

Federal Depository Libraries: A Symposium

THE FOLLOWING four papers were presented at the meeting of the American Library Association Committee on Public Documents, Cleveland, Ohio, July 18, 1950. In considering the general topic of federal depository libraries, the authors have presented analyses of the Superintendent of Documents classification, subject system of classification, specialized treatment of documents and obligations and staff requirements. All of the authors have had valuable experience in the handling of government documents.

By JEANNE E. HULL

Obligations and Staff Requirements of a Complete Federal Depository

Miss Hull is head, Department of Public Documents, the Free Library of Philadelphia.

WITH THE deep concern that the whole world is taking in the actions of governments as they balance between war and peace, the documents of our government and other governments become significant in interpreting and molding domestic and world affairs. The responsibility of the library in housing these documents and making them available to government officials, to industry and to the citizen, is a serious one. This means providing sufficient and able personnel who have a deep sense of the obligation involved in housing, cataloging and servicing the public with this material.

This may be an easy sounding phrase, and yet its implication interpreted broadly is challenging. The housing of government material involves a space problem. Government material is of limitless format as well as quantity. Most libraries have limited shelf space. However, it would seem that wherever physically possible it is best to keep the publications in their logical arrangement regardless of format, and wherever this is impossible to note the fact clearly. Where the material is of long-range interest, binding solves the preservation problem. Envelopes and Gaylord binders help with small items. Microphotography is a possible approach to the space problem.

Making government material available implies a number of obligations. First, and basic, is that of producing the requested publication. Sounds easy? Actually, this ability to produce a given publication involves a logical shelf arrangement, a careful cataloging practice that brings out titles, series, subjects, personal authors, as well as government authors and cross references, a record showing changes in government authors and a systematic analysis of publications. It means experience on the part of the worker in interpreting incomplete references, in making the connection between popular and official titles and in sifting out the real clues that the reader gives from the fancied ones. It also means that the incoming material, which frequently is what the alert reader wants, should be shelved as quickly as possible. With the influx of new material, this is no mean task. Furthermore, certain publications in demand should be put through immediately, because not doing this results in frequent unnecessary trips to the checking shelf. Another device which helps with new material is calling the attention of the entire staff to the receipt of a new edition of a much-used publication through a bulletin board notice.

A further obligation of the staff, in addition to being able to produce a given publication, is to attempt to keep up with the content of government publications. Here are a few suggested aids for doing this. Wherever pos-

sible, try to see the new material and handle it. An interested checker who not only checks, but who actually examines material, can be helpful in calling the staff's attention to an outstanding new tool. However, in addition to this, one person should be assigned to examine systematically the contents of the new material and newspapers and make card references to useful items. These references should then be filed and used by the entire staff. Indexes, official and unofficial, and the catalogs are valuable in locating the content of publications. The worker of experience will know where certain types of material will logically appear. For other material which is buried in unexpected places, the best finding method is examination of records. Special books showing sources of reference material and bibliographies are helpful. The staff itself in staff meetings may suggest further methods of keeping up with the content of material.

However, making government publications available, being able to produce a given publication and knowing the content of these publications are not sufficient. This vast storehouse of information is not useful unless the community is aware of its existence, and the education of the public to this is necessary. The effective displaying of materials inside and outside the library is essential, and readers should be permitted to pick up the publications and examine them. Newspaper and magazine publicity is helpful. Satisfied readers are the best form of publicity. In addition to this, talks on the potentialities of such a collection are desirable. Lists of publications sent to interested persons, and bulletin board notices strategically placed, giving publicity to new government material, stimulate the use of the collection. Sending a representative of the collection to government agencies and other groups, to chat informally with the officials and inform them of the existence of such a collection and a desire of the staff to cooperate with them and telling such groups of the specific points upon which the material would be useful to them, is another way of making this material available.

Government publications can be utilized when they are used as a supplement to, or are supplemented by, unofficial material in the library. This means an obligation on the part of the documents staff to know the resources

of the entire library and of other personnel to know about the uses of government publications. Furthermore, this cooperation goes outside of the library to other libraries and agencies.

Finally, there is a staff obligation to participate in professional organizations in general and to consider seriously the improvement of government material from the point of view of content, distribution and library handling. A librarian has a point of observation which, if critically used, could effect a better service.

Staff

The size of the staff that receives and makes available government material will vary according to the organization of the particular library. Some libraries do not handle their government material as a distinct part of the collection and work it into the general subject arrangement. In this case the staff required to receive, catalog and classify the material for reference purposes would be rather difficult to analyze. Even in a department that houses government material separately, the exact size of the staff would depend on the size of the public served and on whether they depend on any central services, such as cataloging and ordering. Whatever the organization, the most efficient use of the staff can be obtained where there is an attempt to differentiate between various levels of work such as sorting, stamping, shelving, filing, checking and cataloging. On the other hand when dealing with government material it seems as if even the most routine jobs demand discrimination and training.

One worker in an all-depository collection is needed to open and date mail, put away used material, stamp, arrange and file new material, shift and do other routine jobs. Another worker is required to check the material and report changes to the cataloger, check regularly the *Monthly Catalog* and claim depository, as well as additional useful items. An essential worker is the cataloger, whose problems in governmental material are complicated by the constant reorganization of government agencies.

Cooperating with the cataloger is the classifier who might assume the duty of analyzing publications for the catalog and the quick reference file.

The revision of catalog cards and the filing of cards, particularly if they are filed in several places, would occupy the time of a fifth worker. The typing of catalog cards and correspondence, the filing of correspondence and the ordering of supplies is again another worker's routine.

Compiling statistics for official reports, surveying the work for reference improvement and job efficiency and answering questionnaires might employ a seventh worker. Checking additional lists which are time-consuming as in the case of government material, because the information given is frequently inadequate, ordering of material, preparing material for binding, caring for duplicate gift material and handling interlibrary loans, depending on the amount of this work that is done and the policy of the given library, might well employ the time of two additional staff members.

Preparing lists of government material, displaying publications and doing the general publicity work are tasks that would consume the time of still another worker. There is also need of an administrator to set certain policies, make schedules, supervise, make personnel adjustments, assign special duties, interpret administrative regulations to the staff and give talks on the department.

I have not specifically mentioned reference workers. Those best qualified to handle the reference work are those who handle the material and interpret it to the public. This means that the workers should be selected because of their ability to work with the public as well as their ability to do the specialized "behind the scene" work mentioned.

Frequently, a staff member may be so trained, or have such ability, that it will be possible for him to perform a different combination of duties than those mentioned. Wherever possible, the worker should work at tasks to which he is best suited. Furthermore, the more operations with which the worker is familiar, the greater his value. Therefore, staff assignments should be flexible. In the staff of 11 members suggested, one may assume that from one half to two-thirds of most of these workers' time will be devoted to reference work, depending on the schedule covered and the pressure of the work load.

Such a staff as has been envisioned is ideal in size and, therefore, would be found in few, if any, libraries. Sometimes one or two people do, or try to do, all of these things; yet, to do the job adequately, the staff as enumerated is needed.

The staff qualifications are very frequently indicated by the duties required. The staff qualifications of professionals in an all-depository library of the type mentioned above would need many of the basic requirements of any librarian. Any person whose duty it is to serve the public should like people genuinely, and yet must handle them objectively and professionally. Personal appearance is important from the point of view of clothing and physical impression. To combine some of these personal qualifications with intellectual ones is not always easy. However, a librarian who likes people cannot really serve the public unless she can produce the answer, or at least help to steer the reader to the answer.

Therefore, in dealing with government publications a knowledge of the organization of the government, the types of publications that the government issues and background information in the many fields in which that government issues material is needed. Along with this, there should be a knowledge of the individual system of the given library, a general idea of the resources of the library as a whole and a familiarity with library technique.

Aside from all of these requirements, the public has a right to expect an intelligent person who knows what is going on in the world and who has an interest in helping solve the problem at hand. Background and training that will produce this type of individual are essential for a worker in a complete depository library. The training of the persons required, aside from those doing routine jobs, would suggest training in the library field, a broad general education emphasizing social sciences, particularly political science, and specific training in government publications—along with general training in the resources of the particular library where the depository is housed. While the obligations are heavy and the staff requirements demanding, there are many satisfactions to the staff of a complete federal depository library.

Advantages and Disadvantages of the Superintendent of Documents Classification as a Key to a Depository Collection

Mr. Barr, formerly in the Reference Division, Western Reserve University Library, is now librarian, School of Medicine Library in that university.

THE QUESTION of the organization and administration of government documents in depository libraries is an old one. It has been discussed thoroughly, if not always conclusively, by a number of authors generally regarded as authorities on the administration of libraries. Probably no completely satisfactory solution is possible. I want to speak only of the advantages and disadvantages of the Superintendent of Documents Classification (hereafter referred to as the S.D.C.) as observed in practice over a period of several years. The disadvantages of using the government classification are numerous but relatively minor; the advantages are fewer but of greater importance.

Because the S.D.C. is designed solely for government documents, it is not applicable to other printed matter; thus any general library using it must also use some other system, usually the Dewey decimal or the Library of Congress, for the bulk of its holdings. With most of the library's holdings classified in the Dewey or the Library of Congress systems, the use of the S.D.C. for government documents can be one of those exceptions that irritate the staff and bewilder the patron. The use of the government classification scheme requires special space, preferably a separate room or at least separate stack space, devoted entirely to the shelving of government documents.

This can cause particular difficulty when space is at a premium, as it is in many libraries, or in a highly departmentalized or an open-shelf library. Even regular users of libraries do not often understand the S.D.C. and without special help, not only have trouble in finding specific material, but also they can easily so confuse the shelving as to make the collection almost unusable. As far as library routines are concerned the use

of the S.D.C. removes large amounts of material from normal processing procedures, making another one of the undesirable exceptions that must be recognized and explained.

Another serious problem that arises when using the S.D.C. is the shelving difficulty caused by classification changes that are constantly being made by the Superintendent of Documents. For example, until the fall of 1947, Army material was classified under "W," Navy material was classified under "N." Since then both have been first assigned "M" numbers, and more recently, publications of all branches of the armed services are classified under "D" numbers. Even more confusing changes have resulted from the transfer of numerous agencies, formerly under the Commerce, Treasury and Labor Departments, to the fast growing Federal Security Agency.

Another of the annoying features of the S.D.C. is the necessary wait until the numbers for some documents, usually separates or new series, appear in the *Monthly Catalog*. This means that a special section of unclassified material must be held, sometimes for several months, and it also makes necessary the eye straining task of checking each *Monthly Catalog* as it is received from the Government.

Another disadvantage, especially to public libraries, of using the S.D.C. is that to take full advantage of the classification only a small percentage of the government material received appears in the public card catalog. Much material remains unknown to the numbers of people who are not familiar with the special aids available for use with documents and who are reluctant to ask for help from the library staff.

These disadvantages are not insuperable. So far as the separate shelving is concerned most libraries have space that can be adapted for a document collection without too much inconvenience. As for patron familiarity with the system, while instruction might be difficult in a public library, in an academic library the faculty and student body respond very

well to careful instruction in the use of the S.D.C.

Even the difficulty caused by frequent number changes can be, in large part, overcome by the intelligent use of book dummies, calling attention to the changes in shelving. A great deal can be accomplished in educating library patrons as to the availability of the great variety of government material through displays, selective cataloging of outstanding items and acquainting the public with the use of the numerous bibliographic aids offered by the Government. It is particularly useful in working with documents, as with other materials, to educate the patron to ask questions when in doubt as to the availability of material.

In contrast to the disadvantages of using the S.D.C. there are very definite advantages. Probably these advantages are more applicable in a college or university library, but they should be at least considered by any depository library.

The advantages of using the S.D.C. are the speed and inexpensiveness of processing, a more thorough working knowledge of the content of the document collection by the staff and the opportunity to impress the library patron with the size and value of a depository collection. Government documents are most efficiently processed by the staff members who are to service them, usually the reference department. The usual processing methods are relatively slow and are carried on by the staff members who have little direct contact with the public. If the S.D.C. is not used, normal procedure would call for the cataloging of the greater part of depository material. The rest of the depository items and the nondepository material would be kept in a vertical file with the periodicals, or otherwise scattered, making it difficult for anyone to have a comprehensive idea as to exact location.

Using the S.D.C. the reference staff can set up a simple checking routine that permits a normal day's supply of documents to be checked and made available within an hour of the time it is received. In the case of those documents which are necessary to hold for checking in the *Monthly Catalog*, they can be kept on a few conveniently located shelves. They seldom amount to so many that they cannot be kept in mind well enough

to meet any demands for them. By setting up a card checking system most documents can be regularly checked in spare moments without withholding them from the public. A few hours' accurate checking of the *Monthly Catalog* will take care of most items for which a regular series number cannot be established.

The second important advantage to be derived from using the S.D.C. is that it is much cheaper. A depository library can expect to receive from fifteen to twenty thousand depository items in a year's time, plus another five to ten thousand nondepository government publications.

In general catalog departments are already overworked, public card catalogs are overburdened with cards and cataloging costs are steadily rising. In the face of these conditions the use of the documents classification offers real savings in time and money and avoids adding thousands of catalog cards. By using the S.D.C., as much as 85 to 90 per cent of the government material received can be classified and shelved without any effort on the part of the catalog department. It is advisable to catalog a highly selective number of important or interesting government publications using the government classification numbers and some such location designation as, document stacks, reference room, etc. Even when this is done, if the S.D.C. is used the material can be made available soon after being received and later cataloged when convenient.

The third and most important advantage of using the S.D.C. is the opportunity it offers for developing a number of staff members who are experts in the use of government material. The performance of a regular routine of receiving and classifying government documents by the staff members who are to supervise their use results in a knowledge of documents that can be attained in no other way. When to this basic familiarity is added the assurance that comes with the constant use of such bibliographical aids as the *Check List*, *Document Catalog*, *Monthly Catalog* and similar publications, it is surprisingly easy to build up a staff that is thoroughly in command of the vast wealth of material to be found in government publications. The opportunity for the frequent examination of a unified col-

lection of documents will almost invariably stimulate the curiosity and arouse the enthusiasm of the staff and the patrons alike. In fact, the enthusiasm of a staff well trained in documents is contagious and easily spreads to the public with whom they come in contact. A check of patrons who have had experience in

using documents classified by the government system and documents classified in Dewey or the Library of Congress systems revealed an almost unanimous preference for the S.D.C., especially if they had competent help and instruction until they grasped the fundamentals of the classification.

By ISABEL H. JACKSON

Advantages and Disadvantages of a Subject System of Classification as Key to a Depository Collection

Miss Jackson is head, Documents Department, University of California Library, Berkeley.

WHEN the millennium arrives all United States government publications will be classified and cataloged from page proof. Type will then be set for unit catalog cards which will be printed on lightweight card stock, perforated for removal and bound in the documents. On receipt in libraries the cards will be torn out, keyed for subjects and other added entries and filed in the library catalog when documents are added to the library shelves. As is the case with the Library of Congress *Author Catalog*, the master cards will be used as the basis for an enlarged cumulative monthly catalog.

Such a system presupposes a single issuing agency for all documents. This should come to pass in the ideal state where all government agencies will remain stable and all documents librarians will remain sane. It also presupposes that the Federal Government will recognize the need for more uniform handling of its publications by depositories and will grant funds suitable to this end.

Short of this library millennium what are we doing with the snowballing output of printed and processed material? For many years we have worried in print and in library meetings about the problem of classifying and cataloging our collections. What stage have we reached in 1950? Have we found a universal solution for handling the mass output which has enabled us to turn our attention to fuller exploitation of the varied content of United States government publications?

These questions and others, which you are spared for lack of time, lead in a rather roundabout way to the topic of this paper—the advantages and disadvantages of a subject classification as a key to depository collections.

After reading the arguments offered by the proponents of varying schools of thought which appear and reappear in library literature, I decided that it might be profitable to find out how many libraries are now using subject classifications and, if possible, to discover what those who use them think about subject classification as a means of making their collections intelligible.

In order to get a quick expression of opinion from a group of documents librarians, a brief questionnaire¹ was sent to 30 all-depositories and selective depositories in Oregon, Washington and California. This far western survey brought responses from 27 libraries whose size ranged from approximately 50,000 to nearly two million volumes. The group included state, county, city, college and university libraries.

In addition to this very small sample, a survey of California practices in handling documents in 46 depository and nondepository libraries, made for this group in 1946, was available for comparison. Most fortunately the Superintendent of Documents was able to furnish classification figures for 533 libraries and figures on cataloging practices of 536 libraries from the depository library survey of last January.

When the superintendent's figures are

¹ See Appendix at end of article.

checked we find approximately 33 per cent of the libraries following his system, 17 per cent in the "no information, or do not classify" category and the remainder divided between Dewey (17 per cent), Library of Congress (2 per cent), S.D.C.²-Dewey (10 per cent), S.D.C.-L.C. (1 per cent), and special classification (16 per cent). With the exception of the 17 per cent unspecified, or not classifying, the two other surveys show a similar pattern. Dewey outranks Library of Congress, but there is a higher percentage of special classifications, usually Dewey or L.C., in combination with alphabetical check-listing or shelving.

The variations or combinations of classification schemes account for 36 per cent of the libraries in the superintendent's survey, 51 per cent from the 1946 California survey and 32 per cent from the far western survey. In the latter, where it is easier to probe because of more detailed questions at hand, it is all the more easy to see the pattern at work and to realize that you cannot assume that the use of a subject classification automatically insures its uniform application to all depository items. The very nature of the combinations gives the key to the differing treatment even within the same collection. The almost monotonous answer "some" to the question "Do you classify and catalog your documents" bears it out. Some answers are amplified by such statements as "where content warrants," "more important," "when bound" and the like.

A closer check on the figures from all surveys shows that even where Dewey or Library of Congress is indicated as being used without any combination, the number of libraries which classify and catalog all documents is so small that the outright statement of adherence to a classification scheme, such as the 17 per cent indicating the use of Dewey in the superintendent's questionnaire, is at least slightly suspect. Especially when the same questionnaire shows that only 13 per cent of the entire group reports full cataloging of collections and 50 per cent report cataloging "some." While it is true that classification does not necessarily imply cataloging, the responses to individual questionnaires in the two smaller groups tend to give

² U.S. Superintendent of Documents Classification.

the impression that classification is accompanied by full or brief cataloging.

Here then is the answer to the first question "How widespread is the use of subject classification?" Two hundred and sixty-two, or 46 per cent of the depository libraries in the United States, report using some form of subject classification. Percentages in the two local surveys are slightly higher, but they show even more plainly, because of more detailed information available, the variations in treatment accorded to documents within the framework of subject classifications.

The unorthodox manipulation of percentages which has been indulged in this far may be statistically questionable, but it does point to the conclusion that the subject classifications, perhaps for reasons of economy, perhaps because of a lack of flexibility, have not provided a universal solution for handling all documents in the libraries which use them. It also points to the question of how the "others" are handled when the "some" are singled out for classification and cataloging.

A few answers to this question, and also to the question "what do the users think of subject classification as a key to their collections," will be found in an examination of returns from the far western survey. This group of 27 libraries includes 12 adherents to the superintendent's scheme; 10 who use Dewey or Dewey in combination; two, Library of Congress-Alphabetical; and three, alphabetical arrangements.

Replying to the first six questions concerned with documents administration, classification and cataloging, all of the users of Dewey and Library of Congress classification report classifying and cataloging "some," all include "some" in the public catalog, and nearly all shelve "some" with the general collection. All but one report full cataloging of documents when they are bound.

As to the availability of the "others," seven out of 12 libraries maintain separate catalogs. These vary from shelflists or checking records to dictionary catalogs. One library which does not maintain a separate catalog includes cards in the library shelflist for material not fully catalogued. Another does not mention a special catalog but indicates that all documents are kept in a separate collection which would argue at least the existence

of checking records. Another one which distributes its documents among subject departments does not specify any separate catalog. Another which indicates no separate handling of documents at the present time is contemplating establishment of a separate documents collection.

All of which adds up to a more hopeful picture of availability of the collections, but it also adds up to the apparent necessity to amplify subject classifications for complete coverage.

The seventh question asked for an evaluation of the system in use in the terms of levels of satisfaction. The two users of Library of Congress-Alphabetical find it adequate; four Dewey users find their scheme adequate, one qualifying that by saying that it is adequate with the *Monthly Catalog* as an index. This is the same response given by a Dewey-S.D.C. user. Another library finds Dewey and S.D.C. adequate in combination but feels that neither alone would be satisfactory. Finally one Dewey-Alphabetical finds this combination adequate and another says that it is wholly inadequate and lacking in flexibility.

The eighth and last question asked for extended comment as to the need for development of a new system of classification for government documents. The question was included not with any subversive purpose in mind. Rather it was intended to provoke discussion on one side or the other and perhaps induce the respondents to elaborate on points checked in the earlier questions. Three of the users of subject classifications did not reply, so they are apparently in favor of the present system. Four are opposed to any change on the grounds that they prefer classifying documents with their library collections as the best means of making them useful. Two others feel that reclassification would not be feasible and that too much work has gone into their collections for change. Another believes that the S.D.C. is not perfect but that any reform should be directed toward its improvement. Two signify need for a new system but do not amplify beyond that.

This would seem to indicate that the majority of the subject classification people are content or reconciled with their lot.

Just as a matter of general interest, replies from the alphabetical and S.D.C. libraries

were also checked. Apparently seven in this combined group are content for they left the question unchecked. Two vote no change without comment and a third finds any change an impractical idea where an extensive collection already exists. Five are interested in a new scheme, two without extended comment and three with the plea for a simpler system of classification in which documents could, as one put it, "be found by any librarian, not necessarily a documents librarian."

Documents librarians may vary in their approach to classification but these questionnaires show that their operation depends in large part on government indexes. One of the interesting by-products is a tabulation of their varying requests for such indexing. One library urges that the *Checklist* be brought up to date, another wants more complete subject indexes compiled and yet another more specifically wants the *Index to Publications of the U.S. Department of Agriculture* issued more currently. Two others think that the Government should again issue the *Documents Catalog*. Other less specific comments on indexing appear in a number of the replies.

To sum up: Such varying factors as space shortages, financial questions and local differences all play their part in the status of documents administration. These varying factors, as discernible in the earlier literature as they are now, argue against weighing of the pros and cons and arrival at any universally applicable solution.

One library which puts stress on a separate collection may insist that its records be simple and processing slight, and that its money be budgeted for trained personnel to perform personalized service. Another institution which elects to absorb documents into its general collection will necessarily choose to devote more money to classification and cataloging in order to achieve the fullest use by a staff without specialized document training.

All we can do then while we await the millennium and the document that arrives complete with catalog card, is to apply equal parts of common sense and enthusiasm to the documents under our care. Common sense applied to housekeeping and enthusiasm used in exploiting our much maligned stock in trade may bring the millennium sooner than we think.

Appendix

Sample of Questionnaire

THE _____ LIBRARY

1. Administers its government documents as
 - () Separate department or division with _____ employees
 - () Part of _____ department with _____ employes
 - (Other method—please state)
2. Classifies and catalogs (all) (some) (none) of the collection.
3. Uses (full) (brief) cataloging for documents.
4. Lists (all) (some) (none) in public catalog
 - Maintains separate (author) (subject) (dictionary) catalog.
5. Incorporates (all) (some) (none) into

- general library collection.
6. Uses: () Library of Congress classification
 - () Dewey classification
 - () Superintendent of Documents classification
 - () (Other scheme, please state)
 7. Believes system of classification used is
 - () Extremely satisfactory
 - () Adequate
 - () Lacking in flexibility
 - () Expensive
 - () Wholly inadequate
 - (Any extended comment here would be valuable)
 8. () Believes there is need for development of new system of classification for government publications.
 - (Any extended comment here would be valuable)

By MARY BROWN HUMPHREY

Obstacles and Opportunities in Specialized Treatment of Federal Depository Documents

Miss Humphrey is head, Government Documents Department, State University of Iowa.

MANY years in the service side of public, college and university libraries has ground in one fact—that government publications can be handled, and successfully, by various methods. Consider the two major libraries in Iowa. The State College Library at Ames makes no distinction at any point between documents and other material; all go through the same procedures. The State University of Iowa at Iowa City, at the other extreme, has a document department in which practically all work is centered. Results seem satisfactory on both campuses. Relations between the two libraries are close and cordial. With such a yardstick to measure ourselves against, this observer cannot say, "See us, ours is the right way." Rather with the background of my own experience, let me outline some of the obstacles and opportunities inherent in a depository library and how

special treatment can meet these. There will be cutback to Ames by way of comparison.

Bloating or Selection

The first obstacle probably is due to the fact that "Documents are free—'something for nothing' that can be bad medicine." How many are satisfied with those black dotted items from the Superintendent of Documents? Like the daughters in the Bible we continually cry "More, more" to departments, bureaus, etc. The results can be overwhelming. Especially is this true in the smaller library because of too ambitious selection of depository and other items. For example, two small colleges in our region have accepted, through their presidents be it noted, the Army Map Service deposits. Not one box has been opened. Both librarians have appealed to us for help. Our advice to send them all back untouched will not be accepted by their administrative chiefs.

Thus in building the total document book stock, here is a major opportunity for the

exercise of restraint, judgment and anticipation of needs, all of which may take special knowledge and skills.

Concentrated Diffused Arrangement and Use

Another obstacle to special treatment is: "Does it not run counter to subject treatment?" It is unnecessary to emphasize the enormous growth and spread of government functions. To give just two: Statistical data in an increasing number of fields now hinge on governmental computations; atomic energy research is now and is likely to remain under the supervision of the federal authorities. Can such diffuse information be gathered together?

In a recent conversation Charles H. Brown of Ames said: "In a land grant college devoted to the pure and applied sciences, everything *must* fall into the subject classifications. Only in this way can the needs of our students and scientists be satisfied." He kindly added: "In a university or liberal arts college stressing the social sciences, a document collection might work." Now we in Iowa listen carefully to our elder statesman. Perhaps, it *is* in the social sciences that the opportunity for document reference work lies. Certainly we at the university work mainly with this group. This may be true in public libraries also, where a technology division often runs parallel with general reference and document reference. If we can infer from Stuart Chase's book, *The Proper Study of Mankind*, that these social sciences might, or must, be better integrated, then there is justification for using documents (other than scientific) by a scheme geared to their needs.

Part of this problem is arrangement by subject classification or Superintendent of Document's classification, but other papers will discuss this question. At the risk of repetition it may be said that either plan may create a demand for enlarged reference service. Simplification of cataloging with few analytics and reliance on subject bibliographies, or the Superintendent of Document arrangement with reliance on indexes and bibliography, calls for interpretation or the "liaison officer." This is a point the chief executive, in struggling with the budget, should not forget. Work, *i.e.* money, saved on the processing side probably means more work, *i.e.* more money to be spent on the

service side. This can be true of all types of material, but especially of documents whose use is so bound up with the published guides and indexes.

Curse of Bigness

A third obstacle is the "Curse of Bigness," to borrow the term Justice Brandeis used. It is the over-all bigness of a library, not just the bloated document holdings referred to above. Again it is unnecessary to enlarge on the unpredictable growth of large libraries, alarming in some aspects. Special divisions, such as for art, technology, language and literature, may be one of the remedies. Of these, a document department, or document reference worker, can well be a part, thus siphoning off material easily adapted for specialization.

Danger of Isolation

Is there a danger that such special services or such special workers may become isolated in the general pattern? Indeed there is! But in a library with a cooperative, informed and disciplined staff, this danger can be overcome so that the specialist's job is a part of the whole.

Place for Specialization

If after considering these several obstacles a library commits itself to some special document program, where should the emphasis be placed? It can come, of course, in any of the three divisions of our work: acquiring, processing or servicing. Curiously enough the very large library or the small library is apt to put this with the order or processing (acquisition) end. Where a large library collects many foreign documents, as well as those of the U.S., the specialist with knowledge of foreign language, trade connections and business sagacity is needed. In a small library, order and processing may fall to the head librarian, and through these duties she becomes the document guardian. The public service end, especially reference, is the more usually accepted place for the document worker. We are familiar with the device in some reference departments of allotting the documents to one assistant as her special care, interest and object of study. It is a workable plan. Beyond that is the fully organized document department or division found in both

public and university or college libraries. Such a department often covers all three of the classic types of work.

Since this last is what I am most familiar with, it is from this viewpoint that some of the opportunities of special document service will be suggested. I believe these will apply to both public and educational institutions.

Development of Knowledge

The first major opportunity of a specially appointed document worker is the chance to acquire more knowledge of the subject in hand to the end that the task may be better accomplished.

Actually handling the material in the processing steps is one approach. But there is room for opposite opinions here. In a recent letter Mr. Orr, the librarian at Ames, stated: "Years ago the Reference staff felt that it was necessary for them to check in U.S. Government documents in order that they would know what materials were being received. We now operate on the assumption that documents are as well indexed in the regular bibliographic services and in the special indexes issued by the Superintendent of Documents as any other type of material, in fact, better than some. If the reference staff is familiar with these bibliographic sources, we feel they should have no more trouble in identifying U.S. Government Documents than the publications of other publishers." Remember their plan works for them. The library ticks steadily and smoothly.

To me there is a chance to go further than this. A cardinal point in my credo is that the original checking-in, the search for new titles, the checking of holdings against lists such as *Catalog of U.S. Census Publications 1790-1945*, and the assigning of Superintendent of Document numbers, if used, are all avenues to self-education. All our staff, professional and subprofessional, take part in such chores.

Its value? An over-all knowledge of the document collection and through this a chance to build on a firm foundation, plus detailed knowledge of the collection and a chance to give full and up-to-the-minute service to the reader.

Contact with the library clientele is an important avenue of education as new questions come to the desk daily. Any reference

worker, general or special, remembers frightening questions whose final solutions lead to a new appreciation and future quick use of obscure resources.

It goes without saying, of course, that if a person is to know documents he must read them.

Indexes, etc.

The foundation stones of document use are the published indexes. Ames considers these indexes a big factor in eliminating specialized service. Again there seems to me something more to consider. These are, indeed, the "open sesame" to our warehouse but they are frequently a code to a combination lock rather than a simple key to a simple lock. To find them all and know them thoroughly is a document librarian's first duty. The next is to introduce and interpret them to the reader. They are numerous, scholarly, not always simple, and they are not alike in structure. Remember the uniformity of the H. W. Wilson's indexes; it is one of their biggest values. A freshman or client in a public library who learns to use the *Reader's Guide* can then use all the others by a flip of the page. By contrast consider the variety of arrangements in the *Congressional Record Index*, the "Bibliography of North American Geology," "The Index of Research Projects WPA" and our greatly beloved "Census Publications, Catalog and Subject Guide." Each of these takes a few tricks to learn, or to introduce. Have you ever explained to a class how to use the *Monthly Catalog*? Perhaps, because we are in an educational institution where the library is considered to have a part in the teaching process, we overemphasize this. But an opportunity indeed is here to teach that seemingly difficult matter of how to use books and those of a special type.

Service to Small Libraries

Another experience has been our contacts with the smaller depositories in the state; a few outside, too. The difficulty of selection for smaller libraries has been noted. To about-face, to reorganize, clean out unused stuff, reselect the depository items and set up a going concern in document use, takes courage, ability and very hard work. Twice we have been engaged in such an undertaking

(Continued on page 51)

the classification is given, this search would be wasted effort. When information is needed that would obviously be published by a specific bureau, it should take only a moment to glance over the titles of publications listed in the shelflist and determine if any of them would be useful in the question at hand.

As an aid in calling attention to the documents collection, each series is represented in the public catalog by a card giving classification, author, title and the following note: "For complete holdings see Documents Collection." Each card also has a rubber stamp "Govt. doc." under the call number. (See Fig. 3)

Obstacles and Opportunities in Special Treatment of Documents

(Continued from page 47)

ing by public libraries, as on-the-spot, or long-range through correspondence. The driving force in these campaigns was in the larger library a far seeing cataloger; in the smaller a determined trustee, herself an ex-librarian. If the pattern is once set and if some one member of the staff can become the foster mother of these problem children, documents, a small public library can make the depository privilege a help not a hindrance in serving their community.

The small college library has a tougher job. Its faculty members who frequently have done graduate work in a university or college with rich resources find a limited book stock maddening. When such a faculty member discovers his college library is a depository and can get endless stuff free, there may be a to-do. The care of material and what it involves is beyond his vision. We have tried to arbitrate in such cases.

Here then is an opportunity on a different level for a university or a state library to help documents and readers meet. At one time there seemed a chance to have such off-the-campus activities accepted as part of our university extension program. The project did not seem worthwhile to those in high

SI.31: U.S. Dept. of state.

GOVT. Near Eastern series. Washington,
DOC. Govt. print. office.

FOR COMPLETE HOLDINGS SEE
DOCUMENTS COLLECTION

(FIG. 3)

(For separates, only those which seem important enough for cataloging are represented in the catalog by L.C. cards giving the Documents classification.)

In an effort to make the faculty documents conscious a selected list of current document acquisitions is included in the fortnightly publication *N.T.S.C. Books* which is sent to faculty members.

places, and what has been done later has been on a person to person basis.

Making Material Available in a National Crisis

It is easy at times of national stress to become sentimental or emotional. With a sincere desire to avoid either of these attitudes, may I suggest one last opportunity for the special document worker or department? When a national emergency develops, all federal functions, activities and pronouncements become of increased importance. That the citizens may and must know the truth is mandatory. The public press, the radio and the library should assume in all seriousness this duty. Again this may be our part in a dangerous time. Two different young assistants on two different occasions made exactly the same remark to me. Suddenly in midst of tedious routine each said, "Is it not a privilege at a time like this to handle all this material from the Government?" Once this was said in the midst of a depression, once in the midst of war. If tragic times are ahead, may not document librarians rise to the opportunity of their positions and know it is a privilege?