

Local Imprints in Libraries of State Universities and Other Higher Institutions

An answer is here given as to what attention some college and university libraries are paying to the development of printing in their geographical areas.

ANY QUESTION of collecting imprints, as such, can scarcely be considered vital to the winning of the war. For the duration emphasis is properly placed, even here where no cities have been bombed, on the preservation of records. One of our post-war duties, however, will be to insure that our source materials are in the hands of those especially equipped to house and administer them, for many, among them the writer, are gloomy enough to expect another World War within the span of a generation. Next time our shores may not be immune to invasion and destruction.

A satisfactory definition of "local imprints" (for our purposes) is almost as challenging as a good definition of "the law." What now is in mind is printed materials of almost every kind which issue from the presses of an ascertained locality. "Collecting" is used both passively and actively. There is little question about the importance of this type of acquisition to municipal, county, state, and, especially, historical and antiquarian, libraries, but there is some doubt about its relative usefulness in college and university libraries. Concern with local imprints as such is not

a primary function of academic institutions, while it most certainly is of the other types of libraries mentioned.

Just how valuable such collections are in various situations could be determined only by a complete survey of the scene, including the policies and practices of all types of libraries, the history and purpose of the practices, and the attitudes of administrators and patrons. Such a survey and such investigations are obviously not a task for one person. The work must be done—probably has already been done to some extent—cooperatively and under the aegis of an organization that can raise the funds and supply the personnel. Whether any group would interest itself, sometime, in such a project depends upon the prospect of support from the institutions concerned.

In this paper an endeavor has been made to discover some trends and attitudes in the collecting of local imprints by certain institutional libraries. The findings are uneven and often meager but they may serve as straws to show which way the wind is blowing and as some indication of the probable success of a larger effort. Enquiries were sent to all the state universities, to some state colleges, and, as of possible interest by way of contrast, to the oldest privately-endowed college or university in each state where one exists.

Fifty-three state universities and colleges were approached and forty-three private ones, making a total of ninety-six. Only thirty-five (the fair average of one-third) replied, among them being three or four which had nothing to report. Of these thirty-five, twenty-seven were state universities. Only eight non-state institutions responded in any way. Putting it the other way around, sixty-one out of the ninety-six libraries solicited failed to reply; twenty-six of these were state universities (arbitrarily designated hereafter as *universities*) and thirty-five were non-state institutions, usually privately endowed (designated as *colleges*). There is no need to go into the reasons for this disparity at length, but sometimes recently it has been observed that the privately-endowed colleges and universities are hard put to it to maintain incomes to compare with those of state universities. It is certain, of course, that among the non-state institutions are men's colleges whose healthy existence has been

depending in great measure on the school program of the military. Now that this program is to be drastically curtailed, it is understandable if the matter now under consideration seems not pertinent to some librarians.

The following table of statistics reveals some significant reactions, notably the good representation from New England and the complete lack of it from the Middle Atlantic States, which include New York.

In the questionnaire, "collecting," "local," and "imprints," were closely and conspicuously defined. And yet throughout the returns there were some replies that betrayed failure to grasp the meaning of these terms. In any case, most of the institutions stated at once that they made a conscious effort to collect imprints for their localities, although four, including two colleges, said that they did not. The curious thing about it is that four universities were quite noncommittal. As would be expected, with state universities stealing the show,

TABLE I
INSTITUTIONS REPLYING AND NOT REPLYING

	United States	South	New England	Far West	Mid-west	Middle Atlantic
Total Number Approached	96	31	14	23	21	7
State Universities	53	18	7	12	12	4
Non-State Institutions	43	13	7	11	9	3
Total Number Replying	35	13	8	8	6	0
State Universities	27	11	3	7	6	0
Non-State Institutions	8	2	5	1	0	0
Total Number Not Replying	61	18	6	15	15	7
State Universities	26	7	4	5	6	4
Non-State Institutions	35	11	2	10	9	3

the great majority of these reporting institutions consider the state the happy hunting ground for local imprints. Three of the eight colleges try to cover their municipalities, though four of them also try to cover the state. One privately-endowed college is interested in early Americana (hardly local), while one university and a college attempt a regional coverage.

Over half of all the libraries reporting fail to describe their methods of seeking imprints. Most of those answering on this matter say that their routine is a part of their routine for ordering most items, and supposedly this is the case with the silent majority also. In only two instances is the soliciting left to nonlibrary or teaching members of the institutional staff. Only a half dozen, including one college, have been more than ordinarily successful, while five or six each say results have been "good" or "fair." Several, including most of the colleges, make no reply on this point, and three universities find it impossible to be definite. A question as to personal contacts with influential persons was also ignored by several, but two universities and a college assert that they make no contacts, while four of the former are militant about it. Five meet with varying success.

Special Quarters

Most of the universities have special quarters for housing their imprints, but so many of these are special rooms for the "ana," or space set aside in the regular stacks, that it may be questioned whether they are not for all kinds of material about the states in question rather than for items printed in those states. A few institutions, including four colleges, have no special facilities for their imprints, and three (one college) take care of the matter through separate records only. Two in each case do not reply. The personnel assigned to the

care of imprints and to the superintendence of their quarters is usually submerged by other work, such as that of an order department, but sometimes it is in addition to the regular force and even, in one instance, outside the library.

No Cooperative Arrangements

After years of effort among progressive librarians to reach helpful understandings among themselves on regional collecting, it is disappointing to find that over half the reporting libraries have no cooperative arrangement on imprints with other colleges and universities. A handful admit such general exchange understandings as are probably common to most, while a half dozen leave the collecting more or less to other institutions in their own areas.

In some of the preceding paragraphs there is described, with comment, what actually goes on among the thirty-five colleges and universities. These practices do not necessarily, of course, represent policies. They probably are a mixture of what librarians want done and what they have to do. The respondents have some definite ideas, however, on questions of policy and they have stated them. Fourteen (including those at three colleges) believe that their libraries should collect local imprints as extensively as possible. Half this number (including representatives of two colleges) are of the opinion that the responsibility for collecting on a state-wide basis should be assumed but should be shared with others, while those at two colleges observe a similar policy with regard to municipalities. A librarian of one great state university observes that it is impossible to say how extensive collecting should be "until it is known what other libraries are doing."

The funds needed to implement collecting, however extensive, vary from \$300-

TABLE II

CHARACTER AND NUMBERS OF PIECES IN LOCAL IMPRINTS COLLECTIONS
 Numerals in curves indicate number of institutions reporting for each heading

	Universities	Colleges
Books	Excellent (3); Fair (2). Several hundred volumes (1); 3000. (1); 12000. (1)	Fair (1)
Pamphlets	Excellent (1); Good (1). 4000 (1); 5500 (1); 6000 (1)	Very good (1); Fair (1). Several hundred (1)
Almanacs	Excellent (2); "Fair to Good" (1); Poor (1). Less than 1000 (2)	Excellent (1); Poor (1)
Newspapers	Excellent (1); Good (2); Fair (1). "About 125 state newspapers" (1); 161. (1); over 500. (1); 1500-2000. (1)	
Official government documents	Excellent (3); Good (2); Strong in state documents (2)	Excellent (1)
Broadsides and broad-sheets, and commercial catalogs and announcements	Replies so scattering as to indicate little appreciation of their value as local imprints	
Music scores; maps and charts; atlases	Interest in these from imprint standpoint so uncertain as to be questionable	
Other classes of material	About 100 v. each of magazine and periodical titles (2), (one university emphasizing the Southern states.); Theses (2); Publications of constituent schools and colleges (2); "Reports of historical, agricultural, and patriotic societies, operatic librettos, and political literature" (1); An excellent collection of town reports (1)	

\$500 a year, according to some universities, to \$2,000-\$3,500, according to others. Librarians in two universities and a college believe a "modest" stipend would be enough, while two others think no special fund is needed. More money is necessary, a few concede, but just how much remains a mystery. Funds, of course, are also the wherewithal of adequate personnel. Several librarians would like to have one full-time assistant for such work, while two think they could use more. Two others, including one at a college, see no need for additional help, while eight universities and

one college made no reply.

What provision would have to be made to house an ideal growing collection depends, of course, upon the conditions peculiar to the library in question. Librarians are reluctant to express themselves on this matter. Eight do not comment at all and six (including one representing a college) say no special provision is required. The respondents at four universities and two colleges want more space in the stacks or in their special rooms, while those at three others suggest entirely new rooms. Obviously, these estimates apply to local needs and

provide no general criteria for the housing of "an ideal growing collection." It seems hardly possible that useful estimates could be devised.

For many years the National Association of State Libraries has discussed the feasibility of central clearinghouses in states or regions to receive and distribute printed matter for appropriate participating members. Such a clearinghouse for local imprints has the approval of thirteen of the libraries in the present group (including two colleges), and it is worth considering whether state libraries and academic institutions could not join forces in one common agency in each designated area. Some

of the librarians here consulted (two of them at colleges) are lukewarm about a clearinghouse; two, both at colleges, are against it; and three of those at universities express no opinion.

A wide variation of figures and estimates, both exact and indefinite, was returned in answer to an itemized enquiry into the strength of local imprints collections. Rather than to generalize and summarize here as in the foregoing paragraphs, a presentation of the answers in tabular form may be more effective. In a dozen instances no statistics were given or available. With one exception, all of these were cases at state institutions.

Extended College Library Service to Teachers

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put for the enrichment of teaching. Instances could be multiplied indefinitely but one is sufficient to show how the services of the library in a teacher-training institution

can be extended, not only beyond the campus, but beyond the intangible bounds of the actual curriculum of the institution.