

Regional Library Centers Tomorrow: A Symposium

IN THE January 1947 issue of *College and Research Libraries* a group of papers considered the current state of regional library centers in the United States. The following papers, prepared for the Buffalo Conference, were abridged and edited by John Van-Male, assistant director of libraries, University of Denver. Eugene H. Wilson, director of libraries, University of Colorado, summarized the four papers.

Photocopy Service in the Development of a Bibliographic Center

The establishment and operation of a bibliographic center can be greatly facilitated by good photocopy service. Our experience in the Pacific Northwest indicates that good copying facilities are an essential part of a bibliographic center—almost as essential, in fact, as a union catalog.

Establishment

At the very beginning, we made use of the photostat to copy the charts and maps accompanying our *Memorandum* to the Carnegie Corporation on behalf of a foundation grant.

When planning for the union catalog, various methods of copying cards were considered. First we ruled out the suggestion that all cards be typed, for such a procedure would be cumbersome, slow, and subject to error. We next eliminated the proposal that the cards be DEXigraphed. This method obviates typographical errors but is expensive and produces an unsatisfactory product. In 1940 when our project first got under way there was no simple, speedy equipment which would enlarge microfilm negatives to cards of normal size. Another possibility was the use of microfilm in combination with a microfilm reader involving the typing of cards from a projected image. This method was subject to the normal human equation of error plus errors involved in deciphering indistinct images resulting from poor copy.

After careful investigation we adopted the use of Duophoto contact printers with reflex paper. The main entries of the catalogs of the contributing libraries were thus photo-

printed. The Duophoto machine is a modified print box, using extra strong lights, a filter, and an automatic timing switch. The reproduction of cards is done by contact of the cards and the sensitized paper. Thirteen cards can be printed at one time to produce one negative sheet. The exposed paper is then developed. The next step is the comparison of these negatives with the master file. For this purpose our operator devised a viewing box which simplified the reading of negatives. After reading the main entry card on the negative, the worker looks in the master file for a duplicate entry. If he finds one he stamps the master card with a symbol which represents the library whose file he is checking. Entries not found in the catalog are so marked and positives are later printed from those negatives only. Positive cards when printed are interfiled in the catalog and become a part of the master file.

We found this method speedy, economical, and 100 per cent accurate. If we were considering another huge copying job, however, we would investigate the possibilities of microfilm and filmstat enlargements, as we understand microfilm cameras have been greatly improved during the past few years.

After the initial assembling of a union catalog there are apt to be additional libraries wishing to be included. It is a simple procedure to incorporate their holdings by using some photocopy method. Odd bunches of cards come in from contributing libraries and it is sometimes necessary that these be returned promptly. By copying them photographically they can be rushed back by return mail. The

photoduplication of cards for other special collections in the bibliographic center can be done speedily and accurately. It is possible for the center to pull out cards for short bibliographies (marking the place of withdrawal by inserts) and have them photographed rather than typed.

Operation

A bibliographic center is an agency set up for all kinds of cooperative library work. As yet, many people regard the center as little more than a huge union catalog constructed as a basis for interlibrary loans. Interlibrary loans are indeed important and they have done a great deal to equalize opportunity. The actual ownership of books is not imperative if these books can be made available to those who can profit by them. The chief function of librarianship is to organize knowledge and to encourage its use. Photography has become one of the chief aids in the diffusion of knowledge.

Our photographic service has done a great deal to supplement interlibrary loans. During the war we had frequent long-distance calls from engineers and research workers at the Hanford project requesting articles from journals and other publications. Usually these were copied by film or photostat and sent out by return mail so that our peaceful laboratory had its small part in atomic warfare. The scientists and engineers preferred copies to the originals because they could thus keep the information as long as wished and did not have to send it back to some library at the end of a week or two. A collection of pertinent materials was thus built up right at the factory.

Shortly after Pearl Harbor both the Navy and the Boeing Aircraft Company drew heavily on the University of Washington photographic staff as to both time and knowledge. Our staff was used on stopgap microfilming and the training of personnel until these organizations could secure technicians of their own. This service, supplied just as the bibliographic center was being organized, greatly raised our prestige among the scientists of the region. The success of much of our work was due to the proximity of the photographic laboratory to the bibliographic center. One example may be cited: our department of

fisheries and our hydraulics department were doing important research for the International Fisheries Commission. This was completed too late to persuade any commercial firm to make photographic copies of their charts to include in the report which had to be submitted to a Congressional committee in Washington and to the Canadian Parliament. By doing a night-and-day job we were able to get out the work in time. The result of these reports was the appropriation of four million dollars for the building of fish ladders at Hell's Gate in the Fraser River to save the important salmon industry.

One of our orders was the duplication of Harvard's *Gray Herbarium Index*, now for the most part out of print. By use of the Duophoto we made negatives of some 680,000 cards. Positives will be prepared as soon as card stock can be secured. Most of the work is done for patrons within the limits of the Pacific Northwest, but we have occasional orders from various parts of the United States. For example, we furnished microfilm copies of early American periodicals for the University of Missouri Library to the extent of some \$450. We have aided in completing a number of serials and reference books for libraries both within and without the Pacific Northwest.

One of the most important projects of the Pacific Northwest Bibliographic Center relates to a division of responsibility for library book resources. In this connection the university library is making a collection of microfilm records for the Pacific Northwest. Except where copyright laws forbid, the films are available for other libraries at the cost of reproduction. The advantage of this arrangement is shown in the case of "Books Printed in English before 1600." We have paid Edwards Brothers \$500 per year for microfilm copies of these publications. The higher educational institutions in the state of Oregon have decided not to subscribe to the series but instead to secure reels on interlibrary loan through the center or film copies of the particular portions needed. Here is a tidy saving for Oregon amounting to date to \$4500. The filming of certain newspapers published within the Pacific Northwest has often been requested. The new Recordak oscillating newspaper camera has just been installed, and it is our hope in the near future

to begin a cooperative plan of micro-filming newspapers for libraries of the P.N.B.C.

In closing this informal paper, I wish only to express my belief that the proponents of new bibliographic centers should well consider the question of location. Our experience

would indicate that it is of great importance to have close at hand and if possible within the same building as the bibliographic center up-to-date facilities for the use of photography. —Charles W. Smith, librarian, University of Washington.

Future Bibliographic Centers

The major portion of this discussion will inevitably be concerned with the regional union catalog rather than with the bibliographic center, not because the caption above is a misnomer, but because the union catalog is basic to the conception of a true bibliographic center. The union catalog can exist separately from a bibliographic center. Most of them do, in fact, but the bibliographic center, in the broad and important sense signified by those at Philadelphia, Denver, and Seattle, cannot exist without the regional union catalog.

Definition of the word "region" is not pertinent to a discussion of union catalogs, for it may be a city, a county, a state, several states, or a combination of all or portions of any of these. But "regional union catalog" is a fairly restricted concept which implies that all of the cataloged holdings of all the libraries in the region are included in the catalog. "Cataloged holdings" is a loophole through which many library materials slip from the grasp of the union catalog, partly because of cataloging arrears, partly because of specialized materials which do not lend themselves to identification through a familiar and reasonably universal main entry.

The regional union catalog—and the bibliographic center it supports—is here considered as an entity in itself, with no reference to other regional catalogs or to the National Union Catalog in Washington. The regional catalog, if it is to be the supremely effective instrument it can be, must look first to its own region for support, for guidance, and for opportunities to develop the many useful and indispensable services it, and it alone, can perform.

Its usefulness as a tool for locating needed books within the region is obviously the manner in which it is most used and is the least important. Too much stress on location service leads to statements such as:

Except for local use, the writer cannot see the reason for union catalogs, outside of the Library of Congress, in the regions east of the Mississippi. An air-mail letter can reach the Library of Congress in twenty-four hours. We can obtain information as to the location of a book more satisfactorily from the National Union Catalog of the Library of Congress than from any other source. Why write a center in Chicago, Cleveland, Cincinnati, or even Philadelphia, when more information can be obtained from the Library of Congress than from any of these cities? For the benefit of libraries in the immediate neighborhood of Chicago, a union catalog at Chicago might be of assistance, although it would be expensive. For most librarians, the union catalog of the Library of Congress will be the final recourse no matter what other union catalogs may be set up.¹

Pat and easy answers can readily be made. Books do not travel by airmail, for example, but the fundamental harm to the union catalog idea lies in the fact that the remarks ignore the spirit of the regional concept, ignore the fact that the union catalog and the bibliographic center are primarily concerned with the development of library resources within their region, with making the region as self-sufficient in its book needs as possible—before appealing to the National Union Catalog and the libraries it represents for help.

More important than its location service is the union catalog's usefulness in showing the need for specialization agreements and in performing the necessary and time-consuming work involved in placing them into effect. Surveys of resources, conducted without the benefit of a union catalog, are useful only in outlining the broader, more obvious areas for possible specialization. Specific and continuing research in much narrower fields by the union catalog will reveal many smaller,

¹ Brown, Charles H. "Union Catalogs and Problems of Collecting." *College and Research Libraries* 6:417, September 1945, pt. 2.

though just as significant areas, where specialization is important and necessary to the full and proper development of library resources in the region.

Once the specialization agreements are in effect, the union catalog retains its usefulness in maintaining them. Librarians who have given up responsibility and perhaps important collections in certain fields to other librarians, will want to be sure that collections in those fields are being properly augmented, may want to suggest titles for purchase, or may even purchase them if the need seems urgent. Only through the union catalog can such maintenance be accomplished with the least amount of effort and with reasonable effectiveness.

Even apart from specific specialization agreements, the union catalog may be used to prevent excessive and expensive duplication of library materials in its region. Library growth is becoming a serious problem, even if it is not proceeding as rapidly as Fremont Rider would have us believe. Greater selectivity in book selection will soon be forced on many librarians by their sheer inability to provide shelf space as fast as they are able to buy books. Such selectivity will be much easier to administer and justify if the librarian can easily and quickly determine that titles he is considering for purchase are already in the region and easily available to him. Librarians in regions blessed with union catalogs will one day consider the checking of book orders with the union catalog a necessary part of their order-searching routine. From there it is but a step to centralized acquisition and centralized cataloging—ideas which are admittedly long on merit and short on effective execution.

Discarding

Libraries, being crowded for shelf space, face an ever-increasing problem of discarding books which are no longer needed. But experience with storage libraries has shown that it is extremely difficult for the librarian to decide which books are little used, seldom used, or never used, and it is little wonder that he shrinks from discarding the "never-used" book which may be called for tomorrow. The regional union catalog can help him here, too. A routine check of all titles he con-

siders discarding with the union catalog will reveal those which are held by other libraries in the region and may therefore be safely discarded. "Last copies in the region" may then be retained on the shelves or offered to other libraries in the region which may have greater need for them.

Presently existing regional union catalogs which are reasonably capable of performing the services outlined above include those at Atlanta, Cleveland, Columbus, Denver, Lincoln, Montpelier, Nashville, Philadelphia, Providence, Salem, and Seattle. Those at Denver, Philadelphia, and Seattle have developed their services to become bibliographic centers and are so known in name also. None of them have undertaken extensive and detailed study of their catalogs toward the discovery of likely areas of specialization within their regions. Such studies should be undertaken at once by all of the union catalogs as a preliminary step to much more intensive development of library resources in the regions they serve.

The specific location of other union catalogs to complete a pattern of regional union catalogs covering the whole nation is not especially important. The pattern suggested in 1942² is as good or as bad as any other pattern which might be determined in the same a priori manner. Important consideration is the creation and development of regional union catalogs in places strategically located to serve the region from which they draw their support.* Important too is full regional realization of the need for the union catalog and of the many services it can render in developing library resources, especially in areas less well-supplied with books than the northeast quadrant of the United States. Southern California, where Willis H. Kerr would "rationalize" the library resources of the region,³ is a good example, but he would be the first to insist that the fully-fledged bibliographic center he envisages would be a much more positive force than the apt phrase "rationalizing our library resources" suggests.

But large centers of book resources need the union catalog and bibliographic center as well. Librarians of Boston, New York, and

² Downs, Robert B. *Union Catalogs in the United States*. Chicago, American Library Association, 1942, p. 97-125.

³ "Regional Library Resources of Southern California." *Library Journal* 70:208-10, Mar. 1, 1945.

Chicago could develop intelligent and economical acquisition policies much more easily if a regional union catalog were at hand for the checking of duplication in the region. And it is these libraries which are most greatly pressed for storage space and could use the union catalog most successfully as a guide to the proper discarding of titles duplicated in the region.

Catalog for Discarding

A union catalog useful for intelligent discarding is even now being developed in Boston as a subsidiary activity of the New England Deposit Library. A catalog is being maintained in the deposit library of the books which have been sent to it by the several cooperating libraries. Arrangement is by main entry, which brings together cards for the same books from different libraries. It is planned to work out an arrangement whereby the best copy of each title duplicated in the deposit library would be retained on special shelving at the deposit library on a rent-free

basis, while all other copies would be returned to the owning libraries for disposition. Each library could then discard its copy of all such titles with the assurance that a copy is available in the region, should the need for it arise.

The ample supply of cheap labor which made possible the union catalogs we now have is not apt to be available again. Without it, the cost of creating new regional union catalogs may well be considered too much to pay for a whistle which no one has yet had the courage to blow at its loudest. But mechanical aids, particularly electronic facsimile duplication, may soon be expected which will decimate the cost of compiling a union catalog. When that occurs, libraries and regions wishing to rationalize their resources, their acquisition, cataloging, and storage problems need no longer be deterred by considerations of cost. The time will come when it will be much more costly, regionally, not to have a regional union catalog.—*LeRoy Charles Merritt, associate professor, School of Librarianship, University of California.*

A Union Catalog-Bibliographic Center for California

It may be said with confidence that the prospects for some effective form of union catalog-bibliographic center in California, both north and south, together or separately, are better than at any time in the past. The important service to be rendered, something of the magnitude of the job, and possibly first steps are now pretty well appreciated in all parts of the "Golden State," certainly by the academic and research libraries and institutions.

The agitation and discussion began nine years ago (1937) in the Southern California Conference of College and University Libraries and in the Southern District of California Library Association (ten counties in the Los Angeles area). The net result was inability to recommend a procedure for organization or support of a union catalog in the Los Angeles area. A bibliographic center was only dimly visioned. The committee disbanded in 1939.

However, in 1940, independent of the library group, the then Association of Colleges and Universities of the Pacific Southwest (now the Western College Association, com-

prising the whole of California and parts of Arizona and Nevada) authorized the appointment of a committee on union library catalog; the academic and research people in the region refused to believe a union catalog was beyond realization. The committee was composed of representative librarians and faculty members of several southern California institutions, including the Huntington and the Los Angeles public libraries, both of which are associated members of the Western College Association—so sensibly do we interpret educational forces in California! The war came on, and members of the committee became immersed in the duties of the times, but had a meeting or two, conducted considerable correspondence, reported to the executive committee and the open meetings of the Western College Association, and kept the idea alive. During one of these years, the president of the University of California became president of the Western College Association and took a definite stand in support of the purpose of the committee to achieve a survey of resources and some form of bibliographic

center for both northern and southern California. Another year, the president of Mills College (in the San Francisco-Oakland area) became president of the Western College Association and came out strongly for a union catalog, particularly in the Bay Area.

In October 1944, at the Los Angeles meeting of the California Library Association, a morning general session was devoted to papers on the library resources of northern and southern California, to specialization agreements, to microphotography, union catalog methods, exchange of duplicates, interlibrary lending, and such-like bibliographic center ideas. A resolution was passed by the C.L.A. authorizing the appointment of a state committee on bibliographic planning. However, this committee was not appointed, in the thought that the C.L.A. Committee on Library Co-operation might accomplish part or all of the planning purpose and might get started on the project itself. Meanwhile subcommittees, north and south, of the Committee on Co-operation were appointed to push the regional possibilities. The Western College Association Committee on Union Catalog was continued, with membership now statewide. The C.L.A. Committee on Co-operation, in cooperation with the Special Libraries Association group in the Los Angeles area, conducted a panel discussion in January 1946 on union catalog and/or bibliographic centers. It was apparent that there is still some inertia or failure to realize the vast potentialities at stake.

It began to be suggested, and the suggestion met with consideration and some favor, that the libraries of the University of California at Berkeley and of the University of California at Los Angeles might take on the operation of the California equivalent of bibliographic center service. It is realized that a union catalog of the eight million volumes in the Los Angeles area, on the traditional lines, might cost three hundred thousand to produce; and that a union catalog of the five million volumes in the Bay Area might cost another two hundred thousand dollars. Such sums do not grow on bushes, even in California! The thought is that by the expansion of the two university library reference services to include the exploitation of regional resources, by the use of regional union lists and existing union catalogs

and such means as Teletype communication, we may begin to lift ourselves by our own bootstraps! The university libraries are at least considering this possibility in the planning of their services and budgets. Another suggestion for immediate action was the circulation of the book-form Library of Congress catalog, a volume at a time, among the larger libraries, to be checked in the margins, thus to provide in due time a union checklist. Obviously, there are difficulties and inadequacies in this scheme. The point is that we are considering all means, like Paul, trusting that by some means we may be saved.

The Way To Begin

Meanwhile, as further bootstrap-lifting, the suggestion is made that the way to begin is to begin: that at relatively very small expense (perhaps about forty thousand dollars, paid pro rata by sixteen college, university, and institutional libraries, the Los Angeles Public Library, and the state library union catalog at Sacramento), card catalogs may be microfilmed and deposited at a central service point, and some use, even though cumbersome, be developed. An alternative would be to microfilm the shelflists, for a possible subject approach. Another possibility here is to reduce these microfilm catalogs to microcards, about one hundred cards on the back of each 3 x 5 card, so that, for example, you might have, in four or five card trays, the whole author catalog of the University of California Library. By bringing together the respective alphabetic sections of all these microprint cards, one might have a cumbersome, but better than none-at-all, quick view of resources.

It is realized that these may be impractical or naive suggestions, but they are mentioned to show the determination that exists to begin by beginning to do something about it, to find out how and what as we go along. We are fully expecting some of the startling new possibilities of photography or electronics or mechanization to help us on our way. It may be said that the two University of California libraries are planning to exchange microfilm catalogs as soon as their microfilm facilities can be enlarged a bit. At least one other library is considering the microfilming of its catalog for exchange in the region.

A step for which definite plans are now under way is a survey of the library resources of California in book form. The permanent utility of such a volume is doubted in some quarters, but it is believed that the reflex influence of making a cooperative survey and of discussing and applying its meaning when made, is worth the cost of effort and time and money involved. The survey of the book resources of the eight branches of the University of California, now nearly completed, may be a part or a supplement of the all-California survey.

Meanwhile, the continuing interest of the Western College Association deserves another mention. It is becoming the western

affiliate of the American Council of Learned Societies, and a joint committee, of which the writer is a member, is to consider a library program. That may have distinct possibilities. In all this agitation and education, the un-failing courtesy and help of the bibliographic centers and union catalogs at Philadelphia, Cleveland, Denver, and Seattle are cordially recognized. The writer and others have made repeated visits since 1936, always with profit and stimulation.

In sum, we have *faith* that we shall succeed, and we have reasonable assurance that our faith is "the evidence of things hoped for, the substance of things not seen."—*Willis H. Kerr, librarian, Claremont Colleges.*

Subject Approach to the Union Catalog

In this paper an effort is made to cull from the many articles on union catalogs the statements that relate to a subject approach; that is, the possibility of giving service to research workers who wish information by subject even though the union catalog is an author list only.

Arthur B. Berthold was among the first writers to be concerned with this problem. In 1939 in an article¹ on "Increasing the Reference Value of the Union Catalog," he said:

When the general advantages of a subject approach are considered, it may appear strange at first that, with a few exceptions, whenever a union catalog is contemplated, the subject approach is usually abandoned. There are . . . very grave practical reasons for this. . . . The subject matter of a book permits of endless variety of points of view and interpretation. . . . Compilers of union catalogs, seeking for the least variable elements of the book, have generally decided in favor of the author.

Mr. Berthold then suggested ways and means for a subject approach which, in summary, are: the segregation of certain types of entries into separate alphabets, keeping a large file of subject bibliographies and checking them against the author file for locations, having information on special collections and reference resources kept in a systematic manner; also keeping on file reports of the contents and services of all other union catalogs.

In 1940 Mr. Berthold mentioned² subject union catalogs but qualified the term by saying:

Subject union catalogs such as we have are so in name only . . . in actuality they provide scarcely any subject approach to the cards in their files. The fact that they are compiled along very broad aspects of human knowledge reproduced in books hardly qualifies them as subject union catalogs. For instance, a union catalog of medical books is perhaps more correctly described as a select union catalog of books which have both direct and partial bearing on medical subjects. . . . The desired subject approach may be provided for by the systematic collection of subject bibliographies, the preparation of classed indexes by utilizing duplicate cards; and by the indexing of special collections, sources of information, specialists in various fields, etc.

In 1941 Mr. Berthold said:³

Perhaps we may say the most important step toward a true bibliographical center is the adequate provision for a subject approach to the existing resource. . . . The true subject union catalog does not yet exist. When it comes, it should be a file as inclusive as a regional union catalog and it should be either arranged under subject headings or in classified order. Most important of all, it should take the form of a subject index to the already existing regional union catalogs. In the meantime the subject

¹"The Union Catalog Idea." In *The Acquisition and Cataloging of Books*, ed. by William M. Randall. Chicago, 1940, p. 251-52.

²"Some Aspects of the Union Catalog Situations." *Special Libraries* 32:48-50, February 1941.

³*Catalogers and Classifiers' Yearbook*, no. 8, 1939, p. 35-38.

approach is being developed by some of the regional union catalogs. Some of them have maintained supplementary files for certain types of literature, such as bibliographies, periodicals, genealogical material, local history, imprints, and so forth. Others have undertaken to collect printed subject lists and bibliographies by means of which a subject field may be inventoried. Still others have made intensive studies of special collections and information files in their respective libraries and have recorded this information in a systematic manner. At least one union catalog is experimenting with the compilation of a classified index to its main author file which, if successful, may present the best answer to the whole problem of subject approach.

In 1942 Mr. Berthold was again saying:⁴

One of the first concerns of the bibliographical center as contrasted to the union catalog proper is to find ways and means of providing . . . a subject approach. . . Philadelphia began an experiment in this direction, but decided to abandon it.

The National Union Catalog in the Library of Congress does not at present offer any service from the subject angle, but the possibility of a future development is being kept in mind. In storage are duplicate cards from the New York Public Library and the universities of Chicago, Illinois, and Michigan, held for possible use in a subject catalog. Experiments are being made with punch cards to be used to develop either a subject or classified catalog. Mr. Schwegmann dreams of an international classified catalog based on a universal classification—thus avoiding language difficulties in subject headings—with duplicate records for research workers made by photo-electric facsimile reproduction, but funds to develop such a project would have to be enormous.

During the war years apparently little advance was made anywhere in the development of subject facilities. Probably curtailment of funds and depletion of union catalog staffs made it difficult to maintain even the most essential work. As it is again possible to think of improving services, careful consideration

should be given to choosing the best methods of development. Union catalogs now face much the same dilemma as did the librarians of some fifty years ago when they were debating the relative usefulness of bibliographies and subject catalogs. To this question, J. C. M. Hanson of the Library of Congress replied:⁵

My conclusion . . . would be that while a subject catalog might possibly be dispensed with by a specialist who is thoroughly familiar with his subject, it will nevertheless prove also to him a convenience and an economy of sufficient value to justify its compilation. To the ordinary user of the library who cannot lay claim to special knowledge, and to the specialist when his investigations carry him into fields which are not strictly within his particular domain, it is a prime necessity.

Mr. Swank shows that more recently the value of bibliographies has been extolled and says:⁶

The question arose then, whether the union author catalog—in fact, the whole movement toward the integration and co-ordination of library services and resources—should be implemented by developing entirely new union subject catalogs analogous to the present library catalog or by developing further the field of subject bibliography. Both sides of this far-reaching question—the implications of which do not yet seem to be fully realized—have had their champions in recent years. The crux of the whole controversy can be stated briefly: which kind of bibliographical organization reveals most conveniently and economically the materials needed by the reader on particular subjects? The answer to this question involves a variety of factors: the degree of completeness or selectivity required, generality and modernity of the classifications used, the amount of analysis undertaken, and many others. . . . When . . . a [general] solution is found, it will doubtless be a compromise; there are jobs enough for subject catalogs, classifications, and bibliographies—all three—in the complex libraries of this day.

*Clara Beetle, Descriptive Cataloging Division,
Library of Congress.*

⁴ *Union Catalogs in the United States*, ed. by Robert B. Downs. Chicago, A.L.A., p. 313-14.

⁵ "Subject Catalogs or Bibliographies for Large Libraries?" *Library Journal* 29:472-74, September 1904.
⁶ "Subject Catalogs, Classifications, or Bibliographies?" *Library Quarterly* 14:316-32, October 1944.

Summary

The four papers dealing with regional library centers tomorrow have two major points in common: (1) the importance of duplication processes and machines and (2) the desirability of developing subject approaches to union catalogs.

The importance of a photocopying service in a bibliographic center is the theme of the Smith paper, which emphasizes the essential role of photocopying in setting up a union catalog, in incorporating new holdings, and in supplementing interlibrary loan services. Merritt believes that mechanical aids, particularly electronic facsimile duplication, may soon be available to decimate the costs of creating new regional catalogs. The new possibilities of photography or electronics or mechanization are mentioned by Kerr as being essential to the development of the California union catalog and bibliographic center. Experiments are being made with punch cards to develop a subject or classified catalog based upon the present National Union Catalog in the Library of Congress.

The desirability and general advantages of the subject approach to union catalogs have received considerable attention in library literature, and Miss Beetle summarizes some of the problems which have been presented in this connection. Merritt's

opinion is that the usefulness of the regional union catalog as a tool for locating needed books is of minor importance. The primary concern is the development of library resources within the region and making the region as self-sufficient in its book needs as possible. The importance of the union catalog's usefulness in showing the need for specialization agreements is stressed by Merritt, but since specialization agreements are by nature primarily based upon subject fields the usefulness of the union catalog is limited by the fact that it has ordinarily been set up as an author catalog. None of the existing regional union catalogs have undertaken extensive and detailed study of their catalogs in connection with the determination of likely areas of specialization within their regions. Such studies of the catalog might well be made.

The future of the development of regional library centers seems to hinge upon the success with which photographic reproduction can be adapted and applied to the services of such centers and to the solution of the problem of bibliographical organization which will reveal most conveniently and economically the materials on particular subjects represented in the union catalog.—*Eugene H. Wilson, director of libraries, University of Colorado.*