



Bibliographical and Library Science

Periodicals

HELEN E. WESSELLS

THE FIRST H. W. WILSON COMPANY Periodical Award was presented on July 14, 1961, at the Cleveland meeting of the American Library Association. This award is to be presented annually to the periodical published by a local, state, or regional library, library group, or library association, in the United States or Canada, which has made an outstanding contribution to librarianship. The award committee's ruling states that all issues for the calendar year preceding the presentation are to be examined in an effort to determine the outstanding library periodical published on other than the national level.

The first award was given with justification to the *California Librarian*,¹ the quarterly publication of the California Library Association which is edited by W. R. Eshelman of the Los Angeles State College. The *California Librarian* has set a high standard for many years which has been appreciated by those who, through interest or necessity, watch the hundreds of library periodicals published yearly in the United States and abroad. This year's award shows that an association quarterly—admittedly supported by a large membership—is able to present with typographical skill and attractive format articles that have significance, excellent editorials, and news items of lasting interest. During the past year, for instance, the editor printed articles with appeal to the scholar as well as the popular reader. He varied the use of paper by using glossy stock for illustrations and dull stock for articles. He interested the printers in a state which is noted for fine printing. Four printers contributed inserts describing their printing ventures, which were illustrated with their printer's marks and other

Mrs. Wessells is a library consultant, a former editor of *Library Journal*, and editor of *Leads*, a fact sheet published by the International Relations Round Table, American Library Association.

Bibliographical and Library Science Periodicals

devices and the cover design of the respective issues incorporated the printer's mark. Librarians, bookmen, and typographers were pleased with the final results.

It will be difficult for the next jury to determine an award winner, for *California Librarian* has set a high standard. This new award, if heeded by editors, editorial boards, and publishers, should stimulate a drastic change in many of the overabundant library periodicals. There is no excuse for retaining for decades the same appearance, the same general content with minor changes in semantics. Every state, every region, and every city has people who are well aware of the best way to use cold print and other methods of reproduction and who would be pleased to contribute their knowledge to the library profession. To any one who has examined hundreds of library periodicals and has compared current issues with those of the past decade, there is dramatic proof that a renaissance is essential. For in far too many of the periodicals, there has been no apparent change for over a decade; in others, it takes a vivid imagination and a kindly heart to detect real improvement. This is doubly unfortunate, for the same period of time has produced many mechanical and other developments which make it possible to produce attractive and readable publications at reasonably low cost.

The *Directory of Library Periodicals*² issued in 1957 by the Library Periodicals Round Table of the American Library Association, admittedly unselective, lists approximately 700 periodicals—many, alas, with little more than ephemeral local value. In some cases, even that value seems dubious and money and effort might better be spent upon other activities. The listing includes news bulletins and revered scholarly journals, weeklies, monthlies, quarterlies, and assorted other varieties. These publications are aimed at many types of readers including staff, friends of the library, the local public, or national and international audiences.³ The *American Library and Book Trade Annual 1961*,⁴ considerably more selective, lists 230 periodicals published in the United States and Canada. The authors of various articles, with a few exceptions, recommend that most of these publications should be examined by their sponsors from a highly critical viewpoint.

In this article there is no intention to discuss these periodicals in detail nor to attempt to list more than a limited number which seem outstanding or unique, for such a purpose would require a book instead of a few pages. However, a concentrated examination of

selected years of at least 200 library publications is bound to produce a number of generalizations and some specific comments. For instance, news bulletins published originally for a local library staff have in some cases become vital sources of information for libraries here and abroad. Undoubtedly, the outstanding example of such a weekly bulletin is the Library of Congress *Information Bulletin*. Now in its twentieth volume, the bulletin was intended for the ever-expanding staff of the Library. During its existence, it has been denounced as being too chatty, reflecting personal viewpoints, too expensive from the viewpoint of Congress, and too scholarly—its criticism all depends upon the critic. It has been and continues to be hailed as the source of valuable basic material, for its listing of acquisitions and important foreign publications, for copyright information, for straight library news, for government regulations, and for the accurate, rapid reporting of meetings of national and international interest.

The Library of Congress *Information Bulletin* may have sparked some of the news letters and library notes written by librarians with a vital interest in keeping both staff and public informed of interesting developments in the world of books and libraries. Many of these informal publications convey, in a personal and unique manner, book information, news, and ideas for action to those at home and on the ever-expanding mailing lists. Again concentrating upon California, Berkeley's *C.U. News* and the *U.C.L.A. Librarian*, both readable and spiced with humor, report significant developments in the library world and give capsule reports of association activities. Many a public and regional librarian also finds that a news bulletin offers a rare opportunity to identify the library with the community as well as to inform the staff. If the bulletin is good, the editor is besieged from far and near for copies and, frequently, for permission to copy. Here begins the duplication of material which is bewailed by authors writing about library periodicals.

There is another type of bulletin, often published irregularly, which must be considered because of its importance to the library profession. For instance, the American Library Association publishes two news letters which have a wide impact upon vital phases of library activity. The *Washington Newsletter*, started in 1949 to keep libraries informed of government activities which might affect libraries, was a potent weapon in ensuring the passage of the Library Services Act in 1956 and in helping to secure adequate annual appropriations for the implementation of the Act. The newsletter deals with any aspect of

Bibliographical and Library Science Periodicals

government which may need library prodding. The A.L.A.'s *Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom*, financially bankrupt for two years, was republished in 1960 and continues to perform a unique function in an uneasy time.

From another point of view, *Library Research in Progress*, published irregularly since 1959 by the Library Services Branch, U.S. Office of Education, lists current investigations of all aspects of library science in the United States and abroad. If consulted, this publication should make it possible to avoid the duplication of effort which is a valid criticism of the library profession and its literature.

During the past decade there has been little change in the periodicals published by state agencies or state library associations. For the most part, a pattern has been set and adhered to although a few marriages between state agency and library association publications have reduced the output but strengthened the content of the combined publication. Idaho's state library, for instance, now publishes the *Idaho Librarian*, and *Illinois Libraries* absorbed the *I.L.A. Record* in 1957. The latter publication is strong on such material as rural development, statistics, and significant research such as the report in the June 1961 issue on "Public Library Administrators View Their Professional Periodicals" by Mary L. Bundy.⁵

The naming of specific state bulletins probably is as controversial a gambit as the naming of the most influential librarian. Everyone has a favorite. If one judges again from the mass of material published, those bulletins which have seemed to be consistently good or which have seemed to incorporate new ideas, a few stand out for this viewer. Among them are *The Michigan Librarian*, *Minnesota Libraries*, the *Missouri Library Association Quarterly*, *Montana Librarians*, *Oklahoma Librarian*, *Wisconsin Library Bulletin*, and the *Bulletin of the School Library Association of California*.

Many of the long established state publications are not on this list. Some are too local, some consist mainly of unoriginal booklists, some are in a complete rut, and some—let's face the fact—may have been examined when the mind and the eyes were weary. A few bulletins do not realize their full potentialities even though they are organs of active and financially-solvent associations.

Editors of state publications, and for that matter of all publications, might do well to adopt the same tactics as the British Columbia Library Association did recently.⁶ The association officers first coldly appraised their situation. Then they decided to publish three cate-

HELEN E. WESSELLS

gories of material in three different ways. Committee reports and proceedings were to be mimeographed and distributed. Staff and personal news items were to be published in a separate mimeographed newspaper. The *British Columbia Library Quarterly* was to be a well-designed printed quarterly containing studies and histories of local subjects of interest to British Columbian librarians and friends of libraries, reviews of British Columbian books, critical studies of the region's authors, and reports of library development. The editor believes that the decision was wise. The resulting periodical is an outstanding example of literary content and printing.

The longest-established regional library association periodical, *P.N.L.A. Quarterly*, publication of the Pacific Northwest Library Association, maintains its high quality. In addition to association news, book lists, reviews that have local interest, it also publishes an association directory with supplements. *The Southeastern Librarian* is a fledgling, for volume two, number one was published in the spring of 1961. It, too, emphasizes regional news about libraries and books. *The Mountain-Plains Library Quarterly* has good material but is inclined to be irregular as to publication date.

National library associations also seem to believe that they must publish or perish. In a few cases, the publication is irregular; in others the association becomes so complex in its structure that not only an official journal but also offshoot journals are published. The American Library Association is a supreme example of this type of publishing proliferation, for it has about 26,000 members from all types of libraries rendering all types of service.

During the past decade, the *ALA Bulletin*, official publication of the whole association, has been the subject of much debate. Should it publish full reports of meetings? Should it highlight such events in view of annual published proceedings? Should it have general articles? Under the direction of several editors, the bulletin has improved in format, has added general material of interest to the majority of the membership, has changed departments and added departments for division and committee news. It is interested in controversial subjects, but controversy is sometimes difficult to handle in an official bulletin.

College and Research Libraries, the official journal of the Association of College and Research Libraries, a division of the American Library Association, is now in its twenty-second volume. It is consistently good and may be relied upon for important statistical and bibliographical information, for thoughtful reviews, and for excellent

Bibliographical and Library Science Periodicals

articles. It is now published bi-monthly in a pleasant format and is so well established that it is able to claim first refusal of excellent speeches and reports of new developments in the college and university field.

Among the other A.L.A. divisional publications are *Library Resources and Technical Services*, official publication of the A.L.A. Resources and Technical Services Division. During the reorganization of A.L.A. which occupied attention during the last years of the fifties, the *Journal of Cataloging and Classification* and *Serial Slants* were superseded by this division quarterly which continues high in the esteem of librarians, here and abroad. Two A.L.A. divisional publications are valuable to all who work with children and young adults—*Top of the News* and *School Libraries*. In addition to articles, these quarterlies contain book lists, film information, and other vital material. These are only a few of the A.L.A. publications and, in spite of coordination efforts, it is apparent that there will be more bulletins, quarterlies, and monographs in the future.

In 1960, the Association of American Library Schools decided to incorporate the former reports of meetings, newsletter, and directory and to publish a quarterly, *The Journal of Education for Librarianship*. Signed articles, accreditation reports, reviews of dissertations and research projects, and other pertinent material may be found in the new quarterly.

Changes in name or format have occurred in two other national publications. The *Canadian Library* appeared in 1960 as a successor to the Canadian Library Association *Bulletin* and continues to publish interesting material six times a year. The *Catholic Library World*, published since 1929, was criticized⁷ in 1954, and as a result a more positive plan was put into action with respect to content; trivia were to be eliminated, book reviews radically reorganized, and a "devil's advocate" group of five individuals was appointed to scrutinize each issue and to send their comments and recommendations to the chairman of the periodical's advisory group. This procedure, together with the use of a more attractive cover and changed format, has produced positive results.

The Special Libraries Association has divisional and local bulletins of special interest to the members and the chapters of the association. The official publication, however, is *Special Libraries*. It is obvious that much thought has gone into making this publication an especially helpful tool for special and other librarians. The scope of the content

HELEN E. WESSELLS

has been enlarged during the past years; type, format, and general readability improved.

The *Law Library Journal*, a quarterly, and the *Bulletin of the Medical Library Association*, a bi-monthly, have been published for many years and both contain authoritative articles, notes, and appraisals. Through the constant endeavor of the late Richard S. Hill, the former editor, the quarterly of the Music Library Association, *Notes*, was guided to its present status as an international journal of music bibliography from small beginnings as a mimeographed bulletin. All these publications, particularly the medical journal, have had an international slant for many years, and all of the associations are engaged in international activities. It is becoming apparent that all library periodicals have discovered that there is an international library world and that a "give and take" in publishing is a part of today's world.

There will be great interest on the part of librarians and documentalists in *American Documentation*, since 1950 the official publication of the American Documentation Institute, for a new editor was appointed in 1961—Luther H. Evans, former Librarian of Congress and former director of UNESCO. He has already transformed the physical appearance of the periodical, for the page size has been increased, coated paper is being tried for better illustration, and there is an eye appeal which was lacking in the past. This forum for discussion in the field of documentation retains its scholarly approach but undoubtedly will be enlivened by the new editor.

The editorial boards of *The Library Quarterly* and *Library Trends*, quarterlies sponsored by the University of Chicago Graduate Library School and the University of Illinois Graduate School of Library Science, set patterns years ago and have adhered to them. They are good patterns for scholarly periodicals, and the resulting periodicals are highly respected. *Library Trends* is unique in its concentration upon one theme in each issue guided by a guest issue editor or editors. It has explored many aspects of librarianship since 1952. *Library Trends* truly provides, as stated on the masthead, "a medium for evaluative recapitulation of current thought and practice, searching for those ideas and procedures which hold the greatest potentialities for the future."

The Library Quarterly was started in 1931 when there was a real need for a journal of investigation and discussion in the field of library science. The history of its first quarter-century is recorded in

Bibliographical and Library Science Periodicals

the issue for January 1955. Always a scholarly publication, the *Quarterly* contains thoughtful reviews, lists theses which have been accepted, reports in full the summer institutes sponsored by the library school, and prints articles on library history, administration, research techniques, international relations, and many other matters of importance to the librarian with a thoughtful interest in his profession.

New editors—both British—have enlivened the two general periodicals in the library field which are commercially published. *Library Journal*, the patriarch of library periodicals, has had three editors and several acting editors during the past decade. *Wilson Library Bulletin* had the first change in editors since World War II in January 1960. These new editors are trying new approaches and new ideas, and are completely unreluctant to cast out old shibboleths.

The *Wilson Library Bulletin*,⁸ published by the H. W. Wilson Company, has become a dynamic periodical appealing to an increasing number of subscribers—27,000 at last count—from all types of libraries. Outstanding experts design a new cover each month; there are bigger and better illustrations, new departments, innovations such as photo features and how-to-do-it inserts which may be removed for practical use, and even professional cartoons. The news coverage has increased 400 per cent during a two-year period. Experiments are still being made with type to find the most satisfactory face and size for all-around use. The editor is convinced that the magazine must be lively, easy to read, good to look at, and entertaining when possible, and that it must have material to appeal to all types of libraries, although if there is ever the necessity for a choice, the small library will have high priority.

The H. W. Wilson Company is changing with changing times in other publications, for the periodical indexes are being re-examined. *Current Library Literature* has been discussed by an advisory committee. The A.L.A.'s Reference Service Division's Committee on Wilson Library Indexes has completed its study, and subscribers have voted on periodicals to be included in the *Readers' Guide*, *International*, *Art*, and *Education* indexes, and the *Industrial Arts Index* has been superseded by the *Applied Science and Technology* and *Business Periodicals* indexes. The library profession has been fortunate in having such companies provide tools of this type. During the past years, it has been unfortunate in the loss of another true friend, Rollin Sawyer, who for many years directed the *Bulletin of the Public Affairs Information Service*, which now has a new board of directors.

Library Journal, veteran of 1876, has a unique position. In many respects, it should be considered a three-in-one periodical, for it has a general section, a book appraisal section, and *Junior Libraries*—all within the same cover. Independent, it likes controversy, in fact would not mind being, in a constructive manner, the “opposition voice.”⁹ Published twice a month, except in July and August, it has the power to report quickly. Ten years ago when circulation was 10,766, the journal needed tightening in content and appearance. It needed new authors and a dignified but readable content. It needed to take a strong editorial stand. Under three editors, many of these needs were fulfilled, and the circulation has reflected the fact for in 1956, the statement of ownership indicated 13,500 subscribers, and by 1960 the total was 16,000.

The book appraisal section has grown constantly during the decade and advertising is in a healthy condition. In 1958, more than 4,000 books were reviewed by experts, and 7,000 were described briefly from advance notices.

Always a periodical of general appeal, a 1954 venture produced *Junior Libraries* as an integral part of *Lj* but available also as a separate publication designed to appeal to school librarians and librarians working with children and young people. In view of the expansion of knowledge and the curriculum changes in schools, *Junior Libraries* attempts to keep abreast and to interpret the effect of changes upon the role of the individual library and librarian.¹⁰ In September 1961 the name *Junior Libraries* was changed to *School Library Journal* for the separate publication. The section in *Lj* is now called “*Library Journal* Section on Work with Children and Young People.”

Librarians are constantly on the alert for bibliographical information. The scholarly, authoritative publications of the Bibliographical Society of America and the Society of American Archivists provide valuable source material. The libraries of great universities publish scholarly journals in order to keep people aware of valuable collections and needs. These publications are heeded by other libraries because of their basic source information. Some live a good life and then die—the *Harvard Library Bulletin*, for instance, expired in 1960—but during the same year *Carrel* was launched by the Friends of the University of Miami. To name such publications greater space would be necessary, but examples are the scholarly journals published at Dartmouth, Princeton, Columbia, and Pennsylvania.

Bibliographical and Library Science Periodicals

Large public and special libraries also publish, for various audiences. Detroit has *Among Friends*; Cleveland's *Open Shelf*, founded 1894, is still flourishing. Among the numerous publications of The New York Public Library are *New Technical Books*, *Bulletin of The New York Public Library*, and *Municipal Reference Library Notes*. These and many others are quickly discovered by libraries searching for authentic and up-to-date book information. Over the years the format may change slightly, the type of content even less. They are working periodicals designed for a specific purpose.

Possibly one of the more striking changes in such publications has been achieved by the Boston Public Library. *Books Current* was suspended in 1959 after sixteen years of existence. *Schedules and Notes* has now appeared as a slick periodical which uses color and illustrations, has advertisements, and contains book notes and other news to appeal to a variety of readers. The new publication is free when obtained at the library or its branches and costs only \$1.75 when mailed out of the city.

UNESCO Bulletin for Libraries, improved in format and more regular as to publication, gives vital information about libraries abroad, about UNESCO library activities, and also about publications throughout the world. The *Inter-American Review of Bibliography*, published by the Pan American Union, attempts to keep track of that area's publications. *Books Abroad*, sponsored by the University of Oklahoma, has had a far more attractive format during the past years and is filled with valuable information such as the section "Not in the Reviews." *Stechert-Hafner Book News* is also important for those libraries keeping up with books from overseas. Another source, known for its profiles of librarians, its information on the life and death of periodicals, and its bibliographies, *Bulletin of Bibliography and Magazine Notes*, has not changed either its format or its publication plans and is a valuable tool.

No attempt is made here to cover U.S. government publications which are so important for bibliographical information. The Library of Congress, Department of Agriculture, and others lead the way. A number of states try through their publications to improve local book collections through such publications as *The Bookmark*. The New York State Library is only one state library which adapts to changed conditions such as the establishment of regional libraries, but it also remembers that there are many small units which must have good book information.

Among the reviewing media, there have been several changes during the decade. *The Booklist* and *Subscription Books Bulletin* joined forces in 1956 to the advantage of the American Library Association and other subscribers. *Library Journal* now reviews both musical and nonmusical recordings as well as books. The *Saturday Review* enlarged its scope in 1952 and now reviews records, movies, and books along with reporting on developments in science, education, and politics. In a brief interlude the *New York Herald Tribune* tried to include the Book Review Section in a section called "The Lively Arts," but it is now in its old form just as *The New York Times Book Review* continues to be. The *Virginia Kirkus Service* reviews more books for more libraries. *The Horn Book*, now edited by Ruth Hill Viguers, *Lj's* Section on Work with Children and Young People (*School Library Journal*), *Junior Reviewers*, now published in Aspen, Colorado, and the *Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books*, University of Chicago, provide a better opportunity to judge the spate of books published for children. These reviews, of course, in addition to the state and association bulletins must be weighed by individual libraries.

Publishers' Weekly, a perennial library necessity, also has a book offshoot, the monthly *American Book Publishing Record*, better known as B.P.R. and started in 1960. According to its cover, B.P.R. is "annotated by PW, catalogued by the Library of Congress." All entries are taken from P.W.'s "Weekly Record," classified by Dewey, and arranged by subject in the publication.

To go from new books to old, what would librarians do without the *Antiquarian Bookman* and the *A.B. Bookman's Year Book: the specialist book trade annual—for all bookmen: dealers and publishers, librarians and collectors*? It is difficult to realize that A.B. has been a separate entity only since May 1953, when its editor purchased the property from R. R. Bowker Company. Sol Malkin, editor and publisher, helps to keep library editors¹¹ in line, for in addition to his expert book knowledge, his salty comments about the multiplicity and the deadly sins of library periodicals have become legend.

Anyone who attempts to evaluate the trend¹² of library and bibliographical periodicals discovers quickly that there has not been much of a trend except for a few notable exceptions. During the period of examining periodicals for this article, a professor said that nothing really new has happened since Dr. Williamson's day. This observation is not entirely true in the periodical field, but it is true that many of the periodicals examined, and some of them are mentioned in these

Bibliographical and Library Science Periodicals

pages, have been extraordinarily static over a long period of time, in spite of high hopes on the part of a new editor or editorial board. There is every indication that many of the periodicals suffer over the years because of the tendency to change editors too often, while in other cases the converse is true. There has been too much of a tendency to "reprint each other endlessly," in the words of one writer who worries about the state of the library periodicals. There has been too much multiplicity of publication, not enough selectivity. Too many people wish to see themselves immortalized in print. All these seem to be valid observations.

There is another facet which emerges bright and clear, and that is that possibly the fault is not so much with the periodicals but with the thinking of the library profession as a whole. There is much talk about new trends, new ideas, new methods. Are they really new, or are they thirty years or more old? ¹³ Even within a decade there have been articles proclaiming something as new, while a study of the literature of the profession would prove that there is little new.

Library editors need to know their literature, to reject the obvious, to edit. They also need to know the resources of their communities and to use them, even as the *California Librarian* editor did, to help produce a library periodical which will be dynamic, exciting, and worth preserving.

Every community has a printer, an advertising man, an individual interested in typography and layout who will help the editor as a public service. Every librarian has resources with which to find out if material offered for publication is new or stale. Now is the time to turn the trend and to produce better and more interesting library periodicals.

References

1. Eshelman, W. R., ed.: *California Librarian*. Berkeley, California Library Association, 1939- .
2. American Library Association. Library Periodicals Round Table: *A Directory of Library Periodicals in the Continental United States*. Chicago, American Library Association, 1957.
3. Temple, P.: Directory of Library Periodicals. *ALA Bulletin*, 49:517-518, Oct. 1955.
4. See the following for information about all periodicals included:
Wright, W. E., ed.: *American Library and Book Trade Annual*. New York, R. R. Bowker Company, 1961; Graves, Eileen C., ed.: *Ulrich's Periodicals Directory*. 9th ed. New York, R. R. Bowker Company, 1959.

HELEN E. WESSELLS

5. Bundy, Mary L.: *Public Library Administrators View Their Professional Periodicals*. Springfield, Illinois State Library, March 1961 (Mimeographed).
6. Bell, I.: Mechanics of Editorial Work. *LPRT Newsletter*, 6:4-6, 1959-60.
7. Committee Report. *Catholic Library World*, 26:13-16, Oct. 1954.
8. Wakeman, J.: Personal letter dated July 7, 1961.
9. Moon, E.: Personal letter dated July 7, 1961.
10. Saul, Margaret: Personal letter dated July 19, 1961.
11. Boochever, Florence: Bohemia at ALA: a Report of the Library Periodicals Round Table at Montreal, June 21, 1960. *LPRT Newsletter*, 7:[1-2], Dec. 1960.
12. Lancour, H.: Trends in the Library Periodical World. *Library Periodicals Round Table Newsletter*, 2:18-20, April 1956.
13. Thompson, D. E.: The Sad Story of Library Literature. *ALA Bulletin*, 55: 642-644, July-Aug. 1961.

ADDITIONAL REFERENCES

Gregory, L. H.: We Need Another National Library Periodical; together with comments by Eric Moon and John Wakeman. *LPRT Newsletter*, 8: no. 1, Mar. 1961.

Harvey, J. F.: Research Needed on Library Periodicals. *Library Periodicals Round Table Newsletter*, 3:3, Jan. 1956.

Murra, Kathrine O.: Bibliographical Services in the United States, 1950-1959. *College and Research Libraries*, 22:40-52, Jan. 1961.

Oboler, E. M.: U.S. Periodicals: A Selected List. *Canadian Librarian*, 17:77-80, Sept. 1960.

Thorne, M.: Library Association Quarterlies: Some Facts on their Management. *Louisiana Library Association Bulletin*, 20:182-184, Fall 1957.

Wulfekoetter, Gertrude: Background for Acquisitions Work. *Library Journal*, 86:522-526, Feb. 1, 1960.