

Scientific Libraries in the Emergency

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THE NATIONAL emergency defense program is deservedly receiving the attention of librarians. All of us are eager to have our libraries contribute to the program. The question is, what can we do now and what can we prepare ourselves to do in the near future?

In 1917-18 the American Library Association, upon the initiative of Dr. Frank P. Hill and others, set up a program of library war service which proved of such value that there is now no question of the continuation and extension of naval and army libraries in the present crisis, under funds available to these branches of the government.

The present emergency presents new problems and a different challenge to librarians. There is an immediate incentive to organize some activities which, it must be frankly admitted, should have been developed long ago. Necessarily the national program will require the support of all types of libraries. The following hastily written notes concern only certain activities of the scientific and technical departments of university libraries, the technical departments of large public libraries, and the technical and scientific libraries attached to societies, industrial firms, and other institutions.

Certain changes in trends should be noted first. The government is recommending the establishment of new industrial plants "between the mountains." There will be great emphasis on industries which are regarded as essential. Plants used for purposes which are regarded as less essential may be transferred to the manufacture of other products. This procedure is now under full headway. A survey of the industries of any one of our plains states will show not only an increase in the number of new plants but also adaptation of old plants to new uses.

The production of essential equipment for national defense will be speeded up all over the country, but especially in the middle west. No one library can furnish the books and periodicals needed for the research departments of these new industries. Scientific and technical libraries in the various states must be prepared to satisfy their demands. Every scientific and technical library must study the new possibilities in its own domain. The scientific and technical libraries of the country might well consider together functional changes to meet the needs of the new national program.

There is need of experts, not librarians, but scientists and technologists who are trained in bibliographical research. There is no doubt that Germany was well prepared for the development of war industries. In the libraries of the technical

institutions in Dresden and Berlin, in the Deutsche Chemische Gesellschaft, and in other libraries in Germany, expert bibliographers (not librarians), trained in scientific and industrial research, are employed to search for material in response to requests from industrial firms. We have no such program in this country, but a similar organization located in a center with well-equipped scientific and technical libraries would be of service. In addition scientific and technical bibliographers could well be employed in outlying libraries. In the meantime the universities can call on their chemists, physicists, bacteriologists, and engineers in evaluating material which will be needed by the research departments of our new and growing industries. It is not satisfactory to submit a list of references, or to send twenty-five or thirty publications on the subject; the research department will want the *one* publication which will give it the best answer to its question.

There are some definite services for which we can prepare ourselves immediately. To some extent a few libraries are now performing these functions.

1. The first step is, of course, to compile a list of industries in our region, state or city, listing especially those with research departments, and remembering that the nature of the product of any industry may be radically changed under the requirements of national defense.

2. We can get in touch with the research departments of the industries in our state or city, either directly or through our institutions. We can offer our services; we can make our books and periodicals available. We can arrange for translating, especially from the less familiar languages. We can help especially in informing the research workers where information can be obtained in case we can-

not supply it. It does not help an investigator to know that material is not available in his nearest library—he wants to know where it *is* available.

To assist in making available a list of resources, a special joint committee of the A.L.A. and Special Libraries Association under the chairmanship of Robert Bingham Downs has been appointed to compile during the next month or two a guide to sources of bibliographical information, which will list the libraries best equipped to furnish books or information in special fields.

3. Obviously some research departments do not know of the material available in the nearby libraries, especially periodicals files. They should be informed. Some of them have had unfortunate experiences in attempting to obtain material from libraries. The present opportunity is a most excellent one for bringing the libraries and the faculties of our universities into contact with the research departments of industries. The university library can well be the connecting link.

4. We can relax our rules for lending. Unfortunately European periodicals cannot now be purchased by industries as needed. Whereas a year ago European journals could be obtained, now the sole supply is in our libraries. We should be willing to make them available. We should announce our willingness to lend recent issues of periodicals bound or unbound. We should be prepared to lend in some cases complete runs if the nature of the demand justifies such a service. It may even be necessary to lend current numbers of magazines as received so the research departments can look them over regularly.

5. A new vocational program is under

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This by-law shall not apply to the term of office of any person elected by the association to represent it on the American Library Association Council, or on any other American Library Association body, which may have terms of office differing from terms specified in these by-laws. In such cases the term specified by the Ameri-

can Library Association shall prevail.

Article VII. Rules of Order

Sec. 1. The rules contained in Robert's *Rules of Order* shall govern the association in all cases to which they are applicable, and in which they are not inconsistent with the Constitution and by-laws.

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way. Vocational teachers will be needed to an increased extent in occupational camps, in the Army, in Civilian Conservation Corps camps. Teachers must be trained in our universities and colleges, especially in the industrial arts. Universities and colleges have unusual opportunities to see that these future teachers know of the books published in their fields and recognize the aid to instruction that books can render. We would do well to set up in some of our universities typical school collections in various subjects and show how these books can be woven into the instruction of technical workers.

For future reference I should like to mention with regret some of our deficiencies. There has been much emphasis on the lacunae in our book collections in the humanities and social sciences. Study of the book resources in the sciences and technology seems to have been neglected. Such collections too often are step-children in our university libraries. Sometimes they are not under the direction of the university librarian, or, if nominally under his direction, they are to a considerable extent in charge of clerks or left to run themselves. There has been no effective national organization of scientific and technical libraries. Possibly this emergency may bring us together in cooperative action. There has been no study to determine material in the sciences and engineering not available in the United States, or available to a very

limited extent. During the past few months Iowa State College Library has had requests for the German periodical, *Die Räder*. The *Union List of Serials* does not indicate that any copy of this periodical is available in the United States. Correspondence has failed to locate a single copy. Another request for a complete file, for examination, of *Astronautics* comes as this is being written. The only set available in the United States, (not complete) according to the *Union List*, is in the Library of Congress and naturally this set cannot be made available to the workers in the midwest. If these incidents occur in one library in a non-industrial state, how many more cases must exist throughout the United States! We have failed to cooperate in providing, at least in some library of the United States, complete files of each scientific and technical publication. Such publications may become essential in meeting the increased demands of research workers.

This emergency, therefore, gives the scientific and technical libraries of all types an opportunity to expand their functions and to show that they are essential. It is hoped that committees of the Association of College and Reference Libraries and of other associations can add to these meager notes and can give more careful consideration to the functions of college and reference libraries in the present emergency.