Proposal for Study of Increased Cost of Serials and Binding

The proposed study is to be undertaken by the Serials Committee of the Association of Research Libraries with the help of other interested librarians and with the cooperation of the chairman of the Serials Committee of the American Library Association and the Medical Library Association.

A paper prepared by Dr. Jerrold Orne,1 of the Washington University Library, St. Louis, Mo., presented at the January 1951 meeting of the Serials Round Table, proposed several studies to indicate the increased cost of serials and its effect on library budgets. At the meeting of the Association of Research Libraries, also held in January, a report was presented by the Serials Committee of the Association of Research Libraries together with a supplementary report by Dr. Robert B. Downs which indicated that the cost of serials had increased 40 per cent in the last few years.

The Serials Committee of the A.R.L. is preparing a series of studies showing the unit cost of American, British, German and French serials and the cost of binding for 1950 as compared with 1946 and 1939. It is hoped to obtain reports from different types of libraries.

As an example of the type of studies which we hope will be made, the comparison of the costs of binding for certain years as compiled by Iowa State College is shown below.

"The average cost for binding per volume at Iowa State College shows an increase of 96 per cent for the fiscal year of 1949-50 over that of 1940-41 and an increase of 45 per cent for the year 1949-50 over that of 1945-46. In January 1951 there was an additional increase of 10 per cent over the prices of 1950."

"On account of stiff competition between two firms the prices in 1941-42 were somewhat lower than in previous or succeeding years. In order to give a clearer picture the following percentages based on binding of a 10"-11" periodical have been compiled: 1938-39, Price of Binding 10"-11", $1.42.

"The increase was 50 per cent in 1945-46 over the price in 1938-39; the increase was 100 per cent or double in 1951 over 1938-39."

Arnold Trotier,2 University of Illinois, compiled certain figures on the increase in cost of binding during recent years. Illinois was enabled to accomplish a sizeable decrease in the unit cost of binding by a reduction of the processes required of the binder. On an experimental basis the State University of Iowa3 is substituting in some cases microfilms which will avoid the necessity of binding of individual volumes. The extent to which these economies will, over a period of time, be actual economies remains to be seen. The Serials Committee of A.R.L. will be glad to learn binding economies.

The proposed studies in the cost of serials will include the compilation of both the increases in prices of individual periodicals and increases due to increased number of periodicals purchased. The costs of American, British, German and French periodicals will be compiled separately on the two above-mentioned bases. The cost will be figured from the data available in American libraries only. Libraries in the Sterling area are seriously affected in the purchasing of periodicals by the depreciation of the pound.

It is believed that the increased costs of subscriptions to German publications in 1950-51, as compared with 1946, is due more to the increased number of German serials published in 1951 than to the increase in prices of individual periodicals.

The chairman of the Serials Committee of the American Research Libraries will be glad to receive any suggestions from all interested.—Charles H. Brown, Iowa State College Library.

2 Serial Slants, 1(10-12), January 1951.
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