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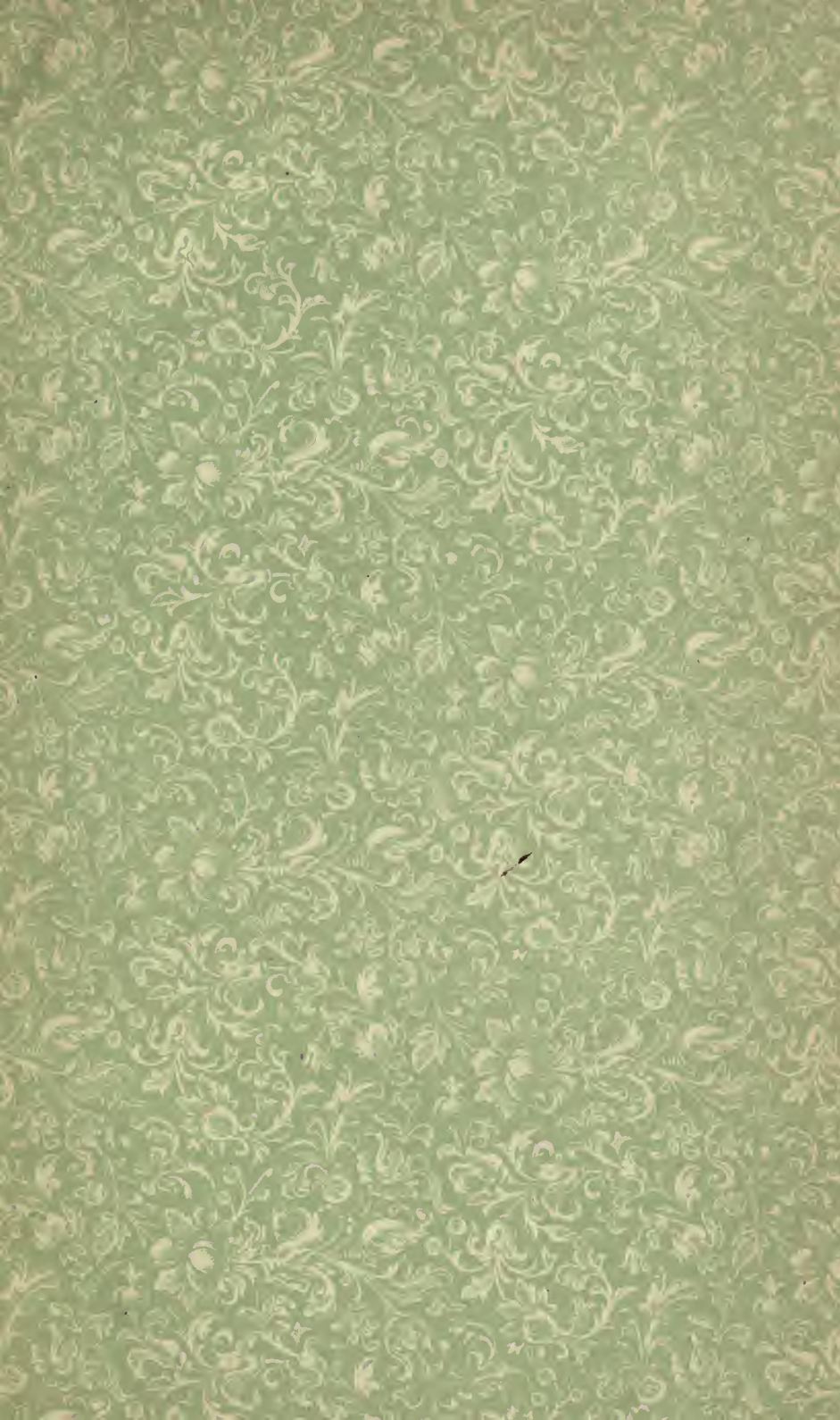
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*The Library Association Series*

EDITED BY J. Y. W. MACALISTER, HONORARY SECRETARY OF  
THE ASSOCIATION

No. 3

PUBLIC LIBRARY STAFFS

BY

PETER COWELL

CHIEF LIBRARIAN OF THE LIVERPOOL PUBLIC LIBRARIES

LONDON

PUBLISHED FOR THE ASSOCIATION BY

SIMPKIN, MARSHALL, HAMILTON, KENT & Co., LIMITED

4 STATIONERS' HALL COURT, E.C.

1893

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# Library Association <sup>of</sup> the United Kingdom.

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THIS Association was founded on 5th October, 1877, at the conclusion of the International Conference of Librarians held at the London Institution, under the presidency of the late Mr. J. Winter Jones, then principal librarian of the British Museum.

Its objects are : (a) to encourage and aid by every means in its power the establishment of new libraries ; (b) to endeavour to secure better legislation for rate-supported libraries ; (c) to unite all persons engaged or interested in library work, for the purpose of promoting the best possible administration of libraries ; and (d) to encourage bibliographical research.

The Association has, by the invitation of the Local Authorities, held its Annual Meetings in the following towns : Oxford, Manchester, Edinburgh, London (*twice*), Cambridge, Liverpool, Dublin, Plymouth, Birmingham, Glasgow, Reading, Nottingham, and Paris.

The Annual Subscription is ONE GUINEA, payable in advance, on 1st January. The Life Subscription is FIFTEEN GUINEAS. *Any person actually engaged in library administration may become a member, without election, on payment of the Subscription to the Treasurer.* Any person not so engaged may be elected at the Monthly or Annual Meetings. Library Assistants, approved by the Council, are admitted on payment of a Subscription of HALF-A-GUINEA.

The official organ of the Association is *The Library*, which is issued monthly and sent free to members. Other publications of the Association are the *Transactions and Proceedings* of the various Annual Meetings, *The Library Chronicle*, 1884-1888, 5 vols., and *The Library Association Year-Book* (price one shilling), in which will be found full particulars of the work accomplished by the Association in various departments.

A small Museum of Library Appliances has been opened in the Clerkenwell Public Library, Skinner Street, London, E.C., and will be shown to any one interested in library administration. It contains Specimens of Apparatus, Catalogues, Forms, &c.

All communications connected with the Association should be addressed to the Hon. Secretary, J. Y. W. MACALISTER, Esq., 20 Hanover Square, London, W. Subscriptions should be paid to H. R. TEDDER, Esq., Hon. Treasurer, Athenæum Club, Pall Mall, London, W.

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**LIBRARY  
SCHOOL**



## PREFACE.

ALTHOUGH the craft of Librarianship may be said to be nearly as old as books themselves, it is nevertheless true that the Librarian of to-day is a Pioneer—for the field of his work has become so wide as to embrace much untrodden territory, and he has had to invent an entirely new equipment to fit him for his task.

There is much experimenting, and there may be many mistakes, but the tendency is in the right direction, and there can be no doubt that both the Librarians and the Readers of the Twentieth Century will owe much to the Librarian of the Nineteenth.

But Committees as well as Librarians owe a duty to the next generation, and they should regard it as an important part of that duty to help forward the higher development of Librarianship. They rather retard it when they appoint men without practical experience, and thus proclaim that, in their opinion, Librarianship is not a craft. To point here and there to one or two brilliantly successful Librarians who have had no practical training, is as absurd as to condemn medicine as worthless, because now and then a sick man recovers by the help of nature alone.

One simple test of efficiency—better than the most glowing testimonials—Committees have now at command, and the more the test is used the more valuable it will become. I refer to the “Professional” Examination of the Library Association.

THE EDITOR.





# PUBLIC LIBRARY STAFFS.

## CHAPTER I.

### THE CHIEF LIBRARIAN.

However unexceptionable a Public Library may be in regard to its books, arrangements, and regulations, it is an absolute necessity that the staff should be characterised by ability, energy, and appreciation of their duties, for otherwise a lack of vitality would soon be apparent in the library, and a corresponding deficiency in its usefulness and popularity.

When the staff of a library is imbued with a common spirit, and that spirit is identified with the true aims and purposes of a public library, it follows that such a library will soon be engaged in a great and important educational work, and in exercising a wide and beneficial influence.

The attainment of such a position for the institution under their care is the desire and ambition of all Committees of Management. But how is this to be achieved? It will be admitted that the prosperity and success of manufactories and commercial houses are largely, if not wholly, dependent on the ability and energy of their respective heads or managers, and by parity of reasoning we must conclude that a public library, if it is to be prosperous and successful, should have a librarian or manager possessed of the necessary qualifications and training for his particular office and work. There was a time when an ex-policeman, a soldier, or some one of equal status, education, and training, was believed to be capable of discharging the duties of a librarian; but, fortunately for readers and libraries, that time has gone by.

There are still many people who are unable to understand what the duties of a librarian are beyond reading the books at his command and seeing that they are not stolen. Both of these are obviously important duties; and though the first may be con-

sidered optional, good and forcible reasons might be advanced in favour of making it compulsory, notwithstanding the oft-quoted dictum of the late Mark Pattison to the contrary.

A little reflection as to what ought to be the aim and purpose of a city or town library will enable us to arrive at a definite opinion as to what should be the qualifications and attainments of its managing librarian.

The main object of public libraries is to promote education and literary and scientific inquiry, by placing within reach of the community at large those books which, by reason of their scarcity, or costliness, would not be otherwise available, and such other books as are useful for the purpose of general education and recreation.

Such a library, if efficiently conducted, becomes an educational centre—a place of study for the man of literature and the man of science. How the embryo library will develop, and what other educational work may be taken conjointly with that of supplying books, will in a great measure depend upon the activity and ability of the principal librarian.

Above all things he ought to be a lover of books—a lover of them for the sake of their contents, and a lover anxious to see them housed, clothed, and cared for in a fit and proper manner.

The more a librarian reads, and the more varied his reading, the better able he will be to advise others seeking to know the best books for their purpose. It is no less clear that the man who has been trained in some large public library is better qualified for the duties of a managing librarian than the man who has not had such a training. The trained librarian has acquired much of that bibliographical knowledge which is valuable in all libraries alike; also a knowledge of the best and most useful books of special and general reference; of prices and editions, and of authors, publishers, and second-hand book dealers. He has learned how to catalogue scientifically, whether on the dictionary plan, the *catalogue raisonnée*, or some other plan of recognised merit, and has acquired in the performance of such work an amount of general and special knowledge such as he could not hope to obtain in any other way; and, if he has not already done so, will desire to learn something of several of the great literary languages, without which he cannot do more than stand at the entrance to the field of literature and



then be compelled to turn away without tasting of its pleasures. He has learned something of book-classification, of shelving and book-arrangement, of book-binding, and the durability of various leathers and cloths. He has acquired experience in dealing with maps, drawings, newspapers, specifications of patents, parliamentary papers; besides much useful information about magazines and periodicals, and of the transactions and proceedings of British and foreign learned societies. He has also learned something of book-registering, and other matters connected with the working of lending libraries, and, moreover, he has seen much of the reading public, and no doubt has had his moral education greatly improved through the certain application of many tests of patience and forbearance.

After a course of training in such a school, a man promoted to form and manage a public library would advise and act with confidence, prudence, and decision: his knowledge and experience enabling him to do so without fear of failure. While much of the administrative and practical side of a librarian's character may be due to his training in a public library, there are several natural traits of character which are no less important, and which it is very desirable that he should possess. I have already alluded to an innate love of books, but in an institution which aims at drawing within its doors the uneducated, a librarian with a brusque and self-important manner will be found a great hindrance to its popularity and usefulness. It is, therefore, no less essential that he should be courteous, affable, and ready to help in the elucidation of the various and often peculiar questions which engage the attention of readers. It is not enough that he should wait to be approached by readers, for the poor and uneducated are diffident, but should by a smile or inviting word induce them to use him as a species of walking dictionary or encyclopædia. It is true that some readers are apt to repel invited confidences as to their investigations; but these form a decided minority. In the thanks and smiles of the great majority whose time has been saved and knowledge extended, the librarian will receive an ample reward as well as every encouragement to continue by such means to make himself and the library as popular and useful as possible. The advantage accruing to a library and its readers from the possession of a librarian of the character and attainments here indicated is self-evident; and yet it is not a fancy sketch of an ideal librarian,

but a fairly accurate description of many young men in public libraries who are available for promotion and are ambitious to find greater scope for their energies and talents.

#### THE SUB-LIBRARIAN.

The librarian of a modern free library is compelled to devote so much of his time to committee business, tradesmen and their accounts, book-buying, and visitors, that he is unable to give much time to readers and their wants; therefore this important, occasionally troublesome, but always interesting work, with the direction of the junior staff, and the general order and superintendence of the library falls largely on the sub- or deputy-librarian. The appointment of an adult assistant who shall be capable of acting as an efficient *locum tenens* during the absence of the principal librarian is a necessity in even the smaller libraries. In the selection and appointment of such a person there is wisdom in giving the principal librarian a voice, as it has a disciplinary effect, and will almost certainly operate in securing a person possessed of the proper capacity for efficiently performing the duties of a librarian, whose manners and temperament will not easily create friction with self-assertive readers. In the case of this appointment, even perhaps more than in that of the principal, it will be most advantageous if the applicant has had a previous training in the work and management of some library of like character. Library work includes many details, and the services of a new man will be of value in proportion to his proficiency in the technical details. This is so rational a view to take of a matter of this kind that it appears almost inexplicable that committees, having at heart the efficiency and welfare of the libraries which they are called upon to establish or to preside over, should ever seek to appoint more or less inexperienced officers instead of such as could immediately bring to bear upon their duties the mature experience acquired in some large public library.

#### ASSISTANTS.

The limited incomes at the disposal of most library committees compel them to adopt the most economical methods of manage-

ment, and the apprenticeship of youths and employment of females in libraries is largely due to straitened circumstances and the economical spirit arising therefrom. Apart, however, from this reason for their employment, there is much to be said in favour of their services. The temptation to employ youths is strongest in the smaller libraries for the financial reason already stated. As there are a greater number of small than large and wealthy libraries, it follows that very soon (if it is not the case already) there will be a greater number of poorly paid library assistants than can be regarded with complacency. And, moreover, as in the competition for appointment to new libraries it is natural that the young men who have been trained and educated in the larger libraries, where a wider experience and a better bibliographical knowledge have been acquired, will be preferred to their brethren whose opportunities have been less favourable; it becomes tolerably clear that the advancement of the latter will be slow and uncertain.

The question of apprentices is one of much interest. The conscientious librarian cannot help accepting considerable responsibility for the future of the youths under him, who are just on the threshold of life; to his example, his teaching, and his influence they will in all probability be indebted for at least the first steps towards a successful career. His help and supervision in the work of self-education, and his insistence on it when there are signs of flagging industry, ought not to fail, and no effort should be spared to produce and foster a feeling of mutual trust and confidence. In no other way, it is believed, will a surer *esprit de corps* be achieved and true harmony and unity of working secured among assistants than by the apprentice system; more particularly if the principal views himself as a parent among his staff and they feel that their comfort and prosperity will always be regarded by him as of primary importance.

What is generally understood as the apprentice system is an arrangement (without indentures) between the parents of a youth and the librarian on the part of the committee to secure the boy's service for a period of five years on a small, progressive salary. Where boys are largely employed as attendants on the readers, as at Liverpool, the selection from among their number of a bright and intelligent one to enter into such an arrangement is not difficult, and so far the apprentices there have done tolerably well in after life. There ought to be an understanding that the parents



on their part shall see that the boy's education is improved by attending classes for the study of say Latin, French, or German, or for English Grammar or Composition, while the librarian on his part shall undertake to see that during the boy's apprenticeship he has every opportunity of learning what will make him an efficient librarian. How this will be accomplished will depend on the thoroughness of the librarian himself and on the resources of the library. The cataloguing-room of one of the larger libraries will be his best school in the important but slowly acquired knowledge of bibliography. Here he will be early put to collate the books purchased, to compare the prices of books sent to the librarian on approval or marked for purchase in the catalogues of book-dealers, with the prices quoted in Lowndes, Quaritch, Lorenz, Heynsius, and other bibliographical works; here he would learn to classify the books and mark their sizes by the help of fold and book-scale. In cataloguing work he will be taught to seek guidance, when writing out his entries under author, subject, or title, from Cutter's rules, those of the British Museum, Bodleian Library, and of the Library Association, and to use as companions the various standard dictionaries, bibliographical works, and books of literary and scientific reference, with which the cataloguing departments of the larger libraries are so liberally provided, while at the same time he obtains the benefit of having his work supervised and corrected by a cataloguer of experience. He will be called upon to take an active part in the more general work of the library, and by so doing gain that administrative experience which will enable him, when so required, to act on his own responsibility with confidence. It is not necessary to enter further into the details of library work as they affect the education of apprentices. Sufficient, I think, has been said to show that, given a youth of good average abilities trained in a library school of the character described, the result can scarcely fail to be satisfactory. Suppose it were asked: Would it not be better when one is wanted to seek in the open market for an assistant librarian who had acquired the necessary training and qualifications in some library of reputation, and under the guidance of some other librarian? In certain cases perhaps it would; but when a vacancy occurs in a library and the juniors, assuming they are qualified, do not receive promotion, a justifiable feeling of resentment among them will almost be sure to follow, succeeded by more or less apathy in the after discharge of their duties. The new comer will be regarded as



an interloper, and the principal as indifferent to the advancement and prosperity of those who serve under him. It should not be overlooked that a better salary than need be paid to a promoted junior, would have to be offered in order to induce a young man to come from another town and leave his home to go into rooms. Moreover, the promoted junior possesses one advantage a stranger can never have—namely, an intimate knowledge of what books the library does or does not possess. It is largely this acquaintance with the books, together with other minor details, which makes it often very advantageous to take one of the elder and smarter boys to train up as a future librarian. He is as useful, to begin with, in many ways as an adult, while possessing what must not be despised—a feeling of attachment to the library and its arrangements.

During recent years women have obtained for themselves in this country a recognised place among library assistants, and, in a few of the smaller public libraries, hold the position of principal librarian. In America several have made for themselves a deserved reputation for energy and ability in management; and if any one were to ask: Why not in England also? a logical and conclusive answer might not be readily forthcoming. In Manchester, Bradford, and recently in Liverpool, women have shown that they can perform many of the duties in a library, particularly in the lending department, with considerable success. In cataloguing they should have a future, for it is a work for which they would seem to be particularly fitted—mentally and physically, and which would be most congenial to women of good education. If a young woman on her appointment to a library could bring herself to put all thoughts of marriage in the background, and to regard the winning of her own bread as her first and permanent object, probably greater seriousness and studiousness would acquire for her an honourable reputation in librarianship. Whether the whole of the work falling on the principal librarian of a large library could or could not be efficiently performed by a woman it is not necessary to discuss here. This, as in other questions where the sexes are concerned, is not so much one of mental ability as of other considerations which make it seem expedient in certain appointments and positions to employ a man in preference to a woman.

The employment of boy attendants in libraries though largely the outcome of economy is not entirely due to this cause. The

duties they have to discharge, though necessary and important, are so light, simple, and within the ability of a boy of average intellect, that to employ adults to perform them seems like a waste of power and energy. The principal work the boys have to perform is to obtain and replace the books required by readers. As boys have plastic memories, they very speedily learn by heart the classes and numbers of the more important and popular books in the library. This in itself is a great advantage to the readers. The charges made against boys of carelessness, and dilatoriness in finding the books, are in most cases unfounded or exaggerated. With some readers any delay, however justifiable, by reason of the number of books wanted and their scattered location in the library, gives rise to expressions of impatience and unreasonable charges of negligence against the boys—charges they would probably be more chary of bringing against an adult, but bring against boys, I suppose, largely on the principle that a boy ought to have his ears boxed whenever you meet him, because if he has not just perpetrated some piece of mischief he very soon will.

For the amount of wages which would have to be paid to one man, the services of four boys could be obtained, who, by their nimbleness and activity, would attend to the readers with far greater despatch than an equal number of adults. A boy will dust, paste, and perform many other minor offices in a library with less reluctance and disposition to question than a man. It must not be assumed, however, that boys may be left to follow their own wills and inclinations, and do not require to be superintended. The presence of the sub-librarian or a senior assistant is obviously necessary, alike in the interests of readers and of the management; an assistant who has gained the boys' respect will succeed in getting from them a wonderful amount of useful and intelligent work. It is worth noting too that a dilatory or negligent boy may be discharged with far less thought as to the consequences to his future than if he were an adult; for there is every chance that a boy dismissed from a library will speedily find another situation, probably better suited to his taste and capacity.

In the larger libraries porters or janitors must form part of the staff. Where several hundred persons are frequently gathered together in a reading-room, a man in uniform is desirable to insure quietness and the due observance of the regulations. It has been found that the employment of commissionaires as janitors

has worked well. The men as a body are smart and commanding in appearance, and punctilious in carrying out orders and seeing rules and regulations observed. Their employment has its economical side, as the corps provides a neat uniform and supplies a substitute in case the man on regular duty is ill or otherwise incapacitated. Their employment brings also with it a money guarantee in case of dishonesty, and obviates any necessity for a sick or death allowance by their employers : the corps being in the nature of a friendly society.

It has been found very profitable from time to time, when the arrangements of the libraries will admit of it, to bring the staff together, wholly or in part, for the purpose of discussing some contemplated change in the working of the library, or to hear a paper read by one of its members on some subject of common interest. Occasional gatherings of a more social and pleasurable character, whenever such can be arranged, promote harmony and good feeling, and through them the prosperity and success of the libraries.

The position which free libraries hold among the democratic educational institutions of the day makes it all the more necessary that those whose duties place them in daily and hourly contact with the reading public should be duly impressed with the responsibility of their position, and that they should possess those qualifications which are best calculated to place their respective libraries in touch with the artizan class in particular. Such librarians will soon possess the happy consciousness of taking part in a great educational work, and of contributing to the pleasures and enjoyment found by a large and constantly increasing number in the reading of the literature provided in the public library.



## CHAPTER II.

In the previous chapter I have endeavoured to point out how and in what way the objects and aims of free public libraries can be best attained, and what should be the character of those who are directly responsible for their working and management, in order to achieve the good results so ardently desired by the promoters of these popular institutions. In the present chapter my purpose will be rather to direct attention to administrative matters as affecting the staff of a library, and to supply a variety of statistical information which it is hoped may prove of use to the many friends of free libraries who desire their extension. Thanks to the kind assistance of various librarians I have been able to gather a considerable body of facts and figures, the story of which I shall endeavour to tell as clearly and pointedly as possible in the next few pages. One lesson very apparent and easy to deduce from this statistical matter is the amount of individuality as to details that obtains in the working of public libraries.

To many, the arrangements and management of a public reference or lending library are simple matters, and not calculated to demand any great amount of administrative ability; but where a librarian possesses decided ability and individuality he often makes it evident that there are more ways than one of arriving with a fair measure of success at the same result. To cast the internal arrangements and working of all libraries into a common mould, even if it were possible, would be a mistake, seeing that so much is gained from an honourable rivalry among librarians as to the best methods to be adopted in order to attain the greatest efficiency. In one particular, however, I consider this rivalry to be greatly at fault: namely, in the matter of statistics, the making up of which seems oftentimes to betoken excessive zeal, and a sanguine temperament. But of this I shall have more to say further on.



## NUMBER OF STAFF.

It might be thought that the number of employées required for a given reference or lending library might be accurately deduced from the number of volumes annually issued, and the total number of readers entitled to borrow books ; but a little reflection will show that there are other factors to be taken into account besides borrowers and volumes issued. One of these factors, and by no means the least, is building construction. A well planned library with its various reading and service rooms on one floor, and so arranged that its reference, lending, and newsroom departments, can be worked and superintended from a central position, can obviously be managed with a smaller staff than a library where these departments are inconveniently placed in regard to one another, or worse still on two or more floors. The compact storage and good arrangement of the books are other important factors, and so is the system adopted for registering issues from the lending department. Then follow the business hours, number of volumes, and the area they cover, and last, and perhaps the most important factor of all, the personal ability and activity of the assistants. The relative merits of registering or charging systems of books lent for home reading is another subject of no little importance in connection with the work of a library. An expeditious system, and safe withal, has a direct bearing upon the time and labour of the staff, and ought to receive careful consideration at the hands of all library managers. It is obvious then from the foregoing list of modifying causes, how difficult it would be to lay down a rule as to the number of assistants necessary for the work of any given library.

The principal lending library at Birmingham in 1891 issued 260,596 volumes, and the staff consisted of four adults (one a woman) and five youths ; the East Branch Library at Liverpool issued in the same year 151,320 volumes with a staff of three adults (two of them women) and three boys ; and the Deansgate Branch Library at Manchester issued 125,601 volumes with a staff of eight women and girls. These figures do not enable us to come to any conclusion or form any opinion as to whether any or all of these staffs are over-worked or under-worked. As a matter of fact the arrangements of all these libraries differ, and the systems of registering the issues are also different. At Birmingham

there is a combination of the indicator and day-book system; at Liverpool a card system, the invention of the writer; and at Manchester the day-book system: consequently the amount of writing and trouble involved in the issue of any particular book varies at each of these libraries.

#### LIBRARY STATISTICS.

Touching the question of library statistics to which I have already referred, I would say to any one disposed to make comparisons between one library and another, based on the figures given in annual reports, that it is by no means easy to draw fair and trustworthy comparisons, owing to the absence of any method of making up statistics common to all libraries. Taking the three libraries before mentioned: at the Birmingham Library there are 11,147 constituted borrowers; at the Manchester Library, 8,243; and at the Liverpool Library, 4,358. Now, taking as a basis of computation the readers and issues at the Liverpool Library, Manchester with say 8,000 readers ought to issue 304,000 volumes; and Birmingham, with 11,000 readers, 418,000 volumes. But here this anomaly comes in—all these libraries differ as to the time they allow a reader's borrowing ticket to continue in use before it is called in to be renewed, the neglect of such a recall causing the ticket to lapse, and the owner to forfeit his privileges as a borrower.

In regard to the issue of books: in some libraries the more important reviews and magazines are issued and counted as volumes along with the issues of ordinary books, while in others they are reckoned and tabulated separately. In few, if any, reading rooms where newspapers are provided and the magazines lie on the tables, or are otherwise placed at the discretion of the readers, is there anything more done for statistical purposes than to make an occasional or periodical count of the readers and issues of this class of literature, and on these counts to compute the total issues for the year. It requires very little consideration to see how easy it would be to err on the side of excess in calculating the year's issues, and how readily an enthusiastic assistant might be tempted to consider it more venial to magnify rather than to minimise the work of a year. As perhaps the custom of no two libraries is alike in making these

counts, it is clear that local statistics and customs must in all cases be ascertained and considered before a fair comparison can be made between one library and another, or a deduction drawn serviceable for guidance in connection with any library about to be established.

### HOURS.

It would appear, from the statistical information kindly furnished by many libraries, that in the larger ones throughout the country the working hours average from 47 per week at Leeds and Liverpool to  $49\frac{1}{2}$  per week at Birmingham. In Manchester, however, the average is a little over 50 hours per week. In smaller, but important libraries the average is apparently higher. At Bermondsey (London) it is 52 hours per week, Sheffield 51, Wigan 50, Derby 50, Bradford 49, and Cardiff  $48\frac{1}{2}$ . It may be accepted that from 8 to 9 hours a day is quite sufficient service for the staff of any popular Library, as towards the later hours of the day, and particularly in the evening after the gas has been lighted, the air of the public rooms becomes vitiated in even those which are supplied with good means of ventilation.

It is a matter of no slight difficulty to provide an adequate artificial reading light, maintain a temperature satisfactory to elderly readers, and at the same time prevent the atmosphere of any well attended reading room, after being open from nine or ten o'clock in the morning, from becoming towards evening prejudicial to the health of readers and staff, and I may also say to the bindings of books. The electric light is undoubtedly the best means of lighting a library, as it has none of the objectionable features inseparable from the use of gas. Where, however, ventilating shafts are placed in direct connection with Argand or other gas lamps, the result has been proved to be eminently satisfactory, and a comparatively cool and healthy atmosphere preserved. I would here mention in passing, that after many years' experience of the electric light in a public library, and after conducting some experimental tests, I see no reason to give credit to the statements as to the injurious effects of the light upon the colours of leather and cloth bindings.



## SALARIES AND WAGES.

In noting the salaries and wages paid in various public libraries, the most potent factor in their regulation is undoubtedly the income at the disposal of the respective committees. Locality is not without some influence, while the character and ability of the members of the staff must always exercise an important influence. Many free libraries are hampered and even crippled in their work and staff through building debts, while others very similar in size, in income from the penny rate, and in other ways, are relieved from this incubus through the generosity of some local benefactor who has provided the library buildings. Others<sup>1</sup> again are in the happy position of having more than the penny rate at their disposal, and can therefore afford to employ a larger staff, to pay them adequate salaries, and to attract a greater attendance of readers by purchasing liberally the latest and best books, reviews, magazines, and newspapers; thus making themselves the centres of more extended work and greater usefulness than their less fortunate neighbours.

As hardly any two public libraries correspond exactly in income, the time they have been established, the number of institutions affiliated, and the educational work carried on in connection with them (such as museums, art galleries, lending branches, reading rooms, science classes, and lecture work); so no two managing librarians have, it may be said, wholly corresponding duties; consequently salaries differ very considerably, and not always with that difference favourably corresponding with the number and importance of duties and responsibilities.

Some librarians combine the office of curator of a museum or art gallery, and some the secretaryship of science classes.

<sup>1</sup>The following cities and towns possess powers under Local Improvement Acts which enable them to exceed the penny in the pound rating permitted by the Public Libraries Act. Birmingham, Oldham, and St. Helen's are unrestricted in their rating powers. Nottingham levies a penny rate for their central Library, another penny for the Art Museum, and receives from the Town Council out of the profits of their gas and water undertakings, an amount for Lending Libraries and Reading Rooms equal to a half-penny rate, making a total of 2½d. in the £. Manchester, Leicester, Wolverhampton, Sheffield, Swansea, and Wigan, have power to levy a rate of 2d. in the £, and Preston, Warrington and Southport 1½d.

The Public Library of Leeds has as many as twenty-six branch libraries and reading rooms, while in Glasgow there is not even one connected with the Mitchell Free Library. In this and other ways the work and responsibilities of the librarians of Manchester, Birmingham, and Liverpool, differ one from the other, and this difference extends to their deputies. Hence any statement of the salaries paid to librarians would not serve any very useful purpose, without a knowledge of the circumstances of the various libraries, and the duties devolving on their respective librarians.

The deputy librarian at Manchester receives £230 a year, and as he is the principal cataloguer, his time is almost entirely devoted to this work. In Liverpool the deputy librarian has £200 a year, but he acts as superintendent of the Picton reading room or new extension of the Reference Library. In Birmingham the duties of the deputy librarian who has £180 a year, differ in many respects from both of the preceding ones. In the smaller Public Libraries the salary paid to the senior assistant or deputy librarian varies from £80 to £130 a year, the difference in remuneration being due to the causes which usually operate in cases of wages between employer and employed: ability to pay on the one side, and age, length of service, duties, and efficiency on the other. When it is known that the librarian of no free library<sup>1</sup>—except that of the Guildhall, in the City of London, which in the source of its income, and in other respects, differs from the free libraries of other cities and towns—has more than £500 a year, and that only three public librarians receive more than £400, it is evident that bibliography and the multifarious duties of a public librarian are not as yet very highly estimated. With respect to the wages of assistants subordinate to those already mentioned, it is hardly necessary to refer. The custom of apprenticeship which has been in operation for many years at Liverpool, and is favoured in some other libraries, is found to work with considerable advantage. Out of the large staff of boys employed there as attendants on the readers, one is always found, when a vacancy occurs in the senior staff, whose good conduct, smartness, and intelligence, have separated him from his fellows, and marked him out as

<sup>1</sup>The British Museum Library is altogether so distinct in all that appertains to its staff, that it has not been deemed necessary to allude to it.



deserving of being taken as an apprentice, and trained during a term of five years in the more responsible duties of a librarian.

The rule has been to give the youth 10s. per week to begin with, and increase his wages by yearly increments to 25s. a week. In most cases the young men after the period of their training and probation, manage before very long to secure advancement either in their own library or obtain appointments elsewhere.

In Manchester several of the branch libraries are in charge of women, who receive from £65 to £80 per annum, and these amounts seem to represent the maximum remuneration paid to female managing librarians in this country at the present time. In one library, which, however, is not under the Public Libraries' Act, the principal librarian, a lady, receives a salary of £100 a year. At Manchester, Liverpool, Bradford, and some other libraries, as assistants young women receive from 10s. to 20s. a week, according to ability and seniority.

The wages of boys employed in libraries range from 5s. to 7s. a week. The great difficulty attending their employment is their constant coming and going. The librarian trains them carefully in their simple duties, and then when they have become useful they find other situations for themselves, and leave him to begin *de novo* with other boys. Seeing, however, that he cannot secure promotion for them as fast as they grow up, this constant change is inevitable, and may as well be endured with equanimity. It is owing to this that some libraries have resorted to a sort of compromise in the employment of young women, hoping thus to secure longer service, and steadier and more thoughtful work and conduct, while only paying some 50 per cent. more in wages.

In most of the larger libraries one or more janitors or porters are employed. At Liverpool, Birmingham, Sheffield, Derby, and Edinburgh, the head porter also acts as keeper, and lives on the premises. Besides the rooms, coals, gas, etc., allowed, the wages paid at these libraries are—£100 a year at Liverpool; 30s. per week at Birmingham, Sheffield, and Derby; and 27s. a week at Edinburgh. At Manchester, Bradford, and many other places, no residence for the head porter is provided. The weekly wages paid at the two libraries just named is 34s. and 22s. per week respectively. Leeds is very exceptional, for it appears to be able to do without porters altogether. At Wigan a

man and his wife are provided with rooms, and receive jointly 35s. per week, with 2s. 6d. a week extra for assistance in cleaning. In this case the man is only required to be in attendance during the evenings. At Cardiff, besides residence, coals, etc., the porter or caretaker has 25s. per week, and 9s. a week extra for cleaning assistance. In many libraries, particularly in and near London, the librarian himself has a house or rooms adjoining the library, and so is in charge of the institution both day and night. At Liverpool, St. Martin's and Clerkenwell, commissionaires are employed as porters or janitors. I have already referred (page 15) to some of the advantages attending the employment of these men, who, in most cases, are highly deserving, and certainly merit a trial in places where their services are obtainable. It may be observed in regard to porters and caretakers that it is not easy to present a simple and clear statement of wages paid them owing to the variety in time and duties, and the size of the libraries to which they belong.

#### SUNDAY DUTY.

Through the active propagandism of the Sunday Society, supported by many persons unconnected with it, who from philanthropic motives are favourable to the public reading rooms of our cities and towns being thrown open on Sundays, a large number of these institutions are now open on this day, usually from 2 or 3 o'clock in the afternoon to 8 or 9 in the evening. At the present time the following cities and towns, including ten districts of London, open their libraries on Sunday: Birmingham, Bradford, Darlington, Dublin, Gateshead, Leamington, Leicester, London (Battersea, Bermondsey, Camberwell, Chelsea, Clerkenwell, Fulham, Hammersmith, Hampstead, Kensington, Lambeth), Manchester, Middlesbrough, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Oldham, Norwich, Northampton, Rochdale, St. Helens, Salford, Sheffield, Stockport, Stockton, Wigan. In Birkenhead, Chester, Coventry, Keswick, Maidstone, Oxford, Sunderland, Stoke-on-Trent, Worcester, and Workington the opening of libraries on Sunday has been tried, but the experiment, for various reasons, has resulted in failure, and the libraries have accordingly been closed on that day. It may be noted that Sunday duty is not generally paid for as extra work but simply as

ordinary, most library assistants being now engaged on the understanding that their duties may include Sunday service. This is scarcely fair or reasonable. In many cases a time allowance is granted on some week-day in lieu of Sunday; but this can hardly be regarded as a full equivalent for the quiet rest and home and family enjoyment of Sunday.

An idea long prevailed that the duties of a public librarian were of a very elementary character, easy to perform, and required little education and small mental capacity. This idea has, fortunately for the public and for libraries, given place to a truer and more generous estimate.

In the previous chapter, I have endeavoured to give a sketch of the qualifications necessary to a librarian if the library under his charge is to prove equal to the expectations of usefulness entertained of it. The choice of a librarian of adequate experience and knowledge is often attended with difficulty. Testimonials are, for the most part, of a vague and general kind—the outcome of a kindly desire to render a service to some more or less known applicant—and are seldom so precise and analytical as to attainments and character as to be of real use to those who are responsible for making an important appointment. Though Committees often succeed in choosing a good man out of the few selected candidates usually invited to an interview, it by no means follows that the best man is uniformly chosen at such times, be the intention ever so good, but rather the man of self-confidence, ready tongue, and good appearance and address. The deeper and more solid qualities of an applicant cannot be discovered and gauged by means of the few and often irrelevant questions asked by one or other members of such a Committee seated in conclave, and often quite wearied of the task in hand.

With the object of supplying Committees with sure and certain proof that the requisite knowledge is possessed by a candidate, the Library Association has instituted an examination in general knowledge as well as in its own special field of library science. Accordingly, the holder of the Association Certificate will come before any Committee having an appointment to make with good and sufficient credentials that he possesses, at least, a certain satisfactory minimum of knowledge and attainments qualifying him for a library appointment. The general recognition of this examination by Committees would often simplify and



lighten their task when required to fill up a vacancy in their senior staff, while it would tend to raise the character and status of librarians, and what is most important of all, prevent the management of free libraries falling into the hands of incompetent persons.

Free libraries are now among the recognised educational institutions of our time. And although every city and town has not yet established its public library, sooner or later it will, together, no doubt, with keener appreciation of its value and usefulness to make amends for previous indifference and omission of public duty. The spread of education by means of our elementary school system, technical classes, university extension lectures, and colleges for higher education must make the public library an important auxiliary and adjunct. Hence the necessity that Committees should be fully alive to the importance of placing in charge of the public library those who are capable of helping the young, the scientific investigator, and the general student to a knowledge of the best text-books, and to those sources of information which only become known to those who may be said to live among books and are daily and hourly unlocking some little known or forgotten literary treasure house.







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