

# Review Articles

## History of Libraries

*Handbuch der Bibliothekswissenschaft*, Vol. III: *Geschichte der Bibliotheken*. Edited by Fritz Milkau and Georg Leyh. Otto Harrassowitz, 1940. xxiii, 1051p.

After a delay of over seven years the third and final volume of the *Handbuch der Bibliothekswissenschaft* has been completed. The general editor, the late Fritz Milkau, did not live to see its completion, and the final job of revision was done by Georg Leyh of Tübingen. However, as Leyh points out in the introduction, it was not only Milkau's inspiration that made the ultimate completion of the work possible but also, above all, his own contributions to the field of library history. His history of the Breslau library was a model of its kind, and his essay in the Friedrich Schmidt-Ott homage volume on the last half century of library history was basic from the standpoint of both method and factual content.

Leyh's introductory essay describing the genesis of the third volume of the *Handbuch* and setting forth a kind of affidavit of justification for the study of library history is well worth careful study. It is full of suggestions as to possible future directions in the investigation of library history, and, in a broader sense, it is a confession of faith in librarianship. To emphasize the value of the study of library history he quotes Milkau, who was equally successful as a research worker in library science and as an administrator: "If there is any learned profession in which the knowledge of its own history is indispensable, then it is that of the librarian. As no other he lives in traditions, as no other he is fettered by traditions."

Whatever may be the shortcomings of the *Handbuch*, volume three, it fills a sorely needed place in library science. No one since Edwards has attempted a general history of libraries on a large scale, and consequently many aspects of library history have been almost totally neglected. The present vol-

ume, significant as it may be in itself, should be used as a steppingstone on which to build a new discipline of library history. The Germans have done much spadework in the field of library history, and the English have played with and at the subject, but here in America only one scholar (and, unfortunately, he not a librarian), J. W. Thompson, has done serious work in the field. Even the history of individual libraries has been largely neglected except for a few brilliant studies such as those of Lydenberg on the New York public, Spencer on the Chicago public, and Salamanca on the Library of Congress.

Several of the contributors are former pupils of Milkau. All are leading authorities in the fields on which they have written. The contributors, their subjects, and the amount of space devoted to each topic (volume three is, of course, uniform in size with volumes one and two) are as follows:

1. Carl Wendel, director of the University of Halle Library: Graeco-Roman Antiquity, p. 1-63.
2. Viktor Burr, a librarian in the University of Tübingen Library: Byzantine and Arab Libraries, p. 64-89.
3. Karl Christ, director of the Manuscript Division of the Staatsbibliothek in Berlin: The Middle Ages, p. 90-285.
4. Aloys Bömer, director of the University of Münster Library: From the Renaissance to the Beginning of the Enlightenment, p. 286-462.
5. George Leyh, director of the University of Tübingen Library: German Libraries from the Enlightenment to the Present Day, p. 463-854.
6. Albert Predeek, director of the library of the Technische Hochschule in Berlin-Charlottenburg: Great Britain and the United States of America, p. 855-975.
7. Joris Vorstius, counselor in the Staatsbibliothek in Berlin: Other Civilized Countries, p. 976-1051.

Leyh states in the introduction that it was part of Milkau's original plan to include a

history of popular libraries (*i.e.*, public libraries in our sense) and that Konstantin Nörrenberg, one of the leaders in the belated German public library movement, was to have written it. The cryptic explanation for its omission, of which no translation will be attempted, is stated thus: "Das Volksbüchereiwesen isst aber nach dem nationalpolitischen Umbruch in eine so lebhaftige Bewegung eingetreten, dass die ältere Arbeit als in den Masstäben überholt sich hier nicht mehr einfügen wollte." (*p. xvi*).

On *p. xvi* Leyh explains the organization of the work and the relative amount of space devoted to each subject. He points out that the greatest emphasis was purposely laid on medieval, Renaissance, and modern German, British, and American libraries. However much we might have wished to see a monumental treatment of libraries in classical Greece and Rome or a more extensive discussion of modern French and Italian libraries, it must be conceded that the emphasis is correctly distributed in order to keep the volume within reasonable bounds. The omission of pre-Hellenic libraries is condoned inasmuch as it is the purpose of the volume to show the direct continuity of the history of the care of books as it is practiced in the modern Occident. However, it is most regrettable that there was a complete omission of any reference to Jewish libraries, especially in medieval times. After S. K. Padover's disappointing essay on medieval Jewish libraries in *The Medieval Library*, it might have been expected that this subject, so worthy of adequate treatment, would have fared better at the hands of the editors of the *Handbuch*. But possibly if they had included it, then the *Sicherheitsdienst* would have allowed us to have none of the *Handbuch*, volume three. Still, until some scholar equal to the task gives us a complete picture of Jewish libraries, the history of libraries will continue to suffer from one of its most troublesome lacunae.

The task of the historian of Greek and Roman libraries has been made considerably easier by the excellent bibliography of Teggart (*Library Journal* 24 (1899), 5-12, 57-59) and Gomoll's continuation covering the

period 1899-1938 (*Buch und Schrift* N.F. I (1938), 96-105). However, neither Wendell nor Thompson has said the last word on this subject. This field is worthy of a volume comparable in scope to *The Medieval Library*. Whoever undertakes the job will need a classical background at least equal to Wendel's, and preferably it should be undertaken by a commission of outstanding classical scholars. Wendel's work should give a good start toward the realization of this ambitious project, and in all fairness it must be admitted that one can hardly ask more of a *Handbuch* article. Wendel, like most German classicists, is at his best on the subject of Pergamon. His notes on the library founded by Attalos I and his successors represent an important original contribution. Another highlight in his essay is his treatment of early Christian libraries. In one respect these libraries are even more important than ancient libraries, for those rare souls among the early fathers who saw the beauties of heathen literature and were willing to tolerate it in their libraries deserve our profound gratitude for their part in its preservation.

The problem of Byzantine library history is a more difficult one. Some thoroughly capable Byzantinists even question the wisdom of attempting a history of Byzantine libraries on the grounds of the paucity of archaeological evidence and the destruction of so much valuable source material by fire and iconoclasm. Viktor Burr has given us essentially the same type of thing that S. K. Padover and Isabella Stone contributed to *The Medieval Library*, and it appears to be the best foundation yet laid for anyone who will make so bold as to attempt the definitive history of Byzantine libraries. But if Aeneas Sylvius called medieval Constantinople "fons musarum," no one can deny the importance of Byzantine libraries and the need for further investigation.

The six pages into which Burr jams the history of Arab libraries is unworthy of the scale on which the *Handbuch* is conceived. Yet it is a good encyclopedia article, and the general reader in library history will do well to follow it rather than Padover's essay

in *The Medieval Library*. What is really needed is a study which not only looks beyond Muslim culture as a mere vehicle for the preservation of certain aspects of ancient Greek civilization but also recognizes the true greatness of the Arabs as productive literary men, scholars, and preservers of the written word. Ruth Stelhorn Mackensen's brilliant series of articles on "Arabic Books and Libraries in the Umayyad Period," published between 1936 and 1939 in *The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures*, is a good beginning for the systematic, exhaustive investigation of Arab libraries and librarianship.

### *The Medieval Library*

One of the best contributions to the third volume of the *Handbuch* is Christ's essay on the medieval library. Here for the first time we have a complete, coherent picture of the medieval library, and not since J. W. Clark's *The Care of Books* has there been such a generally valid treatment of this subject. It is true that medieval western European libraries are far easier to investigate than classical, Muslim, Jewish, or Byzantine libraries, especially in view of the fact that many of them tie directly into the history of modern libraries. Thus it is due to no paucity or inaccessibility of source material that there has hitherto been no adequate description of medieval libraries. The facts are merely that Christ has a broader acquaintance with his sources and a fuller comprehension of the significance of his subject than any of his predecessors.

In getting at the basis of his problem Christ lays appropriate emphasis on the importance of the libraries of the monastic foundations, each of which he considers individually in the various periods into which his essay is divided. His own studies of the Fulda library published over a decade ago give him a peculiar advantage in this respect. He shows very clearly how the entire cultural history of western Europe prior to the founding of the universities centers around the monastic foundations and how, in turn, their history is largely the history of their libraries. Again, such great figures as Columba, Lupus, and Gerbert are

given full credit for their contributions to the preservation of literature, and we see that the history of medieval libraries is not merely institutional history. In addition to his discussion of the universities and their role in the care of books in the later Middle Ages, Christ gives a useful outline of the activities of private collectors, chiefly princes.

### *Renaissance and Reformation Libraries*

Aloys Bömer has handled his section on Renaissance and Reformation libraries fully as well as Christ and Leyh handled their respective sections. Although the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries mark the beginnings of the institutional history of modern libraries, it is a difficult period to discuss because the issues are so frequently clouded by confiscation, suppression, and unstable administration. In addition, it should be remembered that perhaps more than in any other period the libraries of the fifteenth through the seventeenth centuries were influenced by the great political, intellectual, and religious movements of the day. Bömer has given an exact interpretation to the significance of Renaissance, Reformation, Humanism, Counter-Reformation, and Absolutism for the history of libraries. He is well versed in the history of science and scholarship in general, without which knowledge it is difficult to understand fully the background of the Hartmann Schedel or Willibald Pirckheimer collections or the beginnings of the Cracow University Library.

Bömer considers the library history of each country separately under the three headings of Renaissance and Humanism, Reformation, and Counter-Reformation to Enlightenment. No account of England and America is given here, inasmuch as that was left for Predeek. His bibliographical footnotes are somewhat scantier than are those in other sections of the book, but this may well be attributed to a careful choice made from the great wealth of material which is available. In general he has illustrated his text with enough citations to the key works, which will usually offer an introduction to an entire subject. What is now needed is

the source book of library history once proposed by Ferdinand Eichler.

### *German Libraries*

Leyh's essay on German libraries from the Enlightenment to modern times occupies more space than any other section of the book. The same careful, exact scholarship that has characterized Leyh's other work lends a maximum value to this essay. Although the German university library of the nineteenth century was the workshop for the founders of modern science, this is the first detailed treatment of the subject. Leyh's long years of experience as an administrator of a great German research library give his work added authority, inasmuch as he himself has played a leading role in many of the movements he describes. Unfortunately, he shows undue (and unjustified) enthusiasm in welcoming the libraries of Posen and Reichenberg into the V.D.B. in his treatment of the most recent events in German library history.

The section on German libraries from 1870 to the present is a valuable model for American librarians who are interested in trends in research libraries. There are literally hundreds of problems which the German university and research libraries have met and solved or outgrown but which are still burning issues of the day in the United States. If our research library administrators will take the trouble to read this one relatively brief section, we will be able to save ourselves considerable grief and find many short cuts. For example, Leyh's comments on training for librarianship and his historical presentation of the problem can be of great value to American library schools, particularly the larger ones.

Predeek's history of British and American libraries should be required reading for every librarian in the United States, as much as Munthe's much discussed book of a few years back. Predeek's work is neither as comprehensive nor as fundamental as Leyh's corresponding treatment of German libraries, but it is sound and virtually unique. The three quarters of a century old work of Edwards and the half century old work of Savage (and very brief at that) are about

the only general material which we have in English on the history of libraries in Anglo-Saxon countries.

Predeek was well qualified for his work. After visiting America and working in some of our greatest libraries, he devoted several years to a study of the historical aspects of British and American libraries. His sources are all secondary, and yet he has done more with these sources than we in America have done with all of our rich archival material and, above all, the availability of many men still living who were the real founders of our great research libraries. To be sure, there have been valuable contributions to limited aspects of the subject by Ditzion, Shera, Shores, Cole, Walter, and a few others, as well as two or three good histories of individual libraries, but there has as yet been no concerted effort by one individual or one institution to approach the subject systematically. Predeek has pointed the way for us, and, in justice to ourselves, we can hardly afford to neglect much longer the history of libraries in the United States.

The present reviewer's forthcoming translation of Predeek's essay is not intended to be a textbook or a reference book. It is intended merely to be a guide to further research in the field. Some errors in the bibliographical references in the original have been corrected in the translation, and it is hoped that Predeek himself will have the opportunity to add corrections from his own *Handexemplar* before the translation is printed at the conclusion of the war.

The last section of the *Handbuch*, volume three, by Joris Vorstius, dealing with the last two centuries of library history in countries other than Britain, America, and Germany, is readable and accurate, but actually it amounts to little more than the Library Association *Survey* or Esdaile's two volumes on the great libraries of the world. It is unfortunate that more space was not allowed for French libraries in particular. We might have wished for more information on Soviet and Latin American libraries in view of possible interests in postwar years. Still, there is no doubt but that the puffing, unreliable statistics on Russian libraries make the job of adequate description a difficult

one. Likewise the relative poverty and primitive administration of Latin American libraries make the page and a half devoted to them about all they deserve. It might be noted, however, that some attention could be paid to the numerous excellent private collections in the various Latin American capitals. A student of Mexican history using Father Mariano Cuevas' admirable private collection could accomplish slightly more than he could in the Biblioteca Nacional and slightly less than he could in the Bancroft Library. However, Vorstius has done a good job within the limits of the space allotted to him, and, after all, it is the task of librarians in Finland, Portugal, or Japan to write the history of their own institutions.

Documentation in this volume of the *Handbuch* is uniformly satisfactory, although no attempt is made to give complete bibliographies. However, enough is given on all topics to provide a good start to anyone interested in more detailed investigations of any given subject. Most of the

errors in the bibliographical notes are due to excessive brevity of citation rather than to any gross carelessness. Evidently the volume began going to press in late 1938 or early 1939, since virtually no references are made to research published at a later date.

Like the other volumes of the *Handbuch*, the *Geschichte der Bibliotheken* suffers badly for the lack of an index. While the excellent analytical tables of contents of all three volumes compensate in some small degree for this fault, it might be conservatively stated that the usefulness of the set would be increased 25 per cent by good indices. It would be a pious work for some library school class in indexing to undertake this job as a term exercise.

Harrasowitz risked shipping only a few copies to the United States before Pearl Harbor. The only copies located thus far are in the Brooklyn Public Library and the Graduate Library School of the University of Chicago.—*Lawrence S. Thompson, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.*

## Administration and Finance

*The Administration of the American Public Library.* E. W. McDiarmid and John McDiarmid. American Library Association and University of Illinois Press, 1943. 250p.

*Public Library Finance and Accounting.* Edward Allen Wight. American Library Association, 1943. 137p.

Judging from their titles it would seem at first glance that these two works are of no special interest to those concerned with college and reference libraries. Wight's work is a study chiefly of municipally controlled public libraries. The volume representing the joint work of the brothers McDiarmid is a study of 315 municipal libraries whose staffs range in size from ten persons to three hundred or more. Privately endowed libraries are excluded. Municipally controlled universities excepted, it would appear that the material in these two volumes would not directly apply to college and reference libraries. Further examination, however,

brings out the fact that the works under review contain many useful statements and suggestions applicable to libraries of any type.

There is no difficulty in finding quickly in the work of the McDiarmids pertinent suggestions. After each subject discussed there are specific recommendations clearly set out in paragraph form. The place of the board and its committees in the library management and questions of what duties should be left by the board to the librarian, are admirably treated. There is a discussion of lay groups, including Friends of the Library. Particularly useful are the chapters dealing with the duties of the librarian and his assistants and the pros and cons of departmentalization in larger and medium-sized libraries. Organization charts are suggested for libraries of both types. Sensible broad principles of practice are recommended, with which no one will quarrel, to be applied as circumstances dictate.

Financial management, including practical suggestions for budget preparation, receives