Investigations and Research Projects in the Field of College Libraries

We like to think that research into problems of librarianship is both a scholarly and practical pursuit. By objective analysis of our problems we anticipate the skeletonizing or isolation of principles involved in librarianship and, perhaps, although it does not always happen, we apply the principles immediately to practical situations. About 20 years ago, when the Graduate Library School was just starting, there were some librarians who were skeptical of the value of research, especially the formalized research as carried on in an academic atmosphere. There are still some librarians who see little or no value in research, especially since they have not, as a result of research, been able to reduce library service costs, to increase efficiency, or to raise the reading level of their patrons. The critics have been apprehensive, and with some justification, that students would fail to do more than collect facts. The proponents of systematic research, whether in the library school or in some other academic department, have recognized this danger. They have also insisted that one of the real contributions of library research is to encourage and develop critical thinking about our problems. Have we been doing this? What are we learning about college library problems? What ways and means are being determined for the improvement of procedures leading to a more effective meeting of the demands upon the college library? It is the purpose of this paper to review what students and others have been doing in the way of studying problems which are of both scholarly and practical concern.

We can arbitrarily divide the research being done on a functional basis, and consider such problems as those related to organization and administration, personnel, finance, etc. Or, we can consider studies from a methodological base, such as historical, experimental, or prognostic. For the purposes of this discussion it would seem that the functional approach would be more meaningful. The effort will be made, then, to show what research has been going on in the following areas of librarianship: foundations and historical backgrounds; general administrative problems; public relations and extension service; personnel; finance; relations of faculty and curriculum; selection and acquisition of printed materials; problems of nonprint materials; cataloging and classification; binding and conservation; circulation work, including interlibrary loans; reference and bibliography; instruction in the use of the library; evaluation of collections and services; buildings and equipment; cooperation; and reading problems. Since College and Research Libraries has just celebrated its tenth anniversary, it seems fitting to limit studies to the past 10 years. It was not possible to examine every unpublished study, of course, so that some studies are merely mentioned to indicate the direction of investigation. Many of the published studies have been examined. An effort has been made to include those studies which have made a contribution to our knowledge of college librarianship, but there is no claim that all such studies have been noted. Sources include the Cole list in the Library Quarterly, the Charles’ annotated list of Chicago studies, the current “Research in Progress in Librarianship,” issued by Sarah R. Reed of the Graduate Library School, and Library Literature.

Foundations and Historical Backgrounds

Just as members of staffs of other social institutions have been interested in the beginnings of their enterprises, so have librarians. Several studies which may be classified as historical have been made during the past few years. Some have been concerned with libraries of particular states, while others are studies of specific institutions. Ruth E. Bo-
gart, for example, studied "College Library Developments in New York State during the Nineteenth Century," while N. O. Rush was concerned with college libraries in Maine. Frances L. Spain, in her study of "Libraries of South Carolina," included material relating to college and university libraries. Among the specific studies are those by Stanley (Earlham College), Knighten (Southwestern Louisiana Institute), Krueger (Carroll College), Irwin (Iowa Wesleyan), and Engley (Amherst). It might be said that historical studies, even with the earlier ones by Shores, Storie, Duncan and Atkins are relatively few. Indeed, it might be said that the story of college librarianship in America still needs to be told. Among current studies is the one by T. S. Harding, who is studying "College Library Societies of the Nineteenth Century: Their Contributions to the Development of Academic Libraries" (Chicago).

Of what value are such studies, in addition to giving students an exercise in writing about a relevant historical subject? Experience of surveyors of libraries has generally proved it necessary to delve into the history of the institution and its library in order to explain current situations. The historical sections of the surveys of South Carolina, Cornell, V.P.I., A.P.I., Florida, Georgia and other libraries clearly show the factors which have resulted in difficult library situations. A systematic historical study of a library, therefore, has not only scholarly value in pinning down the facts regarding a particular institution, but it adds to the total picture of college library development in America. More studies of this kind need to be encouraged, although it is admitted that unless they are in survey category, and consider current questions, they are likely to have little direct application to immediate administrative problems.

General Administrative Problems

In The University Library, the statement is made that "The controversies which center about certain types of administrative organization of libraries will not be settled until systematic study is made of the efficiency of existing patterns." There has apparently been very little systematic study of over-all problems of organization and administration. Guy R. Lyle's book on The Administration of the College Library, now in its second edition, has been a useful contribution in summarizing and evaluating data as well as in providing some new information concerning the management of the college library. Intensive studies of special problems of organization and administration, however, are limited to such investigations as Felix Reichmann's "The Location of Books on the College Campus," Elizabeth F. Kientzle's "Study of Administrator and Library Committee Relationships in College and University Libraries," Taisto Niemi's "Problems and Considerations Connected with the Inception of a Science Departmental Library at Western Michigan College of Education," and Eli Oboler's "The Process Chart as a Management Device for College and University Libraries: with Special Reference to Circulation Routines."

A number of college librarians have followed the pattern which is being established in university and large public libraries in dividing their organizations into readers' and technical services divisions. Joseph L. Cohen's study of "The Technical Services Division in Libraries" has already revealed that there are many unresolved problems in this type of library organization.

3 M. S., Columbia, 1948.
5 Ph.D., Chicago, 1944.
9 Irwin, Maurine. "History of Iowa Wesleyan University Library," M.A., California, 1941.
11 Storie, C. P. "What Contributions Did the American College Society Make to the College Library?" M.S., Columbia, 1938.
Public Relations and Extension Service

Although college librarians are concerned with the problems of public relations, few studies in this area have been carried on intensively. The survey made by Barcus in 1946 included many of the aspects of a public relations program. A recent study by Williams was concerned with "College Library Publications as Media for Public Relations." Agnes Reagan made a detailed study of the incidence and problems of college library exhibits. While university libraries and land-grant college libraries have been included in a few studies relating to extension work (e.g., H. E. Helmrich, "Relationship of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges in the Pacific Northwest to State-Wide Library Service," M.S., Columbia, 1939; Mildred H. Lowell, College and University Library Consolidations, Eugene, Oregon State System of Higher Education, 1942; and J. G. Hodgson, "Rural Reading Matter as Provided by Land-Grant Colleges and Libraries," Ph.D., Chicago, 1946) there have been no systematic investigations of the service in the liberal arts college library as a separate entity. A few reading studies, commented upon in a later section, include work with alumni.

Personnel

Studies of personnel problems include investigations of the work of student assistants, the activities of librarians in Mississippi, the reading of librarians, staffs in Negro colleges, academic status of Negro college librarians, retirement plans, worker morale among college catalogers, and faculty rank of college and university librarians. The last mentioned study, by Frank A. Lundy, is a detailed study of present practice in 35 college and university libraries. In addition to presenting new material gathered through correspondence, it is also a summary of a number of studies of personnel made in individual institutions. Undoubtedly, the Bryan study of public librarians (a report of the Public Library Inquiry) will contain suggestions which will be applicable to academic librarians.

Finance

Investigations of problems in financing of the college library have dealt with comparative statistics, administration of book funds, budgets of Negro college libraries, and records. The effort to develop standards of library support, based on certain criteria, continues although libraries are having a more difficult time with appropriating bodies. Several of the university and land-grant college library surveys contain material on financial problems which should be useful to college librarians. On the whole, however, it might be said that research into problems of finance has been relatively meager. Knapp’s study of costs in a preparation department of a college library is an example of the type of project that other individual libraries should follow.

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braries probably have carried on in order to justify expenditures.

Relations of Faculty and Curriculum

Efforts on the part of students to study the library's relations to the educational program have also been few, despite the importance of the problem. Hagan, for example, studied the "Libraries of Six Liberal Arts Colleges Operating under Progressive Education Programs," 39 while Coleman was concerned with "Changes Needed in the Library of a Small Liberal Arts College to Meet the Needs of the New Curriculum." 40 Wray approached the problem from the standpoint of holdings. 41 Sister Rose Warburton examined the literature on the question of the "Attitude of the Educator towards the College Library." 42

Selection and Acquisition of Printed Materials

While almost any study of library materials—books, periodicals, pamphlets and other forms—should be potentially significant to all librarians, special efforts have been made by students of college libraries to investigate problems related to the building up of collections. At Columbia, a series of studies has been made concerning reviewing in periodicals in certain subject fields—food and nutrition, 43 biology, 44 political science, 45 classics, 46 music, 47 English and American literature, 48 economics, 49 higher education, 50 technology, 51 philosophy, 52 and general works 53—

50 Whitford, Robert H., "Evaluation of Certain Technical Reviewing Media as Book Selection Aids for book selection purposes for college libraries. How much college librarians have used these studies—they represent a type of study that requires periodic revision—is a question which needs to be answered by a separate study. Essentially, the methodology is to examine reviews in a group of periodicals in a special subject field and appraise them on the basis of certain criteria of evaluation.

Another approach to book selection has been through analysis of publications. This has been done by considering book usage, 54 or selecting lists of books on the basis of minimal needs, 55 or for background purposes, 56 or for the requirements of certain college libraries. 57 Again, these studies will have a certain value for the time when they appear. It should be pointed out that these studies, as well as those of book reviewing adequacy, tend to add little in the way of new approaches to studying library problems. They fall within the category of critical bibliography.

In addition to these studies dealing with the selection of books, there has also been some interest in the collecting of such materials as serials in the field of sociology, 58 chemical engineering periodicals, 59 and maps. 60 A number of similar studies were made prior to the period being covered by this review. Insofar as acquisitions administration is concerned, three recent Columbia studies may be noted. These are Lena Biancardo's "Desiderata Files in College and University Libraries," (1950); A. F. Lane's "Exchange Work in College and University Libraries," (1950); and R. W. Christ's "Acquisition Work in Ten College Libraries," (1948).
Problems of Nonprint Materials

Examination of periodical literature will reveal the presence of a large number of articles on the treatment of nonprint materials. There are few intensive studies of the problems created by these materials, however. In addition to an early study on the handling of serials, recent theses have investigated the problems of educational films and records, and the distribution of microfilm in libraries in Ohio.

Cataloging and Classification

Under the heading of general administrative policy in cataloging, we have studies dealing with centralization of work, size of staffs, and satisfaction of catalogers in their work. The various studies at the Library of Congress by Lucile Morsch and others have definite applications to problems of cataloging in college libraries. A number of students have been concerned with the characteristics of the card catalog, including such aspects as the methods of indicating serials holdings, the practice of making analytics, and the division of the catalog. Another study has been made of the content and use of the shelflist. The investigation by Knapp is the only recent intensive study we have of the use of the card catalog in the college library. Studies by A. E. Markley, L. C. Merritt and W. H. Brett, now in progress at the University of California, will probably provide new insights into problems relating to the use of the catalog, though on a university level.

Actually, little study has been made of problems of classification. One student has assembled information about special classifications in college and university libraries. The problem of recataloging and reclassification in college and university libraries was also considered.

Binding and Conservation

Although binding and conservation of materials are becoming more and more serious problems for librarians, the only study prepared during the period is Margaret H. Hughes' "Periodical Binding Schedules of Improved Reader Service in University and College Libraries."

Circulation Work

Aspects of circulation work considered by students include general studies of use, the lending of pictures to college students, application of microfilm to interlibrary loan, and problems of the reserve book room. College librarians, like public librarians, have become keenly interested in the application of machine methods, electrically operated or photographic, in circulation work. Comparative studies of these machines have not been made by librarians.

Reference and Bibliography

In the area of reference and bibliography, it may be repeated that with a few exceptions practically any study, on any academic level, should have potential value for the college librarian as he deals with his students and faculty members. Some of the library schools, especially Denver, have encouraged the preparation of bibliographies. These seldom get into print, however. It might be suggested that there be established some publication,
either print, offset or other photographic re-
production, to provide access to such studies.
Although there have been several studies
relating to reference work, the only study
directly relating to reference work in the col-
lege library is Frances Cheney’s “The Refer-
cence Function of the Southern College Li-
brary” (Peabody, 1949).

Instruction in the Use of the Library
Allied to reference work is the problem of
instruction in the use of the library. Two
studies in this area may be called to your at-
tention. The first is Ann Conway’s “Readers’
Advisory Work in the Liberal Arts College,”
and the second, Johanna B. Smith’s “Library
Instruction in Liberal Arts Colleges.” On
the basis of articles which have appeared in the
literature it would seem that this particular
aspect of college library service could be sub-
ject to a thorough examination.

Evaluation of Collections and Services
In a preceding section, attention was given
to the appraisal of materials in the selecting
process of the library. In addition to the
relatively large number of such studies, there
have been several investigations of college li-
brary holdings which might be noted. These
include studies of collections in philosophy, educa-
tion and sociology, as well as examina-
tions of recent noncurricular books and
current publications received by college li-
braries. Such reports as that by Rugg: “Mo-
modern Authors in New England College
Libraries,” provide helpful information to li-
brarians without necessarily involving evalua-
tion.

The several surveys of libraries, of course,
provide information to librarians of what par-
ticular institutions have been doing in their
collecting activities. Similarly, they also pro-
vide evaluations of services. Several surveys of
particular institutions which have appeared in
College and Research Libraries give other esti-
mates of collections and services.

Checklists issued by the various accrediting
associations have been used constantly by col-
lege librarians in developing their collections.
Eileen M. Thornton has prepared a study
which seeks to re-evaluate the North Central
Association checklist holdings of a group of
college libraries by weighted values instead of
by a numerical count. This study represents
a distinct departure in the approach to check-
lists. Gosnell and Stieg have analyzed problems of obsolescence and evaluation by
use, respectively.

Buildings and Equipment
In the matter of library buildings, one may
find in the literature a large number of de-
scriptions of individual libraries, as well as
statements concerning new ideas and princi-
pies of construction. In 1946, Reynolds made a
study of university library buildings in the
United States (1890-1939). Earlier, Andrew,
considered trends in college library
buildings, and Buchanan studied library
buildings of teachers colleges. The Chicago
Institute of 1947 contained a number of papers
which have application to college libraries as
well as to other types of libraries. This is
also true of the recent book by Burchard and
others. Undoubtedly, we have not reached
the end of studies of buildings.

Few studies of equipment have appeared.
The use of photographic and other equipment in
circulation work has resulted in a number of
articles in journals. At the present time, a
study by Blasingame on the use of I.B.M.
equipment in libraries is under way, while
McGaw is investigating the use and applica-
88 Thornton, Eileen M. “The North Central Asso-
ciation on Check-list: Some Experiments in Its Appli-
89 Gosnell, Charles F. “Obsolescence of Books in
College Libraries.” College and Research Libraries,
5:172-75, March 1944.
90 Stieg, L. F. “Technique for Evaluating the Col-
lege Library Book Collection,” Library Quarterly,
91 Reynolds, H. M. “University Library Buildings
93 Buchanan, Lillian M. “Library Buildings of
Teachers Colleges, 1932-1942.” M.A., Columbia, 1944.
94 Fussler, H. H., ed. Library Buildings for Library
95 Burchard, L. E. et al. Planning the University
Library Building. Princeton, Princeton University
96 Blasingame, Ralph U. “The Applications of
I.B.M. in Libraries.” (In process at Columbia.)
tion of marginal punched cards in college and university libraries.  

Cooperation

Aspects of cooperation are included in specializations in acquisitions programs, in contributions to union catalogs and bibliographic centers, in interlibrary lending, and regional coordination. College and Research Libraries has during the past 10 years published articles in all of these areas. While they have not been exhaustive, they have added to our knowledge of the various activities and opportunities in cooperation. College libraries in the New York metropolitan area have been participating in discussions on cooperation held during the past three years.

Reading Problems

Under the rubric of reading problems may be listed studies relating to both reading and other use of the library. Among recent studies are those which involve students as a group, freshmen, women students, alumni, and faculty members. The use of reading material as a factor in attitudes of college students concerning social problems was also investigated. Primarily, the methodology of the reading studies is the analysis of circulation records or the manipulation of data obtained through questionnaire and interview.

Summary

This review of studies of the last 10 years is concerned with more than 100 studies which have been made of problems concerning the liberal arts college library. Another 50 or so studies could be added if the teachers college libraries, junior college libraries, and university libraries were included. These figures exclude the numerous bibliographical studies of a descriptive and enumerative type. Historical studies, and investigations of problems of personnel, collections and use predominate.

One final word on methodology is pertinent. Many of the studies have been carried on through the device of obtaining data by questionnaires. Many college and other librarians are annoyed by the never-ending questionnaires and checklists which come to them from students working on theses and dissertations. Librarians interested in substantial answers to questions disturbing them also need to use the questionnaire to obtain information. Correctly used, however, the questionnaire is an appropriate instrument for gathering data.

On the basis of queries which have been noted, there seem to be some librarians who apparently have not taken full advantage of many of the studies made. The need for dissemination of findings of studies of general interest has been emphasized by the Committee on Research of the Association of American Library Schools. So far as possible, studies are listed in College and Research Libraries, and an effort is made to present in partial form some of the studies. Other library periodicals also contain reports of studies of college library problems. The A.C.R.L. office in Chicago has been collecting significant documents reflecting current practices in college, university and reference libraries, available on loan to members of A.C.R.L. A résumé of the materials collected, prepared by Orwin Rush, appears in this issue of College and Research Libraries.

97 McGaw, Howard F. "Marginal Punched Cards—Their Use in College and University Libraries." (Ed.D., in process at Columbia Teachers College.)
100 Kemp, Frances E. "Freshman Reading in a Progressive College." M.S., Columbia, 1941.
102 Tiplady, Charlotte M. "Reading and Reading Interests of Alumnae of Hollins College." M.S., Columbia, 1940.
103 Nicholson, Margaret E. "College Faculty Reading and Popular Books." M.A., Chicago, 1940.