The Dynamics of Securing Academic Status

The trend in university library administration during the last ten or fifteen years in the direction of academic or faculty status for professional librarians has not been studied as an administrative process. Although the initiative in seeking a change in status usually belongs to librarians, the power to approve such a change lies outside of the library in the field of university government and administration. This then is an analysis of factors and processes in decision making at the university level.*

The virtues or defects of academic status for librarians lie outside the scope of this study, consequently they have been excluded from consideration as far as possible. For this reason, the procedures used in this analysis could be applied almost equally well to the reaching of decisions about other major library problems, such as an effort to consolidate branch libraries.

This project started out as a case study of the University of Oklahoma. A request for faculty status, initiated by the library staff association and endorsed by the director, beat its way about the university for a couple of years but ultimately was shipwrecked on the rocks of faculty disapproval. In a number of other institutions, where such a request had been approved, different conditions might exist and different factors be in-

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volved. Accordingly, to broaden the study by drawing upon the opinions and experiences of others, who also might be more thoughtful or more ingenious, a questionnaire was sent to the librarians of 105 institutions.

Of the ninety-seven replies received, the status held by professional librarians, in descending order of frequency, was: academic status, thirty; faculty status, twenty-four; professional, administrative, and special, twenty-three; non-academic and uncertain, twelve; mixed, six; and state civil service, two. Academic or faculty status was held by fifty-four of the ninety-seven library staffs. Requests for academic or faculty status had been disapproved in twenty-three institutions, four times in one particular university. Several requests are pending.

Faculty status for librarians is defined as the possession of all or most of the privileges of the classroom teaching faculty, including faculty rank. Academic status is held to be the possession of some but not all usual faculty privileges, with definite classification as academic but always without faculty rank. Academic status thus may be considered a kind of reduced faculty status. Because faculty status and academic status are quite similar, and for convenience, the term academic status is used loosely throughout the rest of this paper to apply to both forms.

The decision about whether or not to approve a request for academic status may be affected by a very large number of factors. Some of them may be very influential, some quite trivial. Occasionally one single factor is decisive but usually a mixture of influences is involved. For convenience these factors may be gathered into six groups: (1) institutional, (2) administrative and financial, (3) pertaining to the faculty, (4) originating in the library, (5) other intrainstitutional forces, and last (6) extrainstitutional forces. Each of these groups will be discussed in turn.

INSTITUTIONAL FACTORS

The nature of the institution of which the library is a part obviously will have some bearing upon the decision. Size of the university, in terms of the number of students, might be thought an important factor. Oddly, however, it apparently is not. Academic status is held almost equally, percentagewise, in small, medium, and large institutions covered in the survey.

The character of the institution appears to be more influential. Almost three-fourths of the separate land-grant institutions (often called agricultural and mechanical colleges until recently) grant academic status to their professional librarians. Two-thirds of the state universities which are also the land-grant institutions for their state have granted academic status, as have two-thirds of the technical institutes. State universities and private universities bring up the rear, with slightly less than half of both granting academic status to their librarians

The governmental structure of the university, especially its clarity, has a definite bearing upon the action which will be taken. If there are clear lines of authority and responsibility, the librarian will be able to select the most appropriate channel for the request, and the administration will know clearly where the request belongs and who has the power to act. On the other hand, a detailed set of laws or regulations for the government of the university can be a

disadvantage, for they may specify already what status librarians shall have. Of course it is easier to secure a favorable decision on a proposal that has never been acted upon formally than it is to have a previous decision reversed or modified.

The by-laws or constitution also may cover an important point, how the present faculty may be added to and how new departments can be established. If the governmental structure is not clear, everyone may be uncertain about the proper procedure to follow. Uncertainty tends to add to the normal administrative and faculty caution or inertia.

The degree to which authority is centralized is a most influential factor. If the president has a great deal of authority, he may decide to act himself. Four out of every five of the institutions according faculty status to librarians, and four out of five giving academic status, did so by administrative decision without the prior approval of the existing faculty.

The president almost invariably has the authority to grant academic status. He usually can grant faculty status himself, with the approval of the regents, by virtue of his power to establish new departments, schools or colleges. He is likely to have much less power to add to the membership of an existing department without departmental consent.

The librarian certainly ought to point out these alternatives, and the actual power of the president, either privately or within the statement of the proposal, if the administrative route is to be followed. Action by the president is far simpler than action by the faculty, and is more likely to be favorable on the question of academic status for librarians.

The concept of a university which a particular institution holds is important. The medieval ancestor of the university was solely a teaching organization in the

beginning, and those who did not teach classes tended to be excluded from the government of the organization. Later on deans and a rector or president were found to be necessary, so they were added, and for them the rule about teaching usually was waived. Research faculty were a luxury financially, but in time some of them were added to the faculty too. The early American college was a simple teaching institution.

The modern American university began its evolution about a century ago. The accepted purposes of the school were expanded gradually by adding new curricula and new services. Among these may be mentioned the rise of professional and vocational schools in law, medicine, engineering, business, agriculture, education, library science, etc. Extension services, begun by Columbia in 1830, have spread widely, especially after the Morrill land-grant act of 1862. University presses were begun, the first at Cornell in 1869. Summer sessions and correspondence study were popularized following the initial success of Chautauqua in 1874.

Acknowledging a responsibility for the welfare of campus students outside of the classroom, universities also have established specialized welfare services. Among these are deans of men and women, student health services, testing and counseling units, placement bureaus, alumni offices, and university bookstores.

All of these services and the people who perform them go to make up the modern American university. Universities vary widely, however, in the recognition accorded to these new areas of service. All of you are familiar with the attitudes of some faculty members towards some Johnny-come-lately academic departments such as education. In how many universities is extension looked on askance? Some of these "new" activities are regarded as basic, others are only sanctioned. Most of them were in-

stalled by presidential action rather than by faculty request, it is interesting to note.

A fairly conservative definition of a university is that of Abraham Flexner. He accepts four major concerns: conservation of knowledge and ideas, interpretation of knowledge and ideas, the search for truth, and the training of students.1 He thus accords full recognition to research. It should be noted, by the way, that many faculties still stick to the medieval rule, that faculty members to enjoy tenure must teach at least half-time in formal classes. In any such university, which does not even grant tenure to full-time research professors on campus, the librarian might be wise to avoid asking the faculty for full faculty status.

A broad definition of a university is that employed by Washington State College. There the faculty consists of seven "functional" staffs: (1) administrative, (2) resident instructional, (3) research, (4) library, (5) extension, (6) student welfare, and (7) graduate faculty.

To teach these larger curricula, to offer these new services, and especially to meet the tremendous increase in enrollment in the past fifty years, the staffs of universities have grown enormously in numbers and in variety. The very size of the staffs, reaching into the thousands, has tended to force the larger universities to adopt some kind of personnel program in order to cope with this unwieldy number of faculty and other employees.

Many librarians question whether or not the library staff is large enough and wields enough power by itself to achieve a suitable independent status within the university. Others question whether the library should operate as an independent entity, instead of seeking closer cooperation with the classroom faculty and clearer recognition of the library as a

¹ Universities: American, English, German (N. Y., Oxford University Press, 1930), p. 6.

teaching agency. At any rate, institutional growth is compelling universities to reach decisions about the status of all. Librarians must fall into some appropriate classification like everyone else.

ADMINISTRATIVE FACTORS

Among administrative factors, the attitude of the president of the university and his chief assistants is most important. Time and again librarians whose request for academic status was approved by the administration have referred to the great value of having a "library-minded" president. Sometimes a president may even go so far as to persuade the faculty to approve full faculty status for librarians, when he considers faculty approval necessary. Other presidents may disapprove and say so heartily, but they are in the minority. Of all personal factors, the attitude of the president clearly is the most influential.

The cost of a change, unless it is excessive for the values to be received, is never decisive by itself to an administrator. Most changes in status do appear to include an increase in salary scales, either immediately or in the future. If a large sum of money is involved, this cost certainly can be influential and a few instances occurred in which cost became a major adverse factor. Usually, however, if the general attitude of the president was favorable, the increased cost was eliminated or deferred for future action. Even modest increases can cause hesitation and delay, if new money must be found.

Incidentally, the existence of an irregular salary scale for the teaching faculty can be a favorable factor, for obvious reasons.

If the president knows that he has the authority, and if the exact procedures for effecting a change in status are evident, then the librarian has only to convince the president that the proposed change would be beneficial to the university as well as good for the library. As noted before, the alternative routes which the president might follow ought to be mentioned.

Other officers of the university administration do not appear to be involved frequently. The academic vice-president or dean of faculties is mentioned most often among these other officers. Probably their opinions tend to be channeled directly to the president.

Even the personnel officer, if the university has one, does not seem to appear in the decision, though the existence of an adequate classification and pay plan for librarians can be a fairly important negative influence. Several librarians mentioned the consent of a personnel officer to the proposal. Actually a proposal for a change to academic status, removing librarians from the purview of the personnel officer, probably lies outside the field of authority of that official.

Finally, administrative inertia must be recognized as a factor. Failure or unwillingness to act is not necessarily a liability in administration, for the decision not to act can be beneficial in maintaining stability in an organization. When normal administrative inertia is coupled with uncertainty about procedure or uneasiness about the effect of a favorable decision on other parts of the organization, no action is likely to follow.

Some of these other parts of the university that usually have not been recognized as fully as the classroom teaching faculty are the extension staff, the university press editors, professional people in the student welfare services, and junior administrative officers. If such groups do not have faculty status, and if they become involved in the library decision, or even if the president believes that favorable action on the library request could set a precedent for them which he is unwilling to do, academic status for librarians may be re-

fused. The faculty are likely to be even more opposed on this point.

FACTORS PERTAINING TO THE FACULTY

When the classroom faculty become involved in the decision or when their attitudes have a bearing on the outcome, trouble more often than not lies ahead.

The first stumbling block may be the existing definition of who constitutes the faculty. Many faculties limit their membership as strictly as did the teachers in the medieval university, who found it necessary to form exclusive corporations or guilds to negotiate with the students about salaries, as well as to protect the quality of teaching. Later, when salaried or endowed professorships were established, the protection of the teaching organization became even more important.2 A good many faculties still limit their membership strictly to those who actually teach in the classroom, though this requirement is modified often to require not less than half-time in the classroom. Incidentally, the wording of the statement about teaching can be important. "Teaching formal classes" or "classroom teaching" excludes librarians; just plain "teaching" can be interpreted to include professional librarians.

Protection of salaries used to be important. Perhaps two of the chief perquisites of faculty membership today are the benefits of academic freedom and the tenure that must accompany freedom. These are precious rights indeed. Peculiarly, the need for protection of the library collections from censorship or book-burning and the need to give tenure to librarians for their protection were not mentioned as important or even a factor, by any librarian. In fact, several noted that this was not a factor.

Who has control of faculty member-

ship certainly is important. As noted before, the president can add to the faculty administratively by creating a new department or school. If approval or consent of the faculty is necessary, then the attitudes of the faculty toward membership of professional librarians becomes all-important. In twenty-eight institutions in which the attitudes of the faculty affected the decision, either directly or operating through the president, thirteen were said to have been favorable to membership for librarians, and fifteen were either unfavorable or opposed.

There is one strange characteristic of the conduct of faculty affairs which militates against the granting of faculty status to librarians, when the faculty must approve the action. That is the extraordinary influence which a minority can exert upon an issue not regarded as important to the faculty. Although a large majority of the faculty may be in favor, when this majority does not feel strongly on the issue a few determined and outspoken men can kill the proposal. Rather than fuss about the matter in an undignified fashion, the majority gives way. Perhaps this happens because there are not equally vocal and determined men defending the majority view.

Whatever the reason, this does constitute a kind of academic blackballing. It occurs frequently enough for several librarians to comment upon it vigorously. They conjecture that this small group of outspoken men feels the need, in the realm of the subconscious, to feel superior to somebody; that everybody wants someone he can look down on. Strangely, most of these people are the library's best friends otherwise, in the sense that they fall largely in the social sciences and humanities. Perhaps the classical or medieval tradition exists most strongly in those subjects.

Another adverse factor is the fact that certain faculty practices may have to be

² Hastings Rashdall, in *The University of Europe in the Middle Ages*, ed. F. M. Powicke and A. B. Emden (new ed., Oxford University Press, 1936), vol. 1, pp. 204-16.

modified for librarians, or else librarians may have to modify their own practices in order to conform. Among these may be mentioned criteria for promotion, academic vacations and holidays, a rule that instructors must go up or out by five years, promotion not tied to administrative responsibility, length of the faculty year, and membership in one particular discipline.

LIBRARY FACTORS

Whether or not librarians are entitled to academic status, in the eyes of those who are to do the judging, depends to a major extent on presidential or faculty acceptance of the case for the teaching function of the library. If people outside of the library can be convinced that the librarians really perform an essential teaching function, which contributes effectively to the total educational and research program of the university, then the action is half won already. Here lies the real opportunity as well as the challenge for the librarian and his staff.

Before a good case can be made, the library should be operating at something more than a mere custodial or housekeeping level. The library actually ought to be doing individual teaching and counseling, bibliographical and other research. It should be working actively to promote the independent and cultural learning that should constitute ten to twenty per cent of its use. The library staff ought to be professionally alert and intellectually alive. And the librarian and his staff should not be diffident, as so many are, in participating in the discussion of stimulating intellectual problems in the university. All of these qualities contribute to the giving of a good opinion about the library. to establishing its prestige.

Meeting all of these conditions still may not convince the library's public that the library actually is engaged in teaching, at least in the traditional meaning of the term, but this can lead to a better recognition of the importance of the role of the professional librarian in the teaching and research programs of the university. This may be enough.

In simple terms, the prestige of the library has to be high. The library staff itself, rather than the quality of the collections, the adequacy of the physical plant, or the size of the budget, tends to determine what the prestige of the library will be on the campus. A president or faculty can understand why the budget or quarters or collections may not be good, but they will not condone poor service by librarians.

Turning then to the library staff; the answers to the questionnaires indicate that the qualifications of the present staff very frequently must be taken into account. Qualifications are of two kinds, educational and professional. Library education differs in kind and it differs in degree from that of traditional faculty members. The advent of the new style library education, however, has tended to reduce the differences in kind, for professional education in librarianship generally is becoming recognized as of graduate calibre. Relatively few librarians, however, go on to the doctorate. Lack of the doctor's degree is one of the difficult hurdles for the librarian. If the administration or faculty will accept a master's degree or its equivalent as the terminal degree for most of the staff, then this standard had better be adhered to rigidly thereafter.

Academic status requires professionalism in the real sense of the word rather than the watered-down version commonly used. Too many librarians do not want to be academicians, at least are unwilling to pay the price, to submit to the same rigid standards of judgment which teaching faculty members apply to themselves and their colleagues. If full faculty status is to be requested, librarians must make clear that they are willing to accept faculty responsibilities for membership in committees, participation in the intellectual life of the institution, and research and publication. They should have given good evidence of the same such interest already. Thus the attitude of the library staff and the staff support of the request for status must be strong and sincere. If the staff has a staff association, that group can be active in support of the request, though its influence as an organization does not appear to be especially strong.

The teaching of formal courses in library use is an asset, as is the number of librarians who already have achieved faculty or academic status by one means or another. Teaching bibliographical or research courses in specific subject fields is a useful aid.

Of course the number of people involved is important. The university as a whole or the individual colleges or departments to which the librarian might belong could absorb a few people without difficulty, but a very large group of fifty to two hundred persons suddenly thrown into an existing academic unit can be upsetting. Colleges with their small number of librarians find it much easier than universities to give academic status to their library staffs.

The modern practice of dividing library staffs into professional and non-professional helps, because this identifies the professional and reduces the number to be considered. It is obvious to any outsider that much library work is routine and can be performed by clerical persons; this division makes it clear to the observer that the librarian recognizes this too, and only uses professional librarians (the persons for whom status is asked) for professional work.

At the same time, the librarian must recognize that faculty members and sometimes even presidents find it difficult to distinguish between a librarian and a non-academic person in a library. All persons in a library tend to be considered librarians. Allied with this is the unfortunate practice of using the term "librarian" for the head of a small branch library who lacks professional qualifications. The profession unquestionably should be more careful on this point, and call such persons "assistants" or use some other descriptive term. Sometimes these branch libraries are not under the control of the chief librarian, unfortunately, as noted by a couple of respondents. Thus the administrative pattern of the library can prove an adverse factor.

When faculty status is granted, the librarian will have to decide whether or not he will follow the faculty basis for promotion or whether he will tie in academic rank with position in the administrative hierarchy. He should recognize this problem beforehand and have his answers ready, for it is likely to be asked by the president or by the faculty. Note the implications of the decision for traditional principles of administration.

The predominance of women on the library staff apparently does not influence the ultimate decision much, for the role of women as faculty members has been pretty well established by schools of home economics, departments of physical education, and the growth of allwomen's colleges. Only in salaries and ranks do they appear to be discriminated against. Two librarians commented on the difficulty of securing just salaries for women.

One factor perhaps does not belong in the list of library factors, but it does not belong anywhere else exactly either. That is the question of whether or not full faculty privileges are requested. It is exceedingly important. If the issue of title is minor to the library staff, and the content of status more important than status, then the library may ask for only a part of the program. It is easier, apparently, to secure academic status than faculty status, though this can be only an unproved hypothesis. However, some libraries have secured academic status first, proved themselves, then secured full faculty status later. Sometimes the library has succeeded in securing academic status but failed later in a request for faculty status.

Some of the faculty prerogatives that were mentioned fairly frequently as having been omitted from the request, or deleted before it was approved, were the faculty salary scale, rank assignments, vacations, holidays, and tenure.

In other instances, certain members of the staff were excluded from the request. Mentioned specifically more than once were part-time people and wives of graduate students and faculty members. Exclusion of those who fell below the minimum in education was not mentioned at all and presumably was not done.

Stressing the value of academic or faculty status in recruiting was noted by eight librarians as an important favorable factor. There may be regional or institutional variations in the weight given to this factor by those making the decision. Institutions without special advantages in climate or lacking in traditions may be more inclined to give it importance. A few librarians noted the negative effect of not having it, upon the building of a high quality staff.

Adequacy of the present status of the library staff appears to be influential. If important conditions such as salary, pension, vacation, tenure, travel allowance, etc., are well met, the library staff itself may not particularly favor a change, and the administration also may use this as a reason for refusing to approve the request.

Finally, among library factors, the attitude of the chief librarian and his prestige outside of the library obviously are major factors. No request will get any-

where at all without the chief librarian's approval and his active support. The amount of influence he can bring to bear will depend upon his standing within the institution. Close and cordial relationships with faculty members, the president and vice president of course are particularly helpful.

One librarian noted a new library building and a new plan of library service as an influential factor. This might be particularly so if the faculty have been invited to participate in the general planning.

OTHER INTRA-INSTITUTIONAL FORCES

The faculty library committee is a logical starting place for seeking opinions and first approval of a request for academic status, and most requests apparently are cleared through this committee even if the request is to be directed to and acted on by the president. A change of status of librarians obviously is a policy matter, and most faculty committees are supposed to advise on library policies.

The recommendation of the faculty library committee appears to bear considerable weight with the administration, who may accept it as an evidence of faculty consent. With the general faculty, however, the committee is not so influential. Members of the committee may be suspect by the general faculty because the faculty may feel that they have to support the librarian. If committee approval was given reluctantly and if the members do not support the decision strongly in talking with other faculty members, the value of committee approval will be negligible. Positive support has to be given for it to have value.

The status of similar or other professional groups on campus certainly can have a bearing on the decision about the library staff. Perhaps the strongest single argument at the University of

Oklahoma against faculty status for librarians, at least in the general faculty meeting, was that extension personnel and other such groups might be brought into the faculty later if the librarians were added now. If these other groups extension. university press, student health, student dean's offices, and other such—do not already have a satisfactory status and try to come in with the library request, the result certainly can be fatal. On the other hand, if some of them already have academic status, the librarian's task is much easier. It would behoove the librarian to examine the status of such groups before the request is submitted, and come to some conclusion about what to do if a problem exists.

The existence of a faculty committee on membership tends to compel a request for full faculty status to go through the faculty. Even if the librarian does not direct the request to that committee, the president may be inclined to do so.

The role of a personnel or civil service office on campus has already been noted. Sometimes the consent of the head of this unit must be gained, and it would appear to be advisable always whether necessary or not.

EXTRA-INSTITUTIONAL FORCES

A number of influences outside of the university campus may influence the decision. Chief among these may be a state civil service board. Only two libraries (of the ninety-seven) were found to have their entire staffs under state civil service, but two others had a severe struggle recently to avoid being put back under civil service. One library is trying to prevent such a change now (from faculty status), and several of the larger university libraries have part of their professional staffs subject to state civil service. The great expansion of governmental services during the past few years has led to the rise of state boards of civil service to remove state jobs from politics and bring system into state employment. Librarians who are classed as non-academic would appear to be more likely to be subject to any future expansion in the state civil service.

It may be noted that civil service does seem to bring many problems to library administration and also to university administration. Several librarians commented on faculty and administrative support for academic or faculty status for professional librarians, largely to prevent the intrusion of this outside force into university affairs.

Many requests for academic status for librarians cite the precedents or examples of other universities. This appears to be a desirable though not a particularly influential factor. For example, all institutions of higher education in Oklahoma, both public and private, grant faculty or academic status to their professional librarians, except the University of Oklahoma. This fact was not considered important, nor were the examples of comparable institutions in other states. Several librarians found precedents more helpful than did the University of Oklahoma, but it still does not seem to be a strong positive factor. Examples may be more likely to influence a president than a faculty. The tendency to imitate the actions of other universities, especially those in the east, appears to be declining. Instead, institutional decisions now seem to be made increasingly in the light of that particular institution's needs, which may indicate more institutional maturity.

Educational associations and societies often are favorable to faculty membership for qualified professional librarians. Examples are the A.A.U.P. and Phi Beta Kappa. There probably are others.

Accrediting agencies generally appear to support or at least agree to academic membership for professional librarians, for they have long recognized the importance of good libraries. Their influence on this point is probably minor. A negative influence can be wielded by an accrediting association if it places great emphasis upon the percentage of Ph.D.'s held by the faculty. This militates against faculty status but not against academic, of course.

One librarian mentioned the support of an outside surveyor's recommendation. The recommendation was not approved.

LITERATURE ON THE SUBJECT

This has been a study in decision making at the university level, involving the library. There are no satisfactory textbooks in university administration that will serve adequately as guides in such matters, and really very little published information about the processes except in biographies of presidents. There are, however, several guides in the field of business and government which might prove helpful.³

Sometimes, when direct action is unsuccessful, the librarian has decided upon different tactics. A public relations plan designed to overcome resistance to the idea may be appropriate to the gaining of faculty approval, if in the opinion of the librarian the faculty were not fully informed when the original decision was made. This strategy is not recommended where a president is concerned. Librarians have referred to

such campaigns as "evolution," "a policy of gradualism," "infiltration," and "boring from within." As a matter of fact, public relations authorities do not appear to advise frontal assault on human resistance. Frontal assault and a possible refusal may be difficult to avoid with a faculty; it is easy and better to check beforehand with a president when the president only is involved.

Any hearing before the general faculty is likely to be preceded by hearings before a committee. That is the way faculty business is transacted. A favorable report from the committee does not assure that the general faculty will approvenote the role of outspoken minorities in faculty affairs,5 but a favorable committee report of course is needed. One suggestion about committees: do not depend on written arguments, but appear in person, state the complete case, and answer all questions fully. Committees will talk but they do not like to read. "The oral method of presentation is more effective in provoking and guiding discussion than the written."6

One final comment concerns the nature of the written document which is usually submitted in support of the request for academic status. This is often a long document, and sometimes very long. Many large businesses require that any memorandum or report over a few pages long be summarized on a single page attached to the front of the document. Probably this practice should be adopted by libraries.

³ For example, see Manly Howe Jones, Executive Decision Making (Homewood, Ill., R. D. Irwin, 1957), especially Chapters 3, 4, 5, and & Chester I. Barnard, The Functions of the Executive (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1954), is useful for his theory of opportunism (Chapter 14) and the executive process (Chapter 16). Edmund P. Learned in Executive Action (Boston, Graduate School of Business Administration, Harvard, 1951) is useful on backgrounds for decisions. In the field of governmental processes, noteworthy is David B. Truman, Governmental Process (New York, A. A. Knopf, 1951).

⁴ See Nicholas Samtag, "Strategy," in Edward L. Bernays, ed., *The Engineering of Consent* (Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, c1955), pp. 94-137.

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⁶ For a good discussion of the dynamics of committees, see K. C. Wheare, Government by Committee; an Essay on the British Constitution (Oxford University Press, 1955), p. 188.