

# The Publication of Library School Theses

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WHEN I examined the list of "Graduate Theses Accepted by Library Schools in the United States, 1949-50,"<sup>1</sup> I was fired with enthusiasm to study several papers which promised us help in our library. I have gone through this excitement every time comparable lists have appeared in the past, and I shall probably continue to burn with good intentions as each annual list appears. Unfortunately, so far this has been entirely a matter of enthusiastic excitement, totally unsupported by positive action on my part. When it comes right down to it, I find that I am loath to go through the complex, costly and generally unsatisfactory performance of borrowing theses on interlibrary loan. I find that I want the material to stay with me until I can study it thoroughly and discuss it with my colleagues who must also have time to study it. The chances are we shall want to keep it so that we can refer to it again later. What I should really like to do is to develop a small but excellent library of research studies which might help us with specific problems or which might widen and deepen our knowledge and philosophy of librarianship.

If the research conducted by the students in our library schools is not carried on solely as discipline but instead as a sincere attempt to advance the frontiers of librarianship, its products deserve wider dissemination than

they now receive. Each year students produce a large group of research reports; reports of current interest, on a wide variety of topics and under the best direction we have in the profession. And each year, when the mountains have ceased their labor pains, the resultant mice are quietly shelved in triplicate, modestly hidden away from all but rare command appearances in *Library Literature* or the *Library Quarterly* listings.

Librarians, library schools and the student-authors all lose by our failure to make this material available. All of us would benefit by even a moderate publication program.

Librarians in the field have a double responsibility in regard to this reporting: they should put it to the test of both practical and critical examination (which would, in turn, benefit the library school and the author), and they should extract from the mass that part which would improve them as librarians and profit their institutions. As a matter of hard fact, librarians really need the information to be found in many library school theses. A search through *Library Literature* usually has the disheartening effect of proving that the data one most wants are quite often to be found only in a thesis. A good thesis with a good bibliography is frequently the most direct route to the information the working librarian requires. If we assume that each of the studies is worthy of the degree it helped to earn for its author, publication should redound to the glory of the library school.

<sup>1</sup>Leon Carnovsky. "Graduate Theses Accepted by Library Schools in the United States, 1949-50." *Library Quarterly*, 20:289-99, October 1950.

Also, it is hard to see how library schools can plan productive research programs without having at hand reports on the research already carried on under the aegis of other library schools. Library school placement efforts could be made more successful if prospective employers had easy access to the major research efforts of candidates. If library school graduates are to be encouraged to continue scholarly research, both the schools and the profession as a whole would be well advised to give more than lip service to students' research by finding some method of publication and distribution for theses.

It is obvious that no publisher of trade books is going to clamor for the privilege of making these studies available in print. Occasionally one report will be of general enough interest to find a publisher—usually among the university presses—and a slightly larger number will be abstracted or otherwise eviscerated for publication in professional journals. A few will be duplicated on film, and most will be available on interlibrary loan. What seems to be called for at this time is cheap and small editions, and these can be obtained by means of microcard. The Microcard Foundation would like very much to undertake a project involving a group of library school theses. Mr. Rider writes, "Continual small economies have enabled us to get out minimum editions of 15 copies instead of 25 copies, at no increase of basic rate per card. . . . If the foundation does them it will quote a price of not over 20¢ a card. . . ." The majority of masters' theses do not ex-

ceed 100 pages in length; the doctoral dissertations vary greatly but often are not longer than 200 pages. A maximum of 48 typewritten pages can be printed on one microcard. This indicates that many research studies could be reproduced on cards at costs ranging from 40¢ to \$1.00 per title. Of the 441 reading machines already sold by the Northern Engraving and Manufacturing Company, well over 300 are in academic or public libraries, the most obvious market for library school theses.

As Dr. Carnovsky pointed out in his prefatory remarks to the 1949-50 list of graduate theses, the information which was supplied to him from which to compile the list is not sufficient to distinguish among a comprehensive paper, a synthesis of existing literature, a report written for a seminar, a field study and a piece of research consisting of an original contribution to knowledge. Still, as a starting point, and because it is accessible to most persons who might be interested in this project, this list might serve as a checklist from which to make a trial order. Librarians who are interested are asked to write me immediately, listing the theses they would like to have made available on microcard. This will not be regarded as an order because authors and library schools must first authorize publication and because most libraries must order such materials through more formal channels. Quick, informal communications will enable me to see if the idea is sufficiently popular to take to the Microcard Foundation and to the library schools for the next steps.