
Exchanges: National and International

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THE ONE CLEAR TREND that has developed in the field of exchanges during the past thirty years or more can be discovered by consulting *Library Literature*. During the quinquennium 1926–30, according to that bibliography, only 13 pages were printed on the subject of exchanges, an average of 2.6 per year. For 1936–40 there were 107 pages, or 21.4 per year. For 1946–50 the figure is 899, or 179.8 per year. Since 21.4 is 823 per cent of 2.6, and 179.8 is 840 per cent of 21.4, the geometrical rate of increase appears to be reasonably constant. If fractions are disregarded and the increase is described as only eightfold, the situation can be summarized by stating that the output of printed material on exchanges is doubling in quantity every three and one-third years.

Many persons now studying in library schools can expect to be alive during the years 2006–10, when, if this trend should continue unchecked, more than 100,000 pages about exchange will be pouring from the presses every day; it may be feared that production of literature on the subject will then leave librarians little time to engage in the practice of exchange. Geometrical growth of libraries—even if it threatens to make them dwarf the Pentagon or absorb the universities they now serve—may be indicative of a growth in value and importance that has its gratifying side. The annual production of writing on exchange, however, though sixty-four times as voluminous as it was twenty years ago, does not seem to have increased correspondingly in value of content, and the prospect of further dilution might be considered alarming.

Though international exchanges account for a large proportion of the total literature, it is not difficult to point out those publications that will serve as adequate guides to this area. The Princeton conference volume attempted, in effect, to provide an annotated bibliography of significant works antedating 1946.¹ The report by Lawrence J. Kipp,² though primarily concerned with governmental pro-

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grams for exchange between the United States and Latin America, is a valuable aid to investigation of almost any aspect of international exchanges involving American libraries. The Unesco handbook³ summarizes developments in international exchange for the years 1939-49 and lists and describes exchange centers, treaties, and conventions; it also offers information on transportation and customs. A new edition is planned for 1955, and in the meanwhile the *Unesco Bulletin for Libraries* serves as a monthly supplement.

The international exchange of government documents is covered so well by the sources just mentioned that it need not be considered here at all. The subject of barriers that impede international commerce in library materials is also treated at length in these sources and in a separate manual issued by Unesco;⁴ it would seem inappropriate to discuss barriers here in any case, because nearly all of them affect purchases and gifts as much as exchanges.

The growing volume of exchange literature may reflect a considerable increase in the number of publications exchanged, but there seems to be no convincing evidence that this is so. Indeed, it has been pointed out that the establishment of university presses has tended to diminish the amount of material that is available for exchange by university libraries,⁵ and another source of supply is drying up as fewer and fewer universities require publication of theses.⁶ Newly independent nations, on the other hand, may have a great bulk of material to offer and may also develop more effective methods. "India," it is asserted, "has no hampering tradition in the matter. . . . It can organise its exchange on the most rational lines, make experiments and improve it with far greater freedom. . . . India has not got any of the ideological or constitutional handicaps which got developed a century or two earlier. It is therefore possible for India to set up and practise the ideal standard in this form of international relation and be a model to other nations."⁷

The exchange of current publications—usually exchange by a library of publications issued by the institution to which it is attached—is undoubtedly more extensive than exchange of duplicates at the international level. As a means of encouraging it, Unesco has listed series currently available for exchange. A possible objection to lists of this sort is implied by questions that Errett W. McDiarmid suggested for discussion at Princeton: "Is there a tendency to acquire material on exchange simply because it is available and seemingly inexpensive? . . . What would be the effect of a great volume of exchanges on the book selection policies of libraries? Might it not result

in libraries' acquiring the things others want them to acquire rather than those they need?"⁸ Good bibliographies enable libraries to select what they need and propose exchanges in cases that seem appropriate; but lists devoted to exchange materials alone may sometimes, presumably, increase the temptation to neglect those series that can be acquired only by purchase.

Materials contributed toward the rehabilitation of libraries in war-devastated countries were allocated by national clearinghouses, and a few of the national exchange centers attempt to handle all international exchange receipts in the same way. There are theoretical advantages, but it is doubtful that institutions with successful exchange programs will agree. A recent article⁹ states that the "Uppsala University Library decisively rejects the idea of transferring its exchange work to a special exchange centre," explaining that postage would not be saved because the library already has franking privileges, that the library would not wish to share material exclusively at its disposal, that the center would not save labor but would be unwieldy, that both donors and employees are more interested in exchanges directly affecting their own institutions than in "an abstraction like an exchange centre," and that direct exchange has created considerable good will for the library internationally.

Most projects for the exchange of duplicates have been primarily domestic rather than international, though the *Unesco Bulletin for Libraries* lists wants and offers, and some national centers carry on a heavy international commerce. Exchange of duplicates, it should be emphasized, is a very different problem from exchange of current publications, and arguments against centralization in the latter field do not necessarily apply to centralization of duplicate exchange.

An interesting discussion is reported in the proceedings of the Philadelphia Conference of Librarians in 1876:

MR. BARTON called up the subject of duplicates, and how we can make the best use of them. . . .

MR. VICKERS hoped that the LIBRARY JOURNAL would be able to furnish an opportunity for effecting exchanges hereafter, by giving lists of duplicates.

MR. BARNWELL thought that even if the JOURNAL was made accessible for this purpose, the labor of making the lists would prevent its being generally used. . . .

MR. DEWEY . . . thought the best method, if it were practicable, would be to turn all duplicates into a common depository, and then contributors could draw from that source, the manager of the de-

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pository giving credit for all books sent in, and charging all drawn out.¹⁰

Experience has accumulated since 1876, but the best method of dealing with duplicates is still debatable, and Dewey's opinion is at least as tenable as it ever was. Many kinds of duplicate exchange organization have been established, and many are still in existence. One possible classification is by geographical scope—local (as in Philadelphia¹¹), state (like the one established in Albany by Melvil Dewey¹²), regional (as prophesied by Robert B. Downs, who has predicted that national efforts will prove abortive¹³), national, and international (like the Pacific Exchange Center recently established in Honolulu¹⁴). They may also be classified by method of operation. Some, like the Duplicate Exchange Union of the Association of College and Reference Libraries,¹⁵ merely systematize the circulation of lists of duplicates. Others, like the British National Book Centre,¹⁶ act as clearinghouses for lists of wants and offers that are sent to them. Still others, like the United States Book Exchange, collect duplicates and fill orders.

Some duplicate exchange organizations are limited to libraries specializing in a single subject such as law¹⁷ or theology.¹⁸ The exchange operated by the Medical Library Association, which has been described by its Manager as "the most wonderful institution of its kind in the world, and the most successful ever tried,"¹⁹ has a long experience that illustrates interesting problems. Its altruistic nature has been emphasized: ". . . there is still too much of the feeling to 'give something and get something in return for it.' This can never be the case in the Medical Library Exchange because the large libraries must give largely and receive very little, while the small ones receive much and give but little."²⁰ It was once estimated that "The large library should, normally, give ten times what it receives."²¹ Trading outside the exchange by members has been denounced as reprehensible—a "get-rich-quick, greedy method."²² Libraries were given priority in the order of their size until 1948, but there were difficulties:

The assigning is the most difficult and heartbreaking part of the Exchange work. We want so much for everyone to have what they need, but it is quite impossible. . . . We know that the constitution says assigning shall be by the size of libraries, the largest libraries to receive their requests first. The provision would work much better in reverse, and would be much more logical, for the larger [the] library, the less it should need from any duplicate list, if the large libraries played fair, for the constitution also states that no library

shall ask for a duplicate of what it already has on its shelves without stating that it is for a second set. . . .

Size of libraries should be a guiding principle, but it cannot be the final word if complete equity is to be maintained.¹⁹

Under the new system, two plans are used alternately. Distribution of one lot starts with the library that ranks in size immediately below the one offering the material and proceeds down through the list, reaching the largest library in the exchange only after the smallest has been passed; distribution of the next lot starts with the library that ranks in size immediately above the one making the offer and works up through the list, reaching the smallest libraries only after the largest have been given a chance.²³

Establishment of the United States Book Exchange is undoubtedly the most important event in American exchange during recent years, but it is not quite accurate to describe this exchange as "a new idea."²⁴ Dewey, it was noted, had something much like it in mind by 1876; he advocated it again in 1880, asserting that "If it wont pay to do the work in the cheapest way, it certainly wont pay to do it at all."²⁵ By 1930 he admitted that he had been ahead of his time a generation ago (a long generation!) but still believed that, sooner or later, someone would start a nonprofit center to which duplicates would be shipped.²⁶ Eighteen years later the American Book Center for War Devastated Libraries, Inc., gave birth to the exchange; a profusely illustrated booklet has recently told the story of the parent organization.²⁷ A monthly *Newsletter* has been issued by the United States Book Exchange since February 1948.

The organization accepts for exchange credit unsorted and unlisted lots of "monographs in science and technology published during the last ten years, or those published in the humanities, the arts, or history during the last fifteen years, as well as recognized classics of older date. There is no date limit on periodicals, which are acceptable in the same fields, both scattered issues and long runs."²⁸ Lists, arranged by language or country, are distributed regularly, and requests for any publication that the exchange might have or might later acquire may be submitted on forms that sell for ten cents each. A library receiving material from the exchange pays shipping charges plus handling fees ranging from ten cents to one dollar per item.

Establishment of the United States Book Exchange has not prompted other organizations to abandon their exchange systems, and lists of offers by individual libraries are still received in large numbers, even in institutions that customarily disregard them. Since doubts

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that such listing is profitable have been expressed repeatedly from 1876 on, and since a national clearinghouse was often advocated as the ideal solution for the problem of duplicates, the present situation, at first glance, may seem surprising. Perhaps it can be explained by consideration of underlying causes that have prompted library exchange.

The Kipp report, noting that interlibrary barter may seem an anomalous survival in a civilization that normally uses money for commercial purposes, acutely diagnosed the advantages of library exchange as falling into three classes: economic, bibliographic, and psychological.²⁹ Many of these advantages result from conditions that are clearly pathological. Inadequacy of library book-budgets has often been cited as a stimulus to exchange; during the depression, when it was "sometimes easier to get added N.Y.A. [National Youth Administration] help than an addition to the budget,"³⁰ a considerable impetus was provided by "the pressure of curtailed funds."³¹ Since World War II a major factor in international exchange has been "the lack of dollar exchange coupled with currency controls in most of the other countries in the world, which makes it difficult for institutions in those countries to obtain current American publications other than by exchange."³² The fact that satisfactory book dealers are not to be found in many countries may also be a symptom of economic morbidity, and the caprices of Soviet bureaucracy, which often make it possible to get on exchange material that cannot be purchased, are hardly healthy, though their causes may not be wholly economic.

Bibliographical deficiencies were largely responsible for the proposal that the United States Book Exchange serve as an agency for Farmington Plan acquisition of non-trade publications.³³ (Efforts to obtain a grant to finance this project have not succeeded.) As the Kipp report notes, "A library normally finds it expensive to locate foreign titles needed, and additionally expensive to locate the bibliographic data needed for ordering through commercial channels. These steps are all the more expensive when the material needed is from a country where publications are not systematically listed. The need for such data is often eliminated through use of exchange. . . ." ²⁹

The United States, however, has not been undergoing an economic depression since the war, and the other considerations that have just been noted apply to international exchange and to exchange of current publications rather than to domestic exchange of duplicates. Psychological factors remain as possible explanations of failure by the United States Book Exchange to supplant other channels. The Kipp

report states that "The psychological advantage in exchange lies in the simple fact that individuals and institutions sometimes prefer to pay their own way, and exchange of talents or goods may be preferred to the acceptance of gifts."²⁹ This is sound as far as it goes. On the domestic level, one can cite the extraordinary lengths to which a small library has gone in order to balance its exchange accounts, though reluctance to accept charity seems to have applied only to charity from other libraries, which were paid off with materials begged from individuals or commercial organizations.³⁴ There remain, however, other and more important psychological factors.

Exchange may be regarded as an adventure with attractions that have been vividly described:

Have you traveled to the fascinating land of exchange? Its boundaries are limitless and the only passport requirements are your good will and your desire to help other libraries. Of course there are the usual vicissitudes of travel—correspondence, sorting and packing. It sometimes requires a stout heart to conquer the trials of locating gratis packing materials and an alert mind to unravel the mysteries of transportation rates, custom regulations and the other intricacies of travel. Be that as it may, those who have overcome these obstacles will agree with me that it is a never-to-be-forgotten experience—rich in satisfaction.

. . . My first voyage was on the good ship Von KleinSmid Library of World Affairs of the Los Angeles University of International Relations Line, administered by the University of Southern California. . . .

. . . Many friendships were formed in the process. It takes little imagination to visualize the colorful backgrounds of some of the writers. . . . Imagine my pleasure at being recognized after several years and a change in position by a British friend.

. . . Answers came from many different types of libraries; some very large and important libraries were among those that participated. This is one of the pleasures of exchange—you never know what library will be your next partner.³⁵

The Executive Director of the United States Book Exchange, though convinced that her organization's plan is more economical than any other, has stressed the fact that "it was and has been the ideal of the agency not to try to supplant or absorb such direct exchanges as have provided friendly intercourse and helped to strengthen cultural ties over the years."³⁶ Still, such an organization can hardly avoid arousing some apprehension in those who value the personal relationships of which Flora B. Ludington spoke at Princeton:

I rather profoundly believe that exchanges between libraries that

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are arranged between library and library or librarian and librarian add to general cultural understanding more than they do in the operating of an agency. The mere fact that you have to write a letter, from one individual to another individual and probably have a continuing correspondence over a long period of years, I think, is a salutary thing, and we are living in a world that is too much built up around organizations. I think personal friendships, even though they have begun because of official position, nevertheless are very much worthwhile. . . .

We may not have seen our opposite number, who is the research librarian of some far-distant place, but we know his name through a long period of years, through an exchange of correspondence.³⁷

On the other hand, friendly feelings may not always result from the offer to enter into such relationships. The voyager who reported that many friendships were formed also indicated that, of the sixty American libraries approached, only one-half answered in any way; she writes: "It seems that with the added hint of the enclosed stamped and self-addressed envelop that [*sic*] only great lassitude and distaste for exchange could account for the small number of those who responded."³⁵ Disillusionment with half of one's colleagues may be a high price to pay for contacts with the remainder.

It may also be feared that centralization is not the only development now threatening to reduce in number the personal relationships that result from exchange. A librarian at Columbia University, noting that form letters are becoming increasingly popular, has reported: "One of the characteristics of exchange work is the high volume of correspondence. By the use of form letters Columbia has effected an estimated saving in time of sixty-six percent with a corresponding financial saving."³⁸

Perhaps, however, forms need not have a deadening effect of impersonality, for another student of the subject has instructed his readers: "Preface your short and neatly mimeographed list of books or serials listed in correct bibliographic entry with a brief statement of conditions. . . . Add: 'P. S. We shall appreciate receiving lists of duplicates your library offers.'"³⁹ The mimeographed form, consequently, does not preclude the human afterthought; like national advertising, it may be artfully personalized.

Finally, the individual's profits from exchange are not confined to adventure or to friendship; there is an anodyne vision that transcends these. ". . . Every item secured through our Exchange is another building block in an invisible shrine that must now reach to the heavens," the Manager of the Medical Library Association Exchange has written.

"When you pay for something you did not order; when your shelves are so crowded you cannot squeeze in another thin journal; when the Exchange process seems inordinately slow; when your back seems broken by sorting out the assignments; and your arms and legs ache from carrying packages to the post office; let this beautiful shrine rise before your eyes, and know that you are adding more building stones which are higher than mortal eye can see, and the annoyances will pass, the aches mysteriously disappear."¹⁹

Exchange, if it can offer this as well as adventure and companionship, evidently can be its own reward. The literature of the subject records no cost-accounting studies that would justify direct exchange of duplicates on a merely economic basis, but, if the practice fulfills needs that currency cannot measure, the results of such accounting might be irrelevant.

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