

# Development of the Book Collection in the College Library: A Symposium

THE FOLLOWING three papers on various aspects of the book collection in the college library were presented at the meeting of the College Libraries Section, Association of College and Reference Libraries, Feb. 1, 1951, in Chicago.

By PAUL BIXLER

## The Book Collection and Its Functions

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THE LIBRARY has been called the heart of the college. If we are thinking in these terms it may be meaningful to say that the book collection is the heart of the library. The real purpose of the library is to cleanse the soul, renew the spirit, clarify ideas and invigorate the mind. If any of these actions take place in the library, they are accomplished primarily by contact with the library's books. The books, however, are not born into the collection by some form of immaculate conception nor do they have their effect solely through some obscure action like osmosis. There is a more or less steady flow into the book collection, and very often there is a more or less steady flow out. In other words, there are relationships to and from functions. One may immediately divide these functions into two types: First, production—or what leads into the book collection; second, consumption—or what leads away from the book collection into its use.

Let me attempt to present the relation of functions more graphically. Suppose I draw a circle in the air before me. This represents the book collection, and it allows us to start off with at least one advantage. If the book collection is represented by a circle then it will be well rounded even before we get under way. It is a very comfortable way to begin, for it may well be that this is the only time during the operation that the book collection can be well rounded although I hope that

this may be the long-range objective toward which we would aim and where we would at last arrive. If a circle represents the book collection, then clearly there are certain functions leading into it. For example, up above we would put the processes of selection and nearby the participants in selection and the buying of books. Each of these, as functions, would lead down into the book collection.

If those above are the productive functions, those below are consumer functions. Down below, for example, would be a line leading to the curriculum and teaching methods; and also below the circle would be the clients or readers for whom the book collection is designed. At this point, interestingly enough, one may note that the line from the participants in selection runs straight down through the book collection circle to the clients or readers below. The persons involved—the selectors on the one hand and the clients or readers on the other—may very well be the same people adopting different roles.

There are, however, other functions or elements to be taken into consideration in the relationships surrounding the book collection. One of these, for example, is other book collections. Such collections can be outside the college library or inside it. Upon that difference in location there depends a considerable difference of function. Closely related to other collections inside the library are other learning aids—nonbook materials may or may not be considered as part of the principal collection. Another function or element in the

book collection is the simple physical environment which certainly influences the size of the collection. Where do these functions relate to or affect the book collection? Graphically they may come in horizontally, but I shall not argue the point.

Just what are we talking about when we use the term book collection? How do we define it? Does the book collection include everything between hard covers and over 49 pages? That was at one time a kind of practical definition. In some descriptive accounting of budgets and of money spent for materials, books and periodicals have been lumped together without differentiation. Does this mean that they belong together in the book collection? Perhaps the collection should include simply the usual volumes (books) plus the representation of books in microfilm and microcards. This last would seem to be a fairly logical inclusion; for where microfilm or microcards represent books and will be used in large part as books will be used, why should they not be considered a part of the collection? If we begin to take in various other materials, where do we stop? Do we include pamphlets? What about motion pictures, music, phonograph records, government publications? Some of these categories are considered a part of the general collection in some libraries, but are we to include them as a definite part of the college library book collection or as mandatory in describing such collections?

There will probably be arguments on both sides if librarians begin to talk about specific collections with which they are associated. There should, however, be some kind of flexibility. There should be a definition which will take in as many of the practical conditions in as many libraries as possible. Rather than haggle over the problem, let me simply suggest a working definition—that the book collection be considered anything and everything represented in the main or union catalog. Presumably this would exclude unaccessioned pamphlets, depository government materials and probably special collections. This last is one category which does not easily fit into the scheme I have attempted to draw up. The special collection may be outside the book collection as I am considering it here. And yet it definitely has its place. I hope you will bear with me when I say—very personally—

that the special collection is the sort of problem or thing that you can't live with and you can't live without. It probably should have special treatment and I am glad to leave it for someone else.

But to return to the definition—it allows us to have a perfectly good library without films or records or a number of other materials if that is what seems right or necessary. Yet the definition is not exclusive. It also allows a book collection to include motion pictures and records.

Let me now turn back to the relationships of the book collection.

First, let me mention the cost of books. As everyone knows, the cost is high. Presumably we should consider what we can do about it. Certainly the elements that go into the cost of books may be broken down and discussed, and perhaps we can in the end not only learn something but accomplish better expenditure of our funds. We might consider buying policies as a problem in itself. What books you buy and in what order of precedence would appear, for example, to affect what you get for your money. Pretty clearly, we could examine where and how to buy, and look into the complicated question of book jobbers and out-of-print dealers, and of discounts.

But I should like to suggest here another angle to this function of cost—its relation to other costs in the budget. Our college has endeavored to hold college (including library) salaries close to an equality with the cost of living. This has meant that the salaries have gone up—and how can one disapprove of that? It does not mean, however, that the total budget has gone up in the same proportion. A total budget of which 60 to 65 per cent went into salaries and wages, and 35 to 40 per cent into other costs (principally books and other learning materials) was a fair and equitable kind of money management. But in the last few years, in attempting to keep up with the cost of living by raising salaries, certainly our proportion of money spent for salaries and for books has gone clear out of its normal relationship. Is there something that can be done about this?

Another relationship to the book collection involves the sources of selection and the availability of materials. There are a number of problems here. One of them is the creation of good lists for selection. Another is the

evaluation or notations which should, wherever possible, accompany each entry in a list for selection. A third and most difficult problem is the evaluation of the evaluation, or the use to which book lists and reviews may properly be put.

Lists of reference books may be trusted more fully than buying lists for circulation and general reading. This is true because reference works deal more in facts, because they can be measured systematically and sometimes even statistically, and because they are frequently more self-contained or inclusive. A copy of Mudge and a set of the *Subscription Books Bulletin* are tools that can be well trusted by the librarian. But to gain an equally trustworthy judgment about books for general reading, the librarian cannot go to the Shaw list and *United States Quarterly Book Review* with equal faith. This is not because Shaw is not the equal of Mudge or the *U. S. Quarterly Book Review* the equal of the *Subscription Books Bulletin* in its field. The reason lies in the nature of the reading matter to be judged. Opinion, art and point of view are not to be handled or trusted like figures or facts.

Lists of the 10,000 best books (or 1000 or 100) can be gathered and published without too great difficulty, but this does not really answer the problem of selection, if indeed there is a final answer.

One of the aids which the librarian ordinarily wants is evaluation. This means a problem within a problem even if the evaluation or reviews answer specific questions about the book. Authority is an evasive term. Who is the authority? What is his point of view and why? Is he judging simply the facts in the case? Or is he laying down the law? Informed opinion about books as about other matters in a complicated world is hard to get at. But even if you get it, the problem of judgment is still with you. For you have to answer the question—does the book fit your library and its needs? Is it useful in your particular context? One might add that there is no substitute for the judgment of the librarian who is buying the books with his own knowledge or his client's needs in mind. I am speaking dogmatically now but what I am really trying to say is that these aspects of selection are problems which ought to be discussed.

This brings me to the third relationship—the participants in selection. If you remember, I earlier suggested that the people who select books and those who use them are in large part the same. I would even add that they should be as similar as possible. When our program chairman was examining the subjects which should be treated here in this panel, he hit upon the subject of pressure groups. Pressure groups may be all right in themselves, but they can go off the beam very easily in two respects. One, they may be attempting pure propaganda—wanting other people to read books which they are convinced are good yet about which they are incompletely informed. Secondly, they may be so interested in a particular subject that they push the number of treatments of that subject to an extreme. Even so it is unfair to suggest that they be excluded entirely from the process of selection.

Let me suggest that the participants in selection might well be thought of as anyone who belongs to the particular college community. This would include the library staff, the administration, the faculty, the library committee, students and people from the community at large; there are, for example, people in the town who may have sound opinions about books. There may be college graduates in the neighborhood or friends of the college.

One might divide the participants in the book selection process into two types—the formal and informal, according to the form of their participation. It is rather clear, I think, that book selection in which the faculty, the library staff, the library committee take part cannot prosper unless regular channels of communication are set up and used. These participants are the people who should feel some continuing responsibility for the condition of the book collection. Some formal or well-determined network of lines of selection should be constructed and used. This does not mean that there will not be problems. The amount of control of book selection by the library committee may be a continuing problem, and I do not think we have yet established how much responsibility should be taken by the librarian.

Still less settled, however, are the questions of informal methods of selection. This is more a matter of library attitudes and

atmosphere than it is one of specific channels. One may put a box on top of the catalog inviting suggestions for new books, but if there is no feeling of communication between the readers and the library staff members, no confidence that such suggestions receive attention, the value of the arrangement will be much impaired.

There is another advantage to this sense of rapport wherever it can be established. No better measure of a book collection can be found than use. It is use for which the library exists. Yet there are few if any aspects of a library about which we know less. There are circulation figures, yes. But happily, we now rely less than we once did upon such statistics. For it is the kind of use, the quality of use and the depth of impression which are significant; and about these we are largely ignorant. We might well give more attention to this problem but, of course, that requires research. For most librarians, knowledge of use is a subjective or at least an empirical matter, only to be arrived at by giving special attention to those who use the library, to those who may not be entirely satisfied by what they find there, or who have suggestions for what might be added. Until we know more of why and how people read, there is no substitute for the librarians' intimate and personal knowledge. From such knowledge can come some of the informal participation in selection of which I have spoken.

Let me suggest a friendly attitude in this matter of book selection. One cannot accept every suggestion for book purchase, yet one should be hospitable to suggestions which come in. This does not mean that you will not occasionally have a misfire. I remember, for example, a faculty member who urged that we buy the recent book on dianetics by Ron Hubbard. The first words of the "synopsis" at the beginning of the book read as follows: "The creation of dianetics is a milestone for Man comparable to his discovery of fire. . . ." Dianetics is certainly a hot subject; a number of people got burned on it—and possibly I speak here with feeling because the head of our psychology department protested that this book should not have been put in the book collection. I do not think that the harm was very great, however. Just how do you treat a misleading book? If it has some preten-

sion to learning, do you refuse to give readers access to it or do you buy the book upon demand and let the learning process take its course? Sound book selection is a process which every good student has to learn for himself. Furthermore, the purchase of a dubious book may be a small price to pay for friendly and continuous interest in the growth of the book collection.

The relation of the book collection to the curriculum and teaching methods is an important part of the "consumption" function of the book collection. It is essentially what distinguishes the college library collection from a public library collection. It determines what goes into a college library collection, determines whether you include audiovisual materials and in what proportion or quantity; determines the relation of books to other materials.

Does the college have an intensive reading and honors program? Does it emphasize the natural sciences or the social sciences? Does its program run heavily to history, to language, to literature? Does the college have specialized or technical courses or go in for certain types of research? All of these factors can and *should* have particular influence on the book collection.

Whatever the character of the college program, the library (in particular, the librarian) has an important job of interpretation and of applying the interpretation to the building of the book collection. The college program is more than the latest speech of the college president, more perhaps even than a statement in the college catalog. There is the college history to be considered—of which the librarian may have a better grasp than some of the other officials in the college. And there is the experience, after a time, of knowing what will happen when the college changes direction, or of understanding just how the book collection will or should be affected under the stimulus of new methods of teaching.

Then there are special collections. I have already dealt with these in an offhand way. I have described them as a kind of lump on the book collection which otherwise might be well rounded. This may be unsympathetic of me, but I don't mean by lack of sympathy to discourage further discussion. There are plenty of problems in the area, but I am con-

tent to let someone else denote them.

The last and perhaps the largest of these subjects is the size of these collection—demanding cooperation and control. This function is an enormous one. Let me give the title as several of us arrived at it by correspondence: "The development of the book collection in relation to cooperation between institutions, including possibly sizes of collections, weeding, interlibrary loans, and bibliographical and book storage centers." Quite a mouthful! Cooperation. Size of collections. Weeding. Interlibrary loans. Bibliographical centers. Book storage centers. And I suppose we should have added union catalogs, microfilm, microcards, dilating shelves and rubber walls. The size of the collection, if thought of in terms of control and cooperation with other libraries, is probably *the* problem of our age.

It is useful, of course, to consider size in relation to requirements of the curriculum and the number of readers, principally faculty and students. Some years ago it was fashionable to discuss the size of a collection which would adequately answer the needs of undergraduate students. The figure was set variously at 8000, 10,000, 25,000 volumes. These numbers were arrived at by presupposing that the books could be correctly selected beforehand and were usually limited to the needs of a single year. In other words, they were a

kind of core collection for a given moment in time and excluded the thousands of books which accumulate in the normal course of events in any library. This kind of discussion has its values, but it has little to do with the practical problem of book control. The number of courses, the spread of courses, the number of students, the amount and type of research—all influence the growth of the book collection. And "growth" is the right word.

For there is nearly always the laudable desire to grow and there is the further urge toward more knowledge and more research. The practical problem in the end is usually one of weeding—or of building an addition to the library or a completely new structure—or of reducing least-used materials to microform—or of all three. When you have taken steps toward the girth control necessary in your own library, that is less than the half of it. For a lively and inquiring faculty and student body in these days usually want some material that only special or research libraries have. And so we have with us library cooperation—which means union catalogs, microfilm, interlibrary loan, bibliographical centers and book storage centers.

I hope these ramblings have induced a certain perspective on the book collection. If they have not, I despair of improvement by continuing. It is time perhaps for someone else to concentrate and produce more specifics.

By ELIZABETH C. SEELY

## The Cost of Books

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THE PRESENT high cost of books is an accomplished fact. William Miller, in *The Book Industry*, quotes G. P. Brett, Jr., president of Macmillan Company, as saying in March 1948 that ". . . all [book] costs have increased since 1940 between 60 and 70 percent." *Publishers' Weekly* estimates that since 1938 the price of books to the consumer has increased 35 percent, so we should probably be grateful that the whole cost has not been passed on to libraries. The only hope I

can see from the publishers' side is that they are reported to be working on certain technological improvements which will cut down the production costs, and ultimately the prices.

Librarians examine this situation and wonder how they are going to deal with it. There seem to be two solutions, perhaps neither one possible. The first is to increase the book budget. Libraries have a strong basis for first consideration in being allotted any increase that might be made from the college funds. More and more the library is becoming the core of the learning process around which all teaching revolves. With the

library as the laboratory, with new courses being added to many curricula, and with faculty needing new research materials for their own studies, the whole college community looks to the library and is aware of its adequacy or inadequacy. It is, therefore, willing to argue for the library's support in its own interest.

At Sarah Lawrence College we weathered the high prices of 1948-49 pretty well because we were given a gift of \$500 to buy art books, but the next year we added 400 fewer books by purchase. This was noticed by our public when they could not find things they expected we would have, or when we had to refuse requests that we buy such and such a book, although we borrowed constantly to keep them satisfied. So this year, although the college is still running at a deficit, we have \$1000 added to our budget.

But how much in the way of book fund increases may we expect in the future? Everyone admits that colleges are finding it increasingly difficult to raise funds, and the expectation is that, with students being drafted and family living expenses inflated, enrollments in colleges will decline in the next few years, and hence the total college budget. If we must do without more money, then I should discuss my alternative suggestions.

First, there is the possible use of expedients as the opportunity arises. For example, faculty members often travel in the summer. Last year we selected two of these whose knowledge and common sense we trusted, and supplied them with funds and with lists of titles that we needed. They bought books for us in Paris, Rome and London, at the prices prevailing there, which were favorable to us, and had them shipped back to us. In addition, we authorized them to buy other titles they might see which they knew would build up our resources.

Titles from Penguin, Signet, Avon, Pocket Books, and similar publishers are a great saving whenever they are available in needed items. They are especially useful for duplicate copies required for certain assignments. They wear out, of course, after a week or two on a reserve shelf, and then they can be thrown away and no money has been spent on cataloging and very little on the original purchase price. Often we buy several copies of one title and sell them to students.

This next procedure is one that may not be practical for many libraries, but we have found it successful. Since our budget for supplies is not so strained as our book budget, we call it "Supplies and Services" and charge to it all our indexes (*New York Times Index*, *Readers Guide to Periodicals*, *CBI*, etc.) and also our subscriptions to the Westchester County Union Catalog and the Philadelphia Union Catalogue. This leaves a relatively large sum available for books in the book budget.

The interlibrary loan system is another economy which should be stressed. Union catalogs are so obliging and always seem willing to supply information whether one is a member or not. And colleges with larger resources are kind and generous to small ones. The colleges and universities of Pennsylvania, in our case, have helped us with many out-of-print, hard-to-get, or too-expensive items.

Most colleges think of borrowing from other colleges. It happens that the Westchester County Union Catalog which we use, also lists the holdings of many public libraries. We have most satisfactory relationships. They like to borrow our back files of periodicals, our psychology and foreign language books, our Karl Marx and books about Russia. We like their fiction, particularly the nineteenth-century fiction which is available here and there and which is valuable to us for its picture of social history. We also use their drama collections and books about travel, biography and military campaigns. These interlibrary loans suggest attitudes of good will and cooperation. If one develops those attitudes there is no end to what might be accomplished. There is the possibility of bulk buying of supplies and books, the setting up of regional depositories, the inauguration of selective book buying (each library buying in certain fields) and a similar decision in the matter of binding periodicals.

Photographic reproduction is becoming more widely used by libraries and seems to be another way in which we can save money and still provide needed materials to users.

My last thought for today, and the really basic one, is that it is the librarian who counts. To keep improving the quality of the book stock while decreasing its quantity, takes the very best in librarianship. The head librarian, and all of her staff as well, should undertake to know what is in the books al-

ready on the shelves and what purposes they serve. We should know as much as we can find out about the books we may buy, something about the authors; whether their technical, scientific, or economic background is such as to make their writing authoritative, whether these books will help to eliminate weaknesses in the collection, or whether such material is already in the library, perhaps more effectively presented. We should never fail to feed well any mind that comes to us for nourishment.

To do all this work which I have outlined will require a staff which is interested, intelligent, alert, and possessed both of certain intangible graces of mind and the strength of Superman. But the satisfaction to the reader

in this superior service and the pleasure of the worker in his increased effectiveness, will be worth all the trouble.

In the present crisis the salary budget should not be sacrificed to the book budget. I note in the statistics of the last few years in *College and Research Libraries* that improvement has been made in salaries of librarians, though this is probably more apparent than real since the 1940 dollar is now worth 57 cents. According to the *ALA Bulletin* of January 1950, college librarians are still not so well paid as elementary and secondary school librarians. If we are to get and keep these angels I want for the college library, they will have to be well-paid and carefully-nurtured.

By THOMAS M. IIAMS

## Special Collections, Rare Books and Gifts

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I ASSUME that every college librarian has formulated policies regarding the development of his collections based on the aims, objectives and methods of his particular college,<sup>1</sup> and that he has evaluated his collections, either objectively or subjectively, and is in a position to know the weak and strong fields

<sup>1</sup>From my observation of the Colgate plan in operation, and the objectives of the institution, the library functions might well be interpreted as follows:

(a) To furnish the books required for collateral reading in connection with courses offered, together with related material required by the faculty members needed for instructional purposes.

(b) To furnish books for voluntary recreational reading by students and to promote their use.

(c) To provide a comprehensive selection of authoritative books covering all fields of knowledge and to make their content accessible.

(d) To train students in the use of library materials and to integrate the library with the instructional program.

To these four more or less accepted functions I would add two more:

(e) To provide materials to meet the needs of members of the faculty engaged in productive investigation *within their field of instruction* and within the possibilities of the budget after the first four functions have been adequately fulfilled.

(f) To collect and preserve material of institutional and local historical interest, providing no other agency undertakes this obligation and, of course, within the limitations of the budget.

If the foregoing library functions conform with the objectives of the college, we should adhere to them rather religiously, deviating only when changes in institutional objectives and increased budgets warrant the extension of library functions.

in his library. What I have to say regarding special collections, rare books and gifts is based on those assumptions.

If your book selection policy is somewhat similar to that at Dartmouth, you are in a good position to consider the development of special collections. Dartmouth's policy, as stated in 1939, is three-fold: (1) The purchase of books directly related to the teaching done; (2) The building up of a more general book collection for student use; and (3) The acquisition of "such books as will attract great scholars to the college as teachers."<sup>2</sup> Many smaller libraries, for budgetary reasons, cannot include the last category in their book selection aims and, for those libraries, the development of special collections is a real concern.

Any way you state your policy regarding the development of your collections you will find yourself, at some time or other, confronted with the problem of special collections, rare books and gifts. In my opinion, rare books are a special collection and, even if you do not consider them as such, both rare books and special collections often depend

<sup>2</sup>"Books for the Undergraduate College." *Dartmouth College Library Bulletin*, 3:57-63, December 1939.

on gifts. It might therefore be well first to have a look at policies governing the acceptance and encouragement of gifts. You are probably all familiar with the policy regarding gifts adopted several years ago by ALA.<sup>3</sup> The ALA suggestions are highly desirable objectives but include only cash gifts and rarely fall into the province of the librarian to explore. They are functions usually undertaken, if at all, by the college president or the vice president in charge of development.

Most of us would agree that the ideal gift is money without restrictions as to use. But what about gifts of books, objects of art, memorabilia of all kinds, and just plain junk most libraries are offered in great quantities, all of which may have restrictions regarding shelving, care and use? It is in this regard that it is necessary to have a realistic policy. Even cash endowments can bring on headaches if too many restrictions are imposed. Many of you have had experience with small endowments for the purchase of books on certain subjects no longer considered important or, indeed, taught. What to do with these funds if the bequest cannot be interpreted broadly? There are times, too, when the library does not benefit even from unrestricted endowments. In some colleges, funds realized from endowments are not actually added to the library's budget; instead, the college's support from general funds is reduced by the amount received from endowments. Often this is not the intent of the donor.

At Colgate, the policy regarding gift books is simple—no restricted gifts are accepted. I do not mean to imply that we would not accept an outstanding collection with reasonable restrictions if the collection is worth the expense involved. For instance, our T. S. Eliot collection was accepted with the understanding that it would be shelved in the Treasure Room, certainly a reasonable restriction. As a matter of policy, we refuse very few unrestricted gifts. It is probably an expensive policy but we can always exchange unwanted

<sup>3</sup> The ALA approved policy is: (1) That any program for gifts and bequests shall be formulated carefully; (2) That memorials in the form of funds should be encouraged; (3) That the development of trust funds be encouraged; (4) That a large number of people should be interested in writing bequests into their wills; (5) That the possibility of insurance policies, including annuities, should be explored; and (6) That in considering any gift or bequest, the donor consult the library administration.

material or sell it for scrap. Too, one never knows when the donor of unwanted books may give something of value later on. This has happened too frequently for us to consider any other policy.

Many donors of books or cash expect some recognition in the form of a memorial. If the gift is large they may expect a special room. However most people are reasonable and, when informed of the problems involved, will usually settle for a neatly designed bookplate.

Richard Logsdon has said what many librarians have expressed in different ways: "A book is not a good buy unless it makes an addition to the net instructional strength of the library."<sup>4</sup> I would add that gift books, too, are not worth the cost of cataloging unless they help round out or strengthen the collections.

Nathan Van Patten, former director of libraries at Stanford University, insists that "Unless a library has a well-formulated buying policy its development is likely to proceed along lines determined by the demands which are made upon it from day to day. The results of such a practice are rarely good."<sup>5</sup> An entirely adequate library must go beyond the day-to-day needs if it is to help the college obtain good students and outstanding teachers. Good teachers are attracted to colleges with good libraries and so the question of developing the collections along lines most likely to bring prestige and scholarship to a college is, in my opinion, entirely justified.

However, it is doubtful that small college libraries should compete with larger colleges and universities in the acquisition of rare books. This statement may seem strange, coming, as it does, from an old rare book man. But it is my honest conviction, based on experience in a relatively small college. In the first place a small college does not have the resources to build up outstanding, or even good, rare book collections in many fields. In the second place it is doubtful, in an undergraduate college, that the use of such collections would warrant the expense of purchase and the special care and housing such collections should have. Having made

<sup>4</sup> Logsdon, R. H. "Selecting Books for a College Library." *Madison Quarterly*, 2:114-16, May 1947.

<sup>5</sup> Van Patten, Nathan. "Buying Policies of College and University Libraries." *College and Research Libraries*, 1:64-70, December 1939.



that statement I should now like to point out an exception.

What would librarians of small colleges do if they were confronted with this problem? An alumnus decides to give his private collection of rare books to the library. This collection has been given no particular direction except that each item must be rare. It does not greatly expand any collection in the library. This private library is well worth \$75,000 at current prices. There is no rare book room or, indeed, any safe place to care for such a large and valuable collection.

They probably would do the same thing I did when faced with a similar problem a few years ago. They would inform the president of the offer and say that they could not accept it unless adequate facilities to safeguard the collection were provided. The president, if he is a normal man, will react the same way mine did. Carpenters, masons, locksmiths and other workmen were on hand the next day to transform a staff coat room into a rare book room.

So now we have this splendid collection of rare books, collected with no planned purpose. I do not in the slightest way mean to give the impression that I do not appreciate this gift; in fact, I would have been unhappy if it had gone to Yale or Harvard where it probably would have been duplicated. I get a vicarious kick out of showing the books to teachers and students, but they are not immediately available to them, nor are they essential for their work because more readable editions, in most cases, are accessible on open shelves. The fine bindings cause many "ah's" and "oh's" when displayed and students often ask what certain items are worth, but the collection is not essential to the college. It is chiefly a prestige item, but, as such, certainly has value.

How much better off we would be if the donor had sold his collection and presented the library with \$75,000, with the understanding that the money be used to purchase rare books, books that could not normally be purchased from regular library funds. I could then have a plan to develop special collections.

I would select a field in which we are already strong, lacking only the rare materials to make it an outstanding research collection. For instance, I would build on our T. S.

Eliot collection, already outstanding, but lacking important original manuscripts.

No other agency in Hamilton, where Colgate is located, has the responsibility of building up a collection of local and regional history. We have made a good start in that field, but have never felt justified in taking even \$50 from library funds to buy, for instance, the original field survey book for the Chenango Canal, which ran along the edge of the campus. I would certainly feel justified in using part of the \$75,000 to round out that collection.

I would also make sure that all pertinent archival material was purchased; that is, material that could not be obtained by gift.

I would then have another look at our strong collections and would select a field to develop that would be of interest to a number of students and faculty, a subject that is likely to continue to grow in importance—area studies, for instance.

I would spend a part of the \$75,000 to build up a special collection illustrating the history of printing, using the few incunabula already in the library as a basis and purchasing leaves of books from famous presses when the cost of complete volumes prohibits their purchase. I would also purchase the necessary reference tools in this field. I would make both students and faculty aware of the history and aesthetics of printing by occasional exhibitions and lectures on the subject.

I would certainly use some of the \$75,000 to buy a few of the more expensive sets faculty members want, but cannot be purchased for them from library budgets without sacrificing the more obvious or urgent curricular needs. These sets may not come under the category of rare books, in that they are not scarce in one edition or another, but because of sheer bulk they are expensive even in microfilm or microcard reproductions.

Beyond these special collections, I doubt that I would be justified in using any part of my \$75,000. Future changes of emphasis and university objectives would, of course, change my mind, but that would be my policy for the foreseeable future. A planned program such as I have suggested would, I am sure, have more significance than a haphazard accumulation, either by purchase or gift, of a collection of rare books *per se*.

All libraries in old established colleges have

some rare books. Librarians could not possibly have added books to their collections for the past 100 or 150 years without inadvertently accumulating a number of books that are now considered rare. Possibly the first thing a college librarian should do in deciding on a rare books policy is (1) determine what a rare book is<sup>6</sup> and (2) do something about segregating the rare books in his library so they may be adequately handled.

Just as every long-established college library has rare books, so may they also have special collections, although they may not be segregated and immediately recognized.

Other important possibilities for developing special collections, rare books and gifts exist.

<sup>6</sup> "Rare Book Code of the University of California at Los Angeles Library," *Antiquarian Bookman*, 7:20, Jan. 6, 1951. Also in *College and Research Libraries*, 10:307-08, July 1949.

Regional cooperative plans for the development of subject collections, for example, are important. Such questions as the following suggest avenues of approach that should be considered: Why buy rare books at all when the same material may be had on microfilm or microcards at a fraction of the cost of the originals? What is the best method of making friends of the library and alumni aware of library needs? What other sources for gifts should be considered? To what extent does publicity about existing collections influence gifts? What are the possibilities of cooperative storage and service as a solution to the special collections problem?

It is often true that "them as has, gets." If you make a start, and your project is a worthy one, support may come from unexpected sources.

## The Librarians' Agenda of Unfinished Business

*(Continued from page 313)*

to the good life. The critical requirements today of libraries in Europe and Asia, in their struggle to resume activities, offer a great challenge to our own institutions to aid in the unceasing effort of providing books, periodicals, training facilities, personnel, and library equipment. Libraries have been recognized as an effective instrument in the Point Four program for technical assistance to economically underdeveloped areas, for they offer an organized means of disseminating technical and economic information essential to the relief and economic advancement of those areas. The United States Book Exchange has demonstrated successfully the need for a permanent national organization devoted to the collection and distribution of books here and abroad. The exchange arrangements of our libraries for books and personnel offer continued opportunity to strengthen

ourselves as well as to strengthen our neighbors.

It is agreed, then, that libraries, which serve individuals and groups of every description from the laboratory to the scholar's study, from the public school to the woman's club, are a fundamental factor in maintaining and strengthening the fabric of civilization. They are engaged in a common purpose and they share a common goal. To this end they must labor without discouragement on the problems which have been reviewed in this recital, and on others of which these are but samples. They must abandon forever inertia and indifference. They must continue, instead, to face, with calm and quiet courage, their responsibility of service in the great task before us all—the task of surviving as free nations in a world yet to be attained of free men and free women.