

Review Article

Cooperation^N

IT MAY WELL be that in any future history of American librarianship the decade of the 1930's will receive a very considerable amount of attention. Should this cautious prognostication prove correct, the underscoring and emphasis given to those ten years will probably be the result of the certainty—which can today be guess only—that they mark the beginning of the culmination of one of the most important of all library developments. The “development” is cooperation and its “culmination”—at least to the present—is represented by library consolidations.

Concerning cooperation we have had much talk, dating back to the very beginnings of the national Association. And with that talk there has come a good deal of solid accomplishment which has made libraries more efficient, enlarged their resources and services, and saved them money. Interlibrary loan, cooperative cataloging and indexing, including union lists and union catalogs, cooperative agreements with respect to fields of specialization, and cooperative purchasing, binding, and storage are but partial witness to the progress we have made in not much more than half a century. Useful and socially significant though these activities are, however, they can never fully meet the basic and crucial problem of assuring adequate research resources for every major area in the country. The problem can be solved—for most regions at least—only by a *maximum* of cooperation, that is, by institutional pooling of financial, book, and other resources; in short, by some form

of consolidation or merger. And the first example of this type of ultimate, formal, contractual cooperation among college and university libraries took place in 1931. There were twelve such consolidations from 1931 to 1940.

These two facts, with their interest for the past and their implications for the future, are among the many offered by Mildred Hawksworth Lowell in the first full-length study of college and university library consolidations.¹

Mrs. Lowell begins her survey by suggesting the factors, of which she notes six, which have apparently been responsible for the recent “new cooperative spirit”—*e.g.*, “the increasing magnitude of the world of print” and “the destruction of scholarly libraries in China and Europe.” She outlines briefly, with examples, the more usual forms of library cooperation, including “specialization agreements.” Although this first chapter is simply by way of introduction to the author’s main subject, one reader would like very much to have found a fairly comprehensive listing at least for this particular topic. Such a listing would have to include the agreement between the libraries of the universities of Minnesota and Michigan and the John Crerar and Newberry libraries with respect to the collection of the publications of European local academies. How many agreements of this general nature are there, how effectively have they worked out, and what have been the results?

¹Lowell, Mildred Hawksworth. *College and University Library Consolidations*. Eugene, Oregon: State System of Higher Education, 1942. 136p.

Examples of Consolidation

In the second chapter, comprising over one-third of her work, Mrs. Lowell considers and evaluates in detail the origin and development of eleven of the twelve existing examples of consolidation—a word, incidentally, which as there used does not in the least necessarily imply loss of individual identity or autonomy on the part of any consolidator. These eleven are divided into three types: (1) Formal agreements between wholly independent libraries (*e.g.*, the University of North Carolina and Duke University libraries); (2) Contractual arrangements between two or more libraries (*e.g.*, Fisk University Library and Meharry Medical College Library); and (3) The actual merging of two or more libraries (*e.g.*, Atlanta University Library).

The last chapter of the volume is devoted to the only instance—Oregon—of the reorganization of state institutions of higher education into one system, with unification of their libraries. In some ways this chapter is the most interesting and significant of all, not simply because of the author's personal acquaintance with the topic and the full detail with which she writes, but more especially because the experiment in Oregon is unique and of great scope. What has been accomplished there should effectively and forever silence those critics who maintain that distance between and the vested interests and different natures of institutions prevent satisfactory consolidations. The Easterner, particularly, needs to be reminded that the six coordinated Oregon institutions are located in a state whose area is greater than all of New England and not much less than that of all the Middle Atlantic states. These institutions have efficiently

worked out central administration, book-keeping, order, binding, periodical, and other procedures, with resultant savings of thousands of dollars annually and, more important, greatly increased efficiency and resources.

Southern Institutions

Another volume has recently appeared which also describes, but from a different point of view, some examples of library consolidation—and which also, unfortunately, contains no index.² As stated in the title, the papers edited by Mr. Kuhlman are limited to Southern institutions and even within this limitation the picture drawn is only a partial one, several examples in the area being ignored. Nonetheless, the collection supplements Mrs. Lowell's survey in a useful fashion in that a number of the papers (*e.g.*, those on the development of university centers in Georgia, New Orleans, North Carolina, and Nashville and two on "The Joint Library" specifically), presented by non-librarians, suggest the viewpoints of other administrative officers and consider the over-all institutional implications of higher education consolidation. (At Vanderbilt and George Peabody, for instance, the faculties agreed to the elimination of 280 quarter hours of work which appeared to represent "unnecessary duplication;" obviously, each institution was able to handle better what remained.) It is interesting to note, however, that the question of library resources, cooperation, and so on is given a prominent—even a dominant—position in these discussions, too.

In addition to the chapters just noted

² Kuhlman, A. F., ed. *The Development of University Centers in the South*. . . . Nashville, Peabody Press and Vanderbilt University Press, 1942. 128p.

the volume contains papers on "The Library's Contribution to Scholarship" (W. W. Bishop), "The Program of the Joint University Libraries" (Kuhlman), "The Significance of the Joint University Libraries" (L. R. Wilson), "Teaching with Books" (Harvie Branscomb), and four, under the general heading "Further Implications. . . ." by Commander James G. Stahlman, C. H. Brown, Robert M. Lester, and Albert Russell Munn.

Motives Underlying Cooperative Ventures

Several conclusions are drawn in the two volumes—explicitly in Mrs. Lowell's, implicitly in the other. The motives underlying these cooperative ventures seem definite and fairly universal; they are also, perhaps, quite obvious, being concerned with the provision of better service at less cost, the building of more adequate resources for a given area, the fuller serving of research needs, and the improvement of educational effectiveness. The evidence is that these goals have, for the most part, been achieved or are being achieved to a remarkable degree. Mrs. Lowell shows, for example, that with respect to book stock, number of current periodicals, and financial support, the consolidations compare very favorably with the institutions included in the American Library Association annual statistical tabulations. Throughout the Kuhlman volume we are reminded, however, that the library aspect is sometimes only one, though often the chief, element in these consolidations which, through the elimination of duplication, the concentration of facilities, and the coordination of faculties, are vastly enriching teaching and research in a manner having almost unlimited educational implications.

It is very clear that most of these developments could not have taken place, or could not have done so to the extent that they have, had it not been for generous foundation aid, notably from the Carnegie Corporation, the General Education Board, and the Rosenwald Fund. Only two of the twelve have received no foundation aid and neither of these is in the South. Does this fact and the fact that nine of the twelve are located in the South bear any relation to the special interest in that region on the part of the foundations? Undoubtedly so; undoubtedly, too, the southern region has been in greater need than any other part of the country of assistance and stimulus along the lines of research and library resources. Yet realization of the incalculable benefits which will certainly accrue to the whole southern area cannot help but make one wonder about—and hope for—other parts of the country. Illinois with its hundred institutions of higher education, Iowa with its sixty-four, Massachusetts with its sixty-nine, New York with its hundred and four, Pennsylvania with its hundred and one, Wisconsin with its thirty-six—just to pick a few states at random—or the great metropolitan areas, such as Philadelphia, with its hundred fifty odd libraries, what about all these? For the most part all the libraries in these areas go their own sweet ways, on the one hand buying, cataloging, and shelving between them, ten or twenty or thirty copies of specialized reference sets and expensive journals, on the other combining to ignore—even in such a wealthy and resource-rich area as Philadelphia—literally dozens of fields of knowledge. Which of the two evils is the worse it is hard to say, but we know that real cooperation and coordination can very

largely eliminate both. We know, because it has been done. But it takes courage, determination, realization of need, and vast patience to overcome the problems and obstacles which lie on the road to success. Chief among them would seem to be the inability of administrators to see the advantages of cooperation and their unwillingness to enter into agreements, the fear of librarians that they will lose prestige

or authority, and the difficulty of making legal and financial arrangements.

The two volumes which have served as pegs upon which to hang these notes should be required reading for everyone interested in higher education. Their contents are, if the writer is any prophet, signposts of the future.—*J. Periam Danton, librarian, Sullivan Memorial Library, Temple University, Philadelphia.*

Classification and the Scholar

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available in the emptied 870's and 880's, possibly enough to take care of all phases of classical study. By such a scheme classification, unaided, might bring together books according to their use. Similar revisions might be worked out in various other classes, both in D.C. and in L.C. Of course such a system of revision might soon cost more than to devise and install an entire new scheme of classification.

Certainly, reshelving without a revised classification can never succeed. "Objections to the order of the D.C. tables,"

Dorcas Fellows argued, "can be largely and easily overcome by adjustments in shelving, *e.g.*, English philology (420) may be shelved next to English literature (820), travel in Italy (914.5) next to Italian history (945), etc."⁶ The same "solution" could, of course, be worked out in L.C. But if classification does not indicate where a book may be found and if the stacks are to be a maze of jumbled letters and figures penetrable only to the initiated—why classify?

⁶ Fellows, Dorcas. "Library of Congress Classification vs. Decimal Classification." *Library Journal* 50:292, Apr. 1, 1925.