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THE NATURAL HISTORY OF THE LIBRARIAN

It is not uncommon for a writer to say that no profession is more misunderstood than his own. This is especially true of librarianship, and the complaint is made more poignant by the doubts which have been expressed as to whether it is indeed a profession.

Actually there seems to be no reason to withhold the cachet of "profession" from the pursuit of library science. The characteristics by which one distinguishes a profession are most of them present: those engaged in a profession are usually clannish and conscious of their mutual interests; librarians cling together like bees at swarming time. A profession should have its own jargon incomprehensible to others, or at least a highly specialized vocabulary; this is undoubtedly true of librarians, although in this respect they cannot compete with the sociologists. There should be a specialized professional literature and periodicals devoted to its dissemination, and in fact there is a large body of library literature, both general and specialized.

A profession should have a code of ethics, highminded and idealistic, although occasionally a bit snobbish and infuriating to the laity, as in the medical profession; librarians possess such a

code, part written, part understood.¹ There is usually a formal postgraduate training for a profession, centered on the study of a body of theory and not merely the learning of techniques, with a final granting of degrees; this is also true of library science, although a few librarians slip in at the back door. In the opinion of many, there should be a sense of dedication in undertaking a profession, and its practitioners should feel that they are serving humanity and even be willing to accept comparatively low financial rewards in doing so; this is certainly true of many librarians and should be true of all.

One of the most interesting and creditable characteristics of librarians is their fierce sense of democracy. They will not tolerate, so far as they are able to prevent it, any discrimination based on color, race, religion, or sex. That women are not discriminated against is not surprising, since librarianship was one of the first professions open to and considered respectable for women.² Lady librarians outnumber the men at least three to one; remove the women and all libraries would have to close tomorrow.

At the national meetings, all librarians, black or white, Protestant, Jewish or Roman Catholic, are considered to be of equal importance

¹ Helen E. Haines, "Ethics of Librarianship," Library Journal, LXXI (15 June 1946), 848-851.

² The writer is well aware that few women make it to the top in university libraries, but the American Library Association has had many women presidents, and in general there is equality of opportunity.

in the eyes of God and the American Library Association; the Association will not meet in any city where hotel or dining room discrimination is practiced against any of its members. In the state associations and local meetings of the South a certain amount of segregation in the housing and feeding of members has to be accepted, but this is done with the greatest reluctance.

It will also strike an outside observer forcibly that there is no privileged class among the different types of librarians. The college and university group does not dominate the scene or the national meetings as it does, for example, in the American Historical Association. This is because the academicians have no monopoly on libraries, either quantitatively or qualitatively. One finds that public librarians, school librarians, and librarians of the special reference collections of industry, all have their prominent and active places in any national meeting or national journal; all these groups have their special sessions and publications reflecting their special interests, but on a national scale all librarians are constantly associated. Obviously this tends to make their organization larger and stronger, as well as less academic in every sense.

Similarly, the college and university side of the library profession is not dominated by the Ivy League, although the great libraries of Harvard, Columbia, and so on are held in high respect. But of the twenty largest American academic libraries, eight are in the East, nine in the Middle West, and three in the Far West; size, although not a sure guarantee of quality, is more so in the case of a book stock than of a student body. Library schools are similarly distributed, and a degree from an Eastern library school does

not carry the special prestige which Eastern degrees do in some fields of college teaching.

By the same tokens, namely that the American Library Association draws its members from all parts of the field and that even college and university librarians are not culturally guided by Eastern institutions, the librarians range more widely and imaginatively in their meetings. Whereas the Modern Language Association confines itself to a few well-worn centers in the Northeast, with an occasional daring sortie as far as Chicago, so that Eastern professors will not have to leave their firesides before Christmas, librarians travel far and wide; they think nothing of meeting now in Los Angeles, now in Minneapolis, now crossing the border to Montreal, their scope limited only by the availability of hotels to accommodate the thousands who attend the meetings and by their antipathy for segregation, to which reference has already been made.

It is a dull week in library circles that sees no convention. The national body, the AIA, meets not once but twice a year. There are regional groupings, such as the Southwestern Library Association, which meets at least biennially. All states have library associations, and these meet annually. Many states, like Texas, are divided into library districts, and these divisions have their meetings too. Many communities have their local library clubs. Groups such as the Special Libraries have additional meetings of their own. Should all else fail, there are always workshops on some phase of librarianship to relieve the librarian of the tedium of independent existence, and it is not unknown for the staff of one library to pay friendly and exploratory visits to a sister

institution. It is hardly necessary to remark that the committees subservient to all these organizations and conferences are only less numerous than the sands of the sea or spawn of the codfish.

At worst, this passion for organization and for meeting together is always time-consuming and sometimes futile, and on occasion it appears almost as if there were a conspiracy to keep the individual from paying sufficient attention to his own problems. The demands upon him to engage in membership drives, to promote regional arrangements for sharing library resources, and to expand library service in underprivileged areas are very considerable. But at best, this signal characteristic of librarians denotes and promotes a wider point of view, a desire for self-improvement, and self-sacrifice in the finest sense.

Another marked characteristic of librarians, related to their democratic spirit, and stimulated by their fondness for gathering together for discussions of all sorts, is that they are extremely sensitive to public opinion and are constantly seeking for improvement in their procedures and techniques. Library literature is full of plans for improved charging systems, streamlined ordering and cataloging procedures, and in fact better methods of doing everything which can be done, from the administration of million-volume enterprises to the display of book jackets. It is no unusual thing (indeed it is almost standard practice) for a library association to have the title "As Others See Us" as the theme for its annual meeting. Librarians constantly worry about the opinion which their public, or their board of trustees, or their faculty will have of them.

This driving spirit of collective

self-criticism, this constant striving for self-improvement, is not uncommon in the business world, but it is relatively unknown to institutions of higher learning except on the football field. Few departments of instruction engage in the critiques of past practice and future endeavor which are commonplace and of almost daily occurrence in libraries. This is mentioned not as an unfriendly criticism of teachers, who probably do a better job by going their ways individually, but to emphasize this outstanding characteristic of the library profession. Librarians always talk shop and never stop talking about library affairs; they work at their jobs with extraordinary concentration; although life may have beaten some of them into submission, most of them are conscious of a suppressed excitement, a series of challenges, a succession of problems, which keeps them on their toes. Since libraries are quiet places, often with an air of somnolence about them, this may be hard for the layman to believe; but those on the inside know that there is always something exciting happening around a library, even though it may lack the spice to make it a popular movie.

II

In the struggle for survival and self-justification, the librarians have some weapons. No one can publicly be against books, any more than he can be against motherhood, social security, installment buying, or any other beneficial institution of the present day. But some people are opposed to books and feel that it is subversive of librarians to make available to the ordinary man the apparatus for thinking. Such people cannot say so, and they can attack only certain books,

basing their objections on grounds of their own definitions of moral and patriotic behavior.³ Therefore the librarian remains the custodian and purveyor of that respectable commodity, the book, and his place in society is secure.

It worries him, however, that people do not read enough books, and he does not wait for people to come to him. In universities, of course, the librarian has a captive audience, sent to him by the assignments of the faculty; also he has another and more mature clientele who need no advertising to inform them of the beauties of research. But with the general public the case is different, and the modern public librarian is appalled by the competition to reading set up by radio, television, motion picture, and comic book. However innocuous or even excellent these media may be, they do offer serious competition to the art and recreation of reading. The librarian therefore arranges displays, contests, bookweeks, and all sorts of devices to bring the customers in, and he is likely to venture out in a bookmobile to spread the gospel.

"A college training is an excellent thing," said James Russell Lowell, "but, after all,

³ The librarians' answer, expressing the convictions of the vast majority of the profession, was contained in the statement "The Freedom to Read", published among other places in the Summer, 1953, issue of the AAUP Bulletin. This official statement of the AIA affirms the duty of the librarian to make available material showing "the widest diversity of views and expressions," not to intrude his own opinions, not to label books in other than the literal sense, and to resist encroachments upon the people's freedom to read.

the better part of every man's education is that which he gives himself, and it is for this that a good library should furnish the opportunity and the means." Not content with a merely passive role, the American Library Association has long had its Office for Adult Education and its Adult Services Division, their work designed to help adults continue their educational development and their recreational reading in all types of libraries. The details are not so important as is the rejection of the storehouse idea and the doing of work which lazier and less dedicated people would leave undone.

To the same end, the AIA has promoted the American Heritage Project, to help citizens appreciate their country, and in addition many libraries serve as hosts to the sessions of the Great Books discussion groups. All in all, librarians have a stubborn belief in education, self-given or not, and in the eventual prevalence of truth in any free market of ideas.

III

For all their concern with extracurricular activities, there are times when librarians turn their attention inward to their own libraries. But even in so doing they are conscious of obligations to their readers. The keynote speech for this aspect of the librarian's profession was delivered by James Russell Lowell at the opening of the Free Public Library in Chelsea, Massachusetts, on December 22, 1885. On that occasion he said:

Formerly the duty of a librarian was considered too much of a watchdog, to keep people as much as possible away from the

books, and to hand these over to his successor as little worn by use as he could. Librarians now, it is pleasant to see, have a different notion of their trust, and are in the habit of preparing, for the direction of the inexperienced, lists of such books as they think best worth reading.

Bibliographical and reference work has grown much since 1885, but it is to be hoped that the spirit is the same. The application of science to industry has been a major factor in this development. Rapid as the establishment of special libraries by industry has been, an increasing task of reference work has been assumed by the public libraries, and by college libraries beyond the needs of their own teachers and students. The big problem of the present and future is that there is too much potentially useful material. With tens of thousands of articles appearing in thousands of journals, and the number growing every day, it is impossible to find out quickly all that is being done in many fields. Most librarians are concerned about this problem of retrieval of information. It may be that a super-machine will some day give out both references and abstracts in response to a suitable stimulus.

Side by side with reference and circulation are those divisions of the library that go by the name of technical processes. These are the ministrations that go into the preparation of a book, from its ordering to its launching as a fully recorded, labelled, and identified book, ready for circulation. The various methods of acquisition come under technical processes, as also does a considerable amount of record-keeping and, above all, cataloging. Here are the librarians who seldom see the light of day or the public whom they serve,

toiling in little cells and workrooms like cooperative insects, each having some organ, sense, or skill more highly developed than any other. These workers, whose tasks might be though dull and routine by the uninitiated, are in fact fiercely proud of their calling and not infrequently refer to themselves as a corps d'élite. Nowhere in the library is there such pride and so much sensitivity. Cataloging can be learned but the aptitude for it must be hereditary.

"Tell me," said the lady next door, "do all your books have numbers?" They do indeed have numbers, and the principle behind the numbers is to bring order out of potential confusion and to provide a government of laws and not of men. Most librarians know they are mortal, and they seek, in this as in other procedures, to adopt a system which will hold up after they and their personal knowledge have passed from the scene. Few of the frequenters of a library will object to a numbering system of some sort, but the specific assignment of a call number is sometimes open to argument.

Those few libraries which operate with completely closed stacks have no need of a system other than the assignment of a number from one to infinity. Each acquisition can be given a simple accession number and placed in the next vacant spot on the shelves. Books may be designated as small, medium, and large, and arranged by size, which permits much tighter shelving and saves space. But in such a library, where works on ornithology may rest companionably with those on gasoline engines, the delight of browsing cannot be enjoyed; no one can range along the ranges, seeing what the library has on Napoleon or reptilia or astrophysics. Since this practice is not only delightful but almost a necessity for the serious

student, it follows that the books on a given subject are kept together in most libraries, at least so far as possible. Sometimes this is not possible, and then sensibilities are wounded. One research man was grieved to find a work on the hymenoptera of North America among works on agricultural statistics. "Are the ants and bees compelled to be in such company?" he inquired; "it seems unjust." And plaintively he added, "I love ants and bees." Here is the librarian in a dilemma, torn between his desire to serve his client and the stern rules which dictate that ants and bees, to say nothing of birds, must find themselves now in a section of pure science, now among works on plants and animals considered for the use of man, and again in economics, as in the case of the work just mentioned. Presumably one man's songbird is another man's potpie, and each will want the bird-books similarly differentiated.

A great deal of trouble is also caused by monographic work in series, where the series element is relatively unimportant. The series is made up, say, of separate works on organic, analytic, and other subdivisions of chemistry; shall they be kept together as a set, or dispersed as their subjects indicate? Some will say one thing, some another, and the librarian, caught like a Secretary of State between two quarreling nations neither of whom he can afford to antagonize, is likely to be gored by at least one horn of another dilemma.

To change the metaphor, there is in this stormy sea of argument over classification one sure and strong haven of refuge, the catalog. Here the librarian can rest his case; here the bee-lover will find his pets all in one hive; here the organic chemist will find all the books on his subject grouped under one heading, whatever may be their

fate upon the shelves.

"Catalog" in library parlance means "card catalog", spelled without the final "ue" in all libraries save some in New and Old England. Catalogs in book form exist, and many of the largest libraries are seriously considering the adoption of this form. The Library of Congress issues a multivolume catalog, with supplements, in which all its cards are reproduced on a smaller scale by offset printing; this printed catalog is of inestimable value in the identification and ordering of books. The saving of space afforded by such a catalog is obvious, and so is the convenience to the user, who can scan a whole page, with many entries, at one time; but the disadvantage of issuing a reference book which will necessarily be out of date before it is published is equally obvious.

Now to bear them to the rock of the catalog, the reader and the librarian have one unfailing raft, and this is the Library of Congress card. In 1800, an Act of Congress established a library for the use of the legislators, and this has grown into the world's largest and one of the world's greatest libraries. It is far more than a place for the preparation of speeches which are franked out all over the country; it is more even than a great research institution and a truly national library; it is also the headquarters for a vast bibliographic enterprise, selling printed cards by the millions annually to libraries large and small.

Cards are made and printed for practically all the books cataloged at the Library of Congress, and the fee is modest considering the service rendered. When one orders a book from a

dealer, it is customary to order the LC cards from Washington at the same time. These cards come in little packets of three or four or six or whatever number is requisite. They are all duplicates of each other, the necessary distinctive touches being supplied by the recipient. All have the name of the author or other main entry, the title, and much other information about the book. At the bottom of most cards are the LC and the Dewey call numbers, which have been assigned to the book by the subject specialists at the Library of Congress. Whichever system a library uses, the card will serve equally well when the number is copied onto its usual place in the upper lefthand corner. If the library has its own system as do the Widner at Harvard and the Newberry at Chicago, the same cards may be used; but in such cases a cataloger must assign a number to each book, making sure that it duplicates no other in the library.

Vast as it is, the Library of Congress does not possess all books, particularly older books and foreign. In such cases, of which there are many, it is necessary to do the work oneself. All the necessary information must be provided, which is called descriptive cataloging, a logical call number assigned, which is called classification, and subject-headings made which is called subject cataloging. These cardless items are at once the joy and the despair of the cataloger's life. They are necessarily a bit out of the ordinary, and if they were written in Latin a couple of centuries ago, by an author with a fondness for pseudonyms, they present certain problems in accurate classification and description.

Once a given work has been classified, that is to say assigned to its proper branch and twig on the tree of knowledge, and the cards

completed, the cards are placed in various strategic locations in the catalog, each serving to locate the book from a different point of view. As Mr. Lowell put it in 1885:

Cataloging has also, thanks in great measure to American librarians, become a science, and catalogues, ceasing to be labyrinths without a clue, are furnished with finger-posts at every turn. Subject catalogues again save the beginner a vast deal of time and trouble by supplying him for nothing with one at least of the results of thorough scholarship, the knowing where to look for what he wants.

It comes as a surprise when one first realizes that libraries have more than one card per book, but of course it is the added entry cards, those in addition to the main or author card, which makes the catalog of any good library a magnificent index and series of bibliographies all in one. Librarians do their best to anticipate all wishes and satisfy all tastes, but they cannot foresee everything and they have difficulty providing that subject-heading which some readers seem to want, namely "All the Books in Which I Take a Particular Interest".

As increasing amount of library effort is being spent on works issued in some kind of series form, generally amounting now to more than 50%. "Serials" is the library term for all works which are issued periodically or in a series, whether one is speaking of the daily paper or of the annual volume of a learned society. In the larger libraries there are both serials and periodicals departments, but serials is the handy word, and some libraries have a separate catalog for

these works. In a typical serials catalog are found the title and call number of each item, a notation if it is currently received, and one or more holdings cards, on which the volumes actually in the library's possession are ticked off by number or year. In addition another main entry or title card appears in the main catalog. Nothing would appear simpler than to provide this information, particularly if the Library of Congress has made the basic cards, but there are many pitfalls for the unwary, and serials cataloging is about as highly specialized an art as the library can show.

Serials have a way of changing their names and even their size without warning, providing problems for both cataloger and binder. In addition, publishers of a periodical have been known to forget where they were and to publish two successive volumes with the same number; they have also been known to grow tired and erratic and publish now ten, now thirteen, numbers of a journal which is supposed to be monthly throughout the year. All this must be duly confirmed and the necessary adjustments made. The changing of titles is the most annoying habit, both for cataloger and reader. Sometimes a journal devoted to several branches of a science will undergo fission, producing several individuals where only one grew before; sometimes the process is fusion, with alliances produced by affection or necessity. Here is a true case history, admittedly extreme, so well described by Erhard Sanders in a periodical called Serial Slants (V, 4) that it would be a pity to spoil it by paraphrase:

THE METAMORPHOSES OF A JOURNAL

Once upon a time there lived a little magazine called Television Engineering. It was a slender little thing full of useful

information and beloved by many.

But along came a big bully with the pompous name of FM Magazine and RM Radio-electronics which had at one time been infected with the TV virus and thereafter called itself FM-TV and Radio Communication. Under this disguise, it devoured little Television Engineering and ruminated it from May 1952 'til December 1953. After the last big gulp, it became diet-conscious and started the new 1954 quite slender, this time under the moniker of Communication Engineering.

But all the previous dissipation now showed its effect and after one brief issue it became so weak that it fell easy prey to another glutton, Radio-Electronic Engineering. This character had had quite a career itself. It had entered the world as a sort of appendix to Radio and Television News distinguished by a head band with the inscription Radio-Electronic Engineering Edition of Radio and Television News. Later it had made itself somewhat more independent and gone as Radio-Electronic Engineering Section and then finally eliminated the section.

It can still be seen on the periodicals shelves as Radio-Electronic Engineering, but for how long?

Now all these changes of title must be noted by any library possessing this extraordinary piece of bibliographic confusion. Someone is sure to want the journal by one of its earlier names, and therefore a card must be provided for each

name, with the notation that one should now look for the holdings under the latest name. If the name is changed again, which has actually happened in the case described by Mr. Sanders, all these cards must be pulled out and changed. Another way, of course, would be to treat each title as a separate serial; but this also involves a lot of careful checking, a multiplication of cards, and complaints by those who want a whole run, whatever its titular vicissitudes.

IV

It is a paradox that librarians suffer on the one hand from public ignorance of their techniques, and on the other from over-familiarity. After all, everyone if he really tries can recite the alphabet and count to a thousand by ones. Therefore everyone feels that he could be a librarian if he had to do it, and devise efficient procedures too, probably simpler than those generally in use. History teachers, for example, suffer from the same handicap of their craft's not being sufficiently mysterious, whereas no one thinks that he can give advice to mathematicians and physicists, for their knowledge is much too abstruse.

The librarian is torn between his inclination to make his profession appear as a science and his hope that the public will try to understand the rules, which are simple enough though rather numerous. When on his professional dignity his reactions may be likened to the time when King James the First, in one of his many skirmishes with the Common Law and its defender, Chief Justice Sir Edward Coke, said that since law was based on reason, and since the royal reason was acknowledged

to be superior to all others, therefore he could judge all cases himself. To this Sir Edward replied that the law was indeed based upon reason, but that it was not natural reason but artificial reason, which took years of study and experience to acquire. So with the librarian. And although the librarian has a good territory and a good product to sell, he cannot always retreat into the mysteries of his craft and ask his public and his Board to support him on faith alone. Faith will take him up to a point, but beyond that he must achieve his effects by statistics of work performed, cost-accounting of at least a rudimentary sort, and reasonable explanations of why his procedures are necessary and not merely boondoggling.

Just as a teacher, in a momentary fit of depression, will think that a university would be a nice place if there were no students, so a librarian will occasionally reflect that his job would be a pleasant one if no one gave him any books. This is because he knows how much it costs to put a book through the mill and maintain it on his shelves. Those who cheerfully say "these books won't cost you anything" have not followed through. A recent survey made by the distinguished Librarian Emeritus of Harvard, Dr. Keys Metcalf, calculates that each gift book cost his institution \$5.75.⁴ This sum may be subdivided as follows: purchase price, acquisition costs, and binding are nil, although if the book is unlucky or overpopular it may have to be rebound some day. Incidentally, Dr. Metcalf estimates

⁴ Report on the Harvard University Library; a Study of Present and Prospective Problems (Cambridge, Mass., 1955).

that the cost of the needed rebinding, relabelling, and repair of material already in his stacks would come to \$265,000; but his library is larger than most. To continue: 25 cents is estimated as the cost of checking in and handling the gift book, and \$3 as the cost of cataloging. These costs include materials used but mainly refer to the salaries of the staff members concerned. The construction cost of the space occupied by the book is estimated as \$1.50, and the endowment required to provide future income for maintenance is \$1. This last would include shelving, dusting, issuing, reshelving, and so on. All this adds up to \$5.75. Even if the item of \$1.50 for construction cost of the space occupied is rejected as being rather arbitrarily introduced, the cost would still be \$4.25, which many would consider a very conservative estimate.

If the book is purchased, not only must the purchase price be added, but also the much higher costs for ordering, so that a \$3 book works out to \$10. With a periodical, the cost is higher yet, for binding must be added. This is said not to discourage people from giving books to libraries, but to emphasize a sometimes overlooked but obviously fundamental part of library operations. Some of the best things in life are free, but not books.

Having acquired his book, the librarian cannot always forget it. He may, for one reason or another, have trouble keeping it. A question endemic in all university libraries is whether or not to centralize. If all the books are kept in one building, some of the scholars will wish that their particular books could be housed in a departmental library. This is particularly true of those scholars who sit up all night with projects and experiments, like the architects and many of the scientists, and want to have their books at their

elbows. The librarian, reverting to the setting-hen psychology of the 19th century, hates to see this happen, and he has his reasons too. He knows that a dispersion of the books will greatly weaken his collection, for example that the removal of works on physics from the proximity of works on mathematics will mean that these two related disciplines will not continue to strengthen each other; he also knows that the chances of loss and damage are greatly increased when books leave the central roof; and he knows that even under the best supervision, which is seldom forthcoming in departmental libraries, there is grave danger of uncoordinated policies and unnecessary duplication.

The Metcalf Report shows that while the space problem alone forced Harvard to decentralize, to say nothing of the widely separated locations of some of Harvard's colleges and departments, the results have not been entirely happy; aside from other difficulties just mentioned, hardly any two libraries in that great system follow the same cataloging code, and the results are disastrous for the efficient maintenance of a central or union catalog. At another university some years ago, the autonomy of the departmental libraries was so complete and so wilfully exercised that it took a truly heroic reform to bring order out of a chaotic situation. At another, the librarians of the branches like law and medicine are not appointed by the President upon recommendation of the Director of Libraries, but rather upon that of the Deans; doubtless this plan works well at the moment, but it could promote disharmony. Therefore the typical university librarian has taken a Hippocratic oath never to permit decentralization to occur; if lack of space or other considerations have forced him to farm his books out, he hopes that the rustlers will not change the brands.

Similarly the librarian is bound by the rules of his order to resist the kindly-meant importunities of those who seek to donate special collections. A special collection is a group of books which is arbitrarily kept in a certain room or on a certain shelf in a library, regardless of the positions which the book would normally occupy. If all special collections were large and unique gatherings of valuable material on a single subject, there would be few problems other than the ever-present one of finding the space somewhere, but many offerings are not of this type. Rather they represent the work of a collector whose tastes were catholic, ranging from architecture to zoology; these books the librarian is expected to keep inviolate and unseparated, out of respect to the individual's feelings or to his memory. Many librarians think that if they could have inscribed upon their tombstones the legend "He Never Accepted a Special Collection" they would have done enough to win the gratitude of posterity, for this turning of a library into a museum of fixed memorials has little to commend it. It is costly all along the line, in cataloging, in shelving, and in management, and it is timewasting for readers who want to find their books readily.

For more desirable material, all libraries even the richest, face the problem of book selection. Obviously the first determinant will be the function which the library is supposed to discharge. A special library of an oil company will have one task, a junior college library another, and so on. In the case of a public library the problem is especially difficult, for it is hard to tell how far to go in acquiring material for true research purposes, such items being comparatively rare, costly, and little used once they are acquired. In colleges, where faculty recommendation is the most

important factor in book selection, the policy is usually that of "building to strength" or to obvious faculty interest where strength does not yet exist.

The modern trend, which should ease this problem of there being more useful books and serials than money with which to buy and process them, goes by the name of cooperative acquisition. This has many variations, but the gist of it is that one library will buy one thing, another library another, and that they will share. There is already a brisk business throughout the country in interlibrary loans, but the new plans will make this more equitable.

An important development on a national scale is the Farmington Plan (named for the town where the agreement was made), by which a large number of important libraries, both academic and public, have agreed that each will be responsible for all procurable library materials on one or more fields or countries. Thus one will take music, another Dutch and Flemish literature, another the Union of South Africa, and so on. The intent is to make sure that at least everything current is received in at least one United States library, but there are also possible economies in this division of labor, and the plan should be a benefit to scholars.

Another well-established project, which will be imitated in other parts of the country, is the Midwest Interlibrary Center in Chicago. This is a large warehouse where the least-used material of a number of large midwestern university libraries is kept, thus easing their space problems. Any of this material can be made available to the owner or to the other partners in a very short time, for it is cataloged and adequately supervised. In

addition the participants have reached an agreement whereby each shall be responsible for subscribing to certain serials and periodicals, mainly in foreign languages, for which there is comparatively little demand; no one library therefore has to buy everything.

Union catalogs, as for example the one kept at Emory of the holdings of the Atlanta libraries and of the University of Georgia, are becoming more common, and their value is obvious. In Chicago, it has been agreed that the Newberry Library shall devote itself to the Humanities, the John Crerar Library to Science and Technology, and the Art Institute to the Fine Arts, thus relieving the Public Library of the research materials problem and allowing it to concentrate on general reference, current fiction and standard classics, children's books, and do-it-yourself manuals. Sometimes cooperation can be less formal: for example it would be wasteful for a college in a city where there are already large libraries devoted to law and medicine to spend much in these fields; on the other hand its collection in political science and biology may be of great value to lawyers and doctors who qualify as borrowers because of their research interests. This kind of cooperative acquisition does not require an agreement, but merely common sense.

So, presented in a few snapshots, we have our librarian. Whatever his function in the library, he or she is a good deal more than a label-pasting, book-mending drudge. He has with some consistency stood for democratic principles and intellectual freedom. He believes in books, although he has little time to read them himself. He has a lot of rules and procedures which he at least believes are necessary to provide good

service. It may take time, but if you will leave your name and address, he will get you the book.

Hardin Craig, Jr.
Librarian and Professor
of History
Rice University

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