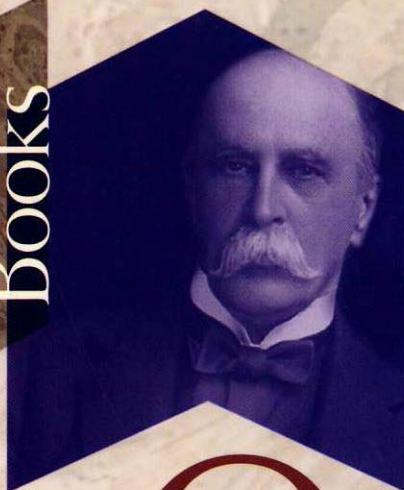


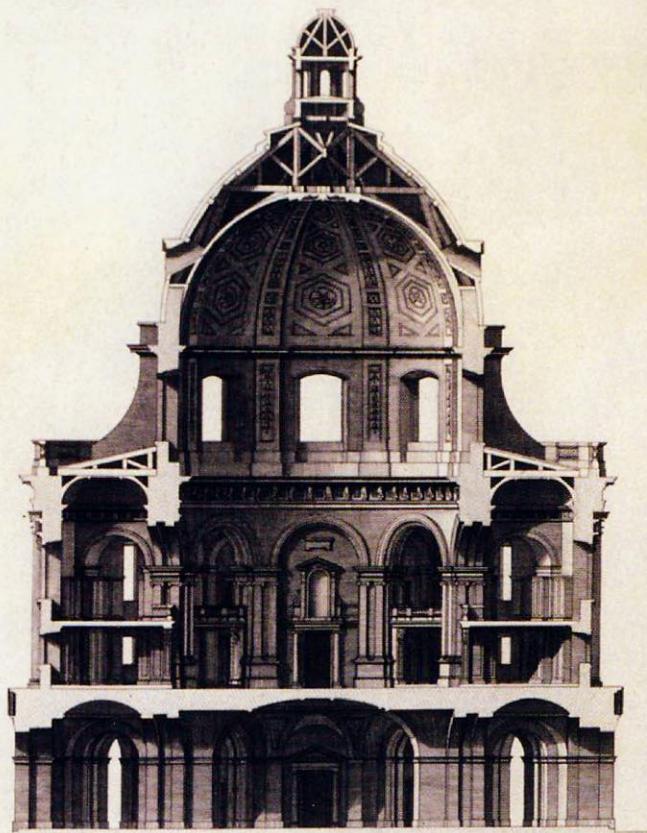
McGILL UNIVERSITY

75 Books



from the **Osler**
Library

67



A Section Showing the Inside of the Library

Isabel Günter Architect

P. Fournier Sculpt.

Doctors building libraries

James Gibbs, *Bibliotheca Radcliviana: or, a Short Description of the Radcliffe Library, at Oxford*. London: Printed for the Author, 1747. Bibl. Osl. 7262.

Architect James Gibbs (1682-1754) published this exquisite volume of engravings by Paul Fourdrinier in 1747, documenting his just-completed Radcliffe Library at Oxford University. It continues an earlier architectural tradition of issuing plates or books that celebrate special events. This particular volume of *Bibliotheca Radcliviana* commemorated two such occasions: it includes an insert describing a royal banquet staged in the library in 1814. The cross-section of the library, Plate IX, illustrates the relationship of the building's three levels, the thickness of its walls and floors, the framing of the library dome and lantern, and the interior elevations of the dome and major spaces. The other twenty plates in *Bibliotheca Radcliviana* are plans, elevations, perspective, and details. Handsome portraits of Gibbs and Dr. John Radcliffe (1653-1714), the library's benefactor, are also included.

Bibliotheca Radcliviana differs from well-known classic theoretical works such as Colen Campbell's *Vitruvius Britannicus* (1715-25) in that it focuses on one commission. It is a detailed record of an important building as it was constructed. As Gibbs admits on page 6, the plates take into account the alterations and accidents that occurred during construction.

Gibbs was a major figure in English Neoclassicism. His design for St. Martin-in-the-Fields on Trafalgar Square (1721-26) is often cited as the prototype for subsequent Protestant church architecture. His *Book of Architecture* (1728), a general theory of architecture, was the first by a British architect devoted to a single designer's oeuvre. Self-published books such as *Bibliotheca Radcliviana* helped post-Renaissance architects like Gibbs establish the emerging profession of architecture, advertising their talents and accomplishments. This rare volume inspires further research on English Neoclassicism, the history of libraries, and the architectural profession.

Anmmarie Adams