

## Wisconsin's New University Library After Two Years

IN SEPTEMBER OF 1953, after years of cramped quarters, the University of Wisconsin Library was installed in a new building. For the first time in years it was unnecessary to double-shelve books, pile them on floors and window sills, or disperse them to inaccessible storage points. A plant which had been designed to meet the needs of an eventual student body of 18,000 was ready for the test of use.

Now that the library has been in service for nearly two and a half years, it is possible to assess in a measure the soundness of that planning and to observe as well any imperfections which day-to-day operation has revealed. Such purely mechanical appurtenances of the structure as heating, lighting and other electrical facilities, furniture, and the like have been noted previously in a general discussion of library planning.<sup>1</sup> There remain to be considered: first, Wisconsin's principal library theory in application; second, the way in which spatial and functional plans have matured; and third, the success with which peripheral services and conveniences have been made available.

A nonmodular structure, the Univer-

<sup>1</sup> Louis Kaplan, "The Librarian's Function with Regard to Working Drawings and to Specifications," *ALA Bulletin*, XLVIII (1954), 369-71, 401-03; also in *Planning a Library Building* (Chicago: ALA, 1955), pp. 19-25.

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sity of Wisconsin Library was planned around a single core: an integrated book collection housed on ten stack levels capable of shelving a million volumes, exclusive of basement storage. The relatively large size and importance in the university community of the graduate school, together with the demands of the faculty, argued against decimation and dispersal of this primary research tool to provide nucleus collections for divisional libraries, however desirable they might be for libraries without a comparable problem.

It was determined, therefore, to preserve the general collection complete in shelf-list order, except for some books on reserve, as a bibliographic tool to facilitate research and scholarly browsing; and to plan the reference departments of the library so that they would complement its resources in the stacks.

Three departments in addition to General Reference—Humanities, Social Studies and Education, and Documents—were located on three main floors adjacent to that portion of the stacks containing books in their respective areas of specialization. These stack-focussed departments have proven successful. They afford supervised entry to the book collection from three of the main reading rooms at three different levels; they provide specialized reference service to faculty, graduates, and undergraduates; they house the reference books necessary to their respective disciplines; and, perhaps most important of all, they are so located that their materials and services

are conveniently available both to students in the reading rooms and to scholars and students working in the stacks. Finally, they afford an economical means of inspection of those leaving the stacks, since subprofessional workers are employed to perform this duty as an incidental task in addition to typing, answering the telephone, and filing.

While the Humanities, Social Studies, and Documents departments have made possible an enlarged reference service oriented toward the graduate student, the General Reference Department, on the first floor, has been given increased time in which to answer mail and telephone inquires and to provide the reference needs of undergraduates.

This theory, then, has prevented the growth of divisional reading rooms as such, their walls lined with key books from the general collections—or extensive duplication of such materials. Though each of the four main reading rooms in the library is lined with built-in bookcases ready for future expansion and adaptation, in general the book stock is not visible. A critical observer might wonder how books and readers are brought together.

A part of Wisconsin's solution to this vital problem has been the provision that despite the size of our student body, no one with a legitimate need or inclination should be denied entry to the stacks. Graduate students receive year-long stack privileges on application, juniors and seniors may secure these permits with the approval of their faculty advisers, and sophomores and freshmen are encouraged to obtain entrance cards for limited periods so that they may work on term papers and similar research projects. In addition, each of the reference collections is available to all students without hindrance.

Other plans to join books and readers will be noted elsewhere. Now it is time to examine the way in which available

space has been adapted to function. In an attempt to keep low the center of gravity, so to speak, of the library, the first floor was reserved for undergraduate services—reserve book rooms with adequate study areas, and undergraduate reference. This plan has proven itself in operation. It has obviated the flow of unnecessary traffic to the upper floors and has afforded easy access to the required reading materials of a large student body. Location of the closed reserve desk in the center of the main corridor has removed the congestion and bustle of this type of operation from the study areas.

The graduate reserve collection, however, is shelved in a room on the fourth floor with an atmosphere more conducive to advanced study than that of the undergraduate reserve rooms. A small collection of reference books and foreign language dictionaries makes for additional convenience.

The Public Catalog Room, Circulation Desk, and Periodical Room were established on the second floor. This more central location has made possible convenient access from all parts of the building. Here, as throughout the library, there is ample corridor space, and the noise of traffic is kept from soundproofed reading and study areas.

One aspect of Wisconsin's new library building which caused some anxiety at the planning stage was the location of the Technical Processes Division on the third floor, while the Public Catalog was housed on the second. It was hoped that a special staff elevator running between these two levels would solve the problem. Technical Processes heads have agreed that in practice the system provides more rapid communication between these two areas than might be possible if they were at the extremities of the same floor.

Some criticism has been voiced of locating the administrative offices on the

third floor rather than the first. Two carefully considered arguments are offered in support of the decision: first, it was felt that premium space on the first floor should be devoted to undergraduate services, with their concomitant heavy traffic and use; and second, that the librarian and his associates could be most advantageously stationed together and near the Technical Processes Division. Automatic elevators in the main corridor provide sufficiently rapid transportation to all floors of the building.

Two more areas of Wisconsin's Memorial Library remain to be considered: the upper floors and the basement. The fourth floor, with its more quiet and secluded atmosphere, has proven peculiarly suited to its functional installations—the Graduate Reading Room previously mentioned, an exhibition gallery and auditorium, and the Rare Book Department.

Gallery and exhibit space in the Exhibition Room and Rare Book Department lobby, as well as in the second floor cases, have made it possible for the library to attract visitors, to interest students and friends in its special collections, and to secure more frequent newspaper publicity.

In addition to its use for the staging of local and traveling exhibits, the Exhibition Room has been of value as an auditorium capable of seating two hundred, in which library indoctrination talks for new graduate students, meetings of visiting groups, and special bibliographical and cultural lectures have been held. It has afforded the hitherto impossible luxury of providing for library meetings *within* the Library.

Ninety-nine studies on the fifth floor are made available to faculty members with a legitimate need for such accommodations; and these rooms have shown themselves to be in popular demand. Certain of the faculty, however, prefer to be closer to their own sections of the

research collection. These individuals are provided with locked carrels in the stacks.

Also on this floor is another previously unknown luxury for staff members: a staff lounge and lunch room, equipped with suitable furniture and beverage-vending machines.

The basement of the library was planned to afford ultimate compact storage for half a million volumes. A beginning has been made in shelving little-used materials both from the general collections and from the departmental libraries elsewhere on campus. Circulation records reveal a negligible number of calls for these volumes, which shows that the installation is performing its function. Extensive servicing of a compact storage area some eleven feet high would be discouraging, to say the least. Experience in administering the system shows that with careful selection it combines satisfactorily economical storage facilities with book immediacy.

Wisconsin librarians have been concerned as well with the provision of peripheral services and conveniences. Though carrel accommodations do not fall logically in such a category, they may be most easily discussed here. Three hundred fifty carrels are available throughout the stacks, a portion of them locked to provide studies for faculty members and for graduate students writing theses. The remainder are open, each having three adjacent book lockers which are assigned on request to holders of stack permits. Student use of these facilities has been heavy.

Accommodations for typing in the library have thus far been more than adequate. Soundproof typing rooms are located within the stacks on the mezzanine levels and outside the stacks on the three upper main floors. The latter three rooms house rental typewriters, and the mezzanine rooms have nearby locked storage bins for personal typewriters.



Unfortunately, a student questionnaire on the library, its appurtenances, and its services was not coded and evaluated in time for this study. One complaint, however, noted most frequently on individual questionnaires concerned talking in the study halls—particularly during so-called “closed” and examination periods. To remedy this situation, the main fourth-floor reading room has been designated a talking area, and notification concerning it has been posted throughout the building. Less talking is now encountered in the remaining reading rooms.

Another problem which still faces the library is the provision of suitable and adequate areas for smoking. Experience has suggested that the basement lounge, with a seating capacity of fifty-odd, may not be adequate. Also, lighting in the room is purposely inadequate for reading. Smoking-and-studying areas may have to be created, though this leads, of course, to increased cleaning and maintenance costs.

The bringing together of books and readers, previously mentioned, has been furthered by instituting a browsing collection of new fiction and nonfiction on open shelves in the main first floor reading room. These books are changed at frequent intervals to provide worthwhile current recreational reading. We feel, however, that much still remains to be done. Plans are in progress for enlarging the collection, adding a supplementary selection of high-quality paperbacks, and providing a segregated area with comfortable and attractive furnishings where books may be enjoyed at leisure.

As a last word about bringing books and readers together, one should not underestimate the importance of the large open-shelf reserve collection located in the room which houses the browsing collection. Wisconsin librarians have been purposely lenient in the

variety of reserve periods offered, as well as the wide range of materials. Students may consult books in the open reserve reading room, or they may take them out for one, three, seven, or ten days. Fine books of both specific and general interest are thus available to all students, either to be savored in the library or chewed and digested at home.

Finally, the library staff is increasingly aware of its responsibility for the provision, servicing, and publicizing of its rapidly growing collection of nonbook materials. The situation at Wisconsin is both eased and complicated by the existence of various campus facilities outside the library.

In the first place, the University of Wisconsin community is served by the excellent microfilm collection of newspapers—and a large battery of reading machines—in the State Historical Society Library, just across the mall from the university library. Also available at the Historical Society is a fully staffed manuscripts department which complements the university library's archival collection of University of Wisconsin materials. One might mention as well that the University and the Society observe a cooperative buying policy and division of fields in the acquisition of both book and nonbook materials. This close and friendly association has benefited both institutions, lessened duplication, and eased congestion in both book-stacks.

Other university organizations such as the very active Bureau of Audio-Visual Instruction, the departments of speech, radio, and television, the Wisconsin Union, and the music library provide audio-visual materials and equipment.

Much of the pressure for provision of instructional nonbook materials, therefore, has been taken from the library. Yet serious thought is now being given to an expanded and centralized reposi-

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- Bracknell, Berkshire, England. v.1, no.1, Spring 1956. 2 or 3 no. a year. Free?
- Phronesis*. Royal Van Gorcum, Assen, The Netherlands. v.1, no.1, November 1955. Semi-annual. \$3.
- The Polish Review*. Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences in America, 145 East 53d St., New York. v.1, no.1, Winter 1956. Quarterly. \$5.
- Prisme des Arts*. 1 bis, rue Henri Rochefort, Paris XVIIIe. no.1, March 15, 1956. 10 no. a year. 2,600 Fr.
- Problemi del comunismo e del socialismo*. Corso Italia 15, Milano. no.1, 1956. 6 no. a year. L 3,500.
- Race Relations Law Reporter*. Vanderbilt University, School of Law, Nashville 5, Tenn. v.1, no.1, February 1956. 6 no. a year. \$2.
- Research and Industry*. Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, Old Mill Rd., New Delhi 2. v.1, no.1, January 1956. Monthly. Rs 8.
- Retirement Planning News*. Retirement Council, Inc., 342 Madison Ave., New York 17. no.1, 1956. Frequency not given. Price not given.
- Social Work*. 374 Broadway, Albany 7. v.1, no.1, January 1956. Quarterly. \$6.
- Steel Review*. British Iron and Steel Federation, Steel House, Tothill Street, London SW1. no.1, January 1956. Quarterly. Free?
- The Student*. National Union of Students, Post Box 36, Leiden, Netherlands. v.1, no.1, April 1956. Frequency not given. Free?
- Survey of Ophthalmology*. Mount Royal and Guilford Ave., Baltimore 2. v.1, no.1, February 1956. Bimonthly. \$9.
- U. S. Shipping*. Franchar Publishing Company, East Stroudsburg, Pa. v.1, no.2, February 1956. Monthly. Price not given. (v.1, no.1 was not available for examination.)
- Villanova Law Review*. Villanova University Law School, Villanova, Pa. v.1, no.1, January 1956. Quarterly. \$2.50 for v.1, \$5. for v.2+.
- Der Welt der Slaven*. Otto Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden. v.1, no.1, 1956. Quarterly. DM 40.
- Das Wichtigste aus Welt und Wissen*. Verlagsunion, Büdingen, Oberhessen. no.1, January 1956. Monthly. DM 13,80.
- Wisdom*. 8800 Wilshire Boulevard, Beverly Hills, California. v.1, no.1, January 1956. Monthly. \$7.50.
- World*. 21 Hampstead Lane, Highgate Village, London N6. Winter 1955/56. 4 no. a year. 10 s.

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tory in the building for microfilm, microcard, and microprint collections and reading facilities; and the need for voice records and playing equipment is being investigated.

Much has happened in the Memorial Library in the past two years, and much will happen in the next twenty-five—by which time we shall have begun to agitate for the new wing sketched into the plans for the original building. But a university library, no matter how big, fulfills its function only when it is patronized by readers well acquainted with its system and its services. The larger it grows, the more confusing; and the new reader wanders among its intricacies as in a maze. We have tried by several means to insure that the library and its materials are adequately explained to its reading public: indoctrination visits

and problems for each entering class, yearly introductory lectures to new graduate students, additional information service during the first portion of the fall term, and a well-received series of telecasts over the university station, during which the basic services of the library were explained by staff members, and panels of students and librarians discussed points of general interest and puzzling features of the new library.

In the opinion of its users, the Memorial Library, with its commodious facilities, its cheerful and varied color combinations, its attractive furniture, and its services and book stock, has vindicated itself and the theories behind it during these first two years. During the following decades, the duty both of the staff and the faculty will be to make it truly the center of the University.