

# A Proposal for a Cooperative Storage Library

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THE PROBLEM of providing adequate library space on university campuses is an increasingly difficult one. The growth in the size of student bodies and the frequent use of source material by larger and larger numbers of students have forced a rapid expansion of university libraries. New buildings have had to be constructed, and too often these buildings have soon become crowded.

Because of the architectural standards of modern academic institutions, the cost of a campus library building is much higher than that of a building constructed off the campus for storage purposes only. On some campuses it is not possible to provide land area for a continually expanding library. Furthermore a library building, constructed for work and study as well as for book storage, is not so efficient as a storehouse because a much larger percentage of the stack area must be used for corridors, aisles, etc. Shelf space is lost because a working collection must be arranged by subject and some empty space reserved for an expansion of each subject.

In the autumn of 1940 a study was made to investigate the possibilities of a storage and distribution center which would house the little-used books of cooperating libraries in the Middle West. Some forty libraries were visited, thirteen of them of university status. As a result of the study it was concluded that a deposit library—that is, a well-equipped warehouse with library facilities—could be successfully established on a cooperative basis by those libraries interested in participating.

A plan for cooperative low-priced storage is not new. In 1902 it was suggested by President Eliot of Harvard University and in recent years it has interested, among others, President Hutchins of the University of Chicago and Keyes D. Metcalf, director of the Harvard University Library. At the present time the Boston Public Library, the Boston Athenaeum, Harvard University, Boston University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and other institutions in New England have established the New England Deposit Library. This library, which is a cooperative book storage house leasing space to members, is in process of construction.

Cooperative book storage has many incidental advantages aside from the cheap housing of little-used books. Today there are thousands of books seldom, if ever, used within individual libraries. If these

are placed in a cooperative library, it is conceivable the scholar will find the aggregate collection of great interest. The deposit library will effect a saving or deferring of library building costs. It will also effect a saving in cost of library service since, with inactive titles removed from member libraries, the large expenditures involved in shelving, stack lighting, heating, searching, and shifting will be reduced. In time it is hoped the deposit library will advance cooperative purchasing and preservation of books for which there is small demand and library cooperation in the lending and cataloging of books.

#### *Problems and Objections*

Before citing reasons for a deposit library, it seems wise to summarize briefly problems and objections connected with such a project.

The objection most constantly encountered is that the particular library does not have enough little-used books to make cooperative storage an advantage. This is felt in libraries of 135,000 volumes and in libraries of a million volumes. Most books are used, to be sure, at some time. Furthermore, since libraries have had their greatest growth within this century, and sometimes within the librarianship of one man, the resulting collections are often largely restricted to books that are in frequent demand. On the other hand, in a library that grew from seventy-five thousand volumes in 1910 to four hundred thousand volumes today, it is believed that as many as one hundred thousand volumes are so little used that they add unjustifiably to the cost of, and decrease the efficiency of, library service.

Many librarians agree that books purchased from library funds or received as

gifts and expensively prepared for use must be retained close at hand for the eventual reader. It is held that part of the library's duty is to make available with the least delay any of its holdings even though the volume may be little used. The inability to anticipate the occasional request of the scholar is frequently mentioned.

#### *Interest and Demand Vary*

From one library to another, interest in and demand for books which fall into the little-used categories vary considerably. Some institutions give much attention to the care and growth of their collections of college catalogs. In others, these catalogs, except for the recent ones, are used too infrequently to justify maintenance. In most large libraries efforts are made to secure the documents of the forty-eight states, the territories, and foreign nations. Reports of counties and cities are sometimes sought because of the feeling that such documents should be available somewhere. And yet, there are other libraries which question the value of keeping the documents of the lesser departments of the United States government, let alone documents from remote sections of the country and distant, little-studied lands.

Of the thirteen university libraries visited at least seven are already "libraries of record." That is, they are libraries whose collections extend beyond the needs of the average student and offer, as a matter of course, facilities for the specialist. Among such libraries there is certain to be considerable duplication of little-used research material, even though a differentiation of the fields of purchase has been partially worked out.

The difficulty of selecting and the cost

of removing titles from libraries are problems raised consistently. President Ruthven of the University of Michigan, thinking of the university's collection of more than a million volumes, wonders how a person can tell what to send from the library stacks, and the university's associate librarian, Samuel W. McAllister, suggests that no one is sufficiently familiar with all aspects of a collection to name all the titles which are little or never used. Confronted by limited budgets and minimum staffs, some consider the added expense a formidable obstacle.

The crux of the matter often is that until a building's shelf space is completely filled, until opportunities for growth within a new building, in departmental libraries, in stack additions, and in campus and nearby storage have been exhausted, interest in storage away from an institution is not going to be great. In most cases, financial officers are more sympathetic to the cooperative low-cost warehouse plan than are librarians.

### *The Library Space Problem*

The situation in two university libraries, which we will call A and B, will help indicate the general book space problem.

*A:* Space in this university library is much in demand. Without an addition to the building or the transfer of books in large quantities, it will become increasingly difficult for stack work to function smoothly. Some storage space has already been found within library attics. It is possible that increased departmentalization will allow for more storage in the future. Present departmental libraries, however, are crowded. Accessions are being received at a heavy rate; in the last ten years more than three hundred thousand

volumes were added. It is unlikely that a campus structure can continue to house effectively a growing collection of such vitality over a long period of years. The present library is twenty years old. It was designed with great care and with the future growth of the book collection in mind; but the increase in book holdings has been so enormous and the increase in students so unanticipated that more room is needed. To save space, there is considerable fore-edge shelving, and available stock room, aisles, and walls have supplementary book shelves.

It is possible to add to the rear of the building, but in gaining new stack area some of the present stack will be turned into corridors. Opportunities for indefinite enlargement are not available. The difficulties would be decidedly reduced by the storage of little-used books now occupying needed and valuable space.

### *Shelf Space Exhausted*

*B:* This university library has practically exhausted its shelf space, but, since more work and reading room space is also urgently needed, it cannot be argued that the warehouse is a solution to all of the university's library building problems. The warehouse should, however, help to lessen the present overcrowding of shelves—which adds to the difficulties of service to the public and is likely to result in unsatisfactory care of the books and costly wear through frequent reshelving. Most of the departmental libraries, likewise, have or can soon anticipate space problems, and most of them have books which could be housed in less costly quarters.

About ten years ago it was indicated that if the university's book needs were filled, the collections of the university would run to more than 2,400,000 vol-

umes, a million more than are now held. If these, together with current and future publications, are to be housed on the campus, a new building for the university library will have to contain at least ten thousand library sections, occupying about 675,000 cubic feet. In a library of this stack capacity, at least 50 per cent should be added for corridors and rooms so that at least one million cubic feet would be required. A building of this sort would probably cost more than a dollar per cubic foot, since the average library building of this type constructed during the past twenty years in this country has cost from \$1.25 to \$2.00 for each book for which storage space is provided. If money for a million dollar building were borrowed, carrying charges and amortization would probably be at least \$50,000 a year, with routine operating services and upkeep charges of at least \$25,000 a year, making a total of \$75,000 a year. This equals \$7.50 a library section.

The cost of warehouse storage is estimated from one half to one fourth of this figure, and, of course, space is available as required, so that the annual expenditure for the 250,000 books which are now thought to require storage would be no more than \$5000 and as low as \$2500.

The need of space felt in the two universities is apparent in varying degrees in other libraries. Libraries would naturally view with sympathy any attempt to solve a pressing problem on a sound basis.

#### *Recommendations*

Two treatments of the deposit library plan are possible. The first is postponement of action at this time because of the difficulties mentioned and because of lack of support. The second is the adoption of a plan for a cooperative warehouse to

which will be sent little-used books from as many Middle Western libraries as decide to join.

If the second plan is favored by the libraries and money and land for the first unit can be secured as a gift, certain steps need to be taken before the establishment of the deposit library can be carried out.

#### *Steps to Be Taken*

1. A nonprofit, tax-exempt corporation must be created to make possible cooperative arrangements among the institutions and to help prevent legal complications.
2. A decision must be reached as to location of the building which is to be constructed. This decision is difficult and inevitable. The warehouse should be as near as possible to the center of the district covered and in a location from which overnight mail delivery to all the cooperating libraries is available. It should be near a large general research library where there is background material required in connection with the books in the deposit library, and where photostat and microfilm service can be given.
3. Money must be raised for the acquisition of land, the construction of the building, and other expenses incidental to the establishment of the enterprise.
4. Definite agreements should be reached with institutions within the area by which they will rent specified amounts of space in the building. Until 3500 sections have been rented it seems undesirable to proceed. Estimated annual rental figures run from \$3.60 for a standard section shelving 180 average-sized octavo volumes when the building is half rented, to \$1.80 when fully rented.
5. Plans for a building to accommodate a million and a quarter volumes should be approved and arrangements made for its construction. It should cost approxi-

mately \$450,000. Operating services and maintenance fees, including depreciation charges, are estimated at \$12,500 a year. These annual charges would be prorated among the cooperating libraries. Extra fees for special services should be determined by the deposit library corporation.

#### *Building Specifications and Arrangements*

The deposit library building should be a warehouse built for the purpose of book storage, with space for working and reading rooms. It should be made in unit plan, the first being large enough to shelve about a million and a quarter average-sized books. It should be constructed to provide the cheapest possible permanent type of fireproof storage and would be little more than a brick shell surrounding an inexpensive steel stack.

A building about 76 by 78 feet, with seven stack levels, and a total height of approximately 56 feet, together with a one-story reading room wing  $17\frac{1}{2}$  by 93 by 22 feet is suggested. The building would contain less than 470,000 cubic feet of space. The main part of the building should be without windows; the stack should have a comparatively narrow center aisle. The side aisles between the shelving need be no more than 26 inches wide, which with 8-inch shelving would place the ranges for regular-sized books on 3 foot 8 inch centers.

The fairly large workroom and reading room should be such that these rooms can be easily enlarged in case of later needs. No other special facilities are suggested, except toilet rooms, a freight elevator, a landing platform, and stairways. The workroom and reading room should be so arranged that they can be heated to a comfortable temperature in winter, but the rest of the building will not require

more than a fifty-five degree temperature in cold weather. Under these conditions, special air conditioning, except for filtering, can be omitted.

The building can be constructed, under present conditions, for approximately ninety-one cents per cubic foot. It will have a capacity of about a million and a quarter standard-sized books on 55,328 shelves in 6916 stack sections. Construction costs for each volume of capacity would be on the basis of less than thirty-five cents per volume.

The 6916 sections of shelving should be rented to the cooperating libraries for a sum large enough to cover cost of caretaking and upkeep of the building, the cost of services, and any essential depreciation charge. It is believed that \$12,500 per annum is enough for all running expenses at the beginning.

If all 6916 sections were occupied, the cost per year for a section would be approximately \$1.80, and the cost per octavo volume about one cent a year. If, however, there are 3500 sections rented in the beginning, the cost per section will be approximately \$3.60 per year, and the cost per octavo volume about two cents a year.

#### *Summary of Advantages*

A deposit library can be recommended on the basis of the economies and useful services such a cooperative warehouse will provide. Through its use the need for new library buildings will be reduced and delayed. By the storage of books in the deposit library, institutions deferring the construction of new library buildings over periods of years will accumulate cash reserves and credits which can be directed toward other needs, such as increasing the book collections, bettering services to

readers, and improving library personnel.

Removing of little-used books from the library stacks not only postpones new building requirements but makes unnecessary the regular expenditures devoted to the cleaning and the needless heating and lighting provided for such little-used books in the stacks. It reduces the problem of constant shifting and the attendant wear on these and other books. (The cost of shifting is ordinarily from one fourth to three fourths cents a volume; the resultant wear and tear is often much more expensive.) It will speed service and eliminate unjustified waste in distances employees and patrons travel in obtaining books.

Housing books for storage rather than easy access to readers permits shelving books in very much less space than that needed in a regular library building. Shelving space in the deposit library, planned for inexpensive storage, will cost only a fraction as much per volume as space in central library buildings.

To the saving in building costs, present and future, should be added advantages resulting from cooperative storage. Among such advantages are opportunities for the elimination of unnecessary duplication of titles, cooperative cataloging, use by member libraries of deposited books, and finally cooperative acquisition of books needed only for the occasional reader.

The deposit library building would be a fireproof structure. Some existing library buildings are not. It would offer protection against the heat, light, dust, and other circumstances harmful to books, present in most regular library buildings today.

By economies offered in building costs, by deferring of building programs, in savings arising from removal of inactive volumes, by cooperative services, and as a permanent place for storage, the deposit library would make possible the heightened efficiency of libraries.