the wrong place for future use. It should be admitted that the plan is not a cure-all, but it will help when it comes to the specialized collections. It is these special collections that are most expensive to acquire, catalog, and maintain, but it is of first importance to have them somewhere in the country, and a cooperative program in connection with them seems desirable.

Note may properly be made here of progress in the above-mentioned committee's plans. The surveys of Belgian and Mexican publications have been completed; those for Sweden, Spain, and Peru are well under way; others will come along in due course. The results so far are enlightening. For Belgium it was found that 79 per cent of the titles selected from the 1937 lists as being of possible interest to research libraries cannot be found in any one of the fifty-five libraries that reported. These include practically all of the large general research libraries in the country. The total cost of all the priced items published in 1937 would have been only $1160. That is, if one university library had been willing in the year 1937 to acquire all books of research importance published in the regular trade in Belgium in that year, it would have cost the institution only $1160, and the other libraries of the country would have felt secure in their knowledge that they could be selective as far as Belgium was concerned, because all the material could be readily found elsewhere in the United States.

***

Comment by Raynard C. Swank

Cooperative Subject Bibliography

The librarian who reads Mr. Downs's article "American Library Cooperation in Review" may feel proud of the cooperative achievements of his profession; and, if he is a cataloger or a bibliographer, he may feel, as does this author, especially pleased that no field of library activity is more notably represented than the bibliographical. To union lists, union catalogs, bibliographical centers, descriptions of resources, and cooperative cataloging, more than half of Downs's review is devoted.

Yet these achievements represent for the most part but half the field of enumerative bibliography—that half which concerns the description and location of specified books or collections. The other half, which concerns the listing of books pertaining to specified subjects, is but meagerly represented. This omission is not an oversight. Indeed, it accurately reflects the present stage in a normal development of bibliographical enterprise.

The foundation upon which any system of subject bibliography must rest is patently the finding list. Unless books can be located, there is no point in seeking references to them in subject lists. That this foundation is already being well laid at the interlibrary level is evidenced by an impressive array of such cooperative works as the Union List of Serials, American Newspapers, 1821-1936, and the National Union Catalog in the Library of Congress. Yet it is equally patent that the finding list can never achieve its greatest usefulness without subject catalogs or bibliographies to supply references to books which subsequently need to be located. Provision for an adequate subject approach to library materials, also at the interlibrary level, is the indispensable next step in the development of a complete bibliographical system.

The librarian thus far has not altogether neglected this other half of the general bibliographical problem. The cooperative cataloging project, although primarily concerned with descriptive cataloging, aids in the assignment of subject headings for books entered in the card catalogs of individual libraries. But the subject catalog of the individual library complements the author catalog of that library only, not the union author catalog or the union list. As long as a person selects books from the subject catalog of one library, he will have no use for a finding list of books in other libraries. At the interlibrary plane a partial subject lead is offered by descriptions of the resources of various groups of libraries; but, valuable as these general descriptions are, they do not actually supply references to the materials on any subject. For lists of actual references to subject matter not contained in particular libraries, one must still depend

SEPTEMBER, 1945
wholly on pure subject bibliography—that heterogeneous mass of apparatus which has been created primarily by the working scholar and which has not yet received the concentrated attention of the library profession.

The need of a more adequate subject approach to books has been sharply felt by many librarians in recent years. Proposals for the compilation of new union subject catalogs, in both card and book forms, have roused occasional discussion. This author, among others, has suggested greater emphasis in libraries on the compilation and exploitation of pure subject bibliographies. Striking out in another direction, Mr. Rider, who had previously advocated a plan for the publication of union dictionary catalogs, has now startled the library world with the possibilities of a microcard catalog, a major purpose of which would be the provision of a more effective subject approach to research materials.

The exact nature of the bibliographical system which may eventually best satisfy the subject needs of the reading public is anything but clear at this time. Indeed, the exact nature of the need itself is but vaguely known. There is still much, very much, to be learned about books and, especially, about readers before any comprehensive reorganization can be safely undertaken. Nevertheless, several basic propositions have already emerged in forms sufficiently clear to command the attention of every thoughtful librarian. If they are valid, as this author believes they are, the general character of future subject bibliography is indicated.

Provision of Subject Approach

1. The provision of an adequate subject approach to books is a general bibliographical problem, not merely a problem of library cataloging.

The library cataloger is and should be vitally interested in the matter, but he cannot readily solve it without reference to the experience and achievements of others who have long grappled with the same problem. Indeed, any proposal must be viewed with suspicion which does not account for the large amount of bibliographical activity apparent now, as always, among working scholars and professional bibliographers, as well as many librarians. No analysis can be sound which does not seek out the forces which reared such monumental works as the Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature, or which compel scholar after scholar to compile supplements, however clumsy, to such tools as Hammond's Chaucer manual, or which oblige readers advisers the country over to develop special lists and files of references found useful for different types of readers. On the other hand, any program which does not take into consideration the real values of library cataloging must also be viewed askance. This is not a matter for either the cataloger or the bibliographer alone; it is their common problem. And not until each gains an enlarged conception of the whole, a firmer grasp of the purposes and accomplishments of the other, and, above all, a more realistic awareness of actual needs—not until then can a satisfactory subject scheme be developed.

2. An adequate subject approach can be provided only by a system of special tools aimed directly at special needs, not by general tools aimed broadly at general needs.

One of the most disturbing elements in traditional cataloging thought has been the conviction that efficient service requires the general use of single, universal, subject tools for all readers. This shotgun method assumes a mass of average readers with unoriginal problems about stereotyped subjects. It assumes further a general unity of knowledge and a need in every reader to have all parts of that knowledge simultaneously at his fingertips. A more sensitive, discriminating method singles out comparatively small groups of readers, with fairly homogeneous needs, and then aims directly at them. For purely descriptive and locational purposes, the comprehensive, standardized, author tool may be altogether desirable, since books and their locations do not vary with readers' interests; but, for the selection of books to fit individual needs—and all needs are individual—the special approach is likely to be more rewarding than the general.

Based on Value to Reader

3. The selection of materials to be listed under subjects should be based on value to the reader, not on the incidence of materials in particular libraries or on the circumstances of publication.

The criteria which determine what is listed
or not listed in many tools are manifold and confusing. In a large number of subject catalogs and indexes, as well as many "bibliographies," the material must first belong to the library, or libraries, or to the type of material being indexed. Second, it must to a large extent possess bibliographical independence—that is, it must consist of a separate work with its own title. Third, in many instances, it must appear in a prescribed physical form—a volume of so many pages, with or without boards, not on microfilm, or the like. Finally, then, if it still qualifies, it may be examined for relevance to subjects or readers' interest. But, meanwhile, a multitude of impertinent factors have so conditioned the results that no one can say precisely why this or that title appears or does not appear or precisely what need the list is capable of filling. From the point of view of the person who seeks references to guide his reading, such tools are low in bibliographical significance.

Significance, in this sense, is the fulness of meaning which a list holds for the reader, and the most significant list is the one about which it is possible to say, "Here are references to the materials—all the materials and nothing but the materials—relating to this subject and of value to this reader."

The tools which describe the subject content of libraries may obviously achieve high significance when that content itself is significant. There are special collections of which the catalogs approximate exhaustive bibliographies. There are also rigorously weeded collections of which the catalogs are valuable selective bibliographies. But most book collections are either too small to be exhaustive or too great to be selective, and no collection can be both. But, meanwhile, the limitations of no single collection, or group of collections, need be imposed upon subject lists and subsequently upon the reader. On the contrary, the subject list is the one device which can and should be used to help the reader, as well as the librarian, to surmount precisely those limitations.

**Subjects for Study**

4. The headings in subject lists should refer to subjects for study, not merely subjects of books.

In most existing subject tools, including library catalogs and many bibliographies, the headings point to the subjects of the books listed under them. Under "U.S.—History—Colonial period," for example, are listed books about that period of American history. In other tools the headings represent, in a broader sense, subjects which the reader may wish to study. Under those headings are then listed not only materials which are, strictly speaking, about those subjects but also others which are necessary to the study of the subject. For example, under "U.S.—History—Colonial period" might be listed, in addition to the histories about the period (i.e., the secondary sources), significant social and political works of the period (i.e., the primary sources). Or, for a student of The Dunciad, a catalog or bibliography might list under that heading the texts of the work itself and primary sources relating to its composition and publication—stationer's records, letters, etc.—as well as the history and criticism of the poem.

Books, in other words, may bear different relations to subjects, especially to literary, historical, and social subjects, and the list which places under a heading only the materials which are specifically about that subject may fail to guide the reader to other useful, if not essential, sources.

**"Subject-to-Book" Method**

5. Most effective in the compilation of subject lists is the "subject-to-book" process, not the "book-to-subject" process.

There are at least two different ways of compiling subject lists, and these are antithetic. The book-to-subject process is characteristic of library cataloging and indexing, wherein the compiler takes a book in hand and lists it under subjects where it may be found useful. As book after book is processed, the number of entries in all lists, or under all subjects, grows by accretion. The subject-to-book process is characteristic of "pure" subject bibliography, wherein the compiler takes a subject in hand and lists under it all books which may be found useful. As subject after subject is processed, the number of lists, instead of entries, grows by accretion.

Both methods have advantages, but those of the subject-to-book process seem the more important. First, the subject-to-book process offers a way of meeting important needs first, by dwelling on crucial subjects, letting others wait for time and circumstance.
book-to-subject process, the controls relate primarily to forms of materials and the flow of new acquisitions into the library, often with the result that urgency goes begging. Second, the subject-to-book process brings the compiler into closer rapport with the library user. The compiler, like the reader, begins realistically with a specific problem and looks for books to solve it. His objective—to assemble useful books about a subject—is always clearly before him. In the book-to-subject process, the objective is too often simply to subject-head the book or to classify the library; and rarely does the compiler, who works at a distance from the reader, stop dispersing books among subjects long enough to see how meaningfully they are assembling on the other side. And, third, it is easier to circumscribe the books relating to a subject than the subjects to which a book may relate. Books are tangible objects which can be seized upon and analyzed for relevance to a definite need, but the needs themselves are as different as people and as intangible as the imagination. Many people know the literature of some subject, but few know all the needs which any book will satisfy.

It must be acknowledged, however, that the crude, preliminary sorting of books by subjects, as they first come from the press or the antiquarian's satchel, can take place only by the book-to-subject process. But this original subject indexing, whether done in library catalogs, in national or trade bibliographies, or elsewhere, is preparation only for the more intensive and critical work of the subject bibliographer.

Character of System

These propositions, if indeed they are valid, suggest the general character of the subject system which should be developed to complement the union author catalog or finding list. On the one hand, they militate against any effort to construct union subject catalogs or union dictionary catalogs analogous to the present catalogs of individual libraries. Such catalogs, as commonly conceived, would be general purpose tools based on the content of libraries and compiled by the book-to-subject process. On the other hand, they clearly support the possibility of enlarging and systematizing, in cooperation with scholars and bibliographers, the already indispensable resources of special subject bibliography.

The success of the subject portion of Mr. Rider's proposed microcard catalog would depend largely upon the selection of materials which can be published in that form. If, as he hopes, complete collections of the useful materials on special subjects can be issued, bibliographical significance would simultaneously be achieved. This might well come to pass if the process were begun with the compilation of adequate lists of materials on selected special subjects and then with the publication of microcards for all those materials.

The development of an adequate system of subject bibliography, whatever the form it takes, will require years of patient study and experiment. There are no short-cuts, no panaceas. First must come studies, not merely of books but of readers, and not merely of readers but of significant types of readers whose particular interests can be segregated and defined. These interests must then be translated into subjects, groups of subjects, and types of reading on those subjects. Then must come the search for books to fill those special needs and the publication of lists which can be recommended wherever those needs exist. For scholars in different fields there must be comprehensive bibliographies bearing directly on crucial problems and reflecting current theories and methods of research in those fields. For the farmer, the clubwoman, the industrial worker, the adolescent, or whoever else may display significantly different interests, there must be other lists, many of which may depart wholly from the academic subject categories of the scholar. Such an objective, to say the least, is ambitious and one not soon to be realized. But in the long view the results would be richly rewarding. And it is an objective which, if it is ever to be achieved, will exact the utmost of cooperative effort from librarians, scholars, and bibliographers alike.