

Documents in the Divisional Library

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA Libraries are organized for service and for administration by broad fields of subject matter. The public service divisions are the humanities; the social studies; and science and technology. Practically coordinate with these three are the principal branch libraries, in the College of Law on the Lincoln City Campus, in the College of Agriculture on a separate Lincoln campus, and in the College of Medicine on the campus in Omaha. These six divisions are coordinated by the associate director of libraries. There is also a technical service division with an assistant director in charge.

The science and technology division, for example, under the direction of an assistant director of libraries for science and technology, includes not only the science and technology reading room and related areas of the central stack, but also the branch libraries in chemistry, in geology, and in bacteriology, botany and zoology, and the laboratory libraries in physics, in pharmacy, in dentistry, and so on. A close liaison is maintained by this division with the principal branch libraries in agriculture and in medicine where there are many overlapping interests.

The responsibilities of each subject division are broad and include book selection, bibliographical checking, cataloging, classification, reference work with students and faculty, formal and informal instruction in the use of the library, and close contact with the serv-

ice problems of the students at all levels and with the faculty. The boundaries of responsibility are described by fields of subject matter rather than by aspects of format (such as monographs, periodicals, newspapers, or reference sets), or by library process (such as book selection, cataloging, classification, reference work, reserve books, two-week loans), or by imprint (such as publications of the United Nations or of agencies of the federal government).

In the interest of business-like efficiency in dealing with certain common problems of office procedure, a single acquisition department serves to concentrate the receipt of all incoming mail, the ordering of books and periodicals, the handling of gifts and exchanges, and bindery preparations. Cataloging and classification are concentrated physically into one large room and under the supervision of three full-time catalogers, but the bulk of the work of cataloging and classification is performed by the staff of the subject divisions and of the principal branch libraries working in the central catalog department. The physical processing of books (book-plate and marking) is concentrated at the end of the cataloging process in one operating unit under the catalog librarian. Similarly, circulation functions in the central library building are concentrated into one central administrative unit under the circulation librarian, who also exercises a general control of circulation procedures throughout the system of libraries.

The basic divisional idea of organizing the college or university library around broad subject concepts instead

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of by form and process, by format, or by imprint, is not new, and its application, with many local variations such as the completely open stack or the total abandonment of reading rooms as such, is becoming more and more widespread. Step by step the divisional idea, with all of its legitimate variations, is being refined and extended. At Nebraska, for example, 90 per cent of all reserved materials are on open shelves interfiled with the rest of the hundred thousand books on open shelves; the dual assignment of reference work and cataloging as the proper responsibilities of the same members of the professional staff in the divisions has been applied successfully for a period of five years. The administrative subordination of all branch and laboratory libraries to appropriate subject divisions has been accomplished. It remained until recently to apply the same underlying principle of organization by subject to the documents collection.

In library parlance "documents," or more commonly "government documents," refers to all publications issued by agencies of government. In libraries within the United States the bulk of the documents collection is likely to consist of publications issued or sponsored by agencies of the federal government. Because of their great quantity and bulk and a complex of issuing agencies, also because there are available certain special check lists and indexes, these publications are commonly segregated in the library and put under the administration of one or more documents specialists. The documents concept, however, is a broad one and includes the publications of the United Nations and the League of Nations, of all foreign governments, and of regional, state, or local agencies of government. Collectively these publications include a wide range of subject matter. The very existence of a documents department in a divisional

plan library, with wide-ranging responsibilities for the selection, acquisition, recording, processing, housing, and servicing of publications of governmental agencies, seems to be a contradiction in terms and in functions.

For many years the University of Nebraska Library has had a closed documents collection. This collection has been administered within the social studies division, the primary responsibility resting with the documents librarian who is a member of the staff of that division. The basic library functions of selection, acquisition, record keeping, shelving, reference service, and circulation of government publications have been performed under the immediate direction and supervision of the documents librarian. This is common practice in many other university libraries. In 1956 the library council, consisting of the director and associate director of libraries and the heads of the divisions and principal branches and departments, working in a series of informal evening discussions, undertook to evaluate government publications per se, and the closed documents collection at Nebraska. Out of these discussions a new policy has been evolved.

The publication programs of governmental agencies have increased greatly in quantity and in variety of subject matter in recent years, especially since World War II. The output of the executive agencies of the United States government has increased until it now accounts for over two-thirds of the United States government production of printed materials. Eighty per cent of United States publications are serial in nature, consisting, that is, of periodicals, annual reports, and regular or irregular monographic series. These observations led us to reexamine our policy for their acquisition and organization in relation to the three principal divisions in humanities, social studies, and science, and

in agriculture, law, medicine, and also in relation to the library's system of record keeping. We asked, for example, to what extent we have been using government publications or failing to use them in serving the patrons in our subject divisions outside of the social studies. Will not the subject material published by governmental agencies greatly strengthen, or in some cases replace, related publications issued by non-governmental agencies, that is, by private publishers? Should not each of the divisions and principal branches be making regular use of the *Monthly Catalog* of government publications along with the common periodical indexes and abstracting services, both as a tool of book selection and also of reference service?

The bulk of government publications held by the University of Nebraska is not represented in the public card catalog, despite the fact that our aim has been to make this tool a union catalog of all titles held by the University Libraries. In view of the fact that 80 per cent of the material published by the United States government is serial in nature, it would seem practical to record government-issued serial titles in the public card catalog, and to rely on the *Monthly Catalog* and other indexes to analyze the content of that material.

Careful pursuit of the implications of these observations and questions, in frank and open discussion, has resulted in a changed attitude toward that valuable mass of material referred to as documents. This changed attitude led to the formulation of a policy adopted in November 1956, which reads in part:

It shall be the policy to select, house, and service government publications according to subject content. Each subject division will have the responsibility for selecting and servicing those publications which fall within the subject interest of that division . . . Insofar as practicable, government publications will be handled

within the patterns of organization and use established for other library materials.

The aim of this policy is to integrate and coordinate all aspects of the government publications program with public service and technical service procedures as they have been developed at Nebraska.

At the time this policy was adopted the director of libraries appointed a committee of three to implement that policy, consisting of the acquisition librarian as chairman, the documents librarian, and the associate director of libraries. This committee was instructed to work out smooth procedures and routines for transferring some of the responsibility for documents to other public service areas; to relocate integral groups of government publications within the system of libraries when desirable; to integrate the ordering and receiving of all governmental material with the library's general procedures for purchases, gifts, and exchanges; to integrate record keeping with the library's card catalogs; and finally, to maintain maximum availability and service during the transition period.

First of all the entire collection of publications of the United States Department of Agriculture was moved to the campus and library of the College of Agriculture. This was a major relocation of materials. The staff of the College Library has undertaken the preparation of records which will gradually replace those formerly maintained for this material in the documents reading room. Each serial title will have a unit card in the public catalog and in the shelf list in the central University Library and in the public catalog and shelf list in the College of Agriculture Library; actual holdings will be recorded in the College Library serials file (Post Index). Monographs not in series will be handled in one of three ways: those of permanent value will be cat-

aloged and classified in the same manner as similar monographs from non-governmental publishers; materials primarily of current interest will be shelved according to the Superintendent of Documents' classification, will have no additional records made, and will be approached as in the past through the *Monthly Catalog*; ephemeral materials will be handled the same as other vertical file materials.

When all non-social studies materials have been relocated in this manner from the documents reading room, the bulk of the collection will remain. This material will be recorded in the manner described above. Unit cards will be filed in the public card catalog, in the main shelf list, and in the social studies division author catalog and shelf list. A master-file card at the loan desk and a half-card in the public card catalog will indicate the location of the title. The classification scheme for the government publications remaining in the documents reading room area will be that of the Superintendent of Documents for all United States publications and an adaptation of that scheme for publications of other governmental agencies.

In summary, the publications of all governmental agencies, great in bulk and number, and rich in content as they are, will now be looked upon as a primary resource of interest not only to students and faculty working in one or more phases of the social sciences, but as of interest to students and faculty

working in any field of knowledge where such publications seem to have bearing. Responsibility for selection and the initiation of the processes of acquisition will rest with all the divisions of the library and with its principal branches, and appropriate tools for selection will be made available. The technical service division will be responsible for all acquisition and record keeping. Incoming materials will flow into appropriate locations in reading rooms, in branches, and in the stacks under the same selective and critical direction that is now applied to all other incoming publications. Service in the use and interpretation of governmental publications will be a responsibility of the entire public service staff in harmony with the general principle of subject specialization now applied to our three central divisions in the humanities, the social studies, and science, and to our principal branch libraries in agriculture, in law, and in medicine. The imprint concept is now being relegated to a position of secondary importance. It will follow naturally, however, that the bulk of the documents material will be routed into the documents area, one of three large reading room areas comprising the social studies division on the third floor of the Love Memorial Library; also, that heavy reliance upon direction in its use will rest upon the division's staff. The documents librarian now becomes a librarian in the social studies division.

Concerning ACRL Committee Appointments

Wyman W. Parker, President-Elect of ACRL, and Arthur T. Hamlin, Chairman of ACRL's Committee on Committees, request from ACRL's membership volunteers to serve on the Association's several committees and further suggestions as to appropriate appointments. The committee will determine its recommendations to the President-Elect at Midwinter. Suggestions should be sent well ahead of that time to Arthur T. Hamlin, University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati 21, Ohio.