

By CARL M. WHITE

# A New Mechanism in the Organization of Library Service in the Northeast<sup>1</sup>

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MY UNDERSTANDING is that the purpose of this meeting is to see whether we cannot unite the results of two independent but overlapping series of conversations on library cooperation. In one series, the participants have been limited to librarians in New York City; in the other, to four large research institutions which later invited first three, then four, other similar institutions to join them. Today the basis of these conversations is still further broadened.

The two original groups have found the problem we are discussing at this meeting exceedingly complex. They have nevertheless made encouraging progress and have succeeded in making errors, if at all, in almost opposite directions. A man may perhaps be permitted to do some fumbling in trying to get his shoulder under a heavy load. By such fumbblings, we find we have been working our way around this sizable undertaking till we are now in sight of one another, one group narrowing its approach from a more general consideration of the various possibilities of library cooperation, the other broadening its approach from a consideration of the advantages to a small number of

the larger research libraries of off-campus low-cost storage for little-used books.

In recent weeks, every effort has been joined to close the gap between these two approaches, and it is with high expectations in this matter of resolving any remaining differences in viewpoint that we look forward to hearing the paper by Mr. Metcalf today. Our senior research library director in the Northeast, Mr. Metcalf, is undertaking the difficult task of outlining in concrete terms a proposal for action on which it is to be hoped we can all unite. Such an assignment, undertaken in behalf of the Northeast as a whole, makes it fitting for all of us to gather around and help as best we can, but I confess I was at first at a loss to know how I was supposed to do so when the invitation came to prepare what amounts to a separate paper on essentially the same topic. I gather, however, that those who planned the program wished something like a case history of group thinking on library cooperation. They reasoned, it appears, that a connected statement showing where the librarians of New York City have arrived and why and how they happened to arrive there would, in a small way, supplement a call to action by providing background—a partial rationale—for the idea of a northeastern regional library.

I shall be glad to do what I can with such an assignment, but I must point out at

<sup>1</sup> A paper read before the College and University Library Section of the New York Library Association, April 29, 1950.

once that the views of New York City librarians have nowhere been formally defined. In fact their views are so plastic that any attempt at this stage to project them as fixed or final would not only be premature; it would tend to clamp a strait jacket on healthy growth. I must therefore limit myself to something like a biographical interpretation of the short life of this series of conversations. In so doing, I shall draw mostly on the work of a steering committee and two supporting committees, and for short I shall refer to them as the "N.Y. committees," or just "committees."

Before launching into this story I ought to acknowledge that we have been free borrowers. We have tried to keep in mind the experience embodied in other cooperative undertakings and so far as in us lay to penetrate the larger meaning or implications of certain recent developments—the emergence of bibliographical centers, for example, the creation of the New England Deposit Library and Midwest Inter-Library Center, the organization of Danish public libraries into a network through which each can tap the resources of others, the National Central Library in London, and so on. We are under no illusion about how rare indeed originality is except as it is either a new arrangement of other people's ideas or a creation called for so urgently by changed conditions that the solution is already, so to speak "in the air"—that is, half formed in the minds of various intelligent people who face essentially the same conditions.

One of our main conclusions can be stated in a single sentence. The N.Y. committees are of the opinion that the wisest course to be pursued in developing research library service in the northeastern United States is to establish a new type of regional library in either one of two forms: (1) a library serving primarily the research requirements of the 12 to 15 million people in the local met-

ropolitan district, or (2) a library serving the research requirements of the 38 or 39 million people in New England and the Middle Atlantic States. A comparison of these two regions shows that, whereas roughly half as many people live in the metropolitan district as live in the rest of the Northeast, the smaller region comprising a few counties in three states spreads over only about one-seventieth or one seventy-fifth of the land area embraced by the nine states in New England and the Middle Atlantic States. It must be clear to all, as it is to us, that there would be some advantages in using the smaller region, with its great population packed into a few political units, as a basis of planning the next step, even if that step be conceived as only the first one toward a regional library for the whole Northeast; but we see in the use of the larger region enough potential advantages to be willing to join the rest of you in exploring the opportunities and risks of using the larger region as a basis of planning from the start. One member of the N.Y. circle summed it up this way: There are enough resources outside the metropolitan district to build a regional library without our help, just as there are enough resources in the metropolitan district to build a regional library without help from the outside; but it would be a pity for us to proceed independently when both groups and the cause of serious intellectual inquiry they serve stand to profit so much by uniting their efforts and building a great regional library.

The suggestion of the larger region came out of the second Metcalf report to the Greater Four in January. It is one of two major contributions of his which have exerted considerable influence on our thinking, as you will see, the other being the idea of cooperative low-cost storage for little-used books. This January report, while described as a "proposal for a northeastern regional

library," still bore so strongly the stamp of storage-library thinking, of which the New England Deposit Library might serve as a general illustration, that it did not measure up to our conception of what a bona fide regional research library should be. This brings me to the main purpose of this paper which is an attempt to describe four paths of thought which converge on a conception of a regional library of broader dimensions than a regional storage library for sloughed off books.

One of these trails leads straight over the hill from where some companions nudged us into striking up these conversations. On Jan. 20, 1948, representatives of the governing boards of leading libraries and institutions of higher learning in New York City met for dinner on joint invitation from the Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Rockefeller Foundation. The main topic discussed was library cooperation. This dinner was followed by another on February 12 for librarians from the same—or nearly the same—institutions and was devoted to the same topic. Out of these two meetings came an informal arrangement to stimulate discussion of the possibilities of library cooperation. Within two months from the second meeting, that machinery was working so well that we were beginning to feel like the little man in the cartoons who is always pictured with some planet-like burden which costs him untold toil and sweat and tears but never quite crushes the life out of him.

What was the motive? What was behind this ceremony of dropping that planet-like burden on us? A healthy appetite for good food and good conversation? Interesting, but hardly adequate. A gesture intended to invite new library projects which these two foundations might be afforded the opportunity to support? We are able to confide a reliable answer to this question. With flawless correctness, the foundations have man-

aged to convey to the little man their assurances of boundless sympathy and high esteem and the intelligence that he is unmistakably, absolutely on his own. The very plethora of library projects however, which find their way to the foundations each year—may this not be our clue? Picture yourself behind the Big Desk of Decision on which piles up, from all quarters of this continent and the globe, one request after another for funds for library purposes. What would you do? Would you not soon begin to ask yourself, where are all these well-worded proposals taking us? Do those who present them know, or are they improvising by gamely hacking away on small pieces of their problem, each on whatever piece the daily pressures have shoved closest to his heart? Is this enough? Is it enough to sit there and wait for librarians singly, or in organized groups, to develop their own proposals without relation to some large design, and whichever way you answer that question, whose job is it, theirs or yours to size up what all this energetic chopping away on big trees is doing to the bigger forest?

It takes a better man than I am to plumb the depths of that remarkable entity, the corporate mind of a large foundation, so I beg you to assume that any supposed correspondence between this analysis of why we first came together and the actual facts is purest fancy. But I can say with more authority that the circumstances under which our conversations began were such as to deflect our minds to some extent from the more pressing matters of immediate daily concern in our own libraries and to cause us to feel a somewhat larger measure of responsibility to assist the public in thinking about the survival and the good health of the research library as one of the cornerstones of our kind of society. If this seems a little remote from the daily preoccupations of ordinary librarians like ourselves, remember that that planet-like burden is not made any lighter to

anyone inside or outside foundations on that account.

Now we come to a path which is worn more plainly. The earliest method of providing physical connections on which telephonic communication depends was to use heavy steel wires and string them on poles above ground. It was a very practical method at first, but in time it ran the telephone business straight into a crisis. This is the way it happened. As more telephones were required, more crossbars were nailed to ever taller telephone poles. But the arithmetic limits of telephone poles were exceeded by the geometric growth in the popularity of telephones. By the time New York City had lined West Street with 90-foot poles, the tallest ever used, with each pole carrying 30 crossbars and each crossbar loaded to capacity with wires, it was not difficult to see that some kind of reorganization of the industry had to take place; otherwise the accepted standard of telephone service would be impaired. Happily, the crisis had been foreseen, and a dry core cable was developed which used thin copper wire, insulated with dry paper, hermetically sealed in a continuous lead sheath. By 1914, as many as 1200 tiny pairs of wires were being crammed into a single two and a half inch cable. That number of steel wires would have required eight giant poles the size of those used on West Street. Had the old method of stringing wires remained unchanged, and had the supply of tall poles held out, acres and acres of Manhattan's streets would today be required to provide the standard of service the telephone industry provides us.

The illustration may sharpen the point of what I think is the most important question I shall ask you. It is this. Do the practical realities faced by civilized man midway in the twentieth century in retaining control over the record of the mind call for the insertion of a new mechanism in the organiza-

tion of research library service?

All of you are as familiar as New York City librarians with the situation faced by the research library, and you are far more familiar with it than the public generally. But as those of you who have had anything to do with setting problems for research know, general familiarity with a problem and precise definition of that problem are two quite different things. Why is careful definition of a problem important? Partly because it invariably suggests, directly or indirectly, the method of attack to be used in solving it. That raises the question as to what it is we conceive the problem of the research library to be.

One statement of that problem runs this way: research libraries are just not getting the money they need to do the job expected of them. If this definition of the problem is to be accepted, the research library has its method of attack clearly laid out for it. It must stand its ground and gamely fight out its future on the issue of increased financial support. There are those among us who take this stand. They believe with deep sincerity that all the talk about library cooperation is beautiful but perhaps a little balmy, and that the individual library is not going to measure up to its responsibilities until it gets more money—a great deal more. It is just as simple as that.

Another way to state the problem is in terms of stabilizing the growth of library collections. Research libraries, it is pointed out, "tend to grow more rapidly than the other parts of the institutions to which they are attached. By the time they reach the size of the Harvard Library, they can no longer increase their annual expenditures as they have in the past without taking a larger percentage of the total resources, unless the University has a rapidly expanding economy. Sooner or later, we must face the fact that every time the library increases its budget more rapidly than other parts of the

university, the other parts must reduce their budgets to a corresponding extent."<sup>2</sup>

The central problem as thus conceived is one of so stabilizing the growth of research libraries that they can, like other units of a university, live on a more or less fixed budget. The line of attack thus suggested is threefold: let each library set restricted bounds to the areas it will itself undertake to cover, selectively and inclusively; farm out to other libraries on a cooperative basis the job of total coverage; and build a regional storage library to take care of the books these libraries find it necessary to slough off in order to stay within these self-imposed bounds.

Those who are present in this room need not be reminded that this formulation of the problem and this line of attack are the fruits of the best years of thought and experience of the most seasoned veteran among us. One does not lightly entertain doubt about the adequacy of a solution so highly accredited and advocated with such deep sincerity and so persuasively by one so warmly esteemed among us. But if I understand the mood of our common searchings we seek first of all the best solution, and not one of us would wish intentionally to pass over an earnest question which conceivably might help us make some slight improvement. Surely we must agree that adequacy of financial support is a key to the problem facing us—so much so that any attempt to freeze research library budgets under conditions as they exist, or which can now be foreseen, would I fear be ill advised. Surely, stabilizing research library growth within reasonable limits is a key to the problem too. But do these two keys, separately or in combination, turn all the cylinders in the lock; and if they fail to do so, can we improve in any way, even slightly, upon the way the problem can be most fruitfully conceived?

<sup>2</sup> Metcalf, Keyes D., "Harvard Faces Its Library Problems." *Harvard Library Bulletin*, 3:193, 1949.

We may not be ready, any of us, to answer that question, but even though that be the case, it may not be a waste of time to raise the question so that each may use it to search carefully his own thinking.

The title of this paper, of course, suggests a third key which might have some use in combination with the two just mentioned—namely, that our fundamental problem is one of adequate organization of research library service—or if you prefer, one of partial reorganization aimed at retaining or regaining control of a situation which is gradually getting out of hand. It is not a question, of course, of the internal organization of individual libraries; at least that is not the main point. Neither is it a question of overextending tall telephone poles by organizational splices of a kind which the present setup is really not designed to support. It is more a question of changing the design of the setup to some extent, of changing slightly what might be called the institutional basis of research library service. Happily, no radical change is necessary, for at many points we are doing well already—quite well indeed. At other points, however, we are falling down, and the setup itself contributes to our failure in spite of our best efforts to the contrary. We seek, for example, to give society—the public in the broadest sense—the service we think it requires, and we find ourselves hampered by a setup so costly that society seems unable or unwilling to go on footing the bill. We seek to reduce those costs and find ourselves hampered by a setup which calls for unnecessary waste in duplication. We seek through united effort (the spirit of which in the Northeast is, I believe, unsurpassed) to reduce unnecessary duplication and find ourselves hampered by a setup which excites competition, rivalry, even dark jealousy. We seek to make each dollar count 100 cents worth toward achieving the objectives of the clientele our library is chartered to serve,

and lo, we find ourselves hampered by a setup which saddles on our consciences and our budgets the burden of taking part of that dollar and providing something over and above the felt needs of the local clientele—the burden namely of providing inclusive coverage “in the national interest.” Here we come around face to face once more with our broad social obligations—which is the point where we started around the circle.

Does conceiving the problem in terms of the over-all organization of research library service in the nation, and the Northeast in particular, help us any in thinking about a solution? I think it does.

It suggests that we should somehow find a way to transfer library cooperation, or at least certain emerging areas of library activity which have been going by that name—it suggests transferring these emerging areas of activity from the outside to the inside of the setup by a process of institutionalizing cooperative library activity. It does not matter much what we call the institution which results from so doing. Call it a northeastern regional library. That does not mean the new institution would be just another library or a super-library like an over-tall telephone pole. It would be a departure from any kind of library we know. It would have a special job to do—a job readily identifiable and of central, not peripheral importance. Its job would be to handle for the region to be served those library activities which can be handled more efficiently or more economically through joint auspices and which at the same time lend themselves to being institutionalized. That term “institutionalized” may need to be clarified. Yale and Princeton, for example, could never turn over to a central agency located on neither campus the handling of reserve books required daily in connection with courses of instruction. On the other hand, there is nothing about—say—the placing of periodical subscriptions or the buying of Swedish

geological publications which in itself would prevent the two universities from handling these two activities through a central agency. In fact, the existence of periodical subscription agencies and jobbers illustrates how these very activities have been institutionalized already on a commercial basis.

Now, let us restate the function of the regional research library in the light of this explanation. This new type of library would be designed to handle those library activities to each of which one of the three following statements could be said to apply: (1) This activity can be handled *more efficiently* for society by a central agency than can be done by depending on libraries acting singly; (2) this activity can be handled *more economically* by a central agency than can be done by depending on libraries acting singly; or (3) this activity can be handled *more efficiently and more economically* by a central agency than can be done by depending on libraries acting singly. Again repeating for emphasis, the regional library would convert library cooperation into an institution. In so doing, it would seek to put an idea (the idea of concerted activity) and a handful of emerging activities on the inside of the total setup for offering society research library service instead of leaving them attached to the outside of a setup in which they can hardly be said to belong naturally.

What, in detail, are the cooperative activities which make up the program of a regional library conceived along these lines? This question calls for retracing a third path followed by the New York committees.

Beginning last fall, we narrowed to four the areas of library cooperation to be considered in New York during the year 1949-50, and created a separate committee to take charge of studying each area. Around Thanksgiving two committees, one committee headed by John Fall on division of sub-

ject fields, the other by John Berthel on a storage library, began to speak of what they termed variously "a library cooperation center," "a cooperative library," and "a central library serving cooperating institutions." Following their own suggestions, the Steering Committee modified their original assignments and put both committees to work on this new concept, one being given the job of describing the activities of such a cooperative center, the other, the related job of proposing an acceptable scheme of organization and administration. The first written report of these two committees, presented February 15, can be summed up as follows: a simply planned, moderately priced, fireproof building would be erected on a carefully selected site, preferably in Manhattan, where the library would be easily accessible to railway, postal, and other terminals. It would be controlled by a board of governors composed of representatives of subscribing institutions and administered by a librarian supported by an advisory council likewise drawn from subscribing institutions. Its program would be held to whatever limits the method of financing prescribed. The general function of the central cooperative library would be to serve the controlling libraries, and no recommendation was made to include direct service to readers. Its activities would include acquiring and housing publications, whether old or current, cataloging these publications, distributing catalog cards, and reproducing library materials photographically. It would accept custody of material which individual libraries no longer wish to retain on their shelves and in such case, the title would probably pass to the cooperative library. It would not, however, be looked upon primarily as a deposit or dead storage library nor would it limit its acquisitions to materials sent to it from the overcrowded shelves of other libraries.

How competently these committees are

serving us can be seen from the fact that their reports mark the highest water level of agreement yet reached among us. Some would like to go beyond what the committees have thus far recommended, but our ranks hold firm up to the point where they have brought us. The ultimate in fruitful agreement is not necessarily achieved in so short a time; otherwise, I suppose we should have to write off as the highest practicable achievement in international government as amounting at times to little more than agreements that the veto occasionally has its uses—which would be to stop too soon. The possibility of advancing beyond this point raises such questions as the following:

1. *Should the regional library give direct service to readers?* This is a question of critical importance, as it will affect the whole concept of the agency to be established and some are of the opinion that in the long history of the new establishment, it would be shortsighted and unrealistic to try to avoid direct service to readers and that, therefore, it would be best to face up to this necessity before we freeze a decision into brick and steel.

2. *From the professional standpoint, which is preferable, a location close to an existing research library or some miles away from any other library?* What is sound professionally seems to be the only statesmanly approach to the whole undertaking, including the question of location. This matter of proximity to a standard research library assumes large practical importance when we begin to think of an institution which allows readers to come to the book instead of remaining far enough out on the periphery to justify having the books sent on and on forever to the reader. I believe the issue before us will have to be considered on a plane somewhat above suspicion and jealousy. Should the librarians and the institutions which normally should lead the way seek in vain to rise to a plane more in

keeping with the dimensions of the problem and the public interests involved, responsible voices would undoubtedly not fail to question whether the time is ripe, or the auspices the most propitious, to work out a proper solution. This would be a reproach I have every confidence we shall not invite. By way of strengthening our firm resolves in this respect, may I point out that there are two ways by which the barrier of physical distance between the regional library and some standard research library could be removed if we decide that that is the best thing to do. One would be to locate the new agency at or nearby an existing library. The other would be to pick first a site for the regional library according to a set of specifications tailored to fit its requirements, and then move an existing library or libraries to the new site thus chosen.

Such relocation of an existing library may appear at first blush to be absurdly impractical, and possibly it is; but I suggest that we think twice before jumping to that quite natural conclusion. Look around at what is happening. Members of this audience can name important libraries which changing conditions have already crushed, or are crushing, entirely out of independent existence. This phenomenon is new—too new to be sure what it means. Are we witnessing the operation of forces not yet fully comprehended which will bring about in the library world a movement comparable in any sense to the consolidated school movement a generation ago? I do not know, but I cite the facts to help us avoid freezing hasty decisions into brick and steel. If we succeed in building wisely and well, I suspect that we shall in establishing a northeastern regional library not create something peripheral, something apart which can be hidden under a half bushel in the woods somewhere, but a center of such central importance that it will permanently and significantly affect the web of research

library service in the Northeast. If that is likely to be true, it would be regrettable to build without sufficient foresight.

3. *What should the acquisitions program of the northeastern regional library be?* Our committees agree that it should not be confined to acquiring little-used books from cooperating libraries and they even gingerly suggest a separate acquisitions program, presumably tied in closely with that of other libraries in the Northeast; but they have not yet worked out the details.

By way of encouraging these committees, which have at this point come squarely up against the issue of reorganizing our setup *versus* maintaining the status quo, it seems to me that they are on the right track and that a positive acquisitions program should be developed along the following lines:

1. Let the northeastern regional library assume responsibility for organizing through voluntary participation complete coverage of three types of material: (a) publications of importance for research which are originally intended for a limited audience; (b) publications of importance for research which are in less used languages and which can be treated the same as other limited-audience publications; (c) publications of importance for research which, because of obsolescence, serve only a limited audience even though they were intended for a wide audience originally.

2. The northeastern regional library would freely delegate responsibility for limited-audience material to other libraries. It would have no authority to impose any commitments on a cooperating library. Its powers in organizing coverage would be limited to stimulating voluntary commitments and to serve as a clearing house for information about coverage thus effected.

3. The regional library would itself, however, see to it as one of its primary responsibilities that coverage is effected through its own purchasing program wherever dependable voluntary arrangements could not be made. This would be one of the chartered purposes of the new institution.

4. As the reservoir of limited-audience materials for the whole region, the northeastern regional library would accept custody of little-



used materials from other libraries with the understanding that one copy of every item deemed of importance for research would be retained as a part of its permanent holdings. It would ordinarily not accept a second copy if acceptance entailed an obligation to keep it permanently among its holdings, through the strictness of any such principle should be settled in the light of experience.

I am told of uncertainty as to whether a mistake was not made in failing to adopt the second Metcalf report at the meeting of the eight institutions in January. This suggests the propriety of appraising that report in careful terms, for we need the united support of all friends of library cooperation. As a step in this direction, I shall try to give some idea of the thinking of our committees with reference to it. This will take us along the last of the routes to be followed toward the conception of a northeastern regional library as described above. The local division of opinion parallels that of the January meeting with the exception that the proportion of those who would recommend adoption of the report in the form presented there is perhaps lower. The majority would, if I am not mistaken, consider the following to be a fair analysis of strong and weak points:

As of the first quarter of 1950, the second Metcalf report entitled "Proposal for a Northeastern Regional Library" is the most concrete proposal yet developed. It is based on the most extensive canvass yet made of opinion among eight large institutions. Following the general lines laid down in the first report, the second report is essentially a scheme for storing little-used books, and if what we wish is joint storage facilities for a handful of larger libraries—that and nothing more—it would be difficult to improve upon this scheme. Finally, it suggests both a larger region than New York City librarians had, prior to 1950, been considering and a name, "Northeastern Regional Library" which was a splendid

burst of inspiration.

This brings us, however, to the first weakness of the report. A country location is recommended. Such a location is all right for storage purposes, but a name like "Northeastern Regional Library" is too good to waste on a storage library some four miles out of town which can be reached only by station wagon, taxi and snowshoes. This incongruity goes deeper. Along with the name, the prospect of unlimited growth and inconclusive intimations of possible usefulness as time goes on are congruent with something more than a storage library, but the statement of the problem, the program as laid out, the decision to exclude cooperative buying and cataloging "for the present if not indefinitely," the physical isolation of the library, type of staff and limited guest accommodations are all more congruent with the storage concept underlying, for example, the New England Deposit Library. Third, something is lacking in the conception itself. The lack resembles the dependence of the unborn child for oxygen on the parent respiratory system. Perhaps the most precise way to express it is to say that the new establishment is conceived less as a change in the structure of research library service than as an excrescence or adjunct to that setup—suspended, as it were, by anchor lines from supporting libraries. Fourth, the report's disarming treatment of what Nietzsche would call the human all too human capacity for jealousy is hardly matched by its treatment of the equally human capacity to deal with professional problems on a professional plane. Fifth, fixing attention on a particular site so early in the game leaves something to be desired from the standpoint of procedure. In coupling the whole idea so closely to a given site, it resembles suggesting—let us say—not that we have a U.N., but that we have a U.N.-in-San Francisco. Sixth, the financing showed costs which convinced no one that he was getting a very handsome

bargain and depended, moreover, on enough appropriating bodies with heavily burdened budgets to forecast a shaky future for the undertaking.

As to financing, one New York librarian has electrified us with what I believe is the most original suggestion yet made. I hope it can be discussed today. It is that New York State and the eight other states in the Northeast be invited to join in supporting a northeastern regional library at public expense. To insure an equitable distribution of responsibility, in such case, a special interstate authority would probably be called for.

Here, then, in summary are some suggestions for starting off today's discussion:

1. The suggestion to consider further what it is we conceive the problem facing the research library to be at this juncture.

2. The specific suggestion about conceiving the problem as basically one of reorganizing to some extent the setup by which research library service is provided.

3. The further suggestion that a regional library be created which shall be neither another library of the standard type nor a storage library off to one side of things, but a new mechanism of more or less central importance in the setup to provide research library service in the Northeast.

4. The suggestion that much Farmington Plan material on one hand and many of the materials which would normally be sent to a joint storage center, on the other, perform a common intellectual function—that namely of serving a limited audience—and that this function of making available limited-audience material lends itself to being institutionalized in a separate program.

5. The parallel suggestion that there may be a fundamental weakness or two in theory in Farmington Plan procedure and that a northeastern regional library, properly supported, would offer greater promise of making the objectives of the Farmington Plan an indigenous part of the research library setup.

6. The suggestion that a northeastern regional library conceived along these lines is the most efficient and the most economical means within reach of organizing effort to retain control over the written record of the

mind.

7. The suggestion that the northeastern states would see in the northeastern regional library an opportunity of such significance to promote access to this record, and thereby to nurture scholarship, that they would wish to join in giving the undertaking the moral and financial support it will require to become a reality.

Is a northeastern regional library a practical possibility? It depends on how much effort is put into making it so. Six years and two months ago, the Association of Research Libraries concluded a meeting in this city with this question: Do we have adequate machinery to deal with library and other cultural problems which the world is going to face when the war is over? Do we not need what we fumblingly called that day a cultural league of nations? That meeting was the beginning of one rill in a watershed of exertions which in two years was to produce Unesco. The A.R.L. takes pride in having spread on its minutes before it adjourned that day one of the quite early motions taken toward forming Unesco, but after adjournment when the brass-tacks cloakroom discussions began, the big question was, "Is this idea really practical, or is it idle dreaming?"

One further word of encouragement. While this paper was being written, I happened to read the following words of a well-known American industrialist who, in the face of folk legend that no man would ever walk across the raging Columbia River and in the face of warnings even from engineers that its thundering torrents would rip to shreds any works of puny man to dam it, nevertheless went ahead and constructed the Bonneville Dam down across the lower waters of the Columbia. Undaunted faith, he says, surmounted the last formidable obstacle "and proved that what men can dare and imagine, they can find ways to accomplish."