

## Introduction

THE PROGRAM and discussion on rare books in the university library which took place at the Atlantic City Conference were planned for two purposes. The first of these was to acquaint librarians with the thinking and experience of three men who knew a great deal about rare books and the problems of caring for them in university libraries. From their papers we hoped that university librarians would find useful suggestions and practical help for a local situation. The second purpose was less direct, but we hoped by these papers to give assurance to bookmen, collectors, and dealers, that university librarians were no longer vandals of the printed page and jailers of the book. For it is true that most university libraries now recognize the tremendous importance of rare books not only for purposes of scholarship but also for their other values and this recognition has led our libraries to provide proper personnel (e.g. Wyllic and Alden) and sound, bibliographical protection for rare books. By publishing these papers as a supplement to *College and Research Libraries*, we make them more readily available to bookmen as evidence not only of our intention but of our accomplishment.

Hidden in these papers is an assumption that needs a statement and an emphasis. University libraries are collectors, different in many respects, of course, from the private collector but often moved by the same impulse to buy and quite as often impoverished for the same reason. Some libraries, unfortunately, view the rare book on their doorstep with the uncertainty of an unwilling foster parent and in the forced guardianship of a gift can think of nothing better to do than to lock it up. But many more university libraries not only seek the gift but have a carefully matured plan for the purchase of rare books and special materials for the enrichment of their libraries and the scholarly programs of their institutions. A library with a plan operates in the same way as a private collector with a plan. Both read the catalogs and both are greatly dependent upon the services and good will of the dealer. Both aim for their own measure of completion in the fields of their collecting. Both find much for rejoicing in a prize acquisition, and there is much bitterness and self-reproach in losing an essential item. Whatever may be the motives for their collecting, they acknowledge a mutual obligation in seeking to preserve the materials of culture for the future.

The men who have written the articles that follow are bookmen who bring to librarianship the high standards that distinguish the true collector. Under the leadership of these men and their many colleagues in university libraries, we have every right to believe that the related causes of scholarship and collecting will be firmly maintained and strengthened.

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