



A Note on the Library of Congress

Without explicit designation, the Library of Congress, at Washington, performs those basic functions which characterize the work of a national library. How, in the course of a century and a half, it came to occupy its present position as the principal library of the Government of the United States, and how its purview has, by the direction and with the assent of Congress, gradually widened, has been recounted in *The Story Up To Now* (Washington, 1947), and in the Appendix, "Library of Congress: Congressional Enactments Regarding Its Use," to United States Congress, Senate: *Legislative-Judiciary Appropriations, 1955, Hearings Before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations*, (Washington, Government Printing Office, 1954, p. 99-127).

A conspectus of the Library's present course has had to be deferred, for the time being, for the reason that it would be premature. Luther H. Evans presided over the Library from the closing days of the second world war until the summer of 1953, when he resigned to become director general of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. His administration is, in other words, already historical. It has been historically summarized in the introductory chapter of the *Annual Report of the Librarian of Congress for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1953* (Washington, 1954). Thereafter, for more than a year, Chief Assistant Librarian Verner W. Clapp, conducted the Library's affairs. Then, on September 1, 1954, L. Quincy Mumford took office as the eleventh librarian of Congress. A period had closed; another had just begun. There are adjustments to a new environment. Practices are being re-evaluated. Existing policies are being re-considered. Plans and purposes are being carefully formulated. It is too early to discern new directions, altered perspectives, or revised enunciations of objectives. These are in the making. They will be forthcoming.

On the other hand, the status and activities of the Library of Congress are so well known to, and so thoroughly understood by, American librarianship as not to require inclusion here. It is, perhaps, the most completely fenestrated institution of its kind in the world. Its weekly transactions may be seen in the pages of the *Information Bulletin*; its exertions of each year are observable in that extended chronicle, the *Annual Report of the Librarian*; its notable accessions are described in the *Quarterly Journal of Current Acquisitions*; its technical developments can be watched in *Cataloging Service*; its relations to Congress are reflected in *Hearings* before Committees on Appropriations; its dramatic moments are exhibited in the columns of the public press.

Informed readers of this number will be impressed by the many parallels of the Library of Congress with the national libraries of other lands.