

The Centralized Libraries of the Oregon State System of Higher Education¹

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COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY LIBRARIANS are becoming increasingly conscious of the possibilities of cooperation. They are realizing that concerted effort must be made if the book resources of the nation are to serve scholarly and research needs effectively. Types of cooperation include interlibrary loans, union catalogs, union lists, cooperative bibliographical projects, limiting fields of purchase and emphasizing certain areas of specialization, cooperative bookbuying, agreements regarding the collection of documents and reproduction of books and manuscripts on film, surveys of book resources in a given area, and consolidations which include legal contractual arrangements and mergers.

Examples of cooperation and/or consolidations are: The University Center in Atlanta, the University of North Carolina-Duke University cooperation, Claremont Colleges, Fisk University and Meharry Medical College, Joint University Libraries at Nashville, Atlanta University Library, Western Reserve

¹Part of unpublished Master's thesis, "College and university library consolidations," Graduate Library School, University of Chicago, 1939.

University Library, Dillard University, the merger between Howard Memorial Library-Tulane University-Newcomb College, developments in the Atlanta-Athens region, and the centralized libraries of the Oregon State System of Higher Education.

A brief review of what has been accomplished in Oregon may give some conception of the problems involved and of the possibilities and opportunities for book resources and library service which may be realized through consolidation.

The centralized libraries include the libraries of Oregon's six state supported institutions of higher education. Their consolidation in 1932 was part of the State Board of Higher Education's general reorganization of the institutions, and their administrative plan follows, in general, the plan set up for the system as a whole. Four of these institutions are located in the Willamette Valley: the University of Oregon at Eugene and the Oregon State College at Corvallis are forty miles apart, the Oregon College of Education at Monmouth is only eighteen miles from the latter, and the Medical School in Portland is eighty-four miles from Corvallis. The two remaining state supported institutions have been established recently in the southern and eastern

sections of the state: the Southern Oregon College of Education in Ashland is 241 miles from Corvallis and the Eastern Oregon College of Education in La Grande is 373 miles from Corvallis.

Lower division courses in liberal arts and sciences are offered on a parallel basis on the campuses at Eugene, Corvallis, Ashland, and La Grande. Professional and technical curricula are allocated to the various campuses as follows: social sciences, arts and letters—university at Eugene; physical and biological sciences—state college at Corvallis; medicine and nursing—medical school at Portland; elementary teacher training—Ashland, La Grande, and Monmouth; graduate study and research—Eugene and Corvallis.

The age of the libraries ranges from eleven to fifty-eight years with a median of thirty-five. Their individual library collections range from 16,000 to more than 300,000 volumes and their combined collections total more than half a million volumes. When compared with the other libraries of the state, one finds that they constitute about one-fourth the total book resources of the state; have twice as many volumes as the combined total holdings of all special and private higher educational libraries in the state; and are exceeded in size by the public libraries.

Outside the state of Oregon, the nearest book concentrations² are found to the north in Seattle about two hundred miles from the northern boundary of the state, and to the south in Sacramento and in San Francisco which are about four and five hundred miles from the southern boundary.

Prior to 1929, the six institutions and

² Wilson, Louis R. *Geography of reading*. American Library Association and the University of Chicago Press, pp. 119, 121.

their libraries were operated independently. Over a period of seventy-five years the institutions had been established one at a time. For each of them the legislature passed a special law providing for support by means of an ear-marked millage tax levy. Each had a separate governing board. The resulting rivalry and competition between them was comparable to that which other states with several separate institutions have experienced.

Higher Education Reorganized

Legislative action in 1929³ created a single State Board of Higher Education and the people of Oregon undertook a complete reorganization of higher education as a departmentalized function of the state government. The old boards were abolished and the new board of nine members serving for terms of nine years were given control of all property, activities, income and disbursements, accounts and records, curricula, advertising and publicity, and all negotiations between the state legislature and the institutions.

Plans for a single library system were worked out by the board in advance of their reorganization of the system as a whole. They felt that any coordination among the institutions should necessarily be preceded by a unifying of all book resources. It was their belief that library facilities in the institutions should not be duplicated and that the entire resources of all of them should be made available to all faculty members and students in the system.

As early as May 29, 1931 (which was a month after their receipt of the survey

³ Oregon State System of Higher Education. *Administrative code*. State Board of Higher Education, 1938, pp. 80-85.
Oregon, *General laws* . . . 1929. State Printing Department, 1929, pp. 256-60.

report⁴ and more than a month before they officially took over the control of the institutions), they directed the presidents of the various institutions to formulate procedures which would avoid duplicating library facilities with a view to creating a single library system. In July, 1932, the board's completed plan for library reorganization was announced. It provided for a single library system under the control of a director of libraries with a librarian in charge on each campus, free circulation among the six institutions of all book stock, a common book fund allocated by the director according to curricular needs, a central order department, and instruction in the use of the library provided for on each campus. Miss Lucy M. Lewis, librarian of Oregon State College, was appointed director of libraries effective July 1, 1932.

Efficient Organization Evolved

Although the general plan of the library consolidation was dictated by the board in the above quoted rulings, the implementation of their wishes was in Miss Lewis's hands. It is due to her far-sighted vision and administrative ability that a harmonious, closely integrated, efficiently and economically operating organization has evolved.

It should be pointed out that the consolidation was achieved without any help from foundations or without any special appropriations or endowments.

The task of reorganization would have been difficult in itself under normal conditions, or even with additional staff and money. There were no precedents to follow and because of the shrinkage in tax

returns, all income for higher education was drastically reduced at this time. The director of libraries was faced with the gigantic problem of effecting reorganization and at the same time of reducing staffs and budgets.

The first reorganization problem was to set up a central agency for carrying out the board's decisions regarding "central ordering," and a "common catalog." Room was made available in the Oregon State College Library for the Central Library Office.

Union Author Catalog⁵

In the summer of 1932, when this Central Library Office was being organized, it was realized that centralized ordering was impossible without a catalog of the holdings of all six institutions. Obviously, the board's objective of economy in library administration could not be met unless all orders were checked for duplication before they were placed; nor could their objective of "a great common supply of books" be met without some record of the holdings of all the libraries.

The problem was to find a way to duplicate 200,000 cards quickly, accurately, and cheaply. Miss Lewis investigated all possible methods and found the cheapest and most satisfactory was to utilize the state-college equipment and photographic service. Special equipment was built by the physics department and the cards were photostated at a cost of \$.0203 per card. All cards were copied within two weeks and the originals returned to the individual libraries. All detail work of establishing the central author catalog was handled by

⁴Klein, Arthur J., Kelly, F. J., and Works, George A. *Survey of public higher education in Oregon*. Survey Commission, United States Office of Education, Bulletin 1931, no. 10.

⁵Lewis, Lucy M. "Adapting Equipment to the Making of an Official Library Order Catalog." *Library Journal*, 58:302-05, Apr. 1, 1933.

Ritchie, Elizabeth P. "Union Author Catalog of the Oregon State System of Higher Education." *Pacific Northwest Library Association Quarterly*, 2:29-30, Oct. 1937.

the library staff, except the collection and forwarding of the cards by the other libraries. The original cost of the catalog was \$4,946.42 and the total cost from 1932-1939 was \$9,634.07. It is kept up to date by order cards which record purchases and by cards furnished by the individual libraries for additions by gift and exchange.

In addition to the union catalog at Corvallis, an author catalog of the holdings of the state college library was prepared for the university library at Eugene. This is being kept up to date by supplying cards for additions and withdrawals. Cards are also furnished the medical school library for certain classes.

Central Order Department

The organization of this department took much thought and planning. It was established with a staff less than the combined former library order department staff of the university and state college.

This department is responsible for all of the order work of the six institutions, and demonstrated during the first two years that it could be operated more economically if centralized. Within the two years 1932-1933 and 1933-1934 salary savings of \$2,933.60⁶ were thereby made in this one department.

Instructions for each phase of the department's work, rules of general policy, and sample forms have been carefully worked out and are revised frequently to meet changing conditions. There are five such codes which have been prepared.

Although the order procedure differs somewhat in detail for the various libraries, it is, in general about as follows:

Each library does its own book selection

⁶ Lewis, Lucy M. "Centralized Library Control and Institutional Library Autonomy, May 20, 1934," p. 25. (Mimeographed)

and the order department orders only the publications which the libraries request. There is no censoring of orders and the institutional librarians alone are responsible for the publications which they request.

The university library and the medical school library search for their own requests and prepare the purchase orders which are sent to the Central Library Office for placement, accounting, and recording.

The other four libraries make their requests on library requisition forms and note author, title, and as much bibliographic detail as they care to add. These requisitions are sent to the central order department where the searching is done and the purchase orders are made out. Whenever a request can be met by transferring a duplicate copy from one of the other libraries, this is done instead of buying a new copy.

Library orders are handled much more quickly and efficiently through this central order department than they were under the pre-centralization era when the library orders went through several general business offices.

Reorganization Program

The initial reorganization program included: (1) reorganization of the circulation and reference departments at the state college and the university; (2) uniformity in certain records, forms, statistics, and methods of practice within the libraries to increase economy and efficiency of service; (3) the adoption of uniform business forms to correlate with the work of the system's central business office; (4) the studying of the needs of the individual libraries in order to improve and facilitate effective work; (5)

avoidance of duplication by purchase, through transfer of duplicate stock no longer needed at one institution because of curricular changes or reduced registration; (6) interchange of reserve books; (7) the adoption of a more liberal policy of inter-library loan; and (8) the transfer of library material to correspond with the transfer of major schools from one institution to the other.

Centralization was further facilitated by having a bookkeeper in the Central Library Office who keeps the financial records for all the libraries and a secretary to the director who has worked out statistical forms for the system and compiles all statistics for the libraries.

The Library Council and Its Interlibrary Committees

Coordination has been effected in part through the work of the library council and its committees. The council consists of the chancellor of the system, the director of libraries, and the six institutional librarians. Meetings are held at least once each quarter and traveling expenses of members are paid by the system.

There is a friendly, cooperative spirit in the council which makes possible planning for all the libraries as a unit, formulating constructive policies, and stimulating professional growth. The activities and accomplishments of the library council include (1) systematizing the reporting and recording of faculty publications, (2) eliminating postage records on loans within the system, (3) correlating material included on gift records, (4) unifying charges for fines and rentals, (5) studying the use made of the libraries by faculty and students, (6) investigating possibilities for cooperation with all the libraries in the Pacific Northwest, and

(7) planning for future development of the libraries through library surveys getting up qualifications for budgets and staffs.

Through the five interinstitutional committees composed of representatives of the six libraries many details of unified procedure and method have been worked out.

The cooperative bibliography committee brings together information about all the indexing and bibliographical work done in the six libraries and stimulates cooperation on projects whenever that is feasible.

The committee on correlation of continuations and periodicals has undertaken two studies: (1) a comparison of procedures and routines in handling continuations and periodicals in use by each of the libraries, and (2) a study of incomplete holdings in the six libraries.

The committee on coordination of cataloging practices and procedures is coordinating cataloging rules and procedures of the different libraries as much as possible and is working toward the time when all cataloging for the system will be done in the Central Library Office.

The reading interests committee has stimulated reading on the six campuses and has made a study of library use.

Because of the centralized ordering, the committee on order procedure has had unusually heavy responsibilities. Detailed procedures for handling all orders have been worked out, a multiple order card was devised, uniform card forms and supplies were adopted, and experimental combined supply orders were placed which resulted in significant savings.

Gains Due to Centralization

The following gains due to centralization have been made: (1) all libraries have a definite budget; (2) photostatic

copies of many card indexes have been supplied all libraries; (3) savings have been made in circulation and order department salaries, combined orders for supplies, exchanges between libraries, larger discounts secured on foreign periodical subscriptions by pooling orders and placing them with the same agent, better book discounts secured because of arrangements made with dealers and publishers, all binding is done at cost in the system's two binderies, and duplication in periodical subscriptions reduced as much as possible; (4) the libraries are given advance notice of curricular changes; (5) library staff has been accorded faculty status according to their qualifications and experience on the same basis as the teaching staffs, interchanges of staff are made when feasible, in-service training of staff members is made possible by the system's liberal regulations permitting faculty members to take courses, and the academic qualifications of the professional staff have been improved since centralization.

Summary

This is an example of a regional consolidation which has achieved a high degree of unity in spite of the fact that the libraries are spread out over a state.

The original objectives of the State Board of Higher Education as set forth in their rulings were to increase the library resources for the students and faculties of the institutions, and to provide better library service at lower cost. Evidence of the extent to which these objectives have been accomplished has been presented in the foregoing pages. It is a pioneer experiment in a larger unit of library service.

Due to limited funds, and the unlimited

mass of detail involved in the coordination of our libraries, it has been necessary to spread the work of organization over a period of years. . . . Under these circumstances new projects could not be started until others were completed, and since the various projects were often interdependent, efficiency in operation has been impeded. In spite of these handicaps, however, definite progress has been made, through the cooperative efforts of the various libraries in the system.⁷

In studying the reports, minutes of meetings, codes of procedures, and other data of these libraries, one is impressed with the implied as well as the expressed friendly, helpful, and constructive attitudes of the staffs in achieving their goals.

No attempt has been made to make the libraries conform to a pattern of dull uniformity. Their individuality has been maintained and no changes have been made that would hinder the effective work of any of them.

Centralization means that the money appropriated for libraries goes farther than it would under an individualistic regime; and it means that greater resources are available to all students and faculties. The efficient reference departments of the larger libraries are generous of time and effort in meeting the needs of the smaller. Through committee work and meetings of various kinds, there has been much closer contact between the staffs which has resulted in greater professional growth and stimulation.

The carefully worked out plans for future development indicate that much more will be accomplished in the years ahead particularly if money can be secured for additional staff and the purchase of necessary bibliographical equipment.

⁷Lewis, Lucy M. "Biennial Report of the Director of Libraries, 1936-1938." Oregon State College, Corvallis, p. 3. Ms.