

Review Articles

A Banner Year

Annual Report of the Librarian of Congress for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1958. Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1959. 169p. \$2.00.

Every advance in bibliographic control made by the Library of Congress has a two-fold benefit. On the one hand, LC is able to give better and increased services to Congress, its first responsibility, and, on the other hand, American libraries, indeed libraries in the entire world, gain from the increased services available to them. Therefore, although the *Reports* of the Librarian of Congress are addressed to the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives, they are of great significance for the library world. These *Reports* reflect the current activities in the profession "writ large." The *Report* for fiscal 1958 is particularly gratifying to read, because the Library of Congress seems to have had a banner year and has broken records in practically every one of its activities. Many of these increased activities reflect national interests and Mr. Mumford emphasizes that there was a heightened use of scientific and technological resources beginning in the fall of 1957 which can be correlated with the interest in the International Geophysical Year and the launching of the first artificial earth satellites.

Some of the major developments during fiscal 1958 can be briefly described as follows: fifty-nine new positions were provided by Congress, probably contributing to the increased work accomplished. However, it may be noted that there were eighty-two fewer people employed on June 29, 1958, than were employed July 14, 1957, each being the end of a pay period; growth was controlled by disposing of more than was received—5,360,000 pieces—through the application of increasingly rigid selection policies; time required to process subscriptions and payments was reduced by 50 per cent in the order division by placing the Li-

brary's periodical subscriptions on a three-year payment basis; the "cataloging in source" experiment was a major development, as well as the 9 per cent increase in cooperative cataloging which produced nearly 12,300 titles during the year; the arrearage of unsearched publications was reduced in the descriptive cataloging division from 105,000 in 1955 to 64,000 at the end of fiscal 1958; 1,075,000 cards, an increase of 16 per cent, were received in the Union Catalog division; 25 per cent more volumes were bound, for a total of 87,700; 928 new subscribers for LC cards accounted for a 5 per cent increase in the number of subscribers to this distribution service and a 6 per cent increase in the amount of money received, resulting in a recovery of 93 per cent of the total appropriations; nearly 1,600 American publishers, 300 more than last year, sent their new publications in advance of the date of issue and also printed the Library's catalog card numbers in the books themselves; the Legislative Reference Service's research and reference work for members and committees of Congress climbed to an all time high with a 14 per cent increase in the number of questions answered, to a total of 67,843, and other departments handled 37,346 congressional inquiries; in the reference department, one record that was broken is particularly laudable, in that the number of books lent to members of Congress rose by 42 per cent to a total of 77,000, thus becoming the largest single category of loans out of a record high of 207,141 loans; answers to reference questions reached a record high of 573,187, and an increase of 53 per cent in direct reference services in science and technology, supports Mr. Mumford's statement; the administrative department undertook an intensive study of the Library's requirements for a third building in view of the fact that the fifteen acres of floor space in the old building, and the twenty acres of floor space in the Annex, with a total capacity for 15,000,000 volumes, is becoming overcrowded; and the earned revenues from fees received by the Copyright Office in pursuance of the copyright business were the largest in its history,

totaling \$954,231. Major developments in other areas are detailed in the *Report*.

The appendixes to the *Report* should also receive some attention. The Library of Congress, already giving incomparable leadership and service to the profession, could provide an additional service in straightening out the statistics muddle. There is much confusion among librarians concerning the total size of a library. On page 80, LC adds up all types of units and comes up with \$6,905,919, a new high, which it calls the "Total Contents of the Library." It seems to the writer that this is a meaningless figure because volumes, microcards, microfilms, etc., are all added together. Why not add pages in books? Moreover the definition of the meaning of a volume by LC, acceptable to the profession, would resolve the contradiction in the definitions given by *CRL* for its annual statistics and those of the Office of Education for its annual statistics. Space limitations prevent more detailed development of these comments. A minor point that may also need straightening out is the use in the LC statistics, by the reference department, of the term "items accessioned," and by the processing department, of the term "pieces processed." Is there a difference?

An important appendix to the *Report* is the list of notable publications of the Library of Congress for fiscal 1958, which includes the *National Union Catalog*, the sixth edition of *Subject Headings Used in the Dictionary Catalogs of the Library of Congress*, and other important titles.

The 1957-58 annual report of the Librarian of Congress is an exciting document and is recommended reading for all librarians.—Henry Birnbaum, *Chief Circulation Librarian, Brooklyn College*.

Bible Bibliography

Eleven Years of Bible Bibliography; the Book Lists of the Society for Old Testament Study, 1946-56. Edited by H. H. Rowley, Indian Hills, Colo.: Falcon's Wing Press [c1957], vii, 804p.

There is no disputing the primary objective of this volume which is to present

a reliable and annotated bibliography of Old Testament studies during the past decade. But to leave it at that might appear as lack of appreciation of the labors of the indefatigable and erudite editor of the volume. What is more, it might frighten away from it searching but unsuspecting and irresolute readers and reduce its usage to the mercy of cloistered scholars, theologians, librarians, teachers, preachers, etc. Not an inconsiderable conglomeration, to be sure, as far as audiences go. But the volume has an appeal much broader, and would prove very useful to a growing number of intelligent lay readers who are neophytes to Bible study. Scholars specializing in related and adjoining fields who lack the time and energy to pursue Old Testament studies in detail, will learn much about recent research on the subject.

For, strange as it may sound, the average literate layman would rarely associate with Bible study the huge amount of preparatory research work and the toil required to produce an up-to-date, readable, and meaningful translation in any modern language. Few would suspect that, in order to arrive at the exact meaning of the text, access to older versions and the minute perusal of long checklists of manuscripts are required. To penetrate beneath the transcript of the text as it reached us one would have to familiarize himself with the origin and development of writing and the attempts at decipherment. That the pottery, metals, flora and fauna, coins, buildings, temples, fortifications, and evidence gleaned from travel accounts are part and parcel of it is an undeniable, although unappreciated fact.

Few connect aerial reconnaissance with Biblical excavations. Yet to the initiated few there is no conceiving of modern archeological excavations without it. Electro-magnetic detection, radio-carbon dating, and the dating of fossilized bones by fluoride content have all been utilized in the search of Biblical truth.

The normal expansion of Biblical studies through many newly erected seminaries, and the revival of Hebrew as a spoken language in the new Republic of Israel, may have contributed their share to this growing interest in the Bible. But what really brought it to the attention of millions of