

Distribution of American Library Resources

ONE OF THE MOST frequently quoted sections of Louis R. Wilson's *Geography of Reading* deals with library centers in the United States. Basing his findings on the *American Library Directory* and several other standard reference sources issued in 1935, Wilson discovered that there were 77 centers of not over 50 miles radius (airline) containing 500,000 volumes or more.¹

The Wilson study was primarily in terms of municipal centers, since the great concentrations of library resources normally are to be found in cities. At approximately the same date as the Wilson report the results of another investigation appeared, using the same sources of information, but showing the distribution of library resources by states, and more strictly limited to collections of research importance.²

How much has the situation changed in the period of about 20 years since these two studies were published? Has the number of centers increased substantially, and has their rank in relation to one another undergone any radical shifts? Are the rich states and cities getting richer and the poor poorer, or is there any

evidence that library resources in different regions of the country are being equalized? These are some of the questions that the present article will attempt to answer.

The specifications used by Wilson for computing his map and table were thus stated: "In general, the area included does not cover more than 50 miles (airline) from center. When a city could be attached to more than one center, the total number of volumes in the area and transportation facilities were considered in allocating it. Public or college libraries of less than 20,000 volumes and special libraries of less than 5,000 volumes were not included. State lines were not crossed except in special cases. Centers such as Newark were maintained separately. No city was chosen as a center unless it contained one library having at least 75,000 volumes. Preference was given to state capitals, or cities in which state universities are located. Metropolitan areas were selected unless the library center would fall elsewhere."³

The second study, showing the distribution by states, included "all educational libraries with over 25,000 volumes, all public libraries over 50,000, and all special libraries of a research nature."⁴

In bringing the two earlier reports up to date, the same criteria have been adhered to, in general, as in the original studies.⁵

Table I summarizes the principal data

¹ Louis R. Wilson, *Geography of Reading* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1938), pp. 118-23.

² ALA Committee on Resources of Southern Libraries, *Report* (Chicago: ALA, 1936), pp. 118-19. Also in Tommie Dora Barker's *Libraries of the South* (Chicago: ALA, 1936), Appendix A.

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³ Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

⁴ ALA Committee on Resources of Southern Libraries, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

⁵ The sources used for compiling the 1955 data were: *American Library Directory* (New York: R. R. Bowker, 1954); *American Universities and Colleges* (Washington: American Council on Education, 1956); "College and University Library Statistics, 1954-55," *CRL*, XVII (1956), 56-84; U. S. Office of Education, *Statistics of Public Libraries in Cities with Population of 100,000 or More: Fiscal Year 1955*, Circular 471, March, 1956.

TABLE I: LIBRARY CENTERS, OF NOT OVER 50 MILES RADIUS

City	Rank 1955	Volumes in Area, 1955	Rank 1935	Volumes in Area, 1935	Increase in Volumes	Increase Per Cent
Washington, D.C.	1	25,356,917	2	11,744,966	13,611,951	115.89
New York City, N.Y.	2	24,688,777	1	12,910,623	11,778,154	91.22
Boston, Mass.	3	18,334,377	3	10,709,614	7,624,763	71.19
Chicago, Ill.	4	12,519,393	4	6,691,144	5,828,249	87.10
Los Angeles, Calif.	5	10,096,635	5	6,564,016	3,532,619	53.82
Philadelphia, Pa.	6	7,867,242	6	4,805,252	3,061,990	63.72
San Francisco, Calif.	7	6,901,607	8	3,558,191	3,343,416	93.95
Cleveland, Ohio	8	6,140,556	7	3,835,889	2,304,667	60.08
Newark, N.J.	9	6,024,375	9	2,955,827	3,068,548	103.82
New Haven, Conn.	10	5,330,221	10	2,868,781	2,461,440	85.77
Minneapolis, Minn.	11	4,988,889	13	2,475,322	2,513,567	101.57
Baltimore, Md.	12	4,857,922	12	2,477,779	2,380,143	96.04
Albany, N.Y.	13	4,498,344	19	1,902,574	2,595,770	136.41
Columbus, Ohio	14	4,119,799	20	1,813,637	2,306,162	127.12
Princeton, N.J.	15	4,040,143	15	2,150,512	1,889,631	87.86
Pittsburgh, Pa.	16	3,937,179	16	2,136,108	1,801,071	84.31
Cincinnati, Ohio	17	3,750,316	18	2,066,825	1,683,491	81.42
Detroit, Mich.	18	3,707,637	25	1,404,736	2,302,901	163.91
Providence, R.I.: Fall River; New Bedford, Mass.	19	3,646,088	11	2,607,138	1,038,950	39.85
Hartford, Conn.	20	3,583,938	58	691,217	2,892,721	418.66
Chapel Hill; Durham, N.C.	21	3,337,247	34	1,091,858	2,245,389	205.58
St. Louis, Mo.	22	3,217,632	14	2,269,662	947,970	41.76
Springfield, Mass.	23	3,170,131	17	2,099,229	1,070,902	51.02
Seattle, Wash.	24	3,122,956	36	1,064,818	2,058,138	193.23
Urbana, Ill.	25	3,072,034	33	1,184,928	1,887,106	159.24
San Jose; Stanford, Calif.	26	3,006,064	22	1,551,791	1,454,273	93.68
Indianapolis, Ind.	27	3,000,499	30	1,266,031	1,734,468	136.96
Ann Arbor, Mich.	28	2,884,529	35	1,074,274	1,810,255	168.52
Buffalo, N.Y.	29	2,809,211	27	1,341,455	1,467,756	109.47
Denver, Colo.	30	2,715,259	32	1,212,159	1,503,100	124.00
Milwaukee, Wis.	31	2,673,066	21	1,565,732	1,107,334	70.68
Ithaca, N.Y.	32	2,573,378	31	1,264,920	1,308,458	103.39
Topeka, Kan.	33	2,505,793	29	1,293,901	1,211,892	93.66
Lansing, Mich.	34	2,351,614	45	797,736	1,553,878	194.73
Worcester, Mass.	35	2,341,469	28	1,315,636	1,025,833	77.96
Madison, Wis.	36	2,155,846	26	1,341,899	813,947	60.65
Dallas, Tex.	37	1,963,176	70	570,746	1,392,430	243.78
Sacramento, Calif.	38	1,958,441	23	1,534,107	424,334	27.64
Akron, Ohio	39	1,937,456	44	799,509	1,137,947	142.25
Kansas City, Mo.:						
Kansas City, Kan.	40	1,937,367	47	788,837	1,148,530	145.62
Austin, Tex.	41	1,918,420	49	783,391	1,135,029	144.95
Atlanta, Ga.	42	1,865,435	54	715,842	1,149,593	160.61
Des Moines, Iowa	43	1,851,960	40	972,814	879,146	90.33
Springfield, Ill.	44	1,851,364	60	667,247	1,184,117	177.51
Corvallis, Ore.	45	1,843,038	42	903,154	939,884	104.09
Rochester, N.Y.	46	1,836,532	24	1,515,438	321,094	21.18
Harrisburg, Pa.	47	1,743,178	43	902,802	840,376	93.02
Dayton, Ohio	48	1,637,991	41	955,198	682,793	71.51
New Orleans, La.	49	1,625,299	56	702,703	922,596	131.29
Oklahoma City, Okla.	50	1,550,821	68	604,140	946,681	156.78
Nashville, Tenn.	51	1,526,868	46	791,242	735,626	93.04
Lexington, Ky.	52	1,475,022	69	578,806	896,216	154.74
Richmond, Va.	53	1,441,119	61	651,842	789,277	121.01
Baton Rouge, La.	54	1,415,255				

(AIRLINE), CONTAINING 500,000 VOLUMES OR MORE

<i>City</i>	<i>Rank 1955</i>	<i>Volumes in Area, 1955</i>	<i>Rank 1935</i>	<i>Volumes in Area, 1935</i>	<i>Increase in Volumes</i>	<i>Increase Per Cent</i>
Columbia, Mo.	55	1,413,600	55	715,829	697,771	97.48
Iowa City, Iowa	56	1,401,880	59	679,405	722,475	106.33
Birmingham, Ala.	57	1,374,977	76	508,381	866,596	170.66
Concord, N.H.	58	1,344,355	51	782,818	561,537	71.77
Portland, Ore.	59	1,322,670	53	759,320	563,350	74.17
Grand Rapids, Mich.	60	1,299,376	52	775,680	523,696	67.52
Bridgeport, Conn.	61	1,240,975	65	607,834	633,141	104.11
Lincoln, Neb.	62	1,237,610	37	1,031,052	206,558	20.07
Houston, Tex.	63	1,231,685				
Augusta, Me.	64	1,230,769	39	989,944	240,825	24.34
Salt Lake City, Utah	65	1,218,566				
Ft. Wayne, Ind.	66	1,133,926				
Charlottesville, Va.	67	1,069,935				
Bethlehem, Pa.	68	1,048,181	50	783,274	264,907	33.84
Lafayette, Ind.	69	1,020,870	75	513,855	507,015	98.63
San Diego, Calif.	70	1,010,631	77	500,383	510,248	102.00
Louisville, Ky.	71	1,003,900	71	537,494	466,406	86.77
Fresno, Calif.	72	971,751	38	995,404	(-23,653)	(-2.41)
Columbia, S.C.	73	960,247				
Montpelier, Vt.	74	952,662	67	607,570	345,092	56.74
Utica, N.Y.	75	917,844	74	514,373	403,471	78.40
South Bend, Ind.	76	911,314				
Syracuse, N.Y.	77	906,084	57	695,565	210,519	30.31
Oshkosh, Wis.	78	892,690				
Roanoke, Va.	79	859,511				
Hanover, N.H.	80	831,089	73	523,641	307,448	58.58
Poughkeepsie, N.Y.	81	822,856	64	613,535	209,321	34.03
Toledo, Ohio	82	818,293	63	620,711	197,582	31.88
Peoria, Ill.	83	817,470	66	607,659	209,811	34.53
Phoenix, Ariz.	84	815,778				
Knoxville, Tenn.	85	801,299				
Montgomery, Ala.	86	797,701				
San Antonio, Tex.	87	782,248				
Miami, Fla.	88	757,906				
Gary, Ind.	89	739,501				
Little Rock, Ark.	90	736,870				
Omaha, Neb.	91	724,850				
State College, Pa.	92	715,896				
Tulsa, Okla.	93	693,836				
Gainesville, Fla.	94	686,243				
Charleston, W.Va.	95	678,681				
Charlotte, N.C.	96	670,739				
Athens, Ohio	97	664,610				
Greenville, S.C.	98	658,138				
Rock Island, Ill.	99	654,067				
Wilmington, Del.	100	629,775				
Santa Barbara, Calif.	101	623,121				
Morgantown, W.Va.	102	596,929				
Bakersfield, Calif.	103	593,277	62	641,660	(-48,383)	(-7.47)
Norfolk, Va.	104	590,478				
Lowell, Mass.	105	580,119	48	784,843	(-204,724)	(-26.11)
Evansville, Ind.	106	560,300				
Erie, Pa.	107	547,168				
Wilkes-Barre, Pa.	108	546,564				
Tallahassee, Fla.	109	537,755				
Total		289,355,391		138,867,606	150,487,785	108.36

concerning library centers, i.e., the relative ranks of the centers and the number of volumes in each area in 1955 as compared to 1935, the increase in volumes, and the percentage of increase. The number of centers grew from 77 to 109 during the 20-year period, an increase of 32. The ten leading centers in 1935 remained at the top in 1955, but there

were two slight shifts in rank order: Washington, D.C., displaced New York City in the number one spot, while San Francisco pushed Cleveland from seventh to eighth place. In 1935 there were 38 centers holding over one million volumes. By 1955, the number of centers had jumped to 71.

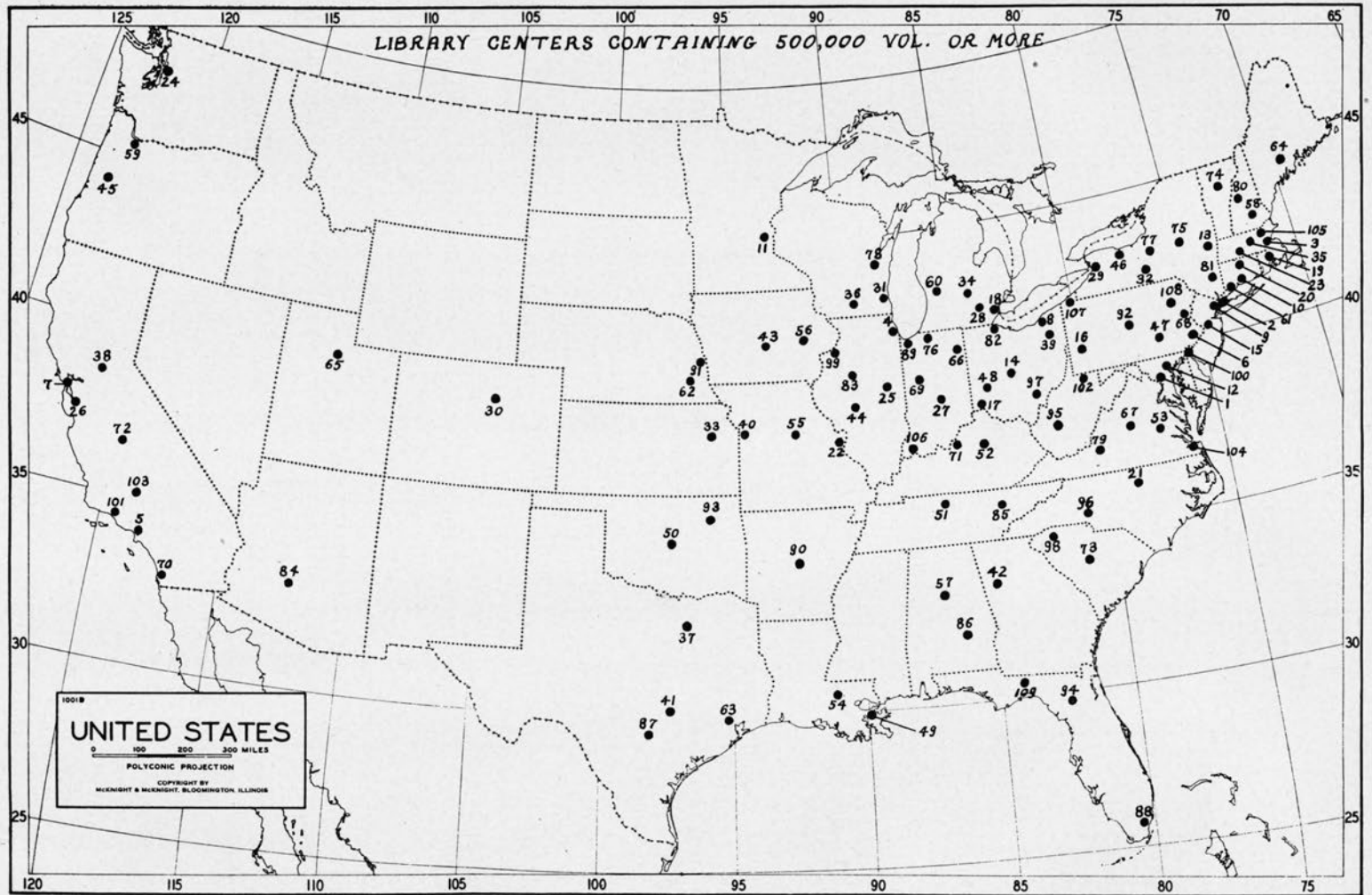
While the top ten were the same at

TABLE II

76 LIBRARY CENTERS ARRANGED IN THE ORDER OF THEIR PERCENTAGE INCREASE, 1935 TO 1955

Rank 1955	City	Increase Per Cent	Rank of Increase	Rank 1955	City	Increase Per Cent	Rank of Increase
20	Hartford, Conn.	418.66	1	47	Harrisburg, Pa.	93.02	39
37	Dallas, Tex.	243.78	2	2	New York City, N.Y. . .	91.22	40
21	Chapel Hill; Durham, N.C.	205.58	3	43	Des Moines, Iowa	90.33	41
34	Lansing, Mich.	194.73	4	15	Princeton, N.J.	87.86	42
24	Seattle, Wash.	193.23	5	4	Chicago, Ill.	87.10	43
44	Springfield, Ill.	177.51	6	71	Louisville, Ky.	86.77	44
57	Birmingham, Ala.	170.66	7	10	New Haven, Conn.	85.77	45
28	Ann Arbor, Mich.	168.52	8	16	Pittsburgh, Pa.	84.31	46
18	Detroit, Mich.	163.91	9	17	Cincinnati, Ohio	81.42	47
42	Atlanta, Ga.	160.61	10	75	Utica, N.Y.	78.40	48
25	Urbana, Ill.	159.24	11	35	Worcester, Mass.	77.96	49
50	Oklahoma City, Okla.	156.78	12	59	Portland, Ore.	74.17	50
52	Lexington, Ky.	154.74	13	58	Concord, N.H.	71.77	51
40	Kansas City, Mo.:			48	Dayton, Ohio	71.51	52
	Kansas City, Kan. . .	145.62	14	3	Boston, Mass.	71.19	53
41	Austin, Tex.	144.95	15	31	Milwaukee, Wis.	70.68	54
39	Akron, Ohio	142.25	16	60	Grand Rapids, Mich. . .	67.52	55
27	Indianapolis, Ind.	136.96	17	6	Philadelphia, Pa.	63.72	56
13	Albany, N.Y.	136.41	18	36	Madison, Wis.	60.65	57
49	New Orleans, La.	131.29	19	8	Cleveland, Ohio	60.08	58
14	Columbus, Ohio	127.12	20	80	Hanover, N.H.	58.58	59
30	Denver, Colo.	124.00	21	74	Montpelier, Vt.	56.74	60
53	Richmond, Va.	121.01	22	5	Los Angeles, Calif. . .	53.82	61
1	Washington, D.C.	115.89	23	23	Springfield, Mass.	51.02	62
29	Buffalo, N.Y.	109.47	24	22	St. Louis, Mo.	41.76	63
56	Iowa City, Iowa	106.33	25	19	Providence, R.I.: Fall		
61	Bridgeport, Conn.	104.11	26		River; New Bedford,		
45	Corvallis, Ore.	104.09	27		Mass.	39.85	64
9	Newark, N.J.	103.82	28	83	Peoria, Ill.	34.53	65
32	Ithaca, N.Y.	103.39	29	81	Poughkeepsie, N.Y. . .	34.03	66
70	San Diego, Calif.	102.00	30	68	Bethlehem, Pa.	33.84	67
11	Minneapolis, Minn. . .	101.57	31	82	Toledo, Ohio	31.88	68
69	Lafayette, Ind.	98.63	32	77	Syracuse, N.Y.	30.31	69
55	Columbia, Mo.	97.48	33	38	Sacramento, Calif.	27.64	70
12	Baltimore, Md.	96.04	34	64	Augusta, Me.	24.34	71
7	San Francisco, Calif. . .	93.95	35	46	Rochester, N.Y.	21.18	72
26	San Jose; Stanford, Calif.	93.68	36	62	Lincoln, Neb.	20.07	73
33	Topeka, Kan.	93.66	37	72	Fresno, Calif.	- 2.41*	74
51	Nashville, Tenn.	93.04	38	103	Bakersfield, Calif.	- 7.47*	75
				105	Lowell, Mass.	-26.11*	76

* Decrease.



MAP I

TABLE III
COMPARISON OF CENTERS AND VOLUMES IN THE QUARTERS OF THE NATION
FORMED BY THE 38TH PARALLEL AND THE 97TH MERIDIAN

Quarter	Centers		Volumes		Percentage of Total		Increase Per Cent
	1935	1955	1935	1955	1935	1955	
Northeast	57	70	113,158,458	223,812,024	81.48	77.34	97.78
Southeast	7	22	5,032,614	25,092,084	3.63	8.68	398.54
Southwest	8	11	15,202,976	28,270,353	10.94	9.77	85.95
Northwest	5	6	5,473,558	12,180,930	3.95	4.21	122.52
Total	77	109	138,867,606	289,355,391	100.00	100.00	108.36

the beginning and end of the period, their total collections were not quite so disproportionate in relation to the rest of the country in 1955 as they had been in 1935; in 1935, the ten leaders held 48 per cent of the volumes in all 77 centers, while in 1955 their holdings represented 42.6 per cent of the total volumes in the 109 centers.

Below the first ten, some striking changes in rank may be observed. For example, Hartford, Connecticut, fifty-eighth in 1935, jumped to twentieth place in 1955; Chapel Hill-Durham, North Carolina, from thirty-fourth to twenty-first; Seattle, Washington, from thirty-sixth to twenty-fourth; Dallas, Texas, from seventieth to thirty-seventh. Among the smaller centers, there appears to be little stability in rank.

Table II arranges the centers listed in the 1935 study according to their percentage of increase.

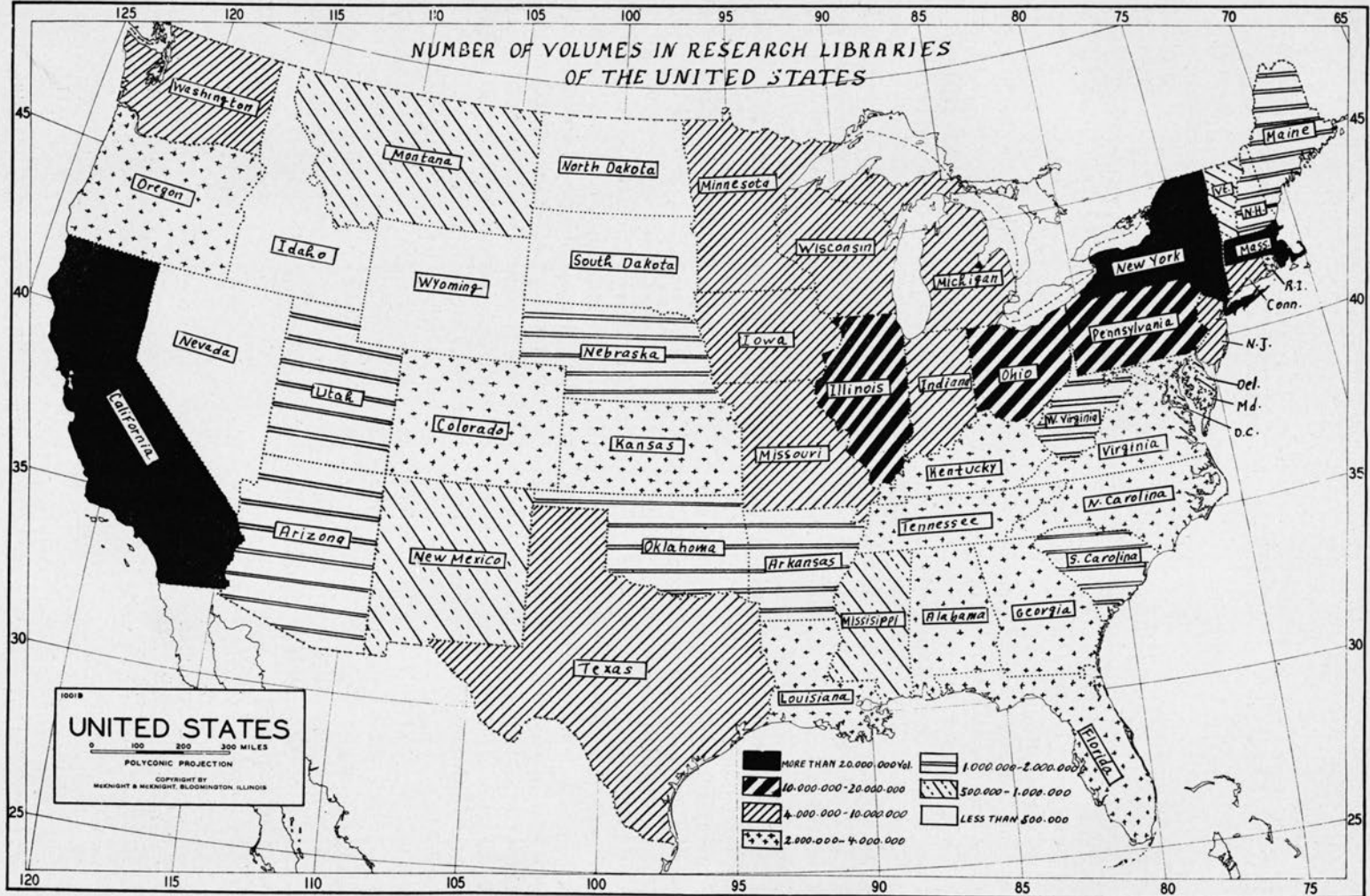
Twenty-one states gained centers during the 20-year period, accounting for a good proportion of the 32 new centers. The largest number of new centers for any one region, fifteen, appeared in the Southeast. Indiana gained four centers, and Florida, Pennsylvania, and Virginia, three each. In 1935, there were five states east of the Mississippi without a center; by 1955, there was only one—Mississippi. West of the Mississippi, ten states lacked centers in 1935; in 1955, Arizona, Arkansas, and Utah each had a center, leaving seven western states outside the select

group—Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wyoming.

Wilson compared the number of centers and volumes in the four quarters of the nation formed by the thirty-eighth parallel and the ninety-seventh meridian. The overwhelming lead then held by the northeast quarter was still being maintained in 1955, though the percentage of increase dropped off slightly. The story is told in Table III, and in Map I. The Northeast, which had 57 centers in 1935, had 70 in 1955, while its volume holdings grew from 113,158,458 to 223,812,024, almost double. Of the nation's total number of volumes in the 109 centers (289,355,391), only 65,543,367 volumes were outside the Northeast. Nevertheless, other areas had reasons for optimism and satisfaction. The most rapid expansion occurred in the Southeast, with a startling increase of nearly 400 per cent, and the Northwest grew by 122.52 per cent. The Southwest showed a small decline in relation to the other quarters.

When one turns from library centers to a consideration of the distribution of resources by states, substantially the same patterns are repeated. Conforming to the criteria for the earlier study, by the ALA Committee on Resources of Southern Libraries, only public libraries of over 50,000 volumes, educational libraries above 25,000 volumes, and spe-

(Continued on page 235)



MAP II

Distribution of Library Resources

(Continued from page 188)

cial libraries of research significance have been included in the revised computations. The figures may appear somewhat inconsistent, therefore, with those noted for library centers, and it should be understood that the differences are explained by the use of different bases for tabulation. Table IV and Map II re-

TABLE IV
NUMBER OF VOLUMES IN RESEARCH
LIBRARIES OF THE UNITED STATES

Rank 1955	State	Rank 1935	Volumes 1935	Volumes 1955
1	New York	1	16,931,000	34,041,000
2	District of Columbia	4	10,348,000	25,357,000
3	California	2	14,401,000	23,951,000
4	Massachusetts	3	12,944,000	22,951,000
5	Ohio	5	9,669,000	18,606,000
6	Illinois	6	8,907,000	17,089,000
7	Pennsylvania	7	8,056,000	14,697,000
8	Michigan	8	4,427,000	8,988,000
9	Connecticut	9	4,220,000	8,507,000
10	New Jersey	10	4,137,000	8,080,000
11	Texas	16	2,196,000	6,716,000
12	Indiana	12	3,345,000	6,520,000
13	Missouri	11	3,495,000	6,239,000
14	Wisconsin	13	3,027,000	6,195,000
15	Minnesota	14	2,916,000	5,700,000
16	Washington	18	1,665,000	4,415,000
17	Iowa	15	2,527,000	4,108,000
18	Maryland	17	2,163,000	3,888,000
19	North Carolina	25	1,131,000	3,882,000
20	Virginia	22	1,552,000	3,684,000
21	Colorado	23	1,425,000	3,098,000
22	Kansas	19	1,643,000	3,045,000
23	Oregon	24	1,416,000	3,038,000
24	Louisiana	30	818,000	2,797,000
25	Georgia	31	790,000	2,659,000
26	Florida	35	447,000	2,553,000
27	Rhode Island	21	1,640,000	2,469,000
28	Tennessee	20	1,642,000	2,412,000
29	Kentucky	27	1,011,000	2,379,000
30	Alabama	32	763,000	2,292,000
31	Nebraska	29	947,000	1,931,000
32	Oklahoma	33	720,000	1,902,000
33	Maine	26	1,046,000	1,706,000
34	New Hampshire	28	948,000	1,693,000
35	South Carolina	34	594,000	1,483,000
36	Utah	36	446,000	1,330,000
37	West Virginia	39	420,000	1,207,000
38	Arizona	38	425,000	1,187,000
39	Arkansas	44	236,000	1,153,000
40	Vermont	37	440,000	928,000
41	Montana	40	376,000	848,000
42	Mississippi	42	267,000	828,000
43	New Mexico	49	90,000	677,000
44	Delaware	41	314,000	557,000
45	South Dakota	45	227,000	475,000
46	Wyoming	46	187,000	470,000
47	North Dakota	43	254,000	456,000
48	Idaho	48	167,000	378,000
49	Nevada	47	175,000	249,000
	Totals		137,931,000	279,814,000

TABLE V
RATE OF INCREASE OF VOLUMES IN
RESEARCH LIBRARIES OF THE UNITED
STATES FROM 1935 TO 1955

Rank 1955	State	Per Cent of Increase
1	New Mexico	652.2
2	Florida	471.1
3	Arkansas	388.5
4	North Carolina	243.2
5	Louisiana	241.9
6	Georgia	236.6
7	Mississippi	210.1
8	Texas	205.8
9	Alabama	200.4
10	Utah	198.2
11	West Virginia	187.4
12	Arizona	179.3
13	Oklahoma	170.9
14	Washington	165.2
15	Wyoming	151.3
16	South Carolina	149.6
17	District of Columbia	145.0
18	Virginia	137.4
19	Kentucky	135.3
20	Idaho	126.3
21	Montana	125.5
22	Colorado	117.4
23	Oregon	114.5
24	Vermont	110.9
25	South Dakota	109.3
26	Wisconsin	104.6
27	Nebraska	103.9
28	Michigan	103.0
29	Connecticut	101.6
30	New York	101.1
31	Minnesota	95.5
32	New Jersey	95.3
33	Indiana	94.9
34	Ohio	92.4
35	Illinois	91.9
36	Kansas	85.3
37	Pennsylvania	82.4
38	Maryland	79.7
39	North Dakota	79.5
40	New Hampshire	78.6
41	Missouri	78.5
42	Delaware	77.4
43	Massachusetts	77.3
44	California	66.3
45	Maine	63.1
46	Iowa	62.6
47	Rhode Island	50.5
48	Tennessee	46.9
49	Nevada	42.2
	National average	102.11%