



Associations in the British Commonwealth

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THE PHILADELPHIA CONFERENCE of Librarians, held in October 1876, did more than found the American Library Association. It was also largely instrumental in the creation of the Library Association of Great Britain.

When the proceedings of this conference were published they were reviewed in England by E. B. Nicholson, then librarian of the London Institution and later to become a famous figure as Bodley's librarian. In 1877, there was a well-known weekly review called *The Academy* and the issue of January 27 of that year contained an article by Nicholson on the Philadelphia Conference.

He stated that the meeting had been attended by 102 representatives of libraries in the United States, but "only one stranger—Mr. Yates, of the Leeds Public Library—accepted the general invitation tendered to other countries. The science of library management has been so zealously and successfully cultivated in the States that this is a matter for much regret; had the governing bodies of large English libraries sent their chief officers to attend the Conference and inspect the various American systems, the expense incurred would probably have been more than compensated in most cases by the attainment of far higher efficiency."¹

Nicholson enumerated the various papers read at the conference with great care and was especially enthusiastic about Mr. Barnwell's on "A Universal Catalogue: Its Necessity and Practicability." He was, in fact, more than merely enthusiastic; he was optimistic. In his opinion, if the details of the scheme could be worked out, "it is difficult to see how the American, or, indeed, the English government could refuse to bear some portion of its expense."²

Nicholson's article was, however, more than a review of a periodical. It was a plea for a constructive plan, and he concluded with a proposal that English librarians should hold a similar meeting and establish a

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comparable organization. The fact that *The London Times* saw fit to publish the greater part of his review in its influential pages persuaded Nicholson to a further course of action. In a subsequent issue of *The Times* for February 16, 1877, he published a letter in which, with the support of the principal librarian of the British Museum, Bodley's librarian, the librarian of Cambridge University Library, the librarian of the Advocates' Library in Edinburgh and the librarian of Trinity College, Dublin, he called for a conference of English librarians. The result of his suggestion that librarians in the London area should meet and elect a steering committee was the formation of such a group in April 1877. It was this body which planned an international conference for the autumn of that year and invitations were duly sent out.

When this first conference assembled at the London Institution in the autumn of 1877, its 218 participants included seventeen from the United States. Affection likes to recall that among this number came Melvil Dewey in his newly conferred position of secretary and treasurer of the American Library Association. At an evening meeting on October 5, the last day of the conference, came a unanimous resolution: "That a Library Association of the United Kingdom be founded." The draft constitution was approved, the first officers were appointed, and so it began its work.

One further important step in the evolution of the association remained. On March 29, 1895, the council considered a recommendation that steps should be taken to secure a Royal Charter of Incorporation. Apart from the prestige value of such recognition and the fact that, by it, the association would become the officially recognized representative body of the profession, it also meant that the association could own property and take legal proceedings. After certain delays, occasioned by the somewhat cumbersome machinery designed to operate in such cases, it finally became an accomplished fact. To a traditionalist, there is still great satisfaction in the realization that the daily, rather humdrum, business of running the Library Association is still governed by this long statement of the aims and constitution of the body beginning in glorious style with; "VICTORIA, by the Grace of God, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, Queen, Defender of the Faith, to all to whom these presents shall come, Greeting": and ends "Witness ourself at Westminster the Seventeenth day of February, in the Sixty-first year of Our reign."³ Even the most routine reference back to a committee becomes, under such auspices, an act of grace.

Some attempt to appreciate the work of the association and an effort

to assess its achievement can be made by studying the "Purposes and Powers of the Corporation" as set out in the charter and by determining the progress made under each heading. The purposes were laid down as:

1. To unite all persons engaged or interested in library work, by holding conferences and meetings for the discussion of bibliographical questions and matters affecting Libraries or their regulation or management or otherwise.
2. To promote the better administration of Libraries.
3. To promote whatever may tend to the improvement of the position and the qualifications of Librarians.
4. To promote the adoption of the Public Libraries Acts in any City, Borough or other district within the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland.
5. To promote the establishment of reference and lending Libraries for use by the public.
6. To watch any legislation affecting Public Libraries, and to assist in the promotion of such further legislation as may be considered necessary for the regulation and management or extension of Public Libraries.
7. To promote and encourage bibliographical study and research.
8. To form, collect, collate, and publish (in the form of Transactions, Journals, or otherwise) information of service or interest to the Fellows and Members of the Association, or for the promotion of the objects of the Corporation.
9. To collect, and maintain a Library and Museum.
10. To hold examinations in Librarianship and to issue Certificates of efficiency.
11. To do all such lawful things as are incidental or conducive to the attainment of the above objects." ⁴

This is obviously a document of its time and certain of its provisions are now primarily of historic interest. There is little need now for the encouragement of the adoption of the Public Libraries Acts or the actual establishment of libraries. That is a phase which has passed and contemporary efforts must be concentrated rather on the improvement of such provisions as now exist.

The chief functions of the Library Association in the middle of the twentieth century might best be summarized under three headings; those relating to libraries and the science of librarianship; those relating to its members; and those relating to its own publishing and bibliothecal activities.

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Any library association which sets out to promote the better administration of libraries generally is facing an enormous task, yet it is one which, if not undertaken, will reduce the whole of the association and the profession to impotence and decay. Much will have to be left to the individual initiative of members and this aspect will be considered later. An association can however function best along broad lines of policy within a national framework, while remitting more specialized functions to particular groups of people.

In England, at present, one or two important fields claim the Library Association's attention at a national level. First of these might well be considered the imperative need for new legislation relating to public libraries. In spite of important later enactments, much of the public library provision has grown up under the shadow of mid-nineteenth century legislation and conditions. Even though the important area of county librarianship is governed by an act of 1919, nevertheless the spirit of 1850 when the first enabling legislation for public libraries was passed by Parliament is still heavy upon us. Since that time two important things have happened. The structure of local government has undergone considerable change and will, in all probability, change yet more in the future. It is quite inadequate for many of the tasks which it is now called upon to perform and a recent leading article in *The Times*, a sure barometer of responsible public opinion, has called for an investigation. The second factor is the change in professional opinion regarding the functions of a public library.

The 1850 Acts appeared to regard the provision of libraries as an alternative to the gin palace or, following the tumultuous events of the 1830's and 1840's, an attempt to placate the rising demand of the artisans for enlightenment. The attitude of the 1919 act was to place county libraries as a minor toy of the formal education program. Between these varying opinions confusion has grown apace. Also, when neither the governing bodies nor the thing governed is on very certain ground it is hardly propitious for forward-looking programs. At several times, but especially during and since World War II, the Library Association has devoted considerable time to these matters.

That nothing has yet come to fruition is in greater measure due to the difficulties involved and the intransigence of government than irresolution on the part of the association. What is the average member of the association hoping for when eventually all those dreams become reality? More than anything else, in this writer's opinion, for three things:

1. Some kind of direct government grant for public libraries, so that

they may no longer be entirely dependent upon the straitened purses of local councils.

2. Some re-arrangement of library areas so that more effective and more economic units of administration may result.

3. The removal of county libraries from the direct control of directors of education and the establishment of county librarians as chief officers.

In order to enable the work of the association to be carried on more effectively in relation to its membership, provision has been made for various forms of grouping. Even in a country as small as Great Britain it was natural that steps should be taken to provide for something more than national meetings. Consequently the country has been divided into eleven regional areas, Birmingham and district; Eastern; London and home counties; Northern; Northern Ireland; North Midland; North Western; Scottish Library Association; South Western; Welsh and Yorkshire. Each of these branches runs its affairs through an elected committee and is financed by means of an annual grant from the Library Association which is computed according to their respective membership strengths. Each branch is also represented on the council of the Library Association by an elected member.

Further work is carried on throughout the country by sections which represent particular functional interests of the membership. The six sections are the Association of Assistant Librarians, which is the biggest of them all; the Medical Section; University and Research; County Libraries; Reference and Special Libraries; and the Youth Section. Two matters here call for special comment.

Five of the above sections are obvious in the declaration of their interests but some confusion might be experienced regarding the Association of Assistant Librarians. It began life as the 'Library Assistants' Association' in 1895 and was then entirely disassociated from the Library Association. It declared its purpose as 'uniting all persons engaged in library administration other than chief librarians.' Although it has now changed its name and has lost its independent status by becoming a section of the Library Association, from which it receives all its funds, its aims remain constant.

The avowed object of the Association of Assistant Librarians is to provide a forum, by means of meetings and publications, where the young assistant can express his views without feeling that his chief is registering severe disapproval nearby. To this end it provides an almost complete mirror and reproduction of the activities of the parent body.

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It holds an annual conference, it is organized in geographical divisions very similar to the branches of the Library Association and it publishes its monthly journal, now known as *The Assistant Librarian*. This position is not without its critics. Critics of the Association of Assistant Librarians urge that the usefulness which an organization of this kind may have had is something of the past. In a small profession it leads to a dispersal of effort which is extremely wasteful.

Above all, these critics point to the difficulty of deciding who is an "assistant librarian" and over whom this body spreads its protective wings. The chief librarian of a small system is excluded by the title of the association whereas the deputy of one of the largest systems is still eligible. It is a situation which is extremely anomalous and yet, against all reason, it seems to work. Its supporters, and they are many, urge that its justification is that it is the only part of the Library Association which appears to be doing anything of direct value to the younger members of the profession. There is some force in this statement and many people will point to the continuing success of the A.A.L.'s correspondence courses. The Library Association itself provides no form of tuition for its own examinations and every year many students study by means of these courses in their spare time, while working in their libraries.

Similarly, the chief publications of the A.A.L., apart from its journal, are the "primers" of the various examination subjects, in which every effort is made to compress as much essential examination material as possible into as small a physical compass as can be attained. They are open to many objections, especially from the educational standpoint, but their popularity with students ensures a ready sale. The general policy of the A.A.L. varies from time to time depending upon the popular mood of the moment and the membership of its council. There have been periods when it seemed to be dictated entirely by an "agin' the Government" mentality and consisted in waiting to see what measures the Library Association proposed in order that the A.A.L. might oppose them. Luckily this is not the case at present and the leaders of the Association of Assistant Librarians have been very constructive in all their acts of recent years.

One other point regarding the sections of the Library Association calls for comment and is a peculiarity of omission rather than commission. The absence of any section specifically concerned with public libraries, aside from the County Library Section, is not due to any lack of preoccupation with their concerns but rather the reverse. The Library Association is currently primarily an association of public librar-

ians and, by virtue of historic accident, this has in the past meant pre-eminently municipal public librarians. Members not conforming to this general pattern have been compelled, by the instincts of self-preservation and self-interest, to form sections in which their particular specialities may be given due weight. Obviously it is a good thing that those members with specialized interest in some branch of librarianship should have the opportunity to foregather and discuss their common aims and problems. It is the feeling of many people in Great Britain that some reorganization should take place which would put public librarianship on the same footing with the rest and that it should cease to be regarded as the standard from which any departure is abnormal.

There is probably one distinction above all between these sections of the Library Association and their counterparts in the American Library Association. It is comparatively rare for a librarian to have experience in more than one type of library; the public librarian, for example, is usually a public librarian to the end of his days. Consequently, each of the sections is far more a watertight compartment than would otherwise be the case and the membership of one section is not too well known among the membership of another.

This makes it increasingly important and desirable to have as much administrative unity among the sections as possible. In this direction, attention will always be centered upon the major bifurcation of the profession created by the foundation in 1924 of the Association of Special Libraries and Information Bureau (Aslib). Into this organization, which is completely separate from the Library Association, are poured the major efforts of special librarians and that indefinable body of men and women known as "documentalists." There are people in the library profession who regret the existence of Aslib but, for all their tears, Aslib is an accomplished and a flourishing fact. Even assuming that the more dogmatically inclined documentalists are correct and that there is no similarity at all between documentation and librarianship, yet nobody would ever seek to deny that they are contiguous and interdependent fields of activity. In that event, and for their mutual benefit, it is important that they should agree upon the terms of their peaceful co-existence. This, again, is a matter upon which the policy of the Library Association can have great effect in the near future upon the general shaping of the profession. Some progress has already been made and the two organizations have recently been investigating the problems facing the education and training of their members.

Aslib provides an almost exact parallel of the activities of the Li-

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brary Association. Its national organization of council, committees and branches, its annual conference, and branch meetings are similar. The only difference in function relates to the membership served by the two bodies and, when it is realized that the Library Association has a University and Research Libraries Section and a Reference and Special Libraries Section, the confusion appears to be complete. It seems difficult for the two associations to outline clearly their respective spheres of influence because this would demand agreed definitions of "librarian," "special librarian," "documentalist," "information officer," and all the other regularly used and infrequently understood terms. It is fortunate that all the officers involved can discharge their duties satisfactorily even in the absence of a sure nomenclature. The future relations between these two professional bodies will have considerable effect on the shaping of events. There comes a moment, after years of soul sustaining argument, when both sides find it difficult to retreat from their entrenched and embattled positions.

A somewhat comparable, although less aggravated, condition is found in relation to the School Libraries Association. Again, this is a body which is entirely disassociated from the Library Association and concerns itself with a particular category of libraries. Once again there is a measure of duplication, because the Youth Libraries Section of the Library Association is interested in school libraries as one part of its work with young people. The School Libraries Association is strongly representative of those teachers who are running school libraries and, in the great majority of cases, doing so without any kind of training or instruction in librarianship. The likelihood, therefore, of their wishing to be associated with the national professional body is remote.

Both these cases have developed because of the particular interest of the main body of membership of the Library Association. As has been said, it is predominately an association of public librarians and, in the public libraries at the present time, those working with children and young people are a depressed minority. It is not a field of activity which is regarded as a stepping stone to more important posts and many librarians do no more than pay lip service to it. The fate of the "Work with Young People" paper in the Library Association's syllabus provides an indication of this attitude. It was removed because of the opinion expressed by certain librarians that there was not sufficient content in the field on which to conduct an examination. Only following considerable agitation by the Youth Libraries Section was it permitted to return. When important groups feel that their interests are

being neglected, it is hardly surprising, however regrettable, that they should form their own organization.

One of the most direct ways in which the Library Association hopes to advance the cause of librarianship is through the work done on behalf of the individual member. A profession can be no stronger than its members and any real advance in the status of an individual librarian is certain to reflect eventually upon the standing of the whole body of librarians. Much of this work is naturally directed towards salaries, a field of endeavor in which success is welcomed for very personal reasons as well as for the enhanced reputation of a better rewarded profession. In this imperfect world public estimation will always be proportionate to the salary check. The Library Association has been greatly concerned, particularly during the post war years, with negotiations for salary scales and has met with considerable success.

The association also keeps a regular watch on advertisements officially announcing openings in library positions and approaches are made to those authorities who are not offering what appear to be adequate salaries. The danger of a low salary is not that applicants will be lacking, but that those who do apply may not have the necessary competency for the post. It is a matter which has a very marked bearing on the general health of the profession and can only be satisfactory when every member co-operates to the full by avoiding any 'black balled' appointments.

Any consideration of salaries and conditions of service must, of necessity, be two-sided. Apart from what the employer can offer there is also the professional contribution of the librarian. A profession will, in the long run, attain the status to which the work of its membership entitles it, and the Library Association has for a long time endeavored to bring about the third clause in its schedule of 'purposes and powers' enumerated above by means of the tenth clause.

The first examinations of the Library Association were held in July 1885, and although there have been, and continue to be, many changes in the official syllabus of topics covered in the examination, the overall picture has remained much the same. The over-riding factor is that, except in one particular instance, the association has complete control in the construction syllabus and the examinations. As a result of these examinations the association issues successful candidates with a 'Certificate of Efficiency' and all those members who have been so approved are 'chartered librarians.' This certificate is the officially recognized qualification for professional positions and is a specific re-

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quirement for practically all positions in public libraries, government libraries, and some special and university libraries.

There are two categories of chartered librarians. The Associates of the Library Association are those who have passed their first qualifying examination and Fellows of the Library Association are those who have progressed further to a final examination. The minimum educational requirement pre-requisite to sit the examinations of the Library Association is a General Certificate of Education, which is attainable at about the age of sixteen and the terminal point for secondary education.

The association exists solely as an examining and certifying body; it does not undertake any tuition. Organized tuition is conducted along three main channels; the correspondence courses of the Association of Assistant Librarians; part time courses in various educational establishments throughout the country which will often be attended one evening a week by students who continue in their normal employment; and the full-time Schools of Librarianship.

Although the library schools are, in no way, under the control of the Library Association, they are intimately connected with it. The oldest of these schools is that in University College, London, which began life in 1919 aided by a substantial endowment from the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust. It enjoys the distinction of being the only library school in the country which is permitted by the Library Association to formulate its own syllabus and conduct its own examinations. The school awards a diploma to successful candidates and at a later date, mainly with the accession of professional experience, this can be translated into the Fellowship of the Library Association.

The association's main contact with the school is secured through its six officially appointed representatives who serve on the school's governing committee.

The other library schools, nine in number, are a post war development. They are situated in commercial and technical colleges in Birmingham, Brighton, Glasgow, Isleworth, Leeds, London, Loughborough, Manchester, and Newcastle.

As opposed to its benevolent outlook in 1919, the policy of the association in 1946 was to restrict the activities of these newer schools to straightforward tuition for its own examinations. Consequently, these nine schools have no control over the syllabus on which their curricula are based nor over the examinations by which their students are judged. However, since the policy of an association is not an affixed and abiding thing, it may be that a remedy will be found for

this strange situation. But whatever changes may ensue, it is probable that the majority opinion of the profession will prefer to see the retention of the system of certification and chartering by the association. It has distinct merits and need not be discarded when any reorganization of the professional educational program ultimately takes place.

Matters of professional education bulk largely in all the deliberations of the association and there is no other single activity to which so much time and money is devoted. Even when the comments of the severest critics have been heard, it must be admitted that the educational policy of the association has done a very great deal to raise the status of the librarian in the United Kingdom. The progress has been so marked that one can only hope that it presages even greater developments in the near future.

The eighth clause reciting the powers of the Library Association in its charter bade it "collect, collate, and publish information of service or interest" to its members. It is possible that those who drafted this foundation document envisaged this activity as one which would spring naturally from the immediately preceding item, which called upon the association to "promote and encourage bibliographical study and research."⁵ Admittedly, bibliography is a term with almost as many shades of meaning as documentation and is quite as frequently misunderstood. In general, however, this seems to have been one of the less well-obeyed injunctions. Bibliographical research has played a small part in the association's activities and its publications have not been replete with the fruits of such toil. But to say this is not to condemn the publications policy of the association which has accomplished most useful work in other directions. It is doubtful whether any works handled by the Library Association have had a better market over the years than Charles A. Cutter's *Rules for a Dictionary Catalogue* and the joint A.L.A./L.A. *Cataloguing Rules*. This latter is an ideal example of the kind of publication which results from a carefully planned and exhaustive enquiry. In these present days, when 'catalog rules revision committees' are sitting again and the name of Lubetzky is one to conjure with in the dark chancelleries of cataloging departments, the next publications in this vein will be eagerly awaited.

The most regularly criticized publication of any organization is usually its regular journal and so it has been in this particular instance. As pointed out elsewhere in this issue in the beginning the Library Association joined with the American Library Association in having *Library Journal* as a joint official organ, but inconvenience soon grew greater than the advantages. In 1889, the association adopted *The*

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Library as its official mouthpiece, a situation which lasted until 1898. Then, in January 1899, under the editorship of Henry Guppy, for so long famous as the librarian of John Rylands Library, Manchester, appeared the first issue of the *Library Association Record*. During the 55 years of its life, the *Record* has mirrored the changing fashions and interests of librarianship and has been well served by a number of editors. Any criticism of its contents, and this is not an infrequent occurrence, is primarily an indictment of a membership which fails to produce better articles. For a profession which spends its life among books, librarianship has hardly been outstanding in the realm of authorship. Perhaps familiarity has bred contempt for the thing by which it lives, but the literature of librarianship in Great Britain during the past quarter of a century has scarcely pulsed with vitality. Much of the general publishing of the Library Association, apart from its periodical, has been concentrated upon what may be regarded as text book material. It is possible that this is due to the association's great concern with its examination program, with the result that it has never been practicable to move outside this restricted orbit. Many of the text books published or sponsored by the association have been the boon companions of students for years. While none may ever achieve to the kind of immortality granted to works such as *Gray's Anatomy*, yet a list can not be ignored which contains such honored names as Arundell Esdaile and Ernest Savage. So great, however, appears to be the librarian's dislike of the pen that many of our greatest librarians will retire leaving behind them a very meager bibliography.

In another sphere of activity are the bibliographical tools of various types published by the association. Although they are few in number, they are worthy of attention and include some of the most important titles on the whole list. The oldest among them is the *Subject Index to Periodicals* which, after some forty years of quiet and regular existence, is now turning from an annual into a quarterly and, at the same time, producing a new venture in the shape of separate regional lists. These will be grouped under geographical areas of the United Kingdom in order to bring together the scattered entries relating to those districts. Change is also afflicting the old-established annual of *Year's Work in Librarianship*. The volume for 1950 will be the last one in this present series and it will be replaced by a series of *Five Years' Work in Librarianship*. It is hoped that the longer period of coverage will permit greater digestion of fact and more mature reflection by the contributors. The other bibliographical publications are both post-war arrivals. A glance at *Library Literature* demonstrates how bewilderingly

profuse is becoming the printed material of interest to librarians, especially in the peripheral subjects. No one can possibly hope to keep abreast of it; but to help in the sifting process the publication of *Library Science Abstracts* was begun in 1950. It has had a short life so far and no new venture is without its teething troubles, yet, in spite of this, it bids fair to be one of the most important of all the association's concerns. The final item of this group is the biggest in conception and in execution; it is especially heartening at the same time because it is a co-operative venture. The Library Association is one of the twelve sponsoring bodies which, through a representative council, have combined to produce the *British National Bibliography*. This weekly classified list of new publications, with only a few categories excluded is, even if not perfect, at least good enough to have attracted criticism. It has now settled down to being an accepted part of the British Library scene and there are not unfounded hopes that it will develop still more in the future. It is the nearest that this country has yet approached to a large scale scheme of centralized cataloging and is, consequently, a happy augury for the future. Its influence on classification appears, at present, to be more debatable and is viewed with some concern by those who believe that a notation symbol of upwards of ten digits is a snare in itself. But these are merely details in the development of a project which is having such an effect upon British libraries that it may well prove to be one of the most far reaching enterprises with which the association is connected.

A natural corollary to a discussion of publishing is some consideration of the association's own library and information bureau, established at the headquarters in London. This and the Greenwood Library in the Manchester City Libraries are the two main collections of library literature in Britain. The latter is entirely the concern of Manchester through the Greenwood bequest. The former at Chaucer House, the Library Association's own headquarters building in London, is its own. A fair sum of money, but never enough, is spent on this library each year and it is a living and thriving collection. Embodying as it does all forms of recorded information, it has proved to be a provision of great usefulness to the profession both here and in other countries.

The affairs of the association are directed by its council, of which, since the Llandudno Annual General Meeting of 1953, the majority are elected by, and therefore directly responsible to, the members. The core of the council consists of the nine elected 'London' councillors and the fifteen elected 'country' councillors. The distinction between these two categories is that the former work within a radius of 30 miles

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of Charing Cross while the latter are from outside that orbit. It is an arrangement which must appear very strange to an outside eye and, even within the association itself, it cannot be determined whether this is a device to prevent London librarians from swamping the council, or whether it is a necessary precaution in order to secure any representation of them at all. All these elected councillors are elected for three years and one third of their number retires each year.

Provision is also made in the By-Laws for the representation on the council of the geographic interests of branches and the specialized interests of the sections. Up to twelve members may represent each of these two categories and at present there are eleven councillors elected by the eleven branches of the association, and eleven either elected or appointed by the sections. Finally, there are the three members appointed by those associations of library authorities which are designated by the Library Association from time to time, such as the County Councils Association and the Committee of Vice-Chancellors [of Universities].

Tradition has established that the presidency of the association should be held alternately by a distinguished librarian and a non-librarian who is known to be interested in the work of libraries. It is a method which, from both streams, has brought many notable men to the highest honor which the association can confer. Until 1953 it also brought the privilege, subject to regular attendance, of perpetual membership on the council. But in an age when presidential honors appear to be conferred on younger librarians and when, happily, longevity seems to be a hall-mark of librarians, it was observed that the council chamber was becoming rather over-populated. In 1953 the position was changed, but without detriment to serving past presidents, so that only the immediate past president retains his seat on the council. All the foregoing, together with three vice-presidents and the three honorary officers of the association, treasurer, secretary, and legal adviser, constitute the council.

The council meets five times a year, with each period of about three days occupied with the meetings of the individual committees, which then report to the final full meeting of the council. The House and Library Committee, concerned with the headquarters and its library; the Library Research Committee; Membership Committee, and the Publications Committee proclaim their functions in their titles. Members are given an opportunity to name the committees on which they wish to serve and, subject to the limitations of arithmetical balance, those wishes are usually granted. The Finance Committee comprises those

who have expressed a desire for that influential body, together with the chairmen of the other committees, while the Executive Committee is a small general policy forming committee elected annually by council members from among their own numbers.

Apart from these general committees is the Register and Examinations Executive Committee, consisting of those members of council who are Fellows of the Library Association. This is the body which, as its name implies, is responsible for everything concerned with the examination and registration of members. From its own members it elects annually a small Education Sub-Committee which handles the regular routine of educational affairs and an extremely small, five in number, Assessors Sub-Committee. This is the quintet of final arbitration in matters of syllabus and examination and appears to the student to be a slightly superior Cerberus.

The administrative side of the association's affairs is conducted from the London offices, housed in the romantically and inappropriately named Chaucer House, by the secretary and his staff. Contrary to the policy of, for example, the A.L.A., the secretary is not a librarian but he numbers several on his staff in the roles of librarian and information officer, membership officer, education officer, and publications officer. There has recently been certain, but so far abortive, agitation for the appointment of an officer charged to attend to the needs of special librarians and there is a sporadic demand for a public relations officer. It appears to some members that the profession's voice is not heard sufficiently among the general public when matters of concern to libraries are being discussed. The economy cuts which the Treasury inflicted most harshly on the British Museum and the present position with regard to the seizure of obscene books are examples of situations which seem not to have aroused the association so much as might have appeared desirable. In the opinion of many in England, the stand of the American Library Association with its "Freedom to read" is a model of the kind of watchfulness which is essential everywhere in this day and age.

Under the provisions of the charter, the association is required to hold an annual business meeting which, in the normal course of events, is held as a part of the annual conference. There is little to distinguish the Library Association's conference from other such gatherings and, as will be apparent to all who read British periodical literature, recent conferences have not passed without criticism. Part of the difficulty lies in the fact that the association is not entirely a congregation of librarians. The conference is attended by many representatives of library

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authorities whose interest in libraries is non-professional and whose conference tastes are so varied as to be well-nigh incapable of satisfaction. The published comments of returning American librarians who have attended the annual general meetings of recent years have contained several references to the bad manners of the audience. Weighty matters, such as subscription rates, have been debated at post war conferences and it is true that enthusiasm has overstepped the bounds of courtesy; but calm will doubtless be restored.

The British scene has been sketched because it bears some resemblance to the evolving pattern in the other parts of the British Commonwealth. One of the most interesting of studies is the manner in which the important areas of the world which are now becoming library conscious are building upon, reshaping and adapting the experiences of professional associations in the older parts of the world. British eyes have looked of recent years with especial interest at the work now being done in India and the work which is just beginning so momentarily in West Africa. These countries will also benefit particularly from the events in Australasia and Canada, whose great developments come midway between the nineteenth century upbringings of England and America and the mid-twentieth century struggles of the newer countries.

The first attempt to form a library association in that part of the Commonwealth most geographically remote from Great Britain was an ill-started one. The Library Association of Australasia was founded in 1896 and, after holding four biennial conferences and publishing a journal from April 1901 to June 1902, it ceased in 1902. It was a short life, but the memory of some of its hopes and plans lingered in peoples' minds, but for a further quarter of a century nothing concrete emerged.

In October 1926, a preliminary meeting was called in Adelaide, a provisional committee appointed, and in August 1928, there came into being the Australian Library Association. Branches were formed in Queensland, Tasmania and South Australia, while in Victoria the local library association was affiliated to it. No associations or branches were formed in Western Australia or in New South Wales and this partial state coverage seems to have been one of the limiting factors in the development of the new organization.

The report of the Executive Committee for the years, 1928-33 said, "Associations have not been established in Western Australia or in New South Wales, although the New South Wales delegates were in accord with the proposal and promised then, and on several subsequent occasions, to establish an association in that State—an under-

taking which has not been fulfilled, and, on the contrary, intimation has been given to the effect that no steps in that direction are intended. This lack of co-ordination has prevented the Australian Library Association from functioning as effectively as if that undertaking had been honored." ⁶

A few years later in 1938, the principal librarian of the Public Library of New South Wales replied to this allegation and said,

"... there was no promise to form a branch, only to discuss the matter with the New South Wales librarians. In this discussion, it was felt that at this stage no real good could come of a library association constituted to include an overwhelming proportion of representatives of subscription libraries who had no professional knowledge. It was agreed, however, that there was urgent need for a professional association confined to the trained librarians only. The senior librarians in New South Wales felt that such an association could not be of much practical value to librarians, and would be likely to express opinions and pass resolutions with which the professional minority could not possibly agree." ⁷

Even at this distance of time some of the exchanges seem to have been rather acrimonious but out of the troubles grew a new organization, the Australian Institute of Librarians. It was founded at an inaugural meeting in Canberra in August 1937, with its first annual meeting and conference in Sydney a year later. The final change was a post-war one in which the title was amended to The Library Association of Australia and, as such, it flourishes now as a fully fledged professional organization. It is conducting its own examinations and its *Journal* has established itself, although it is still primarily of notes and news. The chief need at present is still for an increased membership and, as soon as this is achieved, the association will be able to act fully as a representative organization.

The first attempt to found a library association which would cover the whole area of Australasia was not repeated when the new ventures were launched, and, since 1910, New Zealand has had its own association which has followed its own separate course of development.

The year 1930 saw the birth of the South African Library Association which has been an extremely vigorous body ever since. It has done a great deal to raise the standard of librarianship in the Union and has been very active in the educational sphere. To an outsider, however, one of the great achievements of the South African Library Association has been the efforts which it has made to weld this bi-lingual race and profession into something of a cohesive unit. Its quarterly journal,

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South African Libraries, is itself a bi-lingual publication and the problems which are raised by a situation such as this have been as resolutely faced in South Africa as they have been in certain areas of Canada.

The idea of the formation of a national association of librarians in Canada seems to have been entertained since the early years of the present century. This remained a dream, however, until around 1925 when there was a meeting of Canadian librarians in Seattle, followed fairly rapidly by two more meetings in Vancouver. At this time the majority of interested Canadian librarians were members of the American Library Association and it was at a conference of this latter body that the next significant movement took place.

The American Library Association Conference of 1927 met in Toronto, under the presidency of G. H. Locke of the Toronto Public Libraries. Two meetings of Canadian librarians were held during this period with the participation of 300 Canadian librarians representing all the provinces with the exception of Prince Edward Island. As a result of these meetings there was a resolution which, in the words of the official report, was designed to "organize a Canadian Library Association, with the object, not of competing with the American Library Association, but of securing co-operation on all matters affecting the welfare of the library movement throughout Canada as a whole."⁸

As a pre-requisite of any such definite action it was decided to conduct a survey of library conditions in Canada which was done in the summer of 1930 by a small committee of three financed by the Carnegie Corporation. When their report was finally issued one of its recommendations was for a "representative Canadian Library Association, with a paid professional headquarters staff and with adequate facilities for field work."⁹

The next step was also made during a Canadian Conference of the A.L.A., when, at Montreal in 1934, a Canadian Library Council came into being. In 1946, G. R. Lomer, librarian of McGill University and director of the library school, said that; "Though little was actually done by this Council, it had the result of giving to the A.L.A., the idea of an advisory committee for Canadian Affairs, and the Council has acted since its inception as a liaison with that body."¹⁰ To interested Canadian eyes this may have seemed a small contribution yet, to the outside observer, it provides another example of one of the most heartening instances of international co-operation anywhere in the world.

The forty-ninth parallel, the 'undefended,' is the most famous and

most optimistic frontier in the world. The tolerance and sanity which it demonstrates seem to have pervaded American-Canadian Library Association affairs from the beginning and this is no mean achievement. At the organizational conference in Hamilton, Ontario in 1946, Luther Evans recalled that, some months before writing the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson had expressed the opinion that, "In a short time, we have reason to hope the delegates of Canada will join us in Congress and complete the American union, as far as we wish to have it completed."¹¹ This state of affairs has never come to pass and both countries are the greater because of the co-operation of their equalities. Librarianship is gaining because a similar respect for independent thought has pervaded their professional affairs.

Shortly after the initiation of the Canadian Library Council, financial aid from the Carnegie Corporation and the Rockefeller Foundation enabled the council to be constructed on representative lines, and this state of affairs prevailed until the foundation of the Canadian Library Association in June 1946. In appointing a woman as their first president, the Canadian Library Association achieved in one year a distinction which the British Library Association has failed to accomplish in three-quarters of a century.

It is, surely, permissible for a factual survey of this character to close with a hope for the future. There have been a few great international library conferences in the past and, at this present time, the International Federation of Library Associations' annual concourses and the steady application of Unesco open up vistas of future international good will. If, however, as is the dream of every man, co-operation is possible and practicable at all on a world-wide basis, how much more probable it is within the vast boundaries of the English speaking world. The Library Association has no International Relations Board nor is there any similar body at work within the Commonwealth. It would surely be a step in the direction which all men hope to see taken if there could be a Commonwealth Libraries Conference. Nothing but good could come of it, discussions could be wide and varied and some misconceptions could be cleared away. Of one thing the Commonwealth could be assured. Their deliberations would undoubtedly be followed with the friendliest possible concern by their professional colleagues in the other great English speaking community of the world.

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