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Importations of Foreign Monographs Under the Early Influence of The Farmington Plan¹

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IT APPEARS to be true, though so far as we know the subject has not been adequately investigated, that research libraries in this country have long been more receptive to foreign language titles and have spent a larger proportion of their total resources upon the acquisition of such titles than comparable institutions abroad. Such an attitude has doubtless been made possible by our comparative wealth and, in more recent years, by our freedom from crippling exchange restrictions; but let us hope that it has arisen in some degree from our breadth of mind, from the sanity of our international outlook, and from a very proper disposition to pursue knowledge and the arts wherever the quest may lead without regard to the language in which they may find expression. More recently our interest in foreign importations has doubtless also been stimulated by a haunting fear that the records of civilization are in danger of destruction abroad and by a perhaps unjustified hope that they will somehow be more secure when brought within our borders.

In any case it is a fact of common knowledge that the organized research li-

brarians of this country, realizing how inadequate, with all their efforts, their holdings of foreign publications are, have set to work through cooperative effort to bring it about that there shall be brought into this country currently, and centrally recorded in the national Union Catalog, at least one copy of every foreign book of possible research value. This cooperative effort has come to be known as the Farmington Plan. It began to be put into actual operation gradually as of Jan. 1, 1948, when it was inaugurated on an experimental basis for France, Sweden, and Switzerland. It has since been extended to six other countries and it will presumably soon be extended further still. But there are definite limitations. So far there has been no attempt to extend it beyond works in the Latin alphabet—an illogical limitation, but one which in the initial stages certainly obviates practical difficulties. And certain categories of materials, such as school texts, music scores, translations, reprints, juvenilia, elementary popular works, newspapers, maps, and even periodicals are excluded.

Since detailed information concerning the origin and inauguration of the Farmington Plan is already available in print, this brief introduction will suffice and we shall proceed at once to the essence of this paper.

How has this ambitious effort called the Farmington Plan worked in its initial

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stages? What effect has it had upon the importations of foreign publications by our research libraries? How nearly can we hope that with it we shall realize our ambition to bring into this country and centrally record every work of research value which is currently being published abroad? It will doubtless be felt, and we must certainly acknowledge, that it is hardly fair to the Farmington Plan to submit its results to the test of a rigorous investigation while it is still in the initial and experimental stages of its development, and that therefore no fully satisfactory answers can be given to the questions which we have posed. But our interest in these questions is intense and should the later history of the Farmington Plan be ever so successful, not to say distinguished, we still feel that it should be a matter of interest and importance to have in the record such facts as can be established concerning its operation at the beginning. Therefore, though the plan is barely under way, we have undertaken an experimental investigation with a view to seeing what light we may be able to shed upon its early results. It is, of course, our hope and expectation that subsequent investigations will be undertaken to record the later progress of the plan and with it the progress of national coverage of foreign research materials by United States libraries.

We have proceeded by the method of sampling. We have taken the Swiss national bibliography, *Das Schweizer Buch*, published by the Association of Swiss Booksellers and Publishers, for the early months of 1948. Arbitrarily we have selected Numbers 3, 5, and 7 of Series A (commercial publications), which appeared on February 15, March 15, and April 15 of that year, and have made a list of the titles there recorded. But from the list we have excluded, so far as we were able to recognize them, all items belonging to categories

which fall outside the scope of the Farmington Plan. Also we have omitted late 1947 imprints which have been belatedly recorded in the 1948 bibliography. Though the work of exclusion has been done with all possible care, it must be acknowledged that, due to insufficient information some mistakes may have been made and that some few items which should have been excluded may have crept in. However, we believe that the margin of error is too small to be of serious consequence.

The list of titles from the three numbers of the *Schweizer Buch* with which we began totaled 473 items. When the exclusions had been completed there remained 113. This remainder constitutes the sample with which we have worked. It retains, it will be observed, something less than one-quarter of the 473 titles with which we started. It amounts to a little less than $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent of all the titles produced in the Swiss book trade for the year 1948.

The fact that the *Schweizer Buch* has a classified arrangement has provided us with a convenient subject breakdown of our sample list. We shall therefore be able to present two separate analyses, the first based on the whole sample, the second upon groups of titles arranged under certain large subject headings.

Having prepared our sample with such care as we could, early in August 1949 we submitted it to the Union Catalog at the Library of Congress, which besides its regular reports is supposed to receive promptly from participating libraries, cards for all Farmington Plan receipts, and we asked to have it checked for locations. Out of 113 items, 92, or 81.4 per cent, were located.

Of the 92 items located 52 had been brought into our library network as unique copies under the Farmington Plan. There were seven additional Farmington items which were also imported independently by United States libraries, the extent of dupli-

cation attesting to their relative popularity. One of these items was recorded in seven copies, another in four, two others in three copies, and three in two.

Now turning to the remainder of our sample, besides the 52 Farmington items which were recorded in unique copies, the Union Catalog located for us 33 additional titles which had not been brought into this country as Farmington importations. Such a finding seems surprising, but surely no great importance ought to be attached to it unless it should be confirmed by later and more comprehensive investigations. That some Farmington items should be duplicated through independent importations outside the plan is, of course, to be expected; but that more than one-third of the located items in our sample should be imported outside the plan and *not* duplicated by Farmington copies must, we think, have resulted from the novelty of the plan and the inexperience of those who were responsible for selections under it. It is surely to be expected that future studies will reveal the percentage of unique Farmington titles going up while the number of non-Farmington titles held by our research libraries declines.

The comparative status of Farmington and non-Farmington importations, as revealed by our study, is presented in Table I.

Turning from the problems of the Farmington Plan for the moment, let us glance at the multiple importations of identical imprints which the check at the Union Catalog has revealed. Our sample seems to indicate a very small amount of duplication by American libraries, a fact that seems surprising in view of the present-day importance of the Swiss book trade. As a result of the restrictive policies of Nazism and the subsequent disintegration of the Germany economy, Switzerland has fallen heir to a considerable part of German book production. American research li-

braries, aware of this fact, must surely be checking the Swiss national bibliography with care; yet by far the largest number of titles in our sample were located in one copy only—a fact which may well be gratifying to those who worry about extensive duplication but will seem disturbing to others who believe that the more important materials of research should surely find their way into several American libraries.

Table I
Comparative Status of Importations

	Number	Per Cent
Farmington Purchases only	52	56.52
Individual Purchases only	33	35.87
Farmington and Individual Purchases	7	7.61
	—	—
	92	100.00

Out of a total of 92 titles for which we have locations, one was reported in seven copies and one in six. There were four titles in four copies, five in three, and seven in two. But there were 74 titles (or 80 per cent of all those located) in one copy only.

The location of these unique titles may be of some interest. It is hardly surprising that the Library of Congress (see Table II) should lead with the holding of 15 out of 74 titles which are to be found in one institution only. It is perhaps a less obvious expectation that New York University should come next with 10 unique titles, and that Yale should come next after that with nine. Then comes New York Public Library with eight, Harvard with six, and the University of Chicago with five such titles. It may be observed that, with the exceptions of the Library of Congress and the Army Medical Library, unique locations are due largely to importations under the Farmington Plan. Let us hasten to add that we have no thought of making invidious comparisons and that we fully rec-

ognize that such statistics as we have been using can take little or no account of qualitative factors.

We turn now from a study of our data as a whole to an examination of subject coverage for certain particular fields. Our sample is perhaps too small to justify a subject breakdown (this is surely the case for certain fields where we have a very meager representation); but again it must

Table II
Locations of Unique Titles

Library	Number of Unique Locations
DLC	15
NNU	10
CtY	9
NN	8
MH	6
ICU	5
NNUT	4
OrU	4
IU	3
DSG	2
MiDW	2
PU	2
DCU	1
NhD	1
PPTU	1
WaU	1
Total	74

be noted that our study is preliminary and experimental; and though our findings will doubtless be modified by later and more comprehensive investigations, we still believe that as a first assay they have some value.

As just indicated, we have omitted from consideration fields for which the total number of items in our sample was very small (less than four to be exact), namely general reference and bibliography, philology, education, sports, geography, commerce and banking, engineering and trades, agriculture and forestry. Turning now to the other fields for which we had a better representation, we find that American libraries achieved, either through the Farmington Plan or through independent

importations, complete coverage in the following subjects: philosophy and psychology (seven titles), law and administration (nine titles), music and the stage (five titles), medicine (seven titles). Coverage was more than 75 per cent complete in economics and sociology (six titles), belles-lettres (26 titles), fine arts (four titles), and political science (four titles); it was less than 75 per cent but more than 50 per cent complete in religion (14 titles), history (12 titles), the natural sciences, including mathematics (five titles). In none of the fields examined did the coverage fall below 50 per cent.

What part has the Farmington Plan played in subject field coverage in this initial phase of its operation? As judged by our sample, it must be remarked that while it accounted for one-half or more of the titles in music, law, economics, religion, fine arts, and political science, it accounted for less than half in belles-lettres, history, natural sciences, philosophy, and medicine. But once more it must be noted that our study is at the beginning of its operation, and we have no doubt that by now, in its second year, a much more adequate coverage is being achieved, at least for the three countries in which it was first established, and that non-duplicating importations outside the plan must inevitably decline.

It will perhaps be of interest to note institutional coverage with respect to some of the foregoing subject fields. As was to be expected, the greatest dispersal is found in belles-lettres where 17 different institutions hold 26 titles, with enough duplication to bring the total to 43 copies. Of these 17 institutions 12 are located in the East, three in the Middle West, and one in the Far West. In the field of medicine we find that seven titles were held in 12 copies by nine institutions. Quite naturally the Army Medical Library leads, though with only four titles out of seven. As to geo-

graphical distribution of the nine institutions in question, six are in the East and three in the Middle West; none were located in the South or the Far West.

In some other fields there is a greater concentration of holdings. All seven of the titles classified as philosophy and psychology are divided between two institutions, namely the University of Chicago and the Library of Congress. In economics and sociology six titles are located in New York University and one in the Library of Congress. If we were in a position to analyze the entire Swiss book production for the year 1948, we have no doubt that in fields like psychology and economics some buying of Swiss books would be found to have been going on in institutions throughout the country, notwithstanding the concentration which is shown by our sample. At any rate we know that there were such purchases at the University of Pennsylvania.

It is impossible, or at least very difficult, to ascertain what titles have been imported in copies which have not yet been cataloged by receiving institutions, or have not yet been reported to the Union Catalog in Washington. A check of our sample against the Union Library Catalogue of the Philadelphia Metropolitan Area has revealed six locations which were unrecorded in the national Union Catalog. It did not, however, reveal in our area any item for which there was no known location in the national Union Catalog.

It is, of course, an unsound practice to judge the importance of books by their size. Nevertheless, we think it may be some interest to note that of the 21 titles in our sample for which we found no American location, three were volumes of more than 300 pages, seven were less than 300 pages

but more than 100, and 11 were of less than 100 pages.

Let us now in conclusion glance briefly at some of these unlocated titles. Choosing examples at random, we can understand why, without the aid of the Farmington Plan, a publication on the accounting system of the repair shops of the Swiss railroads would not find its way into our library system (even though it was published by Haupt of Bern, a respectable publisher). It is, however, surprising that a sizable volume of 244 pages on collectivism, published not only in Lausanne but also in Paris and Brussels,² was not to be located through the national Union Catalog; or again, considering the fame of Paul Valéry, that a book on this author,³ even though it counts but 61 pages, was not reported in any United States library. However, so far as one can judge from the authors, titles, and publishers in our sample, it would seem that but few of our failures to import are serious. But neither do these failures seem to indicate any very clear or logical reason for their occurrence. It is for this reason, failures to import being accidental rather than planned, that the Farmington Plan, once it gets into fully effective operation, would seem to have such great merit. Though our rash investigation of its working at the beginning has revealed a far from perfect score, we still retain our confidence that shortcomings will be overcome, indeed that they are already in process of being overcome, and that we shall before long arrive at a complete coverage of significant foreign publications in United States libraries.

² Koch, Jean Paul. *Le collectivisme devant l'expérience*. Lausanne, Paris, Bruxelles, 1948.

³ Monod, J. P. *Regard sur Paul Valéry*. Lausanne, 1948.