

CONFERENCE ON LIBRARY SPECIALIZATION

New York City, May 13-14, 1941¹

ON May 13 and 14, a conference of approximately forty librarians, deans of graduate schools and executive secretaries of learned societies or councils was held in New York on the subject of specialization by American libraries in the acquisition of research collections. The conference was called by the American Library Association Board on Resources of American Libraries. Through the courtesy of the Director of The New York Public Library, the conference met in the Trustees Room of that library, the afternoon session of May 13, being held at the Harvard Club.

The purpose of the conference was to consider the great variety of problems created by the enormous increase in the publication of books, government documents, periodicals, and other library materials. There was general agreement from the outset that the world of printed and other forms of recorded knowledge has become so vast that these problems can no longer be solved by the independent efforts of the various libraries of the country. A totally new point of view must be developed, namely, that each library is to serve not only its own immediate constituency but regional and national interests as well, benefiting in turn from the reciprocal services of the other libraries of the country. This involves specialization by each library in the development of its book collection. Paul Vanderbilt referred, for example, to figures which have been published by Fremont Rider as to the prospective size of such a library as

that of Yale University, if its growth continues at the rate shown in the past. The figures are not excessive, he declared, but the anticipated growth is to be expected on the basis of past experience. The same speaker emphasized the necessity for a reworking of the basic conception of the research library. American libraries have been set up as independent units, and this conception has stamped itself on every one of their operations, particularly their cataloging and acquisition processes. These must be re-examined, if the institution is to function most effectively in this new cooperative era.

The proposal that the various libraries of the country undertake to develop specialized collections called for a definition of specialization. Mr. Van Hoesen, who spoke to this point, declared that this could not be supplied in a universally applicable form, but that a definition or description of particular special collections could be formulated. This would be (a) in terms of the field of collecting; (b) in terms of the policy adopted within the field, whether inclusive, selective, or undefined; (c) in terms of its completeness or adequacy for research; (d) in terms of its comparative strength with reference to standard bibliographies or to other collections; (e) in terms of its rate of growth or of adequate financial support for continued development. For the purposes of the conference, the term specialization was used in the sense of collections on particular subjects that are reasonably exhaustive, and which are assured continuous financial support.

That other obligations would rest on

¹ Summary statement prepared by Harvie Branscomb, faculty member, Duke University.

libraries taking part in such a program besides that of collecting in specified areas, was brought out in the discussion. An obvious one would be to refuse to duplicate collections already available in other libraries. A second was the advisability in many instances of transferring collections or portions of collections to other libraries. It was clearly recognized that such proposals as these involve, for those libraries connected with universities, questions of educational policy and of legality for which librarians are not primarily responsible. The conference requested, therefore, that the Board on Resources of American Libraries address to the Association of American Universities a communication urging that it give consideration to the problem considered by this conference and to the educational issues related to it.

The questions whether an effort to initiate a program of specialization on the part of American libraries should await the collection of more information as to present holdings, whether experimentation should be carried out first on a regional basis before being considered nationally, and whether initial efforts along this line should be confined to any group of libraries, occasioned much discussion. It seemed to be agreed that while more information as to special holdings was needed there was available through union catalogs and published bibliographies a body of information sufficient to justify and support many agreements between libraries even while more data was being secured. It was also felt that attention should be kept focused on the national character of the problem. A number of regional programs subsidiary to the national plan are already in existence and others will no doubt develop. Regions with limited resources should also be encouraged, it was

felt, to develop special interests. On the issue whether one collection on certain subjects might not be adequate for the entire nation, W. W. Bishop stressed the factor of insurance. One could not forget the Chicago fire, he remarked. The element of insurance would justify, he felt, the duplication of every important collection at least in one other locality. The best approach to specific agreements of the sort under consideration was felt to be primarily through the libraries constituting the membership of the Association of Research libraries.

The conference laid upon the Board on Resources of American Libraries the responsibility of continuing the study of the problems discussed and of proposing practical steps in the direction of library specialization. Carl M. White presented to the conference at its last meeting a statement of general principles in accordance with which a program of specialization should be developed.

Throughout the discussions it was clear that the Library of Congress was regarded by the conference as central in any movement of the sort under discussion. The conference urged that every effort be made to develop fully the Library of Congress Union Catalog, and expressed the hope that means would be found to publish in book form the author catalog of the library. Mr. MacLeish, who was present the first day, described the new Experimental Division of Library Cooperation in the Library of Congress. It was set up, he explained, to aid the libraries in developing cooperative agreements, though not to dictate them. The conference expressed its belief that the agency would be of marked assistance.

This summary statement is by no means

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Readings in Business Administration

MARIAN C. MANLEY, business branch librarian, Newark Public Library, supplies the following annotated list of recent articles in the field of business administration which have marked application to libraries.

Benge, E. J. *Job Evaluation and Merit Rating: a Manual of Procedures*. National Foreman's Institute, Inc., Deep River, Conn. 1941. 73p. plus 26 charts. \$7.50.

The first part discusses new solutions, job evaluation methods, the factor comparison method, using the job comparison scale, etc. Merit rating is covered in the second part and a bibliography is included after each section. Part three contains illustrated charts and case material, which will enable the reader to better understand and apply the principles discussed.

Jackson, J. J. "Organization Plans." *Personnel Journal* 19:378-84, Apr. 1941.

The general principles and benefits of a definite organization plan are discussed from both the executive's and worker's viewpoints.

Knowles, A. S. "Measuring Salesmen's Performance." *Advanced Management* 4:50-57, Apr.-June 1941.

Merit rating as a method to avoid snap judgment and to promote better understanding of work and men is discussed in relation to salesmen. The qualities considered are as important in the library field. The methods discussed may be as effectively applied.

Mapel, E. B. "Stimulating Employee Self-Improvement." *Personnel Journal* 19:316-24, Mar. 1941.

The use of questionnaires of the "true and false" and "multiple choice" type are discussed as a means

of stimulating employees' interest in and improving their knowledge and performance of their jobs. Samples and tests are given.

Riegel, J. W. *Salary Determination*. University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 1940. 278p. \$3.

A practical aid in adjusting the salaries of employees according to the relative difficulty and importance of their positions and their proficiency. Explains how to make a salary survey, how to determine key salaries in a salary schedule, how to analyze and value uncommon positions of a routine type, how to develop performance rating plans, how to link performance rating to job valuation, and how to appraise managerial and technical positions. Based upon an investigation of practices in forty selected companies.

Westinghouse Electric and Manufacturing Co. *Industrial Relations Manual*. Part I. Jan. 16, 1940.

An illuminating analysis on salary and employment policies, grouping occupations as unskilled, skilled, interpretative, creative, executive, administrative, and policy. Positions falling in each group are noted and the grouping permits a quick approximation of the relative importance of a new position unrelated to others.

Wilking, S. V. "Reading Ability and Executive Ability." *Personnel Journal* 12:34-37, May 1941.

The possibility of speeding up the executive's functioning by means of improving his reading skill is related to the present need for efficiency during the national emergency.

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a complete record of the topics considered. Mr. McMurtrie brought forward proposals for developing by cooperative means adequate subject bibliographies. The subject of cooperative storage warehouses, with reports concerning progress of these projects at Boston and Chicago, was given attention. The relationship of micro-

photography to library specialization was not ignored, though there seemed to be an undercurrent of feeling that salvation was not to be awaited from any mechanical device. A complete stenographic record of the conference proceedings is available on microfilm. Plans for publication in edited form are in process.