

By RICHARD HARWELL

National Library Week and College Libraries

COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY librarians are an individualistic breed. Accustomed to working with materials which must be handled as units, they themselves act as units, and their effectiveness is often diminished when forced into patterns designed for mass operations. By participation in National Library Week, March 16-22, however, they can function as individuals and do good service for the aims of the whole profession at the same time.

National Library Week will be a nation-wide promotion. All types and all sizes of libraries are being asked to cooperate in its observance. It is sponsored by the National Book Committee, Inc., in cooperation with the American Library Association. Lucile Morsch, president of ALA, is chairman of a national ALA Committee on National Library Week. "ALA committees in each state," says a flyer from the National Book Committee, "will be responsible for helping to plan National Library Week, for encouraging libraries and librarian participation in the Week, for securing publicity about the program among libraries." The principal impetus for the Week, however, will be provided by committees made

up of leading citizens in every area.

"Library Week," declares the National Book Committee, "is the first united drive of the communications industry to increase the number of readers in America and to increase reading among confirmed readers." It gives as reasons behind the Week the following: (1) The habit of reading is not keeping pace with

increased education, leisure time, or high disposable income; (2) 60 per cent of American adults did not read a book, other than the Bible, during 1954; (3) half of the adults in this country live within a mile of a public library—but only one fifth of them visit it; (4) new standards of public library service have just been issued

by the American Library Association; they need community attention and acceptance; (5) recruiting trained personnel is a major problem for all libraries; more efforts are needed to attract young people to the profession; the shortage is handicapping library expansion; soaring enrollments mean that school and college library facilities must be expanded.

There is precious little in these causes that rises directly from college and university libraries. There is even less in the Committee's statement of "what can a National Library Week do?" Where, then, lies the place of college libraries in this activity?

National Library Week, to be observed March 16-22, 1958, is both a tribute and a challenge. It is a tribute to the fine collections and services the libraries of the country make available to their communities; and it is a challenge to all of us in the library world to increase our efforts to insure the rewards of reading—the joy, the knowledge, and the inspiration that books and other materials found in the modern library can bring—to every citizen of the Nation.—L. Quincy Mumford, Librarian of Congress.

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National Library Week. Its not news when librarians urge us to use libraries to the fullest extent, and it's not news when publishers urge us to read; it is news—and good news—when citizens all over the country join forces in a concerted, nationwide effort to remind us of the pleasures and benefits of reading, of the great privileges available to us through libraries, and of the value of organized library services. College and university libraries can benefit from this joint effort. With the support of all kinds of libraries, National Library Week can become a strong and helpful force.—Eileen Thornton, ACRL President.

An effective National Library Week may very well produce little of immediate value to college libraries. Perhaps the direct effect will be a flood of offers of copies of *The Ulster County Gazette*, the New York *Herald* of April 15, 1865, and the Vicksburg *Citizen* of July 2-4, 1863—all in worthless souvenir reprints. But perhaps—and more than *perhaps*—college and university librarians will recognize National Library Week as an activity good for the profession. And what is good for the profession is good for every library, for every librarian. National Library Week 1958 is only the beginning. It is envisioned as an annual activity that will repeatedly call the attention of the public generally to the values of library service.

College and university librarians are suspicious of what they regard as the crassly commercial. They fear that National Library Week might too easily be just another promotion, another cheese week, grapefruit week, or I-love-people week. It need not be; if they want to make it much more, they can. College and university librarians lack the pattern of group activity that has made such promotions as the Jaycee's Operation Library or ALA's Library Community Project eminently successful. There is much they can learn from the Jaycees, from the adult education people, and from their own colleagues in more public-minded areas of the profession. Friends of the Library are wonderful friends. But their number and effective-

ness can be many times multiplied through wise promotion.

Suspicious or not, college librarians are in a position to gain from the nationwide promotion. It is old hat to librarians that their problems will be multiplied as college enrollments increase (they are expected to double) in the next ten or fifteen years, but National Library Week will make that vital fact known to the widest possible audience. College and university librarians will have opportunity to show how the larger ratio of students to faculty members will put increased emphasis on a student's own reading and an increased burden on libraries. The launching of man-made satellites has dramatized the necessity for more and better education in the sciences. Present library needs are already well known to librarians. Last fall's applications to ACRL's Committee on Foundation Grants supply a wealth of evidence that libraries sorely need help in this area. National Library Week can demonstrate to the public the library's role in scientific education and can provide a platform for the exposition of needs in this field.

National Library Week will function through state and community committees. No pattern of action will be superimposed on those committees, though material to aid them in their efforts will be supplied by the New York office of the Committee (24 West 40th Street, New York 18, New York). The various committees will be urged to call on all

the libraries in their areas for cooperation and participation. But passive cooperation on the part of college and university librarians will not be enough. To garner the benefits possible from such a promotion as National Library Week, they will have to participate positively, fully, and aggressively.

A possible pattern of participation is suggested by the plans being made at the University of Illinois Library. An exhibit in the general library will emphasize the functions of the library and interpret it to its patrons. Small recruiting-for-librarianship exhibits in each of twenty-four departmental libraries will direct attention to career opportunities in librarianship for subject specialists.

The sixth series of the Windsor Lectures in Librarianship, a series which has already produced five distinguished volumes as its record, will be presented during National Library Week. Materials about the library will be made available to student and alumni publications. National Library Week will find a place in the alert radio and television series conducted at Urbana.

Different procedures will be effective at different places. Helpful to all will be a pamphlet on the needs of college libraries now being prepared by Flora Belle Ludington and which will soon be available from ALA. It will be a boon if the dedication of new library buildings can be scheduled within National Library Week. Relations with radio and television stations and with newspapers vary from place to place, but, in nearly every case, librarians, acting either independently or through their campus public relations personnel, can make effective use of them. Campus authors can be used to promote books and reading.

In many cases, college and university libraries can extend their influence by lending for commercial or public library displays already planned the kinds of materials which mark college and university libraries with special distinction. Every librarian has thought of ways in which his library could be more effectively brought to the attention of students and faculty, if he could only take the time. National Library Week provides a ready-made chance to carry through those ideas and make it worth while to take the time.

Special libraries are presented just as much opportunity. Here is the chance for special librarians to exhibit to the general public, as well as to their special

National Library Week will provide an opportunity for millions of people devoted to books and reading—to the inexhaustible informational and recreational resources of libraries—to reaffirm their faith in and support for the world's greatest educational force.—Robert B. Downs, Director, University of Illinois Library, Urbana.

public, the value of their libraries. There are corollaries of the possible actions of the college and university libraries in every type of library: the great independent research libraries, the libraries of law, medical, and theology schools, the fine reference and special

libraries in art, music, history, science, and other fields, the vigorous, active libraries which are parts of business institutions. There is opportunity for all in National Library Week.

From the area of inspirational books, librarians have adapted a familiar title into the slogan "Wake Up and Read." With college and university librarians' obvious conviction of the value of reading as a continuing habit, they might well dip further and alter other titles to their own use: "How to Read 365 Days a Year" and "How to Read All Your Life." But the primary aim of National Library Week is "For a better read, better informed America." College and university librarians have a privilege in the opportunity to participate in that aim.