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Foreword

Nearly five hundred years ago Willam Caxton, having sought and secured by his energy and industry his fortune in the Low Countries, returned to his native England to set up his movable press in Westminster. His enterprise was profoundly to affect the future of English Letters and the English Language. There were, of course, libraries in England before Caxton’s time. They were for the most part made up of works of more esoteric kind accessible only to the great and the gifted. The popular story was transmitted by word of mouth. The bard, the minstrel and the storyteller were the conservators of the traditional chronicle and the current tale. They were the providers of the fiction of the age. Caxton came to stand between the old order and the new. He it was who helped usher in the twilight of the raconteur. He it was who shaped the fashion of things to come. He laid the foundations of literary English in his choice of the vernacular of London and the Court: he gave to that vernacular consistency of form and permanence of record by putting it on his presses. Before Caxton literature was essentially aural: after him it became essentially ocular. Henceforth, the volumes flowed from the printing presses, were read and treasured and collected into libraries both private and institutional. To the making of books there became no end.

It is, therefore, a little surprising that, with so long a history, in libraries there is—at any rate on this side of the Atlantic—so relatively little about libraries and library administration. May it be that throughout the years we have taken libraries too much for granted like other good and necessary things—homes and schools and churches. This book by my colleague, Mr R. N. Lock, is consequently all the more to be welcomed. It should be put into the hands of every cadet to the profession. It should be
on the shelves for reading and reference of every official in the library service. It should be coned by every committee-man charged with the duty of serving the needs of the reading public. And it can be read with pleasure and profit by any man and every man who loves books and rejoices in the resources of a good library. Mr Lock has brought to his task long experience, encyclopaedic knowledge, a lively mind and nice judgment. He has had the courage of his convictions. He has not avoided controversy but his controversy is always of the courteous kind. He has never failed to see the wood for the trees. In his view administration is not an end in itself: it is only a means to an end—service to the reader whether that reader be the specialist probing into the recesses of some abstruse science, the common man looking for a lively tale to beguile the tedium of a winter night, or the child gazing a little bewilderedly upon the world of books. All must concur to this end—financial policy, staff training, library layout, documentation and the rest. Libraries are for man’s use and man’s enjoying. All else is subservient to this.

I am grateful to Mr Robert L. Collison, the General Editor of the Series, for the privilege of writing this foreword. But let the reader no longer tarry with me. Let him turn to the text and read.

ALEXANDER M. B. RULE.
City of Birmingham College of Commerce,

October, 1960.
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"Library administration, broadly defined, includes all the things that go on from the time a group of citizens establishes a library to serve its needs, to the moment that library does something which helps a citizen. The objectives of the institution, and its methods, its facilities, and its personnel—all are involved. To paraphrase a well-known definition, library administration is as much concerned with men and materials as it is with their use in fulfilling accepted purposes." ERRETT W. McDIARMID, "Scientific Method and Library Administration", Library Trends, Vol. II, No. 3, p. 361.
Preface

With one or two exceptions the genius of British public librarianship has been directed primarily into devising economic and efficient methods and these in turn have been mainly proved in small service points wherein planning and furnishing have too often been regarded as ends in themselves. This does not engender an atmosphere in which problems of management and administration can be studied effectively; nor, given such studies would the local government context of public libraries be an encouragement to implement their findings. Professional literature in consequence reflects a depressing bias in favour of descriptions of routines too frequently of purely local application, and as far as British libraries are concerned, a complete lack of large scale investigation of functions or service. The student of administration is therefore bound to follow two parallel lines of enquiry, (i) the very considerable American literature analysing library functions and services in all aspects, and (ii) personal investigation in libraries in this country. The former course is open to all who have the benefit of a library service; the latter is much more difficult. At the outset it is clear that statistical studies of functions are not available, that comparisons are almost impossible due to special local conditions, and above all, no two authorities seem particularly clear as to their library aims and purposes. In short, it is premature to attempt to write on the solutions of the administrative problems in British public libraries until qualified persons are enabled to devote the necessary time in observation and in the collection of facts. This book is an attempt to suggest the lines on which investigation might proceed rather than a description of individual situations; it has not been considered appropriate to detail routines, e.g. photo-charging methods, though these clearly affect the wider
problems of administration; and the general plan of sketching some ideals and of then examining aspects of the administrative problem seems a reasonable foundation for further study. If such systematic study results, then this contribution will have been sufficiently justified.

It is customary in a preface to acknowledge assistance and to thank individuals for their particular help. Librarians, British, American and Commonwealth have been unstinting in their willingness to discuss problems of library administration; the Head of a School of Librarianship in the course of his work has many opportunities of making interesting and stimulating contact among students and visitors. I have had, in particular, great encouragement from the Principal of my College, and from my immediate colleagues, Graham Jones and E. S. Fox, to the former of whom I am particularly indebted for much historical information and many literature references. Mr V. H. Woods, City Librarian of Birmingham, has proved over a number of years a stimulus to thought, as has Mr H. D. Budge, County Librarian of Warwickshire. To all of these I would wish to express my great appreciation. Perhaps even more important in this work is the formation of ideals that should inspire the librarian and even more the teacher. In this I was fortunate in that early in my professional life I served under a great librarian, teacher and writer, W. C. Berwick Sayers. As with all others who had that privilege, I can only express gratitude for a practical demonstration of the best ideals of library service and hope that I may in some small way continue the work.

Her critical judgment has been invaluable whilst writing the book, but I would particularly wish to express my sincere gratitude to Dr Muriel Lock, A.L.A., Member of the Society of Indexers for her skill and professional training in making the Index: that essential complement to any book of this nature.
CHAPTER ONE

Some Remarks on Administration in General: with special reference to Public Libraries

THE underlying principle on which all theoretical studies of public administration are based is that a given task has to be accomplished or a service rendered efficiently and economically to a section of the community by persons on whom this responsibility is laid, with resources supplied for the purpose from public funds (local or national taxation). To do all this, it is essential that the task or service be defined carefully, taking into consideration other similar or existing related functions which are liable to be affected by or themselves condition the newcomer.

Definition also implies purpose, and this must, especially when a public service is concerned, be framed in such terms as will permit development of new aspects within the service as and when the original needs of the community served change.

Definition of the service and of its purpose must next be supplemented by reference to an authority: in public service this will perhaps be either a local government unit or Parliament itself, working through some more immediate agent, such as an ad hoc corporation. That authority must be endowed with sufficient powers to enable an effective service to be set up; that is, it must be assured of financial resources; it must have legal authority to ensure continuity of its finance; and there may have to be some legal obligation to render the service for which it is called into being.

Public authorities will, having public money to spend, be constituted on a democratic basis—members will be elected by the people, or nominated by elected bodies; and will be subject to outside control as to their method of spending money—but such
representative bodies will and can only be policy-forming and supervisory in nature, except for very small units and very simple functions. For purely executive functions, that is to say, the daily administration of the service, officials must be appointed, responsible to the elected body, "Committee", "Board of Trustees" or whatever title may be adopted. A definite hierarchy of control is clear, as in British local government, where the Crown and Parliament enact legislation to be effected by local bodies; thus, Public Libraries derive their being from the Public Libraries Acts 1892–1919, and the various local units of government, from county councils down, possess library powers within the terms of those Acts and such other Local Acts as may be relevant. The local authorities in turn are bound to assign to an elected committee, these library powers, and that committee will appoint executive officers over whom a general financial and policy control will be exercised.

Complications arise and have arisen especially with regard to British libraries owing to a failure of the legislature to make the Acts compulsory on all authorities, but also from the permission for any local unit of government from the parish upwards to adopt the Acts at their own volition, regardless of ability to maintain service. A completely illogical national pattern has in consequence emerged, with the greatest variations in results and quite possibly great lack of efficiency.

The conventional local government structure of controlling public services by elected councils forming into committees for special purposes, such as Public Libraries, gives an admirable framework so long as the main body—the council—is willing to delegate substantial executive powers to the committees, who in turn must pass similar responsibility to the executive officers. Control of activity by regulation of expenditure, that is, requiring detailed annual estimates in advance of spending, and enforcing limits on the level of expenditure which may be incurred without committee* or council authority, is at best an efficient

* Two stages are frequent: £75 for committee and £500 for Council approval.
method, but it does presuppose sound ability in the policymakers (the council) and the executive (staff). To strike a balance between undue restriction and overmuch freedom, so that efficient daily services may function, calls for the very highest qualities in public servants, and it cannot be claimed that these are always available. This, together with the difficulties of administering modern community services in an outmoded structure of local government areas has greatly contributed to the overall expenses of the services, has tended to diminish the interest of public-minded citizens in public service and largely failed to gain the enthusiasm of the permanent staff for their work.

Within the service, administration theory becomes vitally important. The executive staff have to be grouped according to the various functions that must, in total, make the service, and all must be responsible to the individual who is appointed by the controlling committee as its own recipient of delegated power. Clearly, in a small organization, verbal exchange can ensure that the policy formulated by this chief officer is carried out accurately and promptly. The larger the organization, the less possible this becomes. General agreement exists that no single person can effectively control the work of more than ten people.* Such a "span of control" itself can only be effective if the controller has well defined his policy and the means by which each of his staff will make it practical. Again, definition and purpose, but with the important elements emerging of the need to communicate policy downwards and of the nature of decision-making by the chief officer as problems caused by policy implementation are reported back to him. To maintain their flow, information as to the functioning of policy must be regularly and reliably sent from lower to upper levels of an organization, and vigilance must

Note the continued public discussion on the reference to central Ministries of expenditure by e.g. Education, Health services, and the tendency to raise the amount expendable without such sanction.

* In his report to the National Coal Board, Sir Alexander Fleck considers five or six the maximum.
be continual to ensure that only genuinely fundamental matters are passed to the top for consideration and decision. No top executive should be so occupied by routine processes, which could be well or even better done by juniors, that he has insufficient time for the general critical survey of his organization that is constantly needed, quite apart from the enquiry into new methods that is so vital to prevent obsolescence.

The delegation of decision-making to lesser members of a staff is worthy of the most careful study; it implies much in the abilities of the staff and in the temperament of the chief officer. Once delegation is made, it must be permitted to function, although of course abuse must be prevented. Perhaps the most costly of all staff functions is the control of others and the checking of their work. This cannot be done solely by issuing memoranda and instructions, nor in the extreme, by anything but individual supervision; it follows, therefore, that delegation requires trained staff. That this in turn yields a superior service is more than sufficient justification. An added advantage is that there will be a constant supply of personnel able and willing to assume senior positions and the responsibility involved without disrupting the system.

It is a common error to suppose that the installation of modern office equipment and communication devices ensures efficiency and absolves senior executives from personal contact with their departments. All that machines can do is to transfer or transmute work, so that less highly paid persons can prepare the data on which the senior personnel will base policies, decisions and administration. Machinery and gadgets should be carefully studied with a view to their applicability in each context, not omitting the human element. Do not, however, says an American contemporary, seek efficient methods for that which need not be done.

Implicit in any theory of staffing is the need for salary scales commensurate with the requirements of the positions held and a discipline that will ensure staff do in fact carry out their duties to
the highest standard. Over-rigid salary gradings and undue insistence on seniority coupled with a natural desire to reward long service with the authority has tended to reduce the competitive element in most public service departments. Some corrective is needed to maintain the living organization, and this is not necessarily found by professional examinations or by transferring failures from one section to another. Failing the introduction of insecurity of tenure, the only answer lies in leadership from the top and a strong sense of the responsibilities of public service at all levels.

"There is nothing more discouraging than to find young librarians slavishly following the methods bequeathed by their predecessors, because in no sphere of public work is there a larger field for substantial improvement, or less reason to suppose that readers are as easily satisfied as they were thirty years ago ..."

"A suitable reverence for the good work accomplished in the past should be no obstacle to improvement and enlargement of ideas in the future."—J. D. Brown, *Handbook of Library Appliances*, Library Association Series No. 1, 1892.
CHAPTER TWO

The National Library Service: retrospect and prospect

The study of the origin and growth of the public library movement in Great Britain is the study in miniature of the gradual awakening of public consciousness of social shortcomings as exemplified in the ever-increasing volume of legislation from the central government, of the growth and development of the structure of modern local government and of the transition from reliance on private philanthropy to a general reliance upon the responsibility of the community.

Much that is apparently obscure and many of the lacunae in library legislation derive from this background of tremendous social growth; and, when it is considered that the term "local government" itself was not used until 1858, and that until 1871 all functions requiring local administration could be effected only through ad hoc boards constituted by the Privy Council, the Home Office or the Poor Law Board, the difficulties of the promoters in choosing appropriate bodies to implement the Libraries Acts are apparent. In 1850, the parish was still the effective unit of government and there were not the administrative functions to cause local taxation of the order familiar to-day, and, to refer the new library powers to the boroughs of over 10,000 population was not at that time to add to an overburdened machine. By 1866 the parishes, whatever their size, could adopt the Libraries Acts. It is questionable whether this extreme local option and individuality of execution was the best method of attaining the ideals of the promoters of legislation. How different would the situation have been if library powers had been entrusted to local ad hoc boards on the analogy of the public health services!
NATIONAL LIBRARY SERVICE: RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT

More obvious in its effects was the lack of clarity of concept as expressed in the early Acts. What, in fact, was to be done? The early history of the Winchester Public Library* is only too clearly typical of what must have resulted from the adoption of Ewart's Act in many of the hundred or so authorities which assumed library powers in the first thirty years. It can be seen how completely the authority failed to appreciate the need for a positive approach to the new service; how little thought was given to such elementary matters as financial support, building provision and the maintenance of stock. Staff qualifications were, of course, unheard of, and service to readers in the modern sense, unknown. Reliance on private benevolence produced a book-stock that could hardly be expected to appeal either by interest or novelty, and perhaps few would be surprised that issues of eight books a week were made from an upper floor back room. It should be noted, too, that alliance with a museum was an obvious source of weakness for many years.

The fact remains that, as with most social innovations, there was no clear idea of what public interest might be in public libraries, from what sections of the community support would come and to what end these institutions should be planned. Small wonder that wide differences of provision and of service existed from the very beginning and persist to the present day.

Perhaps more than in any other profession have personalities been the deciding factor, and it is fitting that tribute should be paid to these men of vision who were able, in the face of apathy, parsimony and prejudice, to demonstrate the potentialities of a library service in the modern sense. During the centenary year of 1950, many tributes were paid to these pioneers, yet it is not too much to say that the profession still lacks an adequate record of men such as Roebeck, Ogle, J. D. Brown and Jast, and is in danger of allowing many personal memories to fade without being committed to paper. No research into library history can dispense with such personalia; the normal documentation of

* Library World, February 1952.
official reports, legislative enactments, periodical articles, and so on, is but a fragment of the story. More than obituaries must be done in recording biographical details, and only then will it be possible to obtain a balanced view.

Before turning to the library movement as it is organized today, a brief glance at other similar institutions is necessary in order to comprehend some apparently anomalous developments. When, in 1850, the first Act was made law, there were many more or less flourishing subscription libraries, ranging from the purely commercial undertaking supplying popular fiction (e.g. Hookham) through the private Book Societies (e.g. Croydon, 1761–1954) to formal libraries, more reminiscent of clubs, maintained by members' subscriptions, but yet occasionally open to others. Of these last, perhaps mention should be made of the Birmingham Library, founded in 1769 by Joseph Priestley and others, not only on account of its illustrious founders, but also for the fact that comparatively free access was given to persons other than members long before Public Libraries were established. The debt owed by the profession to the catalogue of the most celebrated of libraries of this kind, the London Library, needs no comment at this point.

These subscription libraries, however, frequently fell on evil days, and many languished through lack of sufficient support; the stock became increasingly unattractive, and ultimately collapse ensued, so that the Select Committee on Public Libraries ... 1849 can point to numbers of moribund, but to very few flourishing, institutions.

A similar fate was liable to attend the more or less charitably organized libraries of books circulated in country districts under schemes similar to that of William Brown in Scotland (1817). Sooner or later, the voluntary organizers would fail to provide the steady application to raising subscriptions and to maintenance of stock, and decay would set in.

Such, too, was the fate, more often than not, of the old parish libraries; not only those established under the 1708 Act, but also
those formed by private benevolence. Not all survived the neglect of years as did the celebrated Norwich library, to be preserved into our own time; nor were chained libraries, as at Wimborne Minster and Hereford, necessarily more successful. Neglect, indifference and lack of money completed the ruin that time began. The Evidence presented to the Select Committee on Public Libraries ... 1849 is a saddening reminder of the dangers that beset libraries and of the practical difficulties that prevent their preservation in flourishing condition.

More prolonged success attended the Mechanics’ Institutes, which were primarily social, educational and recreational in function; and, though frequently little more than a cheaper version of the club subscription library closely linked with educational lectures and reading rooms, they were yet potentially a great force in the newly literate part of society, so that in some areas the adoption of the Public Library Acts was delayed many years owing to the success of the Mechanics’ Institute.

It may be questioned whether Ewart, Dawson and Imray in their evidence in 1849 were not merely envisaging some form of official recognition to encourage such endeavours. From the emphasis so frequently laid on the decay of old libraries, the importance of the new habit of buying books, the social improvement resulting from the use of books and the assumed willingness of the wealthy to donate libraries and, eventually, the provisions of the 1850 Act, it can only be deduced that the promoters had in mind a species of subsidy from the public purse in the nature of funds for the provision of buildings and the payment of staff, the two largest items of permanent expenditure. It will be noted that the whole trend of the Evidence and of the wording of the Act is towards voluntary donations of books. After all, the British Museum had been built up largely from donations! But these men were now considering libraries as a social force for improving the “artisan”, and quite failed to see that the books needed for this purpose could never come from the traditional gentleman’s library.
The most depressing discovery is, however, inadequately mentioned in the literature of librarianship* until the McColvin Report of 1942; namely, the number of authorities who, having adopted the Acts and perhaps received Carnegie grants, yet failed to establish even a reasonable library service. In the light of the facts in the Library Association Survey of 1937 and in the McColvin Report, one may be forgiven for cynicism when considering the pleas of small local authorities to retain their independence. The really bad cases may be a diminishing band, but, with the merely mediocre, they constitute a challenge to the profession and a menace to its standards.

It is, furthermore, quite obvious that these public libraries were expected to be of primary appeal to those people who could not as yet buy their own books, and there would be no attempt at selection or stock maintenance through planned acquisition, nor was the service to be other than local. With the insuperable handicap of severely limited income and the complete absence of trained, reasonably paid staff, how could such institutions hope to gain public esteem save in the isolated cases in which community consciousness was well in advance of the age or where exceptional individuals supplied the stimulus?

The wonder is that in so many areas there were found men and women who would devote time and energy to such a cause in the face of uninformed, illogical and often well-organized opposition. To read the accounts of the struggles that lay behind the adoption of the Acts in almost all our large towns is to marvel that the subsequent growth flourished as much as it did; yet it is in those first decades after the initial Acts that we may find the foundation of the great public reference libraries of the country and the beginnings of the concept of librarianship in the modern sense.

The struggle for funds was unremitting; local acts, private benevolence, were tried; national legislation was attempted; but,

* The work of J. M. Mitchell for the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust is the most obvious exception.
until 1919, the stultifying rate limitation inevitably prevented all but the wealthy authorities from real expansion of service.

Even so, pioneers such as J. D. Brown could find ample scope for their ingenuity. If funds were scanty, why then, efficiency must rule; and money had much greater purchasing power in 1890 than in 1959. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that in the years between 1890 and 1914 the bases of present-day library routines were determined and the fundamental principles of service enumerated. Since then, remarkably little truly original thought has come from the profession: much has been tried in the way of administrative efficiency; the fashion in buildings has swung to and fro; professional education has been developed to a high degree; but, despite the passage of fifty years, it would be a bold man who would claim to be giving a service to his readers proportionately better than that given by the best librarians of half a century ago.

To-day, it is possible to question the wisdom of much that was then done: the adoption of the Dewey Classification; the choice of card catalogues rather than some other form; the multiplication of service points; the late and niggardly start in co-operation. Were librarians right in spending the increased book funds after 1920 in competing with subscription libraries and in aiming at higher and ever higher issues? Was the rejection of the attempted alliance with adult education wise?

That a nation-wide library service should be available was an early dream, and with the advent of county libraries and the National Central Library it began to approach reality—though the McColvin and other surveys have shown how much is yet to do. Obsolete buildings, inadequate book-stocks, insufficiency of trained staff are still too frequent. It is not yet possible to claim a wide recognition for public libraries among the people for whom they are provided and by whom they are supported; nor is it justifiable to say that an entirely worthy service is in fact available. Only too often, professional complacency or disillusionment covers up the real truth, which is that as much remains to
accomplish as in the days of the pioneers, and that, if the service is to survive and flourish, it must submit to self-criticism and, taking the conclusions to heart, abandon the inflexible state of complacency and cultivate a responsive attitude to the changing requirements of a perpetually evolving society.

From the succeeding pages of this book it will be clear that the public library service of to-day is primarily two-fold in nature: the provision of books for home reading and books for consultation in the library building. The detailed story of how the home reading libraries became, on the initiative of J. D. Brown, freely accessible to all, and, owing largely to the advocacy of L. S. Jast, classified by the Dewey Decimal Classification, may be followed in the pages of the professional journals of that fruitful 25-year period so abruptly ended in 1914.

Similarly, the chronicle of the princely gifts from Andrew Carnegie, designed to stimulate local authorities to adopt the Public Library Acts, may be recognized up and down the country by the characteristic libraries thus built. For these and other details of library development, reference should be made to reports of individual library authorities, to those of the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust, to the Library Association Record and to Greenwood. Above all, to the earlier editions of Brown's Manual, wherein are portrayed, along with much that survives to-day, conditions that have long since passed away, controversies that have long been forgotten, but also the imperishable impact of the strong personalities of the pioneer professional librarians.

What of the future? Can we envisage a national library service not necessarily either public library or governmental or institutional as is known to-day, but one which includes the best of each and is freely at the disposal of all potential users? Undoubtedly, all administrative theory and considerations of finance would favour drastic reorganization of a fundamentally nationwide service into a more logical pattern, but it would be visionary to expect such a revolution in view of the vested interests
involved and the general lack of concern with the wider aspects of librarianship.

Working within the existing framework of national and local government, it is reasonably certain that sufficient legal powers exist to change the areas of local authorities by combination or separation, and that the national libraries are more harassed by finance than any other problem. What is required surely is a national body to co-ordinate the development of libraries, to advise and, to ensure it was not stultified from the outset, to be in a position to administer grants of money towards buildings, equipment and improvements. The nearest analogy in the British Isles is the national Library Board established in Eire under the Library Act of 1947, by which it was intended that the Board should receive government grants which were to be used for direct improvements to the service. Unfortunately, political and economic factors have nullified these most interesting intentions.

A national service must recognize as a distinguishing factor in these categories the type of user as well as the nature of support, and it must be recognized that as the same user may use more than one kind of library, therefore one must not expect all “research” workers to require the same type of service from all libraries. Economy of service in fact suggests at present that there is an undue duplication of effort. As will be seen later, neither financially nor by reason of lack of skilled staff is the average public library able to offer guaranteed service to specialized users. It is suggested that, whilst the national library service is indeed necessary to ensure that those readers who have not access to comparatively private sources of information shall not be left unserved, yet it is reasonable to limit the structure to perhaps twelve really large reference libraries (about 1,000,000 volumes) in designated centres, and to supplement these holdings with small libraries of basic “bibliographic apparatus” and the more generalized standard work/encyclopaedia. In conjunction with adequate regional storage libraries, inter-communication and efficient loan service, the public reference service could then rely
on sufficient specialist qualified staff and material to substantiate its claim to recognition.

It would follow from this that much care needs to be exercised in defining the functions of the other suppliers, for instance, libraries in local education authority colleges, industrial and scientific, research associations, learned societies, in order to avoid costly duplication of stock and lowering of standards through insufficiency of qualified personnel. If the existing specialized libraries have emerged in consequence of the failure of the public library service, the problem of the future is whether to separate all specialized work from the public library or to bring the public library up to a higher standard. This latter may well be both impracticable and undesirable. Adequate grounds exist to show that the public library service has been highly successful in almost any size of authority, but that success has been almost invariably accompanied by a voluntary limitation of function. If this has been true of the past, how much more true must it be in relation to the more highly specialized demands of the present and future. The current argument concerning appropriate sizes of library authority misses the real point, namely, that any size is appropriate for some service, but to achieve a full, comprehensive service, much more than the average local authority resources are needed, and, furthermore, such a service can only be given as part of a highly complicated pattern of libraries. The self-sufficient local government unit is just not adequate to-day.

If then, the "reference" services call for national and inter-authority planning, what is left? The so-called "home-reading" library; in which British and American librarians have excelled. Perhaps the existing British structure of urban and rural libraries plus the regional co-operation schemes represents as economical a solution as is possible, although the imperfections* of the

* The economics of the co-operative schemes seem very unsound, especially in view of subject specialization, postal charges and the general improvement of stocks.
present service are obvious. Few difficulties would appear to stand in the way of organizing a national home-reading service except the inherent conservatism of the local government framework and the poor quality of much of the personnel. Some proposals relative to the latter will be discussed later. On the whole, whereas reference services must, it seems, be planned nationally, regionally and in conjunction with non-public services, the home-reading and the recreational libraries can fairly safely be left in a structure which is basically sound—towns with central and branch libraries, counties with Headquarters, regional branches, mobile libraries, and other service points, the most obvious reform being an improved and more logical location of the buildings from which the service operates.

The non-rate-supported sector of the library service, especially that supported by research associations, industry and learned societies, represents the greatest growth during the post-war years, and it is all the more important to ensure that these valuable assets do not stagnate through lack of financial support or shortage of trained staff, or, indeed, become clogged by inflexible methods. In a relatively new branch of librarianship—and one which does not by any means owe allegiance to the older profession—materials have been acquired, routines established and staff trained, with few precedents to guide. Such a situation constitutes a challenge to the forward looking librarian or information worker. It is analogous to the position of the rural librarian in 1920. Let us hope that the surroundings of research work in which so many of these libraries function will induce a critical and fruitful attitude to the more traditional methods of librarianship.
CHAPTER THREE

Staff Training and Organization

The basis of all administration is trained staff. Early scholastic and private librarians rightly stressed academic knowledge rather than administrative ability; there being little question of financial accountability, no corpus of routine methodology and a general assumption that readers needed no bibliographic assistance. But the advent of public libraries, with large and growing book-stocks, increased numbers of readers and the demand for better service, infinitely complicated the situation. To-day, it is not possible to ignore the advantages of the study of administration and organization: the question is how to acquire and retain a balance of managerial efficiency and intellectual qualification. Much confusion has arisen from that historic poverty of the rate-supported library, which for many years inhibited the recruitment of high calibre staff, save by exceptional circumstances, and in consequence, created undue emphasis on the enforcement of routine, the only available substitute for trained librarians. The experience and reaction of Nicholson at the Bodleian Library and of Powell at the Birmingham Public Library are most revealing in this context—staff instruction manuals of an almost incredible detail, controlling activities and functions every minute of the day and allowing no deviation. Great credit is due to the pioneer public librarians for establishing the service and demonstrating its worth, but it is clear that too many evolved general principles from particular local problems, theorized on insufficient evidence and quite certainly preferred to govern by decree rather than elicit staff aptitudes through considered delegation of responsibility. An historical study of successive Library Association requirements for the Diploma of Fellowship is instructive as
demonstrating the changing attitudes among the leaders of the profession—observe the gradual decline in emphasis on literature and the knowledge of books, the coming of routines after J. D. Brown's *Manual* (1903), the long dominance of the mechanical applications of classification and cataloguing. At no stage does there emerge the picture of a profession seriously analysing its problem—the requirements for balanced training of staff in a nation-wide library service or the equally necessary definition of the scope of service within the library.

Training for professional service can be seen in two parts: (i) knowledge of the routines of a particular part of the service, and (ii) the knowledge of administrative principles complemented by the educational equipment in bibliographical matters so essential to the effective exploitation of stock and the service to readers. Of these, the first category is appropriate to local in-service training, and the second the province of Schools of Library Science.

Fundamental to both divisions must be an appreciation that the purpose of training be defined, and, by implication, the purpose of that particular branch of the library service with which one happens to be concerned, and it may well be queried whether the existing British system of professional education, with the emphasis on a common core of librarianship which all should learn, is not a failure in analysis. Parenthetically, should be noted the impossibility of any existing Library Association agency adequately devising or implementing a really valid syllabus of education (the constitution of the R. and E.E.C. alone makes an "educational" syllabus beyond achievement). So long as there remains a divorce between "examination" subjects and the actual practice of library work, there will persist the frustrated student and the employer who is unwilling to reward examination success by reasonable grading. Yet another basic problem is that of determining an adequate pre-entry qualification. Staff recruitment policy should surely recognize the desirability of acquiring well-educated personnel of age groups higher
than normal school leavers; but the ensuing complications, if this is to be related to a national salary scheme which predominantly depends on a slow, steady progress from age 16 to 65, are obvious. The dominant factor here is undoubtedly the concept of the "general" library assistant, who will mature in the service, and who may, when opportunity offers, be made responsible for any particular department, regardless of preparation. It would be illuminating to know on what principles selection committees work, especially for the more senior positions: one fears that a scientific basis for selection is not usual, and the example of Chicago in requiring a written examination is hardly likely to gain wide acceptance.

The only logical basis for staff management is valid definition of function, both of library and personnel. Economic deployment of resources is next to impossible in the traditional patchwork of library service, and, sooner or later, attempts must be made to remedy the situation. Ideal requirements seem to indicate that the present mosaic of authorities with varying standards of service should be superseded by some national library system supported by national selection, supply and training of staff.* The last of these could easily be adapted from the present library schools and the National Salary Schemes. It would require obligatory attendance at a library school, closely related to actual library service, for all qualifications, by which alone could promotion be secured. The National Schemes would have to be adapted to recognize the Libraries Departments in local government as being as much different from the main clerical service departments as are the already numerous special grades (cf. Health Service).

A national training scheme means a national qualification: hence, all training schools must teach to the same syllabus and examination, which must recognize all branches of library science (including "documentation"). There must, however, be

* The analogy of recruitment, training and disposition of staff in the Civil Service is interesting.
room for specialization, and also, so as to foster good teaching, the syllabus should be broad enough to engender study of a subject rather than the items listed in a somewhat arbitrary printed schedule. Thus, all library schools would instruct in the use of the bibliographic apparatus of a library; but only some would need to offer instruction in the purely historical aspects of bibliography. A welcome economy in the deployment of teaching staff abilities would thereby be attained.

It is necessary that, in the future, attendance at a full-time course be the recognized means of professional education for the potential higher grade staff. Part-time and correspondence courses may achieve examination success, but they cannot educate in the sense we should require. Contrary argument based on hardship must be met by ensuring adequate finance—again, a possible function of a Central Libraries Board.

An integral part of any such scheme is a properly constructed Board of Studies to ensure that syllabus, training and the requirements of the profession are adequately balanced. The qualifications and abilities of examiners would also require constant review to ensure continuity of policy and equity of performance. Complete divorce of the teaching and the examining bodies is unrealistic and is bound to lead to inconsistencies.

Plans for such a training scheme will immediately encounter arguments based on (i) cost, which need not be great, especially if (vide the introductory remarks to the Salaries and Conditions of Service pamphlet issued by the Joint National Council) the ultimate gain to the service be calculated; (ii) the nature of the work to be done and shortage of higher grade posts: that so much pure clerical and counter work exists for which almost anyone is good enough, or that there are innumerable small service points which, it is alleged, do not need a trained librarian. The second argument would admit that the existing pattern of library service is adequate, incapable of change and indeed all that can be achieved—a demonstrable fallacy.

From within the profession, there would be opposition from
those who encourage all new assistants to believe that they can all reach the highest paid positions: also, from those who would be faced with the integration of trained educated personnel into systems which have not moved with the times; also from existing staff complaining of injustice in that they never could have had such chances and demanding safeguards for their “experience”; above all, from the local authority, which has no concept of what a real library service is or could be. It is a melancholy reflection that, after at least sixty years of professional education and eighty years of a professional association, librarians cannot yet agree on a policy for the future, except in terms of their own particular interest. Any substantial change, it seems, must wait to be imposed on the profession by outside authority acting in conjunction with whatever professional minority exists, able to appreciate the urgency of the problem.

The library movement can go forward, given a sufficient supply of trained staff, as will certainly be available if intelligent training and employment is offered. Let it be noted that libraries of good repute, that is to say, those known as attractive, efficient organizations, have seldom been among those complaining of the poor calibre or paucity of recruits. Before blaming the national employment situation, a review of the terms of library service would not be inappropriate.

Once assured of a sufficient supply of trained staff* administrative reform will become easier because delegation of power will be more practicable; the most senior personnel will no longer be prevented from constructive administrative work by the welter of problems which should have been solved at much lower levels: decisions will be more speedy: forms and memoranda will tend to diminish in number. When the jungle of a largely out-moded mystique of librarianship is cleared, the real concept of libraries as the essential background of all intellectual activity will become clearer and easier of attainment.

* In this context, some authoritative nomenclature is very desirable. For Public Library Posts, see L.A.R. March 1946 and also L.A.R. September 1959.
A problem which will still remain is the desirability of a separation of the administrative staff from those of the library service proper, that is, should the hierarchy be inclusive of trained librarians specializing in administration, controlling both library service and the purely administration departments? What should be the functions of the latter? If due advantage is taken of modern developments, administration will cover clerical matters connected with finance, salaries, maintenance of buildings, the physical acquisition of books and allied material from dealers and then recording, e.g. ordering B.N.B. cards and making the necessary class-marks. The service departments will be concerned with determining what is to be acquired, the management of stock, how to satisfy the requirements of the readers and with the staffing of service points and the planning and location of these service points. Clearly, here is much room for overlapping of functions, and therefore the need for strong informed personnel at the top to co-ordinate related departments and sections. This position should be the culminating point of some years of in-service training, desirably in a variety of library systems, of broadly based professional education concerning itself primarily with the subjects appropriate to the "service" departments and appointments should be made accordingly.

Let us emphasize experience in a variety of library systems. A senior and, ultimately, a chief librarian, who will have previously received a sufficient academic education and a full-time course at a Library School, must be wide in his outlook on libraries. He must appreciate without conscious efforts the fact that his library is but one agency among many catering for the intellectual needs of the people. Fully to appreciate the especial needs and viewpoints of others, he should desirably have had practical working experience (implying in-service training) in more than one type of library—public, academic, industrial—for only thus can he hope to understand the universal rather than the purely parochial problems that beset all librarians and all readers. Complementary to this is the essential ability to demonstrate to the staff that,
although some aspects of library work are more pleasant than others, all are important and require that full service be given. A more ready acceptance by employers and staff of the principle of inter-change* among library personnel would be of considerable assistance, assuming that there existed a sufficiently positive attitude to such a scheme and that newly-exchanged persons would not be confined to the most obvious routine work.

It may well be questioned whether the security of tenure of our local government staffs with the elaborate gradings (which do not always relate adequately to work responsibility or training) and promotion by seniority is in the best interests of such a dynamic service as we predicate. What a tendency there is towards exhibitionism and publicity-hunting when young! How rapidly this diminishes in the early forties, and how quiescent are our "leaders" once they attain their heart's desire! For, in many instances, it is only too easy to calculate who will fill a given position in a number of years—ten, fifteen or more! The reaction on staff is obvious: a strong discouragement towards becoming or remaining effective and alert: a powerful incentive towards conformity and the quiet life, knowing that a pension is but a few years away. Not thus are live organizations created and maintained! We may permit the question as to whether a contract system of appointments for a limited period of years in the higher and more responsible positions would not be preferable. Certainly, breaks in continuity would be more than compensated by the continued influx of new personalities and vigour. For, although the cult of personality as such as highly undesirable, it is quite obvious that all substantial achievement in librarianship has been due to the presence of a strong individual. Personality, for this purpose, implies powers of mind, clarity of thought, physical strength and the ability to follow through policies founded on correct analysis of situations.†

* Existing schemes, for instance, in the Midlands, do not appear to attract staff support. The spirit of adventure is damped by fear of financial loss or of leaving home.

† "In a middle-town library a chief's influence and teaching may be projected
No organization can be a success without leadership; showmanship is no substitute, but, although there is a perennial need for leadership, such persons are rarely encouraged to develop under the system of local government, wherein the temptation to cautious inaction is fostered by committees and the fundamentally weak position of the libraries as regards active public support. Despair would be improper, however, for it is demonstrable that much has been and can be accomplished, given appropriate qualities of mind in the chief executive.

Most obvious, though, is the resultant improvement of staff morale and performance when it is appreciated that there is no monopoly of executive power in one person—that a well-defined and considered delegation of functions is spread throughout the staff, so that each member has his own sphere of responsible activity and realizes the importance of that sphere in the service as a whole. Inevitably, much mechanical routine has to be performed, but all staff benefit from a judicious mixture of daily work, and very rarely fail to measure up to responsibility. It may be noted that, although junior assistants may say little or nothing in the presence of their seniors, like school children in relation to their teachers, they are relentlessly critical of shortcomings such as insincerity, unfulfilled promises and lethargy. This may have unforeseen repercussions in the library.

Managerial experience shows that it is impracticable for any one person to supervise adequately the current performance of more than a maximum of ten subordinates in addition to his own functional contribution; and it is also true that in librarianship much supervision of the work of juniors is necessary to ensure accuracy. These two factors find a ready solution in the establishment of a correct hierarchy of staff with carefully designated functions, the compilation of a thorough staff instruction manual to establish the standard performance required and, above all, a

throughout the whole service, in a larger service they are necessarily diffused and weak, for you cannot achieve by reputation what you can by personal contact and example." E. A. Savage, L.A.R. February 1945, p. 21.
realistic in-service training scheme, which not only imbues newcomers with the routine practices of the library, but also brings to the fore any special aptitudes that it may be desirable to encourage. Only thus will it be practicable to ensure an even distribution of knowledge among the staff and to inculcate that sense of responsibility on which the chief executive must depend in the ultimate for the implementation of his policy instructions. Nothing is more deplorable to the trained observer than the discrepancy between staff instruction or statement of policy and the actuality in many systems. Behind the elaborate façade, what exists? So often, mere lip service to the written order* until chance inspires investigation and a consequent reform which will last until the impetus has died down and attention is directed elsewhere.

Some aspects of the routine organization of the service will be considered in more detail later, but here it should be noted how relatively little of practical value is accomplished by the uncritical acceptance by seniors of daily diaries of work to be performed of weekly, monthly, quarterly reports of routines painstakingly achieved, by comparison with the individual report made by a vigorous personality, whether chief librarian, deputy or branch superintendent, accompanied by his considered assessment of the situation. Librarians might well consider it more economical to substitute this valuation of their service for the conventional practice.

The actual numbers of staff appropriate to a given library service must depend at present to a great extent on the local authority, but it is useful to cite a few figures which indicate general trends before considering an ideal situation:

* This is particularly to be seen in the degree to which extension services, such as those to hospitals or special groups of readers, tend to wither once the enthusiasm of the new venture has died and the immediate eye of the principal officer has been diverted.
## Statistics of Public (Rate-Supported) Libraries, 1958–59

### Great Britain and Northern Ireland

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<th>Group Reference Number</th>
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<th>Total number of Libraries submitting returns</th>
<th>Population served by Libraries submitting returns</th>
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<td>300,000–499,999</td>
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<tr>
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<td>200,000–299,999</td>
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<td>10,000–14,999</td>
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<td>Under 10,000</td>
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<td>206,740</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Norwood Joint Library</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>39,000</td>
</tr>
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<p>| Totals ...              | 514              | 50,650,822                                  |</p>
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<tr>
<th>Group Reference Number</th>
<th>Group Total</th>
<th>Highest</th>
<th>Lowest</th>
<th>Median</th>
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<td>5,836</td>
<td>3,654</td>
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<td>3,844</td>
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<td>14</td>
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<td>2,123</td>
<td>8,500</td>
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<td>City of London</td>
<td>19</td>
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<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Norwood</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3,250</td>
<td>3,250</td>
<td>3,250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals ...</td>
<td>13,957</td>
<td>1,511</td>
<td>18,333</td>
<td>3,652</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These figures do not, of course, disclose for individual systems the gradings or designation of staff, and to that extent are less
useful than one might hope, but it is abundantly clear that standards of staffing vary widely, and that read in conjunction with the next tables the libraries departments in local government do not obtain much recognition of specialized skills or employments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>L.A. Membership</th>
<th>N.J.C. and J.N.C. Gradings</th>
<th>Approx. no. of full-time staff</th>
<th>Approx. no. of library service points</th>
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<td>F.L.A.</td>
<td>1,547</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>33,673</td>
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</table>

McColvin (Report, 1942) long since enunciated the ideal that there should always be available at every service point at least one trained and qualified member of staff; with the increased standards of the post-war years and the spread of the subject-department library, such an ideal becomes an essential and immediate aim. If training and qualifications are to mean anything, the librarian must disengage himself from the mere mechanical repetitive elements which feature in any organization and become free to cultivate the essential part of his profession—the service to readers. Such a disengagement implies maximum use of appropriate machines, such as photo-charging for circulation control; perhaps punched card routines for accessioning; centralized classification and cataloguing. These changes involve capital expenditure and consequential reorganization on such a scale that it has been felt impossible in the United Kingdom to proceed far along the road. In addition, it may justly be urged that there are insufficient large units of administration to warrant such mechanization. The usual solution of the problem has been the centralization within an individual system of acquisition, classifying, cataloguing, with, by implication, the freeing of staff in the
public departments for library service. By no means all authorities would concur with the idea of centralized administration of this kind, as tending to affect the future supply of trained personnel and of the salary grading of existing staff (this being largely based on responsibility as demonstrated to outside bodies). Staff, too, may resist, for custom has inbred a disproportionate valuation of the positions of these non-public departments with an undervaluation of the service element as hitherto defined as "counter duty". But, in an appropriate unit of administration, such central control is the only way to avoid inefficient duplication of effort and to free money for the vital needs of the bookstock. Our concern at this point is not so much with the economic aspect, which is discussed later, but with the effect on staff and their qualifications. A clearer distinction will emerge between qualified and non-qualified personnel, although one hopes that arbitrary barriers will not be allowed to dominate, and, increasingly, the emphasis will be placed on subject knowledge of books and source material. Librarianship will thus revert to the concept of being a profession administered by cultured efficient persons.
CHAPTER FOUR

Some Principles of Planning

All authorities agree that the location of a library should be so chosen as to serve the maximum convenience of the population, but the librarian has to admit in this, as in much else, that the theoretically desirable is often unobtainable, and that though he wishes for an ample commanding site well in the central administrative and commercial area of his district, he will indeed be fortunate to secure either the location or the amount of land needed in face of the competition from profit-making concerns. The result is usually a compromise, but one solution to the conflict between high land values and small library resources is the erection of a larger building of which the ground floor and exterior frontages on various floors are occupied by offices or shops, leaving the interior of the building to the library departments and stack. This solution, having in mind the modern achievements in lighting, air conditioning and elevators or escalators, is actively advanced for such buildings as concert halls or theatres; it has been tried to a limited extent at Leytonstone, where the frontage is devoted to shops and the library is above, approached through an adequate entrance up a flight of stairs. Such a solution would obviate to a great extent the economic problem of stack construction, and consequently enhance service by retaining all books under one roof. Local building regulations and the difficulties of subsoil may limit height, and cost may prohibit excavation of basements, nevertheless the whole tendency of new buildings is so clearly to plan upwards that it seems that new libraries will follow in due time.

The problem of the size of the library can only be solved locally; but it must be remarked that the time is approaching when several great cities will be embarking on new buildings for
their central libraries, and that it seems appropriate now to urge careful assessment of the services of these large authorities in relation to their surrounding regions and the nation. It seems that there is a clear case for the largest reference libraries to develop into regional services and to reorganize into specialist departments. If so, the dominating feature of the new buildings will be the storage stack, and it is not unduly fanciful, for example, to picture a new library in the Midlands with a stack accommodation of between one and two million volumes, surrounded on various floors by comparatively small reading rooms. An example of this development is the Bodleian Library, planned so long ago as 1935, but surely one of the most effective realizations of library building on the great scale.

The British public library service has but seldom produced large buildings giving a great variety of specialized services; in this century perhaps only one important central library has been erected, though several await permission and finance to proceed. Maybe on account of the piteously scanty monies available, or of the small town mind of authorities, it has been easier to erect new branch libraries to relieve congestion at the central, and this has given rise to the situation wherein the utmost variety of plans is to be found for a library of up to 30,000 volumes, consisting of Lending Department, Newsroom, Children’s Section (purely Children’s Libraries are rare), but no precedent exists for the large building suitable for the full modern service.

Undoubtedly, much publicity should be given to these often overlooked points—that hardly anywhere in the country is in fact a full library service provided, and that the lending library is not the only means of supplying the book needs of the country. Among librarians it should not be necessary to say that undue extension of book resources diminishes rather than increases the total value of the service, and, if the annual overhead costs of branch libraries are thought out, there would seem to be a strong case for attempting concentration of service. Certainly, a large branch library is more economic in terms of cost per issue than a
series of small buildings capable of much lower circulation; all
the more so in view of the growing costs of labour and of books.
If branch libraries are regarded as relatively expensive additions* to
the service, it is all the more important to ensure their success
when built. This implies correct location—and local knowledge
alone can tell where people go, and where, a few yards away,
even a good library may be neglected. The library must give the
service most appropriate to the district, and must have a stock of
books constantly refreshed by exchange or addition.

As the branch is likely to be in an area of growth, a flexibly
planned interior is essential; allowing for the conversion of
rooms to newer functions, or for the increase in size of a newly
popular department. Experiments have been made with short
life structures to enable the library needs of a district to be
assessed before the permanent building is erected, and this seems
wholly desirable, if the outside elevation can be given reasonable
dignity and appearance.

It can now be appreciated that one of the factors least realized
by library planners in the past was this possibility of changed use
or changed requirements. At one end of the scale can be seen the
great numbers of newsrooms, magazine rooms, or Ladies’
Rooms, using valuable space in small libraries; at the other end
are the magnificent reading rooms supplied in Reference
Libraries such as Birmingham. In their day, all these had their
justification, but in the middle twentieth century a differing idea
of librarianship has developed. To-day, every adequate library
service requires special departments for science, technology, the
fine arts, music, children, local collection and so on; few have the
wish to squander space on such unrelated aspects as newsrooms
or lecture halls. A tour of small library authorities is in some
ways heartening in this context. Since 1950, innumerable con-
versions (especially of Carnegie buildings) have been carried out,

* The prefabricated building experiments at Plymouth and elsewhere may be
most important factors. So also the tendency to plan building needs over a long
period rather than in response to sudden demand.
resulting in tremendous improvements to the service, and effectively countering the impression that public libraries are pre-1914 in outlook. In this connection, one may note the abolition of metal shelving in public departments, the relinquishment of the radiating stack principle in lending libraries, the advent (under J. D. Brown) of safeguarded open access to be completed in recent years by the removal of the wicket gate itself. The current trend towards token-charging or photo-charging, with, in the latter, the emphasis on freedom to borrow as much as is wished is also significant. Contemporary trends are all towards this freedom.

Much, however, remains to be done, and, until the general principle of flexibility of planning is carried beyond the building right through into the smallest item of furniture or equipment, it cannot be said that librarians are genuinely holding their own against the perpetual obsolescence of all structures. A practical step forward in the construction of the flexible library was the advocacy by J. Snead Macdonald in 1925 of modular planning—that is, construction in pre-determined cubes bounded by the steel girders and stanchions of the frame, with carefully pre-determined fixed areas for stairs, plumbing and certain other immutables. After this, the interior is divided by screen walls, which can easily be demolished to enlarge a room, or erected to make smaller units. A notable example is to be seen in the Manor Branch, Sheffield, where the interior partitions are of glass, giving a superb effect of space, light and unity to the library.

It is not necessary to envisage frequent changes; they may, in fact, very seldom occur, but it is most desirable that, should changes in room proportions be needed, they should be possible with the minimum of disturbance or cost.

Such planning requires most careful assessment of the functions and inter-relations of the departments; again a local decision, to be based on the relations of the library service and administration departments, bearing in mind those aids that are available from modern office and business equipment, such as book lifts, internal
telephones, duplicating machinery, and so on. The problem of lighting the library is not really satisfactorily solved. Illuminating engineers have offered alternatives to the conventional tungsten electric lamp, such as fluorescent tubes, and these can provide brilliant lighting in a reading room at a cost much less than the conventional bulb, but it is not yet determined how much light is to be provided either at the shelves, at the reading tables, in the store or in the corridors. Clearly, it is dependent on climatic conditions, on the design of the building and on the particular use made of it. Librarians would be grateful for a definitive acceptable standard for e.g. general reading room illumination or for the amount needed for efficient reading. So, too, would be a really effective method of supplying local lighting at individual desks without unsightly flex descending from above or setting traps for the readers' feet. Quite apart from them, there is the obvious inconvenience in fixing tables or desks in relation to the power plug.

Heating is yet another problem, and allied to it is humidity. There are perhaps no library buildings in the British isles where adequate temperature/humidity controls exist, and in which it is possible to linger with comfort as one may in the well-lit, air-conditioned suites of the National Gallery in London. And yet intellectual workers need oxygen and warmth! The days are long gone when scholars at the Bodleian had to work without heat or artificial light, but the modern provision of hot, dry, stale air is hardly less harmful either to books or readers. Surely something better than the unsightly, uncontrollable low pressure radiator system could be provided! Modern oil fired boilers generate great heat, but seem hard to control; electrically heated storage tanks with thermostatic control are expensive, but can be effective in small buildings; so also in small rooms gas heating from ceiling units is successful. The problem is not so much in smaller rooms, or rooms of quick use, such as lending libraries, but of the reference library reading room, the administrative offices and assembly rooms. No ideal solution appears easily to
hand, especially with regard to ventilation, which largely controls the humidity and therefore the comfort of readers and indirectly the life of the books.* Again, it would appear from architects that all these ideas of comfort and efficiency can be obtained, at a price, usually beyond the resources of a library. What an admission, and of what ill augury for the future libraries!

Moving from the problem of the building to the problem of administration within the shell, it must be emphasized that intercommunication of staff is highly important to save time-wasting by circulation vertically in the building or horizontally in the departments of one floor. Necessarily, this means careful grouping of the departments so that, for instance, incoming parcels of books move logically to the processing, cataloguing departments and thence to their destination with the minimum of carriage at any one stage and the elimination of doubling back. The example of flow lines in industrial administration is obvious, and no librarian will fail to profit from this. To watch the working of a very large city library is a great pleasure to the student of efficient management and to the librarian who appreciates the consequential economies in staff and money. It has been urged that the functional department organization of libraries isolates staff and prevents their balanced training; it is, however, just as much an administrative trend in larger systems as is the centralizing of common functions such as book purchase, cataloguing and classifying. The building must be planned for it, will work most effectively if this scheme is operated; and it is for the personnel control to make the human adjustments that may be necessary.

The medium and smaller units tend much more to be multipurpose organisms, with all staff acquiring and using all skills, therefore within their limits, these libraries do not pose such interesting problems as the larger systems; the burden really being transformed into the human problem of finding among compara-

* Electrically heated cables embedded in the floor give a pleasant economical warmth to rooms. Recent installations as, e.g. at Cannock U.D.C. appear thoroughly successful in a small building.
tively few, all the necessary skills, training them and ensuring that due balance is maintained. Such systems have great attraction to the librarian; and, as will be considered later, should survive. Their contribution towards the problems of planning and administration are in the direction of ingenious use of small resources, adaptation of buildings and a perennial study of reducing overhead costs so that more books may be provided.

A general consideration of trends in library building and the various adaptations or conversions that have been made since 1945 suggests that the era of the traditional lending library plan—with formal counter for the usual clerical processes, rather formally arranged shelves, with little invitation to relax—is passing. The newer routines of circulation control, token-charging, photo-charging in particular, have considerably diminished the need for solidly built counters; the current ideas of service to readers are tending to take staff more into the library area; and a greater trust that readers will not abuse their freedom, all combine to make a less institutional plan acceptable. It is to be expected that future plans will show a tendency towards interiors unencumbered by fixed walls; to multi-purpose rooms in smaller units; bolder use of non-traditional woods in shelf construction; greater utilization of transparent walls, windows and with this, an appreciation of the value of light, natural as well as artificial.
CHAPTER FIVE

The Reference Library

THE idea of a library formed on the model of that needed by a scholar or a gentleman of liberal culture, but available to the people at large, as distinct from the libraries of the older universities open primarily to their members alone, is not nineteenth century in origin, as is so much of the ideology of the public library movement. The obvious predecessor in this country is the British Museum, but the idea itself is even older, and may perhaps be seen in the larger parochial libraries such as Norwich; and the library of Thomas Jefferson was, it will be recalled, the essential element in the refounded Library of Congress. But, between the theory of founding libraries of this scope and the practical provision of them on other than a national basis lies a great gulf, and one which has only widened with the increased educational standards of modern times and the vastly complex nature of a modern culture. Whereas as late as 1800 it was possible to think of cultural and educational needs as being primarily based on humanistic literature, with occasional glances at natural and experimental philosophy, the ensuing century witnessed a dramatic reversal. Science and technology have become dominant: the forms of communication of knowledge have changed; the privilege of education is no longer confined to a few* and increasingly large numbers of people have become aware of the value of libraries.

Librarians were, however, tardy in appreciating the changed situation, and many even resisted the idea of positive service to

* Significantly, scholars themselves can no longer rely on knowing the bibliography of their own subjects, but must call in outside help in obtaining and organizing the flood of learned publications.
readers. Thus, though in 1876* the complementary concept of service by librarians to consultans of reference libraries was being expounded in the United States, in the following year† the librarian of the London Library considered only the abuses of such extension of function. The ensuing decades nevertheless witnessed a profound change of attitude and the gradual establishment of the trained librarian who now provides a specialist bibliographic assistance to the users of his library is thereafter a most important part of library history. The contemporary view of librarianship cannot do other than recognize trained staff as a fundamental element in the library service, and any discussion of this service must needs take this changed attitude into account.

It is abundantly clear that no library can hope to be a self-contained entity in that all knowledge can be stored within its walls; but this does not mean that there is no place for the large general library representing the broad unspecialized aspects of all subjects. Exhaustive specialisation in subjects is logically the province of libraries provided for persons requiring such a service: these may be the libraries of a learned society, an industrial concern, the department of a university, a government agency or a public library whose local needs so condition its functions.

Economy of effort reinforces the argument that, while all individual library resources are admittedly in themselves inadequate, if all agencies are prepared mutually to assist one another, particular weaknesses are to a great extent nullified and an overall high standard of service may be attained.

Comments have been made elsewhere on the present wasteful nature of library provision in almost every country, and it is worth while at this stage to be more particular as to the needs of the reference library service before suggesting some principles appropriate to its administration. Ideally, a reference library is a

† Harrison at Sixth Sitting of Conference of Librarians, London, 1877.
collection of books and other forms of recorded knowledge from which, thanks to the application of library methodology, any enquirer may obtain such information as he requires on any subject, past or present, in whatever language or in whatever form it is published. This would involve an extension even of the grand concepts laid down by Panizzi for the British Museum—an extension, because so much publication now originates in agencies then unknown and by methods far removed from the conventional form. Briefly, one would hope to find all the literature of one’s own country, books, periodicals, society publications, government documents, maps, newspapers and pamphlets, besides non-printed matter such as duplicated typescripts, technical reports and manuscripts.

Such an ideal is usually considered impossible both for financial and organizational reasons. Yet the demand for exhaustive libraries is undoubtedly present, and it is essentially a problem for librarians to consider most carefully before rejecting. On analysis, the matter seems to involve

(i) defining how many such libraries are needed in the country;
(ii) what is the appropriate administrative agency;
(iii) how will the financial support be secured;
(iv) what will be the position regarding acquisition, that is how to discover what is available and to secure it;
(v) the supply of trained staff, both administrative and librarian;
(vi) relations with other libraries.

It may well be claimed in the light of buildings such as the new Bodleian Library (1935-39) and the new University of Birmingham Library (1958-60) that the problem of building presents no difficulty other than those of finance and of deciding the policy of service within the library.

The number of great reference libraries is ultimately determined by the concentration of population, but should not be entirely influenced by that factor. If, however, this limiting clause is to be observed, then the allied problems (ii) and (iii)
above arise. At present, all the great public reference libraries are in large centres of population, presumably because only in those conditions is there anything like adequate financial provision. How adequate in fact may be judged from the annual reports of these authorities. It is no secret that the burden to Birmingham of supporting a Reference Library of upwards of 650,000 books is such that it is doubtful if the liberal acquisition and conservation policies of previous years can be continued unmodified. A logical solution would be regional or national support for this kind of service, thus enabling similar libraries to be planned for less populous areas. Even if such a revolution were to occur, libraries such as these cannot be called into existence merely by providing finance. The essential value of the large library is in the systematic accumulation of material over a long period of time, and it cannot be too strongly stated that while a serious reader can and will survive the frustrations of inefficient organization, nothing can repair for him the damage caused by changed policies of acquisition and preservation. A library is built up gradually and perhaps almost imperceptibly over a long period of time by persons knowledgeable in the art of book selection: their work can be brought to naught in a day by ill-informed changes of policy or ignorant discarding.

Is it too late to build up new large reference libraries? Probably not, providing that their limitations are remembered and providing that the new micro-reproduction and other non-conventional processes are used to supply the otherwise unobtainable standard sets of periodicals and basic books. Such libraries will, however, need new attitudes from staff and reader alike, and it is here that great difficulty will arise. It should be stressed in this context that, as the great reference library will almost necessarily be organized in subject literature divisions, the senior staff will be subject specialists first and librarians, in the conventional public library sense, after. The much publicized division of professional and non-professional duties (compare the Bodleian as planned by Nicholson, and the British Museum) will thus be relevant here,
if nowhere else in public libraries. It is usual practice in the universities. A pertinent comment is that not only will such personnel have to be attracted into the profession by appropriate salaries, but also, and this is important, by a change of attitude from the conventional local government staff policy. If libraries are to appeal to the more highly trained personnel, there must be a much more flexible attitude towards promotion by merit and towards recruits of more than school leaving age.

Lastly, to consider the relations of these libraries with other libraries. An essential part of the value of the great library is that its collections are catalogued and are known to scholars in other areas or countries—not only in their own catalogue but in cooperative bibliographical projects such as BUCOP, the World List of Scientific Periodicals, STC. But this is only a beginning. A reference library should never allow its material to leave the premises: the fundamental policy, that of having available to all comers, on the spot at all times, the maximum sources of knowledge, must never be obscured: but every means modern science has made available, such as Telex, photostat, xerography, should be at the service of other libraries to supplement their resources, without weakening the large system.

It would be unnecessary to establish large reservoirs of knowledge (for such are these great reference libraries) in more than a few towns, although these should be selected (were such a new start possible) with a view to the maximum convenience of readers. No more need be urged than a comparison of the availability of such libraries in the Midlands and North of this country and the dearth in the southern and western areas; for little can be done under the present administrative system. An interesting experiment whose progress will be followed by all librarians is that of the National Lending Library for Science and Technology. It is too early as yet to judge what its impact will be on library policies, but the idea is undoubtedly fruitful even although librarians will regret that the opportunity was not taken to work through the existing public service.

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THE REFERENCE LIBRARY

If the great libraries are to be few in number, what can or should be expected from the medium and small units of service? Here, a definition of reference library work becomes imperative. Clearly, with less financial and consequently fewer bibliographical resources, the service given by the medium and smaller unit must be different. The burden of maintaining great collections is impossible, yet it is essential that accurate knowledge be provided by competent staff. From this, it follows that no attempt can be made at exhaustive covering of all knowledge, nor can the policy of preservation of all material be implemented, save in the most limited subject field, such as the local collection. Rather it is better to aim at what is generally regarded as an "information service", that is, the provision of answers to enquiries not needing prolonged search into a great variety of sources. A service such as this is valuable, and needs great care in planning and execution, if it is to be done well. The essential element is, however, a firm definition of scope and a clear realization of the financial aspects. It should always be in mind that hardly any "reference" book is so accurate or inclusive that it is independent of other apparently similar works.

A word may be allowed for the "quick reference" service: the provision of directories, annuals, guides, and so on, for the use of the casual enquirer. This service is again a valuable contribution to the community, but should not be confused with the reference library ideal. It is, however, only too frequently entered upon with no clear realization of the ultimate level at which current expenditure will run. This "quick reference" service must be up to date, accurate and well administered. No such service is or can be cheap.

The organization of a reference service will be conditioned by most of the factors mentioned above, and, it is regrettable to admit, by the almost universally obsolete buildings in which British and many other libraries function. What are the common principles?
(i) the policy to be followed by the library: seldom in fact defined, but conditioned by the nature of the authority, its historical background, neighbouring libraries, special local interests;

(ii) an adequate and regular allocation of funds calculated in relation to the defined policy;

(iii) the provision of a trained and competent service staff;

(iv) the provision of an effective building to allow sufficient space for readers, for storage of books and for open access works;

(v) according to the size of the unit, the establishment of subject departments and reading rooms with specially qualified staff;

(vi) an effective catalogue;

(vii) competent routine for requisition and obtaining books and for their safeguarding;

(viii) aids to reader, such as document copying, micro-readers;

(ix) above all, a staff well-qualified to organize the acquisition of material for the library.

Any librarian who has served in a competent reference library will be uneasy at the vast variety of knowledge available to readers or required by them, and by the extremely fortuitous preservation or organization of the records of that knowledge. There are admirable examples where individual enthusiasts have embarked on ambitious policies of acquisition, organization and preservation, but these have too often suffered from lack of continuity, lack of support and, above all, from lack of integration into a mutually supporting system of libraries. It seems unlikely that any old country with an established library system will be able to achieve a planned, effective service (attempts at this were made in Great Britain by persuasion, such as by the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust and by the 1919 Act, and in the United States, with the powers for combination and regrouping of authorities under various State laws, but none seem to have made any great mark on the general scene), and necessarily, one
must seek what amounts to patch-work improvement. Faced, then, with a fundamentally illogical assortment of libraries of all sizes, often poorly located, it seems that intercommunication is an additional major problem, ranking equal in importance with area or regional schemes for co-operative book acquisition policy, and co-operative bibliographical storage centres. Communication is in itself complex; ranging from the single questions to be answered by telephone immediately to the transfer of large or specialized material over great distances. The enquiry that may be answered briefly may be handled by telephone or Telex (the tape machine service analogous to that in newspaper offices) but sooner or later the physical transfer of material must be considered. Libraries do not now send their property through the post so readily as was formerly the case; it is too costly, the book is out of service too long; the damage may be great. Rather they will supply photo-copies, using one of the many documentary-reproduction processes now available, thus increasing the service given by any volume. Note particularly here the service rendered by the Science Library, South Kensington, and the careful costing that lies behind that efficient scheme; but also note the revealing fact that photo-copying services are only slowly coming into use in the larger British public libraries, although commonplace in academic libraries.

All reference libraries should include among their facilities some method of reproducing documents, whether manuscripts or printed books. Not only should photography be used to safeguard valuable or unique items, but readers should be enabled to purchase at an economic price copies of such matter as they need. Modern methods of reproduction, which form a special branch of study for the librarian, vary greatly in expense, in the performance of the machine and in the durability of the reproduction; but it is unnecessary for the average library to be deterred on the grounds of the initial cost of the equipment. Of the many machines on the market, mention may be made of the Contoura, an inexpensive portable “camera” utilizing the contact process
and permitting use in daylight. It is manufactured in various sizes.

A popular modern development has been the use of the diazo principle of reproduction, and here again many commercial applications exist. We may cite the well-known Azoflex. The chief advantage of this method is the relative cheapness of the reproduction and the ease of handling the process. Yet more recently, xerography has been made a commercial proposition, and functioning with a small self-contained piece of apparatus demanding little specialist skill, seems to have a great future.

For more ambitious work, especially in reproducing for great permanence or for ensuring frail material is not damaged in photographing, the Photostat is undoubtedly an essential piece of equipment, but reference should be made to the very large literature on this rapidly changing subject before finally making a choice of method to be adopted, or better still, actual photographic departments should be studied.

The larger libraries will also provide their users with micro-film readers; and recent developments indicate that multi-purpose readers, that is, those capable of handling other varieties of micro-reduction such as micro-print, micro-fiche and micro-card, are very desirable. New commercial experiments are continually evolving new machines for specifically library use, and the price range is by no means prohibitive. Librarians are rather reluctant to spend money in this sphere of reader service, just as in earlier years they evaded their responsibilities in the collection and preservation of periodicals.

Communication is so far only considered as involving transfer of books and other material, but the reader is still expected to travel to the library. Hence the fundamental importance of public confidence that in strategically placed localities there will be guaranteed sources of knowledge adequately organized and easily available to all.

Closely inter-related with this problem is that of forming, housing and maintaining these desirable collections in whatever locality is chosen and making them suitably available. Here the
only foreseeable practical policy is to attempt co-operative acquisition and preservation policies in conjunction with regionally supported bibliographical storage centres. Much American experience (MidWest Inter-Library Center, Chicago; New Hampshire Deposit) is available as to the practical value of these schemes, but in Great Britain the tendency has been rather towards working within the national co-operation scheme (NCL and Regional Bureaux) supplemented by location lists (e.g. Library Resources of N.W., Midlands), co-operative bibliographic projects (BUCOP, STC) and to some extent planned acquisition, as between local public and university libraries. The only large scale co-operative storage schemes to date are for London (Metropolitan Borough Scheme for Fiction) and the various Subject Specialization schemes that complement the Regional Bureaux. These schemes are discussed elsewhere, but their empirical nature imposes clear limits, and none can completely replace the bibliographical storage library if it is adequately planned and financed. The cost/service ratio should ultimately reveal the fundamental wasteful nature of most of these empirical schemes and demonstrate the need for a bolder course of action than it appears existing authorities can envisage. It may well be that a careful consideration of the costs of administering large collections of books in obsolete buildings centrally sited in great towns would lead authorities to lend financial support to co-operative schemes with a view to achieving a more effective overall service at certainly no greater cost. The analogy of co-operatively supported research association libraries is a useful one and should be investigated. What must be avoided is the conviction that the fundamental reference service that is to be expected in a literate country can be the responsibility of any single local authority.

Two of the fundamental principles mentioned above (nos. vi, vii) need somewhat further amplification in so far as they make immediate impact on the users of the library and directly affect the staff. Once the idea has been accepted that reference library
staff should be of positive assistance to those requiring help, it appears logical that there should be plentiful provision, as in the Reading Room of the British Museum, of standard works, bibliographies, serials, on shelves freely accessible to the public, thus allowing the maximum of benefit from the reader who can help himself and therefore freeing staff to help those in need. There should be catalogues easy to consult, clearly and unambiguously compiled, directed to revealing the resources of the library to the full, and, if necessary, there should be an enquiries assistant stationed close at hand.

A perennial difficulty arises in this provision of open access reference works, for much material is unsuitable for such display, and all is valuable. Control over readers must be exerted—ingenious routines are available for this purpose, but it should be remembered that many university libraries are now granting to approved persons access to their stack rooms, and that a liberal policy of freedom among books is less likely to produce abuse than attempts to produce complete security. In this connection, it may be considered that the relatively small reading rooms of the subject departments are more easy of control. Another fruitful concept, certainly applicable in larger libraries, is the differentiation of types of use, e.g. quick reference enquiries, work requiring some few standard volumes, work requiring prolonged search, and the consequent allocation of space in the reading rooms in that order, starting from the entrance. Grouping of open access material, the catalogues and bibliographic apparatus and the staff service point well away from the "quiet areas", wherein the more specialized workers operate will diminish traffic and all the distractions of a busy library.

A final plea may be put forward for adequate space! No serious worker can be effective if crowded by adjacent readers or jostled by persons using the narrow gangways: it can easily be demonstrated that an overall minimum of twenty square feet is desirable per reader, and this is surely not extravagant, if serious work is to be encouraged.
CHAPTER SIX

The Subject Department Library

A SUBJECT department library is usually considered to be a series of special reading rooms closely collocated with the general reference library, within which are grouped books on deliberately chosen topics, such as Fine Arts, Technology, Languages, with the express purpose of carrying the book provision in these subject groups to a much greater degree of specialization than is possible in a library covering all knowledge. The material will by definition appeal not only to general, but also to more specialized readers, and will therefore not be limited by language or form, and must be organized by a staff chosen primarily for subject knowledge and ability to comprehend the mental attitudes and requirements of those specialist readers. The constitution of these departments need not be confined to the reference service. Indeed, some of the outstanding American examples show a fusion of lending and reference stock and a general emphasis on freedom of circulation by the reader between the departments in a building which has a minimum of internal walls or divisions. These departmental libraries are a recognized feature of university libraries and have long been known in some of the larger American Public Libraries, e.g. Enoch Pratt Library, Baltimore, but it was not until after the first World War that the tendency became at all widespread in this country and, although as early as the Select Committee of 1849 the idea of Commercial Libraries was considered, little or nothing is to be recorded* until after 1919 the Post-War Reconstruction Committees recommended public librarians actively to consider the establishment of these and also of Technical Libraries.

* But compare the Mitchell Library, Glasgow; the Guildhall Library, London; and also special collections at Liverpool in the late 1850's.
Clearly the mere segregation of the books in the relevant classification schedules in response to local interests, e.g. technology, is not establishing a specialist department. The matter is much more fundamental than rearrangement of existing materials and the redeployment of staff, and it is unfortunate that too often library authorities seem to have considered that these new activities could thus be maintained and to have failed to anticipate the expanded activities that the newer librarianship will assure. Perhaps to this failure and to the valuable efforts of the DSIR in publicizing the importance of technical information to industry and commerce may be attributed the phenomenal growth of industrial and “special” libraries. It is a vexed problem, and is largely related to the degree of subject specialization required—possibly the “Technical Department” of a public library can only be to the “special” industrial library what the general reference library is to the national library unless the policy is carried to a logical conclusion by replanning the whole library system.

The problems that should have been considered were (i) provision of books and allied material of use to more specialized users than that of the general library, (ii) the need to acquire foreign material, (iii) the especial difficulties posed by serials and their use, (iv) the training of staff in subject bibliography, languages and the needs of industry or commerce, (v) the provision of adequate buildings and furniture, (vi) the provision of an effective photographic or similar reproduction unit, (vii) the due organization of these departments into the library system with the allied problems of staff isolation caused by specialist training, (viii) the impact on users of the arrangement together with a thorough examination of the possible arrangement.

A careful analysis of these problems is to be found in McDiarmid, *The Administration of the American Public Library*, which, being based on practice more widely obtaining in America than elsewhere, is worthy of detailed study. Briefly summarized, it seems that American experience shows that:
(1) readers are better served by subject co-ordination of books, whether for lending or reference;
(2) it is desirable to diminish the division between these conventional methods of library service;
(3) the staff become better qualified to serve the reader;
(4) public interest and support are more easily obtained by focusing of community interests in these subject libraries;

but, on the other hand,

(1) it is expensive in staff and stock (this, however, is questioned by many librarians, and may be more related to the problem of obsolete buildings);
(2) separation of materials rather than their collection together (due to the differences between classification and the organization of knowledge by the reader);
(3) shortage of suitable staff and, if available, their isolation from the other staff;
(4) difficulties of maintaining balance between the subject departments.

A further difficulty, and perhaps the least soluble, will be the problem of staffing specialist libraries for long hours.

From the analysis, it emerges that fruitful results follow a re-examination of the previous organization of library departments, and that any librarian having the opportunity of planning a new library building would be well advised to think along these lines.

There should have been no difficulty in assessing the cost of the books, and it seems that the deficiency was rather of vision and faith in an expanding service. After all, the rate limitation had not long been removed and the modernization of public libraries stock had yet to occur, but it is still unfortunately true that few librarians have adequately pre-costed the supply of technical books, periodicals and other necessary materials or envisaged the ultimate complexity of the problem. The repercussions on staff recruitment and deployment have been
discussed previously, although it should again be stressed how essential it is that department staffs should have language qualifications and good subject bibliographical training.

So, too, is it necessary to perceive that conventional general reference library methods and equipment are not entirely suitable. Now that industrial information sections have become well established, it is fairly easy to see that the public library tradition may result in an over-great reliance on books, an over-passive attitude towards reader-service and, most of all, a lack of vigour in the accurate and swift provision of correct material. Much of this derives from lack of qualified staff; still more from insufficient resources of material. Quite certainly a great deal could be accomplished by an appreciation of the fundamental value of serials, English and foreign, of the necessity of maintaining files of back numbers as well as of subscribing to relevant co-operative indexes, bibliographies and location lists. One immediate effect of the National Lending Library for Science and Technology has been to direct attention towards the poverty of provision of relevant serials in public libraries and of their emphasis on English language material [v. L.A.R., Feb. 1960]. It is an outstanding weakness of public librarianship in this country that no solution has been found to these problems of coverage of titles, least of all storage, though many practicable schemes are in operation elsewhere.* The greater the subject specialization, the greater will be the need for serials and journals of all types, plus the means of sharing scarce sets with other libraries. Here, the importance of micro-reduction, photo-copying and other modern methods such as xerography must be considered. In view of the high costs of maintaining sets of serials, every effort must be made to economize on binding and storage. Already, certain commercial firms have issued substantial lists of available titles, and these lists are continually enlarged. It is for the libraries to

* Such as the MidWest Inter-Library Book Center, Chicago. The recommendations of the Kenyon Report (Cmd. 2868) 1927 in this connection are valuable, but have been disregarded.
enforce a policy whereby these micro-reductions are supplied rather than the cumbersome bound volumes, especially as the latest models of "readers" for micro-card, micro-film or micro-fiche are comparatively cheap and certainly easy to handle. The economy in costs, floor and shelf space is so great that it is inconceivable that new libraries will fail to use these devices and to encourage their users to do likewise. It may be necessary to include instruction in this technique in the general staff training.

Communication with outside bodies by means of the Telex system may be considered axiomatic in the large modern library.

The librarian, however, must, within the limits of his building, organize all this; plan the arrangement of the furniture, locate the books, the catalogue, the service desk; and relate the whole to the general library. Mere installation of mechanical gadgets does not automatically increase efficiency, and no library is more efficient than the staff will make it.

Many important problems arising from the subject arrangement of a library will duly become urgent if and when a new building is contemplated, problems such as the relative location of departments, general stack, administration sections, catalogues; but as most libraries will continue to function in elderly buildings despite such a reorganization, it should be recognized that, failing a well-planned building, separate subject departments will most probably involve a continued separation of the home reading library, considerable duplication of book stock, a reappraisal of the catalogue system, and the installation of an effective inter-communication system.* Few librarians perhaps fully appreciate the urgent need for effective cataloguing rules and classification schemes in the specialist departments, or the immense waste of time caused by adherence to the present rules and schemes. Equally, it may be urged that insufficient emphasis is placed on the presentation of catalogues, their compilation (subject headings are too often sadly obsolete) and of the great

* The value of book lifts and of correct location of book acquisition sections is clearly great in saving staff time and energy.
mass of complementary material needing only alphabetical arrangement or close classification rather than permanent recording.

Some further more basic elements in the subject departments are appreciation of the need for specialized furniture to organize the non-book material. This will include filing cabinets—lateral and vertical, using suspension systems; map cabinets; plan files; visible indexes; pamphlet boxes; storage for micro-reductions of all kinds. A valuable pamphlet on this topic is Collison: Modern Storage Equipment and Methods for Special Materials in Libraries (1955), to which reference should be made, as also to the numerous publications of office equipment firms.

Provision should also be made in such a department for the very considerable correspondence that will arise, not only with or on behalf of actual users of the library, but in pursuit of items of information—material not within the usual book trade and therefore not noticed by the book acquisition section, but often of far greater importance. Such items involve application by letter; correspondence must be filed, small payments made, and perhaps exchange made of duplicate material. This is most germane to the actual department, and there seems no reason why such matters should not be dealt with accordingly.

Another problem to be faced is the preparation for use of this non-book material. Paper covers need strengthening, typescripts must have their outer leaves safeguarded; spiral binders and others of that monstrous breed must be strengthened to withstand use and so stored as not to imperil their more normal neighbours. This work may be referred to the library bindery if one is available, if not, the staff should learn the simple but effective method of sewing pamphlets into manilla covers and also the elementary repairs needed for the other material.
CHAPTER SEVEN

The Local Collection

FROM the smallest to the greatest, almost every public library in the United Kingdom and very many elsewhere have by long established practice attempted to form collections of source material relating to the history and development of their locality. Many of these collections, formed despite scanty means and accommodation have proved invaluable to historians and sociologists as having preserved and organized much that would otherwise undoubtedly have perished; and, though more modern methods of scholarship frequently make the activities of the early librarian-collectors seem amateur and lacking in specialized skills (e.g. for the handling and preservation of manuscript archives), it must always be remembered that the public library was for many years the only local agency that could guarantee this valuable material any continuity of existence. Libraries had long been associated with the provision of museums and art galleries, and it seemed then as now only logical that the written records of the district should find their way to the library. It is difficult to justify the collocation of libraries with art galleries and museums, not only by reason of finance, but also of the special skills now expected in each of these cultural activities; and, indeed, there has been so general a tendency towards separation of functions that it comes as a great surprise to find attempts in certain smaller authorities to continue to provide the whole gamut. Admittedly, the loan collections of works of art now available from the national and other collections can bring both higher standards and greater interest into the dullest of local museums and art galleries, and further, away from the large cities, the library is perhaps the only agent for such a cultural
activity. It is regrettable, nevertheless, that under present conditions, accommodation and staff energies, not to mention finance, should be dissipated in attempting to form individual collections. When the national collections are unable to keep pace with modern requirements in display, organization and acquisition, small local authorities are not likely to be able to do much to benefit their ratepayers. That interest in local history and customs should be encouraged by the preservation of relics of the past is desirable enough; it is equally clear that casual acquisition from local antiquarians, plus miscellaneous items from the travels of local magnates do not fulfil this function. Much more is needed, and the librarian is seldom qualified to supply the skill, even if he has the time.

The legitimate activity of the librarian is with the collection and preservation of the written or the printed records in the widest sense. He will seek all locally printed books, as well as those printed elsewhere but having a bearing on the locality. There will be locally interesting newspapers, magazines, programmes of functions, notices of sales, possibly locally composed music, all to be gathered together. Few, if any, of these items are likely to be recorded in the great bibliographies, a surprisingly large number escaping the British National Bibliography, and the local librarian is, by virtue of his close integration with community activities, well placed for knowing when or where publication may occur, as well as for obtaining, through his personal contacts, much that is not formally published. Much of this material, it may also be noted, may be obtained freely. A well-established collection automatically attracts increasing numbers of gifts.

In short, it is in the formation of the Local Collection that the librarian (or the Reference Librarian, or, in a very large authority, the special Local Collection Librarian) really achieves the ideal so frequently written about—genuine participation in the life and activities of his community. He will, furthermore, be increasingly recognized as something of an expert on these
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matters, and will be in great demand as a speaker; all the more if he is able to produce films or lantern slides showing local developments and changes. Hardly any "extension" activity or publicity on behalf of the library service is so valuable as a series of illustrated lectures on local history. They are an obvious by-product of the collection and organization of the material and need no other justification. Viewed as a direct service, the full exploitation of the Local Collection ranks second to none. If considered as a specialized section, the Local Collection needs certain thought, in so far as the materials need appropriate housing and conservation, and there should be a suitable place to which readers may go to work. The housing of the material need cause little difficulty unless ancient written records are to be collected. If this is so, and the authority has not provided a separate organization for local archives, the library should take steps to provide properly fitted and constructed storage rooms where, in conditions as near perfect for indefinite preservation as air conditioning, temperature/humidity control and sterilization against bacteria can ensure, the fragile records of the past can be stored, organized and used.

Archive organization and maintenance is a very specialized activity, demanding skills that few librarians in the local public service actually possess; and not all authorities have the means to appoint trained staff for the purpose. Indeed, the special archive departments of the county councils have created something of a dilemma in so far as many public libraries, having collected local records and legal documents for many years, are now faced with the suggestion that all such material should be handed over to the central depository for better conservation and in the interests of scholars. Local patriotism apart, it is clear that unless the locality is able to offer good storage conditions, provide adequate staff for the necessary work, and afford visiting scholars all the ancillary material and assistance they need, the work had better be handed to the larger authority. It would be idle to deny that many libraries, among them some of our best known, have not been
able to store their ancient documents at all adequately, and the active provision of trained staff is still confined to a very few of the largest authorities. In such circumstances, it is difficult to see how there can be any question of retaining highly specialized and delicate material in the public library. Had the English municipal public library movement developed similarly to that in France, where the town library is frequently the deposit of illuminated manuscripts, incunabula and other book rarities, often from monastic foundations, both staff and service would be so different that the conflict could hardly arise. As it is, the English public librarian has not been required to possess or, too often, not encouraged to obtain, the academic training necessary for the more traditional conservation work of the older librarians. The situation may indeed change; at the present, to claim that more than a few libraries can adequately handle archive material is unrealistic.

As a problem in organization, the Local Collection is so clearly related to the Reference Library that it will most often be regarded as little more than a special responsibility of the Reference Librarian. The material is used as "reference material", the accommodation for readers will be in the reference library and such ancillary bibliographic aids as the library possesses will be near at hand. Even in the largest of systems, these arguments hold good, although the responsibilities of a really large collection will involve the appointment of at least one full-time qualified assistant in charge, with a specially qualified archivist to handle manuscript items.

All local collections should be fully catalogued and the catalogues supplemented by indexes of local names and places, also, if practicable, of the local newspaper. This last is indeed a gigantic task, but is of incalculable value in saving staff time and preserving the actual copy from unnecessary handling. Local interest may be sufficient to finance a micro-film copy of the files, but the need for an index is perennial. Again, if practicable, the full catalogue of the Local Collection should be printed, not only as a
valuable reference book within the library, but as a contribution to national bibliographic control. In this connection, examples such as the printed catalogue of the Birmingham Local Collection should be carefully considered. This detailed cataloguing, as also the calendaring of deeds, etc., should be given a definite place in the library organization; if size warrants, the reference library staff assigned to the care of the Local Collection can undertake the work. Otherwise, it seems that special instructions must be issued to the general catalogue staff to work with the correct amount of detail.

Classification of the Local Collection presents a particularly difficult problem to the librarian in so far as the subject of the material is perhaps the most specific of any in the library and mere subject classing, as in the general library, fails to reveal much of the significance of the books as required by readers. Thus, there is an immediate conflict between geographical area and subject content, and thereafter the difficulties offered by complex combinations or regional groupings of places. No general classification has been found adequate for this department (one may note the difficulties encountered in other subject departments), and it is usual for librarians to construct their own scheme, based either on the geographical districts (with reference to the Ordnance Survey maps as a standard) plus subject division according to the main classification, or a direct subject scheme derived from the actual holdings of the collection.

This specialized type of classification and cataloguing necessarily raises the problem, particularly in a large reference library, of the ultimate effect of a dual organization, and if specialist sections other than the Local Collection are to be established, will they too need their own style of classification and cataloguing—if so, what are the effects on costs in staffing and on the reader service? Few librarians could contemplate applying the elaborate work required in the special collections to the general catalogue of the library, though it might well be beneficial to service if it were possible, and it appears that some definition needs to be
established between those categories needing full bibliographical description or detailed catalogue entries and those for which some less formal indexing is more appropriate. A careful assessment also is desirable of the value of specific classification plus name indexes of pamphlet or similar slender material suitably kept in vertical suspension filing cabinets.

It is important that these problems should be seen in a just perspective, that is against the context of the size of the collections involved. Few public library systems in the United Kingdom are large enough to establish specialized sections of sufficient magnitude for centrifugal forces to become very apparent, but if such sections do develop in the future, it is to be hoped that the valuable contributions they will make to the total service will not be inhibited by either the organizational problems or by the extra cost in staff and accommodation. That a federation of libraries can flourish under unified control has been demonstrated by university libraries wherein the needs of highly specialized readers is more obvious than in the present public library. A somewhat fresh approach is necessary, and the main element will undoubtedly be the recognition of the correct value of trained qualified staff.
CHAPTER EIGHT

Work with Children

CONSIDERATION of subject department organization would not be complete without mention of the special service given by many British libraries to special classes of readers, regardless of their "subject" interests; in other words, the removal from the "general" library to a special department of readers with special needs. Of these, the chief is the Children's Library, so admirably pioneered in Great Britain at Croydon* under W. C. Berwick Sayers so long ago as 1917.

The underlying concepts are that the foundations of all reading habits are laid in childhood; that most children wish to read; but that special care is needed to ensure that appropriate books are available in conditions wherein children (basically more lively and more easily deterred by regulations than adults) may find and use books and be helped in the ways of libraries by staff competent to understand the psychology of the young and adolescent reader. Several elements emerge from this; the need for a separate room or rooms; the need for full-time staff; the need for intelligence in book acquisitions. It has been for this youth service that much valuable work has been accomplished in adaptation of old buildings (magazine or newsrooms in particular are apt to be so converted) and a great stimulus given to the replanning and redecoration of the older library. Work with children at its best demands a flexibility of approach to routine; a willingness to rise above passive acceptance of instructions in order to meet the unexpected problems, whether of discipline in the library or of relations with outside bodies such as schools; and a pleasant, strong personality. It is not, and never

* Earlier attempts, as at Cardiff and Nottingham, are not considered, as the real contribution by Sayers was the insistence on separate staff and accommodation.
should be considered capable of performance by part-time "relief" staff. In no section of the library is it more necessary to have staff convinced of the value of their work and imbued with enthusiasm in what are sometimes discouraging circumstances. Children are utterly ruthless in their judgement of shams, whether personal or material, and, unless the authority can afford to do well, and give the utmost support to the library, a separate children's section should not be attempted. Better no service at all than (as has been seen) an unwanted corner in a busy lending library with not even shelving of a height suitable to young people, and with no staff who can be approached by a shy enquirer.

From the point of view of organization, the larger library must consider this children's service as one parallel with the general structure of the lending libraries and, in a sufficiently large system where many branches each have their own "Children's Librarian", a central co-ordinating Librarian for Work with Children will control these activities. This control will be carefully defined, or the Branch Librarian will have weakened authority, and confusion may result, but it seems certain that matters affecting book acquisition, recording, classifying and cataloguing can well be in this sphere, as also "extension work", that is, relations with local schools, the promotion of activities to interest children in their library, and perhaps more ambitious schemes for play-reading circles or lecture programmes. If the co-ordinating librarian is adequate, consultation with her equals—the heads of the service points—will obviate difficulties, but it must be faced that, as with other specialist activities, enthusiasm may develop into a lack of balance, which, in conjunction with a strong personality, may need higher authority, such as that of the Chief Librarian, to correct.

Just as branch libraries have an estimate for book expenditure, so should the Children's Department, and the choice of books must be delegated to the specialist, who will be in turn answerable to the Chief Librarian. Owing to the comparatively small
size of most British library systems, it is unnecessary always to envisage an elaborate organization parallel to that in the general library, and it follows, the management of staff and the service are not, in practice, very complicated. Nevertheless, the caution above as to the need for special staff and separate accommodation is valid. Responsibility for this kind of work entails training and recognition of its value must follow. A valid service has no need to inflate the justifications of its existence, and the well-run children's library is always a demonstrable success. Within the library, experience shows that much of what is now admitted as desirable in "adult" lending libraries found its worth proved with the children—low shelving, bright decoration, tables and chairs to help reading in the library, emphasis on displays of books, casing of the rigours of classification and cataloguing—the list could be extended,* and can really be summarized as a picture of the development of public lending libraries since 1920. Some idea of the work involved in this department emerges from this listing, as also of the staff qualifications involved, and it is easily deduced that the emphasis is on positive and personal work to attract readers, to interest them and to retain that interest. It has not always been easy to fit this attitude into the outworn routine-bound structures of libraries, and, consequently, the number of good children's libraries is depressingly few. Nor does it seem likely that the situation will change in so far as present-day staff are unwilling to train or to specialize for work among children. It would be a grave reproach to British librarianship if the excellent pioneer work were not to be carried on by a new generation, and the service as a whole would undoubtedly be the poorer.

In those libraries which do organize sound children's departments, it is usual also to find an element of positive instruction in the use of books and libraries, either by means of co-operation with visiting school classes or by actual exposition to groups of

* The debt of the library profession to Jast, Savage and Sayers in respect of these developments is not adequately recognized.
children of the mysteries of finding books and of how to find answers to questions. This is potentially of inestimable value for the future, as only at this stage is formal instruction in library techniques possible; and librarians who have worked in systems where such instruction has been practised over many years will willingly pay tribute to the lasting benefits derived by readers from their early days in the children’s library.

A more recent, though hardly novel, development, is the establishment of model libraries of the “best” books for children, to which parents and teachers may come to help them in their choice of books, either for later borrowing or purchase for the school library. This is parallel to the concept at Croydon of always aiming to display in the library a sound, clean, well-produced copy of every recognized child’s classic. Both methods are admirable in potential influence and have had due recognition from publishers.

To further work with teachers more effectively, some libraries* carry participation with schools to considerable lengths; inviting classes of children to work in the library under their teacher’s supervision; to organize the books bought by the Education Authority for the school library; to make block loans to supplement the meagre stock in the school. This service frequently is given financial recognition by the Education Authority, or it may go still further and request the Libraries Committee actually to organize the school library. Such co-operation is implicit in counties where the Education Committee is virtually the Libraries Committee, but varies widely in the towns, often depending on personalities. No worthwhile work with children can be done without the support of the Education Authority and many benefits will accrue from full co-operation.

Despite the admitted value of library work with young people, a survey reveals pathetically few authorities willing to give prac-

* Dudley Public Library, for instance, organise a Teachers’ Forum: a group of school teachers and others meeting at quarterly intervals to hear a talk by a qualified person in some aspect of Books for Children and to discuss issues of mutual interest.
tical expression to the ideal, and none has apparently considered that, as, statistically, in many areas adults are in a minority, it would be a reasonable policy to experiment with special branch libraries for youngsters only. Perhaps working in conjunction with the Youth Service and, if practicable, other organizations catering for more specialized interests, a Youth Branch Library could go far to supply a positive centre for the energies and enthusiasms now so sadly running to waste.

This suggestion would appear to be directly contrary to the experience of librarians who have had to tolerate accommodation shared with other public services, and to hark back to the now disapproved Carnegie policy of grouping social services together in appropriate buildings. The analogy is, however, not quite valid in so far as the suggested Youth Library would be dealing with the varied interests of a definite group of people bound together by age rather than the varied interests of particular community groups of much greater disparity in age and experience. It may be observed that already many clubs do attempt, in a very indifferent way, to recognize the need for “quiet rooms”, “reading rooms”, and that, where adequately provided, these have met with success. The limiting factors have always been the pitiful accommodation, lack of finance and, ultimately, the discouraging attitude of those in authority, who fail to realize that voluntary workers lose enthusiasm if perennially thwarted by outmoded restrictions or the usual barrier of non-comprehension. An opportunity offers itself for librarians to take the initiative in an activity full of human values and perhaps of greater importance than the rather ineffective services they attempt to render to industry and science. Will it be seen and acted upon?
CHAPTER NINE

The Lending Library

To a great many, perhaps the majority, of library users, it is the lending or home-reading department with which they are concerned. This is the department which necessarily makes the greatest impact on the community in so far as through it books are spread far beyond the walls of the library and influence many readers other than the original borrowers. Yet no department is more controversial, largely due to the original and continuing lack of definition of the library function.*

As was seen when considering the Reference Library, there has been in the past fifty years, among other things, a gradual development involving increased staff responsibility to the reader, bringing with it a reassessment of the whole concept of libraries and librarianship. Indeed, it may well be claimed that reference libraries have, where local conditions allowed, shown a surprising vitality and adaptability to the protean needs of the community. This would seem much less obvious in the Lending Department. There is little reason to suppose that facilities essential in a bygone age, when working hours were long and education scanty, are bound to continue in demand, at least to the same degree. The home-reading library of the later nineteenth century, with its printed catalogue, was an educational institution, and harmonized with the movement for the improvement of the artisan class. The same claim could be made for the reformed, that is, the open access subject-classified libraries of the early twentieth century. But times change, and in the 1920’s a great access of funds rescued the public libraries of the United Kingdom from their previous poverty and a new, more liberal

* Compare, however, the Memorandum of the International Congress of Libraries and Documentation Centres, Brussels, 1955.
attitude began to prevail among authorities, leading them to provide better funds in return for proved use, that is, larger circulation figures.

Librarians were quick to see that this entailed making libraries more popular in appeal—the stock must be newer, more copies of popular books, fewer older books displayed. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that such developments as have occurred in Lending Libraries since 1930 have been (i) directed at cutting costs to acquire more books, (ii) cutting routine processes to cope with greater volume of work, and (iii) attempts at attracting more readers into the library.

Each of these is in itself good, and great credit is due to librarians who organize what must surely be the cheapest and most efficient of the public services, but the question remains to be answered—to what end is all this effort directed, and is the work done worthy of the financial expenditure or staff labour? What, in other words, do the Lending Libraries stand for and is it valid, knowing that the total amount spent on libraries is comparatively small, and that other activities may well be of greater importance to the community.

The justification for a library from which books may be borrowed is clear enough—the needs of the individual reader; for instance, a very thinly peopled rural area served by a mobile library or part-time village centre, can only be satisfied by lending books to read at home. The crux of the problem is rather in the nature of the books supplied. Or, to offer another form of words, the policy behind the book selection. To-day, few libraries worthy of the name are so poorly financed that they cannot give a reasonably representative stock of good quality books, omitting of course the very expensive and specialized items. But it is quite clear from annual reports of libraries that by no means all librarians spend their book fund according to a similar policy; the average cost per book varies surprisingly, as does the percentage of income spent on books, the number of issues per book per annum and the number of books read by each
reader. Inspection of the shelves confirms that many libraries seek to be popular, and would claim that such is their true function, to supply the recreative reading of the people with, however, the prudent reservation that many really popular books are not thought proper for the library shelves!

It is further claimed that by attracting people to the library—readers of any kind of book—the habit of reading will be formed and they will progress from the trashiest that is to be found to better things by gradual steps. This is wishful thinking and is not borne out in actual experience. Readers who cease to find an adequate supply of their favourite style of book seldom or never try another style, unless they happen already to be reasonably “library conscious”. The person who comes into the public library as a substitute for a subscription library is doomed to disappointment, and the librarian who aims at retaining a loyal following among such people will surely fritter away his book fund on readers who will desert his library just so soon as they fail to find the latest new book just when they require it. It is unlikely that such attitudes will commend themselves to the serious librarian who believes that he has a definite and positive function in the community. Without wishing to suggest that libraries are purely educational agencies, it does seem clear enough that if there is a profession of librarianship and if there is a place for trained staff, the lending of ephemeral literature can be no more than a minor part of the Public Library service. It is a service that many appreciate, and its withdrawal would be a grave hardship to many thousands of people, but let us have no illusions as to the essentially wasteful, luxury nature of the recreational service, and count carefully the cost in terms of what could otherwise be done.

The basic problems confronting the Lending Library may be considered as (i) definition of the service to be offered, (ii) definition of the recipients, (iii) the securing of an adequate financial basis and definition of the size of unit in the organization, (iv) the managerial (organizational) problem, (v) the efficient selection,
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supply and distribution of books, and (vi) financial and domestic management.

By tradition, the public library seeks to make available to all citizens* all literature not condemned as subversive of morals or civil order. In fact, due to financial limits, only selective supply is possible, and quite probably it is the desirable service, always supposing that there is confidence in the selectors. This will be considered under (vi). These problems (i) to (iii) have all been considered in Great Britain, the U.S.A. and such other countries as have followed the Anglo-Saxon concept of public libraries in terms of local rather than central government units; and this has given rise to the subsidiary problem of administering the rural as contrasted with the urban unit as a library area. It may briefly be said here that, over the past thirty years in the U.S.A., the whole tendency of state legislation has been to encourage fusion of small authorities in the interests of more effective service, but that, in the United Kingdom, although powers to combine authorities for library purposes have existed since 1892 and have been reinforced by the Local Government Act of 1933, Section 91, very little progress has been made.†

Indeed, conflicting tendencies are apparent in the county systems, where, so far from small urban authorities surrendering library powers to the county, as hoped for and encouraged by the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust (vide J. M. Mitchell, Report, 1923) many examples can be quoted of secession (e.g. Aldershot and Hants., Gillingham and Kent, Solihull and Warwick). This may be due to the feeling that libraries are among the last purely locally controlled services of the small authority, and that such local control is more effective, but even if this is so, financial strength must be impaired. An underlying difficulty is

* Interavailability of tickets between authorities is so widespread that it is only in exceptional cases that non-residents have to pay subscriptions and/or deposits. By a typically British voluntary process, the situation now obtains where the possession of a valid reader’s ticket ensures the use of practically any public library.
† For Joint Services see: Cardigan County and Aberystwyth; Leicester County and Rutland County; Croydon and Lambeth (Upper Norwood); Kendal and Westmoreland County.
that there is nowhere* a definition of the public lending library standard of service that would command any substantial agreement; and without such agreement, it is hard to see how existing services and standards are to be improved or even made rational as between different authorities.

The problem of a lending library service to rural areas—that is, to large thinly-populated areas—was thought to be insoluble by earlier generations, save in terms of private local philanthropy, but in Great Britain, the advent of County Council authorities (1888), the report of Prof. Adams to the Carnegie Trustees (1915) the enabling Act of 1919 and the emergence of practical forms of transport have changed the situation, and to-day the problem is rather how long the county should control any given area and how far devolution of powers shall be granted by the central authority.

Very great credit should be given to those librarians who pioneered the British rural lending library service; struggling against a grinding poverty of money and books to achieve a service which at its best is to-day unequalled, and at the same time evolving empirically the organization and methods most suited to the individual problem in hand. Perhaps, of the very greatest importance are two decisions, one, dating back to the regency of the Carnegie Trust, that municipally trained librarians and their routines were not necessarily appropriate to the county library, and second, the decision (first taken in Derby County in 1927) to devolve suitable functions to regional units within the limit of the county authority. This latter policy, which may well be the most fruitful experiment in organization yet evolved by librarians, is, to some extent, paralleled in the largest municipal authorities by the provision of large district branch libraries, often with very considerable powers of book purchase and internal self-government. The arguments usually adduced in

* That is, in the United Kingdom. The situation in the U.S.A. has been fundamentally changed by the publication by the American Library Association of the Standards for Public Library Service and by the Federal Library Services Act.
favour of the large branch establishment are that it displays permanently a correspondingly large and varied stock so that readers may always rely on finding at least something of their choice and also that the volume of work at these libraries makes it economic to employ trained librarians to a degree not thought justifiable in small branch libraries. Whether due to staff weaknesses to control a large unit or some other factor, it is often true that readers frequently report greater satisfaction in the smaller units. It appears that too often an institutional atmosphere is generated with mere size, and the home-reading library is essentially a personal service to individuals of a kind that quite fails to flourish in mass production conditions. It seems most probable that the branch library may find its most useful function in the whole service is in making the library service known in schools, factories, offices and wherever people gather—in other words, “extension activities”. An important function, not lightly to be entrusted to unskilled staff!

One of the fundamental dilemmas of the librarian, felt most when dealing with this type of reading and structure of libraries, is that a library to be worthy of the name must be a representative collection large enough to offer a good choice at any time to the intelligent reader. To supply such libraries at closely spaced intervals in any urban area is not financially possible—and the problem is how to achieve concentration of resources (including staff) without making the library service unusable to readers by its inaccessibility.

The often-quoted answer of co-operation between libraries—inter-lending on request—is not good enough. Readers want the book there and then! Reservation of books may help, but is chiefly of value to the reader who knows what he wants and wishes to ensure that he will get the book. Other devices, such as organizing stock into unit blocks, which are circulated at given intervals between the branches (compare the county service), are economic in obtaining maximum use of books of more limited appeal; the telephoned request brought next day by the
library van will help; but nothing can really be an effective substitute for the large library where the reader can be sure of finding at least one of his alternative choices for borrowing.

This immediately poses the problem of the optimum size for a satisfactory lending library, and with it, the necessity for making an attempt to suggest standards for population area, finance and perhaps staff. In 1950, the Library Association issued an important contribution to the question, a small pamphlet, "Centenary Assessment", in which were laid down certain figures and bases for calculation, which appeared and still appear valid, subject to some slight modifications. Of these, the most important elements are the calculated life of books, both fiction and non-fiction, the amount of money needed annually for replacement, the proportion of book fund to be spent on the large subject areas, the proportions appropriate to book fund, administration and staff. From these and other calculations, it is reasonable to deduce that an authority of upwards of 75,000 population can tax its inhabitants to produce a library service worthy of the name, but without undue hardship; that the Lending Library could be a representative one, but that the resources should not be scattered among branch libraries until the area of the authority made necessary a travelling distance of more than a mile between service points.

The central library of such an authority would maintain a stock well in excess of the traditional one book* per head of population, contemporary statistics suggesting two or three times that amount. This much would be within the bounds of financial possibility, and a sound service would emerge, given the right calibre staff, but it should not be overlooked that this service is limited to the general, and that little or no specialized services will be practicable. For these, the larger authorities must remain the sponsors.

* This figure, a purely arbitrary one, seems to have first been used in the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust negotiations with county authorities when computing costs. It would appear to have no valid relation to the number of books necessary to make a workable library, and may have done much harm.
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At all times, the public library system has been notable for its efforts at efficient conduct and economical management. Among local government departments it has a good reputation, and the administrative training given to library assistants proved of national value during World War II in Food Offices, Civil Defence and the armed services.* Until very recently, routine processes have had to be devised within the profession, and the variety and ingenuity displayed is amazing.†

Administration for Lending Libraries falls naturally into the processes involved in Book Acquisition and Control; Circulation Work; Financial and Domestic Management. No comprehensive detailed description of these processes would be possible; the utmost variety of local practices obtains, and although it is easy to group these variants according to their origins, new developments soon render any statement out of date. It is possible to indicate certain underlying principles and to cite some of the applications that have been tried. For further and more detailed description, reference must be made largely to accounts published in the professional press.

The Book Acquisition Processes

The fundamental principle is here a determination of the size of the authority, the actual condition and background of the library, the book fund that will be available and the number of service points for which it must make provision. A really large multi-service point system will carefully consider the economies of a central book purchasing department, and, using B.N.B., employ a copy typist to make the catalogue entries or subscribe to the B.N.B. card service. If the library is large enough or can

* Significantly enough, public opinion surveys conducted by NALGO (1937-58) have shown it also to be the most popular and best known service.
† Librarians can see with amusement the attempts by office equipment firms to publicize as new discoveries the virtues of card indexing, visible indexes, classified files, shelving and storage equipment, furniture and lighting devices. Whereas earlier librarians designed and often manufactured their own equipment (such as Cotgreave), to-day there is almost a superabundance of commercial firms seeking to interest librarians.
co-operate with its neighbours, duplicating catalogue cards by offset lithographic printing is cheap and speedy. Such a department can be staffed by persons trained in knowledge of the book trade, in the acquisition of American and foreign literature, in the second-hand or even antiquarian book market, and this skill will be at the disposal of all the library departments, enabling due balance to be preserved in acquisition and allocation of books. With careful planning, books can be obtained from the dealer early in the week, perhaps even pre-publication, departmental librarians can inspect and select on a given day, a general order co-ordinating all requests for purchase be sent to the dealer the next day, the copies duly received early the following week for immediate allocation and despatch with catalogue entries prepared during the interval. This is especially appropriate for lending libraries, where the publicity value of newly published books is high and catalogue entries may well be reduced to the minimum.

As the size of the library system diminishes, it is not practicable to work on this scale. Selection enters more into the problem, as also the mere difficulty of obtaining a copy on approval. Libraries frequently are handicapped by the absence of a sound bookseller in the area, and correspondingly by the unwillingness of the stationer and bookseller to undertake the uneconomic single copy business. In these circumstances, book acquisition is slowed down, is done by selection from reviews, from the B.N.B., or from titles displayed by travelling salesmen. Delay in acquisition need not be regarded as calamitous; much might never be bought at all if judgement could be withheld for several days, but the difficulty of judging without seeing the book seems insuperable—and the more closely the book fund is limited, the greater the importance of selection.

The large, medium and small libraries will be members of the Regional Bureau and also sometimes of a Subject Specialization Scheme, and this will considerably modify book selection policies, as regards the former in so far as all accessions will be
notified to the Union Catalogue and inter-library loans will be considered for more costly books of limited appeal, and as regards the latter in the special allocation of funds to purchase comprehensively in certain subjects and to preserve books on such subjects whilst acting as the recognized source from which loans can be obtained. This extension of co-operation adds emphasis to the now generally accepted principle that no library stands alone and all gain by considering each other in the acquisition of books.

With limitation of size and resources comes also some limitation of specialist activities*, and the cataloguer in these medium sized libraries is probably quite able, with the assistance of two or three assistant typists, to keep abreast of all activities connected with acquisition; recording of all activities connected with acquisition, recording and discarding from the lending departments. It is interesting to note how the pressure on the staff in these libraries has given rise to administrative reforms, for instance, how, with increased acquisitions, the recording processes, accession register, shelf register, discard register and so on, have been largely banished in favour of a system capable of use as order form, invoice and permanent record combined.

So, too, have the processes of duplicating catalogue entries been examined. Experiments have been made with practically all forms of office duplication—traditional flat bed, rotary, litho-printing, addressograph, spirit duplicator—down to straightforward copy-typing. Librarians have experimented with all forms of catalogues, card, sheaf, book, visible index, rotary card—and there still seems no finality. But such experiment is important in view of the staff time spent on cataloguing in all its aspects. The recent revival by some of the largest libraries of the printed catalogue (for instance, Glasgow, Westminster, Liverpool), the duplicated book catalogue (Bristol) and the substantial

* Important developments are taking place in the U.S.A., especially in small authorities, whereby several will combine to support centralized processing, cataloguing and purchase, financing the schemes by subscription.
printed class lists from some of the counties has revived the whole question of the value of this form. From the reader’s point of view, it is invaluable, but can the library afford such a service? It would seem much depends on the length of time titles are retained in stock and on the method by which revision or supplement is maintained. Unfortunately, no data are available on which to form a judgement. Significantly, most historical examples, such as the Peterborough classed catalogues 1892–1900, are those of pre-open-access libraries.

There are no adequate British studies on the economics of this department, and the data supplied by American librarians seem hardly conclusive to our problem.* The most that can be done, failing some practical costing and field work, is to bear the following principles in mind:

1. Nature of the library:
   (a) single department;
   (b) multi-departmental in one building, particularly if there are specialized collections;
   (c) multi-service point over an area.


3. Volume of current acquisitions:
   (a) potential use of B.N.B.;
   (b) own central cataloguing classing service.

4. Policy of stock management:
   (a) individual stocks at service points;
   (b) “unit” circulation system;
   (c) collocation of lending and reference stocks.

5. Internal administration policy of cataloguing:
   (a) centralized;
   (b) decentralized to service points;
   (c) the possibility of changes of practice, e.g. introduction of co-operative schemes, or simplified entries.

* See in particular Columbia University Library Cataloguing Department, Report of the Catalog Librarian, 1957-58.
6. Format of catalogue:
   (a) physical (i) card,
       (ii) sheaf,
       (iii) printed book,
       (iv) visible index;
   (b) dictionary/classed/other forms
       (i) unit entry,
       (ii) individual entries.

7. Type of catalogue:
   (a) union;
   (b) individual.

8. Reproduction methods:
   (a) typing (i) from slips,
       (ii) from the B.N.B.;
   (b) duplicating from stencil;
   (c) duplicating by spirit duplicator;
   (d) Adrema (addressograph);
   (e) offset litho methods;
   (f) printing.

9. The catalogue maintenance:
   (a) grade of staff required;
   (b) problem of insertion and deletion of entries and revision
       of subject headings.

10. The catalogue in relation to the reader:
    (a) location in library;
    (b) service envisaged;
    (c) in relation to book lists, etc.

One curious feature of British public libraries is the care with which young assistants are instructed in the largely unnecessary intricacies of the Anglo-American Joint Code and the general agreement that it is not a suitable instrument of practical librarianship, save when subjected to considerable emendation. There is
certainly a general agreement on the need for a logical code of rules with less emphasis on bibliographical curios and one more economic in practice. This is not the place to discuss cataloguing practices in detail—that has been done earlier in this Series, but these practices play such a fundamental part in the administration of libraries that it is essential to draw attention to the deteriorating position wherein none of the public departments find the authoritative code economic or efficient and also the only British centralized card scheme has adopted this unsatisfactory standard.

Closely related to the cataloguing of the Lending Department stock is its shelf arrangement or classification. With the general adoption of the open access principle came the need for subject arrangement—though this by reason of the extra space required precipitated a crisis in accommodation. The dominant classification scheme is, and will long continue to be, the Dewey Decimal scheme, and the only matter that needs decision is whether to follow the author’s instruction to use the scheme to the full (as in the B.N.B.) or to adopt part only, that is, the first three or first five figures only. This is the traditional difference of opinion between those who desire close classification to the minutest subject and, if possible, to have the various aspects of the subject revealed by the notation, and those who consider broad subject grouping is adequate for the Lending Library or particularly for small collections. Protagonists of either side become extremely heated (see many passages in the professional press when the B.N.B. was first published, and almost any comments on the Library Association examination results), and the victims, the users of the library, are frequently forgotten. Logically, the close classifiers seem in the stronger position, but it is also true that successful promotion of Lending Libraries is greatly aided by vigorous displays of whole subject areas likely to be in popular demand—that is, temporary broad classification. The controversy seems rather futile when one considers how much more satisfactory a detailed classifying of books is to the more
purposive readers and how easily the staff can assist the less informed readers.

A related routine, often combined in the Acquisition Section, is discarding obsolete and worn-out stock. Again, considering principles, the important stages are to ensure that nothing is finally discarded that is of value in terms of the purposes of the library concerned, that considerable bibliographic and literary judgement is exercised before the last copy of any item in the library is discarded, that the membership of Subject Specialization Schemes will cause careful consideration of specified subjects and that many apparently superfluous books may still be useful per B.N.B.C. Finally, the routine pursued should be such that, if certain titles are to be repurchased, the catalogue entries will not have been removed—in other words, discarding should be considered in two stages, withdrawal from circulation (whereupon the filed book-card will prove location and stage of operation) and final disposal into either a file for reordering or a file for discard and deletion from the catalogues. This is especially necessary to reduce the burden of maintenance of union location catalogues.

The Lending Library Building and Circulation Work

The Lending Department being the one where the greater concentration of users of the library will occur must therefore be planned and administered accordingly. As far as the building is concerned, apart from presupposing a location in the town to which people will naturally turn, there are five major factors to be considered—(1) the entrance, (2) the service counter (or service desk) in relation to the entrance, (3) the relation of this staff service counter to the work rooms, (4) the positioning of the catalogue in relation to service counter, staff, readers and work rooms, and (5) the planning of the open shelves and the number of books to be displayed.

Local conditions will so greatly determine the actual shape of
the library, and, as too often the planning will be in the hands of a local government architect with no experience of library designing, it might seem otiose to make suggestions. A few tendencies in modern buildings should be noted, observing that in the United Kingdom only one substantial central public library building has been erected during twenty years, such library building as has been achieved being either conversion of old structure, temporary structures or smallish branches. The newer developments suggest a strong influence from Scandinavia (especially in interior decoration) or the United States (in arrangement of book shelves), but there is a strong native tradition, as may be seen from Crossgates Branch, Leeds; Manor Branch, Sheffield; Glebe Farm Branch, Birmingham. A more adventurous type is Holly Edge, Manchester, which may be regarded as developing from Savage’s ideas at Edinburgh of displaying the library through plate glass frontage, although a more immediate American influence is more probable.

Within the library, radiating stacks and metal shelving have practically disappeared; the formal massively constructed service counter is being modified (perhaps photo-charging will accelerate this); there are even attempts (Westminster, Rugby) to remove the service counter outside the library area to the foyer; lastly, the belief that readers may wish to read in the Lending Library is becoming accepted, space for chairs being provided for such relaxation. All this within the new colour schemes and bright decorations of the post-war years* has greatly added to the attraction of the library.

These are, however, merely physical surroundings. Better book stocks have brought more readers to the library, and, in the endeavour to maintain these stocks in face of rising prices, routines have been modified and made more economical. Quite the most revolutionary development in Lending Library routine has been the successful demonstration that the traditional book card/

* Typical early examples, Crossgates Branch, Leeds; Stopsley Branch, Luton. The new central library at Plymouth is a hopeful augury.
ticket system of recording loans is inefficient, costly and can be replaced by other more satisfactory methods. The debate still rages, there now being quite a number of individual rival schemes, some employing tokens, stemming from the Westminster scheme, which are surrendered on the borrowing of a book, no record being maintained, others using punched cards, as at Holborn, and, perhaps most popular, photo-charging. These two last retaining all the desired records, and, as with the punched card method, allowing reservation of books to be maintained.

In a routine change such as this, the capital cost of installation must be carefully considered in relation to continuity of use; whether the full potential of the mechanical device is utilized; whether any genuine economy of staff will be achieved. The first of these is often solved by using machines, for instance, punched card equipment, that may be shared with other municipal departments; but photo-charging and token-charging must stand or fall on their own merits. Can they earn sufficient in saving of staff time without reducing services to readers, for instance, in the reservation of books, overdue notices; do they supply the librarian with the records he needs? On these questions, photo-charging clearly offers the most; a moderate capital expenditure, equipment easy to install and operate, a permanent accurate record of loans, a single system of discharging returned books. Overdue loans are easily detected, but reservation is not really practicable.* On the balance, the system yields a clear saving of time previously given to purely mechanical repetitive work. The unanswered question remains, at what level of public use does the system cease to be economic, or rather, more economic than the book-card-ticket routine. In any public department there has to be a certain minimum of staff on duty, and they should, by laws of economy, be employed as near to maximum capacity for as much of their duty hours as is possible. One can imagine many small libraries with loans of perhaps 500 books a day needing no

* Coventry uses a Visible Index system to display titles to be stopped.
more than three staff sharing counter duty.* This could hardly be reduced by any mechanical device, therefore why not retain the admittedly cheap older system? Only in a library where large numbers of staff are employed, can machines bring an economical redeployment on to other more useful duties, that is, to increase the personal service available to readers. Indeed, it should be an understood policy throughout all library administration that nothing should be done that will in any way diminish services to readers, and, positively, the main criterion of routine reorganization should be the degree to which services will be improved.

The public lending library must, in addition to providing an adequate book supply, plan the display of books so that they are easily accessible to the reader; should ensure that a list of books within the whole system is available in a convenient form and that those books not immediately available shall be obtainable by the reader cheaply and expeditiously. These services imply a sufficient number of shelves for display, supplemented by special stands for focal exhibitions of particular interest; that the books be arranged in a convenient comprehensible order; that a clear easily used union catalogue is provided (if possible, printed select lists to be distributed to readers); that sufficient trained staff is always at hand to interpret these services to the reader and to supply such assistance in the choice of books as is required. This can be done in all libraries provided that staff of the right calibre is recruited and that non-productive routine processes are minimized.

A word may be spared for that centre of controversy—the reservation service. It is clearly of value to the systematic or to the informed reader; equally clearly, it can be abused, especially by the avid reader of new books; but before claiming the case for

* "To the practical librarian a good counter is a source of perennial joy. It is not only the theatre of war, and the centre to which every piece of work undertaken by the library converges, but it is a barrier over which are passed most of the suggestions and criticisms which lead to good work, and from which can be gleaned the best idea of the business accomplished."—J. D. Brown, Library Association Series, No. 1. Handbook of Library Appliances, 1892.
abolition is proved by reason of the abuses, the method of implementing the service and its value to all readers should be carefully examined.

As with all services, a mere costing in terms of staff time and stationery proves it uneconomic; the same is said of overdue postcard reminders. The question is, however, not as to the economy of the service, but of the value to the library user. This value is undoubted—both reservations and overdue notice!—and the service must continue.

Behind the service to the public lies the important realm of administration of the library, building, books and staff; an aspect of librarianship that calls for very careful study in so far as it is the foundation on which the book service rests, and, moreover, employs a distressingly high percentage of senior experienced personnel in work not immediately connected with the reading public. Large library systems can afford to organize complete sections whose work is entirely clerical and administrative, but this is impossible in smaller units—perhaps an argument for a minimum size to be fixed for library authorities, for basically most of those duties are susceptible of mechanization, or of more economic handling in bulk by special staff, if the volume of work justifies the changes involved. Clear examples are the economy demonstrated by centralized book acquisition; and the central purchase of stores and stationery. Payment of wages and salaries, control of the cleaning staff, accounting and checking of invoices, stores management, the library bindery, transport services—are none of them activities for which the conventional training in librarianship qualifies a man or woman. This may be accomplished quite effectively by clerks trained, as in other departments in the local government, for these particular functions, and then one would no longer hear the familiar complaint of the librarian of a great city that he has long since ceased to be a librarian.

In a profession where so much of the service is rendered through small libraries, it is useful to consider at this point per-
haps the real value of these units, more especially since they are the object of much hostile and often ill-informed criticism.

The main contribution, though not the only one, of the medium and small library authority to the corpus of professional technique and to a solution of the general organizational problem undoubtedly lies in the provision of the lending library service. It may indeed be doubted whether an authority of over perhaps 150,000 population is the most suitable agency for this aspect of library work, the reason for this suggestion being the tendency in the larger authorities towards weakened personal contact with reader requirements as shown in the establishment of "large" or "district" branch libraries, which in an extreme, may even have sub-branches under their control. These district branch libraries may be in fact quite as large as the entire system in many "small" authorities, and, apart from the oft-quoted, but doubtful, ability to draw on the stock of the whole library system, can have little in their favour if compared with the enthusiastic personal direction of small independent authorities in which the librarian personally knows all his staff, all of whom work as a team, and in which no contact is lost due to the undue extension of the line of organizational control. Where "small" libraries have deliberately limited their provision to that of a sound lending and children's library, with perhaps a strong local collection, it is demonstrable that local enthusiasm can be roused to the extent of providing adequate finance. Naturally, work in such authorities offers less specialized activities than can be found in the largest systems, but, depending on the calibre of the librarian, one seldom sees happier or more alert staff.

The very pressure of finance has made the best—and we need only consider these—of such libraries ruthlessly examine paper work, and study to extract the greatest value from every pound of income; similar economy of management is practised in the large systems undoubtedly, but the margin of tolerance for accepting or rejecting a record is much wider, and the difficulties of change commensurately greater.

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It has justly been claimed that the genius of British public
librarianship is truly shown in the small municipal library,
especially in the great variety of buildings, specially designed or
adapted under emergency conditions from apparently quite
unsuitable existing structures. If, in small organizations there is
little need to study the fine points of staff management and
control, and the real energies of the librarian and staff are instead
directed into the provision of books and thereafter buildings
at economic rates, the true librarian will hardly complain. He
may justly comment, however, on the necessary limitations of
these services, and seek to bring the larger units, which must
provide the specialized activities, more closely into relationship
with their public, and to ensure that organization and size do not
triumph at the expense of human relations.
CHAPTER TEN

The Rural Library Service

THE system by which the scattered population of rural areas in the United Kingdom is provided with library services, is, comparatively speaking, of much greater interest to the student of administration than is the equivalent urban service, and the reason is not difficult to identify. It is, briefly, the fact that here only is there to be studied a systematic plan by which following an exhaustive investigation, the problem was defined, the possible solutions adequately examined and a detailed practicable scheme advanced by an impartial authority outside the library profession. An examination of the method by which effective rural libraries were established is therefore most instructive and could be of the greatest importance when considering the future of urban libraries and of the nation-wide service.

In essence, the difficulties are financial and administrative, stemming from the geographically scattered population units and the relative poverty of such areas compared with towns. Under the Public Libraries Acts, previous to that of 1919, all authorities save the county councils could adopt the Acts and attempt a library service without regard to size or resources, and from later returns* it is clear that great numbers did so with deplorable results. Their experience did, however, demonstrate clearly that very small units of population are not capable of any reputable standard of library without the subsidy of private philanthropy or voluntary labour. The story of the parish library under the Public Library Acts is a dismal one, but underlines both the need for some such service and the failure of government to devise a means.† Professor Adams (Report to the Carnegie United Kingdom

† Great credit should be given to those amateur librarians who started schemes
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Trust, 1915) saw clearly that an authority larger than the parish and with superior financial resources was needed and one with an existing organization already devised to serve the scattered units. This was clearly the County Council with its education service reaching every village and hamlet. With one change in the law (achieved in 1919) libraries could be provided using the schools as buildings and the school teachers as voluntary librarians. Books would be purchased by the county and distributed from a headquarters with minimum staff and administrative costs. Transport of the books to the centres remained a problem and this was not fully solved for some years, when motor vans and bookmobiles became financially possible, but the basic problem was solved, albeit at the expense of true librarianship.

It is not appropriate here to do more than refer to the great difficulties encountered by the Carnegie Trustees in persuading authorities to accept even the pilot library schemes which were started in advance of legislation; reference should be made to their published annual reports and to county council records for much illuminating information on the practical working of local government. Suffice it to say that the familiar attitudes of parsimony and prejudice were still widespread despite the generous financial encouragement offered by the Trust, but ultimately pilot schemes were started and soon demonstrated their value.*

The student will notice the emphasis placed by the Carnegie Trust on using voluntary workers to implement the county scheme, thus effectively reducing overhead burdens of salaries: and also the general absence of specifically library building. This situation still obtains to some extent and, given an adequate body

in rural areas, e.g. Miss Sayle in Hampshire, Miss Verney in Buckinghamshire: to the schemes closely allied to social welfare, such as that organized by the Duchess of Rutland; to the educative schemes as in Dorset.

* Stafford County in particular was a very enthusiastic pioneer under the guidance of the then Director of Education, 1916-17.

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of voluntary workers, book distribution can certainly be effected at a minimum cost. Active county librarians can do much to improve the local voluntary centre, reviving enthusiasm by personal contact, by the payment of necessary expenses incurred on library business, and by the provision of suitable guidance on the book resources of the county. At best, voluntary workers can only be a substitute for the really trained librarian, and with the recent diminution of social consciousness in this respect, many librarians have considered alternative possibilities. Before considering these, let it be said that the enthusiastic voluntary worker who is well supported by the county librarian is worth all the indifferent or ill instructed “professional” library assistants who may replace him. Change of policy need not therefore be considered necessarily desirable though it may be inevitable.

A summary of important administrative developments since 1920 would indicate (i) a great increase in financial support from the county authority, enabling sound book stocks to be established; but, parallel with this, considerable restiveness in areas of more concentrated population. This shows itself in (a) differential rating to give better services in selected districts, (b) the desire to withdraw from the county service and to become independent library authorities. (ii) The experiments in devolution of authority to regional districts.* (iii) The acquisition of transport, and ultimately the bookmobile. (iv) The increase in numbers of paid professional librarians. (v) The movement away from school and similar premises towards branch library buildings. (vi) The use of the printed book list and catalogues. (vii) The growth of reference libraries and special services to commerce and industry. Finally, allied to this last, there are currently most important developments in conjunction with the county technical colleges.

Not all these developments have taken place in all counties.

* Derbyshire pioneered this in 1927. Compare especially Warwickshire and Surrey. Note: County Advisory Committees and their powers, as in Lancashire County.
Some counties are, as with urban areas, less inclined to change than others; many do not care for mobile libraries, preferring to attempt permanent buildings or to retain voluntary staff in village centres; and not all county authorities are suitably formed for division into regions, but the general picture is one of lively activity, and of a service well aware of its future possibilities.

It should be noted that under the 1919 Act, it was possible for existing authorities by agreement to rescind their library powers and to surrender them to the county; and equally, districts could request the county council to allow them independence. In the early years, when the county service was meagre and undeveloped, some authorities did contract out, and, to the great disappointment of the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust, comparatively few small units amalgamated, there being little incentive. The alternative, a differential rate for given areas, seems to have proved an administrative liability and of little general benefit, and has now been abandoned. As, however, the county library improved, the situation changed, and the progressive county has little fear of losing further districts, especially in view of the extensive devolution* that is becoming usual.

The county areas have, in short, become interesting examples of the use of powers implicit in the Public Library Acts and the Local Government Act 1933, whereby combination of authorities † in whole or part is actively encouraged if a service is to be benefited. It is to be regretted that the recent American development of co-operation through functional services ‡ rather than administrative union is not as yet evident in this country, though it might well be the solution of the vexed problem presented by the smaller authorities (such as those of resources insufficient to

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* Surrey County Council Yellow Book 1947, quoted in the Appendix to the Report of the Roberts Committee, gives an account of a very far-reaching scheme.
† Individual agreements differ, but the student will particularly note the variations possible, such as Kendal and Westmorland, Gillingham and Kent County, Aberystwyth and Cardigan County, Aldershot and Hampshire County.
support a full library service or so small as not to warrant the employment of adequately trained personnel). This solution would appear to be greatly preferable to any alternative whose principle must be based on financial subsidy to supplement inadequate resources, or, even worse, the frank admission that the full library service, as known in the most progressive areas, is not required to be rendered. A most desirable economy of skilled staff is achieved if accounting, book acquisition processes, classification and cataloguing are centralized on a regional basis, and this economy will be further seen in the improvement of book stocks by reason of planned selection.

If reasonable devolution of executive action is allowed to the Regional or Branch Librarians and local public opinion is given the opportunity through Regional Advisory Committees to express views on the conduct of the library, there seems little force in the old argument against the county authority; namely, that it is remote, impersonal and ignorant of local reactions. In striking contrast to the municipal systems, several county authorities have expressed their administrative policies in print and it is most instructive to consider the careful definitions of function as given by, for instance, Surrey County Council, and to compare the empirical, somewhat casual manner in which the largest municipal authorities have merely added departments or service, thus increasing the size of the organization, with no fundamental attempt to consider whether efficient operation could continue. A fully devolved county system tends to approach the "staff and line" principle of organization, with the County Librarian and his Headquarters staff remaining sufficiently free from local executive action and daily routine to be able to plan for the whole service. This is apt to be overlooked in the municipal systems, which find, to their great detriment, that the senior officers are immersed in executive and routine action to the exclusion of long term planning.

It is tempting to speculate on the probable development of county libraries if in 1915 there had been available a practical
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means of transporting large numbers of books as is now done in very many areas by "mobile" libraries. Historically it is obvious that transport costs and difficulties greatly handicapped the frequent interchange of books (so vital a principle when small deposit centres are in question), and it is equally clear that the main duty of the librarian was to build up book stocks. Some form of transport was always necessary, for even if the librarian was expected to visit remote areas by bicycle, heavy boxes of books had to be taken to the schools, and this would naturally tend to be controlled by the Education Authority. Gradually the libraries acquired their own transport; enterprising librarians used the vans for exhibiting books; from there it was but a technical step to evolving the mobile library with up to 3,000 volumes on shelves available for actual inspection by readers. As to the value of this service, opinions differ. Owing to the time and speed factors, the range of a mobile library in any day is small; frequent stops must be made for the readers, and the van must usually return to base at night. The value of the service will be closely related to the frequency of visits to any given locality and the duration of the stops, a principle which, in practice, has been excellently illustrated in counties where regional devolution has been implemented. In these instances mobile libraries are based on the regional branch library rather than at the administrative headquarters, thus cutting down unprofitable travel and also more fully utilizing the staff who are employed at the branch.

A frequent criticism of the mobile library service is that the standard of literature asked for by the public is not in fact very high and hardly warrants the claims by advocates of the service that the trained librarian or his knowledge of books is essentially appreciated by the readers. This argument is similar to that used against small branch libraries in urban areas and appears invalid in so far as in every area the type of reading in the public library should be considered more in the light of the availability of good standard books and their use than by the actual number of readers. In any area there is a great demand for popular
ephemeral literature, and there is no reason to believe the country reader is in any way different. The great contribution of these small branches and of the mobile library is that a true library service can be given to the maximum number of readers by persons qualified in knowledge of books; and that readers who wish to pursue their interests further may be shown the way and not discouraged by lack of opportunity. A further advantage not so frequently appreciated by the municipal librarian is the careful planning that must prepare the way for the establishment of the mobile service. Families on or near the intended route are visited, the library facilities explained well in advance, and the appropriate printed publicity distributed personally. This is an extremely valuable element in library work, and is, of course, continued by the staff on the mobile library and by their full exploitation of the request service.

If the “mobile” is based on a Regional Branch Library, staff will probably have alternating duties at the Branch or on the mobile to enable them to follow up the requests made during the previous days, and also to participate in the general work of the Branch. This is clearly an administrative economy of considerable value, and disposes of the argument that county library services need fewer staff than urban libraries.

It is to be hoped that profiting from the experience of urban services, the county services will not be tempted to overload their resources with permanent buildings. Desirable as it is to offer a library building open a reasonable number of hours per week with qualified staff in attendance, it is an expensive addition to the service as a whole, and one which will hardly diminish in cost as time passes. Given the financial resources of the whole area, it is reasonable to expect full-time branch libraries where there are population groups of upwards of perhaps 4,000, but it is also necessary to consider the full employment of the staff. This is best done by considering the Branch (or Regional) Library*

* For contemporary views on standards of county Branch Libraries see the report issued in 1959 by the County Libraries Section of the Library Association.
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as the centre from which part-time or even deposit libraries are operated, and, if the general situation makes a mobile library appropriate, one or more may well be based on this branch. If also library service is provided in the schools and perhaps to special groups of readers such as hospital patients, those in prisons, or workers in local factories, there will be no shortage of employment!

More serious will be the problem of increased administration costs in respect of buildings and staff, which, if a high standard of book selection is to be maintained, will make it imperative to consider standards of expenditure comparable with those of the municipalities. Mere straightforward comparison of cost per issue as shown by different authorities reveals little (it may even show that an "underdeveloped" system actually costs more than a "developed" one) but it is a favourite reasoning among ill-informed councillors or officers and is not easy to refute save by demonstration of the full service, and even then, local prejudices and unwillingness to spend money will present great opposition. Therein lies the great importance of declining to accept inferior provision of buildings, stock and staff, for evidence is quite conclusive that it is the locally known example of library service which supplies the standards for all but the librarian.

A feature of the county library service most worthy of extended comment is the provision of printed catalogues or of book lists. The very nature of the early service required some printed catalogue for the use of the voluntary librarians or of the serious reader; but in those days, stocks and funds were scanty, and the ideal solution was found in the celebrated County Libraries Section (of the Library Association) Book Lists on selected subjects. For a penny or two, readers could buy an authoritative printed list of books on each of a wide variety of subjects with the undertaking that if the book were not already in stock, it would be obtained. Such co-operative work deserves the highest praise, and librarians, even in the towns, eagerly supported the venture, offering as it did an invaluable supplement
to their catalogues and aid in book selection. Similarly, some counties have specialized, as has Nottinghamshire in Dramatic Literature, and published catalogues which can be obtained for use in other areas. When a service is rendered through a mobile van calling for a brief period once a week or less frequently, these lists are essential. They may also take the place of a costly catalogue if the stock of a permanent branch is on a circulating unit basis. It is good to see a post-war resumption of the tradition, and to notice that the standard of compilation remains high.

Whether the county library can ever fully realize the ideal of a “reference” service or carry out adequately the numerous specialized types of library service mentioned, for example, in the County Library Survey (1951) can surely only be determined by consideration of the area concerned. Some counties, as Middlesex, are highly urbanized; others present geographical difficulties; yet others have a small, widely dispersed population. Over all looms the problem of the excluded urban districts which could, by co-operation, so greatly contribute to the general efficiency of the public library system. Examples can be found, notably Buckinghamshire, where vital minded librarians have seized the opportunity offered by post-war industrial expansion to press forward with most varieties of special services and have organized their work so successfully that the county authority has supplied the necessary financial backing. It would seem that the librarian will find response from the public if only he has the vision and ability to profit from the occasion.

As, however, the Carnegie Trustees realized, routines suitable for municipal libraries are not necessarily adequate in rural conditions, and a much more systematic and dynamic approach is needed in the organization of the embryonic County Reference service. Starting, as is proper, from the well tried Students Section, which is essentially a loan service of material usually classed as Reference Library stock, and possibly working in conjunction with the County Technical Colleges, it is clear that
there are enormous possibilities. In passing, it may be noted that already county libraries have responsibility for library service to schools, and it is a logical development to include the Colleges of Further Education. Some of the issues involved are considered in a following chapter, but it is appropriate here to notice the great strengthening of the general library resources both in stock and skilled staff that may ensue, as well as the symmetrical organization.

The essential problem, as always in the counties, is to overcome the geographical problem of the scattered population and their need of access to a large book stock. Modern communications are likely to assist in the sense that the telephone service is becoming much cheaper and is more widely available; library transport is also more adequate than formerly; photo-copying can help to reduce extortionate postal charges; but it still remains clear that in such conditions, the only reader who is going to be satisfied is the one whose requirements can be identified with definite books. The reader who wishes to consult many books in the hope of finding some ill-defined information must still go to a large library. This must have been obvious in the working of the Students Section and is a difficulty underlying all scholarly work depending on libraries. Curiously it seems not to have been appreciated in professional literature, and only indirectly by librarians by their emphasis on select book lists. Some such analysis of readers’ requirements should be undertaken, using perhaps statistics from Regional Bureaux and the County Libraries own Student Section records.

The other aspect of the problem is the wide variation in density of population of the counties so that a solution in one has no validity elsewhere, and in any consideration of a potential reference service, it appears that only individual solutions are possible. Such a conclusion makes it all the more regrettable that the Roberts Committee so signally failed to consider reference services at all.

The ideal solution seems to be the establishment of Regional
Reference Libraries with ample resources for lending books and other materials, supplemented by modern devices for communication. Briefly, it should mean the realization in modern terms of the old Central Library for Students, not only in London, but in selected areas, and with the important addition of staff and reading rooms. Such libraries could well undertake such regional interlending as needs a co-ordinating bureau, and could develop other desirable functions if appropriate, such as co-operative storage.
CHAPTER ELEVEN

Libraries in Technical Colleges

The intensification of national education policies, which has been so marked a feature of the mid-twentieth century, has rather unexpectedly been of considerable indirect benefit to public libraries in that a certain amount of professional recognition has been forthcoming in ministerial and educational circles. After many years, it would now seem to be generally recognized that books are an essential element of education; that it is impossible to proceed far in studies of any kind without access to a wide selection of books; that these books present an organizational problem; and that a librarian is trained both to organize knowledge as shown in books, and also to guide readers to the optimum use. Such a series of propositions is self-evident to a librarian, but it is very necessary indeed that the truth and value of each should be demonstrated not only to authorities who may, under the various Education Acts, provide library facilities, but also to the teaching staff and the students, the two parties who benefit most from these aids.

Historically, the appearance of libraries in public schools, colleges and universities, has been well recorded; here we are concerned with the recent growth of libraries in institutions of further education, that is, Colleges of Technology, Commerce, Art, and similarly named bodies, not to mention the larger schools. The post-war building programmes of the local authorities have greatly accelerated the provision of new colleges, and within them, of new libraries, and it is now clear that a completely fresh area of activity has been opened to librarians. Very typically, no nation-wide policy is promulgated as to the exact relationship of the “educational” with public,
university or industrial libraries; nor is the provision or qualification of staff indicated. Perhaps, fortunately, these matters are left largely to local decision, with the result that wide variations in service are apparent, and in some instances, disquieting complacency as to the calibre of staff to be engaged.

As long ago as 1938, a strong committee* reported on the need for libraries in these colleges, and, having examined existing provision of accommodation, staff, books, finance, proceeded, in terms still valid, to indicate desirable standards. After the war, various government publications† continued the work, and finally, the celebrated Ministry of Education Circulars 322-3 not only officially recognized the position of libraries, but attempted to indicate standards considerably in advance of any yet accepted.

It is important to remember that, though the views of public or other librarians may be sought when new college libraries are being planned, there are many special limiting factors arising from the peculiar structure of the education administration and from the natural subordination of every "common service area" in a college to the "teaching area". It is clear too from the Circulars that few practical matters are known concerning the physical building problems involved, such as the area per student reader, number of places in a reading room; no real information is to hand as to the numbers of books likely to be housed, or the finance available. In short, the Circulars are mainly a guide to principles, and the local responsibility of practical realizations remains with the Principal of the College working with his authority and the Ministry to ensure that the architect provides a library area of adequate size, but leaves it sufficiently flexible to allow for changes in use as new trends become obvious and errors in planning are detected. Without the active interest and support of the Principal, very little progress will be made.

† E.g. Ministry of Works, Building Bull. No. 5.
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The first element of administration in these collegiate libraries is perhaps the staff that will be appointed. Just as when county libraries were founded it became apparent that the existing trained municipal public librarian was not adequate, so it is clear now that a new branch of the profession is developing, and that only certain qualifications of the conventional public librarian are appropriate, whilst some may be positively disastrous. Broadly speaking, it may be stated that collegiate library staff must have more insight into academic attitudes and methods of study; must have more subject bibliographic knowledge; and must be prepared to subordinate well-loved routines to a much greater degree than their public library colleagues. The academic staff will have little patience with the more obvious fatuities of classification; they will be able to spot inefficiencies of routine; they will be strongly individual personalities, and will have authority in the college organization to insist on their requirements being met by the library. A still more serious shortcoming in the librarian would be the passive concept of service to readers—that the staff is there primarily to locate and serve books, or, at most, to answer questions that may be forthcoming as to the use of the catalogues. This is a relic of the nineteenth century and has been abandoned in all progressive libraries in favour of active guidance in the best use of the library and its materials. It is particularly noticeable in collegiate libraries that many of the academic staff are not in fact well versed in the bibliographic guides to their subjects and are not well acquainted with library routines. The librarian, if he is to succeed in establishing the value of his service, will undoubtedly appreciate this and act accordingly.

It is not easy to work in an actively critical (albeit friendly) atmosphere, and to be continually required to enlarge one’s knowledge of books and other sources in order to render efficient service, unless early training has inculcated such attitudes. Comparatively few public libraries can thus train men and women, and colleges are indeed fortunate to attract staff of the required

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calibre. The future may well be brighter as the status of the college librarian (that is, shall he be ranked as academic or administrative staff) becomes clarified, but, in the transitional period, some caution might be desirable in advancing claims for services the librarians may not be competent to render. A further desirable attitude would be the critical examination of all routine methods, including classification and cataloguing, with special reference to peculiar circumstances of the college library.

During these formative years, it has been quite customary for Education Committees to invite the Public Librarian to supply the professional advice or trained staff, and many interesting organization experiments have been made within the local government scheme. The simplest form is perhaps that in which the chief librarian of the public library advises on book selection, purchases and services the books with the normal public library stocks, and supplies staff at the institutions wherein libraries are to be promoted. Such a structure is hardly likely to generate enthusiasm among college readers or staff, and is only to be regarded as temporary. A more elaborate scheme originated in the counties, where, the public library being already closely linked with the education service and usually already serving school libraries, it was an easy step to require the County Librarian to be responsible for the libraries in College of Further Education (or other variant name), appointing staff and organizing book services. The most noteworthy of these services is that in Hertfordshire County, where an elaborate organization has been built up in the Colleges working in liaison with the County Library to supply the technical literature requirements of the area and to some extent make good the lack of a public reference library. Many internal problems arise, and not all seem solved, but the service is a real one, and may indeed be the answer to that old problem of "reference service" in rural areas which so baffled the Carnegie Trust in the 1920's. It is, for example, difficult to see how technical books scattered in the colleges of a county area can possibly be regarded as effective as a library
with its books within one building; nor is it easy to have confidence that staff of the requisite training are always available; nor do the academic requirements seem to match with external public demands.

On somewhat similar lines, in some urban areas attempts have been made to appoint one of the public library staff to the position of co-ordinating technical librarian for the college libraries and the public reference service, but this apparently sensible idea founders, not for the reasons just mentioned, but largely owing to the salary differential and to the widely differing conditions of work. The matter is complex, but, briefly speaking, librarians in colleges hope to be graded as teaching staff and therefore become subject to one of the Burnham Scales, whereas public library staff are all on the much less favourable Whitley Scales. From the authority angle, the position is complicated by the requirement that Burnham Scales only operate for persons working a certain fraction of their duties as teachers; that the teaching week is 30 hours, whereas the Whitley scheme provides for a 38 hour week! Nevertheless, some authorities do in fact appoint as "lecturer-librarians" or some similarly named post, and the difficulty is thought to be evaded by requiring the librarian to give instruction in library use for a given period each week.

Even granted this somewhat irregular solution, it is not practicable to equate Burnham gradings with the Whitley awards, and the co-ordination of the public library with the educational services seems doomed on that account. For those who hope to see the public library advance in status, this is most unfortunate. The fundamental cause, however, that will militate against this obvious administrative economy is the difference of purpose and methods of work in the two libraries. A college library exists for staff and student; is stocked with books relevant to the curriculum both actual and prospective; it is only available during college terms and hours. Furthermore, much of the material is required in the building, either by staff or student, without delays. It might also be urged that the accommodation is quite
unsuitable for the admission of the general public. All this is negative, and no librarian will be content with such an attitude. In fact, much active work can be, and is, done for the general public, always with the proviso that the needs of the college predominate. The chief value is possibly the accumulation of specialized material to a much greater degree than in the public reference library, and its organization and interpretation by persons who are competent to do so. Most college libraries will be members of the national interlending schemes, and will be prepared to consider loaning material to an approved library. All will be prepared to answer telephoned enquiries, though the restricted hours of opening will greatly inhibit this. In short, the co-operation seems likely to be a voluntary one, and the limits must be carefully respected. With regard to book selection, it is obvious that co-operation seems most attractive—to the advantage of the public library. If the situation is examined more closely, it seems less certain that allocation of books for one or other library to purchase, thus avoiding potentially wasteful duplication, is indeed fully satisfactory. No responsible person wishes to advocate wasteful spending, but the actual economies achieved by such collaboration in book purchase, at least in a large authority, have yet to be conclusively demonstrated.

Increasingly over the years it is likely that the two services will diverge, especially if the public library system remains predominantly biased to the present home-reading structure. It might indeed be possible to envisage the national reference library service working advantageously with the college and industrial libraries, but no such service seems likely to emerge and speculation is fruitless.

Administration within the college presents comparatively few problems, so long as there is a general acceptance by the college of the value of the work of the library. The responsible authority is, in effect, the Principal, who will normally regard the Librarian as equal in importance with the teaching staff, and will be thoroughly convinced of the need to promote the service
throughout the college. In a large institution, with very complex curriculum, it is desirable to have an advisory committee formed of Heads of Departments to assist with book selection, though, as in a university library, the librarian must have a large balance for those purchases which he will recommend, perhaps in advance of demand from staff. Such an advisory committee should be confined to its terms of reference—book selection. No useful purpose is served by allowing committee supervision over internal administration; that is the prerogative of the Principal, who delegates it to the Librarian.

The Librarian will naturally consult with such other persons as he thinks may be of help, such as the representatives of the Students Union, especially when it is a question of improving or changing services, but there is no implicit obligation to do so.

Of more difficulty, especially in young institutions, is the problem of integrating the library book ordering with the existing practices of the Education Department. For years, this Department will have purchased books, stationery and equipment for schools, and frequently fail to see the system creaks alarmingly when dealing with fairly massive orders for individual titles, foreign items, subscriptions to societies, periodicals, micro-reductions and all the complications of a modern library. It is frustrating to the keen librarian who wishes to install economic routines, but he may have to bow to force majeure and accept the methods he finds.

Fortunately, there will be few to quarrel with his ideas of internal administration, and, if a little care is taken to become acquainted with the organization of the Education Department as a whole, many things will be achieved by co-operation that could never be accomplished by force. For example, it is most desirable to appreciate the classification of expenditure on furniture or equipment, whether metal or wood; what exactly constitutes a minor repair; how long ahead an application must be made for committee approval; and, above all, how to proceed with staff appointments. It may perhaps not be out of place at
this point to remark how co-operative the Education Department staff will be to any teacher or librarian who seeks to work with the system and to confirm from personal experience how valuable to a newcomer such an attitude can be.

Of the more routine elements in this type of library administration, it is safe to say that, having the opportunity of inaugurating a new service, every element, every practice, should be meticulously examined to ensure that there is nothing to impede the work of the library in the college, and that, above all, nothing is done that fails to justify itself. All too frequently, librarians have introduced various forms of records on the grounds of security, of potential need, of vague desirability. The college library cannot afford the staff or the man hours for unnecessary work, and the most rigorous tests should be applied before setting into action any routine process. In assessing the value of routines and records, careful attention will have to be given to the purpose and services of the library in relation to the parent institution. It is easy to say that the library is to be regarded as the “place to find out the answer”, or for students to regard it as a haven in which to work; but the librarian has to ensure that not only these two minimum requirements are met, but much more. He must be able to provide for the most advanced needs of perhaps research workers; he must know how to obtain that which is not in the library; he must inspire confidence in his administration. This requires sound education and professional training, as has been said; it requires organizational ability and clear vision.

The basic minimum service is that an appropriately trained librarian is available whenever the library is open; and that he should be allowed to instruct students in the use of the library at suitable points in their course. The library must be open whenever the college is in session and able to give a full service during that time. The reading room must be well lit, airy, of correct temperature and clean; having comfortable efficient chairs with, if possible, individual study tables. Within the reading room
must be a representative collection of the most important books and sources of knowledge in at least the main subjects of the college programme. Supplementing this will be a stack room for books in less demand and ancillary material in the form of a judicious selection of periodicals and modern aids to study, such as micro-readers of various kinds. Lastly, there will be a catalogue area, adequately furnished with appropriate bibliographies and library catalogues. Such a library must be maintained in good condition by an adequate annual expenditure on books, and, if manned by the desired quality of staff, will hardly fail to win widespread support in the college.

Problems of stock have been rather deliberately omitted from the preceding discussion, but it is perhaps necessary to allude to a matter of fairly minor importance in an older or a well-established library, but of considerable relevance to the new foundations; that of providing for loan extra copies of individual titles, or allied, the right of students to expect to borrow prescribed texts. In the early days of a library, the emphasis of book selection will be greatly on extending the range of titles covered, and, as the book fund is also likely to be undeveloped, the case for single copies and against lending seems incontrovertible. Careful examination of the actual published titles in various subject disciplines suggests, however, that over a period of years, if expenditure is kept to a constant figure, allowing for increased costs and obsolescence, there will come a time when a small margin for duplication may be available, and then the decision will have to be made. From the purely practical angle there is everything to be said for a controlled loan system; it relieves the crowded reading rooms; it removes the incentive for unauthorized borrowing; it enables students or staff to work where and when they wish. Clearly it is inconvenient to find a book not available when required, and to that extent the librarian must determine whether a given title is to be duplicated with perhaps one copy reserved for reference, or whether to attempt saturation purchase in the most obvious cases only, leaving the matter on
an empirical basis. Funds will hardly permit of saturation buying in most libraries; and compromise solutions usually end by offending everyone, but as no general policy seems to have emerged, it appears that local circumstances give librarians another opportunity for research into reading habits!

A teaching institution acquires books for many reasons other than to enrich the library stock; for example, the teaching staff may be entitled to copies of prescribed or other texts from which they work; some students (under the Education Acts) are awarded free copies of books; local authorities may decree administrative staff training schemes which require the acquisition of books in both of these categories. The problem arises as to whether the college librarian should be responsible for all these (and any other categories) books which are purchased from the general fund allocated to books, whether for incorporation in the library or not. A logical system would be for all ordering to be centralized in his department, so that control could be exercised effectively on supply and that books on arrival should be checked, processed and issued to the staff or students concerned. The additional burden to the library caused by the subsequent recall of those books either terminally or annually at the end of the session is formidable, and gives the librarian grounds for rejecting this responsibility if at all possible. It may not be possible, and, if the work is to be done, accommodation must be found outside the library for storage and the records necessary; nor is it desirable that this material should be incorporated in the library catalogue or stock. Much will be in a form unsuited for library shelves, and more will be so ephemeral as to render cataloguing uneconomic. The only records necessary can be made on the original order slip from which the booksellers' order is prepared.
CHAPTER TWELVE

Co-operation among Libraries

In modern conditions no active library considers the possibility of being a self contained unit and a great variety of schemes exist with the sole aim of making available to the maximum number of readers the book resources in libraries at the minimum cost in duplication of purchase or storage. The bibliographer, working largely with academic or institutional libraries which are the primary repositories of literature of the past, has long been familiar with the value of book lists giving locations of items, and co-operative work of this nature can flourish (given financial assistance) on an international scale to the lasting benefit of scholars. The situation with public libraries is rather different in so far as comparatively few undertake collection and storage of past literature (book or periodical) except in the comparatively narrow range of the Local Collection, the majority being primarily concerned with meeting current needs from current sources. This implies a high rate of turnover of titles and also a reluctance to retain obsolescent or little used items.

Until comparatively recent years book funds in public libraries were almost uniformly inadequate to meet the ideal of all librarians—to supply any reader with his required book—and from that realization it was an easy step to consider regional pooling of resources and to organize a system of union catalogues to locate items within libraries. This classic pattern of library cooperation is seen in a highly developed form in England and Wales (though not all regions have union catalogues and individual routines differ somewhat) and depends largely on the willingness of the constituent libraries to subscribe sufficient money to maintain a central office and staff for co-ordination of enquiries and the maintenance of the union catalogue. The super-

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structure of the National Central Library is to some extent a co-
ordination of regions, but is additionally particularly useful as the
national body for international co-operation work.

The basic theory of regional union catalogues and of the rout-
ing of all enquiries through a central bureau is probably perfectly
valid, and yields speedy results when catalogues are perfect, par-
ticularly if book stocks are poor and individual libraries widely
scattered. If, however, individual libraries improve their stocks,
and deliberately undertake to hold all important literature in
given subjects (Subject Specialization Schemes), the case for
maintaining expensive union catalogues or even a central bureau
seems seriously weakened. There would seem very little reason
against libraries making direct application for their requests for
items recorded in the British National Bibliography, confident that
"Subject Specialization" would have ensured acquisition of a par-
ticular title by a given library. As the specialization scheme
matures the coverage of current literature will be correspond-
ingly greater, and the real need for union catalogues will be in
respect of older (pre-1950) material only. This is already
recognized by the decision to remove from Bureau transactions
as from 1959 all books recorded in the British National Bibli-
ography; it seems a logical step in future only to catalogue pre-1950
English books and all books from overseas countries. Eventually
the Regional Bureau catalogues could confine themselves en-
tirely to the latter category, thus achieving greater economies in
upkeep and increasing the value of the service given in proportion
to the clerical work involved.

That the provision of books and libraries varies enormously
between regions need be no obstacle to this dwindling of
responsibility; rather there should be an increased interest in the
vital but neglected problem of storage of books and periodicals.
Of recent times there has been a vigorous activity in preparing
lists of library resources in particular regions—files of periodicals,
special collections, technical subjects, are favourite categories and
these may prepare the way for Subject Specialization schemes,
just as the co-operative book purchase scheme organized by six Lancashire libraries (Sale, Altrincham, Eccles, etc.) preceded a more extensive scheme modelled on that of the South Eastern Region. These co-operative lists are valuable only in so far as they discover the real strength or weakness of book provision, or are used to improve the situation, but they are expensive to produce and, like all directories, have a short life. A longer view would suggest this is but exploration of a library problem, closely correlated with the question of continuance of the Bureaux or Subject Specialization and, indeed, of the general structure of the library service. This problem, the location and preservation of specialist or little used material, has been explored to a considerable degree in the United States, where a solution is found in the formation of Regional Bibliographic Centres supported by subscriptions from co-operating libraries. Wide variation of method is practicable, ranging from direct subscription to rental of required space and from more or less permanent loan to outright donation of material. Noteworthy examples are the MidWest Inter Library Center (Chicago) and the New Hampshire Depository Scheme.

British practice has been heavily conditioned by difficulties of building and by the dubious legality of either parting with library property or of subscribing to co-operative schemes. The result is that Subject Specialization among the libraries of a region is much easier to achieve, in so far as no building or noticeable financial burden is involved, than would be the establishment of a bibliographical storage centre. One of the most successful schemes (the Metropolitan Boroughs co-operative fiction storage scheme) depends entirely on the availability of storage space in existing libraries and on the physically restricted geographical area served.

In no field of library management is there such failure to report as in that of acquisition and storage of Periodicals. All literature searching concerned with the eighteenth, nineteenth or twentieth centuries must include journals of all kinds, and
current knowledge is essentially found in the contemporary periodical. This implies that any library hoping to serve serious readers must at present be able to maintain long and costly files of little used periodicals or be prepared speedily to obtain photocopies or even originals. The reader himself can, however, seldom be satisfied by this, for the whole process of literature searching depends on access to the files in the hope of discovering previously unused information.

The failure of libraries is twofold, firstly in not providing sufficient coverage of periodicals, and secondly in not preserving the back numbers, and the reason for both is fundamentally the same; cost and lack of space to store comparatively little used material. Co-operative listing (as in the Sheffield Interchange Organization) will do much in a suitable area to increase the efficiency of provision, but this is usually confined to special subject groups and has made little impact on the country at large. General printed catalogues such as the British Union Catalogue of Periodicals or the World List of Scientific Periodicals must rely on the preservation of files in the libraries listed, and this must depend in turn on libraries continuing to make available not only storage space and finance but staff time and labour in notification of changes. This is a precarious situation offering no margin for future expansion of services. For this the main hope lies in the policies to be followed by the new National Lending Library for Science and Technology or in a concentration of public library resources into the hands of the largest systems.

Library co-operation in the United Kingdom is at present wasteful of labour and finance. It is necessary that the whole system of interlending, co-operative record and book acquisition be reviewed against the background of library stock, premises, finance, competing agencies and the requirements of readers. This is a fundamental project for skilled enquiry upon the result of which, rather than of the recommendations of the Roberts Report, would depend the whole effective future of the library profession.
CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Statistics and Reports

All organizations require standards to be established against which it is possible to measure achievement and efficiency of conduct. This is all the more important when the expenditure of public money is involved and where the acid test of profit-making is not relevant. In commercial and industrial undertakings accountants and other experts have evolved highly effective methods to ensure that the required standards are complied with, but the problem of assessing and controlling a public cultural service has never been satisfactorily solved. The most obvious measurements of money spent, books acquired, loans made, readers registered are easy enough to record, but the problem remains as to how the real value of the library service and the work of the staff may be assessed.

A distinction must be made as to the figures that may, if correctly interpreted, reveal the fact that a reasonable book stock is being maintained. This can, for example, be deduced from the average amount spent on books over several years, the total number purchased, the average price per title, the number of service points among which the additions are spread and the number of discards in a year. To quote from the Library Association’s own pamphlet A Century of Public Library Service “the average novel will last between three and four years, ... the average non-fiction book in current use between seven and eight years ... Every year, you must to maintain that stock buy at least one-quarter of the total active stock of novels, one-third of the children’s books, one-eighth of the non-fiction”.

When it is a question of evaluating the use made by readers of the library service, the traditional answer has been to supply
figures of loan transactions. This is a very inaccurate and dangerous method, failing to take into account quality (surely the most important factor) and in fact weighting the returns against the library supplying only better quality books. Similarly in a reference library mere totals of books used by staff or readers only show the physical labour involved, with no indication of the importance of the work behind. A more useful figure for lending libraries would be the number of items on loan on specific days in relation to the total stock, always on the supposition that the quality of the stock was itself reputable.

An obvious suggestion, frequently advanced by non-librarians, is that the cost per loan should be computed and, in comparison with other similar authorities, be used to arrive at some measure of efficiency. The crude figure (easily discovered) would be most misleading in view of the variant factors which should be used for interpretation. Thus few libraries have absolutely reliable ways of totalling loans; all stocks vary in quality; no two staff salaries bill will be identical; no two authorities have equal building and other overhead charges. In short, library services are mutually incommensurable, and it is fallacious to depend on analogies from other authorities.

This is the difficulty underlying any attempt at justifying librarianship in terms of cost or measuring in concrete figures the service to readers; and if for actual libraries ideals are substituted, the impossibility of laying down any standards is obvious. The practical problem still remains of reporting on the service to the authority so that future support may be forthcoming.

In view of the foregoing objections the only useful statistics will be those which relate to the quality of books acquired; to the number of books bought in relation to the national output; to the age and condition of the books displayed on the library shelves; and especially to the number of people using the library. Far too little is known of this last factor and of the motivation involved, yet it should be of fundamental importance to be sure why people cease to use libraries and what other
supplies, if any, are the alternatives. Positive research into reading habits* perhaps of particular districts should be undertaken in preference to the compilation of analyses in (of all unrevealing heads) main Dewey class numbers of books borrowed weekly, monthly etc. Such a project would involve much work and special skill in interviewing, but, as students at some Library Schools have found, it can be done.

Accurately to evaluate the work of the Reference Library and the departments is clearly impossible. All that can be reported factually is numbers of persons visiting the library, of books supplied to them; and none of this gives a picture of what use the service is to the community. Many libraries now publish in their annual reports some of the outstanding enquiries that have been answered. This inadequate as it is is surely more helpful than the conventional sets of figures, and has the great advantage of rousing curiosity and perhaps confidence in the recipient of the report.

In the interests of library science research it is greatly to be hoped that agreement can be made on methods of keeping such statistics as are indicative of expenditure, of numbers of books, employment of staff, and even perhaps of loan transactions.

The desirable statistical returns appear to be (a) factual, (b) evaluative, and may be listed under the first heading:

(i) Number of service points and hours of service;
(ii) " " staff, qualified and non-qualified;
(iii) Expenditure on books;
(iv) Number of books purchased and of individual titles;
(v) " " " discarded;
(vi) " " " in stock;
(vii) " " " on loan on selected days;
(viii) " " " tickets in use;
(ix) Details of total expenditure in relation to population.

Under the second head would appear the results of surveys by the library staff into

(i) population* served by each establishment;
(ii) social factors affecting the use of the library, e.g. new housing developments;
(iii) the use of actual books, i.e. number of times certain books are issued, the availability of worthwhile titles as shown by staff inspections;
(iv) the age of the stock displayed and that of the stock as a whole (at present only deducible from rates of accession replacement and discard);
(v) the achievements of the Reference Library, not in terms of volumes served to readers, but by specimens of work, numbers of users, failures, use of outside resources.

Other valuable statistics would perhaps be more related to costing, e.g. the cost of maintaining catalogues; that of adding books to the library; that of maintaining services. All of these would be highly revealing as to the nature of the library service, yet very little of the data are in fact available.

Finally it should always be borne in mind that the past history of every library system has so conditioned its individuality that, viewed as a nation-wide service, no universally acceptable standards of books, staff or buildings have been evolved. Whilst the public library is recognized as, and encouraged to be, a purely local service, achievements will never be higher than are locally desired.

* The number of children in each area is easily ascertained, and is most important to the library.
CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Some Background Reading

The contemporary situation in any organization is the product of mental attitudes and activities often stretching back many years, and no serious-minded librarian can fail to be aware of the extent to which the public libraries of to-day are conditioned by events in the nineteenth century, or that rightly to interpret the complex responses that ultimately formed libraries as we know them, a considerable knowledge of social trends throughout that century is essential. Confronted with a phenomenon so conditioned by local circumstances as is the public library movement, generalizations are apt to be inaccurate or misleading, and the amateur student who wishes to explore the origins and motivation of the movement has much to learn before he can even identify the source materials. Particularly after the general focusing of interest in historical aspects in the centenary year of 1950, there have been several helpful studies,* all suffering from the disadvantages attending an emergent subject—concentration on mere fact gathering or personality impressions. There is still room for an adequate and scholarly account of the numerous special reform movements which, in the nineteenth century, finding the idea of libraries beneficial to themselves, combined to give a misleading appearance of a widespread demand for general public libraries. Thus, the pamphlets of the Chartist Movement record a great and lasting appreciation of the value of libraries to their education schemes; † the agricultural reformers‡ thought libraries would

* E.g. Munford: Penny Rate.
† See especially pamphlets and unpublished letters of W. Lovett in the Birmingham Reference Library.
‡ Slaney, R. A., Essay on the beneficial direction of rural expenditure, 1824.
remove the worst degradations of the village labourer; the temperance workers added their zeal;* the popular lecturer and educationalist † brought his weighty propaganda; and the religious leaders are recorded as either founding parochial libraries, as did the Bishop of London early in the nineteenth century, or giving general approval to the struggling movement. Nor must small-scale private philanthropy (Mayer at Bebington) be overlooked in the chorus of praise for the Carnegie benefactions; still less the immense importance of Mechanics’ Institutes and club libraries.

All these need careful consideration with a view to evaluating their contribution, positive or negative, to the general movement, which may be said to have come to fruition between 1930 and 1940, and when the general movements have been thus studied, it will be necessary to trace the work done by the individual—not so much the reforming Duchess of Rutland, but the enthusiastic rural librarians, such as Ellin Verney and Miss Sayle before the 1919 Act.

References to all these may be traced in the catalogues of the British Museum, the British Library of Political Science, the London Library, the great city libraries, such as Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool, and in the Library Association Library. Other general sources to be explored are the government publications, such as the various reports of committees on public libraries from 1849 on; the statistical returns to the Home Office; the Parliamentary Debates; the Reports of the Charity Commissioners; the reports of the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust from that of Prof. Adams (1915) onwards; local newspapers for enlightening views of opponents; records of the municipal and county councils; and publications of interested movements such as the W.E.A., also the files of contemporary periodicals. Further exploration will bring to light professional publications in pamphlet form (Cotgreave was very prolific) as well as the more obvious contributions to the official journals.

* Duchess of Rutland et al; note particularly Greenwood.
† George Dawson; Lord Brougham and Vaux.

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Disappointment apparently awaits at the end of some enquiries, perhaps due to the general destruction of records in London 1940-1945. Thus the interest shown by the Athenaeum (later the New Statesman) in libraries cannot be followed further than the published pages; and enquiry into the precise events which determined the celebrated clauses relative to the Education Committees in the 1919 Act is similarly hampered. Perhaps private correspondence may yet become available! On such a vital matter, it is desirable that a full account should be available of why the pressure of the W.E.A. was so easily countered.

General books of interest will be largely biographical, and it becomes difficult to single out individuals, owing to the frequency with which reappraisals and reassessments of notable men and women are issued. The librarian will be interested in any life of George Birkbeck, Thomas Greenwood and Edward Edwards, to name but three pioneers. Although it is hard to say just where legitimate interest gives way to mere curiosity, it is desirable to enforce some limits; names therefore, such as James (Bodley's first librarian), Bray and Panizzi should also be noted.

Against a general background reading, as thus indicated, detailed study must begin by considering the extent of the subject and materials available. Whilst a reasonable bibliographical training and knowledge of library resources will make available all the material cited above, when it comes to first-hand statistical or quantitative enquiry into libraries, the student will find this knowledge of little practical use. To a great extent the literature of librarianship is based on generalizations unsupported by adequate evidence; and too often, where evidence is adduced, it is found, on examination, to be purely local in application. Critical reading of long files of annual reports has shown only too clearly the weaknesses of all past attempts at evaluating library service in terms of absolutes, and the impossibility of making valid policy statements for even a given area. Yet, annual reports are the only source as to the day to day work of libraries, and, retrospectively, are a most important element in tracing development.
It would be rash to expect to go further than this. For example, in an attempt to explore the impact of the library service in three great cities, their annual reports over a period of seventy years were analysed, only to find no common basis for computing book expenditure, salaries, number of books, number of readers or number of service points. It is equally fruitless to expect to find, save accidentally, due to some local requirement, any analysis of cataloguing costs. Such are the limitations of our statistical resources in this country, and it is but poor consolation to turn to the elaborate surveys or enquiries so plentifully produced in the United States. It has to be confessed, however, that all serious students must be dependent for systematic accounts on American contributions in planning, building, book acquisition methodology, cataloguing economics, reader surveys; to mention some of the most important aspects. This is to be regretted in so far as conditions are widely different and lessons learned in one country are not always applicable elsewhere.

The whole field of American librarianship is surveyed in the *Public Library Inquiry*, the many volumes of which are quite indispensable, as a convenient summary of developments, sources for statistical evidence, and copious references to much literature not easily available outside the United States.* Similarly the files of the *Library Quarterly, Library Trends* and *Library Resources and Technical Services* deserve careful study.

Librarians will not need to be reminded of *Library Literature* (1936-) or of Cannons, H. G. T. *Bibliography of Library Economy* covering the important years 1876-1920. From 1950 *Library Science Abstracts* are essential in bringing together contributions in many languages and providing informative indication of the contents of professional writing. The *Year's Work in Librarianship* 1928-1938, provides, with the post-war volumes and the cumu-

* There is no comparable source for British librarianship; such surveys as have been made concentrate on small localities or on general problems as, e.g. McColvin, L. R. *The Public Library System of Great Britain* 1942. It is confusing to find most of the volumes of *Inquiry* have achieved fame as individual items and are frequently cited without reference to their place in the whole.
SOME BACKGROUND READING

Relative Five Year's Work ... 1956, a very uneven, but often helpful record of trends in different aspects of library work with copious references to source literature. It is, however, too dependent on readily available periodicals and makes insufficient use of first-hand enquiry or research into non-published developments, to fulfil the expectations raised by the title.

No attempt is here made to make an exhaustive book list, but in writing this book, the following items, in addition to those mentioned in the text, have been found particularly stimulating:

General Works on Administration and Organization


SIMON, H. A. Administrative behaviour. 1947.

Library Administration. General


McDIARMID, E. W. and J. McDIARMID. The administration of the American Public Library. 1943.


Pierce, Watson O'D. Work measurement in public libraries. 1949. (Public Library Inquiry).


Taubner, M. F. Technical services in libraries. 1954.

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Reference Libraries

Butler, Pierce, ed. The Reference function of the library. 1943.


Rothstein, S. The development of reference services. 1955.

Classification and Cataloguing

Library Trends [special issue on Classification] October 1953.
APPENDIX

The “Roberts Committee” Report

THE publication of this Report early in 1959 was a landmark in the formation of opinion concerning libraries, and though its recommendations did not come as any surprise to many librarians, the document is noteworthy in so far as it has caused renewed discussion of ideals and policies hitherto regarded as somewhat impracticable by the majority of the profession.

It is against the background of previous reports and policy statements that this new report must be judged—the “Kenyon” report (1927); the Library Association Survey (1936-7); McColvin, Public Library system of Great Britain (1942); the Library Association’s proposals for post-war reorganization and development (1943); and the Century of Public Library Service (Library Association, 1950).

These documents reveal a steady trend towards formulating a policy for the development of a nation wide public library service which, while using as far as possible the framework of local government areas, would ensure a reasonable standard of provision for the needs of all readers in all parts of the country; and also reflect clearly the changing attitudes in the old controversy between centralized and delegated government. Thus in the early enquiries (perhaps including the C.U.K.T. findings) though there is a tendency to appreciate the need for finance to support an adequate book fund this is regarded as only to be achieved through voluntary amalgamation of smaller units and by using the regional interlending schemes. By 1943 it was clear that certain authorities were, regardless of size and resources, quite intransigent and unlikely to progress, and, in the contemporary reactions to administration large areas with strong
central government backing were considered necessary and desirable. So far does this attitude go that the Library Association proposals, based on substantial agreement among its members who represent all levels of authorities, are quite prepared (para. 20) to accept exchequer grants to encourage development and obviate inequalities.

Sixteen years have passed, and public opinion has reacted once again in favour of the local unit, but with the significant difference that such units are now admitted to be in need of outside supervision and, sometimes, support. It is also appreciated that efficient administration requires trained staff who must be paid appropriate salaries. The new report reflects this attitude clearly. It is suggested there should be nation wide service administered by local government units under the benevolent supervision of the Minister of Education who will be advised by two committees appointed to assist him in the discharge of his statutory (library) responsibilities; there should be a statutory obligation to provide an efficient library service; authorities giving this efficient service would be designated as public library authorities, others being required to mend their ways or to amalgamate; county councils should be required to submit schemes for the county library service for ministerial approval.

These suggestions, if given legislative sanction, would indeed do much to improve the library service, even though it might be exceedingly difficult to induce a Minister to intervene in local affairs to the extent of withdrawing approval of a library service. The library service generally suffers much more from apathy, parsimony and ignorance than from positive oppression, and it argues great faith in the strength of public opinion* to rely on such procedure for disposing of the bad authorities. Of much greater interest are recommendations 11 and 12 concerning county plans and the appointment of county library committees.

* From 1849 Select Committee:
"There can be no greater proof of the fitness of the people for these institutions than their own efforts to create them."
responsible directly to the council. If the county schemes are genuinely prepared on the basis of this recommendation it can only mean that a complete survey of all the library services public and non-public should be undertaken in respect of each county, and that a logical re-allocation of services between the non-county authorities and the county might be envisaged. In view of the emphasis on delegation of powers (without, unfortunately, any discussion of regional organization) it is possible that local prejudices may be overcome. A more likely approach would have been to point out to the smaller units the great advantage to be gained by exploring the establishment of cooperative administrative and service functions based on subscription. This is a serious omission especially when the important administrative economies are considered, but the committee seems not to have been well informed on co-operation in the widest sense. It is surely quite unnecessary in view of current developments to insist on the completion of the regional catalogues. Subject Specialization, the limitation of entries into the catalogues, the imperfections and expense of the existing catalogues, are all arguments against the system. As years pass changing book stocks and the provision of the arrangement affecting current British books after 1959 will mean a steady diminution of the need for these regional catalogues. It seems that some temporary arrangement is really needed to cover the short period whilst subject specialization schemes are established and during which public demand is concerned with books of the previous decade; after which both the volume and urgency of enquiries should diminish to such an extent that one general national union catalogue of pre-1959 material would be quite a manageable proposition. Co-operation should have been interpreted more widely than inter-lending as a means of bolstering up imperfections of lending library provision, and the very fact that no mention is made of reference services in this connection or of the great work achieved in printed bibliographical cooperative schemes or of experimental uses of Telex suggests a
serious shortcoming. The justification for co-operation in book provision is primarily to ensure economic availability of the widest range of titles regardless of areas as an extension of the Reference Library service; and this is essentially a problem being faced by the county libraries, especially in connection with technical literature. The Committee should undoubtedly have investigated this development, which has had sufficient trial for the preliminary results to be assessed.

All this part of the recommendations stands or falls on the interpretation of the phrase "statutory duty to provide an efficient library service". It will be noted that no new statistical evidence as to library provision was collected other than the Library Association returns for 1957-58; and it will not escape the critic of paras. 48-74 that the definition of efficiency is based at best on current practice in book purchase and the nature of the service, its various aspects and its distribution is not considered. There is an underlying assumption that the best of present day public libraries give the best book service of all kinds that it is reasonable to expect: this is fallacious, and, if used as a means of establishing standards, can only result in a deplorable watering down of the best without appreciably strengthening the others. Even if it had resulted in lack of unanimity of signature to the report, there should have been a published statement as to what constitutes a full public library service in all aspects. That this is not to be achieved in all areas is only reasonable, but some areas could attempt the ideal especially if encouraged to do so by this Report. As it is the minority report and the views expressed in paras. 51 and 59 give clear indications of what to expect.

The reader then searches in vain for a clear statement as to the constituents of a full library service; for an appreciation of the work of the larger systems; or indeed of libraries in technical colleges, and it is therefore with forebodings that the allusions to special services are read. Members of the Committee undoubtedly believe there should be Reference Libraries and Children's Libraries, but have not appeared to appreciate their
APPENDIX: THE "ROBERTS COMMITTEE" REPORT

fundamental importance as part of the national administrative problem—affecting not only staff, but books, buildings and readers. Yet the basic argument for reform of the administrative structure of public libraries is the need for just these specialized services in all parts of the country. In truth the attitude of the Report is that of municipal lending libraries only, and this in isolation is not a true picture of the national service.

The remainder of the Report is concerned with miscellaneous matters such as library charges and with the desirable features of a new Public Libraries Act, mere attempts at codifying existing provisions in the imperfectly drafted Public Libraries Acts 1892-1919, and can hardly be considered as an assistance to solving the problem of the "administrative structure of the Public Library system".
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