

# College Library Standards And the Future

**B**ASIC college standards are passed upon by the regional accrediting groups such as the New England Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, the North Central Association, the Southern Association, and the Middle States Association.<sup>1</sup> ALA and certain state groups, such as the New York Library Association, also publish criteria of library interest. Most graduate and professional groups place their own accrediting stamp upon the specialized graduate institutions, as ALA does for library schools. Another means of achieving a recognized standard is by the self-survey method. Published lists such as the Lamont Library catalog may be used for guidance in book selection and published statistics, such as those in each January's *CRL*, give pertinent budget facts which can be used comparatively, sometimes with telling effect. Such listings are useful to a degree, or in some detail, corroborating at least what we have already expected—that such-and-such a library is a pretty good library, that its superiority extends into most areas, and that its excellence can be measured by a variety of criteria.

According to purely personal opinion, our college libraries maintain good standards. There are some fine libraries in colleges of real repute, and we all know these as touchstones. By and large

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these institutions have had a tradition of faculty and administrative interest in the library and adequate funds have been found to express the library's centrality on campus. Most libraries in most colleges of good academic standing appear to be undertaking their obligations seriously and performing adequately. All these libraries could do with more books, more space, more staff, and more money—but the job is being done and done well. Then, unfortunately, there are the poor libraries; and these are poor in every way—small, ill-quartered, understaffed, almost without books. They are found in the institutions where one would expect them—struggling, overcrowded colleges where teaching is usually by rote with no time for anything but the textbook. Sometimes accrediting teams try to give these librarians a hand-up by reporting with a strong plea for more support or even, if circumstances seem so to warrant, a condemnation to serve the same purpose.

The exchange of technical information between college libraries is fairly good. Certainly with all our meetings and our numerous publications, there are enough channels open to allow the free circulation of information concerning new techniques and new gadgets.

The profession appears to be in pretty good shape and not so complacent as our sedentary perch in the ivy-covered tower posits. There is definite evidence of cooperation, of the judicious use of new mechanical aids, and even the vision of

new money in the offing. For example, the ACRL grants which totalled \$136,000 in their first three years are tokens of new sources of financial aid for libraries, just as the Association of American Colleges uncovered new money in a concerted appeal to industry. In fact, this combination of presidents has done rather handsomely, for in less than a decade the annual donations from this source have risen from \$15,000 to just short of \$6,000,000. Our library salaries have improved, particularly at the starting professional level where they are comparable to beginning academic salaries. With the demand-years ahead, if librarians continue to be identified with educators, perhaps even our long-employed librarians may be more reasonably remunerated.

On the deficit side, it seems to me that we librarians have not been active enough in promoting our books, our services, and ourselves. The public, in our case the college community, is not widely enough aware of what the librarians can do, and how well they can do it. Nor are they sufficiently aware of the treasures—both old and new—so readily available. We need less modesty and more of Madison Avenue's aggressive charm. Take recruiting as an illustration of this shortcoming. We are beginning to get into it now—but why in the past did we ever allow our honorable, interesting, and most attractive profession to hide its charms so completely under a barrel? We do need librarians badly, and lots of them. There should be thousands of very desirable recruits. But we must provide a realistic picture of the many fascinating aspects of library work before we can benefit from a program of recruiting. It is possible that we have failed to attract many desirable people because we have not paid enough attention to the teaching functions of librarians. There could be some direct educational

activity for all in a college library, and where one teaches one gains enthusiastic neophytes.

In fact we have had a tendency to forget that our chief concern is with books—the accumulation, the housing, and the servicing of them. It is here that our light really begins to glow and here it is that we begin to take our rightful place in the college hierarchy. For it is by our knowledge of books, and how to get knowledge from books, that we gain standing in the eyes of the students and faculty. We need more bookmen, and especially do we need them in college libraries. In the university library there is place in the processing and servicing of million-book collections for technicians who can expedite the flow of materials to the shelves, regulate the routines that govern the exact placement of symbols on book spines, and codify cataloging procedures for ephemera, exotica, and erotica. But in the college library everyone should be committed by basic metabolism to a love affair with books. Books are our province and we should know more about them, some of them, than the professors. This is not difficult, for we all have our specialties and enthusiasms and special training in various fields of knowledge. How few of the instructors and teaching fellows are aware of the basic reference books and indexing services in any field other than their own? Lawrence Powell sums it up succinctly: "Give us librarians who have an overwhelming passion for books, who are bookmen by birth and by choice, by education, profession, and hobby. Properly channeled and directed, this passion for books is the greatest single basic asset a librarian can have."

We can expect some physical changes in the college library of the future. However, if we project the trends of the last few decades, it is reasonable to assume that these will be comparatively minor

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changes. Technical advances will make the dissemination of information, one of our primary tasks, comparatively easier and swifter. Mechanical aids will more readily and economically duplicate catalog cards, records, and pages of books. Thus routines may be speeded, cooperation between libraries facilitated by union and regional catalogs, and perhaps we may even see the end of the reserve book room when every student gets a photocopy of the assigned reading. Microcards and microfilms may be supplemented by improved and variant forms which may be more acceptable to the faculty. Unfortunately, for the present, financing usually limits the material available in micro-form to the larger more unified bodies of knowledge.

It may be pertinent to observe that recently the cheap paper-backed volumes now available in really desirable titles have influenced the content of undergraduate courses more than have microfilms or microcards. Thus the book, essentially in its five-hundred-year-old format, has not yet been seriously challenged by new discoveries in the colleges. However, we have yet to see what television can do on the college campus.

Plastics and the photolith process, vastly cheaper methods of printing, and fast reproduction have speeded our channels of communication, but the traditional book is far from disappearing. Rare books are getting rarer and seemingly more desirable. At least we seem

to be paying more, and willingly so, for them. We still read the classic texts in book form. Class assignments still providentially include peripheral readings from books, and libraries still compete for important sets and significant runs of learned journals and transactions. Browsing rooms, seminar rooms, and periodical rooms are still heavily populated. Large reading rooms are in constant demand although there seems to be a return toward alcoves and the breaking up of wide vistas into more informal areas.

In fact, the librarian may find himself providing a "home" for books. In these days of apartments and ranch-style houses, it is the exceptional family that preserves its books.

An area ahead far more uncertain than the comforting bulwark of books is that of the educational changes which may occur to make new and more insistent demands upon the college library. There is, of course, no question about a great influx of students into the colleges. Some institutions will be able to cope with this quite well, either by not expanding or by containing the increased enrollment within a carefully planned extension of both plant facilities and teaching capabilities. However, it is more than likely that a great many institutions will want, or may have, to take in just as many students as they can possibly squeeze into their existing or slightly expanded facilities. New liberal arts colleges may

come into existence, some from sources such as junior colleges and teachers colleges. Possibly even preparatory and finishing schools may try to achieve full college status. This situation may be very similar to that after World War II except that these students will not all have the maturity that made the GI's not only more independent but also stimulating.

Changes in the curriculum can be expected, for educators have had more opportunity to plan for this incoming tide. Accelerated programs may be tried, such as three quarters in residence and one quarter of independent reading. Such a program has direct library implications. Certainly there will be more emphasis on science, in spite of our pressing need for general education. Some institutions of little integrity, under pressure for graduates, will tighten up their pure science programs to the extent that there may be few offerings in the humanities and no time allowed for subjects as necessary as English, philosophy, and foreign languages. Universities may choose the expedient of building a separate science or technology library, thus emphasizing a schism between the sciences and the humanities.

We are all concerned about the possible results of these educational changes in the college library. There is a strong possibility that in some colleges the librarians may be pushed aside or even trampled upon as the enrollment booms and standees jam the library. Some librarians may not be able to effect minimal standards, and their libraries may become useless shells with no books or with the wrong books. The library may have the books and the space and no readers, for to a large extent student use of a library depends on the attitude of faculty members toward a library and the use that they require their students to make of it.

There are many, many comparatively solvent colleges with strong faculties, deeply committed to high standards of teaching, which are oriented toward books and good libraries. Usually one finds in them a sympathetic administration trying to further the college program and able to find funds if well-reasoned requests are made. These colleges are fortunate, and they are not the ones that we need to be concerned about, for they can and will maintain the best standards.

There may be, however, institutions where the standards of teaching are so low that students may not be required, urged, or abetted to use their library at all. The quality of class presentation may be so poor that the library is entirely cut out of the educational process; and, worse than this, both administration and faculty may be completely satisfied with what they are doing. On such a campus, it is indeed a grave situation for the librarians. Indoctrination is then necessary for the complete hierarchy. It may be futile to attempt a program of educating the whole faculty to change teaching habits and philosophy toward the more enlightened leadership of students working on projects of special concern in the college library.

We need the means to strengthen the position of librarians in such institutions. Indeed, if the college does not seek an adequate library, we as a body must coerce that administration into providing at least a minimum of books, space to use them, and trained staff to service them. Surely some students will find their way to such a library and those professors who do want to use the library as an adjunct to the classroom will not be penalized. It is our responsibility to see that these poorest colleges have enough books for the enrichment of daily courses, with more books, essential reference books, periodicals and doc-



uments for individual papers and term projects—even if the books are not actively wanted by those in control of academic policy. We must be sure that the proper books and services are on campus and then hope for the best—that some students and some faculty will be led into a real utilization of them.

One means of helping librarians in such a position is being worked on already by an ACRL Committee on Standards of which Felix Hirsch is chairman. We can hope shortly to see the tangible results. Already an ACRL Monograph (No. 20) has been published which gathers all the existing regional accrediting standards for college libraries. Presumably, ACRL is to decide upon definite standards for college libraries and then to see that the various regional accrediting agencies accept them for use in their periodic surveys. In the past, ALA determined standards for job description and remuneration but had no machinery to enforce them. However, ACRL is coherent enough, and its membership widely enough represented and respected in colleges throughout the nation, that it could present a strong case for reasonable standards judged necessary by the whole organization. These ought to be appreciated by the accrediting boards, for the working out of such intricate and definitive standards for libraries is not a job the accrediting bodies are likely to anticipate for themselves. There are many experienced surveyors among us competent to serve upon a board from which the regional groups could draw for their college surveys.

If, however, the standards we decide upon are not welcomed by the accrediting boards, even if accompanied by the offer of voluntary librarian surveyors, then the hard decision must be taken. That is, to set up a college library accrediting board of our own. It would be a tremendous task, involving much

hard organizational work, for such a new agency is contrary to the avowed policy of the last decade of unifying surveys under one regional accrediting agency. It might be justified by the totally unacceptable level of some of the newer college libraries. The American Chemical Society still does college surveying with regional concurrence, although most subject agencies work on the graduate and professional school level.

The new librarian can be more adequately prepared for his work through more exchange of information about ways and means of tackling problems common to college libraries. Our many meetings might help in this regard, just as the ACRL Circles of Information operated at the ALA Conventions in Philadelphia and Miami Beach. We must remember that what is old stuff to some is new, interesting, and vital to the recent library school graduate who has just been made responsible for an activity within the library.

The chief concern of the librarian ought to be the book collection. The best way to gain the affection and enthusiastic support of the faculty and the administration is to have the right books or, if not the right books, at least the right attitude toward the right books. A dedicated faculty can aid the librarian immeasurably in a quest for such books in spite of reluctance of the administration to ease the way. It takes a hard and callous administration to ignore a faculty petition for reasonable library funds, and the trustees must always recognize a well substantiated appeal.

Perhaps one of the best supports we can supply for librarians so isolated on campus is to endorse the best books. The Lamont list is good but already dated, and the Shaw list is almost hopelessly outdated. Titles appear and disappear so rapidly in the general market that no

one library source can compile a list of best books currently available in all areas. This is true even if the Carnegie Corporation or another generous foundation could supply the large sums required. Alas, even the fine *U. S. Quarterly Book List* has now ceased publication and can no longer serve as a useful tool for current book buying.

Perhaps our concern can turn to a series of book recommendations in the various fields. Examples of such lists are the *Economics Library Selections* published quarterly by the Department of Political Economy at Johns Hopkins, and the now dated *Lucas List of Books for a College Art Library* (*Art Bulletin*, 1929) compiled for the College Art Association. Certain colleges have specialties which ought to be reflected in their libraries. It might be possible to work out a college "Farmington-like" plan whereby a specific college makes recommendations for current books in a definite subject area. Usually a strong department contains library-minded professors. It is possible to call upon them to give book advice, particularly if the library secures lots of books for them, and undertakes all the editorial work.

College librarians can also prepare themselves individually for the future. Surely a college librarian should make every attempt to gain the confidence and respect of faculty and students by the wise use of two kinds of knowledge: *technical*, in regard to the efficient and sympathetic administration of the library and its resources, and *special*, in regard to the books within his charge, whether it be a subject room or portions of the entire library.

A college library is selective and a good college library must choose at both ends, buying the essential new books and weeding the surplus and less useful material. Few librarians will be able to know all the most desirable books in a wide variety of fields, but there are al-

ways specially-trained experts at hand in the various academic departments and willing assistance can be called upon. A firm hand on the quality of the book collection will increase the librarian's stature and will improve the library in the eyes of the entire college community.

The librarian should seek imaginative solutions to the problems of administration and use of books. Cooperation is an area of increasing importance, for the joint use of some books makes particular sense in the case of colleges not committed to graduate programs. Recently the Hampshire Inter-Library Center called in Keyes Metcalf to survey its potential, and the resulting recommendations suggested associate memberships for certain colleges in the New England area, namely, Dartmouth, Trinity, Williams, and Wesleyan. His survey has already stirred up new reports of local cooperation either underway or projected, such as that between six libraries in the north Texas region, four libraries producing a union list of serials in Abilene, Texas, several Catholic colleges planning together in the Baltimore area, and a six-library cooperative program in the St. Paul, Minnesota area. Most reference and inter-library loan librarians know of the potential value of the recently published lists of current serials issued by various groups in the New England and metropolitan areas.

The librarian is in a unique situation on campus. While considered part of the teaching staff, he has no departmental allegiance. Members of the faculty accept his disinterested attitude for he is not involved, nor should he be, in the zealous watchfulness by which each subject department guards its rightful position on campus. Because of his free position, the librarian can speak out, unhampered by any considerations of self-interest, for the furtherance of the ideals of the college.

What the librarian says will be more impressive if his ideas of general education are before the faculty through his daily action: the wise purchase of books, the unbiased administration of the library, and the displays and activities sponsored by the library. This means speaking out in public and in faculty meetings for a well-balanced curriculum, rejecting soft solutions and short-cuts which may be held up as temporary remedies for a given situation. It means having a perspective on the subject matter of a college and insisting that some subjects prepare the mind better than others for making decisions. It means holding to the discipline of hard courses even if the subject matter is not pertinent to a future career. It means assigning a priority to certain courses so that a hard core of general knowledge is given to everyone. Such intellectual discipline will give our youth a fine, basic liberal education. Training, as opposed to education, may come later in professional or graduate school, but let us first give our coming generations the general knowledge from which wisdom is distilled.

We are going to be subject to many pressures in the days ahead. For example, the American Institute of Physics has announced that sixty-two physicists from education and industry would visit 100 colleges and universities before the end of 1957-58 academic year. Their purpose is to interest students in physics and to stimulate the teaching of physics. Funds for this "Crash" project, are being supplied by the National Science Foundation and the Ford Foundation for the Advancement of Education. Now this is a worthy purpose, and we can expect more such visitations from other subject groups. But let us not take every crash program entirely to our bosom. We must guard the integrity of the curriculum and be sure that it expresses our best judgment. There must not be any un-

due emphasis on any one subject to corrupt the relatively free choice implied in a liberal arts degree.

We have all observed during the war and afterwards what is likely to happen if a military unit moves onto the campus. Their objectives are fine and quite laudable but some units can act like a camel in a tent. First it is a required formation at a particular hour, then an inspection by an area commander, and before long the established academic curriculum is taking a back seat and suffering a curtailment of scheduled meetings. We must be watchful that proportion is retained so that the student is given time for his academic program as we visualize it.

It is comforting to know that when one speaks out for true standards and well-founded ideals, that respect and support comes readily from those who really influence decisions. In this regard, I personally, as a former New York Public Library employee, regret deeply the recent decision of their trustees to withdraw that library's sponsorship from the TV program "Faces of War." This program on the theme of the wastefulness and inhumanity of war consisted chiefly of excerpts from Euripides, Homer, Shakespeare, Stephen Crane, Mark Twain, and Walt Whitman. It was produced by the Metropolitan Educational Television Association with a charter from the New York State Board of Regents. Participants in this particular program included Norman Cousins, Margaret Mead, and James Jones, while the script collaborator and narrator was Mark Van Doren. The NYPL Trustee President, Morris Hadley, said the show ran counter to the library's policy of not taking a position in "sensitive areas."

It is necessary for us all to make books available on all sides of controversial subjects and this the NYPL conscientiously does. But the tolerance with

which one observes a student exploring an unfortunate and twisted idea must not be confused by granting that individual license to believe that we are without ideals. Thus the NYPL does, of course, take a stand on important issues such as segregation and democracy, and does advocate controls which safeguard the individual, such as the courts, hospitals, prisons, and poorhouses. Now the library's friends can only be dismayed and disheartened, feeling themselves robbed of one of our greatest institutions.

Librarians must take sides, must have opinions and we can count on the fine educational standards of the past to make a true course obvious. Our every act in

the operation of the library is decisive, for the eyes of the campus are always upon the librarians. This is no time to be neutral. The time to act with integrity is now. In 1940 Archibald MacLeish, as Librarian of Congress, issued a powerful and persuasive call for intellectual responsibility. Entitled "The Irresponsibles" it was addressed to scholars and writers. His plea to librarians given at the ALA Convention that year to take an active part on the side of democracy was to a large degree neglected or even rejected by librarians. I hope that we have now come of age and are prepared to undertake those responsibilities necessary to preserve our heritage of intellectual freedom in a democratic framework.

## A British View

To be fully effective in discipline, a library must comprise, in priority of demand, the collections students would wish to own, or better than they are ever likely to own; it is a gathering of ideal private libraries. In my experience more American than British libraries come near this model. Studying thoroughly the histories of subjects, searching assiduously far and wide, librarians of greater U. S. libraries favor and practice selecting of stock, subject by subject, to make rounded quasi-private collections, historically complete while currently valid. The many rich collections over there have contributed to the same end, for nearly all of them have striven for completeness in any subject they have adopted. Having less money for buildings to store books, and smaller budgets for books, our larger libraries, with a few such exceptions as the British Museum, Bodley's and Cambridge University Library, have not been too careful to collect useful back stock or even to keep what they have: indeed, subjects seem to be in rounded current completeness more by accident than design. In co-operation, as well as in collection, these American libraries are of this model; in modern publications they cover a wider field. On the Farmington plan the sixty-two co-operating libraries buy every British work of any value, as do a number of libraries not in the circuit. No one could list twenty of our libraries which hold all British publications of consequence, let alone all American. Even by Farmington collection it is not possible in Britain to borrow every current French, German, Italian, or Scandinavian book of standing. . . . Until this country regains economic strength, it must manage with weaker resources; and, ironically, until our holdings in science and technology are greater, more widespread, and more fully publicized, our chances of economic recovery are less. Dare anyone, on either side of the Atlantic, deny that the fullness and exactness of American scholarship, both in hard-fact and liberal studies, are largely the fruit of American librarianship? —Ernest A. Savage, "Librarianship's Service in Disciplining Research and Authorship," *The Library Association Record*, LX (1958) 78.