

THE SPECIFICS OF INTERLIBRARY ORGANIZATION

William V. Jackson
Associate Professor
University of Illinois Library School

If, in bringing together the library patron and the material he needs, the librarian finds that he has exhausted the resources of his own institution, he turns to those of other libraries. In fact, it is taken for granted that he will do so; today we do not stop to realize that without library cooperation this would not be possible. There are, of course, many kinds of library cooperation: regional library centers, union lists, subject specialization, cooperative cataloging, exchange of duplicates, joint purchase of supplies, and interlibrary loans --to name but a few. All contribute to better library service, but this paper considers only those which affect reference work especially.

Among cooperative devices perhaps the first to come to mind is the union list. In the last seventy-five years the number of union lists in existence has multiplied greatly, and there are a number of reasons why they constitute so successful a type of library cooperation. In the first place, there is neither need for indefinite commitments on the part of the cooperating libraries, nor is it necessary for them to give up anything. The union list, on the other hand, has an immediate practical use for cataloging, for acquisition purposes, for weeding and for locating items either for direct consultation or for interlibrary loan.¹ It is probable, however, that the location function accounts for 80 to 90 per cent of the use made of union lists.² Another factor is that it is a matter of pride for a library's holdings to be included in a union list. In contrast, there are a number of drawbacks to such publications. Although checking holdings represents a considerable expense to participating libraries, lists soon become out of date. Some of them appear in very small editions, and there is "the danger of excessive multiplication of lists dealing with minute segments of knowledge."³

One might divide union lists into two broad categories: general lists and subject lists. The former includes such forms of material as serials, newspapers, and manuscripts,

as well as certain types of books (e.g., incunabula), while the latter consists of lists restricted to broad or narrow subject fields. In each category there are lists covering the entire country and those giving the holdings of more limited areas-- regional, state, and local. Since the regional list may include from two to six times as many libraries in its area as appear in national lists, it provides a more intensive coverage.⁴ The following may serve to exemplify the pattern outlined above.

GENERAL UNION LISTS

(1) National

Incunabula in American Libraries
International Congresses and Conferences, 1840-
1947

American Newspapers, 1821-1936

(2) Regional and Other Limited Areas

Union List of Periodicals in the San Francisco Bay
Region
Serials Currently Received in Southern Illinois

SUBJECT UNION LISTS

(1) National

Union List of Technical Periodicals in Two Hundred
Libraries...

Periodicals in American Libraries for the Study of
the Hispanic Languages and Literatures

(2) Regional and Other Limited Areas

Union List of Scientific and Technical Periodicals in
the Libraries of Greater Cincinnati

Union List of Periodicals and Other Serial Publica-
tions in the Medical and Biological Science Li-
braries of the Greater Los Angeles Area

A special type of union list which seems to have developed in recent years is that which records items held by a particular group of cooperating libraries which may or may not be in the same immediate area--e.g., Periodical Holdings and Subscriptions in Eight Minnesota Libraries [Hill Reference, St. Paul Public, Carleton, St. Olaf and four colleges in St. Paul]; Union List of Little Magazines... [Indiana, Northwestern, Ohio State, Iowa, Chicago, Illinois]; A Union List of Serial Holdings in Chemistry and Allied Fields... [Emory, Georgia Tech, Florida State, Florida, Georgia, Miami]. The most commonly thought of list is that which records serial holdings; of these, the best known and most important is, of course, the Union

List of Serials. It has served as the model for many later publications. The first edition was issued in 1927, and some years later two supplements appeared. The second edition was published in 1943 and has also had two supplements covering the years through 1949. The present problem in regard to the Union List of Serials stems from the fact that what is, in effect, its current supplement, the Library of Congress publication New Serial Titles (with its predecessor Serial Titles Newly Received) covers only serials which began publication in 1950 or later. Yet the interdependence of libraries is nowhere more apparent than in serial resources, since no collection--not even the largest--has been able to assemble "even as many as half the serial titles in existence."⁵ It is likewise obvious that libraries can no longer afford the cost of completely new editions of the Union List of Serials every fifteen years or so. The Joint Committee on the Union List of Serials, which has been studying the problem of the continuation of this important publication for a number of years with the objective of providing "comprehensive and up-to-date union-list records to supersede the earlier and noncomprehensive, noncurrent publications,"⁶ proposes the creation of a Union Catalog of Serials at the Library of Congress; this would serve as a national bibliographical control for approximately 500,000 titles and in excess of 50,000,000 volumes. Utilizing this record's punched cards, new editions of the Union List of Serials could appear conveniently at twenty-five year intervals. Between them New Serial Titles would provide supplementary information on a current basis, with annual and quinquennial cumulations. To accomplish this the Joint Committee on the Union List of Serials seeks \$2,673,222, all but \$150,000 for the creation of a Union Catalog of Serials. The latter sum would be used for two closely related projects: (1) to reprint the second edition of the Union List of Serials, revised to correct errors which have crept into it and to add information which now appears in the two supplements (\$50,000); and (2) to stimulate the consolidation of incomplete files by the exchange of materials among libraries (\$100,000). Of the more than \$2 1/2 million sought, it is interesting to note that subsidy to libraries for checking their files accounts for 36 per cent.⁷

The union catalog is another type of cooperation of great importance in enabling libraries to fulfill their roles as community centers of information. As in the case of union lists, one enterprise of special significance deserves comment: the National Union Catalog at the Library of Congress. A year ago this catalog contained nearly 14,000,000 cards in its main file;

in addition, there were over a half-million cards in four auxiliary files covering Slavic, Hebraic, Japanese, and Chinese publications.⁸ These files record many millions of locations for books needed for research. Any consideration of this vital tool sooner or later leads to discussion of two large problems which have concerned librarians for a number of years. These are (1) completing and (2) publishing the Catalog. Since the western part of the country and selected major libraries in other regions are poorly represented, it would require an estimated \$1,212,318 to provide for its "completion" by adding approximately 16,000,000 entries from the catalogs of selected university libraries, historical societies, research and special libraries, federal libraries and certain regional catalogs. Of these, approximately 1,500,000 would be new titles, the remainder representing additional locations.⁹

The question of the publication of the National Union Catalog involves both safety and availability factors. However, microfilming of the Catalog, accomplished in the period from March 10 to June 27, 1952, and financed by a transfer of \$46,500 from the General Services Administration to the Library of Congress, has virtually eliminated the safety argument. This transfer took place under a program for the preservation of vital government records; Remington Rand did the actual filming. The project resulted in 2,385 rolls of microfilm which are for sale by the Library of Congress at \$4.00 a roll (a total of just under \$10,000),¹⁰ and to date no purchases have taken place. It would appear that the inconvenience in using microfilm for locating titles, and the cost have greatly limited the appeal of the Catalog in this form. The question, then, of general availability remains; it has been estimated that the cost of publishing the National Union Catalog would range between \$4,500,000 and \$5,000,000, of which more than 50 per cent would be necessary for editing cards presently in the file. In the light of this substantial sum, and the seeming impossibility of obtaining funds from Congress, philanthropic foundations, or other sources, the Sub-Committee on the Reproduction of the National Union Catalog of the American Library Association's Board on Resources of American Libraries asked to be dismissed in 1953 with its report to guide what was hoped would be more successful future efforts towards publication.¹¹

In the course of considering the problems of publication of the National Union Catalog, there arose the question of the possible expansion of the Library of Congress Catalog--Books: Authors into a current national union catalog. Such a project

had appeal not only because of the immediate prospect of a published bibliographical tool, but also because, by giving the existing catalog a "cut-off" date, it promised to bring to an end its seemingly endless expansion and thus to pave the way for its ultimate publication.¹² After investigation by the Board on Resources, its Sub-Committee, and the Library of Congress, a questionnaire was sent in 1955 to all subscribers to the Library of Congress author catalog. Seventy-five per cent of them responded, and, of these replies, nearly ninety per cent were favorable.¹³ On July 4 of that year, there was an open meeting on the question at the Philadelphia Conference of the A. L. A., and on July 7 the Board on Resources passed a resolution recommending the publication of an expanded author catalog at the earliest possible date. In January, 1956, this expansion began for 1956 and later imprints; in July, reflecting the publication's new scope, the title became The National Union Catalog; in 1957, the first annual cumulation appeared. The success of this venture can be judged by the fact that in 1956 there were 831 domestic, 4 territorial, and 102 foreign subscriptions--a total of 937. The domestic subscriptions were divided by type of library as follows: 551 college and university, 148 public, 87 federal and state, 27 special, and 18 industrial organizations.¹⁴ Obviously this publication represents a significant milestone in American library cooperation, not only because it makes available the current imprints added to the National Union Catalog but also because it demonstrates the feasibility of isolating one phase of a large and complex bibliographical problem and solving it successfully. It is to be hoped that some way will now be found to publish the pre-1956 portion of the Catalog.

There are, of course, a great many other union catalogs in the United States. In 1942, A. B. Berthold listed 117, of which just under half were Library of Congress depository catalogs, expanded or unexpanded. Other types include regional, local, subject, and exchange catalogs.¹⁵ The 'thirties witnessed a great increase in the number of union catalogs--the result of the federal relief programs which provided much labor, available without cost to libraries.¹⁶ There have been no new union catalogs since the war, perhaps on account of increased labor costs, uncertainties about the size of regional units, or other factors; moreover, there is a growing question as to the value of the union catalog particularly in new situations where a great deal of time and work would be necessary to compile it, and related to this is the question of whether newer means of communication make it unnecessary. Flora Belle Ludington

says, "...in a fairly compact geographical area a telephone call, a trunk telephone line, or even a long distance call may well be cheaper than a union catalog and furthermore if you communicate directly with your neighboring library in your group your filing is always up to date."¹⁸ However, existing union catalogs operated in connection with such bibliographical centers as those in Denver, Seattle, and Philadelphia are but one of the services which the centers provide and for which they receive local support. Such catalogs are here to stay, and the question is how they can best serve the national interest rather than whether their existence is theoretically justifiable.

The uses made of the union catalog are many, but the most obvious and most important is the location service. The National Union Catalog last year, for instance, searched 19,451 titles and located 14,382 of them.¹⁹ Such service includes not only locating for direct borrowing by the user, or for interlibrary loan, but also for the reproduction of material. A union catalog can contribute to regional development; it can serve as an aid in cooperative purchases, in the division of fields for acquisitions, and in the completion of broken sets and partial files. Furthermore, it can contribute to the national picture by supplying the National Union Catalog with titles and by searching books not located in Washington. Miscellaneous functions include providing answers to bibliographical reference questions, aid to order librarians, assistance, appraisal, and possibly even other services.²⁰

Descriptions of resources and guides to special collections constitute another useful tool. They contribute to library cooperation in several ways: by assisting "scholars, research workers, and students to find the best materials in their fields, particularly by locating and describing collections whose value is not sufficiently known."²¹ In other words, here are keys to material which may be neither fully cataloged nor classified, nor described in other sources. By showing the nature and extent of present resources, they may also provide a basis for increased cooperation. Finally, when a specific title wanted for interlibrary loan cannot be located, the guides may, by their indications of subject strength, suggest a library likely to hold the volume. Indeed the relationship between guides and union catalogs has been called a complementary one: "Whereas union catalogs list and locate specific titles and editions, the surveys of resources indicate subject areas in which libraries are strong."²² Of course, this statement applies to union lists as well.

The types of guides are many. They describe collections on the national, regional, state, and local levels. In addition, we find surveys of individual libraries, of subject areas, and of types of materials.²³ Quite a few such guides were published in the 'thirties and 'forties, and A. L. A. 's Board on Resources of American Libraries has done much to stimulate this activity. In 1938, the first attempt "to study all classes of library research materials distributed over a large region"²⁴ described the holdings of southern libraries, while in 1940 the first of a number of articles on significant current acquisitions of American libraries appeared. This series, "Notable Materials Added to American Libraries," covered the years, 1938-39 through 1948-49; six reports were published in eight parts in various issues of the Library Quarterly from 1940 to 1951. The possibility of a revival of this series was investigated in 1954, and most libraries expressed interest. Data for the five years following the last published report--i. e., 1950 through 1954--were assembled and are in process of preparation. Scheduled for winter publication by the Bowker Company is Subject Collections, described as "A Guide to the Special Book Collections and Special Subject Emphases in American Libraries, Public, College, and Special."²⁵ However, since this information was collected by questionnaire, requesting little more than the subject memorial name, the name of the curator, number of volumes, and acquisition book budget, it is to be presumed that this will be a directory rather than a complete guide to resources. To fill the need for a comprehensive work, Robert B. Downs has proposed the preparation of a new guide to special collections or areas of concentration in American libraries. Such a compilation would include all regions of the country and all the types of libraries containing research materials of national significance.

Other than a general survey of the six Georgia and Florida libraries cooperating in the Southeastern Interlibrary Research Facility,²⁶ there has been little done in this area in the last few years, in spite of the fact that large numbers of important libraries have also been inactive in publishing.²⁷ A number of difficulties encountered in the preparation of such descriptions may help to explain the situation. One of these is the problem of timeliness, which stems from the fact that, although such surveys require a great amount of labor for preparation and a considerable sum for publication, they rapidly go out of date. There is no easy solution to this problem, although there are certainly a number of possibilities. One of these

might be to plan from the beginning to issue new editions at definite intervals. The preservation of the results of the basic investigation, and definite arrangements for some library staff member to have responsibility for noting significant additions, changes in acquisition policies, gifts, etc., would reduce the cost of new editions, while nearprint processes would also make it possible to avoid large expenditures for printing. Between editions, supplementary reports might be prepared. Libraries issuing a bulletin or journal might investigate the possibility of utilizing it as a vehicle for the publication of a guide.²⁸ The University of North Carolina's Guide to Special Collections furnishes an interesting example of some of the newer techniques. It is issued in loose-leaf, mimeograph form, because it will receive additions and revisions; descriptions of special collections are filed under appropriate subject headings, and the Guide is available at various public service points throughout the library.

The union list, the union catalog, and the guide to resources are all important kinds of cooperation, and upon them the interlibrary loan relies heavily for assistance in locating titles to be borrowed. The interlibrary loan itself is, of course, one of the oldest and most extensively used forms of library cooperation, as shown by the growth of such loans in the past twenty-five years. Between 1927-28 and 1952-53, the number of transactions handled by eleven universities, (Chicago, Cincinnati, Columbia, Cornell, Illinois, Louisiana, Michigan, North Carolina, Ohio State, Princeton, and Stanford) increased 483 per cent in items loaned (from 7,214 to 41,749) and grew 322 per cent in items borrowed (from 4,014 to 16,935).²⁹

The purpose of the interlibrary loan is, of course, "to place every book, manuscript, archive, or other graphic record within the reach of persons who need them."³⁰ The operation of such loans is governed at present by voluntary adherence to the General Interlibrary Loan Code 1952, which provides a statement of practices covering such features as responsibility, conditions of loans, scope, expenses, information required, shipment, and insurance.³¹ Sixty-two per cent of the academic, special, and public libraries surveyed by C. H. Melinat follow the Code, plus their own regulations, but it is significant that only 20 per cent of them follow it without variation. Public libraries tend to use their own regulations more frequently, and the Code less frequently, than college and university libraries.³²

In a discussion of interlibrary loans, a number of areas

call for comment. First, one might mention the tendency for interlibrary loans to be a one-way street for large research libraries. Small libraries are sometimes justly criticized for requesting from the Library of Congress, Harvard, and the University of Chicago--to name but three examples--titles which they might locate in libraries closer at hand and thus would need to depend on these and other large institutions only for items which they could not find in their own region. On the other hand, a state university usually feels an obligation to fill requests from other institutions supported by its state. Although large libraries generally interpret this problem liberally, the situation would undoubtedly change very rapidly if smaller institutions abused the privilege--if, for example, a college offered courses for which it had inadequate resources and expected to borrow many titles on interlibrary loan.

A second area for consideration is the material itself; here one sees attitudes changing when a lender becomes a borrower. Melinat reports, "Libraries usually have fewer restrictions on the types of materials they will lend than on the types they will attempt to borrow. Libraries lend oftener than they borrow: books in print, individual volumes from sets, government documents, material of unusual size, and unbound newspapers. They tend to attempt to borrow oftener than lend: manuscript theses, unbound periodicals, valuable books, rare periodicals, rare books, reference books, and rare newspapers."³³ University libraries have fewer restrictions than public libraries, but here the trend is certainly towards loaning when the library wishing to borrow explains the reasons for its particular need.

The third area for discussion is verification, which presents perhaps the largest single problem. There are two senses in which we may use this term: (1) the bibliographical details of the publication itself and (2) the location of a copy. In Melinat's survey, 87 per cent of the libraries reported that they attempt to verify and to complete citations before sending them out, but 47 per cent of lending libraries are not satisfied with the references sent to them.³⁴ Much can be done, as Mary L. Lucy indicates, if libraries will require readers to record the places where they saw references to titles they want, thus enabling the interlibrary loan librarian to have a logical starting point for verification.³⁵ Requesting items not in another library's collection obviously wastes time on the part of both libraries, the asking and the asked. Libraries should certainly do all in their power to verify a title's location by consulting regional union catalogs and bibliograph-

ical centers, the National Union Catalog at the Library of Congress, and guides to resources, if the previous two fail. This is preferable to hastily sending off requests to the Library of Congress on the assumption that it probably has the book. Moreover, careful checking may also reveal the existence of copies in nearby libraries, thus (as already pointed out) taking a portion of the burden of interlibrary loans off the larger and better known institutions.

Fourth, we might mention the increasing use of substitutes for actual loan. To the familiar photostat and microfilm, technology has now added xerography and other processes, all of which offer possibilities of avoiding the lending of material itself. Just over the horizon lies facsimile transmission, which, if cost were reasonable, would eliminate still more borrowing. Closed circuit television offers another medium. Melinat found that 68 per cent of the libraries surveyed could provide photostats, and 49 per cent were able to supply microfilm, but only a small number report that such services materially reduce the amount of material sent out, although 77 per cent of the borrowing libraries order reproductions when the actual material is not lent.³⁶ Certainly we must be more willing to accept substitutes for actual loan, and reference librarians should encourage patrons to do so, especially when the item in question is a short piece or journal article. In doing this, however, we should ascertain that the photographic service is rapid enough to avoid long waits, because a substitute will not be popular with readers if more time is required to procure it than to borrow the original. The excellent service offered by the New York Public Library might well serve as a model; ideally a reproduction should be at least as readily and as quickly available as the original. Cost, ranging from the relatively low price of microfilm to the photostat and other processes which become expensive when a large number of pages are required, also affects the demand for substitutes. More libraries could offer to buy and add to their collections or give to users reproductions of needed material.

Finally we come to the question of cost. As computed in various studies, the cost of an interlibrary loan ranges between \$1.11 and \$7.00; the effort made by different libraries to execute requests probably accounts for the variation.³⁷ It is a common practice for the borrowing library to pay the transportation fees, but in addition the lending library may charge a fee, although even this does not pay for the entire service. Nearly one-half of the libraries which borrow absorb any fees, but many public libraries charge the cost back to the

patron.³⁸ Academic libraries facing increasing budgetary problems may gradually come to charge patrons. Miss Lucy suggests that interlibrary loan costs can be reduced without reducing service through such devices as the general use of the five by eight inch Standard Interlibrary Loan Request Form, by annual bills for postage, and by better verification³⁹--all pleas echoed in Phyllis Schneider's recent article.⁴⁰ Obviously the more an interlibrary loan resembles an ordinary charge made at a circulation desk, the lower its cost will be; in this direction we should constantly aim.

By way of conclusion, it seems appropriate to make some general observations on library cooperation. In this, as in other fields, some ideas are better than others; it is sometimes necessary to abandon schemes which do not accomplish results commensurate with the time, energy, money, and thought that go into them. In order to avoid this, one might examine the record of the substantial amount of library cooperation that has already taken place in the United States. It constitutes a body of evidence from which certain principles may be drawn. It appears that cooperative ventures have succeeded when there is proximity among institutions not too much unlike in aims and resources; when cooperation is not proposed as a substitute for inadequate library service (each participant makes a contribution above and beyond the basic job it is already doing); when cooperative agreements are positive (each library accepts a definite responsibility but at the same time retains freedom of action in other areas); when highly specialized subject areas and/or little used kinds of materials are involved (the folly of duplicate individual efforts is apparent); when proposals are realistic (this may mean settling for a definite and limited idea rather than a vague and grandiose one). With these principles in mind, one might prepare a list of questions to be asked about a new proposal for cooperation; if they cannot be answered affirmatively, it might be well to pause and re-examine the proposal. (1) Is the problem one which seems to be solved better or solved only with the cooperative approach? (2) Have alternative methods of solving it been carefully considered? (3) Do the strong features outweigh the drawbacks? (4) Is there accord on the underlying objective? (5) Is a workable organization proposed? (6) Will adequate financial support give the scheme a fair trial? Finally, let us remember, as Robert B. Downs has pointed out, that "... cooperative enterprises have vastly strengthened American librarianship."⁴¹ They can and should continue to do so.

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