

Our Four Year Goals: Contributions of College, University, and Reference Libraries¹

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AT THE first A.L.A. convention I attended in 1928, at West Baden, Ind., the keynote was on library service in an understanding world, a phrase which has been proven considerably more optimistic than the facts warranted. We and the world at large were little aware that there was even then brewing a devil's cauldron of envy, distrust, hatred, and greed, which was to threaten to lay our comfortable and pleasant way of life low and which was to demonstrate tragically that we did not and do not live in an understanding world. Now two decades later, having tasted of the bitter brew of that unholy cauldron, against which our books availed but little, and to which many of them directly contributed, we are concerned, gravely concerned, and more realistically, about the challenge of public affairs and how the work we do in and through our libraries can help bring enlightenment, peace, and yes, understanding, to a world that has always had far too little of these much sought and desperately needed characteristics. We know that library work well and honestly done will contribute in some degree to the better world

all mankind needs and wants. Therefore, we appropriately relate our plans and thoughts to the four year goals our Association has set for itself in anticipation of, or rather in preparation for its 75th anniversary.

If there is anything new in our announced goals and in this conference it is our sense of urgency and our desire to improve and strengthen our libraries and librarians quickly so that they can make a more direct and positive contribution to the many serious problems that face our civilization, problems aptly said to be, if not new, then newly dangerous. Whether this is true, whether our uneasy concern, our near-hysteria, is justified, time alone will tell. We know from the books in our libraries that many generations before us have felt that they more than any that had gone before, faced unique, difficult, terrifying and almost unsurmountable problems. Our forebears, even as we, solved or failed to solve problems through intelligence or blunder, through good fortune or bad luck. That they failed more often than not, in matters of human relationships and international amity as we have so often and so recently failed, the present state of the world bears eloquent if unhappy testimony.

A survey of our goals indicates several areas in which the work and efforts of college, university, and reference librarians can make important, in some cases even

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dominant contribution. In doing this, however, the college and university libraries (and to some extent the separate reference libraries) will not be free agents in the same sense as are the public libraries. What we accomplish in our higher educational libraries will necessarily have to be done within the confines of the policies and teaching and research programs of our respective institutions, which of course, we primarily exist to support. Within these limits, though, there is much that we can do.

Toward our first objective of an adequate number of high caliber professional librarians the college and university libraries can and should make the major contribution. We can best answer the question as to how and why young people enter the library profession by each of us stating how he himself happened to become a librarian. Like as not answers to this question would indicate that the decision came during our years in college or our immediate post-college years. For many of us it came through the accident of part-time employment in a library, more often than not a college or university library. Both in being in close contact with young people during their years of decision, and by being advisers, friends, and preceptors of young people working in college libraries we in the colleges can gain many recruits to our ranks.

We do not propose, in the colleges and universities, however to continue, as we have in the past, to leave the attraction of strong young people to our profession to the missionary zeal of a few of our more enthusiastic librarians. We intend to stimulate and promote a unified approach, by all our members and libraries, in behalf of librarianship, to the best young people who come under our observation. It is extremely fortunate, in my opinion, that the majority of our library organizations have decided on a joint effort to attract strong

young people. We were, in the college field, naturally glad that this decision found us mobilized for action, with a special recruiting committee of our own already set up and functioning. We are pleased that this committee has been able to take a prominent part in the work of the Joint Committee on Library Work as a Career, and that our chairman, Lawrence Sidney Thompson, is the secretary of the joint committee. We expect to contribute largely, through Dr. Thompson and his committee, to the work of the joint committee.

In improving professional education for librarianship, also a part of our first objective, we in the colleges and universities have taken and are taking a prominent part. This is natural, even inevitable, in view of the fact that nearly all of our library schools are associated with universities. The schools, even if they are not, as is often the case, under the direction of the librarian, naturally function in very close relationship to the libraries and the library staff, many of whom serve as part-time instructors. These members of college and university library staffs have contributed largely to past progress, and in my opinion it has been considerable, in this area. College and university librarians are taking a prominent part in the present ferment, change, and experimentation in the field, and the considerable trend toward graduate recognition of the first year of library school work. In this area, too, A.C.R.L. has a special committee at work.

The goal of stronger library associations, better organized for membership participation and better equipped to provide service to members, which is also a part of the first of our four year goals, has this year occupied the major time and interest of the Association of College and Reference Libraries. This has been because we have felt ourselves, with our office of executive secretary

newly established and our decision to remain an integral part of A.L.A. behind us, to be in a formative period. We have placed major emphasis, in addition to recruiting and better education for librarianship, both of which will contribute to strong library associations, on attracting new members to our association. This effort, under the direction of Wayne S. Yenawine of the Air University of Montgomery, Ala., has borne good fruit during the year, bringing our ranks to well over 3600 members, as compared to 2400 last year.

While strong emphasis has been placed on our association as such, this has been done with a clear realization that the association is only a means to an end. We are interested in the association only because we believe and hope that through working together within it, and in an organized way, we can best make our libraries stronger, more vital, more effective. At whatever moment and to whatever degree our association begins to exist by and for itself, instead of as a convenient and responsive agency for us to work through, it will begin to lose value and that strength which comes from close contact with the grass roots. It is for this reason that the Board of Directors of A.C.R.L. has been highly pleased that our new executive secretary has been able to make numerous trips to institutions about the country, to confer with and advise college presidents, and speak before library groups and faculties.

In the current issue of *Special Libraries* there appears a provocative and thoughtful article by Ruth Savord, "Seen from the Sidelines," on association strength and development. Miss Savord looks back with understandable nostalgia to the days when the strength of the Special Libraries Association lay in participation of practically the entire membership in the constructive work of the association. She compares this

with the present large, far-reaching organization, with a headquarters office and staff and numerous chapters and groups. She fears, and quite rightly, it seems to me, that this situation inclines the membership to become "takers" of others' labor and abilities rather than "sharers." She raises the question as to whether it is better to be *ineffectively* large or *effectively* small.

This is the dilemma of all professional organizations. Obviously we need numbers for strength as well as a wide dispersal of the results and benefits of our efforts. How to have both, a large membership and a vital program with appeal to all members, and in which they can work, is a problem neither easy nor simple of solution. A.C.R.L., being young, should be able to avoid some pitfalls. Already, however, demands on our executive secretary are snowballing, pointing a clear trend toward a strong, extensively staffed executive office to which we can all turn to get our work done. I here voice the personal hope that our headquarters staff will be kept relatively small and simple and that much of our work will be spread to and done by our members.

The increasing fragmentation and specialization of our associations is also a matter for serious thought. It is exemplified by the Special Libraries Association, once itself a specialized group drawing together because of mutual interests and problems, and now having twenty-three chapters and thirteen groups, and our own young A.C.R.L. already with seven sections. It is my opinion that, in our efforts to be democratic we have leaned over backward in setting up section and chapters. Within A.C.R.L. this can now be done by any twenty people banding together and, with the approval of our board of directors, organizing a new section.

Our association and our sections would be stronger, I believe, if the constitutional

section requirement were raised to 150 or 200 members. Finally, we need an effective unifying agency for all our associations, which have as many or more things in common as they do apart. I incline to the view, as suggested by Milton E. Lord, that this need can be well met by a national federation of library associations, with the A.L.A. serving as the unifying agency.

Our college, university, and reference libraries can also make major contribution to the attainment of one phase of our third goal, the cooperative acquisition at the state, local, and national levels of the world's useful knowledge, so that all important materials will be found in some American library somewhere. In this quest for all the books of conceivable importance to be somewhere in America, college, university, and reference librarians, ever since E. C. Richardson first voiced the idea in 1899, have taken a leading part. Now the Association of Research Libraries, which believes in keeping itself small, and which, with a very few exceptions, consists of university and college libraries, is the chief proponent of such action, through the well-known Farmington Plan, a plan which in its logical implications and application extends far beyond the sharply limited membership of the Association of Research Libraries.

In this problem of acquiring and organizing for effective use all the world's knowledge lies one of the serious cultural problems of mankind. It is not a problem of the librarians alone, although we as librarians are certainly on the front firing line. Given the necessary money and space we can probably organize indefinitely, even with our present controls, mankind's voluminous production of records, which at the Library of Congress alone is bringing a linear shelf growth of over six miles per year for books and pamphlets alone. I wonder though, and I know this is heresy, at the need of

scholarship, that is really significant scholarship, for all the materials we so meticulously acquire, or its ability to use them effectively. As a citizen and taxpayer, too, I am concerned, using the Library of Congress again symbolically, over the fact that the budget of this great library has more than tripled during my two decades as a practicing librarian, and is still far below the carefully demonstrated needs of the library. The time has come, it seems to me, for us to begin seriously to ask, "Can there be no ceiling?"

To the improvement of interlibrary loan arrangements and the bettering of facilities for locating materials the colleges and reference libraries will continue as they have in the past, to make major contribution. This will undoubtedly be done through further expansion and refinement of bibliographic centers, regional reservoirs, and union lists. It may here be appropriately noted that the present large *Union List of Serials*, now so fundamental and so important in the operation of all libraries, came into being through the planning and active financial support, to the tune of \$36,000 each, of forty libraries, chiefly college and university.

One desired objective in the interlibrary loan area is to limit the very heavy loans and the responsibility now carried by our largest libraries. There is good prospect, I believe, that technological developments will before too long make possible very considerable economies in time and money in the free and easy interchange of our books. It seems highly probable however that our 75th anniversary will see us still carrying this work on largely along the present well established and traditional lines.

I have purposely stressed in this brief discussion those areas and goals in which and to which our college, university, and

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appears significant enough to be preserved in an article, I hope you will not be too modest to describe and interpret it for the editor. The sections, you know, have not shared equally the space in the journal—but I think there has been no hint of discrimination. Of 409 articles appearing in *College and Research Libraries*, 242 have been general in scope; 56 concerned primarily with university libraries; 52 with college; 28 with reference; 10 each with libraries of junior colleges and teacher-training institutions; and fewer than 10 to agricultural and engineering libraries. While obviously there are differences in the amount of material available, there must be gaps in the published information about the philosophy, practices, obligations, and opportunities of some of the special interest libraries. You should not assume, however, that the paucity of articles bears any relationship to the interest of elected officers of sections. The best records of attendance at board meetings are held by representatives of those special types of libraries about which literature seems to be scarce.

Among you are many who want to receive *College and Research Libraries* in place of the *A.L.A. Bulletin*. It is obvious that

such a substitute arrangement cannot be worked out satisfactorily. However, you will remember that the Fourth Activities Committee has included in its tentative proposals a plan which will permit every member to receive the journal on his membership.

Finally, a word about the work of the executive secretary. His report covering his first year in office is evidence that in the executive secretary's office we have the connective tissue this association has needed so urgently to bring its sections and its members together: a clearing house for information, a representative who can speak to us and for us about the affairs and problems of this association, continuity, and an honest desire to be of service. While this office is already an indispensable part of A.C.R.L., its contributions may be expected to increase in importance in each of the next several years. The directors are not losing sight of the ten points in A.C.R.L.'s original program. They are still before us. But whatever the objectives of the next decade, they will be achieved only if we continue to strengthen our membership in quality as well as in numbers, and only if most of these are *interested* and *active* members.

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reference libraries can and will make outstanding and significant contribution. We will not, however, I sincerely believe, limit our vision and our work and efforts closely and specifically to the college field. Toward all our goals, four year or otherwise, I know I can safely pledge the college and reference librarians to work with intelligence

and good will. Our members will often be found, I am certain, working in behalf of state extension of public library service, county and other larger units of public library service, and in whatever other ways may strengthen and improve library service and help bring books to the people and understanding to the world.