64). In the cultural scene of Maranhão, the comparison was experienced within the memory of intellectuals, desiring “an environment that honored the literary traditions” (MARANHÃO, 1948), created with similarity to the Parthenon¹¹ with its Greek Corinthian style columns¹², located at the center point of the city of São Luís since the Greek temple was located at the heights of the city of Athens. In addition, an agora¹³ (public square) was established in front of the institution in Maranhão.

With the beginning of construction, we find political enemies such as Sebastião Archer leveling criticisms in respect to the building, considering it a waste of revenue due to the financial instability of the state. Nevertheless, the governor believed in the undertaking and had the support of Josué Montello¹⁴, who carried out the plan of the technical fixtures through modern librarianship theories of the time, defending the matter under question in the Legislative Assembly.

¹¹ The Parthenon was a temple of the Greek goddess Athena, constructed in the fifth century B.C. in the acropolis of Athens. It is the most known of the buildings remaining from Ancient Greece and was adorned with the best of Greek architecture. Its decorative sculptures are considered one of the high points of Greek art (<http://www.wikipédia.com>).

¹² The Corinthian order is the most ornate of the three Greek and Roman architectural orders. The columns of the Corinthian order have from 9 to 11 times the measure of the diameter (<http://www.wikipédia.com>).

¹³ The agora was the main square in the constitution of the polis, the Greek city of classical antiquity. Normally it was a space free of built structures, where people were accustomed to going, marked by the presence of open-air markets and fairs bordering on it, as well as by buildings of a public nature (<http://www.wikipédia.com>).

¹⁴ Josué de Sousa Montello (São Luís, 21 August 1917 — Rio de Janeiro, 15 March 2006) was a Brazilian journalist, professor, playwright, and writer. Prominent among his works are *Os tambores de São Luís*, of 1965, the trilogy composed by the novellas *Dois vezes perdida*, de 1966, and *Glorinha*, of 1977, and by the novel *Perto da meia-noite*, of 1985. He worked as director of the Brazilian National Library and of the National Theater Service.

On the first floor, I designed the reading room, with its reference services, the vestibule, the catalogs, the accommodations of the public and of the workers. Then, on the second floor, I foresaw [a space for a] children's library, the art museum, and the youth library, fittingly separated by glass walls and with adequate furnishings. On the last floor, I sought to gather all the cultural work of the Institution in a conference hall, with two hundred and four accommodations, as well as a twelve-meter stage, such that [there] would be the natural theater of the intelligence of Maranhão. *All of this, honorable representatives, was designed with equilibrium and good taste, with the plans and designs I submitted to the consideration of the [Honorable] Governor of the State constituting an expressive summary.* (MORAES, 1973, p. 52, our emphasis).

The main argument naturally raised against the facilities of the State Library is that it is a sumptuous work. I think we should repel this adjective outright. Sumptuousness was not the aim, but rather good taste, within the basic conditions of a modern library (MORAES, 1973, p. 55).

When Josué Montello defended the institution in the Legislative Assembly, he questioned “for what reason would we, in our devotion to intellectual traditions, erect a petty temple to culture in the Brazilian Athens?” (MORAES, 1973, p. 51); he argued in respect to the grandeur of the building that by no means could it be erected in any which way, but that the city of São Luis deserved a reading space worthy of its activities. We infer that the “Wedding Cake” (“*Bolo de Noiva*”), as it is commonly known, was not being built only as a decoration, because it had the mission of instructing the population of São Luis, arguments defended by the director Aryceia Moreira Lima and Josué Montello to those interested in their activities.

Josué Montello, in his description of the physical structure of the Library in response to those who thought the work to be of great expense, ends his statement affirming the equilibrium and good taste of what would be the chambers and accommodations of the institution. His role in protecting the institution was important in discussions regarding this structural problem, helping to choose the furniture when he described the design of the technical fixtures for the institutional structure. This native of Maranhão was the director of the National Library of Rio de Janeiro and was to be the person recommended to the governor for creating the design due to his experience.

The document of the technical fixtures consisted of collecting the price quotes from the companies specialized in fixtures and decoration and qualification from the state to request the credit necessary for effective expenses on completely equipping the library, according to modern standards. The cooperation of the director of the National Library was called for in presenting the companies that would bid in providing services for furnishings. There would be four specialized companies:

- 1st – the Piratiningga S.A. furniture factory of São Paulo: cr\$ 4,602,000.00 (four million, six hundred and two thousand cruzeiros);
- 2nd – Sousa Batista S.A. tapestry factory of Rio de Janeiro: cr\$ 4,293,000.00 (four million, two hundred and ninety-three thousand cruzeiros)
- 3rd – Brasileira Fornecedora Escolar S.A. of Sao Paulo: cr\$ 4,221,000.00 (four million, two hundred and twenty-one thousand cruzeiros);
- 4th – G. F. Gunther, of Rio de Janeiro: cr\$ 3,067,000.00 (three million, sixty-seven thousand cruzeiros) (MARANHÃO, 1950, p. 2).

The proposal of the G.F Gunther company of Rio de Janeiro won over the state and was approved, and the budgetary resources were released for acquisition and labor for installation of the furnishings, defined by the bill of law in order to effect the necessary payments:

BILL OF LAW

AUTORIZES the Executive Branch to spend up to the amount of cr\$ 2,783,000.00 (two million, seven hundred and eighty-three thousand cruzeiros) on the acquisition of material and labor necessary for technical fixtures and decoration of the new building of the public library.

art. 1 – the executive branch is authorized to spend the amount of cr\$ 2,783,000.00 (two million, seven hundred and eighty-three thousand cruzeiros) to settle expenses on acquisition of material and labor necessary for technical fixtures and decoration of the new building of the public library of the state.

art. 2 – for execution of the present law, the credit foreseen in the previous article is opened, effective until 31 December 1951.

art. 3 – this law will come into effect on the date of its publication, revoking provisions to the contrary (MARANHÃO, 1950, p. 5).

There were those who were contrary who said the "furnishings were termite nests" (DIÁRIO DE SÃO LUIZ, 1951, p. 1), and thus, covered by anonymity, they defamed the government administration. The claim caused the governor Eugenio Barros to nominate a commission in 1951 to investigate, leading to positive results: the acquisition was of furnishings in perfect condition (DIÁRIO DE SÃO LUIZ, 1951). At the end of construction, Archer defended himself in presenting that the expenses were not small, for the work had been of great proportion, requiring the use of millions. Nevertheless, in spite of the expense, he made a point of announcing to representatives of conservative classes that he had left the public coffers with a balance of more than 16 million cruzeiros.

Without a doubt, this ensures our budgetary balance still in the present year; and Mr. Sebastião Archer da Silva can descend the stairways of the Palácio dos Leões with head held high, at peace with the consequences and certain that, sooner or later, his name will be proclaimed as one of our greatest administrators (JORNAL DO POVO, 1951, p.1).

In the face of this, the news story presented the figure of the governor confronting a campaign that had been advanced by political adversaries to condemn his undertaking. However, on the other hand, he obtained prestige from people of all classes that understood the importance of the work in benefit of the culture of Maranhão. These critiques regarding the construction of the building and regarding the acquisition of adequate furnishings were strategies used by political enemies of the governor Sebastião Archer, leading to poorly based accusations, for the company that provided the technical services had backing in the market:

The attached documentation shows that the firm G. F. Gunther presented the proposal that best served the interests of the State at the overall basis of Cr\$ 3,067,000.00 (three million, sixty-seven thousand cruzeiros). [...] The firm that exhibited the proposal of most reduced prices and that was appreciably

distant from the others presented as credentials of its reputability, among dozens of others, the following major works, which, recently, released it, after winning the respective public tenders in federal administration:

- 1) General Renovation of the National Library
 - 2) Fixtures of the libraries of the:
Ministry of Education and Health.
Government Accounting Office.
DASP.
National Health Department.
SAPS (Rio, Niterói, Juiz de Fora).
 - 3) Completely equipping the Public Servants Hospital in Rio de Janeiro.
 - 4) Setting up nine floors of the Ministry of Education and Health.
 - 5) Setting up the Chamber of the President and of the eleven ministers of the Accounting Office.
 - 6) Setting up the Chamber of the President of the DASP.
 - 7) Setting up the halls and restaurant of Officials of the Galeão Air Base.
- One may perhaps presume, as a result of lack of detailed knowledge of the scale of the projected work, that they are costly facilities. For that purpose, I judge it to be my duty to provide further clarification. (MARANHÃO, 1950, p.3).

The firm was verified to be reputable, which was the factor that led to its being chosen. The accusations were resolved when Josué Montello defended his plan in the Legislative Assembly. We also highlight the contribution of Ariceia Moreira Lima, who made the petitions for constructing the Public Library building. We can infer that these people were important in achieving benefits for this institution of Maranhão.

These criticisms only delayed the plans of the governor Sebastião Archer of inaugurating the permanent location of “the sumptuous building on 30 January, it not being made accessible to the public due to lack of furnishings for all the floors” (A PACOTILHA; GLOBO, 1951, p. 2). In spite of these difficulties, the head of state government celebrated the delivery of the building with a ceremony on January 31, 1951, with the presence of teachers, politicians, students, and the population in general.

It was not possible to perform inauguration with the library furnished because of lack of transport within the time required. I can however ensure that it is constructed in accordance with the highest demands. Although the price is high, for it was contracted for Cr \$ 2,800,000.00, it can be considered low given the technical perfection (DIÁRIO DE SÃO LUIZ, 1951, p. 1).

This solemnity occurred at 9:00 pm, with the governor cutting the tape as a sign of mission accomplished for the population of São Luis, allowing the people to enter, who filled the facilities in a gesture of curiosity. Then, Dr. Arimathea Athayde, director of the Official Press, spoke in the name of the director Ms. Arycea Moreira Lima regarding the work undertaken regarding conservation and cataloging of the volumes belonging to the Library.

In combination, the lighting, stairways, and the elevator constitute a composition, presenting the impressive appearance of the building. This fact led to the greatest praise for the administration of governor Archer, along with the benefits in providing school extension activities, encouraging students to study, as well as the textbooks made available (DIÁRIO DE SÃO LUIZ, 1951).

In spite of its inauguration on January 30, 1951, the institution remained closed from January until December 21, 1951, when it was delivered to the public at 9:00 pm. Thus came the invitation for the solemnity to the *Jornal do Povo* (newspaper), “we have received the following invitation: I have the honor of inviting Your Excellency to attend the act of opening the new facilities of the state public library to the public. Friday, 21, at 9:00 pm summer time” (*JORNAL DO POVO*, 1951, p. 1).

Present at the festivities will be the governor Eugenio Barros, Dr. Manoel Tavares Neves Filho, secretary of education and health, the director Aryceia Moreira Lima, secretaries of the state government, representatives, magistrates, civil and ecclesiastical authorities, members of the military, the press, radio, and the general population (*JORNAL O COMBATE*, 1951, p. 1).

On that day, the furnishings had arrived and the library was “opened to the public”. On the same night was the inauguration of the second hall of Visual Arts of the Artistic Cultural Society of Maranhão, with an exhibition in the auditorium and participation of seventeen painters (*JORNAL DO POVO*, 1951). The newspaper “*A Pacotilha - O Globo*” carries the report:

The splendid and impressive building constructed in the center of the area situated between the avenues Silva Maia and Gomes de Castro especially to be the site of our Library will thus be festively lighted and displayed to all the people of Maranhão to provide for a ceremony of the greatest spiritual significance (*A PACOTILHA - O GLOBO*, 1951, p. 2).

At the ceremony, there was a statement from Rubem Almeida, a member of the Maranhão Literary Academy, in the name of the director of the Library who, in his speech, highlighted the figure of the former governor Archer da Silva, in whose administration the new building was constructed. In this respect, the people of Maranhão were able to visit the work that most represents the state in terms of culture and that provided studious young people with greater opportunity to deepen their knowledge.

In the press, the inauguration resounded as a marking of facilities that caused pride for the state, as a space worthy for the “anonymous reader” to “scholars of all weights”. On that day, the “Wedding Cake” was presented to the public as one of the most beautiful buildings that correspond to our traditions of intelligence and culture, and which can be shown with pride to visitors of the city of São Luis.

We understand that the term “Wedding Cake” could be confused as derogatory or prejudiced, arising from anonymous voices contrary to the administration of Sebastião Archer, criticizing it as simply a decoration for the city and that it would serve for nothing, except to provide a monumental appearance. Yet, from the opposite perspective, we find that the construction raised high those concerned with culture and intellectual efforts. In a certain manner, it ennobled the important aspect of education upon supporting the educational system, serving as a basis for student activities. Its mission was carried out through its evolution to its permanent structure.

In this perspective, after years of requests, the cries of those who placed value on this cultural heritage of São Luis were served through the commitment and perseverance of the directors who, throughout its history, wrote in their reports of the need to construct or adapt the Library’s own building that would be spacious and adequate for the cultural development of the state. The structural problem was resolved when the permanent site was established, without ignoring its troubled history that in golden periods or periods of decline always contributed to its social role.

In fact, the commitment of the directors, employees, and enthusiasts of the institution was apparent, who, through appeals, projects, and activities performed by the Library, obtained construction of the Library's own site. Each of them had their own important role in the history of the institution and contributed by seeking assistance in fulfilling the dream of seeing the Library in its own environment, representing the cultural traditions of the state.

Conclusion

Public libraries have the characteristic of providing access to knowledge in a manner open to all in benefit of a community. On the one hand, they maintain their readers active, assisting in socio-cultural growth. On the other hand, we observe that they suffer from a lack of government incentive. In Maranhão, we perceive from the creation of the Public Library in the middle of the nineteenth century how this neglect affects the social role of the institutions, through the belief that these places of reading are directly linked to the educational formation of a society.

The history of the Maranhão Public Library from 1918 to 1951 occurred with golden periods and periods of decline, highlighted in the discourse of directors, newspapers, reports, and messages of governors. On identifying the political-economic conditions, we observed that these factors contributed to provision of insufficient funding. Furthermore, we emphasized the moves involving inappropriate and poorly-conserved locations. We perceived that the solution for immediate provision of its needs would be the construction of an adequate location and public commitment in making sufficient funds available to maintain essential services such as cleaning of its environment and its collection.

We inserted the theories of De Certeau (1994), the strategies and tactics, in the context of the Public Library, correlating the tactics with the methods of action, that is, the dedication of the directors in contributing to organizational development, breaking with governmental strategies when they acquire an inefficient position in relation to the physical structures. Moreover, we understand that the accomplishments of the directors and their requests were indispensable for encouragement of the Library, with projects directed to reading and the acquisition of works, through purchases or donations, for the purpose of providing these services to the community of Maranhão.

We highlight the participation of Antônio Lobo and Domingos Perdigão, who, in their administrations, knew how to present, in a concise manner, the physical deficiencies of the Library. In their presence, we observe the peak of innovative services. Discussions were perceived already in the reports of Antônio Lobo; however, the incisive arguments regarding construction of an adequate building were in the administration of Domingos Perdigão, which culminated in creation of Law no. 860 of 1918. It is noteworthy that, in addition to complaints from the director, the state also experienced economic prosperity in this period with the First World War, leading to an increase in the export of raw material, especially babaçu palm oil.

After the Law was created, nothing occurred, and as of that point, we identified the elements that brought about this delay, because only in 1951 was the library delivered to the population of São Luis in its permanent location. During the period that followed creation of the Law without it being placed in effect, we observed some improvements in its physical structure; however, they did not completely solve the structural deficiencies.

As educational discussions intensified in Brazil, there was the need to establish a Public Library that would assist in instruction in Maranhão, and these reasons contributed to

construction of a worthy building. Another reason arose from the knowledge gained by enrollment of students in the Librarianship course in Rio de Janeiro, bringing modern knowledge to Maranhão, which was necessary for resolving the deficiencies of the institution in Maranhão. Prominent within this group of students was the librarian Ariceia Moreira Lima, who became director of the Maranhão Public Library.

The work in execution disturbed the political enemies of the governor Sebastião Archer, and they fought against the undertaking. However, Archer presented the disbursements made, along with the positive balance at the end of his administration. Likewise, other controversies regarding the structure of the Library were described over the course of the study, such as accusations regarding damaged furnishings and it being considered a reprehensible luxury. In the face of these discussions, the figure of Josué Montello was important for the purpose of defending the position of the state governor in a speech in the Legislative Assembly, as well as creating a project for acquisition of the furnishings.

This architectural work is characterized by some simply as the “Wedding Cake”, with a monumental appearance, through which the state used resources unnecessary for the institution. Others, such as intellectuals, the director, and the government, saw a socio-cultural evolution in Maranhão in the undertaking. After many complaints regarding the structure of the Library, the commitment and the perseverance of the directors, who wrote in their reports of the need to construct a spacious and adequate permanent location for development of activities, achieved results.

After the inaugurations, we inferred whether the state government continued to employ resources necessary to maintain the permanent location of the Public Library. In spite of solving the problem of the search for a worthy location, it is necessary to proceed with studies in regard to organization, maintenance, and tactics of administrators of the Library in our time.

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