

Inside Washington

*Christopher Wright
Assistant Director
ALA Washington Office*

As if heeding the arrival of autumn, the Library of Congress' new Madison Building has replaced its summer garb of scruffy concrete and steel with a coat of grey marble. Those of us who pass by daily can no longer peer into the shadowy interior spaces, imagining librarians who will someday pace those floors. The sounds of hammering and riveting come muffled through the walls. The Madison Building is beginning to have a permanent look.

But at the base of one marble flank is a protrusion, a half-buried concrete tunnel. This construct ends, for the moment, in a fringe of steel reinforcing rods just at the sidewalk's edge but pointed unmistakably at the Cannon Office Building of the U.S. House of Representatives across the street.

The tunnel is in the plans, evidence of the library's expanding role as the research arm of Congress. When linked under the intervening street the tunnel will give members of Congress and their staffs private access to such resources as the burgeoning Congressional Research Service to be housed on the Madison Building's second and third floors and LC's extensive law library.

However, this modest tie with the 131 congressmen housed in the Cannon Building has taken on a symbolic significance far beyond its actual purpose. What was planned as a simple convenience has suddenly begun to look more like a sapper's tunnel than an accessway to legislative information. Since late June there has been a move underway in the House of Representatives by members who wish not only to have their own entrance to the building but also to take over two floors of the library for their own office use.

The drive is headed by Representative Fortney (Pete) Stark, a first-term Democrat from California. Claiming he was "hanging people from chandeliers" in his two-room Longworth Office Building suite, Stark produced a list of some 220 fellow congressmen who apparently shared his views in late June. House Speaker Carl Albert, who himself had led a move three years ago to take over the building site, then approached Senator Howard Cannon, chairman of the Joint Committee on the Library, asking his opinion on the library's lending the House two floors "for about five years while a fourth House office building is being constructed on another site."

Cannon replied with gratifying outrage for which he deserves the thanks of literate people everywhere. "It was my understanding," he told Albert, "that this issue was settled for good several years ago when the same proposal was made and rejected in both bodies." But the threat remains. A post-election Congress could pin a motion onto almost any piece of legislation which could start the ball rolling. And the Senate, already planning a new office building of its own, might be swayed to support this "temporary" measure for the other house.

Anyone who doesn't think this would be a disaster for the Library of Congress should drop by the Marc Development Office and see programmers pecking away at consoles jammed into four-foot hallways, or visit the library's order division whose employees have to risk cracking their skulls on the concrete eaves of the fifty-year-old annex building every time they get up to check a catalog entry. The library has simply run out of space. Book stacks have been taken over by catalogers so books are piled on the floor. Stack attendants can't find the books so readers complain to their congressmen.

On the other hand, what is Congress going to do with the two floors if it does take them over? Presumably they would want the two top floors, since those are the only ones with plentiful windows and are now destined for the library's cataloging division, administrative offices, and a cafeteria.

At the moment this area is open and uncluttered, and would be quite suitable if Congress were an insurance agency or an engineering contractor. But congressmen want private suites with large offices and reception rooms. And they don't like to hear what's going on in the next office, and be heard themselves in return. They don't like to walk down the hall to the bathroom. They don't like to wait for elevators when they're in a hurry to get to the House floor a half-mile away.

So any takeover would require massive redesigning of the two floors. Air conditioning and plumbing would have to be totally rerouted. Another elevator would have to be built. Fire walls intended to protect the priceless collections of the library would have to be chopped open to meet the needs of congressmen. The redesigning alone would take a year

and cost a good million dollars, knowledgeable construction people say.

And what about all the hope and effort on the part of the library staff who have reconciled themselves to yet another year of labor in their cramped quarters with the promise that the bright fabrics and new desks pictured in the interior designer's mock-up will someday be theirs in the new building going up across the street.

And what about the American public, the people all across the country who depend on their libraries and who count on the Library of Congress as a primary national cultural resource. How will they feel if Congress, while hailing openness in government, tunnels its way into the best space in the Madison Building to avoid facing the people with the bill for a new office of its own. ■■

ACRL Chapter Developments

Under the guidance of Norman E. Tanis, ACRL president during 1973/74, the ACRL Board of Directors established as one of ACRL's top priorities the development of chapters of ACRL. In July 1973 Mr. Tanis appointed an ad hoc Committee on Chapter Development, chaired by George M. Bailey, associate director of libraries at the Claremont Colleges. The committee is charged with promoting the organization of chapters and with assisting chapters in program planning and development. In the past, ACRL has con-

tributed to chapter programs through the participation of ACRL officers and committee members.

Article IV of the ACRL Bylaws provides for the organization of chapters within ACRL:

Article IV. Chapters

Sec. 1. Establishment. The Board of Directors may establish a chapter of the Association in any state, province, territory, or region on the petition of twenty-five members of the Association residing or employed within the area.

Sec. 2. Bylaws. A chapter may adopt its own bylaws provided there is no conflict between them and the Constitution and Bylaws of the Association.


Sec. 3. Members. A chapter may admit members who are not members of the Association.

Sec. 4. Meetings. Each chapter shall hold at least one meeting a year unless it is affiliated with an organization that normally meets biennially.

Sec. 5. Reporting. Each chapter shall send a report of its meetings to the executive secretary of the Association within one month following the meetings.

Sec. 6. Dissolution. A chapter may be dissolved at its request by the Board of Directors of the Association and shall be so dissolved if it becomes inactive or fails to comply with the provisions of this article.

Within the past two years, the ACRL Board of Directors has approved three petitions for the establishment of new chapters: the New England College and Research Librarians, the Illinois Association of College and Research Libraries, and the Academic and Research Division of the Minnesota Library Association. The three additional ACRL chapters are: the Delaware Valley Chapter (eastern Pennsylvania, southern New Jersey, and Delaware), the Tri-State Chapter (Ohio, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia), and the Missouri Association of College and Research Libraries. ■■



SOLUTIONS TO THE PROBLEMS OF SERIALS LIBRARIANS

SERIALS: Acquisition & Maintenance
by Clara D. Brown

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 76:189654

Librarians who have reviewed this volume say that it "outlines with wit and perception all of the difficulties with which serials people must contend and offers solutions." The book was authored during Mrs. Brown's retirement after 30 years service as librarian at Washington State and Louisiana State Universities. No theorizing—it's all down to earth and extremely clear! Order now at \$4.95. (Cash must accompany order)

Attn: Sam Brown
P.O. Box 1943 Birmingham, Ala. 35201 Inc.

EDSCO Industries. 