

Surveying the Resources of a Library

Library Resources of the University of North Carolina; A Summary of Facilities for Study and Research. Edited with a foreword by Charles E. Rush. (University of North Carolina Sesquicentennial Publications, Louis R. Wilson, director.) Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1945. x, 264p.

The University of North Carolina is an old college but a young university. Like most Southern institutions, it remained an academy in fact, but not in name, until the turn of the century. Like the others, it got off to a slow start, because the South moved slowly up to the Civil War. Thereafter, Southern colleges did well to survive the poverty and social upheavals which lasted nearly two generations. Forty years ago Southern universities made a poor showing in comparison with those of any other region, including the West, where colleges were in their infancy. Since then Southern universities have grown markedly. None has gone ahead quite as fast as the University of North Carolina. While not the largest, it is unquestionably the most progressive.

Despite its youthful attitude, the University of North Carolina is 150 years old. Characteristically, it chose as director of the sesquicentennial celebration not a historian but a pioneer, Louis R. Wilson. Like his own writings, Dr. Wilson's series of Sesquicentennial Publications glances backward and then takes a long look forward. The library volume in this series devotes six pages to the library's first hundred years, fifteen more to the last fifty, and over two hundred to a survey of the library's resources now. Moreover, the survey points to the future by noting gaps to be filled.

This volume portrays a young library of limited means. Fifty years ago the library comprised 22,500 volumes, but now it contains nearly half a million. This remarkable growth resulted from enterprise, not wealth. The Southern Historical Collection is a case in point. Professor J. G. De Roulhac Hamilton and Dr. Wilson earned the title of "literary carpetbaggers" by their boldness in carrying off to Chapel Hill such prizes as the papers of Wade Hampton, South Carolina's favorite son. By seeking out gifts, endow-

ments, and grants, North Carolina's librarians enlarged their holdings more rapidly than the university's income permitted.

Size, in itself, can be taken as a measure of the quality of a library's resources, within broad limits. Any library inevitably owns better collections, in nearly all subjects, than another library of the same kind half its size. Within narrower limits, individual differences show the influence, in a university library, of faculty specialization, the university's and the library's administration, the regional and local economy, and such unpredictable facts as alumni loyalty and donor's hobbies. On the whole, *Library Resources of the University of North Carolina* could be used as a guide to other university libraries of equal size without great inconvenience. In an older library, or in one with a larger income, more serial files would be complete. An older or wealthier library would probably show fewer pronounced specialties accompanying noticeably weak groupings in other subjects. In an older library, the humanities collections would probably be larger and richer. A Western library would probably own fewer titles in foreign languages; a Northeastern library, more.

Scope of Collection

As described in this volume, the library's book collection has grown farther in the fine arts and social sciences than in the natural sciences and technology. A few subjects show exceptional development. The Southern Historical Collection is the best of its kind, because of its strength in personal manuscript collections. Gifts have placed the library above par in general bibliographies and the history of the book. North Carolina's activities in drama, music, folklore, economics, and sociology have given the library better-than-average holdings in these subjects. Faculty specialization, the agreement with Duke and Tulane, and foundation grants are responsible for comparative strength in Latin American publications in literature, public administration, and other fields. In comparison with these more outstanding collections, North Carolina appears to be weak in American literature, philosophy, and all sciences except mathematics. Only

one section would be remarkable in any library, the Southern Historical Collection.

The survey reports the university's achievements in building up library resources. While that is sufficient justification for the time and effort which went into the book, it leaves unanswered the question of how valuable a contribution to library literature this survey is. It is vulnerable to criticism in several respects. Textually, it betrays poor proofreading by an error on every second or third page. It usually fails to mention the number of volumes in a given field. A quantitative statement gives some indication of the quality of a collection, as it does about the library as a whole, since duplication is infrequent in a university library and because larger holdings serve more kinds of use. Few standard bibliographies were checked to determine how well the books cover the subject. Library resources can be described by one person or by a group. Whichever method is adopted, the survey is open to criticism for not following the other. Like the volumes describing resources at the universities of Chicago and Pennsylvania, this survey was written by many authors. The editor, Charles E. Rush, avoided the extremes of the other two. He did not rewrite his contributors' papers, like Raney, but he achieved greater uniformity than in the Pennsylvania volume.

The result gives librarians another ex-

ample of how to describe, in the mass, those individualities, books and manuscripts. What else is it good for? Who uses a survey of resources? Librarians can use it as a finding-list for interlibrary loans, but they will find themselves handicapped by the lack of a title index. Scholars can use it to find out beforehand whether a trip to Chapel Hill is necessary or desirable. Like all resources surveys, it has some value as a compact, classified bibliography. Library school teachers will find it useful, along with other resource studies, in the training of university librarians. Judiciously circulated on other Southern campuses, it may arouse a desire to emulate North Carolina, as Professor Hamilton's activities have. Unquestionably, however, this book will find its principal justification on the North Carolina campus, where it will serve as a guide to the library, a stimulant to the faculty and administration, and a tract for prospective donors.

Its utility elsewhere might be greater if it indicated the size of individual collections, the percentage of titles in standard bibliographies, what studies have been made from the materials (theses are noted in some instances) and what other studies could be made from them, the accidents of personality and university history which gave each collection its peculiar quality, and comparisons with other libraries.—*John VanMale.*

The Future of the Research Library¹

Fremont Rider's *The Scholar and the Future of the Research Library*, which exploded like an atomic bomb in the library profession, has not only aroused a sensation among bookmen, but has also caught the imagination of the layman of the popular magazine and of the daily newspaper—an unprecedented event in the history of library literature. It dazzled its readers with the prospect of a new era of undreamed-of potentialities, an era which will enable the average college library to acquire research resources nearly as complete as those of the larger university li-

¹ The editors consider this paper of interest to all readers who have been following earlier discussions in *College and Research Libraries*. It is therefore reprinted here, with revisions by the authors, from *The Classical Journal* 41:108-12, December 1945.

braries, without the attending problems of processing and housing, and with a catalog which will, literally and actually, place the resources of the library at the fingertips of the readers. This is made possible by an idea of Mr. Rider, an ingenious idea yet so simple as to make the inventor wonder why it has been by-passed by others all these years.² The idea is to reproduce, by means of microphotography, the texts of books on the blank backs of their catalog cards. Thus, when a library has bought a catalog card, it has also acquired the "book" itself; when it has filed the card in the catalog, it has al-

² In a very interesting review to appear in a forthcoming issue of *Istis*, Dr. W. J. Wilson indicates that the Belgian bibliographer Paul Otlet anticipated a similar idea as early as 1906.