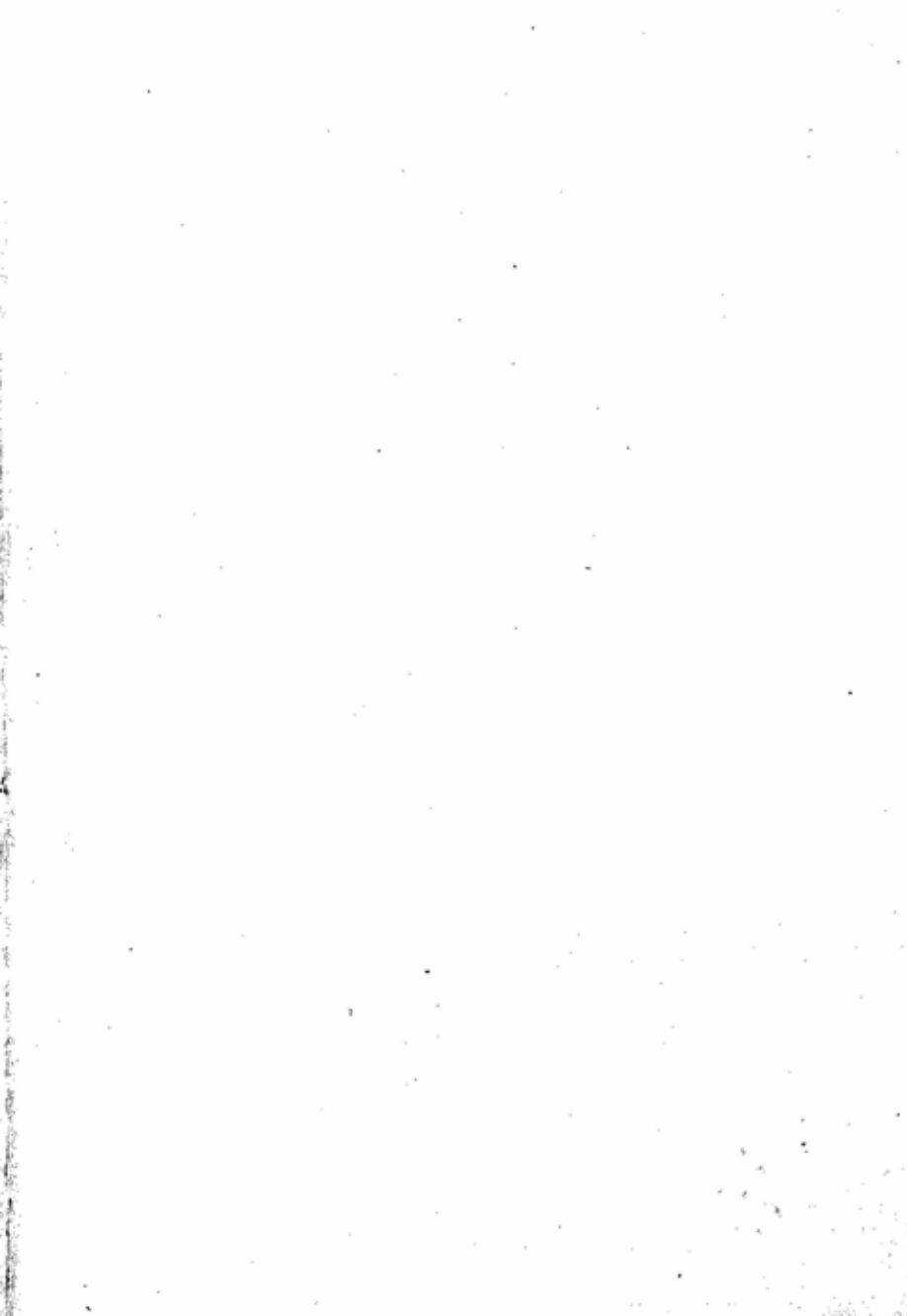


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THIS new Series of Handbooks is intended to supplement the larger Manuals issued by Messrs. George Allen & Unwin and the Library Association under the title of *The Library Association Series of Library Manuals*.

There are some aspects of Library Work which, although by no means unimportant, are of themselves insufficient to require a full-sized manual, and there are other phases which in a comprehensive textbook of manageable dimensions could be dealt with only in a general way. The Handbooks will adequately cover these subjects and will also treat of certain special topics which hitherto have escaped the attention which they deserve, or which—owing to recent developments—demand reconsideration.

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## FOREWORD

ANYONE who compared the literature of librarianship produced in America with that of our own country would be struck by the disproportionate attention devoted to its different aspects. A striking instance of this is the paucity of discussion in British circles of the problems of staff recruitment, training and organization and the wealth of material concerned with American conditions and aims.

If one were to go a step further and compare the standards of staff efficiency, education and prestige in the two countries, one might reasonably conclude that, while this preoccupation with personnel problems was symptomatic of a keener desire to deal more intelligently with an all-important aspect of librarianship, these American writers and thinkers had played no small part in promoting better conditions.

We have not here given staff matters the attention they demand. We have tended to drift, to be overawed by the manifest difficulties facing us. Notable progress has undoubtedly been made in recent years—progress to which the work of the Library Association has contributed largely. Nevertheless, there is a great deal more to be done, and as a first step we should try to survey the field in order to marshal our problems and thus the better determine how to solve them.

This book is a humble contribution with this end

in view. It is intentionally a personal and provocative approach to the subject. The writer does not expect that all his readers will agree with his various proposals; he will be satisfied if he can provoke those who disagree to examine the position for themselves and make their own contributions to a discussion of vital importance.

The writer has confined himself to discussing the staffing of public libraries because his own experience is limited to the public library field. Indeed, it would be more accurate to say "to the urban library field," as no special consideration has been given to the staffing of county libraries. Much that is said, however, applies equally to library workers of all types.

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# LIBRARY STAFFS

## CHAPTER ONE

### I

THE last few years have seen considerable development in the library services of the country. Not only are these reaching a wider public; the quality of the work done is on the average higher and the more specialized and advanced types of provision are receiving increased consideration.

We have, indeed, reached that stage when the full possibilities of librarianship may be appreciated as never before both by librarians and by those others concerned in its progress. Consequently, unless catastrophe comes to kill our future in common with that of all other civilizing forces, we may expect considerable changes and improvements during the next few years, for the post-war period has witnessed both the increase in prestige and the establishment of ideals which will give impetus for the future. We have clearer ideas, we have gained by experiments and experience, we have started to break down many of the limitations of the past. We are thus in a sound position to go ahead with our construction.

We shall not, however, succeed fully unless we face

the various problems arising from the personal element—unless we provide sufficient suitable people to undertake the work that lies before us.

This personal factor is all important. In all types of human activity it is the steady accumulation and co-ordination of the efforts of the many individuals working therein that make for progress and their shortcomings and limitations that hinder it. We cannot, therefore, usefully consider the future development of any branch of librarianship unless as a preliminary we consider how we may secure the requisite personnel. Just as an authority would be guilty of wasteful stupidity if it sought to provide buildings and stock but took no steps to engage suitable staff, so shall we be equally futile if we hope for improvement in service while neglecting the primary staffing needs.

Many of the unsatisfactory features of our present conditions are the result of past failure to provide the proper personnel.

The blame for past and present deficiencies must not, however, be laid only upon those who practise librarianship. They form only one part of the human element concerned in our work. They are the employees—the servants of the public and of the library authorities. They can only do the things that their employers do not make impossible. Their very existence as library workers is, in a sense, the result of the acts of commission and omission of their employers. They, the employers, select their employees; they limit the

field from which they shall be selected; they provide or withhold the material resources needful for their work; they give them or not the stimulation to do their best. For this reason this book is addressed as much to the members of library authorities as to librarians, for in the hands of the former lies the power to put into operation those improvements in librarianship which will prove ultimately of most benefit to the library-using public.

The responsibility, nevertheless, is a joint one in this as in all other matters. One might, in general terms, say that it is the function of the authority to provide the opportunities and resources and to lay down the broad principles of policy to be followed and the function of the librarian to get the work done in all its details. Nevertheless, it may also be said that much of the inspiration must come from the library worker. This is the natural way of things. The executive is closer to the realities of his work. The librarian is a whole-time thinker about librarianship as well as a whole-time practitioner. He should be able to exercise an influence upon the extent and nature of authority support. In fact he has always done so. Thus it is not a criticism of authorities to say that most of the progress of the past has been inspired by actual library workers; it is not criticism but praise that they should have responded to and stimulated this professional activity. Therefore we may best face the problems of library staffing in this spirit of joint responsibility. It is for

the librarians to investigate and consider what needs to be done and to present their cases, and for authorities to appreciate their ideals and give that interest and support without which little progress is possible.

## II

In the first place, let us appreciate the conditions in which our staffs have to work now and in the future.

We have paid insufficient attention to the close interrelation of staff and function. We have tended on the whole to draw into our machine such people as circumstances allowed, and then we have let them, as best they may, mould themselves to the requirements of the service. One of these things has in each case happened:

- (a) We have got someone who has proved suitable and become both an effective worker and one who, from the personal viewpoint, has found satisfaction and happiness in his work; or
- (b) We have enrolled misfits, who may or may not have done their utmost, but in either case have made neither the best of their work nor the best of themselves; or
- (c) We have secured those who, though not genuinely suitable, have not moulded themselves to library work so much as they have moulded

library work to themselves, who, in other words, have not been suited for or desirous of doing the genuine work of librarianship, but have put this aside, probably unwittingly, to do something less good that they offered as a substitute.

This last is an insidious danger because those few who accept low standards, and apparently succeed within their self-imposed limitations, must endanger the work more than the misfits and the inefficient.

Therefore we must try to think clearly about what we mean by librarianship and library service before we can decide what we need from our personnel. We cannot here attempt to propound the basic functions of the library. (The present writer has endeavoured briefly to survey some of these functions in another volume in this series entitled *Libraries and the Public*.) One point, however, is of outstanding importance. The library has many purposes and many differing types of human need to satisfy, and it must seek to neglect none and give undue preference to none. Nevertheless, in all it does it should be constructive. Its objective is the use of books—the fullest possible use of books for the fullest possible purposes. It is the handmaid of action—mental and spiritual as well as material. The active use of books, however, demands not only efficiency of technique but also an appreciation, both extensive and intensive, of the needs of people and of the nature of books. The effective librarian is able to relate books to

needs. He must be equally capable of operating over a wide field and of helping the man who digs deep in a narrow area. The future trend of librarianship—and the nature of its best present activity—is to ensure that the user who wants something may get it, that the potential user shall be encouraged to seek.

In the past the library service has suffered badly from two quite different but closely related tendencies, both chiefly due to financial limitations. On the one hand there has been the too frequent attempt to seek easy popularity, to give people with passive, even mass-produced, desires wholesale quantities of the things they sought; and, on the other hand, a “take it or leave it” attitude has been adopted usually because there was no alternative. These tendencies are fast disappearing. In the most progressive libraries they no longer operate. To-day, while not neglecting popular demands, we seek to concentrate on the more useful things, and above all on that personal service which is the basis of good librarianship.

We shall assuredly in future do more and not less of this individualized purposive work. This fact should influence profoundly our approach to staffing.

To do the popular and the “take it or leave it” kind of library work staffs will suffice which in type, quality and quantity are quite different from those needed by properly organized, properly functioning libraries. The poor quality job can be done by relatively poor quality personnel; to do a good job we need good people.

Conversely, we cannot do the good job efficiently without them.

Therefore in this matter we must take care to avoid the vicious circle which too frequently operates in all aspects of library work. For example, where books are concerned, unless we have the funds to provide sound, useful stocks we can neither offer any inducement to those of our public who would gladly use a good library nor provide any education in book use for the remainder. Yet until we can demonstrate that we are doing really useful work, it is often difficult to secure the funds with which to do it. So it is also with staff. Until we are doing the work which obviously requires adequate and ample personnel, it is not easy to show cause why it should be employed. To break the circle a little faith, foresight and fore-knowledge are sufficient. Therefore we ask our readers—and especially the members of library authorities—to view this matter not solely in the light of things as they may now be but with full consideration also of things as they should be.

### III

It is not easy to define either the precise nature of the profession of librarianship or the qualities desirable in its practitioners.

Librarianship is probably the least specialized of all professions so far as its field is concerned. We all know, in fairly accurate general terms, with what things the



doctor, the engineer, the lawyer, the teacher and the accountant have to deal, and for what purposes and in what directions they work. Their activities are clearly limited. It is not so with the librarian. His sphere of activity and his materials are almost unlimited. He is the handmaid of those engaged in all other human activities. The only "specialization" of the librarian is his knowledge of the technique of book utilization. He must know, better than those who are not librarians, how to select, arrange and make books available. But that is not the whole of his work. His technique may be specialized—though it is not entirely peculiar to his profession—but the material to which he applies it, unless he is engaged in a narrowly specialized library, is as general as it could well be. His technique remains more or less theoretical and useless unless he is able to use it to relate his resources to each and every potential use. He cannot select wisely, arrange suitably, use properly or assist others to use, unless he has some appreciation of the needs of those he has to serve. He cannot be expected to have, neither does he need, expert knowledge of the actual subject fields with which his users are concerned. That would be impossible. But he does need knowledge regarding the literature of those subjects—either direct knowledge of the material itself or (much more frequently) of the bibliographical guides to that knowledge. And he requires sufficient understanding of the needs of the user to enable him to relate the requirements of the latter to

the services of the library—in other words, to relate the non-bibliographical to the bibliographical.

Thus, to a degree not paralleled in any other profession, unless it is that of the barrister concerned with civil cases, he must be able to appreciate those elements in the case presented to him which are germane to his own task, and he must be capable of dealing with a great variety of "cases." Whether he is dealing with the advanced student or the inquiring specialist or with the humblest reader, this ability to look at his own material and methods from the viewpoint of another person is the hall-mark of the good librarian. His work, therefore, requires understanding and wide knowledge, even if it is necessarily in a sense shallow.

It may well seem that when we ask for a "good librarian" we ask for a man of not common attributes, one whom it may not be easy to find or create. That is all the more reason why we should apply ourselves to the problem of recruiting and training.

#### IV

What types of people are most suitable for library work?

Study of the kind of work they have to perform, whether they be senior officers or junior counter-hands, would surely disclose two vital and obvious factors. Firstly, library workers deal with people and with books; secondly, the greater part of library

work involves systematic arrangement and efficient method.

Note particularly the juxtaposition of those two words "people *and* books." The old idea that librarianship was a trade for "bookworms," for persons of retiring dispositions and studious tastes, was quite wrong, as it forgot the first of those words. The librarian does not deal with books as such. He deals with them in relation to the people who want them. Therefore ability to understand people, their needs and their ways of expression is essential. The library worker who cannot understand people, who does not draw from them the full and accurate statement of their needs, must act as a barrier between the reader and the books and not as a link to unite them.

The assistant engaged on assistance to readers and reference library inquirers should, therefore, possess a particular type of personality. He must be approachable and sympathetic; he must not obtrude himself; he must not only "appear" interested, he must *be* interested. Since the needs of readers are varied in the extreme his interests must be wide; he must be adaptable, quick witted, responsive and intelligent. Intelligence is more important than actual knowledge, excepting knowledge of bibliographical resources. He needs a "classificatory" mind. Apart from routine, most library work is classification, though not in the narrow sense of the textbooks. Classification, as the process of appreciating the essential nature of things

and their relationships, pervades not only the tasks of arrangement but also those of use. Needs as well as books have to be classified. Classification does not end when the books and catalogue cards have been given their schedule numbers; it only begins then, for what happens when information and books on a subject are requested is this: the need must be classified as definitely as one would classify a book—not, of course, in any notational sense but in the assistant's mind. Then, when it is clearly defined and appreciated, it is related to the bibliographical factors. Such classification is not, however, a mechanical matter; on the contrary, it is frequently so much a matter of intelligence and understanding that it is not recognized as "classification" at all. The mere mechanical classificatory processes would not carry the assistant far save where straightforward well-defined blocks of material were required. The difficulties facing the librarian who seeks to relate his material to the needs of readers arise from the fact that there are very many different ways of classifying. Only one of these can be adopted for the actual arrangement of his material. At best his material is only very partially classifiable by any scheme, since he cannot break up the unit which is the book, and there are limits to the practicable amount of analysis and classified indexing. He overcomes these difficulties in part by the intelligent relating of the system of his library and the system of his inquirer or the system appropriate to the matter in hand, and in

part by acquiring a wide knowledge of books and of the keys to books.

Assuming that a library worker possesses the right type of personality and appropriate intellectual powers, he can by study and experience both improve his technique of book utilization and acquire knowledge of his material. Conversely, however, the person who lacked the appropriate personal qualities, no matter how assiduously he acquired book knowledge, would never make a good librarian. Therefore it would seem evident that we must recruit with most regard to the personal elements.

The ability "to get on with people" is valuable in all phases of library work. All our assistants are not engaged in reader-assistance or on reference library duties. Some spend their days date-stamping books; some spend occasional evenings trying to persuade library and finance and establishment committees to provide the sinews of war. The counter-hand who is pleasant, hard to provoke, who can make each and every borrower feel that he is receiving willing service, will do much to promote the good name and smooth running of his library; the chief librarian who is not liked and respected as a man may even find his knowledge and technical equipment a disadvantage rather than an asset.

We may seem to have overstressed this point, but it cannot be over-stressed. There *are* library duties which do not involve public contacts, but on the one hand it

would be difficult and undesirable to allocate a man to one type of work throughout his career, and on the other it is possible that even those tasks, which seem exclusively "work room" and apart from public relations, may involve some understanding of human nature. For example, the assistant who has worked in public departments and can maintain proper public relationships will surely produce better cataloguing than one who has spent his life in a cataloguing room.

Ability to "get on" with others is largely a matter of normality, since the more a man is akin to others the more readily he can put himself in their place. Therefore any degree of abnormality—or, if that seems too strong a term, let us say any pronounced bias—is undesirable.

We certainly want clever people in library work, but we do not want the man who is so clever—or the reverse—that he cannot bring himself down to the level of those who are not as clever as he is—and naturally to such a person the latter will constitute most of his clients. Neither do we want those with any excessively pronounced attitude towards life or any prejudices and enthusiasms from which they cannot escape and which are strong enough to mar their judgment. It may be said that this factor is one we cannot assess at the outset of a man's career—that, for example, it is natural for youth to be opinionated. To some extent this may be true; nevertheless, in some men there is an inherent and ineradicable strain of intolerance and pig-headed-

ness, and such will never be good librarians. In any case, if we are to grow out of the faults of youth we must recognize them as such.

It is very rightly said that the librarian, as librarian, has no religion, no politics, no class sense and no morals. By this we do not suggest that the librarian should not have his own special interests in life. On the contrary, we are convinced that every one of us should have some personal specialization, if for no other reason than that the man who does not dig deeply in some field cannot properly appreciate the methods and objectives of other specialists; moreover, the specialist librarian can often contribute something individual to the professional commonwealth. But the librarian's special interests should not be such as induce limitations of sympathy; in other words, he should not come to like anything so much that he finds himself disliking something else for the sole reason that it is different. No one can prevent a librarian from having his private opinions, but he should keep them private, since in practice it is impossible for a librarian or any other public servant to dissociate himself from his work in the sight of the public. Incidentally, it is particularly undesirable for a librarian to take any active part in politics.

Physical abnormality is also highly undesirable. Defects of any kind will militate against both personal success and good service. People like to be served by pleasant-looking assistants; they are inclined to with-

draw themselves from and hesitate to make inquiries of any assistant who is not quite normal. The assistant himself is unlikely to banish self-consciousness. Good eyesight is an obvious necessity; while deafness is such a serious handicap that no one with defective hearing should ever be employed in public library work. In general, library workers need good health. Library work is strenuous and involves much more physical activity than most so-called sedentary careers. Most library workers have to endure long periods of standing and running about and much carrying and lifting, and often in an atmosphere that is not ideal. Moreover, they have often to adjust themselves to irregular hours and changing meal-times. Therefore a sound constitution and stamina are essential.

Returning from the physical to the mental, the library worker needs an orderly mind that can cope with a great deal of detail clearly and systematically. Most of his time, especially when engaged in tasks of a routine character, he is doing things where accuracy and consistency are essential, as, for example, counter duties, filing or cataloguing. He must be capable of maintaining this accuracy despite interruptions, and of remembering the principles and details of arrangements and sequences of operations, and of adapting them to constantly varying circumstances. He must be systematic but not hidebound by system.

Especially does he need a good memory. Nearly all really good library assistants known to the writer have



possessed an uncanny gift for remembering books and their contents. They retain the knowledge that, for example, certain books have passed through their hands; they can assert off-hand with a certainty that seems unjustifiable until the fact is verified that they do or do not possess a particular book; they can tell you its physical appearance perhaps. Or, once they have turned up some information required by one reader, they will remember even years afterwards where it was found. The wise assistant never relies solely upon his memory; he checks it with his catalogues, schedules and the like wherever these exist. Nevertheless, his memory can save him hours of work and increases considerably the value of the material at his disposal. Memory is largely a question of mental classification—which is perhaps why experienced assistants have good memories.

If we may now sum up our findings—we seek, when we recruit any assistant, a normal intelligent person with wide sympathies, adaptability, sociability, a logical mind, a good memory, the habit of accuracy and appreciation of the importance of detail. We discard especially the introvert, the self-centred and retiring, the muddle-headed, those unable to see the wood for the trees, the unsystematic and haphazard, those who are impatient of detail, those with bad memories, those who are easily put off their stride by interruptions, and those who cannot put themselves in another man's shoes.

We have not, up to now, used the almost hackneyed phrase "the love of books" because it is one which is usually misused. Generally, when it is said that a librarian must be a "book lover," it is implied either that he should be a keen devotee of the fine art of literature or a bibliophile, an expert in the "old and rare." He may or may not be either of these in his private capacity. Neither is necessarily an important asset where his normal work is concerned. It is one of the curious survivals from other days and other objectives to suggest that he should have a specialized knowledge of "literature." Actually a specialized knowledge of economics or geography or music might be just as useful, since the people he has to serve are just as likely to be interested in these matters. A literary bias may even be a bad thing if it causes ill-balanced book provision, or if it elevates the literary factor unduly above other elements in life. And most emphatically the bibliophile has no place in general modern public librarianship; he may become a wasteful danger.

Nevertheless, if we use the phrase "love of books" in its full and proper sense, there can be no doubt that the librarian must love books, because they are his tools, and the workman who quarrels with his tools is proverbially branded.

## CHAPTER TWO

### I

THERE are many different kinds of library work, from pasting labels in books to securing support for a programme of development, from helping one reader to find a novel and another to solve a difficult problem in applied chemistry, from keeping books in order on the shelves to ensuring that a children's library shall exert a good and not a pernicious influence upon the young mind.

All library work is part of a whole, but it is not all of a part. This consideration raises several of our major staffing problems.

It cannot be denied that routine tasks, which any reasonably intelligent person can perform with little difficulty, bulk largely in the work of any library. Perhaps 80 to 90 per cent of the actual operations carried out do not involve any qualifications or knowledge beyond what one might expect from a competent clerk. Given a well-selected stock, properly arranged and catalogued, given an efficient and businesslike service, a great part of normal library work could well be regarded as a matter of routine, of people coming and going, finding for themselves the things they need, of staff employed in matters of housewifery, record keeping and the like. Speaking quantitatively, the needs

of most readers are such that there is something radically wrong with the service and its methods if a considerable percentage require for the satisfaction of their normal requirements anything more than routine assistance. A busy modern library could not function properly if it were not capable of handling the bulk of its work on a routine basis.

But if 90 per cent is routine, the remaining 10 per cent is not. It represents individualized service to those whose requirements are in some sense special and different. Moreover, the normal machine that serves the 90 per cent—and the 10 per cent as well—has to be provided, maintained and directed.

Here, in a sense, is a distinct division of library work into two categories which may be called professional and non-professional. The professional people are those who provide and maintain the machine and those who give whatever non-routine, professional services are required by users; the non-professionals run the machine and perform its routine duties.

If we are to achieve the best possible library service and if we are to serve best the interests of all types of library worker, we must recognize this inherent differentiation between the two classes of library work and library worker. In America and in certain European countries the division is clearly marked. So far we have failed to make it, and we are suffering as a result of our neglect.

If, therefore, we devote considerable space to this

matter and introduce it at an early stage in the book, it is because we regard it as of fundamental significance. Nevertheless, we would not minimize the difficulties.

Firstly, though it may be easy to say that such a task is of a non-professional character and that another requires professional knowledge, we cannot so easily divide our personnel into the appropriate grades—even if we set aside for the moment the problem of adapting existing staffs to changed conditions.

To begin with, the professional librarian does not suddenly blossom forth with full professional qualifications. He can be taught much, but there is far more that he can only acquire by experience; and much of that experience can well be gained during the performance of non-professional tasks. We must not exaggerate this factor. The more a man can bring to his work when he leaves the student stage the less he needs to acquire by the gradual process of working as a hewer of stone and drawer of water. Experience in America has shown that the intelligent college-and-library-school trained entrant learns the routine processes much more quickly than the younger ex-high school entrant. Nevertheless, it is certain that no librarian can either come to understand the people he has to serve or acquire a basic general knowledge of material unless he has worked for some time in a relatively humble capacity in close touch with the whole, and not one section only, of the library-using public. The junior routine worker sees an aspect of the service that his

seniors do not see in the same light. Therefore, the professional worker should, for a long or a short period, serve an apprenticeship.

The second point is even more important. The contact between the library worker and the library user is not in any way clearly defined as "professional" or "non-professional." If you can divide your staff into two clear-cut categories, you cannot necessarily so divide your readers. To give an extreme case: a man might come for weeks and require only the routine services of the non-professional, and then one day might need the help of the professional. Furthermore, it may not at first be obvious, either to the reader or the staff, that the subtle distinction had arisen. Consequently there is a marginal zone. Either your non-professional must have some reserve of ability beyond his station as a routineer, or the professional must always be present. The latter is preferable, but it may mean that part of his time is spent on routine duties. Certainly the work of any department cannot be successful if it is staffed only by junior non-professionals. It is in the public departments that contacts with readers are established, where in fact the library is effective.

Too many libraries fail to do their best because too many of the contacts are made with non-professional personnel. With few exceptions lending library users, in the average British library, meet only the assistants who serve them at the counter. When they think of library workers they think of these counter assistants;

when they think of library work they think of the duties they see performed there. If they meet only unqualified routine workers, they either fail to ask for non-routine service or they ask and are disappointed. An eminent librarian once said that the best and most qualified staff should be put to work in the public departments. This is partly true, but it is partly untrue. We need a happy medium.

The size of the service point varies considerably. In a large library where several assistants, professional and non-professional, are needed on duty throughout the day the problem does not arise. In a team of ten or six or even three, one can be a professional, free to give help when needed, and may be fully occupied on reader-assistance. Difficulty arises when, as in a small branch, only one or two are on duty at times, for even in the humblest circumstances some professional guidance will sometimes be called for. It is a fallacy to assume that the smaller the library or department the less the ability we should demand in our staff. If anything, the average quality of the staff of a small library should be higher and not lower. Yet it is probable that the smaller the place the more limited, relatively, its financial resources, and consequently the less the attractions offered to personnel. It does not follow in practice that the largest libraries are the best staffed and vice versa. On the contrary, some of our best librarianship is being done to-day in relatively small places, but that is because the librarians of

medium and large libraries often seek their first experience in these smaller places, and thus often give them their best years and first enthusiasms, because there are good men content with the more intimate and varied opportunities of the smaller library, because our system of staffing does not give sufficient opportunities for movement, and because there are compensations. That, however, is a digression.

We began this section with the proposition that library staffs should be divided into two types, and we started the discussion by surveying some of the difficulties—that the professional worker should have the opportunity to appreciate the whole of the work, that a proportion of professional assistance must always be on duty at service points, and that in a small place this may be difficult to secure.

We face this matter, however, from no mere academic standpoint, with no desire to introduce a change of system for its own sake. On the contrary, we have two closely related objectives: firstly, that the work of our libraries shall be performed efficiently and without waste at all stages from the simplest to the most difficult and in all types of library, and secondly that the individual worker shall be properly related to his tasks both present and future, that he shall have ample opportunity to utilize his abilities and shall secure adequate returns for his services.

In what way will this proposal help?



## II

Librarianship is in no way different from a great many other occupations, in that it has to employ on tasks of varying difficulty people with different degrees of experience and qualification.

A ship has its cabin boys and deck hands, its A.B.s, petty officers, lieutenants and captain; a business firm, its office boys, junior and senior clerks, accountants, managers and the like. We do not want to exaggerate the importance of this aspect of library staffing, but we cannot ignore its implications.

Firstly, there is progressively less scope for employment the higher the grade of work. Consequently a large proportion of library workers cannot reasonably expect to proceed beyond certain grades. Consequently we must ensure that those who are thus restricted by circumstance shall yet achieve adequate and sufficient salaries and conditions of service, and we must guard against bringing into the junior grades too many people who are capable of going further than circumstances will permit, since to do so will breed discontent, disappointment and maladjustment.

Secondly, we have to adjust our financial resources to the best advantage. Too much spent on junior staff may leave too little for professional, and vice versa.

Considering the present state of librarianship and the fact that, saving in a few places, none of the staff are adequately rewarded, this point may seem to have

little immediate significance. Actually we could all quote instances where failure to differentiate between professional and non-professional, coupled with the operation of schemes of promotion and seniority based solely upon length of service, have led to waste and inefficiency. We cannot undo the past and we would not legislate against individuals, but the fact remains that there are many instances where people with non-professional abilities are receiving what pass as professional rewards, and as a result better qualified but younger people are precluded from achieving professional status. Much more important, any campaign for better conditions, local or national, which is based upon the value of professional ability must be stronger than if this factor is not given its full weight. We cannot, in justice, ask for professional rewards for any individuals or sections of a staff when it is evident that the duties they perform are such as a non-professional could perform. Equally the suggestion that the non-professional worker of to-day *may* later achieve professional status and rewards is often a facile excuse for not paying him adequate wages as a non-professional.

Thirdly, the prestige of librarianship suffers from our failure to discriminate. It is obvious to any onlooker that there is much routine to be done; it is absurd and prejudicial to suggest that those who do it are necessarily actual or potential professionals. If we do not ourselves make the distinction, we cannot expect others to do so. It is ridiculous for us to assert that most

library work is of a professional character when anyone with two eyes can see that it isn't.

The Americans have accepted the position. As a general practice their staffs are divided into librarians and clerks (or attendants, pages or whatever term they use to designate non-professionals). As a result, every professional worker is readily accepted as such because he or she is doing professional work and has undergone professional training. In England we have in the past adopted, almost invariably, a reverse process. We have staffed our libraries with boys and girls fresh from secondary—and formerly from elementary—schools; they have started as stampers of books and stickers of labels; some of them have gradually and with much effort acquired professional status for themselves and for their work. No finer testimonial could possibly be given to any body of workers than to note how many library workers have succeeded so admirably in making librarianship a true profession. It is indeed a remarkable achievement. That, however, does not entirely compensate for the cost to those who have succeeded, and still more to those who have not.

A better system is overdue.

What is the better system we advocate? As already stated, its basis is a fairly definite division of staff into professional and non-professional. This, however, is not only a question of grading and nomenclature. It means that we have to relate the allocation of duties to the new system, that we have to adopt two different

and appropriate methods of recruitment and education; it means also that we have to provide proper safeguards for both types of worker, so that whatever we may seek to do to promote the interests of one section we may do nothing to prejudice the other, but shall keep in mind throughout the general well-being of the service. Moreover, since the process will inevitably be a gradual one, we must consider how best it may be promoted and carried out.

### III

If we accept the desirability of separation, upon what factors shall this be based?

May we, as a first question, ask whether we need different types of person for professional and non-professional work? The answer is surely "No." Our previous study of the personal qualities desirable in library workers would indicate that, fundamentally, the same sort of ability and temperament is necessary throughout the scale of library work. The difference is one of degree rather than kind.

Any idea that for junior work we can employ people with low educational attainments—of the porter, messenger boy, shop girl type—is potentially wrong. All our assistants are in contact with the public and need to be presentable, intelligent and adaptable. The humblest library duties are far removed from low-grade employment. It is on similar grounds that all thinking

librarians deplore the practice, sometimes still to be found, of employing uneducated "evening assistants" or lads from elementary schools who serve for a year or two until they are old enough to be absorbed into industry.

Let it be quite clear, therefore, that when we speak of non-professionals we do not descend to extremes. We refer to people of at least the calibre of quite a majority of those who at present enter our service. The present secondary school with school-leaving certificate standards should certainly be maintained for all entrants. We imply, instead of any lowering of standards, the more deliberate selection from the general ranks of those of greater ability and their purposive education for professional work, and also the introduction of a higher percentage of people with more than school-leaving standard of education. Therefore the professional workers will not be different from the non-professional excepting that they have a keener intelligence, a better faculty for acquiring and utilizing knowledge and greater willingness to accept responsibility, that they shall have more leadership, administrative ability, imagination and vision, more enthusiasm and ambition and more pronounced personality.

At present all but a handful of our senior workers have been drawn from the ranks of those whom we may call non-professionals. For many years this practice will have to continue. At no time, whatever the facilities for recruiting people of superior education

may be, must it be difficult for a suitable person to proceed beyond non-professional grades. It may be that a good many years hence we shall have a system comparable with that in America, where there seems to be a sufficiency of graduates with library school training. At this step we shall not consider the suitability or otherwise of this system for England. The fact remains that salaries and prospects will have to be greatly improved before we can attract sufficient suitable graduates.

We shall best appreciate our suggested policy if we treat it in two stages. To begin with—while conditions remain as they are, or while they are being slowly improved—we shall continue to recruit the bulk of our staff from the secondary schools, securing in part people who will make capable non-professionals (the type who, had they not gone into a library, might well have taken up such occupations as clerical work in other local government offices or business firms or clerical civil service posts) and in part those with professional potentialities. For the former we must seek to secure satisfactory conditions comparable with what they would have earned elsewhere; to the latter we must give the best available professional training.

To both groups the prospects at the time of recruitment may remain undefined. There will be no question of some being regarded as future non-professionals and others as future professionals. That is a matter that their first few years' service will indicate. Those who

are capable will qualify for and pass into professional grades; the remainder will either prove unsuitable for this or will recognize their own limitations and be content in an appropriate sphere.

This, one might say, is much the system at present in vogue. It is and it is not. In a few libraries it actually operates; in the majority it does not, firstly because the maximum grade available to the non-professional is far too low so that very many unsuitable people are compelled to seek, often in vain, to achieve professional qualifications; secondly, because the facilities for professional training are inadequate; thirdly, because in many libraries the proportion of those recruited who are likely to be suitable for professional work is too small because the inducements are inadequate; and fourthly, professional efficiency is not yet invariably essential for promotion to senior grades as qualification bars are not always operating.

We are aware that we shall be criticized for this statement—but taking the field as a whole, we do not recruit a sufficiency of potential professionals, and as a consequence we have tended to employ upon professional duties and designate as professionals many who have not either the requisite ability or training.

At a second stage we shall recruit more deliberately. When our non-professional grades are good enough they will attract the appropriate people without any adventitious and often fallacious inducements. Just as many people now deliberately choose to become clerks

or shorthand-typists or any of the many black-coated and, if the false phrase may be forgiven, black-frocksed careers which have obvious salary limitations of say £250 to £300 for men and £200 to £250 for women—limitations coupled with reasonable certainty of achieving them—so will they choose to become non-professional library workers. The door will always be open for them to become professionals, and many professionals will be recruited from their ranks. The remainder, however, will be selected from those who enter the library with professional intentions—whom we shall select with this in mind. We shall be able to offer greater prospects, and so attract more of a better type. We shall probably seek a higher proportion of those who have stayed longer at school and passed, perhaps, the senior examinations. We shall make room for more graduates. We shall be able to accommodate some who have had, as is the American practice, some library-school training.



## CHAPTER THREE

### I

LET us take the non-professionals—especially the non-professionals of our present system—and consider what is needed to convert them into professionals.

Four things are necessary:

- (a) The chance to appreciate the traditions and ideals of true librarianship;
- (b) A wide variety of experience;
- (c) Education in the technique of library work; and
- (d) Opportunity to acquire and broaden and strengthen their general education and understanding.

Our present system falls short of providing for these needs.

Consider the case of the average youngster. On leaving school he goes into a particular library by chance, because his parents happen to be living in that town. It may be a good library—in which case the first need may be met. He may, equally, go into a bad library, so that his ideas of librarianship are distorted at the outset. If it is a really bad library, he may well have to serve a life sentence there because he will get little encouragement to fit himself to leave it, and even if he did fit himself the bad reputation of the library might ruin his chances. Again, even if he did enter a

good library, it might be one in which the service was limited in scope. For example, it may be a small isolated town, where his chances to see something of the "larger librarianship" would be nil; conversely, he may enter a very big system where, if the danger had not been foreseen by a wise chief, he might drift into a rut and spend his time on a circumscribed set of duties as a mere cog in a big wheel. Incidentally—as a general rule with many exceptions—the wise recruit who was fortunate enough to be able to choose his first library would be well advised to select a good medium-sized institution.

However, whatever his chances may be in relation to the first two factors—of ideas and experience—he would find himself compelled to study for his professional qualifications in his so-called "spare time." In other words, if he wants to "get on" he has to sacrifice a great many of the recreational and intellectual leisure pursuits that would have helped him to grow into a whole, well-balanced, sociable man, and instead he has to grind hard at a narrow, purely vocational programme of studies. He may therefore satisfy the third of our four needs, but only at the expense of the fourth. The writer is one who believes fervently in the necessity for adequate professional technical ability; but he believes equally in the importance of those vague but vital qualities one may nominate as general knowledge, culture, broad-mindedness, or common or garden normal interests. You can't have it both ways

under our present system. If you make a man devote the whole of his time to swotting literature, you can't expect him to enjoy it; if you make him learn classification schedules and cataloguing codes, you can't expect him to spend his non-working hours acquiring a general appreciation of the things he has to classify and catalogue; if you keep him indoors with his nose to the textbook, you cannot expect sociability.

Nevertheless, we believe that there is a better way. We could, for example, so arrange matters that his purely technical studies were concentrated into, say, one whole year's attendance at a library school—or one term for each of three years. Then he could use the spare time of his other years to improve his general education. This is by no means impracticable, as we hope to show later. There is no real reason why we should not go further and give him a period of full-time study of some non-professional subject or a course in public administration. It would be no more difficult, given the will, to widen his experience by organized exchanges of assistants and easier interchanges in the junior grades between library and library. If we are too hidebound and pessimistic, we shall never do the things that should surely be done. Certainly we can give in one or two years' full-time study at a library school as much as can be gained by six or seven years' part-time study. The Americans do it; so does our London University School. Why should it not be general?

It may be objected that study without experience is unsatisfactory, that the man who studies part time while he is working is securing better results. This may or may not be true—but is there any reason why some practical experience should not be gained *before* whole-time studies are started, so that experience would serve as a background to theoretical teaching and so make it more valuable?

At present professional studies start too soon. There are three reasons for this—they take the part-time student so long that unless he starts early he may still be “cramming” when he is, if he has sufficient fortitude, a father with a family; his chances of promotion are too much dependent upon the certificates he can secure; and the rewards of the unqualified are too low.

No assistant entering a library from school should start his purely technical studies until he and his employers are reasonably satisfied that he is fitted to benefit and really suitable for the career. Neither should he start until he knows enough about library work to understand what his tutors are telling him.

Youth is the time when facts are easily assimilated and habits are formed, but when it is as yet difficult to fit the facts to their uses and to understand their implications. The beginner may be just as keen, just as full of ideas, just as sensible—even, in the way of youth, as wise—as his elders; but there are many things to which experience alone can give meaning. There are other things which one will naturally and, given

opportunity, inevitably learn from experience and which it is a waste of time to try and teach theoretically; there are things which only experience can teach; and there are matters which no one needs to learn because they are always readily available.

If we examined our present syllabus of professional education in the light of the preceding paragraph, we should not be satisfied with it. Much of it is the stuff that experience would teach better than study; often it involves the memorization of facts that are in the books every librarian keeps on his desk; frequently it asks for knowledge of matters that do not come within the purview of a worker until he has reached an age when he has forgotten his examinations. No better proof of the truth of this criticism could be found than the bi-annual statement of those who fail in the Library Association's Examination in classification. These failures are largely due to the fact that most of those who sit for this examination in a purely professional subject are not and never will be of professional calibre. The rest fail because most of the theoretical side is utterly unreal, whereas for the adequate practice of classification one needs a wide knowledge of a peculiar type that can only be acquired by many years of work in a particular educational institution, to wit, a library—for a library *is* an educational institution as much for the staff as for the public and, for certain staff training purposes, a much more appropriate school than any other.

To return to our main theme. We must not allow our young entrants to stop studying, because study should be easier for those who still have the habit of study acquired at school, and because they might as well understand from the outset that, unless they are prepared to study, librarianship has little to offer. We should, however, encourage study of the things that will be of most advantage. One might go further and suggest that an entrant should, at least in part, study matters that would not be useless but advantageous were he to decide before long that he did not want to continue in library work. No lad can know what he wants to be for life until he has started to be it. He should be able, therefore, to change his mind before it is too late. In practice very few recruits do leave—usually because they don't want to, but not infrequently because, by encouraging them to embark on library studies too soon, we make them more reluctant and less able to change; therefore, the proper studies for a youngster—apart from some general preliminary instruction in the nature of library work—would be in those parts of a library worker's equipment which are common to other occupations, such as foreign languages, geography, history, business methods, type-writing and the inculcation of the widely acceptable habits of accuracy, neatness, common sense and logical method.

According to the age of entry and other circumstances, two, three or even four years might be thus

spent. Then the quality of the assistant could be assessed with reasonable accuracy. He may not have proved suitable and could be diverted to another career. Otherwise he may or may not have shown himself capable of becoming a professional worker. If so, his professional studies may begin in earnest. If not, he should be given appropriate training for non-professional work.

## II

The educational and examinational work of the Library Association has played a most important part in the development of the library service and profession. Indeed, it would not be an exaggeration to say that it has been a decisive, dominant factor. It has helped not only to bring better material to the work and to give it a better equipment so that every phase of the work has been performed with greater enthusiasm, efficiency, and success; it has converted librarianship into a profession, and the influence of professional prestige has been even more beneficial to the work than to the personnel. No criticism we may make, therefore, must be taken to imply any lack of sincere appreciation of this work. Neither would we minimize the worth of the Association's diplomas or the efforts of those who have passed its examinations. On the contrary, as will be seen, the basis of our criticism is that the Association examinations are too difficult for many of those who

at present take them, *having regard to the conditions under which they must study.*

The examinations of the Library Association are the only examinations in librarianship conducted in this country, excepting those of the London University School of Librarianship which are solely for its own internal students. The Library Association Examinations are in three parts—Elementary, Intermediate and Final. The first consists of simple papers in English literary history, elementary cataloguing and classification and elementary library administration. The Intermediate comprises papers in classification and cataloguing; there are no further examinations in these subjects, and the standard is high. In fact the word "Intermediate" is a misnomer, as the examination is really part—and a difficult part—of the Final. This last covers literary history, bibliography and book selection, and advanced library administration (with various specialized alternatives). The Final is not on the whole unsatisfactory, except that it does not include the subjects of the Intermediate; it is a good general examination and covers a great deal of ground. Considerable knowledge and study is involved, and probably most of those who pass it are of professional type. The Elementary serves to disclose those who will surely never be able to pass any other examinations, but offers little proof that the others will. It is, however, well adapted as a preliminary test for youngsters in their teens—assuming that there is any need to test them.



The Intermediate Examination has been rightly criticized; it is unsuitable for those who have to take it. An Intermediate Examination should be either a half-way stage for those engaged in full professional studies or an examination suitable for those who prefer, or are likely to be obliged, to remain in work of an "intermediate" character—in, say, the better type of non-professional duties. One examination might indeed serve both these purposes, because on the one hand the professional worker should be acquainted with and qualified to perform any type of non-professional work; and on the other, if the Intermediate Examination is a step to the Final, the candidate who takes it will not, as might otherwise be the case, be making a definite decision in favour of non-professionalism.

The obvious unsuitability of the present Intermediate Examination—which, it must be said in fairness to those responsible, is the last remaining result of transition from an earlier system—is fully recognized by the Library Association Council. A revised syllabus, which materially improved its character, was put forward two or three years ago, but was rejected for other reasons. A further revision is now being prepared. Naturally we cannot discuss its possible provisions, but obviously the Council will seek to remove the bad features of the present syllabus.

We cannot too strongly urge the need for educational and examinational provision for the non-professional, as well as the professional, workers. In the past we

have concentrated upon the training of the professional and paid no heed to those who had no need, or were unsuitable, for this. Yet since, despite this deficiency, examination certificates have been increasingly necessary to all but the most junior, the non-professional has been compelled to enter the lists. Apart from any other factor, this has led to criticisms that the examinations were "too difficult." They *are* too difficult for those for whom they should not have been intended.

Up to now it is probable that this criticism has not led to any serious lowering of standards, but the danger will remain until we revise our syllabus.

### III

No examination syllabus should, however, be regarded as definitive. Examinational bodies must always take cognizance of past and present conditions, of the position of the numerous students who are part way through their studies, of the need to equate past, present and future examinations. This is unfortunate because examinations tend to be conservative and to fix conditions of education, status and service, and it should be the other way about. Examinations should be the servant and not the master.

Consequently we may well face the possibility of doing without them altogether, at least on a national basis. This is not an impossible suggestion. Examinations are essentially intended to provide evidence that

a person has gone with advantage through a prescribed course of study—that he is capable of learning and understanding the field of the examination and of expressing the results of his studies.

Examinations have serious limitations. They provide no evidence of character and personality. They are largely tests of a particular kind of memory. It is difficult to make them tests either of experience or of genuine understanding. Criticisms of examinations are sometimes carried too far by those who assert that people who fail to pass them are often as good and as well equipped as many who do. This is a very doubtful contention. The man who cannot pass examinations after proper study is probably in some way deficient—perhaps in memory, perhaps in control of his nerves, or in powers of verbal expression. No librarian choosing staff would agree that these things did not matter. Yet there are probably other and maybe compensating qualities which are not aids to the passing of examinations and which are thus not indicated by success. In any case the story is an incomplete one.

Turn instead to the conditions applicable to a really good training institution, such for example as a library school. It would not admit a student who had not got the essential preliminary equipment or who was unsuitable temperamentally or physically. Throughout the course the student would be watched by his tutors. Undesirable characteristics such as carelessness, laziness, lack of interest or disloyalty would be noticed.

To a considerable degree the student would work under conditions not entirely foreign to the normal conditions of team and individual professional work. The curriculum would be properly designed to cover essentials. Such internal examinations as were conducted would test ability to express in writing, whereas ability to express in spoken words and the ability to think would be tested in class and seminar. The good teaching institution would not, at the end, give its imprimatur to students unlikely to make good in later work, as it would not only have regard for its own reputation but also have a sense of responsibility to the profession. For our own part we would prefer to accept a man who had passed through such a school than one who had just passed such and such examinations.

If we accept this viewpoint, we must be prepared to face a departure from our present single Procrustean examinational bed. Clearly it would be absurd to compel our teaching institutions to become mere cramming schools. We must therefore be willing to accept, as evidence of training, satisfactory attendance at an accredited school. The time may come when the rôle of the Library Association may be that of examining schools and not scholars. They have reached something akin to that position in America, where there is no Register of Professional Librarians like our own. They maintain instead a register of accredited teaching institutions, and by implication those who

have passed through them are properly trained so far as institutions can train them. Our Register, of course, goes further than that, requiring some amount of practical experience in addition to the passing of examinations. For us a register is essential if for no other reason—and there are many others—than that it is the British practice to register professional men of all types. Our registration system must be strengthened, not weakened. It is probable that it would become more valuable if it were based less upon set examinations and more upon the quality of education and the type of service.

Clearly, however, we have a long way to go before the Library Association can cease to examine—if ever that time comes entirely. We have as yet no adequate educational system to accredit.

#### IV

The facilities for education in librarianship are sadly inadequate.

We have only one full-time teaching institution—the London University School of Librarianship at University College. This school is doing good work; its tuition is sound and the curriculum comprehensive. But the majority of the full-time students are graduates or non-graduates who have not yet had any practical experience. More important, the public library service as at present organized seems unable to absorb more

than a handful of the students. The remainder go into other types of libraries, including many special institutions with limited prospects. A few assistants living in the London area take part-time courses in preparation for the Library Association Examinations.

All other library assistants—and there are probably over two thousand studying librarianship at any time—must either attend one or other of the courses held at polytechnics and the like or take the correspondence courses of the Association of Assistant Librarians.

We have nothing but praise and gratitude for those who are maintaining these educational facilities, limited though they may be. Nevertheless, no one could be satisfied with this state of affairs.

To take first the various classes. The tutors are all library workers engaged in full-time duties who undertake this work in their spare time, sometimes for the sake of the small fees to be gained, more often from genuine enthusiasm and the desire to help their younger brethren to the best of their ability. Some are good; others are just the best that are available. The latter may know their subjects—but there is more in teaching than that. As things are at present in England we can hardly expect to get sufficient good tutors. Tutorial work has so little to offer; and there is no place where anyone can learn the job of teaching. There are only two whole-time teachers of librarianship in the whole country. Furthermore, attendance at classes is on the whole wasteful. Only a few students can be so situated

that attendance is easy. For others there is an expenditure of time, in coming and going and setting aside times for attendance, quite disproportionate to the benefits of perhaps an hour's tuition. It would seem only sensible that, if a student must rely upon classes attended in spare time, he should have at least a half day's or a day's tuition there while he is about it. But, as we shall elaborate shortly, odd-hour, part-time tuition is a bad system.

As for the correspondence courses, it is by no means easy to teach librarianship by post. Parts of the curriculum are easier to teach than others, but for the greater part the value of the course is proportionate to the student's access to local resources. One might, for example, assist a student of bibliography if he worked in a library where all the material he needed to examine personally was available. In practice many, if not most, students have no such advantages. The libraries in which they work are small or unsatisfactory. Their correspondence courses, therefore, can only deal theoretically and partially with things with which they can have little practical contact. We are not criticizing the A.A.L. courses. In justice to those who conduct them, it must be said that no effort has been spared to make them as useful as possible, but the best organization and teaching cannot overcome the inherent difficulties. You cannot teach a man how to play the piano if he hasn't a piano on which to play.

One further shortcoming of our educational system

should be noted before we pass to practical proposals for reform. It is this. Until we have a clearer idea of the division of personnel into professional and non-professional, there can be no similar division of either students or examinees. As it is, all sorts and conditions of people study and sit for examinations—some of them the professional leaders of to-morrow, some of them people with very limited abilities and prospects. Thus we endeavour to seek a common denominator in tuition and examinations which shall be good enough for potential professionals, yet not too difficult for non-professionals. We need not be surprised if we do not succeed.

## V

We may now envisage a better educational system.

To summarize, our needs are (*a*) full-time tuition, for a reasonable period, for potential professionals, and consequently, (*b*) a properly equipped body of professional tutors, (*c*) proper training for non-professionals and (*d*) opportunity for both types to work in good libraries for at least a short period. Furthermore, (*e*) we need facilities for advanced studies.

We must, throughout our discussion, bear in mind the difficulties of a long transition period and the position of those assistants, proportionately numerous, who are in small and isolated libraries.

Let us first suggest a reasonably satisfactory scheme,



and then consider the gradual steps by which we might reach it.

Conditions in America, though not of a character completely to meet our needs, afford useful guidance. Further information is given in the recent Library Association publication, *A Survey of Libraries*. In brief, in America there are a number of accredited library schools which between them train most of the professional workers; several of the big systems maintain training classes which, though they are primarily for their own staffs, often accept others, and there are examples of correspondence tuition allied to some amount, perhaps small, of oral work.

Many of our needs would be met if we had:

- (a) Three or four full-time professional schools.
- (b) A number of training centres for non-professionals and for intermediate students (and to function in place of the full-time schools until these were operating).
- (c) One school where teachers of librarianship were trained.
- (d) Facilities for advanced work; and
- (e) Provision, during the transitional period, for those who were unable to attend schools or training centres.

Each full-time school would probably be best established at a university because of the facilities for teaching non-technical, allied subjects and because of

the general advantage of association with institutions devoted to and experienced in higher, professional teaching. Nevertheless, there must be the closest association with a good and extensive public library—in addition to the university's own library—so that there are ample facilities for practical work.

The London University School is, on the whole, a good example of the sort of professional school we need, though naturally each of those which might later be established in the provinces would adopt its own appropriate arrangements. For example, practical experience is given at London by three periods, each of a week, spent at various libraries in the region; the provincial school could doubtless arrange to ally this experience more definitely to the class work and spread it throughout the course.

In any case, for a few years to come we are unlikely to have a second full-time school, and it behoves us to make the utmost use of its potential service to the profession. At present its general value is limited, partly because we have not yet devised a system which would enable people already in library work to attend, partly because we are not yet able to absorb many graduate students. If we were to overcome the first problem, it would seem necessary for the school to devise a single year non-graduate course.

We have no examples in this country of the Training Centre. The chief differences between this and the full-time professional schools—apart from the neces-

sarily more limited objectives—are, firstly, that the Training Centre provides a shorter course (of, say, a term's duration, though there are modifications—see later) and that it is usually established at a library. The Training Centre may offer training for professional workers, though with a fully developed educational system this would be given in full-time professional schools, but its primary purpose would be that of giving sound instruction for non-professionals. What we envisage is a complete combination of tuition and of practical work. Some of the students would be members of the staff of the library at which the centre was conducted; the remainder would be from other, and mostly smaller, libraries, and one of the virtues of the centre would be that it provided such young people with the opportunity to gain wider experience. For non-professional workers a long course is not necessary. We must always remember that part-time private study and class attendance is wasteful and slow. The intensive study given at a good centre should give as good a grounding in general routine and essential knowledge in three months devoted solely to this purpose as may be gained in several years' part-time work.

The Training Centre would also serve as a preliminary for many professional students. As before said, we must not set up any artificial obstacles in the way of the able assistant. Some of the professional type of assistants of the future would, as already indicated, pass straight into the professional school after their

initial years of service; others would pass there direct from universities. But a considerable proportion would go first to a training centre and there prove their suitability for professional work.

The teachers at the centre would be members of the library staff who had received special training for the work (see later). One person at least might well give his whole time to the work (at least during term) and act as director, or, in other words, as the person in charge of staff training. This is the practice at one typical American school, where this whole-time teacher gives most of the instruction, being assisted by specialists and by those who give occasional lectures to supplement the main classes. The pupils spend their mornings at class work, their afternoons or evenings working as ordinary young members of the staff in the various departments. At one such library all entrants to the staff are required to attend this school; they are engaged on the understanding that they will be given permanent posts only if satisfactory and when vacancies occur, but they are paid half salary on account of the actual library work they do.

These training centres must obviously be established in really good, up-to-date libraries where the best practice may be studied and the broadest ideals instilled. This is the primary consideration. The libraries need not be the largest, but they must be sufficiently large on the one hand to cover a wide range of activity, and on the other hand to absorb a number of student

workers. For this latter reason no centre can cope with many students. Consequently we need several centres. The ideal is that there shall be no more students than can be given full personal attention by the teachers and ample practical experience, and yet sufficient to reduce the cost of tuition per student to a reasonable minimum.

The advantages of such schools and training centres as we envisage would be immeasurable. In time, even if all library workers were not able to benefit, there would be a powerful leaven, spread throughout the country in libraries large and small, of men and women who were not only better qualified for their work but also gifted with a better understanding of its potentialities. So many of the manifest deficiencies of our service are due to the opposite state of affairs—to ill-trained personnel, insularity, limited outlook and lack of knowledge—that we should surely consider whether this educational programme can be given reality or whether it must remain the dream of idealists.

We cannot deny the existence of difficulties. Can they not, however, be overcome with the assistance of progressive library authorities and the impetus of a far-seeing profession?

## VI

The three major difficulties are: how can we finance these educational institutions, how can we arrange for

students to attend and how can we provide efficient tuition. Let us take them one by one.

At present the onus for maintaining the professional staffing of our libraries rests largely upon the actual people who are seeking professional status. In other words, the amount of professional service that libraries can give the public is directly proportionate to the number of people who, of their own volition, seek professional qualifications. It may be said, with strictly limited truth, that these people receive their reward in due course, and that therefore this is a reasonable allocation of responsibility. But it may be said, equally, that even if the library worker is looking after his own interests when he makes himself competent, he is also by so doing making a good library service possible, and thus brings benefit to all those for whom such a service is of value. There are parallels. It may be said that the doctor, lawyer or architect has to find his own equipment, and when he has found it, is of value to the community. There is the essential difference, however, that he has more to expect by way of reward and recompense. When a community needs professional service, it can choose between two courses—it can let those who will do so acquire professional skill and then be compelled to pay them whatever they can get, or it can assist them in their studies and then award them reasonable but adequate returns. In the long run the latter may well be the more satisfactory and economical system. Certainly it is not inappropriate to the con-

ditions of the library service. A useful parallel is that of the school teacher who is given sometimes a free professional education, otherwise much financial and other assistance.

The claims of library workers are not less valid. On the whole, and in proportion to ultimate rewards, they receive less assistance than any comparable category of professional worker.

Let us consider the financial basis of our previous proposals in the light of this contention.

To take the training classes first. Would it be unreasonable to ask local authorities to bear the cost? As it is now, our youngsters have to be trained in their own libraries. Too often this training is unsatisfactory and unsystematic, but whether it just consists of helping the lad to "pick up" his job or whether there are proper classes under a senior member of the staff, it is done "in library time"—that is to say, at the expense of the library authority. That, however, is an argument of relatively little weight. The right one is that an assistant after proper training should be more efficient, and so give better value to his employer. One could not, of course, so measure the improvement, but 5 per cent increased efficiency over a period of five years would practically cover an absence of three months at a training centre—and 5 per cent would be a modest improvement to expect. To the cost of loss of service must be added that of tuition and attendance. In general one might well regard this also as a legitimate

and useful expenditure by the employing authority, but in the case of some smaller or less fortunately placed libraries the assistant concerned might be asked to help bear the cost. We do not desire that things should be made too easy for students, yet they should not be made too difficult, and it would not be impossible to organize a scheme of scholarships or loans when other means failed. Obviously where attendance at one- or two-year courses at professional schools is concerned, the share to be borne by the student must, in reason, be greater—though it should never be impossible for the really good assistant, no matter how poor he may be, to secure training.

In passing, one might answer an objection that is often heard—that an authority cannot be expected to assist a person who, when he has undergone his training and is better qualified for promotion, is likely to leave its service and go elsewhere. The answer, surely, is that, in the long run when once the practice is general, that authority is as likely as not itself to secure the services of someone who has been trained at the expense of another authority. Once better training and more equitable conditions of service are usual, there will be more frequent and beneficial movement of staff.

To return to our main theme, however. Even if authorities are willing to grant leave of absence with pay and to pay (or help pay) the fees, it is unlikely



that the latter will defray the whole, or even a large part, of the expenses of training.

One might assume that in the case of a training centre the library authority organizing it might reasonably bear such proportion of the cost (which would be chiefly the salaries of teaching staff) as was devoted to training its own staff. For students not on its staff it would receive reasonable tuition fees. There would remain a balance to be met from another source. Similarly one might assume that in the case of the whole-time professional schools the universities concerned would, as in the case of the London school, make considerable grants from general funds, including moneys derived from the Government under the Universities Grants Commission scheme. Even so, special assistance might be necessary.

We come therefore to the solution suggested some two or three years ago, when the Library Association's recommendations were adopted which authorized the Council to seek Government grants for the assistance of accredited training institutions. The sum involved, especially at first, would be small indeed, the benefits considerable. The L.A. Council should undoubtedly press the claims of the service for this assistance, but any action it may take will be strengthened if library authorities and librarians will promptly and seriously consider such proposals as are here presented and will formulate a progressive policy for professional education. We are much more likely to obtain assistance if

we can say with some definiteness what we require and why, than if we wait upon the offer of grants for nebulous educational schemes.

Compared with this financial problem, our other difficulties are slight, given intelligent and willing co-operation. Take the question of how assistants may be enabled to attend long courses. When libraries are adequately staffed, all large and medium-sized places should be able to release the small number necessary without dislocating the normal service. In fact, in a larger establishment it may well be assumed that on an average one, two or more assistants will always be away at school or centre; thus the establishment could be increased accordingly. With smaller institutions this would not be practicable, and for these—and for all libraries during the transition period—some type of temporary replacement might be devised. There are several forms this could take. For example, if small Library A sent an assistant to training centre Library B, the latter might send one of its own staff to Library A in temporary exchange. Even if, as might be likely, Library A was not as good as Library B, this assistant would gain useful experience; his presence might well be beneficial to Library A. If the assistant from Library A spent half his time in actual work, and if at the same time there was at the centre another student from a library that did not need replacement, also working half-time, Library B would be no worse off.

Or again, if there were at a professional school

graduates or others who did not already hold positions on any staff, these could on the completion of the course act as substitutes for those in library service desiring to attend the school. The former would at least be better occupied than in doing nothing while they waited for an opening. Clearly some sort of financial adjustment would sometimes be necessary, and at first such schemes might need assistance either from Government grants or from, say, a Library Association educational fund.

Taking a long view, the time would come when the whole body of libraries was maintaining permanently a sufficient surplus of personnel to permit constant successive attendance at schools. When this state existed there would be few difficulties in the way of arranging exchanges. Until that time comes, we must encourage the gradual increase of individual examples of faith in a far-sighted policy. Once the scheme got going, it would act in snowball fashion.

The Library Association therefore would be justified in making some sacrifices for an initial period. Or, if the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust could be induced to add to its many benefactions assistance for an initial educational programme, much might be achieved. The Carnegie Corporation has expended immense sums on similar purposes in America, and the benefits are already patent. For example, if the Library Association were to organize, say, two provincial training centres, the C.U.K.T. might be asked to make good the deficit on

running them and to pay grants towards the cost of attendance (perhaps in proportion to the sums contributed by the authorities and students themselves) of some dozen or so assistants each term, chosen because on the one hand they showed ability, and on the other they worked in libraries where good general experience was difficult to obtain.

We say it, not in criticism of the C.U.K.T., but in condemnation of our own people, who have displayed little constructive initiative in educational matters—but the fact remains that the C.U.K.T. has done—and been asked to do—nothing for professional education excepting the grants to the London University School which served to establish it on a firm and valuable, if limited, basis.

The training of the few teachers needed for this work should not prove a difficult matter. Nevertheless, it should be undertaken for various reasons. Firstly, even the best “natural” teacher can learn something of the technique and ideals of tutorial work by attending an established school and studying its methods and problems. And we shall probably need to employ some who are not of that calibre and for whom systematic training will make all the difference between success and failure. Teaching, of all activities, should not be amateurish; too much depends on its efficiency. Secondly, attendance at a recognized school will help to secure that amount of uniformity which is desirable. Rigid standardization would be most dangerous, but

there is a happy medium; pupils who are studying for the same kind of work and preparing for the same examinations (so long as these remain) will benefit from the adoption of common standards and basic methods of tuition. Thirdly, in this matter of teaching there is a parallel with the wider field of professional qualifications: that is to say, we want some sort of qualifications for teachers as a means of securing recognition for their work, and conversely to discourage the employment of unqualified people.

We must recognize that teaching will never be a distinct career for more than a handful of librarians. Consequently no person of sufficient ability would be likely to forsake practical librarianship for tutorial work if this decision meant a burning of boats. Therefore we envisage the tutors being mostly relatively young people who turn to the work as a temporary occupation in which they will gain wider experience. The very few will secure such adequate posts at the full-time schools, etc., as the future may create; most of them will teach for a few years only. Probably, however, some of our first tutors will be older men who have established themselves, more or less permanently, in such positions as will permit their devoting part of their time to teaching work.

All that we need do at present is to provide facilities—leave of absence, financial aid, a course of instruction—at our existing School of Librarianship for a few of those who are either at present engaged in tutorial

work or are likely to have the opportunity to do it. We feel sure that any practical scheme would find full support from the university authorities so far as their share was concerned.

## VII

Two matters remain to be considered before we leave the question of education: (a) the provision we must make for those who cannot attend schools or centres when these are established and the arrangements necessary while these institutions are being provided, and (b) the relationship of educational provision to staff grading, especially during the transition period.

Obviously for some years for many candidates, and always for a few, the only method of teaching will be the unsatisfactory correspondence class. Since this is unavoidable, can we do anything to make it less unsatisfactory?

Let it be repeated that we are not offering any unfair criticism of the present activities of the A.A.L. section. We are instead returning to our earlier contention that correspondence tuition has its inherent limitations: firstly that there are matters which only oral tuition and discussion can make clear, and secondly that correspondence tuition increases the difficulties facing the student in the small or backward areas. These two disadvantages may be ameliorated in the one case by somehow associating with correspondence tuition a

measure of oral work, and in the other by increasing inter-staff exchanges. Both of these are possible of attainment.

One American school of librarianship, faced with the problem of providing some training for a class of workers who could not possibly attend even a terminal course, organized correspondence courses, the students of which were required to attend a one week's class at the school. This week was spent partly in showing the students some of the things that could only be demonstrated by practice, partly in discussion, partly in individual talks between teacher and pupil, at which the latter's personal difficulties were explained and solved. Could we not organize something on similar lines? For example, if the students were allocated to tutors on a regional basis, it should not be difficult to arrange that they should all meet, towards the close of the correspondence course,<sup>1</sup> for a short practical class; or correspondence tuition could be linked up with our summer schools—and later with our training centres.

For this—and other reasons—once we have our training classes it would be a good thing if the correspondence tuition were given by the same staff as taught there orally.

Inter-library exchanges are even now being made in a casual, unofficial way. The Library Association could

<sup>1</sup> The A.A.L. already seems to be making experiments on these lines.

easily organize more widespread exchanges. It costs an authority nothing to lend one of its assistants for, say, three months to some other library when it receives in exchange the services of an assistant from the latter. The assistants gain experience and they benefit by the change and the wider contacts.

As for the grading question, we cannot, even if we wished, suddenly initiate any clear-cut division of professional and non-professional staff. We must instead seek to bring about this change gradually. For example, we may well institute qualification bars in our grading schemes. We should, as before said, have junior grades which represent reasonable adult wages appropriate to non-professionals, but we should make it clear to our younger assistants that they cannot expect promotion beyond those grades unless they are professionally qualified. This is the only course that is fair to the service and to the individuals. As things are at present, we should probably accept the L.A. Intermediate as the minimum qualification for promotion, but to do so leaves us without any appropriate educational criterion for the senior non-professionals. We really need some qualification for these, but it should be different both in scope and difficulty from that which we ask of our potential professionals. The matter calls for consideration by the Library Association.

Indeed, the time has now come when this body must face up to its great responsibilities in the field of pro-



fessional—and non-professional—education. Its past activities have been primarily examinational. Thus, while we willingly admit the value of its work, it has engaged somewhat in the gentle art of putting the cart before the horse.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### I

BETTER education, general and professional, can do much to improve both the private and the public benefits of library work. Indeed, if it does not make librarianship a more interesting and satisfying occupation and lead to greater efficiency, it is manifestly a failure.

Yet it is useless to seek better qualified personnel unless we intend to use it to the best advantage. We cannot, indeed, consider staff questions apart from the general conditions of the service. Improvement in the former is unlikely unless there is that progressive understanding of the value of the library which will lead to better book votes, adequate buildings and the other results of sound financial provision. There can be no satisfactory service without good staffing, but equally there can be none, even given suitable personnel, if the essential means of operation are withheld. Without the sinews of war none of the essentials of good staffing can be achieved—for these are sufficiency, suitability, balance, opportunity, incentive and satisfaction. In other words, we need enough of the appropriate types of worker, in the right proportions, to be able to use their abilities to the full, offer them every encouragement to do their best

and provide them with the best possible working conditions.

So far librarians have made little attempt to formulate the constitution of the ideal staff. Consequently we are not only unable to make a proper case when asking for the staff we need; we are almost unable fully to appreciate our own needs. Yet it stands to reason that for any library there must be a certain staff quota, measurable both quantitatively and qualitatively, that will give the maximum yet most economical service. Too often it is asserted that libraries differ so much in size, type of community, wealth and so on that it is impossible in practice to improve upon the usually accepted method of deciding staff requirements. This is none other than that of seeking additional staff, from time to time, by presenting evidence of additional work accomplished. As one librarian recently put it, "As the issues increase, I have to go to my committee and ask for another assistant"; as another said, "On the whole, over the course of years, I have managed to get one more assistant for every so many thousand additional issues." Analysis of the history of most libraries would tell the same story. Few, if any, examples could be found of staffs fixed on the basis of anticipated work to be done. We have always been compelled to put the cart before the horse, and we have as a result been in danger of forgetting our real needs, for the most serious effect of this system has been the magnification of quantitative as against qualitative achievement. It

should be obvious that the better the type of work undertaken the less of it, as judged by the number of issues, each member of the staff can do. Indeed, it is true that until there is a sufficiency of staff, a library cannot really start to do its best work. The purely quantitative basis of staffing, therefore, actually puts a premium upon low standards. In any case, it means that the staff is always at least one step behind. At each stage the pressure of quantity increases—and the neglect of quality also increases—until it is demonstrably unbearable. Then it is perhaps relieved for a while, till the same tale is to be told over again.

We are fully aware that what we have just said of staffing applies equally to every aspect of the service. Books, buildings, equipment and other matters requiring expenditure are too often secured only bit by bit when the need can no longer be gainsaid; they are seldom given in advance for planned provision. This unfortunate fact does not weaken our case but strengthens it.

Since, all said and done, the real criterion of economy is "how much of value can be given for a certain expenditure," we are convinced that properly planned and adequate staffing would produce an efficiency and economy that so far very few libraries have achieved.

We cannot, it is admitted, lay down any hard-and-fast rules for the many varied types of library service. Each librarian must examine his own system—as it is

and as he would wish it to be—and prepare his own staff scheme. What essentials should he keep in mind when doing so?

## II

There are certain fundamental criteria of good staffing.

(i) There should always be, at each service point, enough assistants to cope with the general routine without undue delay to the public and without undue pressure upon the staff. The queue of readers waiting at rush hours for their books to be discharged may bring pleasure to a misguided librarian who regards it as tangible evidence of "being busy": it really means either inefficiency or insufficiency. It is undesirable for many reasons. For example, it wastes the time of people who would rather spend it choosing their books or in other and quite different ways. It also causes the rushed work that produces "queries," which cumulatively create further delay and waste of time. And it engenders the impression that the staff is too busy to give proper assistance to the individual reader—an impression which often prevents that assistance being sought.

This leads to the second principle that (ii) there should always be someone available to help the reader requiring assistance.

(iii) There should be sufficient staff to do the normal routine, "housekeeping" work efficiently—e.g. to keep the stock in good condition and the shelves in proper

order, to get new books into circulation (and their entries into the catalogues) regularly and promptly, to enable all types of work to be kept up to date so that it is not necessary, as too often it is, to make a choice between desirable activities and so always leave, for a to-morrow that never comes, useful tasks that are unfortunately impossible of accomplishment.

It is probable that in most libraries, if requirements (i) and (ii) are satisfied, (iii) will be practicable, because the incidence of public work is not spread evenly over the working hours; there are busy periods and busy days. Granted good methods, proper time sheets and the sensible allocation of duties, if there are enough people to meet public service demands there will probably be enough to do the general work. (iv) There should be sufficient staff to permit of reasonable hours of duty and good "time sheets." Where assistants have to work too long or have too few evenings off duty there are too few assistants. Long hours and inconsiderate time sheets are uneconomical. The quality of the work done, and its accuracy, decreases when a worker is tired or discontented.

(v) There should as a general rule be a marginal surplus of staff so that unusual, extra demands can be met—for example, so that normal illnesses, holidays and the like can be faced without serious dislocation of work or extension of hours.

The above are quantitative factors. Qualitatively (vi) there should always be someone (or more) on duty at

each service point who is capable of dealing with the needs of individual readers.

(vii) There should be sufficient properly qualified people to undertake the general supervision of the service, as a whole and at each service point, and to perform the various duties involving professional knowledge and experience.

(viii) There should always be one person (or more, according to the size of the system) capable of and free to engage in its development—to think, study and experiment, to make contacts, to educate in library requirements the general public and those especially concerned. In other words, even where there is a well-organized and adequately staffed machine it must be someone's job to make it play its full part in the life of the community. Usually it is the task of the chief, who may, however, require assistance. Where the chief finds himself so closely bound up with the everyday work and with matters of internal administration and routine that he cannot step outside the machine for a while and let it run itself, his library is understaffed.

Any librarian or member of a library committee may readily ascertain how far these general principles are applied in his own system, but the whole story is not yet told. What of the work that we may not even have attempted or been asked to do?

It would be a grave mistake to assume that people with needs that the library might satisfy automatically

walk in and ask; it would even be wrong to think that those who do come to our libraries use them fully. Consequently we cannot tell whether we are understaffed or not solely on the basis of how far we are able to cope with existing work. We must also attempt to envisage the full potential activities of our system and the means necessary for doing them. There are many ways of viewing this question. For example, the general standards of efficiency have a direct influence upon demand. A good service will attract more users than a poor one. Moreover, the quality of a service is not only a matter of good housekeeping, book supply and the like; it depends also upon the smooth operation of a number of facilities designed to make full use of the library easy to readers. The extent of the facilities offered by various libraries differs enormously. Many are genuinely backward. Some do not, for example, permit renewals by phone or post, "reserve" non-fiction, deal immediately with readers' requests and suggestions, or encourage the full use of inter-library loan arrangements; some limit unreasonably the number of books a reader may borrow at one time; others delay unduly in sending out reminders for overdue books; and so on. These and many other facilities—some of them small matters when viewed individually—add considerably to the real value of the library. Cumulatively they take up much staff time.

Other aspects of the service involve more and better personnel. For example, are there sufficient and ade-



quate service points? Are all the genuinely desirable departments in operation? Again, are the catalogues maintained efficiently and fully, or are they "just good enough"? Is sufficient time available for really sound book selection? And so on.

In brief, in order to determine the quality and quantity of our desired personnel we must consider our libraries not only as they are but as they might be.

### III

One cannot assess the number of staff desirable in any particular library on any strictly numerical basis. It is not possible, for example, to assert that a town with so many thousands population needs so many assistants, because geographical factors may vary the desirable number of service points, economic and social conditions may influence the character of the service, and so on.

Nevertheless, it is not altogether useless to bear in mind certain arithmetical factors, provided one keeps in mind the inherent reservations. At least these factors provide a rough-and-ready basis for calculations which may then be modified according to local circumstances. Such factors are the number of issues, of borrowers and of population per assistant.

The first two are inclined to be dangerous, as they would assess staff needs on the basis of present

achievements. Obviously if a library is altogether so inadequate that it attracts few borrowers and issues few books, it might on this basis alone appear to need few assistants. The first factor—that of issues—places quantity at a premium and may give an altogether false idea of staff requirements. Therefore the third—that of population—is the only one with any genuine comparative value; even so, it should be taken as a useful indication and no more.

The population per member of staff varies enormously. A high figure can only mean either that the libraries are badly manned or that there are insufficient service points (or both). What is a reasonable figure? Examination of figures relating to British libraries would suggest that one assistant per three thousand inhabitants is reasonably satisfactory and well above the actual average. But comparison with the best American standards will show it to be far from an ideal figure.

In America it is sometimes as low as one assistant for every thousand. To anyone who knows the type of work that can be achieved in such circumstances this figure does not seem extravagant. We might well, in this country, aim at the modest figure of one assistant per two thousand inhabitants.

To return to the other factors. Though we do not recommend them as a means of determining desirable staffing, they do provide evidence of existing understaffing, since it stands to reason that, whatever the

quality of the issues or the general status of the service, each assistant can perform so much work with reasonable efficiency and without undue strain and no more. Therefore it follows that where the numbers of issues and borrowers per assistant are too high, that library is definitely understaffed on the basis of present work and regardless of what *should* be done. The London and Home Counties Branch of the Library Association recommends that there should be at least one assistant per 20,000 issues. This is a modest estimate, as several British libraries are better provided. One assistant per 700 registered borrowers would seem a reasonable figure sometimes exceeded in this country and often in America.

One should not, however, place too much reliance upon such factors. Perhaps at some future date we shall have, as part of that detailed analysis of library work which is long overdue, analyses of the time and personnel involved in carrying out the basic tasks and of the amount and character of the work which would be undertaken by a reasonably satisfactory service. Meanwhile we must rely upon the realistic examination of the individual service—a candid survey of existing deficiencies and of desirable extensions. For example, the librarian might set down his circumstances under such headings as these:

- (a) Present pressure upon staff—volume of work, hours, etc.

- (b) Adequacy or otherwise of qualified personnel at all times at all service points.
- (c) The extent to which work—consequent upon existing service standards—can be done at all, or promptly.
- (d) The adequacy of operations—e.g. the standards of cataloguing, book selection, shelf order, etc.
- (e) The extent to which normal development is possible, or is hindered; and
- (f) The extent to which branches, departments and activities are sufficient for the needs of the community.

Together these statements should disclose, in general terms, the adequacy or otherwise of the staff—and they would carry with them their own arguments for its augmentation.

It may be said that the above is largely a theoretical viewpoint, that it is indeed a “glimpse of the obvious.” To this one can only retort, firstly that it is difficult to speak more specifically in relation to libraries in general, but that the present writer could speak quite definitely, given the facts, in relation to any individual system, *and so could the librarian thereof*. Secondly, therefore, it would seem eminently desirable that each librarian should, as opportunity can be made, present to his authority the actual facts regarding his own service, and not rely so frequently upon the piecemeal method. Immediate wholesale reforms may not be practicable,

but in an age when "five-year" plans of capital expenditure are the fashion, what are the objections to five- or ten-year plans of staff requirement? Or, in fact, to the occasional presentation of an ideal but practical and justifiable formulation of things as they should and might well be?

#### IV

If the maximum results are to be secured from any staff, two considerations—among others—should be studied:

- (a) How can the work best be adjusted to the incidence of demand, and
- (b) How may duties be so arranged that each assistant spends a maximum of his time on the tasks which utilize his abilities to the full.

(a) Many staffing difficulties are due to the considerable variations in the volume of demand—in other words, because of rush hours and rush days. It is true—as already suggested—that, on the average, there is enough work not immediately concerned with serving readers to occupy assistants when they are not actually attending to their needs. The trouble is that this rush work is apt to come at times when it interferes both with reasonable staff conditions and with the execution of their other duties. And if the staff is not adequate, and cannot for any reason be augmented, it may become a serious hindrance to good service. Are there any ways

in which it can be ameliorated? We would make only two suggestions.

In the first place, we have not yet given sufficient consideration to the improvement of routine methods and mechanical aids in the lending departments. We believe that it is possible to devise ways of reducing considerably the time taken in issue, discharge and similar matters, and so both convenience the public and either reduce the number of staff needed at rush hours or give them more time to attend to borrowers' needs. Improvement may be either in matters of "lay-out" or in cutting down the operations to be performed.

In the first instance it is desirable (*a*) to reduce staff movement to a minimum, and (*b*) to segregate those of the public who need special attention (e.g. to pay fines or fill up forms or ask questions, etc.) from those who don't. The prevailing narrow gangway with an entrance wicket at the end—which means that the reader who has ninepence to pay but who disputes the fact, and who must report that his cousin's children have measles "and shall he take his book to the Public Health Department, and can he please reserve such-and-such a work," blocks the way for ten people behind him—is frankly antiquated. So is the solid block of trays of charges behind which, according to the dates of the books they handle, two, three or four assistants jump, jostle and joggle one another. We all know that this is not an exaggerated picture. Structural difficulties

sometimes prevent improvement; frequently, however, a little rearrangement and the scrapping of time-honoured fixtures would work wonders.

The precise arrangements ideal for any library will depend upon local circumstances, such as the maximum volume of work and number of assistants required at different times. The general principle involved, however, is this: at busy times the work should be divided so that an appropriate part can be performed by each assistant, who does not need to move from his place (perhaps not even from his seat) to do it, and that accordingly the public shall be sorted out, each going to his own assistant. For the larger and busier library, therefore, it seems clear that the proper service fitting is a long counter with a clear open space in front of it, and not a narrow gangway. Then any necessary number of assistants could sit, each dealing with, say, the books issued on a certain group of days. The reader whose book was stamped say June 15th would take it to that part of the counter marked "Books Stamped June 14th to 18th," the man with fines to pay to the space marked "Books Issued Before June 7th," the man with mumps or a grievance could go to the part marked "Inquiries." Thus, according to the volume of business, four, five, six or any number of assistants could deal expeditiously and without strain with the rushiest of rushes. Yet it would be simple, at less busy times, to telescope the portions allotted to two assistants, and at slack times even to let one person manage the lot.

One might go further than this, and ask whether at rush hours it is really necessary to discharge books at all—perhaps also whether people couldn't do their own charging. These suggestions are by no means fantastic. "Self-charging" is in operation at several American libraries, while the chief value of the various mechanical charging systems (Dickman, Gaylord, etc.) is that borrowers do not need to wait while their books are discharged, though this aspect is often overlooked by critics. It is the discharging process that takes time, causes delay and promotes "queries." Can we not, at busy times, cut it out—that is to say, put the returned books out of the way under the counter for the time being and discharge them at our leisure, and so spread the incidence of counter work over a longer period and use fewer people at rush hours? The answer is "yes"—and without the use of elaborate mechanical systems. The writer has recently experimented with success at a library where, owing to exceptional circumstances, there is a very heavy rush at lunch-time (which is peculiarly embarrassing, because even library assistants must themselves have lunch). The method is simple. Readers who have fines to pay are separated from the more fortunate or more parsimonious and have to wait their turn and pay their dues. The remainder pass at once to an assistant who is provided with a large supply of numbered pockets, each containing a numbered book card. As each reader hands in his book he is given the pocket, while the book card is slipped into



the book which is put under the counter. The reader uses the numbered pocket as though it were his ticket; that is to say, the book card of the book he takes out is put therein and filed. Later on, when all the captains and kings have departed, the books are discharged and the real tickets substituted for the numbered book pockets and the real book cards for the numbered cards. There *is* one disadvantage that may worry the purist—we cannot tell whether a man takes a novel on a non-fiction ticket. But, in the words of a famous comedian, “we don’t suppose it matters!”; it certainly matters less than an enormous queue and indigestion-stricken assistants. That, however, is only one example of how such problems may be faced. The question is: Do we try to face them?

A little time devoted to “motion study” and the lay-out and positioning of the counter, though it might not, saving in a large library, lead to actual reduction of staff, would surely add to staff comfort and efficiency.

This sort of study is only one of the things that might be undertaken had we more opportunity for experiment and investigation. It is the fashion in certain circles to decry the discussion of technical matters; it is said that the technique of librarianship was settled years ago by Brown, Jast and their colleagues. These men made great contributions to “practical” librarianship, but a great deal remains to be done.

If we may switch over to another aspect of staffing in relation to the incidence of public demand—the

reverse aspect—we venture the heretical suggestion that, especially in small libraries and branches, the effects of limitation of opening hours for lending departments should be considered. Again, it is the fashion to assert that libraries should keep open for long hours, should abolish half-day closing, and so on. We suggest, on the contrary, nothing less than that, when the number of assistants is limited by financial or other reasons, it is better to open for shorter hours during which there is sufficient staff on duty than to open for hours when, though the public demand is small, assistants must be on duty, and clearly cannot do other work as satisfactorily as they could without the distractions of public service. We admit that whenever public demand justifies it, and whenever the staff is really sufficient, we might well consider public convenience and prefer long hours, but we must have a sense of proportion. The important points are that people should know when the library is open and that the opening hours should be so arranged that no section of readers is unlikely to find some suitable open hours. We might also suggest that if readers are allowed to borrow sufficient books at a time, the disadvantage of shorter hours is minimized.

The busy library must, of course, welcome long hours as a means of “spreading” some of the pressure upon it; the smaller place with considerable slack periods might be well advised to revise its ideas of opening hours. For this reason also we have serious

doubts as to the wisdom in smaller places of abolishing "half-day" closing—provided the library is not closed on the local shop closing day. May we go further? We were formerly in charge of a system, neither small nor slack, where the central lending was closed for one whole day each week. We were frequently criticized by non-resident librarians; no complaint was ever received from the local public; we are prepared to assert that this closing did not diminish by 0·1 per cent the total use made of that system. The advantages to staff and administration were very considerable—whole days off duty for several assistants, half days for others with the chance to do without interruption many desirable things, and a better staff for the rest of the week.

We do not suggest that this whole-day closing might suit all libraries: on the contrary. We do, however, urge the necessity for reviewing all our methods and habits realistically.

## V

The best utilization of staff abilities depends partly upon the proper allocation of non-professional and professional duties and partly upon the adequate but not excessive professional staffing of public departments. It is, manifestly, uneconomical to allow any qualified professional person to spend any time unnecessarily upon duties which less capable people could perform equally well. This is a matter which calls for the frequent analysis of staff duties which in most

libraries would disclose waste of this type. Too many seniors spend much of their time doing or supervising clerical work; we even know instances of chief librarians who devote energy to tasks which their secretaries or clerks could perform effectively.

Nevertheless, we must avoid the illusion that there is not ample scope for professional work in direct contact with the public. The tendency to limit professional contacts with users is undesirable yet prevalent, especially in larger lending libraries. It would seem to be the way of the library world, however, that if you put a man in a lending department he will gravitate to the counter, but that if counter work does not detain him he disappears into an office out of public ken.

The proper professional staffing of lending departments is not in fact easy to achieve. The difficulty is increased by the normal tendency of readers in need of assistance to seek it from those who actually serve them. Consequently the various experiments in providing "inquiry desks" or "shelf-walkers" have not always proved immediately successful. Nevertheless, it is a good thing to keep the professional assistant (or assistants) out of the actual counter, though in the department, not only because readers will gradually appreciate his function and turn to him for help, but also because he can, better than when he is in a counter, spend his time on suitable work when not attending to readers.

The ideal system, however, is that of separating the counter work entirely from the library proper. Where this method is adopted—as in several American libraries—the work of discharging, charging, registration and so on is done in an ante-room or entrance hall staffed by “clerical” workers. The library proper—the book-room—is staffed by professionals. The reader readily appreciates the difference, while the atmosphere of the library itself is quieter and more conducive to the proper and leisured choosing of books. Structural difficulties may prevent the adoption of this system in many British libraries, but it is certainly worth consideration for all new buildings. In smaller libraries, both now and in the future, we may have to be content with bringing our senior people more generally out of their workrooms.

Reference libraries are in a different position, since very little clerical routine is involved there and readers naturally gravitate to the desk assistant on duty. Nevertheless, many reference departments, especially in smaller libraries, are badly staffed. Owing to staff shortages it is either difficult to provide constant staffing by assistants of the high quality necessary, or those on duty are overburdened with routine non-reference duties. This is a mistake. Reference work is a full-time job, and if the staff are used for other duties, not only does the proper work of the department suffer—the public are given the undesirable impression that the assistants are too busy to help them. Reference assis-

tants need sufficient freedom to devote whatever time is necessary to help readers, even though considerable research may be involved, and leisure to study their resources and to build up the files, indexes, and so on that will facilitate and increase the value of the service. Some smaller libraries are content with one qualified reference assistant and fill up with unqualified "relief" from other departments. This is manifestly unsatisfactory.

In both lending and reference departments, arrangements should be made to ensure that unsatisfied requests for books and information are recorded and reported, so that when those on duty fail, the help of others, perhaps more qualified, shall be utilized before the matter is finally closed.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### I

SALARIES are, in the long run, the key to good staffing. This is no mere mercenary viewpoint, but the statement of an obvious economic law—or rather of two laws—that one has to pay a proper price to get a suitable article, and that like occupations are in competition with one another.

The truth of this first axiom is perhaps more generally appreciated in the case of materials than of men. Those who would unhesitatingly reject cheap materials, knowing that they might involve risk of breakdown, premature wear, excessive repair and so on, may often forget that unsuitable and unqualified employees can be as dangerous and—in a true sense—expensive.

True economy in staffing consists in employing a sufficiency of well-chosen and appropriately trained people. Waste and extravagance follow reliance upon the unqualified and unsuitable. The latter not only fail to perform the same amount of satisfactory work; they are unable to perform adequately the more valuable functions of the service.

To give instances: the librarian whose book selection was inexpert and ill informed would reduce seriously the value of his library; the reference assistant who did not know his stock or how to use it may, even if

he succeeded eventually, spend several times as long to find required information as a good assistant would take; and inaccurate counter work causes delay, annoyance and "queries" that are expensive to rectify.

Since it is the primary duty of a chief librarian to select, train, organize and supervise the work of his staff, it stands to reason that the first essential of a good service is the employment of a capable chief officer. Yet the best librarian may be made relatively ineffective if he is not given an efficient staff. The need for appropriate quality, therefore, applies to all grades of personnel.

Just as there is a reasonable market price for the various grades of material, so there is a fair price for different types of personal service. The local authority has two sound reasons for paying this—the fact that it desires, or should desire, efficiency and economy, and the excellent and generally accepted principle that local authorities should be good employers. Few authorities to-day would consent to pay their workmen less than recognized trade union rates, while "fair wages" clauses are inserted in their contracts. They do this partly because they thus secure better work, but partly because they express the desire of the generality of the electorate to promote good conditions of labour and living. It would be unjust and untrue to deny that to-day an increasing proportion of library authorities seek to offer adequate salaries to their staffs. But it would be equally false to ignore the fact, easily demon-



strable, that a majority of library workers are still underpaid. For this the still lingering effects of rate limitation are partly to blame. Probably in the days when salaries were restricted artificially by statute, library authorities received in the aggregate better service than they paid for, and it is still too often felt that the non-financial attractions of an otherwise attractive career justify the continuance of low salaries. This is a dangerous viewpoint. While we admit that many suitable people enter library work despite its low rewards, it is certain that those libraries which are not offering adequate rewards are not, on the whole, attracting suitable recruits.

Librarianship as a career is in competition with a variety of other careers—in general, with many of those which are recruited from secondary schools. It will attract suitable personnel in proportion to the extent to which it offers rewards, immediate and ultimate, as good as or better than those offered by its competitors. Thus the type of entrant we want may equally be tempted to go into the civil service, banking, business, teaching and the like. When coming to a decision, the potential entrant weighs up the pros and cons and, given any sort of a chance, chooses accordingly. He and his parents and advisers are concerned with such factors as these: (a) what sort of salary, standard of living and social position are attained by the average adult employee; in other words he may say, "What am I fairly certain to get in due course supposing I am

not 'lucky' or particularly clever?"; (b) "What may I reasonably expect if I *am* lucky and clever and work hard?" Thirdly (c) he will obviously ask himself whether it will suit him. The answer to this question is vitally important to his future happiness, but it is one that it may be difficult to answer. The best person to answer it should be the librarian who selects him or rejects him, but the librarian's ability to give a true decision will depend upon his own freedom of choice, i.e. upon his having sufficient of the right material available. Furthermore, (d) the factor of immediate rewards and early prospects is far from negligible, while (e) every career has its own intangible advantages and disadvantages, such as security, variety, monotony, appeal to the spirit of adventure, to a love of outdoor or city life, and so on.

A number of candidates are undoubtedly guided by a sense of avocation which overrides more material and more general considerations, but on the whole the selection of a career is largely a progressive process of elimination. Some occupations, because of their advantages, make the strongest appeal to the most capable youngsters. If they can enter these occupations, they do; if they can't, they choose a second best, and so on. The less capable or less well placed (socially, educationally, etc.) elect to take up work with less obvious advantages; the worst take what they can get. Conversely the least attractive occupations have to take the candidates they can get who, apart from the minority

with a sense of avocation, are necessarily those who are not thought good enough for the more attractive careers. Thus, in a sense, the salaries we need to pay to secure good library workers are fixed, not so much by the circumstances of libraries, but by what competing careers are able and willing to pay. The better the general prospects open to any class of candidate, the less librarianship can hope to recruit from that class. For that reason, as things are at present, we cannot hope to draw upon the graduate field many who are not in the least capable grades of that class.

It is noteworthy that when the library drew its entrants from the elementary schools it was able to get some of the best of the elementary school children. Times have changed. There are now better facilities for secondary education, and so it is probable that most of the suitable people who would formerly have gone straight into a library now pass into secondary schools. We do not for one moment suggest a reversion to former practice; yet the fact remains that, as we then had a choice of the "best," what was then lacking in education, and perhaps in social background, was often compensated by "character." Many of the ablest men of the older generation of librarianship were elementary schoolboys. The moral is simply this: we cannot afford to rely largely upon the less good of any category.

## II

One of the obstacles to the best recruitment is our failure to distinguish the profession of librarianship from the work of the non-professional clerk and routine worker. Another is the prevalence of low salaries.

To take the first point first. Library work is not presented to the majority of potential entrants as a career suitable for an intelligent lad with professional ambitions. He is not led to "think" of library work as a profession. If he uses a library as a reader, practically everything he sees done there is of a routine, uninspiring character. Moreover, since our prevailing system is that of making him "go through the mill," the entrant is almost invariably asked to start as a routineer at a salary and with immediate prospects barely suitable even for such work. Can we wonder if few of the best type make librarianship a first choice? If, however, we adopted a genuine division between professional and non-professional, we could more easily offer the appropriate prospects to each class, even though all beginners were required to serve a few years' apprenticeship in non-professional work. Many a lad who is later to take part in the management of a business or to hold an administrative or executive post is made to serve his time in the workshop, factory or office; but he does so knowing that this is only for a limited time and for a definite purpose. It is quite a different type of lad, with different prospects, who goes

to the workshop, factory and office with the idea that this kind of employment may be his permanent occupation. We should treat library work similarly.

As it is, we fall between two stools. Present methods of education and promotion compel us to find, in due course, our senior professional people from the ranks of school-leaver entrants. If we were lucky enough to get a high proportion of potential professionals, we should have insufficient scope for them; conversely, if we had too few we should not be able later to fill the better posts from our own staffs. Movements of better people who are surplus in one library to other libraries where there is a deficiency make some adjustment, but on the whole this tends to increase unequal standards of staffing as between libraries offering different rewards. Moreover, movements from staff to staff are chiefly those of relatively senior people. So far as the majority of assistants are concerned, the library with good conditions tends to keep its staff. We therefore need both differentiation of grades on the individual staff and greater equalization of conditions throughout all libraries.

The problem is not easy of solution. We do not want to set up any barriers to the progress of any good youngster; neither can we easily make much differentiation between people doing the same sort of work during their initial years, unless there is some differentiation in initial educational and age requirements. In America this differentiation is simple, as professionals

are nowadays all college graduates, and non-professionals those who have not received or are unlikely to receive anything more than high school education. Here we are unlikely for many years to rely upon graduates, but we might with advantage recruit our future professionals at a later age—say eighteen—and ask for Higher Schools certificates instead of school-leaving standard.

There are two methods of implementing the distinction: (a) that of a basic, first grade common to all entrants in which non-professionals remained (unless or until they qualified), but from which professionals would pass in due course. The disadvantage of this system is that, if the number of established posts in the grade is fixed, as is now necessary for superannuation reasons, qualified and capable people may have to wait some years before they can obtain promotion, and meanwhile traditions of seniority grow up within the staff and promotions may create jealousies.

Therefore (b) it would seem better to arrange parallel, overlapping grades. Thus if (basing the example on the L.A. Scale 2 Recommendations) the grade for non-professionals was from £60 by twelve increments of £15 to £240, the first grade for potential professionals could be from £90 (or £105, etc., according to age) by increments of £15 to £300. This, in effect, means the telescoping of Grades A and B. Were such a system adopted, however, there should be a safeguarding proviso that any assistant in this combined

grade who failed to obtain appropriate qualifications or show the requisite ability should either remain at a maximum of £240 or revert to Grade A.

We feel also that some acceleration of increments in the professional grades would be advantageous. The L.A. recommends the award of an extra increment for associateship and another for fellowship. This would seem a minimum.

Promotion beyond Grade B must as a rule depend upon there being vacancies on the establishment, as otherwise the cost of salaries might become disproportionately high.

While dealing with the question of increments, it might be argued with justice that some modified form of increment should be added after the normal grade maximum for those with long service. As it is (assuming Grade A, Scale 2 to be operated), the non-professional might reach his final maximum at the age of twenty-eight, after which he has nothing to hope for. Five yearly increments thereafter would at least provide some recognition of experience.

Whatever the grading scheme may be, however, it must, as already urged, provide adequate adult wages for the non-professional. Once we recognize that many of our employees will have to do non-professional work for the whole of their careers, we must recognize that we must pay decently for non-professional services. At present, with a number of honourable exceptions, we do not provide adequately for the non-professional.

Consequently as things are now, the man or woman who wants an adult wage has to strive to secure professional status, no matter how unsuited he may be. Alternatively, the employer faced with the obligation to pay him a living wage, but hindered by unsatisfactory grading schemes, has to allocate him to work which he is unqualified to perform properly.

We strike here at the root of our staffing evils. In 1934, when introducing the Library Association's Scale of Salaries and Memorandum on Conditions of Service, the present writer said that "the most urgent problem facing us is this. There is far too much underpaid, 'pin-money,' 'blind-alley' employment in library work to-day. There are far too many authorities employing assistants at wages upon which they cannot possibly be even keeping themselves. This is a state of affairs very discreditable to the authorities concerned. These authorities *may* find it possible to engage a sufficiency of youngsters who either have no need to earn, or who are passing their time until they get married, or who hope, if they study, to secure decent posts elsewhere. But it is a very unsatisfactory method of recruiting a public service.

"We must lay it down as a cardinal principle that *all* who enter the library service shall be assured, subject to satisfactory service, of an adult living wage. . . . Until this principle is universally adopted by authorities, we must suffer the recruitment of a large



percentage of totally unsuitable people, and we must also suffer a cut-throat competition for the slightly better posts. . . . Progress towards professional status in the higher grades cannot begin until we have settled the position of the junior grades on these lines."

### III

The salaries scales and suggested grading recommended by the Library Association represent a reasonable basis for fixing salaries in different types of libraries. Though relatively few authorities have yet adopted them exactly as set out, several have scales which are approximately as satisfactory and in some respects better, while more and more are gradually introducing improvements which will bring them into line with the spirit of the recommendations.

The L.A. scales have been criticized, with any justification, only on one point, i.e. that the Grade A Scale 3 maximum of £300 is too high unless some intermediate bar is introduced (say at £225 or £240) beyond which either some appropriate (not necessarily library-professional) qualifications or proof of ability must be offered. This appears to us a reasonable modification. Apart from this, and with the suggestion previously made of a parallel initial grade for potential professionals, the scale may be commended wholeheartedly to all authorities.

It is important that it should be adopted universally,

because until it is, full interchange of staff between libraries will be impossible or one-sided. Assistants will tend to stay at the places with good scales, and thus at these places stagnation and waste of ability may result. Conversely, the libraries with bad salaries will neither recruit nor retain good personnel.

We realize that there are smaller and less wealthy towns where it is more difficult to pay heavy salaries bills. The problem of the larger places unable locally to raise sufficient to maintain adequate services is one beyond our present scope, but the problem of the smaller libraries is not so difficult as it may at first appear. The difference between the large and the small place should be one of "grading" rather than of "scale." Clearly, the smaller the place, the less the relative responsibility of each type of worker. Thus the branch librarian of a large city may be comparable for grading purposes with the deputy of a smaller library, or the second assistant in an important central lending department equivalent to the chief assistant elsewhere. It is true that inappropriate grading can nullify the effect of a good scale; there are in fact cases where the scale in theory is excellent but in practice is bad, because too few people have been placed in the higher grades. Nevertheless, the intelligent relation of grading to the reasonable resources of a system can secure both suitable, efficient service and adequate rewards for individuals. And furthermore, it can bring that system into line with other systems, so that an assistant could

pass without difficulty from one grade in his system to the same or a higher grade in another.

Nevertheless, however small a library may be, it needs a qualified staff and a capable chief. The needs of individual readers are not necessarily less exacting because they live in a small town. There may be fewer demands in a small town for the more advanced types of service, but on the other hand the limitations of the smaller place are in themselves a reason for able administration and for judgment. It is not easier but more difficult to select wisely a small stock; and a more intensive, if less extensive, knowledge of resources is needed if the deficiencies of, say, the modest reference collection are not to be aggravated. Moreover, to the librarian in a small town it is wise to apply an adaptation of the phrase "What does he know of England who only England knows?" For he must, if he is to be efficient, have a knowledge of books and sources of information far beyond the material at his immediate command. This is especially true in these days when inter-library co-operation is being developed.

The library authority which cannot or will not afford to employ a qualified librarian has no right to maintain its independent existence because its service cannot be effective.

The capable librarian must have adequate support. One might almost say that the smaller the system the higher the proportion of qualified personnel should be, because clearly the smaller the staff at each service

point the fewer non-professionals there can be if there is always at least one qualified person on duty—as should be the case. This need undoubtedly increases the financial strain upon the smaller authority, and where full staff provision cannot be made we are disposed to advocate a course which may sound heretical, i.e. that we should seek quality before quantity. In other words, it would be better—if financial limitations cannot be overcome—to limit hours of opening, curtail less valuable provisions and take any other possible steps to ensure that at least the best part of the library's work is done properly rather than be satisfied to attempt all its work and do most of it badly. As an extreme example, two qualified people earning together, say, £600, with two juniors earning, say, £100 each, might well do much more valuable, if much less extensive, work than one qualified man with four or five unqualified assistants.

#### IV

The employment of girls and women has an important bearing upon questions of salaries and grading.

Women are quite capable of undertaking many, if not indeed all, types of library work; for some, such as work with children, they are much more suitable than men.

There are, however, good reasons why librarianship should not become entirely or predominantly a

"woman's profession." We must consider this matter frankly and trust that no offence is given where none is intended. Firstly, it is a fact that as our world is constituted, most activities are on the whole "run" by men, and consequently those which are not are at some disadvantage. There are several fine and capable women in library work to serve as the exception to prove this rule, but in general, if librarianship is to take its just place as a profession, if the librarian is to claim equality of status with other chief officers, and if he is to represent the needs of the service to committees and councils which are predominantly male, the senior executive and administrative library posts should be held by men. Clearly we cannot have men in charge unless we have men in all the subordinate grades preparing themselves to fill the higher posts of the future.

Secondly, many of the contacts and many of the duties are such that a man is more appropriate than a woman.

Thirdly, as society is at present constituted, it is the man's function, as a rule, to support a wife and family. Consequently, unless there is any reason why a particular means of earning a livelihood should be delegated to women, there are potent reasons why it should be given to men.

Fourthly, a majority of women marry and then leave work. Thus, if we were to staff our libraries entirely with women, we should lose much that was valuable;

the accumulation of experience would be less, as experience would continually be draining away. Neither could we count on the same amount of initial interest and enthusiasm, for though many women undoubtedly give of their best whatever the prospect of matrimony, it would not be reasonable to expect that in the aggregate a group of women would have the same incentive as a group of men whose whole future depended on their efforts.

These arguments do not allow us to exclude women from librarianship, but they make it clear that if women are admitted their presence must not be prejudicial to the interests of men (and indirectly of the women those men may want to support as wives). Equally, however, we must protect the interests of those women who genuinely make librarianship their career.

What we seek, therefore, is equality of opportunity and of rewards. We cannot countenance the employment of women because they are "cheap." Where salaries scales are in operation they must be the same for women as for men, especially in the junior grades. Too often the salaries of the lower grades are low because "girls can be got to do the work well enough." This is a very short-sighted and prejudicial policy, and is responsible more than anything else for the shortage of capable senior staff.

Here again differentiation of professionals and non-professionals would help. We fear that we may be criticized as anti-feminist, but it does seem that, while

leaving room for the capable professional woman, it would be a good thing if librarianship were to become predominantly a profession for men and an occupation for women. In other words, let us accept the fact that, as all libraries have to operate under serious financial limitations, it is unlikely to offer for non-professional work wages which would be more than a bare livelihood for a man (who may have a family to support), but which should be sufficient for the average unattached woman. Let us, therefore, as a general practice recruit women for non-professional work and men for professional work.

## CHAPTER SIX

### I

THE librarian has the right to ask that each assistant shall give his best and most loyal services, but the assistant also has the right to ask much of his chief. Rather let us say that the library service demands that the librarian shall do his duty by his assistants.

Speaking broadly, the librarian is under a moral obligation to make the most of each assistant who is under his control. The assistant's future depends largely upon the enthusiasm his chief can inspire, the opportunities he is given to learn his job thoroughly and the attitude towards librarianship with which he is confronted.

Professionally a librarian stands in *loco parentis* to his staff. So far as he is able—and where the system is too large to permit of this personal contact, it is his duty to delegate this responsibility to some others, such as his deputy and branch librarians, and to see that they shoulder it—he should make himself acquainted with each assistant's abilities and characteristics, afford him all possible help and encouragement and see that he is properly informed regarding educational and professional matters.

There is no need to go to extremes. Self-reliance is as important a quality to encourage as any other. It is,



however, more dangerous to err in the other direction, as anyone will know who has come into contact with a staff of assistants who have been allowed to drift, to decide for themselves whether or not to seek qualifications, to find out as best they may about classes and examinations, who have never been urged to "get out" into better positions. Where there is no guidance the wastage of good material and the deterioration of service may be tragic.

If, on the other hand, the librarian seeks to know his people, not only as members of his staff but as individuals, the mutual advantages are immeasurable. He is then able to suit his demands and his advice to the occasion and to the individual. There are, for example, men who do not call for encouragement to seek higher professional positions, but instead need to be shown tactfully that they may be contented in more humble spheres. And there are others who could be better than they themselves think. Rigid systems of encouragement to take examinations based upon salaries awards and hard-and-fast grading regulations do not always serve the best purpose. They ask too much of some and give too easily to others.

This personal knowledge also enables him to fit his staff into the scheme of things to the best advantage. On the whole, the best results are secured when each assistant is engaged on the work he can do best and at which he is happiest. There is one reservation—that this should not lead to limiting specializations. We

have nothing against specialization; on the contrary, we believe that every library worker should develop some personal specialization, and moreover that in larger libraries there should be much more departmental and similar specialization. We refer here, however, to any arrangement of duties or training which tends to produce one-sided and incompletely experienced assistants. It is part of the librarian's duty to give all his staff some practice in all the types of work of which they are capable. The easy way of finding the people best suited for each task and department and keeping them there has several disadvantages; the assistants concerned become in time less able to assume other responsibilities, and their chances of promotion and migration may be reduced. Further, they tend to look upon the whole system from the viewpoint of their own department.

It is not really difficult to make the necessary temporary changes and adjustments, so that, for example, the cataloguing staff spend some time each week in the public department, or the reference staff in the lending department, or the lending staff in administrative duties and so on.

In some libraries the chief obstacle to this is a kind of unwritten hierarchy of jobs, some of which have by tradition come to be regarded as appropriate for one grade of assistant and others for those more or less senior. Thus to detail an assistant to a particular task implies some kind of subtle preferment or the reverse.

This creates inefficiency and bad feeling. When it is recognized that all jobs are in their way equally essential, and that any assistant can do any of them without loss of prestige, smoother working and greater variety of occupation follow.

Especially must one deplore the practice—once too prevalent, but now less frequent—of keeping assistants at particular branches for long periods. We have known instances of youngsters sent to branches the week after joining the service and staying there till they and their careers were ruined.

## II

The army system of delegated responsibility works well in a library. It is a good rule that from top to bottom no man should have to serve two masters. Thus, when the librarian places a man in charge of a branch or a department, he should leave him to allocate, supervise and be personally responsible for the work of those under him. The chief who "interferes" makes more difficult the task of the man in charge and may cause him to lose his interest and sense of responsibility.

The same rule should apply within the branch and the department. So far as practicable each assistant, especially a senior, should have his own part of the work to do and be held responsible. He should also be given as much scope for individual work as the general scheme of things and as necessary uniformities of method permit. The best work is always done by the

man who is left as free as possible to do it to his own satisfaction, and who gets full credit for what he does.

Some degree of uniformity of method is of course essential. Nothing is more confusing and annoying to the public or detrimental to the free interchange of staff than unnecessary variations of practice between different branches or departments. Every piece of procedure which is common to departments should be the same for all. Yet within this basic framework there may be ample room for the individual treatment of various activities. System is essential, but over-systematization produces red tape and an inflexible attitude towards the public and reduces the assistants' interest in their work.

We must teach them to think about their work, not just to do it by rule of thumb.

For this reason they should be encouraged to express themselves, to make suggestions and even criticisms. After all, they see things that the librarian may not see and they hear things he does not hear. Moreover, if their experience is limited, it may for that very reason be more akin to that of certain sections of the public—for it is one of the disadvantages of experience and expert knowledge that it tends to take things for granted.

### III

Whatever system of training and professional education is in vogue, every possible help should be given to the

students on our staffs. Our first and most obvious duty is to provide good libraries of librarianship. Many libraries have excellent collections, not only of textbooks but also of the supplementary literature; others fail lamentably to do for their own people what they are doing—unless they fail completely to fulfil their function—for other types of student. A short time ago the Birmingham and District Branch of the Library Association made a census of the books listed in the Examination Syllabus and provided by the libraries in the area. The result, so far as some institutions were concerned, was such as to cause grave concern.

It is more debatable whether library authorities should pay examination fees and fees for classes, other than training classes held at their own libraries. There are two good arguments against this practice. The first is that the assistants should for other reasons be paid such adequate salaries that they can afford the relatively small sums involved. The second is that, where examinations are concerned, it is not a bad thing for some assistants to have a small personal stake in the matter, as a minority may be led, when it costs them nothing, to sit prematurely and gamble on their chance of passing. The matter would be of no import were it not that it is a bad thing psychologically for any candidate to fail unnecessarily.

The award of increments and honoraria for examination successes is not infrequent. Here again there are pros and cons to be weighed in the light of local

circumstances. Excepting where (as previously suggested) increments for qualifications are a deliberate means of acceleration, it might well be argued that, since it should be an understood thing that capable assistants *will* qualify, they should not expect any reward for so doing. Moreover, immediate financial rewards are not for some candidates the best inducement and may tempt them to sit prematurely; again, there may be the implication that a man passes his examinations to get an increment and not to make himself a better librarian. On the other hand, however, in certain libraries the system has its advantages. It may be a means of securing some small advantage for the qualified few where it has proved difficult to improve salaries in general. Furthermore, the procedure of reporting successes and of applying for increments provides the opportunity for reminding committees that librarianship *does* call for professional studies.

There is, however, one type of encouragement to the new assistant that deserves unqualified support, and which yet has not been generally adopted. We refer to helping assistants, especially in small places, to travel and visit other libraries, and to assisting those in all types of libraries to make exchanges and to attend summer schools and conferences. Leave of absence, at least, should be given freely, and whenever possible some financial grants made.

Staff associations and social and sports functions which enable assistants to meet one another "off duty"

are to be encouraged. Indeed, if the chief himself can occasionally shed his office and meet his staff on an off-duty basis, he will learn much that is enlightening. Nevertheless, staff associations should confine their activities to social and educational matters. When they stray into trade unionism and politics, undesirable features may result.

It should not be necessary to urge the importance of adequate staff rest rooms, with facilities for meals and proper workroom accommodation. Unfortunately, many libraries are still deficient in this respect.

#### IV

The last few years have seen considerable improvement in the hours worked by library assistants. The excessive hours of rate-limitation days—perhaps then unavoidable—have now given place to conditions comparable with those of other local government departments. A total working week ranging from thirty-eight to forty-two hours is now general. There are, however, libraries where much improvement is desirable, where, for example, it is impossible for younger assistants to study without sacrificing most of their leisure, with consequent prejudice to health and social development.

Library work, however, has problems of its own, due to the long hours throughout which the public departments must be manned. Consequently a forty-hour library week may well be much less satisfactory

than a forty-hour office week. It is generally recognized that for normal social purposes time off during the day is less useful than time off in the evening; yet library staffs must do much evening work. Moreover, it should be obvious that short periods of off duty during the day are of limited value. Indeed, where assistants live some way from the library this time off may be next to useless—as are long meal-times for those who do not go home for meals. Thus the rigid application of the split-duty time-sheet may prove a hardship.

A satisfactory time-sheet cannot be devised unless there are sufficient assistants. Nevertheless, much can be done to improve conditions by attention to such points as the following: (a) as much consideration as possible should be given to the personal circumstances of assistants. For example, those who live near the library are in quite a different category from those who live at a distance; thus the former might welcome an occasional afternoon off from, say, 1 p.m. to 5.30, whereas a morning off to 1 p.m. would suit the latter. (b) An assistant's time-sheet should be as stable as possible. His times off duty should not be changed, save for exceptional circumstances, without reasonable notice. (c) So far as is practicable, each assistant's meal-times should be regular, and the interval between-meals should not be too long or too short. Irregular meal times are bad for health. So are hurried meal times. (d) As a general rule short periods off duty are not much use. An occasional whole day off is valuable. A



late starting hour is usually of no benefit. (*e*) In order to reduce the number of evenings to be worked, endeavour on the one hand to reduce the mechanical operations and duties involved in the public service, and on the other give those assistants who are not normally occupied in public service their share of evening work in the public departments, and (*f*)—as suggested elsewhere—in cases of serious shortage of staff, consider the effect of reducing hours of opening.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### I

THE full development of our future library services will involve much greater attention to specialization. At present our educational programme is too standardized. All qualified librarians have studied much the same curriculum and passed the same examinations. As these studies largely cover basic matters, there would be no objection to this if a sufficient proportion of students supplemented their general professional education with further advanced and specialized work. A few do so, either by pursuing personal interests or because they find themselves in specialized branches of librarianship and by practice acquire the necessary additional knowledge. But we have no facilities for specialized study, excepting certain advanced courses at the University of London School. Neither are there any particular inducements to specialization. On the contrary, those who find themselves in special types of work often find little scope and discover that their specialization is a bar to promotion.

What have we in mind when we speak of specialization in library work? There are two main aspects of the question—the personal and the institutional. Firstly, we are thinking of the individual contribution the well-equipped man or woman can make to the common

stock of bibliographical knowledge and librarianship. The breadth and complexity of the field in which we work are such that, though the competent librarian may compass the generalities of technique and bibliography, he cannot hope to achieve any intensive acquaintance with more than one or two branches of knowledge. Librarianship to-day is not conducted in watertight local compartments. There are ample facilities for the discussion and dissemination of the results of experiment and experience. There are in these days of growing inter-library co-operation ample opportunities for mutual assistance. Whatever one man may discover or learn can be made available to others. What we need is greater opportunity for and encouragement of these individual contributions. There is ample scope for the specialist. Some men may concern themselves with practical aspects of library management; others may elect to study the social and educational aspects of our work; others, with a subject bias, may survey the literature and sources of information of their chosen fields, and perhaps provide book-selection tools for the use of their colleagues.

Secondly, the actual work of our libraries, especially the larger ones, will tend to become more departmentalized and specialized. Already we have in our public libraries a number of special departments (mostly commercial and technical); in America this type of subject department is much more common. We cannot here

discuss the advantages of the system.<sup>1</sup> Its primary justification, however, is that it enables us to employ specially trained and experienced workers who can make an intensive study both of their material and of their public. The benefit to the latter is immeasurable. To that we can add the advantages that specialization can bring to the co-operative schemes of the future, since the special department can act as a reservoir of material and a clearing-house for information regarding its particular field, and serve not only its locality but also the libraries of a region or of the nation. It may, indeed, be said that the co-operative machine can only fulfil a small part of its purpose until the co-operating libraries are in a position to add a considerable degree of specialization to their more normal provisions.

The point at the moment, however, is that for our special departments and special libraries we need to make appropriate staffing arrangements and provide facilities for suitable training. The latter will, on the whole, be of an individual character. There will never, for example, be need for many workers in any particular field—even in such wider specializations as commercial and technical libraries or local collections and archives. What we need, therefore, are facilities for the would-be specialist firstly to supplement his knowledge of the subject itself,<sup>2</sup> of its literature and of the special

<sup>1</sup> See *A Survey of Libraries*.

<sup>2</sup> E.g. by taking university courses therein. The Music Librarian or the Fine Arts Department Librarian would, for instance, benefit from courses in the history of their respective subjects, etc.

technical problems involved, and secondly to work in and study the methods of good libraries devoted to his subject.

At present we have nothing to offer this potential specialist. Indeed, when we do initiate any special department, we must make a choice either of selecting the most appropriate member of our staff, and thrusting him into the breach leave him to work out his own salvation, or of importing a non-librarian specialist. The latter, though he may have the necessary subject training, will probably not possess a very considerable bibliographical knowledge and will know nothing of the technique of his work; he will, almost inevitably, develop his department as a circumscribed unit imperfectly related to the whole system, and probably out of sympathy with the generality of users.

As things are, we cannot expect suitable students to embark upon specialization. They can only acquire the necessary knowledge at their own expense and at the loss of a year or two, during which they are missing the chances in general work of their contemporaries.

If they do prepare themselves for special library work, the odds are about a thousand to one against their ever finding the opportunity to do it. If they are so miraculously fortunate, they will probably remain in subordinate, underpaid posts for the rest of their lives.

We must, in the best interests of librarianship, endeavour to solve this problem. We must improve the

status and the financial position of the specialist, and we must provide scholarships, fellowships and other educational opportunities, similar to those available in America.

As in the case of general educational facilities—already discussed—it might not prove impossible to secure the requisite financial assistance if we considered seriously and demonstrated the need; we shall certainly never get it otherwise. May we suggest that the Library Association should devote its attention to this matter rather than to certain of the arid and unprofitable internal dissensions upon which it seems to expend too much of its energies.

## II

We often claim that librarianship is a profession. In the absence of any clear definition of a "profession" it is difficult to justify or deny this claim. There are some who, taking a wide humanitarian viewpoint, would regard as "professional" those occupations which, while essentially "intellectual," are directed towards the welfare and betterment of mankind rather than towards private gain, and that their practitioners are devoted primarily to the service of the public. Others may take the narrower attitude that a "profession" is a "closed" occupation, in that its practice involves such a degree of expert knowledge and is so bound by tradition and etiquette that only those with recognized qualifications

may engage in it, and are then bound either by governing professional organizations or by legal powers and limitations or both. Thus there are some who ask whether librarianship should, or will ever, become a "closed" occupation; whether, in fact, the existing Register of the Library Association will become more than a list of qualified people—whether, in fact, it will be practicable to confine the employment of people, for work involving professional knowledge, to those who are entered on the register.

All who have the welfare of the library service at heart would welcome any system which prevented the employment of the unqualified. In a few of the States in America, and in certain European countries, there are laws requiring the employment of persons with qualifications appropriate to various types of library work. Would such legal requirements be practicable in England?

We would not express any definite opinion. The tendency for many years in this country has been to safeguard the interests of the public by limiting the activities of the unqualified, be they doctors, plumbers, midwives, lawyers, dentists or accountants. On the other hand, general public sentiment looks with disfavour upon any attempt to secure personal advantage for any group of men by giving them privileges and the power to limit their numbers.

The thing that matters, therefore, is not so much the organization and legal status of a profession as the

extent to which it is recognized by the general public that specialized qualifications are necessary for the satisfactory accomplishment of certain public services. Professional registration is a second stage. It provides evidence that certain persons possess certain knowledge, but is useless unless the public are interested in this evidence. In a nation of faith healers the medical register would serve less purpose than a list of people who could decipher ancient Egyptian inscriptions.

We who work in libraries know that certain qualifications and experience are necessary; we know, conversely, that people without these qualifications are unlikely to do library work as fully and satisfactorily. Consequently, in the interests of all those who benefit from library services, we must endeavour to secure public recognition of the essential qualifications. This is achieved in three ways. The first—and always the most important—is to provide a service which is so efficient and effective that it is self-evident that it is being provided by capable personnel. Secondly, recognizable qualifications and designations must be formulated. Thirdly, the professional nature of the work must be made evident. The last two points may be amplified.

When we refer to a "doctor" most people think at once of a physician, despite the fact that there are thousands of "doctors" who are not "physicians" and many physicians who are not "doctors." The word has a definite popular connotation, as have such words as dentist, parson, solicitor, and so on. The word



"librarian" has no such definition. It may refer to a Fellow of the Library Association in charge of a public library system, or it may mean an uneducated girl distributing trash from a chain store, or a bookseller. If we would indicate clearly the professional library worker, we must find another phrase. There is a proposal to introduce the term "Chartered Librarian," only those who are registered Fellows of the Library Association to have the right to use the appellation. This is an excellent idea, though it will take many years to make the phrase as well known as, say, the name "chartered accountant." It is certainly an improvement upon our present reliance upon the initials "F.L.A." or "A.L.A." after our names. Thus in time the "idea" of a professional librarian would become allied with the Library Association Register.

It is indeed true that, at least so far as public libraries are concerned, the register is universally recognized by employing authorities. Only very occasionally are unregistered persons appointed to senior posts. We are compelled, therefore, to suggest that any deficiencies in professional personnel are due, not to any lack of recognition on the part of authorities, but to our own failure to recognize fully the function of a register.

A registration body has serious responsibilities towards the public. If it enters any person on its register who is not fully qualified to perform responsible senior duties, the value of the register is lost. We must always regard the granting of registration, not as a

reward conferred upon the registered person, but as the assertion to the public and to the potential employer that the person is qualified. In other words, our first duty is to the public, and only incidentally to the librarian. The implication of this viewpoint should be obvious: qualifications must be related to the work and not to the worker. Standards must never be lowered because, for personal or educational reasons, insufficient people can secure qualification. If such were the case, we should turn our attention to improving recruitment and providing better educational facilities.

Lastly—as before said—we must be sure that the professional nature of library work is evident. To put the matter in another way, let us refrain from engaging in activities which are not worthy. The quality of the library service has improved immensely in recent years.

Nevertheless, there is much done in many libraries which is barely distinguishable from the frivolous, ephemeral and useless activities of the commercial distributors of popular pabulum. This is not the place to discuss this wider issue. The fact remains, however, that the public will never recognize as professional physicians those who peddle patent medicines. There is more than enough true library work to be done to occupy all our qualified personnel and utilize all our resources, and it would be a pity to waste either, and at the same time to hamper the progress of librarianship.

As we have dealt throughout with those engaged in “public libraries,” may we conclude with a plea for a

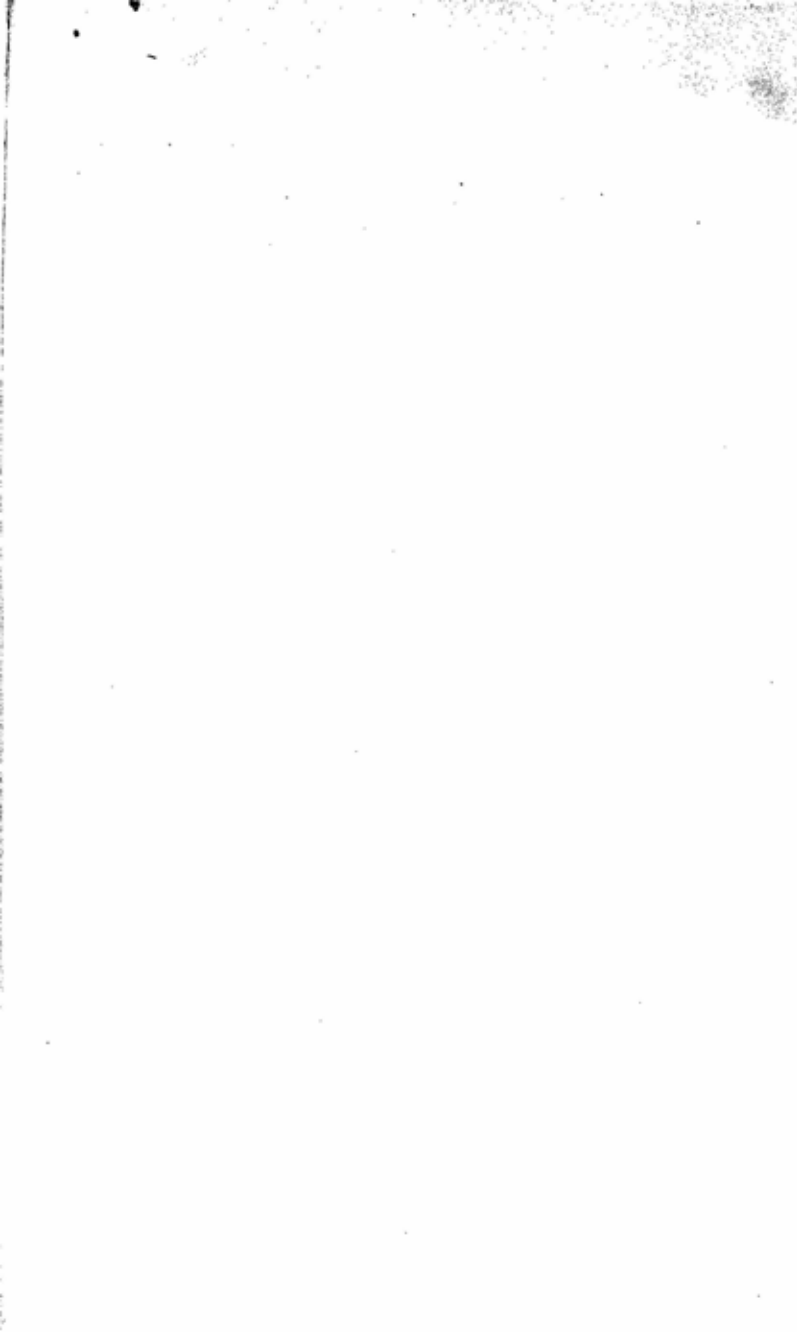
wider professional understanding. The better the work done by the public library the more it becomes akin to that of the university, national, learned society or specialist library, and the closer the alliance and co-operation between all types of genuine library service should be. Though recent years have seen much progress in this direction, there is still too little interchange of personnel and exchange of experience between public and non-public libraries. There is far more in America. We recognize the various obstacles—such for example, as the regard for “degrees” in the university and learned libraries and the influence of superannuation schemes in the local authority service. Yet each side can give so much to the other that we must when we seek to improve and consolidate the profession of librarianship, think not of several librarianships, but of one united body.

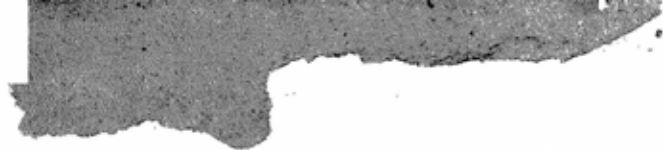
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