

SPECIAL LIBRARIES, THEIR SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS, AND METROPOLITAN PROBLEMS

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Not long ago Ervin J. Gaines¹ took Ralph Blasingame² to task over an implicit assumption in an article he had written, an assumption which made everything seem so simple: that reading is vital to life, and if the idea were projected further, that libraries are vital to reading. Gaines went on, "True, it may be vital to the middle class, but is it vital to a migrant farm worker?"

Many persons and groups in our twentieth century society see little need for easy access to organized collections of books. Few citizens, though, would argue against libraries unless they are compelled to place them in priority with other public services such as highways, police protection, schools, or sewage treatment. Government officials and school and college administrators, too, are unpredictable as to their reaction to libraries.

What then of the Special Library, that poorly defined type of library which came into being without the security of citizen education and service? It is heartening to hear of enlightened administrators in corporations, government agencies, hospitals, museums, and similar institutions who understand and appreciate what a library can do for them, or why a library should be considered for their own organization.

How often, though, are there reports of special libraries passing out of existence and how rare an occurrence is this in the college, school, and public library world? Not unusual is a letter such as one dated Monday, July 26, 1965: "Last Friday . . . management informed me that the Research Library was immediately discontinued in connection with drastic reduction of all Research activities."

Numerous companies, banks, and newspapers do without libraries and few stockholders question whether this may be the reason the stock is slow or the profits low. In fact, if companies ranked in the Fortune Directory of 500 Largest Industrial Corporations or in one of the 50 "Largest" lists were surveyed, it might be discovered that many of the top income corporations do well without libraries. Kruzas³ did find when he checked that the 30 largest industrial firms in 1963 supported a total of 310 special libraries for an average of ten each, and General Electric had 47 special libraries.

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The universe of special libraries in metropolitan areas needs to be explored; some problems peculiar to all special libraries and some uniquely significant to the urban special library need to be examined; and the role of the special library in cooperative ventures needs to be determined.

What is the relationship between the metropolitan area and the special library? Dr. Royer has described the research laboratory—a principal parent of the special library. Some laboratories are located in the city but many in recent years have been established in nearby suburban areas. Most prominent in the metropolitan environment are advertising agencies, consulting firms, government agencies, banks, hospitals, investment houses, insurance companies, museums, newspapers, publishing firms, and trade and professional associations. Very few have yet moved to the suburbs. Although special subject departments of public libraries and departmental and professional school libraries of universities also qualify as special libraries and exist in large numbers, they have been discussed elsewhere and are excluded from most of the present discussion.

The 1963 Directory of Special Libraries and Information Centers,⁴ compiled by Anthony T. Kruzas, was carefully analyzed statistically by Dr. Kruzas and the results released in 1965³. The Directory reports on a total of 8,533 special libraries and specialized collections in the United States and its possessions. (The total number of entries is over 10,000 including 661 Canadian special libraries plus various U.S. depository libraries.) More than one-half of these 8,533 libraries, or 4,763 (56 percent) are located in six heavily populated states (California, Illinois, Massachusetts, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania) and the District of Columbia. New York State with 17.8 percent has twice as many as the second ranking state, California, with 8.5 percent. The New York metropolitan area alone contains all but 1.9 percent of the State's total, or 15.9 percent, and more than in the states ranking number two and three (California and Ohio).

The 1963 edition of Special Libraries Directory of Greater New York describes 1,053 libraries, 200 more than in the previous edition. Although the directory contains fewer entries than the 1,364 listed by Kruzas for New York City, it does include extensive entries for departmental collections in college and public libraries. The classification by type is indicative of the scope of special libraries in one large metropolitan center:

Advertising and Public Relations	66	International Relations and Information	41
Banking and Finance	42	Law	56
Business and Economics	80	Medicine and Health	114
Chemical Industry	46	Newspapers	16

Clubs and Associations	16	Petroleum	14
Colleges and Universities	48	Pharmacy	19
Communications	15	Public Administration	10
Education	25	Publishing	35
Engineering	57	Recreation	7
Fine and Applied Arts	43	Religion	43
Geography and Map	9	Science	41
History and Genealogy	39	Social Science	40
Industrial Relations	10	Technology	68
Insurance	19	Transportation	12

Nine Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas studied by Kruzas—New York City, Baltimore and Washington, D. C., Chicago, Philadelphia, Boston, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Detroit—contain 3,768 special libraries and specialized collections, or 44.2 percent of the country's total. The remaining 4,765 libraries (55.8 percent) are scattered in all other parts of the country. Ranking high in the number of special libraries are six other states with large urban populations—New Jersey, Michigan, Texas, Missouri, Connecticut, and Indiana. These states account for 16.7 percent of the total.

Of the 3,768 special libraries in the nine metropolitan areas mentioned above, 1,213 are company libraries or 56.1 percent of all company libraries in the United States. The importance of the metropolitan area and of these nine, in particular, is illustrated by figures for other types of special libraries.

	Number	Percentage of U.S. Total by Type
Company	1,213	56.1
Government Agency	466	38.2
Other Non-Profit Organizations	1,231	48.1
Public Library Departments	170	44.0
College and University Departments	688	31.2

In the first three categories, the special libraries within the scope of this discussion, Kruzas has identified 2,910 or 34 percent of the total number in the United States. Efforts of Robert J. Havlik of the U.S. Office of Education and those by Kruzas for a second edition of his directory, have produced evidence of hundreds of additional libraries previously unlisted.

Resources of special libraries are often underestimated. Collection information is available for 6,468 of the 8,533 libraries surveyed by Kruzas. These 6,468 libraries contain 181,692,706 volumes, and 4,881 of these libraries receive 1,349,914 journal subscriptions. In 2,187 libraries maintained by companies, government agencies,

and non-profit organizations in the nine metropolitan areas, resources are 54,681,851 volumes, while 1,605 libraries receive 382,660 journal subscriptions. The 947 company libraries of this group of 2,187, house 10,341,338 volumes, and 748 libraries receive 161,587 journal subscriptions. Figures for 327 government agency libraries, including such giants as the Library of Congress, National Agricultural Library, and National Library of Medicine are 25,491,305 volumes, with 110,744 journal subscriptions in 245 libraries. The private non-profit category of 913 libraries shelve 18,849,208 volumes while 612 of them receive 110,329 journals on subscription. These resources are impressive and deserve attention beyond the scope of this paper. (See Appendices I and II.)

A couple of years ago the Georgia Chapter of Special Libraries Association surveyed⁵ special libraries in the South to determine their critical needs. Although a number of matters concerned the southern special librarians, such as lack of clerical staff which ran a close second, the lack of space headed the list. This same lack of space and the problems it creates would likely top lists in New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, or elsewhere.

Managements, in their search for an administrative solution to the shortage of space and its high rental value, use what has become a reasonably common practice—that of assessing all functions, including the library, an overhead charge for the space occupied by personnel, materials, and equipment, and for other general services such as heat, light, air conditioning, cleaning, redecoration, telephone, mail, and the like. Such overhead charges are invariably built into government contract operations, and they are also common to many special libraries. Recently one special librarian expressed concern that her book and journal budget about equals what the company charges against her budget for space. Such overhead figures may well seem out of proportion to the total costs for library service as a special library, unlike similar company functions with which it may be compared, occupies more space than the number of employees suggests. The lopsided ratio seems often to generate a reluctance on the part of managements to provide choice or desirable space. Mobility of librarians from position to position has been studied, yet mobility of libraries is an unresearched topic. Special libraries are constantly being moved in management's attempt to make the most efficient use of space. One librarian reported a move of her library in each of the five years she had been on the job; most of the moves had resulted in a decrease in the space available to a growing library service.

Special librarians long ago decided against bearing the cost of storing and maintaining large files of non-current material. One obvious factor considered in arriving at this decision was the high cost of space, another the emphasis on up-to-date and highly

relevant material only, and finally the accessibility of other library resources. A direct relationship between the size of a special library and its distance from a major library resource seems to exist. Growth of a special library in the city may deliberately be restricted because of nearby large public and university libraries and other special libraries to which it has access. The suburban special library, on the other hand, is a larger library, while the special library removed from the city is to a much larger degree self-sustaining.

Late editions only of most reference books and monographs are kept. Files of pamphlets and clippings are weeded regularly according to systematic and well-thought out plans. Even in historical research libraries such as the Council on Foreign Relations in New York, because the shelves and files are sprawling out in all directions, it is necessary to have a rigid program for microfilming of clippings for earlier years. Metropolitan newspapers such as the New York Times have been in the forefront with programs for reducing from paper to microstorage valuable clipping files.

Kruzas⁶ reports the experience in file reduction by the Prudential Insurance Company in Newark. The first company library was a private statistical library acquired along with a Statistical Vice-President in 1895. Additional and other specialized needs resulted in formation of a popular reading library in 1915, a Bond Department Library in 1920, a law library of 20,000 volumes, and a medical library which, with its 50,000 volumes was estimated to hold 90 percent of the world's public health material. What began to happen in 1922 illustrates a typical corporate attitude, the unwillingness of even the largest firms to pay the cost of storing and maintaining files of non-current material. The medical collection was donated to the U.S. Surgeon General's Library, the economics materials went to Princeton, agriculture and forestry to Yale, geology and geography to Wellesley, labor and industry to Babson Institute, and mining and engineering to Lehigh.

Journals are a principal resource of the special library. Their retention period may vary from a complete run to keeping only the current issue. By establishing cooperative agreements with other libraries and by depending on large research libraries for infrequently used items, realistic retention policies, in relationship to space, have become possible. An advertising agency library, for example, may keep only six months or a year of many journals. Others may be clipped and pertinent text and advertisements indexed and put in a subject file. Large technical libraries, too, are likely to keep permanently only those journals of proven value to their users. Abstracting and indexing publications provide reference to other titles which can be borrowed or acquired in photocopy from a large storage library. Cooperative purchase on microfilm of journals not otherwise available in an area is another current cooperative practice.

Large research libraries have encouraged use by special libraries. Some have established a reference and research service available on a fee basis. In some areas the lack of good public library service is readily apparent. In other communities the public library is alert to its obligations and aggressive in providing service to the business and industrial community. Detroit has suffered a tax imbalance by the move to suburban areas of many industrial users whose tax dollar formerly supported its public library. Special "company cards" have been issued to facilitate continued use and support by industry. An acceleration in the move of special libraries to suburban areas will create problems for the public library in other cities. Use of the New York Public Library's privately supported Reference Department by special library interests is heavy. The Library seeks business and industrial contributions in regular solicitations. In Buffalo, some industries have contributed support enabling the public library to purchase expensive reference sets; yet one special librarian in that area reported privately that his company felt their tax dollar was sufficient support.

Another special librarian reports her company to be an annual contributor of \$10,000 to a nearby private technical university. Library resources of this university are unimpressive. The special librarian, on the other hand, uses the engineering library of a nearby state university as a principal auxiliary resource, yet has been unable to get an extra penny for tribute to the tax-supported library.

At some point the demand for service by the special library is likely to surpass that which the larger library will be able to provide and still meet its regular needs. Special library service is an in-depth service, producing the answer not the source of the answer, making heavy use of foreign language materials, and requiring expensive reference items. The large library with its greater resources, may soon regret the success of its program of promotion to business and industry. The Newark Public Library encourages any and all users both within and without the taxing district to use their collections. The Brooklyn Business Library may reach the day when it must refuse service to the same Wall Street special libraries which have been encouraged to cross the East River for library service. The acknowledgement of an unrealistic responsibility to industrial users in her town was expressed publicly a few years ago by one Long Island librarian. She did not then have the required resources. Fortunately she now has the back-up support of a county library system which also has been courting the industrial user.

Procurement of qualified personnel seems always to be a problem regardless of location. Actually the characteristics and preferences of the available professional labor supply create and compound the problem. An oversupply of professionals, often but not necessarily unmarried, is attracted to New York and San Francisco.

They are determined to work only in the city, will work for less money in order to stay in town, and are not interested in New Jersey or Monterey Peninsula openings. Preferences of some librarians for "glamour" industries—advertising, art, communications, publishing—often result in unglamorous salaries and duties.

Particularly frustrating to placement and personnel officers is what has been called in New York the "Third Avenue Syndrome," characterized by otherwise qualified persons whose geographical limits for a position lie between 68th Street on the north, 38th Street on the South, Sixth Avenue on the west, and Third Avenue on the east. That is, the east side of 6th and the west side of 3rd! A few years ago the principal requirements of one special librarian upon leaving a chemical research library position in the Grand Central area were for another chemical research library position in the Grand Central area! More recently, another specified that any new position with maps had to be above 116th Street in New York. It is also difficult to place the advertising librarian in a position in New Mexico or Arizona.

Attracting family men to the large metropolitan area is even more difficult than getting the unmarried librarian to locate in the small city or rural area. The experience of research laboratories that have made the move out of the city is no different for librarians than for other professional personnel. Qualified clerical staff are invariably in short supply, but for this, special librarians are prone to blame management rather than geography.

Where should the special library be placed on the organization chart? Without benefit of survey, special librarians seem to prefer identification professionally and administratively with research personnel, while identification with other general services—mail, photographic reproduction, etc.—is viewed with concern. A dichotomy is created when the library—established to be responsive to the needs of a single division, perhaps research, and because of success—is asked for service by sales, production, or other units. The management decision required is likely to shortchange someone, usually the library. One special librarian has suggested since only 14.8 percent of all special libraries are in 11 western states, (compared with 17.8 percent in New York) that west coast managements are less library oriented. The special librarian then, must spend time "preserving-justifying-promoting" the library.

How can special libraries participate in regional and national plans for resources cooperation? A recent summary of "Regional and National Co-ordinating and Planning for Library Service to Industry"⁷ is impressive both in the number and in the scope of informal and formal cooperative schemes, agreements, publications, and programs with which the special library has become identified.

The accomplishments are impressive in spite of recent implied warnings that “. . . ingrained cooperation among librarians . . .”⁸ would result in their cooperating themselves into oblivion.

No library, regardless of size, can be completely self-sufficient, least of all the special library which, by the very restrictions discussed earlier, looks invariably to other sources for materials—to other special libraries and to large public and university libraries. Cooperation in the development of collections and services is necessary in order to permit the special librarian to provide his users with all the information they need and when it is needed. As Gordon Williams told the 1965 SLA Annual Convention in a keynote address, “The question is not ‘Should libraries cooperate?’ but ‘How can libraries cooperate most effectively?’”⁹

Williams urged special librarians to cooperate in several ways. First, he would wish for them to use their own funds (and resources) to support practical solutions to the problems in their own libraries. He would urge them, in addition, to seek support for national efforts to provide effective and efficient library and information services. Support of such efforts would include the national libraries: Library of Congress, National Agricultural Library, and the National Library of Medicine; the Federal Library Committee; the Committee on Scientific and Technical Information (COSATI) and its efforts for a coordinated national information network; the National Science Foundation; the Clearinghouse for Federal Scientific and Technical Information; and the Library Services Branch in the Office of Education. These are, incidentally, some of the same forces at whose feet Vosper¹⁰ places blame for the present state of research libraries.

Special librarians through their professional associations are working with the national libraries; there is long-time affiliation with the Clearinghouse, NSF, and the DDC; and through regular and ad hoc committees, they are working with COSATI and its task forces.

An encouraging number of states have created or are studying cooperative plans aimed at providing improved library service, and special library interests have been represented in most instances. In New York State, special librarians were members of the Commissioner's Committee which in November 1960 presented the original 3 R's (Reference and Research Resources) proposal¹¹ for a state-wide network of state-supported reference centers. Later the detailed study¹² of the Rochester complex as a pilot area recognized that special libraries gave purpose and vitality to the program. Special librarians were also prominent in their attendance at the June, 1965, Governor's Conference on Libraries.

Other studies have been made. The one for New York City,¹³ conducted under the auspices of a self-constituted, ad hoc committee and supported by private funds, had the benefit of thoughtful advice of special librarians in public and private meetings of the Committee,

through interviews by the surveyors, and by representation on the Committee. Special libraries of three types—open or quasi-public, quasi-public but with restricted use policies, and private and generally closed to the public—were identified and related to a city-wide library program. Many private libraries, such as those in trade associations, public utilities and various non-profit and government agencies, are often accessible to qualified users upon special request.

Why are some special libraries leery of participation in cooperative projects? In New York and other cities, obviously, the student problem and the lack of seats, books, and staff to serve them, is of concern. How many of the 807 engineering students receiving graduate degrees in 1961-62 from five New York City universities used the Engineering Societies Library as a principal or secondary library? Or more frightening, how many of the thousands of undergraduate engineering students did? Proprietary interests, military security, the need to serve their own users first, the realization that the real solution is not the sharing of inadequate resources, all have had impact on thinking and decision.

Getting back to Williams' first point—that special libraries work out their own problems—this is the traditional and usual way. They look to one another and the possibility of shared resources, often through their contacts in the Special Libraries Association. It is not unusual for librarians in keenly competitive businesses—such as advertising, accounting, consulting, or pharmaceuticals—to cooperate and to share. The employers are better off because of it. Two very recent examples are two publications, Serials: Advertising, Business, Finance, Marketing, Social Science, in Libraries in the New York Area and a Rochester Area Union List of Periodical Holdings.

More formal agreements include those of the "Insiders" in Minneapolis, The Library Group of Southwestern Connecticut, Inc., Associated Science Libraries of San Diego, Medical Library Center of New York, the proposed Houston Technical Information Center, and the automated service to industry at Harvey Mudd College, Claremont, California. Informal schemes for acquisitions, serials, services, and storage exist by the hundreds and in all parts of the country—Hartford, Buffalo, New Jersey, Kansas City, Akron, Wilmington—to name just a few.

Special librarians need not be warned to be wary of "entangling alliances." They have been advised,¹⁴ and perhaps are over-sensitive, that the librarian must be convinced in each case that cooperation will serve the interests of his employer. Someone has suggested that people will cooperate only to the extent that they see a gain in it for themselves. The special librarian will remember that he is first an employee of his employer, and second, a professional librarian. Greater opportunity for special libraries to cooperate with one

another still exists. It is only unfortunate that some plans such as the New York State 3 R's program or that of The New York Metropolitan Reference and Research Library Agency do not admit the profit-oriented special library to full participation.

What of the future? The need for good special library service is increasing, as is the flow of good and bad information, the competition for qualified personnel, and the likelihood that modern technology can become a handmaiden. The solution is not simple and requires planning, openmindedness, hard work, and cooperation.

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APPENDIX I

VOLUMES HELD BY SPECIAL LIBRARIES IN NINE METROPOLITAN AREAS³

		Company	Govern- ment Agency	Non-Profit Organi- zations	Total
New York	<u>Number</u>	450	67	391	908
	<u>Volumes</u>	7,075,822	1,327,270	6,961,017	15,364,109
Baltimore and D.C.	<u>Number</u>	35	164	131	330
	<u>Volumes</u>	319,678	21,089,716	1,717,107	23,126,501
Chicago	<u>Number</u>	102	16	102	220
	<u>Volumes</u>	707,829	346,219	3,482,763	4,536,811
Philadelphia	<u>Number</u>	109	19	102	230
	<u>Volumes</u>	681,311	717,704	2,437,505	3,836,520
Boston	<u>Number</u>	74	21	82	177
	<u>Volumes</u>	342,654	1,212,775	2,397,003	3,952,432
Los Angeles	<u>Number</u>	101	11	41	153
	<u>Volumes</u>	718,181	87,369	913,837	1,719,387
San Francisco	<u>Number</u>	42	26	40	108
	<u>Volumes</u>	295,497	674,222	648,655	1,618,374
Detroit	<u>Number</u>	34	3	24	61
	<u>Volumes</u>	200,366	36,030	291,321	527,717
TOTAL	<u>Number</u>	947	327	913	2,187
	<u>Volumes</u>	10,341,338	25,491,305	18,849,208	54,681,851

APPENDIX II

JOURNAL SUBSCRIPTIONS RECEIVED BY SPECIAL LIBRARIES IN
NINE METROPOLITAN AREAS³

		Company	Govern- ment Agency	Non-Profit Organi- zations	Total
New York	<u>Number</u>	310	42	254	606
	<u>Volumes</u>	67,130	16,781	41,684	125,595
Baltimore and D.C.	<u>Number</u>	30	125	89	244
	<u>Volumes</u>	6,341	75,692	12,417	94,450
Chicago	<u>Number</u>	87	14	65	166
	<u>Volumes</u>	15,521	4,192	16,317	36,030
Philadelphia	<u>Number</u>	99	17	78	194
	<u>Volumes</u>	20,872	3,416	14,115	38,403
Boston	<u>Number</u>	68	18	56	142
	<u>Volumes</u>	12,045	5,115	6,399	23,559
Los Angeles	<u>Number</u>	90	8	28	126
	<u>Volumes</u>	25,025	1,430	9,325	35,780
San Francisco	<u>Number</u>	30	18	23	71
	<u>Volumes</u>	8,378	3,873	7,699	19,950
Detroit	<u>Number</u>	34	3	19	56
	<u>Volumes</u>	6,275	245	2,373	8,893
TOTAL	<u>Number</u>	748	245	612	1,605
	<u>Volumes</u>	161,587	110,744	110,329	382,660