

International Relations

SOME consideration of international library relations is inevitable in a publication honoring Charles Harvey Brown. Mr. Brown has been a member of the A.L.A. International Relations Board since its organization in 1942 and has headed its Committee on Library Cooperation with the Orient and South Pacific. He has also taken a leading part in projects during the past few years for cooperative purchases in China of books for American research libraries.

During the previous decade, moreover, he had been active in other international fields, having made a great contribution toward reducing the cost of German periodicals and having been interested in library relations with Latin America. His name is known throughout the library world with those of William Warner Bishop, Harry Miller Lydenberg, and Carl H. Milam. It would be a pleasure to record his achievements, but his contribution is not finished and this is not a eulogy.

Neither is this an attempt to summarize or laud the international activities of American librarians or of the A.L.A. in particular, for that would mean duplicating reports of the A.L.A. Executive Board, numerous recent articles, including Mr. Lydenberg's "An International Board? Why? What for? What Does It Do?" in the *A.L.A. Bulletin* for November 1944, p. 457-63; the forthcoming *Proceedings* of the Princeton Conference on International Cultural, Educational, and Scientific Exchanges; and other publications. It may be more useful here to face a few uncharitable criticisms

and consider the general problems they suggest.

As a group, American librarians have seldom been accused of isolationism, but the A.L.A. Executive Board has sometimes found it difficult to decide whether or not it ought to invest a hundred dollars in annual membership in the International Federation of Library Associations. On the other hand, the A.L.A., by the end of this calendar year, will have spent more than one and three-quarter million dollars on wartime international projects.

The paradox may be explained, if not extenuated, by the fact that the hundred for dues has to come out of general, unrestricted funds of the Association, while the million and three-quarters has come entirely from the federal government, the Rockefeller Foundation, and other agencies, not from the Association and its members. A critic might, therefore, argue that the A.L.A. international relations program has reflected little more than an opportunistic willingness to spend other people's money. Some familiarity with the amount of time and effort contributed by men such as Mr. Brown to the A.L.A.'s international activities is one of the best answers to such criticism.

More than half of the money in question—more than one million dollars—has gone to buy books for foreign libraries. A considerable sum has gone to support American libraries abroad and to subsidize visits to this country by foreign librarians. All of the money has been put to worthy use.

One objection to a program of this sort,

however, might be that it is not likely to grow into a permanent international relationship. A great part of it has been for purposes of rehabilitation, and money will not be available for that when the war is a little further in the past. Latin American cultural relations may be a more durable element of foreign policy, but, as has been discovered in the case of the American libraries in that area, continuing activities tend to be taken over by the agencies that finance them. It is uncertain how long the A.L.A. will be able to maintain its International Relations Office in Washington.

Temporary or not, however, there was a job to be done, and the A.L.A. appears to have done it well. If, today, the Department of State operates American libraries abroad by the score, it is largely because the A.L.A. helped to demonstrate both the need and the means of meeting it.

Not a Two-Way Arrangement

A more serious objection to American international library relations in general might be based on the observation that they have seemed more like missionary work than exchange. It is natural that this should be the case in a rehabilitation program, but, even in the Latin American field, very little has been spent on development of exchanges as compared with the amount used for gifts.

Likewise, in the projects involving personnel, foreign librarians have been brought here to learn; very few American librarians have gone abroad except to teach. Perhaps this is all right.

The fact that thirty-five million Americans have no library service does not mean that library service is undesirable abroad or that Americans should not help and encourage others to equal or surpass the American achievement. The fact that American library cataloging has encountered a "crisis" and that there is very wide-

spread dissatisfaction with American library schools, does not mean that foreigners cannot profit by learning American methods and enduring American instruction in librarianship.

Library history suggests, however, at least to some observers, that American librarians might find it worth while to study as well as to teach in foreign parts. Inventions such as microphotography and conceptions such as cooperative cataloging and interlibrary loan were not born in this country. Financial difficulties helped to force cooperative acquisition in the libraries of some European countries long before Americans contemplated it at Farmington.

American research libraries, of course, have always been fully aware of the need for importing foreign publications. It is easier, in many cases, to do this by means of commercial agents, but exchanges are necessary, at least for items available on no other basis. If a two-way traffic is to be encouraged, it might also be noted that American books can be traded for microfilm copies of foreign rare books and manuscripts.

Information about foreign publications is prerequisite to acquisition of the publications themselves. Librarians abroad must cooperate in making such information available through national bibliographies, selective lists, and by other means, if the libraries of the United States are to do a satisfactory job of book collecting.

Indeed, the whole problem of bibliography (including indexing and abstracting) is too big for solution by American librarians alone. Probably it is too big to be handled by the librarians of the world alone; they will need the help of scholars and they will require money. But, if all the librarians could unite on a bibliographical program, that program should have a better chance of succeeding than any of its predecessors.

Americans and, in particular, American

librarians will hope that American books continue to go abroad on at least as large a scale as they have gone during the past few years. The excellent libraries maintained by the Department of State can help to create a demand for American publications, but they cannot supply all the needs of foreign scholarship for American materials any more than the needs of American scholarship for foreign publications could be met by a few such foreign-supported libraries in the United States.

Gift Period Near End

Rehabilitation gifts have already passed their peak. It is unlikely that any other gift program will take their place, and it may not be desirable that one should. The question, then, is whether any form of exchange can do the job, and it is hard to see any hope for exchange transactions of this magnitude unless exchange is organized on a national scale, so that a single agency can supply what is wanted from this country and ask, in return, for what is needed by the libraries of the United States. Suggestions for the development of such an organization have recently been under consideration at the Library of Congress and at the American Book Center, but it is too early to say what will come of them.

It does seem safe to predict that exchange of publications, no matter how well developed, must continue to be a transaction chiefly and directly benefiting scholars and research libraries. It is not likely to become of immediate concern to the public and school librarians who make up a majority of American librarians and of A.L.A. members. Any survey of international library activities or of the membership of A.L.A. boards and committees in the field confirms the impression that international library matters in general have been chiefly of interest to those librarians who serve scholars.

Other librarians serve the cause of international relations largely by dissemination of books published in this country and have perhaps more direct interest in the international cooperation of publishers than of librarians. If this continues to be the case, it would seem to be the duty of the Association of Research Libraries and the Association of College and Reference Libraries rather than the A.L.A. as a whole to carry a large share of the burden of international library relations.

If there is an alternative to this situation, it seems probable that it will arise in the field of personnel rather than exchanges of publications.

If a library ought to serve all the intellectual interests of all groups in its community, perhaps it is reasonable to assert that no institution in that community should be less provincial than the library. If this is true, it may follow that a year spent abroad working in a foreign library would be a desirable addition to the education and experience of almost any American member of the profession. Probably, also, most American librarians would welcome such an opportunity. If the program were reciprocal, as it ought to be, the presence of foreign librarians on the staffs of a good many institutions in this country should also contribute to the broadening of American librarianship.

Obstacles

There are numerous obstacles. Lack of language equipment bars a large proportion of American librarians from export to any non-English-speaking country. Money would be needed, both to cover travel costs and to help to equalize the great variations between salary scales. Many local laws and restrictions would have to be repealed or modified. There ought to be a clear

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31. Lends assistant director: general administration full cooperation in recruiting.

32. Conducts exit interviews. See also assistant director: general administration.

33. Assigns duties, approves schedules, etc., in accordance with approved library policy.

34. Confers with assistant director: general administration in regard to personnel problems.

35. Notifies assistant director: general administration of impending vacancies or authorizes arrangements by which the head of the department makes such notification. (The intent of this statement is to insure use of the assistant director: readers' services as a channel of action of personnel matters.)

Budget Preparation and Allocation of Funds

36. Receives budget recommendations from all departments in the readers' services.

37. Submits budget recommendations for salaries and wages in the readers' services for use of the assistant director: general administration in the preparation of the budget.

38. Submits budget recommendations for library additions and library binding.

39. Recommends allocation of the budget for library additions and library binding.

40. Recommends internal adjustments of the budget for library additions.

Reports

41. Analyzes, through statistical and other records and through the assistance of the staff, the work of the readers' services with a view to securing the information necessary for intelligent management and over-all planning.

42. Establishes the necessary procedures for accumulating such information.

43. Reports achievements annually or as need requires.

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realization by administrators that it will take a good deal of trouble to find the best means of using foreign librarians and, at the same time, preventing their American experience from becoming merely a year of unenlightening clerical drudgery.

If an international program for exchange of personnel involving hundreds of librarians per year would be very difficult to arrange, its results are almost equally hard to estimate. Any proposal that a year of work in another country be made a normal part of the preparation of librarians is at least as novel as was the first library school.

Such a program will have a negligible

chance of materializing unless American librarians—public, school, special, college, and research—want it very much and go after it vigorously. Most librarians have never taken part actively in international library relations, but there has never been an international project that promised to benefit most of them directly. International exchange of personnel on a large scale, if it is desirable, would be as novel in this respect as in any other. If librarians approve of the idea and if enough of them possess some of the qualities that have distinguished Charles Harvey Brown throughout his career, fears of novelty or difficulty will not stop them from doing something about it.