



PROJECT PROFILE

New York Public Library

Investigation and Exterior Restoration | New York, NY



CLIENT

New York Public Library

BACKGROUND

The NYPL was designed by New York architects John Mervin Carrère and Thomas Hastings, winners of a design competition in 1897. The library, which opened in 1911, was built using 530,000 cubic feet of Vermont marble, making it one of the largest marble buildings in the United States. In addition to its significance as one of the world's leading research institutions with over four millions volumes, the library is considered a masterpiece of the Beaux-Arts architectural style and was designated as a National Historic Landmark in 1965 and a New York City Landmark in 1967.

A century of exposure to acid rain, diesel exhaust, and pigeon guano had left the exterior of the New York Public Library (NYPL) in need of extensive restoration. The building's carved marble architectural elements and fine art sculptures were deteriorated, the Tiffany bronze windows and grilles were oxidized, the roofs were damaged, and the brilliant white Vermont marble facade had lost its sparkle. WJE was selected to design and oversee cleaning and repairs of the library in anticipation of the building's 100th anniversary celebrations.

SOLUTION

WJE's engineers, architects, and material scientists began with an exhaustive survey of the building's marble facade, sculptures, windows, doors, roofs, and plazas. In all, they documented over 7,000 instances of stone deterioration, including damage to some of the building's prominent architectural features such as the Corinthian columns, lion head keystones, and scroll modillions. Prior to the repair phase, WJE conducted field trials and laboratory tests of treatments and cleaning techniques, channeling this research into the development of a range of repair options for the client's consideration. WJE then prepared contract documents and provided ongoing field support throughout the restoration.

The project team was honored to receive multiple awards in recognition of the restoration, including the AIA Institute Honor Award for Architecture, Lucy G. Moses Preservation Award from the New York Landmarks Conservancy, the Excellence in Historic Preservation Award from the Preservation League of New York State, and an AIA New York State Design Award.

