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Library Trends

Rare Book Libraries and Collections

HOWARD H. PECKHAM, Issue Editor

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Library Trends, a quarterly journal in librarianship, provides a medium for evaluative recapitulation of current thought and practice, searching for those ideas and procedures which hold the greatest potentialities for the future.

Each issue is concerned with one aspect of librarianship. Each is planned with the assistance of an invited advisory editor. All articles are by invitation. Suggestions for future issues are welcomed and should be sent to the Managing Editor.

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CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE:

HOWARD H. PECKHAM
Introduction

LAWRENCE C. WROTH
A Negation and Some Affirmations

THOMAS R. ADAMS
Rare Books: Their Influence on the Library World

LOUIS B. WRIGHT
Utility of the Special Research Library

CECIL K. BYRD
Rare Books in University Libraries

ELLEN SHAFFER
The Place of Rare Books in the Public Library

FREDERICK R. GOFF
Who Uses Rare Books and What For

GEORGIA C. HAUGH
Reader Policies in Rare Book Libraries

ROLAND A. L. TREE
Fashions in Collecting and Changing Prices

ROBERT O. SCHAD
Friends of the Huntington Library

WRIGHT HOWES
A Rare Book: Its Essential Qualifications
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Introduction

HOWARD H. PECKHAM

To devote an issue of Library Trends to rare book libraries and collections is clear recognition of two facts: that they are administered differently from other libraries, and that there is no extensive literature on the subject. Not alone is the American public in labeling rare book libraries as esoteric places difficult to understand. Younger librarians, trained under today’s banner extolling service, sometimes are affronted by locked book cases and regard “non-circulating library” as almost a contradiction in terms, akin to “bladeless knife.” Even some scholars think it pointless extravagance to buy an expensive first edition of a title that has been reprinted or can be photostated. Inevitably, the rare book library has acquired a reputation for arrogance or preciousness.

Yet these same people understand and approve of the concept of a limited hunting season and a limit on the number and size of fish that may be caught. These rules apply to the conservation of natural resources. The application of conservation measures to books (which incidentally do not reproduce themselves) for the sake of preserving them through innumerable seasons for successive generations of “hunters” to use and enjoy is not so readily comprehended. Rare book libraries do have regulations that may appear strange. Certainly they reflect attitudes no longer in vogue. Yet they cannot be dismissed as antiquarian hangovers; the distinctive operating practices have developed logically from the nature of the material in custody. The unusual characteristics of that material may be summarized briefly as follows:

It is expensive. The average cost of each book added to a public library is about four dollars; to a university library, about six dollars. The price paid per acquisition at the William L. Clements Library last year averaged $92; at the John Carter Brown Library, $97. These

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figures are unexceptionable and probably are exceeded by a few other institutions.

It is so scarce as to be difficult or impossible of replacement. Two copies of a book are not bought in the first acquiring of a title, and reordering in case of loss is useless. Manuscript items are, of course, unique.

More than the text is important. Rare books may be prized for their pictures or maps, for their binding or association, for their printer or place of publication, for their scarcity or other factors. Priority puts a premium on first editions. In such libraries it does make a difference in what form a text reaches their shelves.

Compared to modern publishing output and the size of city libraries, material eligible for inclusion in a rare book library is small in quantity. Usually it has been sifted by generations of scholars and collectors. A rare book library, therefore, is almost never a big library.

Such characteristics as have just been mentioned stimulate certain attitudes toward rare books. Translated into policies they include the following:

Physical protection is emphasized. The attitude of the curator more nearly resembles that of a conservationist than of a public librarian. Measures taken include locked cases and file drawers, humidified circulating air, absence of direct sunlight, cleanliness, oiling of leather bindings and boxing of books in paper or board covers, careful checking in and out of books used, and sometimes special insurance.

Use is restricted. Circulation outside the building is almost never permitted, and reading rooms are supervised. Cautions are given about handling rarities. Readers have to identify themselves and sometimes prove their competence by deposing that they have exhausted the secondary materials on their subject. Since most of the patrons are doing research, a very high percentage of them are scholars, as distinguished from the lay public and children.

Acquisitions are given prime attention and usually are the direct concern of the administrative head. Dealer catalogs are studied intently. Books are bought individually, not in lots, and exchanges with other libraries are not practiced.

Classification is simplified where the library is small or devoted to a single field, and spine labels are generally avoided. A chronological arrangement is favored for rare Americana, for instance. Further unorthodox classification is readily made if reasons appear for it.
Introduction

Cataloging is frequently detailed, so as to permit identification of the particular copy owned. References to bibliographies ordinarily are made, as well as added entries for printer, place of publication, date, bookplates, binding, autographs, etc.

The dearth of rare book library literature is indicated by the surveys several contributors felt obliged to make for their articles. Moreover, close reading of the essays will reveal that the authors do not always agree with one another in their attitudes about rare books. In part the differences arise because there is no great body of written matter which might tend to standardize their views; in part, because of the genuine and recognized differences among rare book collections. This issue of Library Trends may well become a solid reference work in this uneven field.

The articles assembled here do not, of course, cover all aspects of the subject. Rather they touch on certain highlights and perplexing problems in this area of librarianship. Acquisition has been discussed in an earlier issue of this journal; the special cataloging problems of rare books should be explained in conjunction with the subject of cataloging generally; the relation of rare book libraries to private collectors is a hackneyed theme. The topics which are discussed sometimes are broad, sometimes are particularized.

L. C. Wroth, the "dean" of rare book librarians, succinctly points up the distinctive character of rare books and indicates how closely the librarian pores over his wares—and by implication how fond he must be of books. T. R. Adams analyzes the impact of the rare book philosophy on the library world. Certain administrative aspects are discussed in C. K. Byrd's treatment of rare book collections in university libraries, in Ellen Shaffer's account of such collections in public libraries, in L. B. Wright's hard-hitting essay on the temptations and obligations of acquisition, and in Georgia C. Haugh's survey of the treatment of readers. F. R. Goff emphasizes the continuing usefulness of rare books in modern research activity.

Collecting trends and costs have often determined the nature and completeness of rare book collections. A dealer, R. A. L. Tree, casts a backward glance at special fields and supplies some figures and opinions that give pause for thought on what lies ahead. One solution to the cost problem has been the formation of "friends" groups to help in making purchases; as secretary of the largest organization, R. O. Schad tells of its success and benefactions. Finally, we are given a hard measure for distinguishing uncommon, scarce, and rare books.
by a venerable dealer and student of price fluctuations, Wright Howes. To all of these distinguished contributors the editors are indebted.

Rare book librarians tend to associate with scholarly organizations made up of actual and potential readers. They are not trying to maintain aloofness from the library profession, even though the programs at professional meetings have to be devoted to problems and themes which do not concern them. Nor do they wish to be regarded condescendingly as "queer" or consciously different in this era of pronounced emphasis on library service and public relations. Custody of expensive and often irreplaceable material, however, does cause them to maintain certain attitudes and policies which the public libraries have left behind in their astonishing advance and multiple services. In this sense, rare book librarians tend to be old-fashioned, orthodox, and out of step. They retain old concepts about books and their use that seem to be passing out of style. It should be a matter of pride to all librarians that the profession continue to be a large enough mansion to afford room for variations of philosophy, and that uniformity of attitudes is not wholesome or desirable to cultivate.

A note of appreciation is due to the many librarians who patiently answered letters and questionnaires thus providing the essential information upon which much of the following discussion is based. The libraries of the following universities participated: Brown, California, California at Los Angeles, Chicago, Columbia, Cornell, Duke, Harvard, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Johns Hopkins, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, North Carolina, Ohio State, Princeton, Texas, Virginia, and Yale; data were also secured from the Cincinnati, Cleveland, Detroit, Enoch Pratt, New York, and Philadelphia public libraries; the Library of Congress, and the National Library of Medicine.

Among individuals contributing material the following were especially helpful: Herbert Cahoon, Chief, Reference Department, The Pierpont Morgan Library; J. M. Edelstein, Reference Librarian, Rare Books Division, The Library of Congress; Mary I. Frey, Registrar, The Henry E. Huntington Library; Isabelle F. Grant, Rare Book Room Librarian, The University of Illinois Library; Ella Hymans, Curator of Rare Books, The University of Michigan Library; William A. Jackson, Director, The Houghton Library, Harvard University; Fannie Ratchford, Librarian, Rare Book Collections, The University of Texas Library; Robert Rosenthal, Curator, Special Collections, The University of Chicago Library; James A. Servies, Reference Librarian, College of William and Mary Library; Lewis M. Stark, Chief, Reserve Division, The New York Public Library; Nicholas B. Wainwright, Research
Introduction

Librarian, The Historical Society of Pennsylvania; Gertrude L. Woodward, Custodian of Rare Book Room, The Newberry Library; Louis B. Wright, Director, The Folger Shakespeare Library; John Cook Wyllie, Librarian, The University of Virginia Library; and Marjorie Wynne, Librarian, Rare Book Room, The Yale University Library.
A Negation and Some Affirmations

LAWRENCE C. WROTH

If this short discussion of the rare book library has any underlying thesis it is one that must be stated negatively. Briefly it is that there is nothing of the ineffable about the rare book library. It is an institution with a job to do that differs only in certain procedures from that of the general reference library or the municipal circulating library. And there is no secret about library purposes. As long ago as 1750 the Company of the Redwood Library of Newport described their newly established institution as a place "whereunto the curious and impatient inquirer after the resolution of doubts and the bewildered ignorant might freely repair . . . to inform the mind . . . in order to reform the practice." To this somewhat austere statement we may add that a Cavalier clergyman had said a century earlier that one of the functions of a book was "to entertain the Reader with delight." The rare book library may not go further in statement of purpose. Like other libraries it exists to inform, to enlighten, and to delight its readers through collecting books, preserving them, and making them available for use.

In defining the place of the rare book collection in the community of which it is a part, whether that community is the library of a noble university as in the case of the Houghton Library, a great general library as is the case of the Rare Book Division of the Library of Congress, or the more loosely organized bibliothecal communities of the Huntington and Morgan Libraries, the concept of integration between the part and the whole is not to be lost sight of. In one mood the rare book library may be regarded as the apex of the pyramid formed by the whole store of books of its particular community; in another it may be thought of as the base of that pyramid. But apex or base there is one aspect of it that may not be forgotten—every book upon its shelves is integrated with some other book or group of books, or, it might almost be said, with every other book in the general collection. The existence of this kinship, this subtle but direct inter-

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relationship with the general collection must always be remembered in thinking of and planning for the rare book collection.

Why then, if books are books, if there is no essential difference between the rare book and the common book, need the special collection be set up and maintained? True enough, books are books by genus, but undeniably there are species of the larger family which require special consideration. There are books which have survived the centuries in unique examples or in very small numbers; there are books—and they are always rare in their early editions—which, unloosing new forces, have affected the destinies of men and nations; there are books become fragile through age; and there are those of transcendent beauty in design, printing, illustration, or binding. If these books are to be preserved for the scholars of today and tomorrow, they must be segregated and given, in their physical and all other aspects, particular and loving care. It is not necessary in our time to put forward arguments for the segregation of such books as these. The principle is accepted even though there is occasional resentment that the segregated books become automatically less accessible to the student. It is the part of the rare book librarian to recognize this feeling and strive to counter it by easing access to his treasures without relaxing his care of them. This is not easy, but he can and does do it if he is careful not to segregate himself as well as the books. It is his pleasing experience to learn that in this delicate operation most people if met half way will cheerfully come the other two-thirds.

But mere segregation and air conditioning are not enough. These books require special, individual treatment in cataloging and in bibliographical study. The rare book librarian must employ the principles, at least, of those technical, and very American, cataloging procedures which have enriched scholarship everywhere by bringing out and recording the hidden as well as the obvious meaning of texts. He must employ all the recommended and approved methods of record keeping—order and accession records, shelflists, and other complexities of which some are less necessary than others. But having done all these things, having put his book through the assembly line, he must enlarge and prolong the procedures of his brother in the general library. He must bring into use the procedures of descriptive bibliography. His books on the average may cost in the neighborhood of $100 each. Up to the point just reached in their processing he has treated each one as if it were a three-dollar trade book. Thereafter he goes to work upon it for what it is, applying to it the precepts and
practices of descriptive bibliography, using bibliography as a means rather than an end in itself, using it, indeed, as "a process in the study of the transmission of texts," and thinking of texts as expressions of the human spirit. He sometimes finds that used in this fashion and for this purpose bibliography becomes a light in a dark place.

But he may not stop with a formal bibliographical description of his book. He makes a card to be filed under its date of publication so that the chronological place of the text in the development of ideas may be fixed, and he files that card in a catalog as comprehensive in size as his shelflist. He makes a card for its printer and a card for its publisher and a card for its place of publication, and he files these in three separate catalogs. He then accumulates in another file such bibliographical data concerning it as may be available, and supplements these by his own discoveries and observations. To this he adds, and here is a continuing process, any bibliographical references to it which may be found in his own correspondence with booksellers and scholars. In this or separate files he records binding characteristics, if worthy of note, and notes upon provenance and association. The fact that a not too important book is found in a gorgeous and truly notable binding may mean little, but it may mean a good deal to a reader who encounters a note concerning it. The circumstance that a Venetian book of 1504 with important American reference is found in a contemporary German binding tells the reflective scholar something about the dissemination of information in the Europe of that period and thus becomes a small element in the history of ideas. A seventeenth-century European book attacking witchcraft inscribed by its author to an American opponent of the great delusion may in that very copy have been an element in the advance of man from darkness to the light. Truly a record of provenance or association should be kept. Only when these and similar investigations have been made and their results recorded can the librarian put the book in its place upon the shelves with the feeling that to the best of his ability and knowledge his library is prepared to say that it is carrying out its function of giving its clientele information, enlightenment, and delight.

The intensive studies described in the foregoing paragraphs underlie the special services of the rare book library. The identity of function of the rare book library with that of the general library, the necessity of using the library science procedures of the general library means that its head is basically a librarian and that he should keep in close touch through the library associations with the concepts and developments of his profession. He need not approve all the acts of these
organizations but he should not separate himself from their aspirations.

Personally this author wishes the rare book library curator would continue to call himself by the honored name "librarian" rather than by the popular and high-sounding title of "director." He is the keeper of books, the library keeper, the bookman, the librarian. There are institutions so diversified in the genres of their collections and in their aims and activities that "director" seems to be a logical title for their heads, but in most cases no such conditions exist, and it would be a pity should the old term with its happier connotation be generally discarded. There are those of us who are fiercely proud of it and who think of the alternative title as without specific implication, something brought in from the world of commerce and industry, not applicable to the work of the bookman.

The special library with its fundamental identity of function with the general library must go on to more complex procedures than the latter employs to make itself effective. A new procedure—the bibliographical—is added to its primary function. But there is no dichotomy thus brought into being. The two procedures merge into the one purpose. The increase of responsibility brings with it the heightening of privilege, the privilege of rendering to mature readers, to scholars, to bookmen, to advanced students a peculiar service, and with institutions as with men life without service is life without meaning.
Rare Books: Their Influence on the Library World

THOMAS R. ADAMS

Since 1940 at least nineteen major research libraries have added a rare book collection of some kind to their administrative framework. In some cases this has been an entirely new development. In others it has meant the regrouping and redefining of already existing special collections. In light of these facts, it is particularly interesting to note that the indexes of the A.L.A. Bulletin for the past forty-five years have only three minor entries under "rare books." This is not meant to imply that the subject has been ignored in library literature. What it does seem to mean is that the official publication of the principal professional library organization has not considered rare books important enough to merit discussion. This author does not propose to find fault for this neglect. Instead it is intended to bring into focus some of the forces which brought the present rare book concept into existence. The role rare books have played in the recent history of American libraries will be described, both as in association with the formal library profession and as independent of it. Finally, in view of the present impact of rare books on library administration and operation, some suggestions for the future will be offered.

The term "rare books" and "rare book collections" will be used here to include the whole realm of rare book research libraries, special collections, and rare book collections. Each institution has its own idea of what is meant or implied by the term it chooses to use. A survey conducted by the author showed policies ranging all the way from the segregation of "high spot" rarities to all inclusive special collections containing all library storage problems. For this article it is sufficient that the concept has enough meaning to devote an issue of Library Trends to the subject.

The rare book library concept has taken three principal forms among

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Rare Books: Their Influence on the Library World

American libraries. The first is to be found among the subscription or society libraries which managed to survive the library revolution of the past seventy-five years. The second is the independent specialized research library created through the generosity of a well-to-do benefactor. Lastly, there is the rare book collection within a larger library.

At the opening of the nineteenth century, all of America's thirty-odd libraries were privately supported and, to a large extent, privately patronized. Although these early collections were open to the public on some kind of terms, they were generally regarded as the private preserve of share holders or members of the societies who owned them. The men who ran these libraries were from the well-to-do class, reluctant to expose their property to the rigors of indiscriminate public use. The collections reflected a readership well educated in the best eighteenth-century traditions. Many had been assembled by men of sound literary taste and judgment like Thomas Prince, James Logan, and Thomas Jefferson. Indeed, the traditional picture of the well rounded eighteenth-century gentleman can serve as a prototype for the American librarian at the turn of the century: a man of wide humanistic interests, aware of his curatorial responsibilities, and concerned with building his collections along sound and discriminating lines.

There is no occasion to recount the impact of the industrial revolution and the expansion of America on the balanced and self-contained way of life of which these early libraries were a part. The increase in book production, the expansion of the reading public due to education and the increase in leisure time, the increase in new forms of publications such as magazines and government publications, the disproportionate increase in publications in certain subject fields such as science, technology, and economics all placed an immense strain on both the physical capacities and the intellectual orientation of the eighteenth-century library geared for a homogenous clientele.

Between 1800 and 1875 an average of about forty-eight libraries a year were founded in this country. The duplication, conflict, and confusion that often characterized these years is familiar to any student of library history. The resolution of this great problem took place during the last part of the nineteenth century with the beginning of the American library profession by a dedicated group of men and women. The creation of the free public library in its modern form, the founding of the Library Journal, the Library Bureau, and the American
Library Association in 1876 and the opening of the first school of Library Economy in 1887 by Melvil Dewey are but the most familiar parts of a whole series of developments and achievements. The essence of the missionary spirit of those early days has been expressed by H. W. Kent, a member of Dewey’s first class in 1884. “What Dewey taught was not the love of books, either for their literary content or their physical properties, but how to administer a library and how to care for the needs of those who would know and use books. His adoption of the word ‘Economy,’ somewhat strange sounding at the time, expressed exactly what he had in mind—the administration of a library in a businesslike, efficient manner.”

Thus it was that the new profession, growing up in an era of pragmatism, chose “Service” as its watchword. The great flood of printed material that had been coming from the presses of the world, and which was to increase to then unimaginable proportions, was organized and managed with vigor and determination. These men and women had to be hard-headed about books. Library procedures had to be worked out in terms of usefulness and reader demands. Classification, cataloging, binding, shelving, acquisition, and all other operations that go to make up the modern library had to be created in terms of what would be most effective for the growing masses of library users. Of the many tributes received by the American library profession for its achievements perhaps the most telling is the fact that institutions as old as the Vatican and as young as the library school at Ankara have come to it for advice, guidance, and training.

As in most reform movements that accomplish a great deal in a short time, the library revolution discarded much that was vital in the “old way.” The great scholar-librarian, regarded as impractical and unrealistic, became a teacher and found his way into the newly re-oriented academic profession. The collector-librarian, regarded as a mere antiquarian accumulator who filled the library with little used and therefore useless material, fell into disrepute, and the librarian who knew his books, inside and out, as intimate friends, was characterized as a stooped old man wearing a green visor, an alpaca coat, and shuffling about among dusty and disordered shelves. Yet it is with these men that the modern rare book story begins. They kept the great humanistic library traditions of learning and scholarship moving forward and adapted them to the needs of the modern world. They were able to do this because there were books and collections which would not submit to the ruthless discipline imposed by the library profession. Some of the new techniques, such as the card catalog, were quickly
Rare Books: Their Influence on the Library World

adopted. Indeed, men and women trained in the new profession played an important part in the continued growth of those libraries which still operated under the old regime. However, the vigorous insistence of the new library profession on standards of efficiency, immediate usefulness, and quantitative measurement were out of place in the libraries that still relished the old traditions.

The most prominent group of libraries in which the older philosophy held sway were among the society and the subscription libraries. Historical societies like the American Antiquarian Society, the Massachusetts Historical Society, the New-York Historical Society, and the Historical Society of Pennsylvania all were devoted entirely, or to a large extent, to books and manuscripts in specialized fields. They, therefore, needed men who were primarily historians rather than professional librarians. In certain instances, privately endowed research libraries such as the Newberry and the more wealthy subscription libraries such as the Library Company of Philadelphia and the Boston Athenaeum, were able to pick and choose the elements of the new professional philosophy they wanted to put to use and they often retained scholars, collectors, and bibliophiles as their librarians.

The administrative officers of the great and growing research libraries also recognized that there were some books that could not be submitted to ordinary library routines. In 1899 the University of Michigan set up its own rare book room. Harvard, many years before the building of the Houghton Library, had its locked closets and later its Treasure Room with two floors and numerous rooms, while Yale was segregating its rarities as far back as the nineteenth century. Among the public libraries, the New York Public Library has long been preeminent as a place where books with special virtues would receive care from men with special bibliographical talents. The consolidation of the Lenox and Astor books in 1911 resulted in the creation of a number of special collections of outstanding importance, while the presence of Wilberforce Eames on the staff provided it with an aura that no other library in the country could quite match.

In 1904 there was injected into this picture an old element in a new guise. The collector of books has always been an intimate part of library growth. James Logan, Peter Force, James Lenox, J. B. Thacher, H. C. Lea and H. E. Widener are but a few of the book collectors that American libraries are proud to have as a part of their history. As early as 1845 John Carter Brown of Providence, Rhode Island, began assembling what was to become the greatest library of Americana in the United States. Through two generations of wise and
fastidious collecting the library grew to the point where scholars everywhere were becoming aware of its importance. Finally, in 1898, the family decided that the time had come to give the collection a permanent home. They built on the campus of Brown University the John Carter Brown Library, which opened in 1904. Established in its own building, it was completely independent of the main university library with its own committee of management and its own librarian. The agreement of gift included strict regulations about the care and the use of the books.

The founding of the John Carter Brown Library coincided with the peak of what has been called "The Golden Age of Book Collecting." During the latter half of the nineteenth century, American book collectors began assembling libraries on the scale of the Duke of Roxburghe and Sir Thomas Phillips. Aided by the break-up of many English and European libraries and an antiquarian book trade that contained such men as Henry Stevens, L. C. Harper, J. F. Drake and A. S. W. Rosenbach, bibliophiles like Beverly Chew, Brayton Ives, and Robert Hoe created world famous collections. Many of these collections were to be dispersed on the owner's death. However, a number of collectors found in the John Carter Brown pattern a more effective method of disposing of their books, and during the next three decades there followed the Annmary Brown Memorial Library in Providence, Rhode Island, in 1907, the Henry E. Huntington at San Marino, California in 1920, the William L. Clements at Michigan and Alfred Clark Chapin at Williams College in 1923, the Pierpont Morgan in New York City in 1924, the Folger in Washington, D.C., in 1932, and the William Andrews Clark at the University of California at Los Angeles in 1934. These institutions differed in a number of ways, yet all but two have some relationship to a college or university; only the Huntington is any substantial distance away from a larger research library. In the years since their founding these libraries have pursued various goals, but their outstanding collective characteristic has been that they have, in general, become important research centers in their own fields. Through programs of publication, encouragement of research, and participation in the world of scholarship they have made themselves a vital part of scholarship in this country.

There were many reasons for the popularity of this kind of library, but high on the list of reasons was a thoroughgoing distrust of the dehumanizing aspects of professional librarianship. In selecting their librarians and curators the benefactors usually consciously avoided the "professional librarian" and chose men and women who were
sympathetic with the humanistic and bibliophilistic motives behind their collections. The late Belle daCosta Greene, Max Farrand, Randolph Adams, and J. Q. Adams were but a few of the people who were to join with men in older institutions to carry on the humanistic traditions of librarianship.

Between the two world wars these men and women began to raise their kind of librarianship to a new eminence. Standing between the library and scholarly professions they partook of a little of each. Having no professional organization of their own, they adopted the Bibliographical Society of America, which has become an association of bibliographers, rare book librarians, book collectors, antiquarian booksellers, and a few professional librarians with bibliographical interests. As librarians outside the profession they freely criticized it for its shortcomings. They stressed the failure to care properly for books, the concentration on service in terms of quantity rather than quality, the growing library bureaucracy with its committees and conferences, and the somewhat self-conscious preoccupation with professionalism.

This friendly warfare soon had its effect. In the 1930's some library schools began offering courses in "rare books." True, the emphasis was frequently on rarity rather than on the books, but it showed that the library profession recognized a valid criticism when it saw one. Then in the 1940's came the administrative changes mentioned earlier. In some cases, of course, the librarian felt compelled to apologize and to justify the creation of a "luxury." It is significant to note, however, that of the nineteen libraries which have created rare book collections, seven did so entirely as an administrative decision. In ten others a gift made possible an already existing administrative desire. Only two of the new collections came about solely as the result of a gift. The professional background of the men and women who have been put at the head of these new operations is also significant. Two-thirds have a professional library background including a library degree, although a number have some kind of scholarly or antiquarian book training in addition. It should be noted, however, that major eastern institutions such as Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Columbia, and Virginia, and one west of the Alleghenies, Indiana, have heads who came to rare book librarianship from backgrounds of research, bibliography, or the antiquarian book trade.

Today, many libraries are fully prepared, both administratively and intellectually, to receive great gifts of rare books. The potential donor now has little difficulty finding a congenial home for his collection, although he must still assure himself of the state of affairs in the
THOMAS R. ADAMS

library he is seeking to enrich. The need for restrictions which helped motivate the completely independent library of the 1900's, 1920's and 1930's is declining. Not only do the large research libraries understand about rare books but their vast collections have become necessary in making a collection of rare books fully effective.

What then is the future of rare book librarianship? In the case of many newly created collections it is too early to tell, but some of the achievements of older rare book libraries and collections are suggestive. The work of the Houghton, the Brown, the Clements, the Folger, the Huntington, and the Newberry libraries in stimulating research in their collections have made them an integral part of the world of scholarship. The various editorial projects being carried out at Princeton and Yale show how scholars can be brought into a library's operations. The library quarterlies and books published by libraries show the direct contributions libraries can make to scholarship. Both the rare book collection and the rare book librarian have played vital roles in these developments.

These successful rare book librarians rarely conform to the traditional library administrative patterns. In addition to their tasks as curators and collectors they have an important responsibility for making the library a more active part of the world of the humanities. The relation of the curator to his job should have some of the flavor of a faculty member's relation to his teaching. He should have both the time and the opportunity to participate in the world of research and scholarship. Those who like to separate human activity into compartments will argue that the scholar and the librarian perform different functions and should not interfere in each other's work. Some of the extreme results of this attitude are familiar. University librarians have been confronted with a departmental decision to include a new area of study without any real investigation of the library's holdings or its ability to build collections in the new area.

Faculty members, on the other hand, find their work hampered by the librarian's close attention to his rules and regulations. There are many examples of both the extra efforts librarians have made to meet unusual faculty requirements, and the faculty members who have gone out of their way to know their library and to grasp the full complexity of its operation. But in a larger sense the dichotomy between librarians and scholars is one of the unfortunate facts of American librarianship. This is particularly true of university libraries where the faculty, which exerts a substantial influence in the selection of the librarian, still feels that the library profession is not a dependable source for men to hold
Rare Books: Their Influence on the Library World

their top library posts. Of the six university libraries of over two million volumes, three are headed by men with no library science degrees and two of these came to their jobs with no previous library experience. Indeed, of the five men appointed since July 1, 1955, to head libraries included in the Princeton statistics, six four are without library degrees and three without previous experience.

There are many reasons for this state of affairs but one of the most prominent is the feeling that the professional librarian stands outside the humanistic tradition. Among the librarians who can help remove this feeling are those men and women who have made it part of their business to carry on the humanistic library traditions of the past. Much has already been done. The recent appointment of a rare book librarian to head a major university library is, we can hope, another sign that as the gap has been narrowed between the “professional librarian” with his modern “know-how” and the rare book man with his library traditions so will the larger gap be narrowed between the world of librarianship and the world of scholarship.

References


ADDITIOANAL REFERENCES

The Utility of the Special Research Library

LOUIS B. WRIGHT

It should be a platitude by now that the privately endowed library of rare books has no justification for existence unless it serves in the advancement of learning by making its literary resources available to qualified scholars. If there was ever a time when a magnificent library, brought together by the zeal of a private collector of means, could stand unused as a mausoleum and monument to the founder, that day has gone forever. If the enlightened consciences of trustees and administrators did not provide for the effective use of such libraries, the hungry tax-collector would soon swoop down upon them. Happily, the great libraries brought together in America by the energy and wealth of book collectors have become a part of the intellectual resources of the nation. Even those collections still in the process of development and those still the private possessions of collectors are for the most part open to scholars. Nowhere in the world does the serious scholar receive a warmer welcome than in the research libraries of the United States, both private and public. Throughout the nation these libraries are actively engaged in making their materials available to the individuals who can best use them. They are significant and important agencies of higher education in this country. And their importance is greater today than ever before.

No important geographical section of the nation is without one or more research libraries, sometimes independent and privately endowed, sometimes bequeathed to local universities. In the East there are such private institutions as the Pierpont Morgan Library, the John Carter Brown Library, and the Folger Shakespeare Library. In the Middle West there are the Newberry Library; the Clements Library, a part of the University of Michigan Library system; and the James Ford Bell Collection recently given to the University of Minnesota. And in the Far West there are the great Huntington Library; the smaller but important Clark Library under the aegis of the University of California at Los Angeles; and the Bancroft Library, attached to the

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The Utility of the Special Research Library

University of California at Berkeley. Some local institutions and societies play important roles in the research activities of the nation. Among them are the American Antiquarian Society at Worcester, the Massachusetts Historical Society, the Boston Athenaeum, the Boston Public Library, and the New York Public Library. All of these institutions have assimilated private collections of major value to learning and they make these collections freely available to scholars. The great university libraries, notably Harvard, Yale, and Princeton, have inherited from alumni and others princely collections of special interest. Recently Indiana University received as a gift from J. K. Lilly, Jr., an extraordinary rare book library.

Many, if not most, of these collections and libraries carry with them endowments of varying amounts for their maintenance and development. Wealthy as some of them are, none can continue to collect on the scale of their founder, some of whom had almost unlimited means. The question of what policy of collecting the special library should follow is one that requires common sense, wisdom, and sometimes the capacity to harden one's heart against sentimentality and the siren sounds that emanate from eager booksellers.

The administrative officers responsible for the transition of private collections into working libraries for the use of scholars have a difficult task little appreciated by the public who benefit from their labors. Indeed, they sometimes find themselves criticized by users of these collections because they do not transform them overnight into effective instruments for research. They are sometimes abused by booksellers who smart with disappointment because they do not spend money for rarities with the same happy abandon characteristic of the libraries' founders. If the administrator of one of these private collections is going to succeed in making his library into an effective research institution, he must try to put himself in the place of one of his potential users and ask himself what purpose the library is designed to serve. He must likewise turn a deaf ear to the blandishments and occasionally to the ill-concealed condescension of certain booksellers who suggest that he really doesn't know a good thing when he is offered one. It is always a help of course if the administrator actually knows from personal experience what a scholar wants from a rare book library.

The fundamental lesson that the librarian has to learn is that he is not a projection of the private collector who brought the original material together and that he is not likely to have the means to buy as lavishly as the donor. One would think that such a conclusion would be self-evident and obvious from the figures in the budget. But li-
brarians easily succumb to the fantasy of imagining themselves collectors in the grand manner. No class of customer is more easily taken into camp by a salesman than is the librarian who for the first time has the opportunity of spending somebody else's money in the purchase of rare books. He learns to roll precious bibliographic terms upon his tongue; he likes to discuss with an air of sophistication the "points" of this or that book; if he is young and provincial, he is flattered at the opportunity of mingling at bibliographic gatherings with collectors who have hitherto been names to him; and he is vastly impressed when a bookseller brings to his particular attention a work of great rarity not yet offered to anyone else. If the "preparation" has been sufficient, the chances are that the librarian will be tempted to strain his budget and buy the rarity, though for the life of him he doesn't know whether the book is worth a tinker's dam to the users of the library which he is supposed to develop.

The first lesson that he needs to learn is that mere rarity is not a criterion of a book's value to learning. Some of the rarest items never were and never will be of much intrinsic value. And furthermore, price is frequently a poor indicator of the scholarly worth of a book or a manuscript. Many things determine price: passing fashions in collecting; the particular avidity of certain collectors active at the moment; the belief of the bookseller, sometimes erroneous, that a book is rare; the fact that it is not listed in the usual bibliographies ("not in the Short Title Catalogue" or "not in Wing," for example); the fact that it is a variant issue or edition that may or may not be significant; previous ownership ("association copies"); and a score of factitious reasons that may have little or no bearing on the book's ultimate utility.

The private collector can buy a work for any reason that pleases him. The appearance, the associational interest, the rarity of the imprint, the quality of the binding, any of a multitude of reasons may influence an individual to pay premium prices for books. The custodian of endowed funds has an obligation to follow other more objective criteria. Concerning every item offered he must ask whether it will serve any significant purpose in the library. If for instance someone turned up a Prayer Book which King Charles I carried to the scaffold, it would command a high monetary value; but the librarian of a seventeenth-century research library would not be justified in buying it for a premium price, however much of the royal blood may have spattered on it. All he could ever do with it would be to put it in a glass case and label it "King Charles I's Prayer-Book with His Blood-Stains." On the other hand, if a trifling sermon of Henry Smith turned
The Utility of the Special Research Library

up in which an apprentice of London had scribbled on the margins his impressions of that fateful scene on January 30, 1649, the librarian would have a valid reason for buying it, for the document would throw a bit of new light on an important event in history and would be of interest to several sorts of scholars.

No one can draw up rules that will apply to every research library. Each varies in its materials and its purposes. The unvarying factor that any rare book librarian must consider is what genuine utility will be served by the materials that he buys. A particular library may be justified in purchasing items merely for exhibition if its museum is an important factor in its public relations. Such a library might indeed buy King Charles' Prayer Book if the exhibition of that memento would further the library's interests. However, the librarian must be sure that he is not being motivated by sentimental or factitious influences.

The utility of a collection of rare books, however precious, is greatly restricted if the scholar cannot find the essential secondary works that make the rare books comprehensible and useable. Endless hours may be wasted if he has to consult rare books in one place and the necessary reference works in another. The inability to get rare books and secondary works together on the same table has been a fruitful cause of frustration and has made a few collections virtually useless to the scholar who had to conserve his time and energy. The inefficiency and waste of time from such causes in most instances are unnecessary and could be corrected if the custodian of the rare books possessed common sense and imagination.

Some years ago a well-meaning old gentleman, himself interested in rare books, wrote to the present director of the Folger Library protesting the dilution of the Folger's collection of rare books with secondary works and other books that would make it, he feared "just another library." In his opinion, the Folger as originally created was "a little gem" filled with "books of excessive rarity not found elsewhere" and it would be a profanation to mingle "these jewels" with common books. To have followed his advice would have made of the Folger Library a tomb for the interment of rare books rather than a library where these books serve the ends of learning.

In the early days of the Folger Library someone evolved the theory that a secondary library of reference books would not be needed because the Library of Congress was immediately across the street and its great store of reference materials would be available. Accordingly the Folger attempted to get along without the books required to illuminate its rare book collection. This effort proved so wasteful of both time
and money that it was abandoned. An analysis of the time consumed by members of the catalog department alone going across the street to refer to books in the Library of Congress showed that the needed books would cost the Folger Library less in actual cash outlay than the monetary value of the time wasted by its staff, not to mention the inconvenience to potential users of the Folger's rare books. As every working scholar knows, no one can carry on his research effectively without the tools of his trade close at hand. No reference collection, it is true, will have every item that every scholar may want to consult, and no librarian in his right mind will try to procure every item that conceivably might be needed by someone. Yet, if he is going to run an efficient institution, he will see that the scholar is not handicapped by lack of an essential working collection.

The development of an effective research library requires everlasting vigilance on the part of the administrator to see that his institution does not become merely a warehouse of dead books. He must be vigilant to see that he does not spend that portion of his budget devoted to acquisitions in useless books and manuscripts. He must also be alert—and tactful—in fending off unwanted gifts that would make his library a warehouse of junk. Perhaps no fallacy is more seductive than the notion that the special library must be "complete." Few libraries can be complete in the absolute sense and there is not much wisdom in trying to achieve that end. Although the Folger Library's primary concern is with materials for the study of the civilization of Tudor and Stuart England, for example, it would be foolish to try to procure every trivial item that has been written on this great period. The Folger Library has the largest collection of Shakespeareana in the world, but it would be equally foolish to try to collect every tract and pamphlet written about Shakespeare. For one thing, few subjects known to the present writer have ever accumulated so vast and worthless a "literature." Cranks, dullards, pedagogues, and pedants have contributed their mites, and those mites have grown into mountains of rubbish. The administrator of a library like the Folger must exercise discrimination lest he be smothered by trash.

The administrators of special libraries must also guard against friends who will try to give them unwanted volumes, pamphlets, offprints, pictures, walking canes, rocking chairs, shaving mugs, locks of hair, and miscellaneous mementoes without number. Sometimes would-be donors want to present a gift with the condition that it be specially exhibited or kept in a certain place. If a librarian is so unwise as to accept miscellaneous gifts, he ought always to insist that they come
The Utility of the Special Research Library

without any strings. Then his successor can quietly dispose of the white elephants. The rejection of gifts, of course, requires tact. Sometimes a monstrosity has to be accepted in order to get some really valuable collection and one must be doubly careful not to alienate prospective donors who have worth-while books and manuscripts to give the institution. Nevertheless, discrimination in the acceptance of gifts is the best policy, because most donors want their gifts to go where they can be used and appreciated, and it is no service to them to make them believe that some useless item will find an honored place in a great library.

Libraries of all kinds, and the special research libraries in particular, should devote more thought to the elimination of useless items. Of course this is a ticklish procedure. The rubbish of one generation may be the valued social documents of the next. The Bodleian Library's reluctance to accept Robert Burton's plays and pamphlets because they were "riff-raff" books stands as an object lesson to us all. On the other hand the fear of disposing of something valuable to posterity does not require us to take leave of our wits. A few years ago the Folger Library sent to the incinerator many bales of miscellaneous newspaper clippings. From early in his career Mr. Folger had subscribed to clipping services in various parts of the world and had instructed them to send him every clipping that mentioned the word "Shakespeare." When the Folger staff came to examine these bales of clippings, a great many had already crumbled into the dust that is the destiny of all wood-pulp publications. Most of the rest were too trivial and nondescript to have any value. If some benighted Shakespearean had set himself the Herculean task of trying to classify those clippings that remained legible, it would probably have been necessary to summon a psychiatrist from St. Elizabeth's to supervise the effort as occupational therapy. The only sensible thing to do with this tinder-dry rubbish, which constituted a fire hazard in the building, was to send it to the city dump. Unhappily, material like the Shakespeare clippings is not unusual in special libraries. Everyone suffers from the temptation, not only to hoard worthless material, but to go on collecting it because they always have. Nowhere is the hand of precedent heavier than in libraries.

The criterion of utility which ought to govern the special research library does not overlook the value of the esthetic and the obligation to preserve beautiful examples of the bookmaker's craft, but the examples themselves must have internal validity in addition to their external appearance. Fancy printers like nothing better than to bring out
a handful of Shakespeare’s sonnets or a few precious words of some other poet. These usually appear in limited editions, printed on heavy deckled paper, in some unusual type face. Sooner or later a bookseller thinks the Folger Library, for example, is remiss in its obligations to posterity if it does not pay a stiff price to give these items house room. What purpose they would ever serve, no one can say. Fine printing should be encouraged by every means at our command, but fancy preciosity ought to be allowed to find oblivion without expensive burial in libraries.

The special research libraries of the country are performing such an important service to learning that they cannot afford to spend any of their efforts on irrelevancies. During the coming years, with the enormous increase in the college and university population, an even greater responsibility will fall upon the special libraries. More than ever they will be the oases where harassed scholars can find intellectual refreshment and nourishment. If learning is going to be kept alive in a world dominated by mass production in education, the special research libraries must be acutely aware of their responsibilities to make their resources more easily available to scholars who will have less and less time for contemplation and study.
Rare Books in University Libraries

CECIL K. BYRD

INITIATION OF ACTIVE RARE BOOK PROGRAMS in most major university libraries in the United States has occurred during the last four decades. It has been a laudable development and in many respects represents a wider perspective, an accent on the qualitative and a more mature respect for the "book" by university administrators.

Other factors however help explain this recent blooming of rare book rooms: the practice of open stack access for students and staff has made it imperative to protect from this great body of users the more expensive, hard to replace, and fragile books, that, by accretion, are in the general collection of all university libraries. Material which may or may not be in the rare class such as broadsides, prints, charts, plans, maps, pictures, etc., does not admit of the standardized treatment given conventional books. These forms sometimes call for individual handling or very special attention and non-standard storage facilities. Segregation for protection, processing, and storage has resulted.

Gifts to a university have often been the incentive that brought a rare book program into existence. Indeed hardly a major collection exists in this country, that does not contain books under the name of a distinguished and discriminating private collector or wealthy donor. When the history of rare book programs in universities is fully explored it likely will be revealed that the collector was the greatest single factor in urging, or even forcing, rare book facilities on libraries.

The age of critical bibliographic and textual studies in the humanistic disciplines and an increasing number of investigators in all fields whose research necessitates access to original sources have led to the acquisition of book and allied material not only of considerable value but of a scarce nature. Investments of this sort could only be entrusted to a division with the twin function of preservation and personalized service as its major objective.

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Emulousness has characterized certain phases of American university development throughout the twentieth century. Where the need has long existed, imitative competition has had some bearing on activating a rare book program: "The General Library this year opened a Rare Books Department. Our peers in the great research libraries of the United States, both public and private, have long had such departments... We too are at last now able to furnish students and mature scholars appropriate facilities for employing a collection long hidden from use, only partly cataloged, and in general little known."  

The divisions that assume responsibility for rare or unusual materials are variously named: department or division of rare books, department of rare books and special collections, or, rare books and manuscripts. In most university libraries rare books and special collections are combined. Some of the material in these special collections may or may not be rare or even expensive, but study is facilitated by having all the books of an author, a subject or a period serviced and shelved together. Quite frequently a division will administer not only rare books and special collections but maps, manuscripts, prints, pictorial material, phonograph records, sound recordings, musical scores, clay tablets, and even coins and stamps.

At the larger universities there are rare books outside the administrative pale of a rare book division, liaison existing through official or informal advisory capacity of the rare book librarian. Many libraries in the departmental system contain subject-related materials that are rare. This is particularly so in law, medicine, architecture, fine arts, and to a lesser extent, business. Special facilities within the departmental libraries are sometimes provided for these rarities. The law libraries at Harvard and Illinois are excellent examples.

Two distinct kinds of physical quarters are provided for rare book divisions. Most commonly the quarters are located in the general or central library building in areas which, with but few exceptions, approach the sumptuous: splendid wood paneling, a liberal use of colorful leather and fabrics, carpeting, drapes, selected furniture—all the appointments that lend an atmosphere of affluence and create an impression in the mind of the visitor that this area of the library system is something very special and might indeed be the library of an illustrious private collector. And it sometimes is!

A few rare book collections are maintained in separate buildings. Houghton, John Carter Brown, Clements, and Clark, were especially designed for well-known collections of rarities. A separate structure was also built for the Browning collection at Baylor. Due to the highly
specialized nature of the collections and the administrative autonomy of Clark, Clements, and John Carter Brown, departments of special collections are also maintained in the central libraries at U.C.L.A., Michigan, and Brown. Indiana University will begin construction early in 1957 on the Lilly Library, a structure to house all its rare books, special collections, and manuscripts.

Whether in a separate building or within the central building, rare books require protection from fire, water, insects, dust, humidity, excessive temperatures, book thieves, and destructive users. Temperature and humidity control are essential as well as physical quarters adequate for storage, public service functions, work space for staff, photographic, and other facilities.

The Houghton is the most recently constructed and impressive example of what can be done in a building devoted exclusively to rare materials. "...the building provides every facility which modern ingenuity has devised for the housing, use, exhibition, and preservation of ancient and sometimes fragile books." The Lilly Library will have in addition to temperature and humidity control, an electrostatic air filtering system and a bomb and blast proof vault of two stack levels for protection of most expensive books in event of enemy air attack.

Where rare books are housed within the central building the quarters differ in size and convenience of location, vary in accommodations for readers and may or may not permit expansion of facilities. A section, wing, or series of rooms in the building is generally available for the rare book division. Some libraries have been forced by necessity to begin a program with a room or series of rooms that could not be expanded, were inconveniently located and remote from the stacks. Such quarters have become inadequate in a few years. In those universities fortunate enough to get new library buildings or extensive additions to the old buildings in the last decade, or in those possessing buildings that would permit variable renovations, rare book quarters have been planned with great consideration and efficacious results.

The utility of a building housing the rare book collections separate from the general book collections of the university may be questioned, particularly if it is far distant from the central library building. Separation poses operational obstacles as well as problems that affect the scholar. The Clements and Houghton almost abut the central building. Indeed the latter is connected to Widener by a public passage suspended above ground. The Clark is some ten miles from the U.C.L.A. campus. Separation of facilities means duplication of reference and general material and, where acquisitions are centralized, some delay
and perhaps additional footwork in ordering and searching. It also handicaps the user who must inevitably range between two buildings to carry on research. Precedent, however, in the form of departmental libraries, present in all universities, exists for separation of facilities. Operational handicaps have not been completely submerged in the operation of these departmental systems but they have been somewhat minimized.

It cannot be denied that a separate building is more attractive to bookmen, collectors, and non-bookish visitors. Such a building is positive evidence that a university is dedicated to a rare book program and may act as a decisive influence on private collectors looking for a permanent home for their collections.

Some duplication, particularly of reference material, is necessary even though the division is located in the central building. As pointed out in L. B. Wright's article, p. 437, the advantage to the scholar of having the general reference collections and the general subject collections near at hand is great. Some time and motion is lost by the user even though rare books are in the central building, if the library is large and he must shuttle between divisions located on different floors and at opposite ends of the building.

The objections to separation cannot be dismissed as minor matters, particularly if it means seriously handicapping the scholar, the primary user, and the intellectual heir of all rare books. The question has not been widely discussed in the university library profession. Since it would appear that a separate building for rare books represents a trend, librarians will undoubtedly scrutinize this development in the future, but complete unanimity of opinion is unlikely, particularly since local traditions, administrative predilection and opportunism influence even library affairs.

Administratively the rare book divisions present some diversities. There are a few instances where they are administered by the circulation or reference department, and one instance where the program is set up within a division of reference and special services. At Yale the many special collections are in charge of curators with no over-all supervision by a head rare book librarian. The majority of the divisions, however, have full departmental status within the framework of the library system. Over the department is a head, chief, curator, or rare book librarian. The curator may report directly to the chief librarian or to the associate director for public services. The chain of command is unimportant if the rare book librarian has authority to act quickly and independently on acquisitions.
Rare Books in University Libraries

be ratified from above, it would seem wise to reduce the length of the chain.

The answer to successful servicing and acquisition rests with a competent staff. The rare book librarian should be an able bookman, at home with research, familiar with the antiquarian book trade and, above all, possess a feeling for people. As T. R. Adams says, p. 433, some of the most successful present-day bookmen had their training in the trade. Others came to rare books directly from academic disciplines or by in-service training in rare book divisions. Some are the combined product of the universities, the trade, and library schools. The head of rare books must be surrounded by competent, keen-minded people who preferably have subject background as well as the bibliographical instinct. Where staffs are large, the department may be subdivided to include a curator of printed materials, curator of graphic materials, curator of historical or literal manuscripts, etc.

Some universities have been successful in eliciting guidance and aid from private collectors and bookish faculty members by making them honorary curators or consultants of collections. The assistance from faculty has been great. There is hardly a university library that does not contain at least one collection that was primarily brought together through the knowledge, influence, and efforts of a member of the faculty. C. B. Tinker, F. J. Child, G. L. Kittredge, H. F. Fletcher, G. N. Ray, and J. R. Moore are names synonymous with well-known collections.

It is impossible to ascertain whether the size of staff is correlated to numbers served, the bulk of the collection, the acquisition program, or is a reflection of the administrative attitudes and recognition of the part that rare books play in the research role of the university. In nineteen universities who replied to a questionnaire, staff size ranged from one to twenty-three full-time employees, without equating part-time help into full-time equivalent. The average size staff would appear to be three employees.

Rare books are acquired by purchase at auction, from dealers and private owners, by gift and, infrequently, by trade from collectors and other institutions. An article recently appearing in this journal was devoted to rare book procurement. A prerequisite to the purchasing of rare books is money. Funds come from a variety of sources: operating income, endowments, research and contingency funds, university foundations, expendable trust funds, and cash gifts.

Among the nineteen libraries who replied to the querist only ten budget annually for rare books. But this fact is not significant. The Uni-
University of Illinois does not budget, yet spent over $131,000 during fiscal year 1955-56 for rare material including special collections. Funds were derived from the general book appropriation, research funds, the university foundation, and from contingency funds. Oklahoma budgeted a little more than $5,000 during the same year but purchases totalled over $47,000. The difference represented cash gifts from friends. No specific amount is budgeted at the University of Michigan for 1956-57, but since rare materials are purchased out of income from endowment funds and expendable trust funds, a sum of over $31,000 is available for acquisitions. At the University of Virginia about $18,000 is annually allocated for rare books and manuscripts, but an additional $2,500 to $5,000 is spent from the general book fund. Indiana budgeted $25,000 for purchases during 1956-57 but has already spent $60,000, the difference coming from general library funds. This sum does not represent the total that will be spent. Departments will purchase rare materials from their allocations and should unusual opportunities arise in the market, funds can be made available from research or university foundation sources. Kansas budgeted $13,000 for fiscal 1956-57 but can obtain additional sums from the university foundation for special purchases. The Houghton budgeted $60,000 for purchase during 1956-57. This amount may represent only a small portion of what likely will be spent, judging from fiscal year 1955-56. During that year $200,000 was "raised" for rare books in addition to the regular budgeted amount.

Some librarians are shocked at the asking prices for rare books. They do not seem to remember that books are commercial commodities subject to some of the economic forces that affect trade in general and that in many areas there is great competition. The consumer has a part in establishing prices. Dealer enthusiasm may cause a book to be priced with the aid of an exponential table, but one is not forced to buy. It is permissible, and is practiced, to inform such a dealer that the price may be out of line and to add that if he is unable to sell the book in question, an offer will be made. Sometimes this procedure brings the book at an earth-bound price, or it may be lost to another and more enthusiastic customer. If a book is wanted and needed at an institution a fair or going price should not be questioned. The antiquarian book dealer has as many personal economic problems as the librarian.

In the nineteen libraries surveyed, orders for rare books are centralized in the general library's order department in all except the Houghton. At most institutions the rare book department does all the bib-
Rare Books in University Libraries

The central order department merely performs the clerical and routine functions incident to purchasing. If there is reason for speed, orders are phoned, cabled, or telegraphed. It is common practice for books to be sent on approval. It has been suggested that more effective results would obtain if the rare book division initiated and handled its own orders. This seems an unnecessary burden of routine paper work to place on a rare book department. The objection to centralized ordering such as approval orders and informal dealer relations can all be overcome by granting minor exceptions in the established ordering routine for rare books.

Rare books are cataloged most frequently by the catalog department of the general library, with the work regularly assigned to one or more catalogers. Only Kansas, Pennsylvania, the Houghton, and Indiana, of the nineteen libraries reported on, have their own rare book catalogers. Incunabula is cataloged by the department at Michigan, but all other rare books are processed by the general catalog department. At Yale and Princeton the curators of special collections issue instructions for the cataloging of rare material but the work is performed by the general catalog department. Manuscripts and broadsides are generally cataloged by the staff of the rare book department. Both John Alden and P. S. Dunkin have recommended catalogers within the rare book department. No comparison of the quality and quantity of the work done in the general department with that done in the rare book department has reached print. The arguments for rare book catalogers seem doctrinaire and basically weak since most universities do not give full cataloging treatment to rare books.

Though cataloging practices vary with the institutions, Library of Congress cards are a mainstay in many divisions. The same entry forms and subject headings are usually employed for both rare and general books. Scholars complain that rare book catalogs are inadequate but cannot agree on the “adequate.” Criticisms may be justified. In most libraries a compromise program is practiced that represents something between simplified cataloging and full-dress bibliographical description. The pertinent information is recorded and the book is located.

Realistically viewed it is unlikely that the card catalogs for rare books will be greatly improved. Most administrators admit the shortcoming, but the expense and time involved in full-dress bibliographical cataloging, and the potential use of such a catalog make its merits questionable. Where budgets are limited, acquisitions and other services are concentrated on at the expense of cataloging.
A more responsible attitude about "condition" of the book pervades most rare book rooms. It is a general practice to give rare books special handling and to keep all as nearly as possible in their original physical condition. Ink stamping and perforating are omitted. Ownership is generally indicated by a small label pasted somewhere on the back cover. The call number is inked on this label. Some libraries pencil the call number on the inner margin of the page following the title page. Bookplates and other marks of ownership are left intact. Truly progress has been made since the days when librarians were called enemies of books!

Libraries profess to specialize in their collecting activities. Formal or informal acquisition codes frequently guide purchases. Gifts, local demand brought on by curricular expansion, replacements and additions to the faculty, unique opportunities in the market, and extension of the scope of major holdings make periodic revision of the fields of specialization necessary. No serious proposals for national and exclusive subject specialization in rare books have been discussed. The programs are young and libraries are too eager to build to give more than local attention to cooperative projects. The rate at which gifts flow into university rare books rooms would seem to preclude such arrangements. Will librarian A tell alumnus or friend to give his books to librarian B because he has assumed the national responsibility for a certain category of books?

Books go into the rare book collection because of their price, intrinsic value, probable difficulty of replacement, association value, because they are autographed or contain valuable marginalia, or because they are related to a special collection. Policies that attempt to get all so-called rare books that annually flow through a large university library into the rare book room are arbitrary. William Warner Bishop would have "Books printed in three hundred copies or less go in the rare book room as a matter of routine." At Yale the following are designated rare: "... any book printed before 1551; any English book before 1641; any American book before 1801 whether of North or South America." At the universities of California an extended code exists to help spot books that may be considered for inclusion in the rare book collections. But the staff is warned that "No rules-of-thumb can be devised which will take the place of personal knowledge, intelligence, and discrimination," an admonition that might well be applied nationally. At Indiana all single volumes costing more than $25 are flagged and held for the decision of the rare book librarian before the book is routed to final destination.
Rare Books in University Libraries

Great emphasis is placed on "cultivating" the private collector by most universities. The dividends have been high. The value of gift books in many collections is greater than the value of those purchased. If it were not for the generosity of the private collector it is safe to assume that some universities could not have a rare book program. How is the private collector converted into the giver? By the gentle, circuitous art of silent persuasion and by the charming, bold frontal approach that is completely disarming. The process may extend over a period of years and will often require assistance from the president and other administrative officers of the institution.

The most successful "cultivators are unusually modest and reticent about revealing a formula for this type of library operation. Perhaps all that can and should be done in contacts with the collector is to show an honest friendliness for the individual and respect for his books, and to demonstrate by practice that the institution has a deep and abiding interest in rare books and the staff to service and manage them. The collector's confidence in the library, faith in and loyalty to the institution, his ability to give, and the tax structure at the time he is prepared to dispose of his books will all have a bearing on whether they go to an institution or under the auction hammer. If he desires continuity for his books and assurance that they will be used and not dispersed, the universities are the most logical depositories.

Except to the skeptical relativist, the intellectually arrogant and the futurist whose roots go no deeper than the day's awakening, rare books in a university library need no special pleading. The uses for such books in an institution that promotes research and the training of students for the teaching and research professions have been discussed. Quite aside from these cogent arguments for rare books, they have an emotional value that is immeasurable but nevertheless of great importance. Some people are not moved or even impressed with the scholarly monographs that are the results of research on rare materials, but there is drama for them in viewing an historic document, the first edition of a literary or scientific classic, an early printed Bible or an association copy indisputably linked with the name of Washington, Lincoln, or Jefferson.

Apart from the research need and the emotional values a university library is justified in preserving rare materials. Indeed, a few centuries hence the rare book rooms may be regarded as having performed a function for learning similar to that of the monastic houses in the Middle Ages.
References

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The Place of Rare Books in the
Public Library

ELLEN SHAFFER

Rare book departments in public libraries are themselves a little rare. Certainly they are not common enough to be taken for granted. They are the glorious exception rather than the general rule, and their curators are occasionally called upon to explain and justify the existence of such departments.

Of course, it was not so long ago that the public library itself had to justify and explain its own existence. In the long history of books and libraries, the free library is a comparative newcomer. It is a modern institution which has been functioning for about a century. Probably, during its early beginnings, it was argued that a public library was not essential; private subscription libraries adequately filled the needs of the average reader, while the exceptional reader and the scholar might look to the libraries maintained by institutions of learning.

Today no one questions the value of the public library—it is recognized as a great cultural force in modern life. It is assumed that it will meet the major demands of the reading public—and the public today is demanding considerably more than recreational reading. It is now expected that the library will provide those books which the individual could not afford to have in his own library, but in which he has a definite interest. Reference books, too bulky and too expensive for private ownership, books of a highly technical nature, as well as books of purely aesthetic appeal, are now taken for granted as a part of the public library. That institution tries to satisfy the widely varying needs of its patrons, among whom it is not unheard of to find scholars, research workers, and bibliophiles—provided the library has books of a calibre to attract them.

Many a public library does have rare books. They may have come through a gradual accumulation or through outstanding gifts, or...
ELLEN SHAFFER

through both. An older institution, which has kept pace with the expanding needs of its patrons for a considerable period of time, may find that it has gradually acquired a number of books of unusual significance. Again, a library may be the fortunate recipient of one or more outstanding collections of rare books, which represent years of careful, discriminating collecting on the part of the persons assembling them. Thus, in the case of some public libraries, notably the older and larger ones, it is not a question of whether or not they ought to have rare books; they already have them. The question rather is: what should they do with them?

Several courses are open. They may regard them as expendable and give them the same treatment accorded any other books, including a liberal use of indelible and/or perforated stamps, (how bitterly many a rare book specialist can testify to this) and then give the volumes routine usage. This procedure today, fortunately, has few followers. Many librarians are trying to rescue from the stacks the already badly defaced books processed by their predecessors and care for them as best they can.

Another course of action sometimes followed is simply to store the books away and not use them at all. Their storage quarters may be over-dry or over-damp; they often accumulate layers of dust, and general neglect proves as damaging to them as careless handling.

Sometimes a library which finds itself in possession of rarities it cannot adequately care for nor use to good advantage may, if free to do so, sell, trade, or give these books to an institution which does want them and will give them protection and intelligent use. This arrangement is usually satisfactory.

The final course of procedure is to decide to make a special place in the library for these books, treat them as precious volumes and a valuable asset to the library, give them the care they require physically, and put them in the charge of people who have some knowledge of rare books. This has been the practice of a number of libraries, and, as time goes on, it seems likely that more institutions will do likewise.

Some public libraries long ago realized that they had acquired books which merited special care and preservation, and, also realizing that in the field of rare books lay new opportunities for cultural service, they made special provision for them. The public libraries of New York, Boston, and Philadelphia have for years maintained separate departments for their rare book holdings, and Detroit now plans a wing for its rare books. The fact that the large public library buildings erected in the last few years, such as those of Providence, Cincinnati,
The Place of Rare Books in the Public Library

and Denver, have provided quarters specifically designed for rare books shows a growing consciousness of this new responsibility on the part of public libraries.

Besides providing adequate quarters for rare books, it is equally important to provide qualified personnel. To realize the potentialities of a rare book department to the fullest, it is advisable to have a rare book specialist as curator. Such a person can appreciate the resources of his collections and advise as to their development. Usually he has whole-souled enthusiasm for rare books and can assist both scholar and amateur bibliophile with equal interest. He can manage his department competently, win the confidence of donors, and direct a well-planned, aggressive acquisitions policy. He can also seek out the rarities that all too often lie buried in the stacks of his own institution. Since there is an increasing demand for rare book librarians, it would seem that these specialists have proved their worth.

The greatest collections of rare books in public libraries today are found, as might be expected, in large institutions in big cities. The New York Public Library, the Boston Public Library, and the Free Library of Philadelphia are, in the order named, the three greatest possessors of rare books. All three of these libraries owe their initial strength in this field to donors who presented them with outstanding collections. The private collector has been their chief cornerstone. On the other hand, the rare book holdings of Buffalo, Cincinnati, and Denver are the result of a steady growth, and their collections have developed gradually.

Most rare book departments in public libraries seem to operate on trust funds. Generous, farsighted donors have provided for books that might appear too rare and too expensive to be purchased from public funds. Their money has bought many a white hyacinth for book-hungry souls, and bibliophiles are forever in their debt. The great collections of the New York Public Library, the Arents, the Berg, the Spencer, and Reserve Books, all make purchases through trust funds, as do the rare book departments of Boston, Cincinnati, and Philadelphia. The Buffalo Public-Erie County Public-Grosvenor Libraries, however, add to their collections through public funds, and the Denver Public Library also uses appropriated funds for books germane to its collections. Most of the Detroit Public Library's rare books have come to it as gifts or purchases made by the Friends of the Library, but it uses city funds on occasion, and its Director feels such use well justified. Actually, in most cases, the maintenance of the department, aside from book purchases, and the salaries of the
staff are paid through public funds, so the rare book collections all do receive some degree of public support—as indeed they should.

Trust funds rejoice the souls of all rare book curators. They give a certain independence and security. Through them it has been possible to bag many a prize which otherwise would have escaped. They are a warrant that precious collections may be kept growing, for a static collection—as many a librarian knows to his sorrow—soon dies. Trust funds may also remove guilt complexes some librarians might have about spending money for rarities when bread and butter books were needed.

But should there be guilt complexes? In today's cultural life rare books also provide essential nourishment. A well functioning rare book collection in a public library is a valuable asset to the community. The public should come to recognize this and give it support. Such support may come slowly—but it is important that it should come, partly because it will make the public more conscious of its treasures. As to the amount of support given, that must always depend upon the individual case. There is no one answer to the question: "How much is enough?"

More than other rare book institutions, perhaps, the rare book department of a public library has a missionary role. It functions at all levels and its patrons present a more varied cross section than would be found in college and private research libraries. The general public feels that it has a stake in the public library and, therefore, approaches its special collections without hesitation. Even security measures, such as locked doors and guards, are not resented, nor do they overawe the patrons. When it is explained that these steps are taken to safeguard the books the library holds in trust for them, they approve. It is a public library, they are the public, and they are pleased that their treasures are being properly protected.

It has been asked what part of the general public is interested in rare books. Rare book enthusiasts are drawn from no one group or groups. They may be of any age and any occupation. Their varied interests range from the utilitarian to the aesthetic. Authors engage in research for books they are preparing. Research for Catherine Drinker Bowen’s *The Lion and the Throne*, for example, was done in a special collection of a public library. A teacher of layout design in an art school may find the Nuremberg Chronicle an interesting example to his students. A firm of engravers may reproduce a series of oriental miniatures for a special client. A Benedictine monk uses
The Place of Rare Books in the Public Library

choral books of the fifteenth century to study variations in the music of the Mass at that period. Writers and scholars all over the country and in Europe call for microfilm of needed books.

The presence of several colleges or universities in the area may serve as an added stimulus to use of the rare book department. Professors and students alike eagerly welcome the resources afforded by it. A professor may bring a class to study some particular field (it may be anything from oriental manuscripts to early American children's books) and occasionally he may appear to work on a project of his own—such as the publication of previously unrecorded letters of a noted writer. Graduate students—and now and then a book-loving undergraduate—may also work in the department, and the project can be English State Trials of the seventeenth century or the study of a certain incunable. It is a fortunate situation when the holdings of the public library and the universities and colleges combine to make the whole area stronger in its wealth of rare book material.

The scholar and the research worker are at home in any rare book library, public or private. They know what they want and ask only to have it made available. But in the public library one is also apt to find the more timid novice whose field of interest is still undeveloped. He does not know what books have particular appeal for him until he is introduced to them. It has been the experience of rare book curators that most visitors show interest and enthusiasm when rare books are sympathetically explained to them. With guidance and encouragement, some of these people may develop into bibliophiles, Friends of the Library, and future donors.

Not every one had a course in the history of books and printing in school (not even some librarians) and many people respond to the story of books and their history and development. Such knowledge adds immeasurably to their appreciation of books in general. The public library here has an opportunity to turn teacher, and frequently takes full advantage of it. In some rare book departments groups of teen-agers are shown rare books and given short talks concerning them. Occasionally adult groups come in the evening for tours of the department. Series of lectures give booklovers an opportunity to get together. Exhibits often arouse interest and a casual display of some treasure and a few informal anecdotes about rare books have often won a friend for the department. The late Randolph G. Adams in an unpublished manuscript remarked that everyone "from nine to ninety"
should be welcome in a rare book library, and added that "a good curator must be at least one-half showman." This applies with particular force to the curator in a public library.

Everyone can understand how the rare book department is valuable to those who have definite fields of interest, those who use it in connection with their work. The department also serves those visitors who come simply to see the interesting, the unusual, and the beautiful. They like to browse along the exhibit cases and see books they never knew existed. They may thrill to the beauty of a Japanese Nara Book or be fascinated by a seventeenth century record of a trial for witchcraft. Some have heard the word "incunabula" and wish to see an example. Others ask for a glimpse of a fore-edge painting. Association books move them deeply. It seems a near miracle to see a volume in which Stevenson once sketched, a book which Washington owned, or a copy of one of his own books which Dickens presented to his daughters. Perhaps their appreciation is entirely sentimental—but it is quite as real as that of the scholar. The little high school girl who saw her first illuminated manuscript and murmured, "there just aren't words, it's so beautiful," was as happy over her visit as the specialist in Anglo-Norman paleography who made an unusual discovery in a manuscript.

It is not necessary to be a rare book specialist to find genuine enjoyment in viewing a library's treasures. Probably a very small percentage of those who come to see the Liberty Bell in Independence Hall are specialists in the Revolutionary period, and fewer yet are likely to be authorities on eighteenth century bell-casting—and yet will any one doubt that for them seeing the Liberty Bell is a soul-enriching experience? One can love music without being a musician and enjoy paintings without being a painter—so why should a feeling for rare books be limited solely to the specialist?

Rare books are a part of the cultural heritage of all people. They represent the essence of all libraries. They are the ancestors of the books that are read today. They are the beauty that man has achieved in his efforts to crystalize thought on clay, papyrus, parchment, and paper. It would seem peculiarly the province of the public library to preach the gospel of rare books.

In the last few years public interest in the subject has been stimulated by traveling exhibits. The Freedom Train with its precious books and documents made American history come alive. The Pierpont Morgan Library is now commemorating its fiftieth anniversary by sending some of its greatest treasures on tour, and Yale's Gutenberg
The Place of Rare Books in the Public Library

Bible and Bay Psalm have already made their debut in Denver, where they were sent to celebrate the opening of the new public library building. More people are traveling abroad and visiting famous foreign libraries. With added opportunities to see fine and rare books has come a surge of public interest in them. More people are seeking them out—perhaps for purposes of scholarship, perhaps solely for their own personal enjoyment, a motivating factor which can hardly be discounted, since it has been responsible for the assembling of some of the greatest collections. A need for more rare books is gradually developing, and public libraries of the future may take rare book departments for granted.

At present they may still be considered to be in a pioneer stage. More than one public librarian has felt that rare books as such had no place in his institution. They required too specialized care and too specialized personnel, and, as far as his patrons were concerned, he felt unjustified in spending the time, money, and effort that would be necessary to establish a rare book department. A few years from now he may be won over, for the departments now functioning have proved that they fill a definite need in the public library—educationally, culturally, and aesthetically. It was a proud moment for one curator when a former opponent confessed that after seeing a well functioning rare book department in action, he had become an enthusiastic supporter.

Sometimes a donor gives a large collection to a library which has had no previous experience in the rare book field. The recipient may find the collection a white elephant or an unparalleled opportunity. Several years ago a life-long collector presented his books to the Phoenix Public Library. That institution rose joyfully to the occasion. In a recent letter, which sparkled with enthusiasm, the librarian told what a superb asset these books had been to the library and the community. Both she and her patrons were obviously enjoying the books.

The large public library in a big city would seem the logical place for most great collections. In theory, at least, such an institution might be presumed to have sufficient funds to care for the books and augment the collections. It is not to be argued, however, that all libraries, regardless of size, should try to maintain an expensive rare book department. A small library might find a valuable collection given to it without adequate funds for its maintainence to be an embarrassment. The possession of a great collection entails the responsibility of administering it properly.
But there are rarities and rarities, and some of them adapt themselves admirably to smaller institutions. Every library should have a few choice and unusual volumes to treasure. A few examples which illustrate the history of books and printing can sometimes open up a new world to a patron. Special collections emphasizing local history are always a proud possession, and the residents of the community can participate in their assembling. It is good for morale to have a few books which are handled with respect, and it is good for one's sense of proportion to have volumes that come from other times and other places.

The author of this article will always be glad that one small library had a few such books. As a high school student she worked as a part time assistant in the public library of her native city, Leadville, Colorado, and there she discovered the first old books she had ever seen. Most people did not bring books with them when they came into this mining camp in early days, but some booklover had brought along a few volumes he cherished, and they had eventually found their way into the public library. There were the Comic Histories of England and Rome with their colorful Leech illustrations, there were such eighteenth century classics in contemporary bindings as the works of Addison and the poems of Ossian. And there was a history of printing by Isaiah Thomas. They were not great rarities, indeed, their intrinsic value was small as she now knows, but they were there when she needed them, and they struck a spark. It was wonderful to be able to see and hold a tangible bit of the past, and the experience led to a pursuit of old and rare books which continues to this moment. It is to be hoped that those books are still there in Leadville, and that books like them are tucked away in other small public libraries, where they may lead other booklovers to those realms of lifelong happiness found in the avocation or the profession of rare books.
Who Uses Rare Books and What For

FREDERICK R. GOFF

Since 1927, the year that the Rare Book Division in the Library of Congress first opened its doors to the public, the number of readers tallied by the end of June 1956 amounted to 155,392. This figure, roughly approximating the total population of a city the size of Bridgeport, Connecticut, is impressive, but while it answers the question of "how many" it does not tell who these readers are, or where they came from. To answer this last question, it has been the practice for the past several years to include in the division's annual reports an analysis of the residences of the readers revealing in striking fashion that the division serves a nation-wide, even a world-wide, clientele. Last year the more than 5,000 readers who made use of the collections came from all but one of the United States, and from twenty-eight foreign countries or territories. As is naturally to be expected residents of the District of Columbia, Virginia, and Maryland account for the majority of the readers, but the fact that 1,329 readers registered from other states indicates the extent of the national character of the service. Readers from foreign lands last year accounted for 139 additional readers.

The following list of topics reflects in partial fashion the subjects of research listed by readers in the division during the last two weeks of June 1956: juvenile literature, early Supreme Court in periodical literature, Gen. Daniel Morgan, American literature, George Pope Morris, William H. Harrison, John Gay, Tom and Jerry—characters in American drama, Edwin M. Stanton, street cries, Sade and Dostoevsky, German history, Congressional committee (84th Congress), St. Cyprian, accounting, church history, George Mason, sexual customs, chess, U.S. Navy, Christian Science, writing, War of 1812, history of mathematics, Spanish literature, penology, genealogy, gambling, logistics, English writers of California history, Shakers, psychology, District of Columbia, Richard Hovey, Western New York (1825),

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This list could be expanded indefinitely, for the readers who consult material in this division are aware of its diversity and frequently of its specialties. June was a particularly busy month for several candidates for the degree of Ph.D. One person, interested in juvenile literature during the years 1840-1870, examined nearly a thousand volumes in connection with the dissertation he is preparing for the University of Rochester on the sociological content of this literature. The Shaker movement in Tennessee is the subject of another Ph.D candidate who has been a frequent reader in the division while he has been stationed with the Army in Washington. Another young graduate student engaged in preparing his doctoral dissertation from Bangor, Pennsylvania, concluded a visit of several months after having made an exhaustive search of early colonial newspapers for source material relating to commercial interchanges among the original thirteen colonies.

An advanced group of professionals included the numerous professors who, if not residing in the neighborhood, utilized research materials available here during academic holidays. Among recent investigators there were an associate professor from Washington University interested in transcripts of Spanish archives relating to Texas history, a local professor preparing a bibliography devoted to colonial women for a text book he is preparing, and a visiting professor from Manila who was devoting his research to the history of the Jesuit fathers in the Philippines. Other academicians include seminarians and theological students; graduate students, including those attending library schools; college students handling specific research assignments in many fields, but particularly in political science, history, and literature; and lower down on the academic scale, younger students who
Who Uses Rare Books and What For

are being exposed to both the pleasures and disappointments of original research. Within this classification should be grouped the individual scholars who are not strictly speaking academicians, but who are devoting their research to pursuits leading eventually to the preparation of scholarly studies and treatises on a wide variety of subjects for publication either independently or in professional journals. Such an investigator is the reader who has been scrutinizing the sheet music of the period 1865-1870 to determine how it reflected the theme of Lincoln’s assassination. He has found the Illinois copyright records, and the sheet music on this subject in the Alfred Whital Stern Collection of Lincolniana to be of considerable help in this study.

For want of a better label another category of reader comes under the heading of advanced investigator. Within this category are grouped other rare book librarians, the collectors themselves, and the dealers, whose motto “Amor librorum nos unit” is equally applicable to all three classes. Colleagues in the profession are always welcomed since librarians learn from each other through sharing both the common and more especially the uncommon experience, through the lively exchange of technical knowledge, and through learning about individual books and collections in the custody of one another. The collector is usually a specialist, and his enthusiasm for his subject invariably arouses a sympathetic reaction on the part of the rare book curator, who, eager as he might be, must be pardoned if he doesn’t know quite as much as the collector himself about all editions of a given author. The collector is invariably only too willing to inform him or to be informed himself, and this interchange can be provocatively helpful. Through the generous assistance of a local collector, a large number of valuable color-plate books in the library’s general collections were called to the attention of the staff, and this has resulted in the transfer to the safer custody of the Rare Book Division’s vault-like stacks a large number of desirable and beautifully illustrated volumes which now will enjoy a renewed life of usefulness under conditions more ideally suited to their protection and preservation.

The pride that a collector takes in the condition of the books he has assembled frequently leads him to make comparisons with copies in other collections; textual content, illustrations, points of issue, binding variants, and provenance are just a few of the matters which collectors sometimes wish to verify. This connoisseurship can and frequently does lead to mutually beneficial results. The bookseller, too, is a connoisseur interested not only in the books he has available for sale, but also in finding out the strengths and the weaknesses of specific collections.
so that he may be able more effectively to aid rare book curators in formulating meaningful acquisition policies. The dealer, like the collector, also is concerned about condition and the other points which distinguish individual copies of a given book.

Within this category of advanced investigator the bibliographer occupies an important position, for he can survive only if he is surrounded and absorbed by the material which he would submit to his discipline and study. For the bibliographers of American authors and American books generally, the Library of Congress occupies a position of particular helpfulness through the possession of the extensive files of the original copyright records and frequently the materials themselves that were deposited pursuant to the provisions of the copyright laws.

Other advanced investigators are the established novelists, the biographers, and the scholar-historians who could not, or certainly not as accurately or effectively, do their work without access to a great research library. Working as they frequently do in periods remote from the contemporary scene they must consult the older and frequently the hard-to-find materials, which have been preserved in specialized collections and depositories. One sometimes wonders how often their obligation to preceding generations of collectors and librarians alike is recognized and acknowledged. Lawyers on case work must on occasion avail themselves of the resources of a rare book library in preparing for forthcoming trials or in writing their briefs. The tidelands oil question brought here legal specialists representing both sides of the controversy. They consulted books and tracts which while not strictly legal in character had a definite relationship to the subject. Federal judges on numerous occasions have found it necessary to consult "rare" books in order to understand more clearly the cases before them or to write a decision at the conclusion of a case. Since the Library of Congress is the major federal library, it is used constantly by research workers employed by the government. One such individual, employed by the Department of Agriculture, has devoted considerable research recently to the study of statistics of wealth and income in this country during the early nineteenth century.

The journalist and reporter also is included with professional investigators whether he is affiliated with an established journal or newspaper or whether he is a free-lance writer. Probably no group is more demanding, for they frequently face dead-lines and must produce copy under pressure. In a very true sense the rare book library effectively
assists in at least the partial support of the staff of many of America's pictorial weeklies.

Other advanced investigators who have not been mentioned are the technical specialists devoted to particular subjects of research which avoid general classification. As an illustration there are the students of the history of paper, printing, and binding, the principal characteristics of books and their production and reproduction. Appropriate reference should be made here to the occasional use by publishers in preparing facsimile editions of rare and desirable books. Copies in the L. J. Rosenwald collection of William Blake's *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* were lent a year or two ago to The Trianon Press in Paris, which has reproduced them in fine color facsimile.

A third type of patron can be broadly classified as the casual reader. Into this group fall the one-visit reader who, possibly wishing to verify a reference, calls for only one or two books; the genealogist who spends a few hours either identifying his coat of arms or examining a single genealogy appropriate to his family; the wholesale copyist who fills note books with his seemingly aimless transcriptions; and the visitor who has a book, usually a Bible, that he wishes to have identified or appraised. Just because this kind of reader is classified as casual, it does not necessarily mean that he is an idle reader. One such visitor spent the afternoon copying sketches from *Godey's Lady's Book*; the name appearing on his reader sheet was that of one of America's leading dress designers. What influence this had on the dresses he subsequently designed cannot be ascertained, but there can be no denying that he transcribed with great care innumerable details from the plates to be found in this once fashionable periodical.

The final group of readers, and by no means the most inconsiderable, are members of the library staff whose duties frequently require that they do research in this division. Most numerous are the searchers from the library's Photoduplication Service who frequently spend several hours a day here calling for material in order that estimates of the costs of photostats, microfilm, or photographs may be prepared. Most of these estimates subsequently become orders for photoreproduction, and the material itself is sent to the Laboratory for appropriate handling. This, like the reference service handled through an extensive correspondence, constitutes merely an extension of reader services, and the correspondents may be categorized in much the same way as the three major groups that have previously been mentioned. In a sense, however, this extension of services does not take into account the
following projects which in the past few years have made heavy demands for material in the division. There were no less than 1,818 requests last year for material to be reproduced in its entirety or in part. This represented an increase of sixty-six per cent above the figure for the previous year and is to be explained in large measure by the activity of the currently produced Microprint edition of Evans' titles (American books printed before 1801), and the Louisville Microcard project which last year reproduced nearly 400 volumes from the library of Thomas Jefferson.

Another extension service is provided to the Exhibits Office of the Library of Congress. It borrows during the course of the year many important books, broadsides, and pamphlets for inclusion in library exhibits. Sometimes, when adequate insurance and other fairly strict safeguards are provided, material from the Rare Book Division is sent out on loan to other libraries through arrangements made by the exhibits officer in collaboration with other library officials. Just a few weeks ago an important seventeenth-century French musical manuscript from the L. J. Rosenwald collection was returned from an exhibit in San Diego. A few weeks later nine books from the Rosenwald collection in company with ten or more others from this division were forwarded to the Toledo Art Museum for inclusion in an exhibit devoted to the history of musical notation, which opened there in January 1957.

On occasion material is lent to other divisions in the library for exhibit; during the October 1956 Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge Foundation Musical Festival four volumes from the division were included in an exhibit devoted to the score of Gian Carlo Menotti's *The Unicorn, the Gorgon, and the Manticore*. It will come as no surprise to know that the books borrowed were all illustrated. Another instance of similar cooperation relates to the Hispanic Foundation's arrangements for blow-ups of photographs of important early title-pages or printed leaves representing important developments in typography; these are to be used as background material for the "Primer Festival del Libro de America," sponsored by the Universidad Central de Venezuela. The Library's Exchange and Gift Division, the Order Division, the Processing Department, which is responsible for the cataloging and labeling of the rare books, and other divisions within the Library to a lesser degree also make use of rare books as they relate to the particular responsibilities of these offices.

In considering the question of "Who Uses Rare Books and What For," the author chose to treat the subject directly from the point of view of the reader. This is not, however, the only way the subject...
Who Uses Rare Books and What For

can be approached, for the question could also have been phrased "What Rare Books are Used For." In other words the approach could be through the collections themselves and then, indirectly to the reader.

A few years ago when this division issued a checklist of Fifteenth Century Books in the Library of Congress, this writer prepared a short preface which answered the question: what use is made of such a collection? What follows is in no way a complete answer, but it will indicate how the collection which represents a very considerable investment is utilized. As the oldest printed books in the western world, they are perforce usually the scarcest and in many instances the most costly. The eminent and respectable age of these volumes is of itself important. Typographically the earliest printed books are diverse and in their very diversity they possess an absorbing interest; their various bindings will always be of interest to the student of bibliopegy; collectors will delight in the manifold stories of provenance, tracing a given volume from generation to generation; bibliographers will be alternately perplexed and delighted in solving the riddles surrounding the production of many of these volumes; but first and last incunabula are nothing more nor less than books, and books which above all else are interesting because of what they contain.

Just as a matter of interest the Rare Book Division recently kept a record of the number of demands that were made on the several collections. These provide the valid answer to those uninformed critics who feel that such collections constitute so much dead wood. A correspondent in Wisconsin recently ordered photostats of the accounts of the life of St. Dominic and St. Francis of Assisi as these were related in the library's copy of the Flos sanctorum, printed at Santiago in 1485, the only copy available in America. An official at the British Museum requested bibliographical details concerning the library's copy of the 1491 edition of Las obras de Seneca. A student in Ottawa ordered a microfilm copy of the Rosenwald copy of the illustrated 1484 edition of Johannes de Turrecremata's Meditationes; similarly an investigator in Baltimore secured a microfilm of the unique Rosenwald copy of Johannes de Capua's Exemplario contra engaños. Two incunabula were consulted by a student interested in all of the early missals containing examples of early liturgical printed music. Another one of the early missals, and one of the rarest, the Missale Romanum (1483), printed entirely in Slavonic, so interested another investigator that after several days of study he decided to order photostats of many of the leaves.

One reader spent several days seeking early references to the life of
Mary Magdalene. The several incunabula requested included Vincent de Beauvais' *Speculum doctrinale* and Caxton's edition of *The Golden Legend*. Early legal texts have been examined by the library's consultant in the history of Canon Law and by one of the officials at the Pierpont Morgan Library interested in determining the correct arrangement of an incomplete manuscript text in the collections of that institution.

Mention has been made only of the individual requests that have been made. Some emphasis should also be placed on the numerous visitations of groups anxious to see the collections in the stacks. One especially interesting visit was paid by a number of Johns Hopkins University students interested in early cartography. It was satisfying to be able to show them the earliest editions of Strabo's *Geographia*, a fine representation of the early Ptolemy's, and two copies of Bartolommeo dalli Sonetti's *Isolario*, the first maritime atlas.

The early bindings have interested a troop of Girl Scouts, a gentleman from the Public Records Office in London, and a lady from Hartford, who has made a detailed study of many of the panel stamps found on the original coverings of the library's incunabula. In brief summary, from the point of view of individual research, from group visitation, and for purposes of exhibition these early editions continue to play an important part in the service which the Library of Congress offers to its public; and just as long as the library endures these ancient volumes will continue to inform, to instruct, and to entertain.

Similar investigations of the uses made of the other collections in the division would also reveal the myriad ways rare books and the related materials which constitute a rare book collection are read and exploited. These books in the last analysis are read not because they necessarily are rare, but because they are important to someone's research—continually shedding light on new problems or explaining old ones. What better purpose can any library serve?

**General References**


Reader Policies in Rare Book Libraries

GEORGIA C. HAUGH

Every rare book librarian encounters resistance and even hostility over security policies in the issuing of rare books. Legends of inaccessibility have an astonishing life and for years at faculty gatherings edged jokes about the velvet ropes and searching by electronic eyes have greeted the rare book librarian. So-called inaccessibility is given as a lame excuse for not using the library, and there is little compunction in using it as an unthinking, but devastating, criticism of the administration of the library. And occasionally, rebellion is voiced at the point of entry into the collection.

The librarian patiently, but to no avail, explains the necessity for the protection of valuable books which are irreplaceable. Since conservation is his first concern, immediate convenience of the reader seems to come second. The extreme position is that readers have no rights, only privileges.

There are, of course, explanations for lack of understanding by the inexperienced user of rare book facilities. The present generation is far removed from the early days of library history when only the paid up members of a subscription library were permitted to borrow the books in the society’s library. Today, the tax supported public library emphasizes service and circulation, and properly so, and little is made of the unique value of a book, unless it should be in a collection of rarities within the public library. Though not intentionally, free libraries foster the idea of expendable books and readers with inalienable rights.

Modern living too, with its assembly line production and abundance of disposable items does not imbue us with the concept of cherished objects. There are always more autos and more television sets (provided one can pay for them); one can always “get another” or “trade it in.” Planned obsolescence is a catch-phrase; no one creates an advertising slogan about revered retention of the unique and fine. Even connoisseurs of paintings, gems, and ivory do not inevitably regard

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a rare book as a precious object. Subconscious attitudes are picked up in colleges, too, where students are encouraged to underline texts, and allowed to return library books in a drop box. Paper back books, with all their advantages, add one more unconscious bit of propaganda against recognition of rarity in printed pieces.

Added to these trends are the natural hostility of the individual to quizzing and blank-filling and his instinctive aversion to declaration of intentions, often unformulated, when the custodian of rarities confronts him. For some reason, one accepts filling out forms when mailing packages, or borrowing money, but not for borrowing books. There is no comprehension that risks are involved in giving out books. Democracy and the rights of the individual become highly important at the charging desk. An unfortunate encounter with an attendant not too skilled in tactful questioning may make the rules seem indeed severe and arrogant.

The average person is not aware of the facts of book life: that natural oil from his hands may be good for leather bindings but injurious to the pages: that a drop of ink may obliterate a highly important bit of text, and a deluge of ink will destroy it irrevocably; that fragile bindings break under careless usage; that numerous small injuries are cumulatively ruinous; and that rare books are becoming scarcer and more expensive.

Human nature is not going to change, and even scholars are all too "human" in their relationship with librarians. If the librarian needs to justify this bothersome phase of his profession he may search intrinsically within the walls of his world and with his professional peers, not extrinsically in public vagaries or misconceptions. With criticism so frequently experienced, it is reassuring for the rare book librarian to know that there is a professional consensus of practices. Answers to a questionnaire sent by the writer to well-known rare book libraries and departments in university libraries reveal wise prudence gained over many years of trial and error experience.

The summary which follows does not enumerate all the replies to each question. It is the writer's own compendium of the replies and cannot of course do justice to flexibility of policies in particular instances within the libraries. Rules are made to be broken when circumstances justify. It should be kept in mind, too, that libraries revise their procedures from time to time, and the information given here is not necessarily permanent policy.

In answer to the inquiry regarding admission to the rare book room a majority of libraries replied that an interview, formal or informal,
Reader Policies in Rare Book Libraries

with a member of the library staff is customary. Often the purpose of the interview is to aid the reader in his research, even directing him elsewhere if he can be better served by materials in another library.

Only a few of the libraries require in addition a letter of introduction with credentials satisfactory to the director. The Pierpont Morgan asks that this application should be made if possible one week in advance. The Folger and the Huntington while requesting credentials “from two persons of recognized standing” permit the applicant to present them personally. The Houghton Library at Harvard advises “strangers to bring letters of introduction from persons known to the officials and to write ahead of time stating what it is they wish to see.” Whether it is required or not, the scholar desiring to use specialized materials will find his path smoothed if he writes before his arrival.

In libraries which have rather formal requirements for admission, reader intention is closely scrutinized. The Huntington and the Morgan libraries want to know the specific purpose for which readers’ privileges are requested. It must be “a project within the field of our collections.” Readers are refused admission on the grounds of insufficient preparation; undergraduates seeking general reference works are regularly referred to other libraries. At the Library of Congress, no one under sixteen is admitted; at Morgan, eighteen is the minimum age.

Rare book libraries incorporated in the library system of state institutions are more liberal, while privately endowed libraries with prestige histories are more formalized. In the former, quite often, serious reader intent is sufficient criterion; no credentials are required. Rarely is an individual refused admission. The curators of some of these will display famous books simply to satisfy a sightseer’s curiosity. However, it must be remembered that those requests are few in the stricter libraries because some of the highly publicized items are kept on permanent display for public view. But in most collections, even the most liberal, there is no hesitation in guiding the reader elsewhere if a reprint or modern edition, for example, seems more suitable.

Of the libraries sampled, the Folger, Clements, Morgan, New York, Newberry, and Harvard libraries require the applicant to fill out an admission card or form. Some of the more detailed ones, such as that of the Library of Congress, are full page questionnaires. The Huntington and the Clements ask the reader to state that he has consulted general library sources where reference material is more available. These forms bear the signature of the approving officer and are kept on permanent file.

Once the reader has fulfilled the entrance requirements, he ordinarily
makes out a call slip for each book as is the practice in any library with closed stacks. Some libraries, notably the Library of Congress, the John Carter Brown, and the Clements, have a double call slip; the original is kept at the charging desk and the carbon remains on the shelf until the book has been returned. Occasionally, libraries retain the call slips as a permanent record of a reader's visit. The number of rare books issued at one time varies from one at the Morgan, three at the John Carter Brown and the Library of Congress, to six at the New York Public. Others such as the Historical Society of Pennsylvania permit any number within reasonable limits. At Illinois it depends on the reader and the use he is making of the books. In practice, few libraries enforce severe limitation as an undeviating policy when the reader needs to exceed the limit. The maximum number is set low for the convenience of the staff and the patron, and according to the reading space available, as much as by the desire to limit opportunities for the book thief.

Virtually all libraries provide a printed leaflet of rules governing the use of materials. Some have cautionary signs on the tables. Even when directions for handling the books are stated precisely in the printed instructions, special cautions are pointed out orally to the reader in four of the libraries, and under special circumstances in seven of them. A warning regarding the use of pencil for note taking was usually felt to be necessary. Many of the curators adopt a policy of "watchful waiting" on the premise that the printed rules and signs and the atmosphere should be sufficient deterrents. However, the percentage of affirmative replies rose sharply on the question of special admonitions to the reader entrusted with the greatest rarities, particularly the fragile ones.

In many of the libraries the reader is informed of his responsibility for the book. The Clements call slip bears this notation: "You are responsible for this book until you return it to the desk and see this white slip stamped 'Returned' by attendant." The Huntington Library states in its "Reading Privileges and Rules" that readers are responsible for the books until they have been returned and the call slip reclaimed. The Folger Library concurs in this.

When the reader must leave books unattended, a librarian is informed or the books are brought to the desk. Some rare book reading areas are small enough so that the reader may come and go with the attendant easily supervising. Many readers wish to use the same books for several days in sequence. Rather than reshelve the books at once as a security measure, nearly all libraries have temporary storage fa-
Reader Policies in Rare Book Libraries

cilities under lock and key for reserving the books—a truck, a desk, or a case. The Library of Congress and the University of Virginia Library are the exceptions, generally reshelving each day.

A majority of the libraries, no doubt remembering the famous slip case hoax of many years ago in which a Shakespeare folio was abstracted and only the empty slip case returned by a skillful (and well recommended!) reader-thief, now keep the case at the desk and handle the removal and replacement of the book personally. Few libraries check the book for possible mutilation immediately upon its return, the reasons being that close supervision obviates the necessity, it is time consuming, and one or two felt it would be embarrassing to the reader. Some check as soon as possible but do not hold the reader for clearance; others inspect only if suspicious. However, one correspondent wryly reported that even in a small room a reader cut out pictures almost under her eyes.

One of the controversial points with readers as they casually whip out their fountain pens for note taking is the prohibition of the use of ink and the insistence on pencil. This is a rigid rule in many of the libraries; it is the one rule printed in red in the Huntington instructions, for example. However, with the advent of the ball point pen, some librarians are relaxing to the extent of permitting its use, or wondering whether they might not do so. In one university library, the fountain pen—unaccompanied by bottle—is even sanctioned. It should be mentioned that in many libraries, typewriters, usually noiseless, are provided, at no expense or for a small fee, or readers are permitted to use their own. Indelible pencils are taboo and tracings and rubbings are not permitted. One curator remarked that one of her greatest problems was to keep students from laying note paper down on opened folio pages and thus leaving impressions as they wrote. This is reason enough to provide reading lecterns. Velvet shot bags or glass plates are indicated for holding books open to eliminate needless handling of the opened pages. Needless to say, it is forbidden to lay books open face down, or to employ harmful bookmarks such as pencils.

The Folger Library's statement lines out several of these points upon which libraries are alert: "No marks may be added to or erased from books and manuscripts; no tracings or rubbings may be made without specific permission; no books, paper or other objects (except the weights provided for holding books open) may be laid on rare materials." All these precautions are designed not only to protect the book, but the reader as well, from the expensive accident.

One of the most carefully weighed considerations in rare book hand-
ling is that of uncut pages. The premium placed by rare book collectors upon the original condition of the book including this feature raises the important question of value. In no instance is the reader allowed to open the pages, and in many cases the curator makes an individual decision on each book.

All rare book libraries shelve their collections in locked stacks, or locked cases, or locked cases in locked stacks; often the greatest rarities are kept in special vaults, or "vault rooms." Reference works, however, are found often in open areas with easy access by the reader. In response to the question as to whether browsing in the rare book cases was permitted there was a positive concensus with answers ranging from "No!" to "No-no-no!" Occasionally a trustworthy reader with special requirements will be taken to the shelves by a staff member. Any photographing of materials is arranged by the staff. Smoking is prohibited in reading areas.

Sentry duty by staff members varies with the reading room situation. A few libraries employ special guards whose primary duty is to stand watch much as in museums, and to screen visitors to the reading area. Among these are the Folger, Huntington, Newberry, and Morgan libraries. When the rare book room is kept locked as at the New York Public Library, special guards are not hired. Many rare book rooms, being contained within the general library security system, have no separate arrangements. Not being show places, they do not attract crowds of tourists. In libraries without a separate guard force, staff duties necessarily include security surveillance.

There is no uniform practice in check rooms. Some places provide them but do not insist that patrons leave their coats, packages, and brief cases there. However, the Folger requests that brief cases be checked. In general, a reader's books are not inspected when he leaves except at the Newberry and the New York Public Library. It should be pointed out that some libraries other than rare book ones request inspection of brief cases and books being carried out. In other libraries other security provisions have been made such as at the Library of Congress where the reader presents evidence at the exit that his books have been discharged. In the small library it is easy to observe departures without formal inspection.

Common practice in rare book libraries forbids the circulation of books and home use, but surprisingly enough there are some who let books out of the building for good cause. This is not on the liberal public library basis, however, but for special exceptions. Two of the libraries in the study participate in inter-library loans, the Morgan will
send out reference books, and others lend rarities for special exhibits. On the other hand, the University of Texas, the Huntington, and the Clements have a definite prohibition against books leaving the building. This non-circulating policy is occasionally stated in the deed of trust. Generally speaking, removal of books from a rare book library is not lightly undertaken.

One device found useful in some of the libraries for recording visits of readers is a daily register. It assists in tracing lost books, or it can be used for a quick survey of reader activities or annual statistics.

The effectiveness of all these various precautions is demonstrated by the reports of little mutilation and few losses. Several of the libraries cited one sobering case of defacement within recent knowledge; only one knew of a loss, a minor one. One correspondent in a large library commented that they had suffered losses until the system of locked doors to the room was inaugurated. One can safely conclude that rare book custodians have carried out their major responsibility of care and protection with marked success.

Perhaps, put baldly in print, these rules for the conservation of costly books sound like stern prohibitions—a calculated scheme by hoarders to fend off eager readers. Yet, no one reading through the questionnaires themselves, particularly the extended answers, could fail to be impressed by the tone of graciousness and helpfulness. A tone of cordial, pleasant atmosphere rather than a restrictive, forbidding one, says the chief at the New York Public Library Reserve Division, is the goal, and each correspondent expressed the same sentiment. This is confirmed by reports heard from the other side of the desk from well-traveled readers. Again and again they express their appreciation of the personalized, unstinting, and knowledgeable service extended them in rare book libraries where they are given the priceless opportunity to examine rarities. All librarians take pride in having their materials seen and used. Most of the libraries welcome visitors; guided tours are frequent occurrences highlighting the display of treasurers.

The solicitude of the libraries for their materials varies from those who merely issue an injunction to be careful to those who extend minute directions. Flexibility of policy is indicated by the wide range of materials. Many books such as reference books and bibliographies require no special treatment at all. While at the other extreme the tenderest of care is given illustrated manuscripts. At the Morgan, pages of manuscripts are to be turned carefully with fingers resting only on blank margins, and care taken not to breathe on the decorations during close examination. Though this essay has been confined to treat-
ment of books, it should be noted that rules for servicing manuscripts are often more stringent. Consequently, rules created especially for manuscripts tend to establish policy for all materials in the collection. It must be remembered that policies are made to yield to the status of the reader. All authorities relax surveillance for the proved reader who has demonstrated conscientious care.

Regulations and manuals appear to be more elaborate when one or more of the following factors are present: the collection contains a large number of extraordinary rarities; the library has independent status; and close relationship exists, or existed, with a benefactor. In addition, institutions like the New York Public Library and the Library of Congress, located in metropolitan centers, with a large patronage must maintain stricter restrictions which may be administered impersonally as part of an inescapable system.

Flexibility of policy is determined also by the function of the library. If the trend may be discerned, it is toward efforts to encourage greater use of the materials, especially in those collections which are part of an academic institution. Necessity to justify existence in competition with other library service units may be partially responsible, as well as the genuine desire of the librarian to stimulate students to become acquainted with fine books. Hence, for them, there is no barring of the inexperienced student for lack of credentials or purpose, and a welcoming atmosphere free of obvious restrictions is sought.

When asked whether they felt regulations have been tightened or relaxed over the years, the curators gave varied answers. It must be pointed out this is a difficult “yes” or “no” question because relativity depends on the original standards, which were not asked for, and personality differences in application enter in. Four of the libraries reported no change; three are relaxing rules, but seven are tightening up and all for the same reason: more readers and increased use.

Laws are by their nature negative—witness the Ten Commandments. If there were no law breakers, and no careless temperaments, the library of rarities could give man free rein. But there are the inescapable facts of human nature and limited library resources. It is the rare book librarian’s duty to use his technical knowledge and experience to preserve while serving. A table sign in the Pierpont Morgan Library expresses a view which all rare book librarians surely hold:

TO READERS

Many of the books and manuscripts you handle are unique and irreplaceable.
Reader Policies in Rare Book Libraries

Our inheritance from the past, and our legacy to the future, they deserve to be treated with the utmost care.
Please respect them.

General References

Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery, San Marino, California. Reading Privileges and Rules. [San Marino, 1956?]
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Fashions in Collecting and Changing Prices

ROLAND A. L. TREE

There can be little doubt that during the last one hundred years or more, there have been many changes in the aims and ideals of book collectors. These changes have been brought about through many different causes and conditions, the more obvious being the opportunities given by the appearance of new topics on the scene or the development of new geographical areas; the unavailability of material that had once been collected; prices of available material; and the publication from time to time of new bibliographies.

Whether book collecting is a significant occupation of importance to the preservation of the present culture, or a mere hobby amusing to certain individuals is an argument that still finds contenders. Certainly among the ancients collecting was confined largely to sovereigns or their appointed librarians. It was a matter of prestige and national honor to build a library; the object was to gather and preserve whatever written records could be found. After the fall of Rome, this responsibility was assumed by the church, and the monks were motivated much the same as the ancient rulers: to preserve the manuscripts that existed, especially and sometimes exclusively the religious writings. With the Renaissance and the invention of printing, wealthy laymen began to show an interest in literature, secular as well as religious, and built up private libraries to gratify their own interests and to impress their friends.

Collectors also looked at the physical condition of their books. Excellence of printing, beauty of the binding, association, priority, and scarcity (hence first editions) became factors in fastidious selection. As for topics, early concern was shown for the Greek and Roman classics, incunabula, Bibles, products of early printers, literature (further divided into dramas, poetry, essays, and finally novels), voyages and travels, and English literature. Collections in particular

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[ 476 ]
disciplines like law, medicine, theology, philosophy, geography, and music began to appear in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Americana was a field that developed later. Working assiduously in the early nineteenth century, Thomas Jefferson may have been the first collector to emphasize his own country. But it was not until the 1840's and the activity of John Carter Brown, abetted by dealer Henry Stevens, that Americana became a recognized and increasingly respectable field of collecting. Interest in some of the older fields mentioned above correspondingly diminished in this country. Brown's chief rivals were James Lenox and George Brinley, who also bought from Stevens. The collections of the first two are preserved in libraries today, while Brinley's was dispersed in a series of auctions from 1879 to 1893 which fed a new and larger generation of Americana collectors.¹,²

The late nineteenth century also saw increasing interest in English and American literature of that century. The history of science grew to a larger field with increasing inventions and rapid scientific discovery. Collecting on trades and occupations began to augment the older disciplines. General Americana has been broken into special areas of interest as the high spots of the colonial period grow scarcer and higher priced. These trends have become more marked in the twentieth century. The subject area of transportation has been divided into ships, railroads, aeronautics, and automobiles, for instance. Literary collectors have concentrated on particular authors. Sporting books may be had in each of the various sports. The future will provide many new topics that will appeal to new generations of collectors.

The appearance of new bibliographies usually has a strong influence on collecting because many collectors are guided and aided by them. H. R. Wagner's *The Spanish Southwest* together with his *The Plains and the Rockies* made the Far West an enthusiasm. Donald Wing's *Short-title Catalogue of Books Printed in England . . . 1475-1640* had a marked effect on the resurgence of demand for books of that period, even though, it must be admitted, some of them have little intrinsic value. The attempt to gather the Grolier Club's *One Hundred Influential American Books* has been made by some sturdy collectors, but there is no record that any one has yet succeeded in acquiring all of them. There are many other bibliographies published recently that have had similar effect: causing an increase in demand, a decline in availability, and a rise in price while the purchasing power of money constantly went down. The author remembers being rebuked by a collector friend about 1949 for offering him a book that he wanted
for the sum of $2,000, when both knew it had an auction record of $600 in 1936. When it was pointed out that a Ford car had increased in price at about the same rate, that there were plenty of Fords available nevertheless, and only one copy of the book, the point got home, and the sale was made.

This writer's connection with the rare book business commenced in 1923, and his interests have been concerned principally with Americana. The firm he was privileged to join was founded by Henry Stevens of Vermont in 1845, when he set up business in London. Surely it will be admitted that this step accelerated the flow of rare books to America, and that he did a great deal towards stimulating a larger interest in the books relating to America. During the past years, many specialties have developed within the field—discoveries, smuggling, the Civil War, books by and about certain prominent persons, the gold rush, the theater, tobacco, Negro literature, Indians, etc. On the other hand, many books, including the intriguing and ephemeral pamphlet, have more or less disappeared from the market. Such books as middle nineteenth-century English and French travels in America are being gobbled up as fast as they are offered. In the 1920's they were barely saleable at a dollar or two; now they are wanted by everybody.

During the period 1920-1930 there were many desirable books appearing on the market, covering all fields and at what today would be considered, in most cases, reasonable prices. At that time, booksellers generally had more than enough stock to satisfy the demands of collectors and institutions. In the early 1930's after the crash, collecting was naturally carried on in a more modest way, and prices were much lower. The booksellers in England continued to support the market during this dull period so that when war came in 1939 most of them had good stocks. Very little was sold at auction during the war, but the accumulated stocks enabled the "trade" to carry on, and the export of books helped to supply the dollars needed so desperately by England.

Following World War II, as soon as Europe was open again, many bookmen journeyed there and found some fine material but this supply is now becoming less bountiful and of course prices have increased enormously. In addition economic recovery in Europe has been accompanied by a resurgence of collecting by Europeans. Consequently the flow of books to America has lessened as more have been retained by collectors abroad. Indeed, there is an ever increasing flow of material back to Europe from America, reversing a trend of more than
a century. The Harmsworth Sale, which ran in London from 1948 to 1953, was a godsend to dealers, whose stocks had declined very seriously, and to collectors who usually get a renewed interest when an important sale occurs. The collection had been offered in America as a whole, but found no buyers. At auction, it must have realized more than two or three times the asking price. Although prices at first were low, as the sale progressed they became stronger and stronger, culminating in the Zumárraga, *Doctrina Breve*, Mexico City, 1544, bringing £2600. A copy was sold in 1927 for £250.

As indicated previously most of the earlier books have become much more difficult to find, but naturally there are always outstanding exceptions. Until 1949, the author's firm had never owned a copy of Champlain's *Des Sauvages*, 1603. Then, in a five-year period, it handled three copies: the Harmsworth copy, one from Paris, and the McCoy copy. It is interesting to note in passing that not one of these copies was kept for more than a few days. Two of them passed into institutions and one into private hands. Perhaps this copy will come onto the market again one day.

The scarcity of available material has come about for many reasons. Apart from what has been destroyed over the years by wars, fires, earthquakes, and other catastrophes, there is and has been a constant withdrawal of many fine books from the market to find permanent homes in institutions. Generally speaking, most book collecting during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was done by individuals rather than institutions, and many of these collections came on the market later, certain books being sold and resold. Collectors in those happy days were given the opportunity of filling in gaps in their desiderata. Always, however, a certain percentage went into institutions. During that period there were many of the giant collectors, and taxation was not the very serious problem it has become in the last few years.

It is a little publicized fact that during the last fifty years, some seventy-five good to great collections have gone into libraries and institutions, presumably to remain there for all time, and this must have had an enormous effect on availability and thus on trends of collecting. These gifts and bequests took a great deal of rare material off the market which in the ordinary passage of time would have become available again. To name but a few of these great collections during the recent generation: Henry E. Huntington (who had absorbed other collections), William L. Clements, William M. Elkins, W. R. Coe, and J. K. Lilly. The tendency to give away collections and even individual important books is on the increase.
In recent years this increase in the donating of material to institutions has been greatly encouraged by favorable gift tax laws. However, tax advantages are not the sole reason that collectors give their books to institutions, but unquestionably it must influence the final decision. Apart from making an outright gift, an ardent collector can even give his collection away on an installment basis; and keep physical possession during his life time, and gain substantial tax deductions based on life expectancy. An important fact to remember is that the value of the gift is not determined by its cost, but by its current value. For instance, if Mr. A had been fortunate enough in 1914 to buy Harrisse B.A.V. No. 1, a Columbus Letter printed in 1493, for $2,000, he would probably be able to get a tax allowance of $25,000 to $30,000.

A related factor is the emergence of more and more libraries—special, university, and public—as active collectors. The recipients of the above mentioned private collections have continued to add to them. Libraries which once had no rare book collections as such have segregated their accumulated rarities for special care and are buying additional rarities for research purposes. If no one of them buys as heavily as some of the old generation private giants, taken together they create an impressive demand on the market.

It will be interesting to look back a hundred years and see what prices books brought then, and compare them with recent prices. The increases are amazing. The classic example is the Bay Psalm Book, Cambridge, 1640, the first book in English printed in America. In 1855, Henry Stevens bought a bundle of prayer books, which included a copy lacking four leaves. This he perfected from an imperfect copy owned by George Livermore and sold to James Lenox for £80 ($400). Some five years later he bought the Crowninshield Library and offered the copy from that collection to the British Museum for £150 ($750). The keeper did not have the courage to present it to the trustees for approval and payment, presumably because he felt the price was outrageous. In 1868, after seven years, the book was withdrawn and sold to George Brinley for 150 guineas (under $800). In the Brinley sale, held in 1878, it was bought by Cornelius Vanderbilt for $1,200. In 1947 this same copy realized $151,000 and now rests in the Yale University Library. Incidentally this is the highest price ever paid for a book at auction, but the situation was somewhat out of the ordinary.

In 1845 Lenox paid £25/10/- (about $125) for a copy of Hakluyt's Voyages, with the Molyneaux map. The last copy the author’s firm
Fashions in Collecting and Changing Prices

handled was sold a few years ago for approximately $5,000, and it would undoubtedly command a higher price today. At the same time, Brown secured four Columbus Letters of 1493 at about $35 to $50; and at that price it is unnecessary to worry about the Harrisse numbers. Today they would be worth $12,000 to $30,000 each, according to which edition they happened to be.

The Gutenberg Bible appeared at auction in London, 1847, and realized the “mad” price of £500. Lenox, for whom it had been purchased, paid with commissions etc. around $3,000 for it, but not until after a good deal of hesitation and feeling that the cost was out of all proportion. Recently, a copy was on the market lacking several leaves, the asking price quoted was $185,000. It was sold. An expert in this field claims that at the present time a perfect copy might well bring $300,000.

The changes in price at auction on John Milton's *Poems*, 1645, have been traced. A copy was sold in 1895 for $370. Since then by approximately five-year intervals, the progression for various copies in different condition has been as follows: 1900—$490; 1907—$490; 1912—$440; 1920—$790; 1925—$1,450; 1930—$1,650; 1936—$3,100; 1941—$625; 1947—$1,400; 1952—$875. Although there is no cyclical pattern and the price has fluctuated like stock prices, the cost has achieved higher ground in fifty years and the minimum has definitely doubled.

Hawthorne's *Fanshawe*, 1828, shows a similar curve: in 1895 the lowest price of $155 was realized; in 1930 a copy brought $5,800; in 1947 another went for $1,800. Before 1924 no copy sold as high as $1,000; since then nine copies sold have passed that figure.

How tempting would the offer of forty Shakespeare “quartos” for £500 sound to you, or, if you wanted the four “folios” added, the price to be increased to £600? Lenox had that opportunity in 1855 and took it. A description of this bargain collection is given in Stevens' *Recollections of Mr. James Lenox*. In 1847 Lenox secured a copy of Hariot's *Virgina* in English, the folio illustrated edition published by DeBry in 1590, for 100 guineas ($525). A year or two ago, a copy was offered for $6,000 and sold, and more recently a fine copy changed hands for $10,000 in a private transaction.

It is interesting to note that in 1883 when Henry Stevens was reviewing Lenox’s purchases of $50,000 for the years 1854 and 1855, the two busiest years in their transactions, he said that if the same books were to be collected now they would cost $250,000. What would they cost today?

English literature is still the most popular field for collecting today.
Widespread demand has kept prices up. In comparison Americana is still a bargain because the general price range of the high spots is lower than the high spots of English literature. Although prices have moved upward in the past century, in all commodities as well as books, the current level in Americana is not as high as the level in English literature. How long this condition will last is anyone's guess, because for the first time in the history of the book trade there is a seller's market. The supply of the “old standard” or long-accepted rarities naturally has diminished, and while collectors and institutions retain their present volume of money to spend the situation is not likely to change. This condition prevailed in the automobile market right after the second world war; it was broken by increased manufacturing of cars. No such solution is possible in old books. Inflation aside, buyers shall simply have to get used to paying more for the books everyone wants; only a depression that dries up demand is likely to pull down the general level of prices.

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ADDITIONAL REFERENCES

Friends of the Huntington Library

ROBERT O. SCHAD

Many years ago a man who had expressed considerable interest in the Huntington Library and who felt on sufficiently easy terms with the staff to voice the following said: "I wish there were some way in which I could be more closely associated with the Library." This was before the present popularity of Friends movements, and the only means this person had of expressing his interest was to visit the library frequently and to make a special contribution occasionally to its purchase fund. Needless to say, when the Friends of the Huntington Library was organized in February 1939, this individual was one of the leading movers and was an officer of the board until his untimely death.

The impelling motive behind the association of many laymen with these groups is just such an unselfish desire to participate in the growth of institutions with which they also share a degree of responsibility and a satisfaction in meeting the problems and rewards of libraries. A requisite of a Friends movement is the existence of a group of people who are sufficiently interested in one institution to want to help it and to be willing to work for it. This focus gives the organization a definite objective. For the library such endorsement by the public is very important and impressive.

A library and a Friends movement are comparable to close relatives in a family: they live in intimate association, yet it is imperative that there be a measure of independence on both sides. Liaison is not only desirable but essential. It is frequently achieved by having a representative of the parent organization sit with the Friends board or committees either as a member or guest.

Most Friends groups have their own organization, with charter, by-laws, directors, officers, committees, and specific membership regulations. The last vary considerably with the institution to which the group attaches. For example, some organizations have honorary mem-

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members; others do not. Some accept gifts in kind in lieu of membership dues. Most of them strive to develop a particular program on which to concentrate their efforts in order to achieve some productive goal.

Two ways in which Friends can be of definite help are through public relations and through acquisitions. In the former the addition of a large membership forms a constituency to which the institution can turn for guidance in time of need. It also acts as a semi-public endorsement of the institution's policies. Unlike colleges, libraries do not have alumni, but most organize their own well-wishers and advertisers. Some groups prefer to have a small number of members who are expected to contribute a large amount in dues; others prefer a maximum number of members who contribute a minimum amount in dues. In some instances the net benefit from dues is negligible after the expenses of organization and membership returns have been met. Nevertheless, the organization may be considered to have served a good purpose if it has won and held the interest of a representative group of people.

For the Huntington Library Friends, the board as a whole acted as the membership committee in the early days. It met frequently, considered names from a variety of sources, and individual directors sponsored the various invitations to join that were sent out. This action resulted in building up a membership of several hundred, and these members in turn became sponsors of their friends. Today there are no drives for membership, but a year around effort is made to supplement the names proposed by members with other eligible prospects. Since members may join throughout the year, the membership year is divided into four quarters so that each member has a full year on the roster each time he renews.

There will be as many attractions for members as there are types of institution. There are libraries, universities, museums, art galleries, restorations, gardens, and rare book collections within libraries. The Huntington Library is unusually inclusive with its art gallery and botanical garden and consequently has exercised a wider appeal to friends than if it were confined to a single function. The membership roster at present includes more than 1,500 names representing national, state-wide, and local interest.

In an early letter to the membership the then president, W. W. Clary, outlined functions fulfilled by the Friends. Among those he named, first, the all important one of furnishing a constituency whose interest would give vitality to the institution beyond that supplied by its own trustees and staff. Next, he stressed that a large number of relatively small contributions amounted to a very substantial sum.
to augment the fixed amounts in the institution's budget. Another consideration was that many really desirable acquisitions fall short of the priority necessary to make them effective recommendations. They would benefit especially by the help of contributions from the Friends.

Clary pointed out the part that individual members might take in the library's program of acquisitions once they understood that program. He also invited members to make known their special interests which they would like to support. In conclusion Clary wrote: "The effectiveness of the Friends organization will increase geometrically in proportion to the number of members. It is our goal this year (1940) to increase the number to one thousand. The goodwill created by such a group spreads far beyond the actual membership. Likewise such a group reaches out like a great net and gathers material aid from a multitude of sources unknown to any one person."¹

Writing fifteen years later, H. D. Crotty, successor to Clary, said:

The manner in which the Friends throughout the year are responsible for an intelligently integrated enrichment of the Library's collections may be of interest. The Library's Book Committee is of course alert to items which come into the rare book market or are otherwise known to be obtainable. The suitability and sometimes extreme importance of a particular book or manuscript to the Library's holdings is determined in committee, and often when the item seems appropriate to the Friends interests, the matter is referred to us. Subsequently the acquisition may be made by the Friends or jointly by the Library and the Friends. Conversely, we frequently come upon an item which we feel would be an appropriate addition to the collections, the matter is referred to the Director of the Library, and if the suggested gift is wanted, and not already duplicated in the Library, it is secured. These same procedures are followed in the case of prints or other art material.²

Sometimes, as in the instance of the Isaac Lord manuscript journal and its accompanying T. H. Jefferson Map of the Emigrant Road from Independence, Mo. to St. Francisco, a particular acquisition is substantially assisted by an individual Friend who comes forward to supplement the library's part in securing it. Or, a gift may come from a Friend's own collection, and the knowledge that the Huntington Library is already rich in a certain field frequently leads to a transfer of ownership. For example, the beautiful pieces of silver presented this year by four members of the library's Friends long graced their homes, and parting with them must have entailed a painful wrench.
The library's periodic exhibitions of material from its archives has familiarized the Friends with its interests. A case in point is the Walt Whitman material presented by a Friend whose interest in the Library's Whitman collection was aroused by last year's exhibit in honor of the *Leaves of Grass* centennial.

Another means of apprising the membership of the library's needs is the "want list" which sometimes appears in the *Friends* leaflet. Possibly this appeals to the sleuthing instincts of the members, for the fact is that since the publication of such a list in the June 1955 issue, nine of the twenty wanted items have materialized. Sixty-five individual Friends have presented books, manuscripts, or art objects this year. Along with the contributions of the organization as a whole, these constitute a thoughtful and important increase in the library's holdings.

The germ from which a Friends movement grows is the dynamic interest of a group of men and women in furthering the welfare of a worthy institution. To do this some formality is entailed. First, there needs to be a group of sponsors and articles of incorporation which set forth the objects of the proposed organization. The articles of the Friends of the Huntington Library, signed December 22, 1938, set forth the legal name of the corporation and designate its purposes. After the familiar "advancement of learning and promotion of the public welfare" clause comes the second, to provide funds for the purchase of books, manuscripts, etc., for the enrichment of the library's resources, to provide for the publication of manuscripts and other material, and to provide funds for the cataloging of all books and other material given by this corporation to the library. Other sections take up acquisitions of material for the art and botanical collections.

The number of directors is set at fifteen, and the incorporators act in the capacity of directors until the election of their successors. The number of directors may be altered by amendment of the by-laws, but the purposes of the organization and the requirement of an eighty per cent affirmative vote of the membership for change of either of these sections is part of the Articles of Incorporation. Fortunately for libraries, the legal profession is a bookish one and is unusually well-represented among the supporters of Friends movements. Therefore a Friends group usually will contain one or more lawyers who can guide it through the legal formalities of its activities.

The directors of the Huntington Library Friends happen to be all men at the present time, and they meet throughout the year whenever business requires, in addition to the stated annual meeting for the
Friends of the Huntington Library

election of directors (on staggered three-year terms) and the annual
election of officers and appointment of committees in March. An
effort is made to keep books in the forefront at these meetings by
having the staff exhibit some prospective purchases. The executive
committee meets more frequently than the full board, since of the
ten board members, twelve are from Southern California, one from
Northern California, and two from the East.

The question of how large a membership is desired is fundamental
to the plan of every Friends organization. Broadly speaking, it might
be assumed that groups would desire the largest possible membership
consistent with their plan, but the dues asked affect size. Some organi-
izations seek a maximum financial return and encourage this by estab-
lishing several classes of membership at various amounts. Others keep
to one class of membership at a nominal annual contribution, on the
theory that the informed interest of the constituency is more valuable
to the institution than the purchasing power of their gifts. Generally
annual fees range from $5 to $100 or more, with $10 striking a popular
note. Thus far the Huntington Friends have had only one class of
membership with a minimum contribution of $10, although many
members have generously contributed larger amounts.

Different organizations offer a variety of membership returns, such
as bulletins, lectures, invitations to teas and dinners, and a choice of
publications. In the Huntington Library’s plan, publications or repro-
ductions of paintings or other art works have always been an important
factor and a happy interchange between the library and its Friends.
The library also issues a Quarterly for the publication of studies related
to the library’s collections, and a considerable number of Friends take
their membership return in the form of a subscription to this periodical.

Most organizations function better for some social grace, and the
Friends of the Huntington Library is no exception. Twice a year the
membership is invited by the trustees to a program and tea. Founder’s
Day (around March 1) is the occasion for an address by a distin-
guished speaker; Friends Day (about June 1) is marked by a display
of Friends gifts and a garden tea under the large oaks adjacent to the
library building. Members also are invited to lectures and new exhibi-
tions, and they receive annual reports of the library and special
accounts of important Friends acquisitions. To those whose interest is
well defined, these seem to constitute satisfactory return, but they
cannot be and are not used as bait for the skeptical. To do so would
only produce a large number of in-and-out members.

The list of books, manuscripts, and prints purchased for the library
by its Friends or with their help during the last twelve months is impressive. It ranges from incunabula to a collection of Christopher Morley first editions, and highlights such items as a beautiful set of twelve engravings of the Irish linen industry by William Hincks (1783), an unique copy of Samuel Ireland's Shakespeare (1796) extra-illustrated with many of W. H. Ireland's forgeries, a set of Henry Alken's original water colors of the Leicestershire Hunt, an early English dictionary by Rider (1612), and an excellent manuscript journal of the Mexican War. Almost every one of thirty or more items listed in the annual report to the members would justify a descriptive paragraph.

The relation of two groups when one exists only to help the other can be fraught with problems. An obvious step for harmony is to insure that those delegated with the executive responsibilities of the two groups see eye-to-eye on policies, needs, and plans for growth. The Friends of the Huntington Library was not among the earliest such organizations in the country, but its history has been one of consistent vitality and growth. Its board is composed of men of affairs with wide and diverse interests yet who never seem too busy to turn their attention to the interest of the Huntington Library. The concern of the membership at large justifies describing the enterprise as a "share the wealth" movement.

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A Rare Book: Its Essential Qualifications

WRIGHT HOWES

In as much as none of the manifold attempts to define "a rare book" has yet obtained such unanimity of approval as to be reckoned entirely satisfactory or final, investigation into this question still remains fair game, is still in the public domain. The phrase—"a rare book"—can mean any one of three different things depending on the sense in which it is used. Two of these meanings—those used in a narrow, conditional sense to indicate merely that a particular volume is either not plentiful, or that it possesses some quality distinguishing it as being unusually excellent or meritorious—can be banished at once from consideration. Neither of these restricted meanings can be properly conveyed by our phrase, unless one or the other is expressly stipulated for or inferentially suggested by context. They are both well outside our province.

The concern here is exclusively with the third and quite different meaning of this phrase; its meaning, unconditioned by any qualification, expressed or implied; its meaning when used in the sense in which it is understood today in common parlance; the meaning, in short, by which a book described as "rare" identifies it as one belonging to the highest of the three several grades into which books of more-than-ordinary monetary value have long been conveniently divided: those called "uncommon," those called "scarce" and those called "rare."

Division into grades of such books is no new practice. Born of convenience, it probably evolved at an early period in the development of the traffic in printed books. The idea of grades, as well as the nomenclature adopted to designate them, have proven of vast utility, an example of bastard trade-jargon legitimatized by long usage. Both will be helpful in solving the present problem; in fact, the solution will primarily hinge upon them. This will be shown later when the three grades are examined separately in order to establish reason-

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ably definite limits of demarcation between them. When those distinctions are made sufficiently clear, confusion should disappear.

One thing, and one thing only, gives a book unusual value: excess of demand over available supply, the phenomenon that produces similar value in any other object. The extent of the dollar value produced depends upon the degree to which that phenomenon makes itself felt, in other words, the degree of disparity between demand and supply. One might get the impression that the influential factor creating value is solely physical uncommonness. This is not true. Sheer physical uncommonness in certain books has frequently an indirect, contributory influence on the disparity between supply and demand, but it cannot of itself ever directly produce monetary value. However hard-to-get a book may be, if those seeking it are fewer than those wishing to sell it, no unusual monetary value can be legitimately placed upon it.

Consider the extreme case of an utterly inconsequential book, issued, as it can be, at will by anyone able to pay for its printing, in an edition consisting of only one copy. Such a book is as uncommon physically as is any book in the world; it exceeds in that respect the Gutenberg Bible, the Bay Psalm Book, or Poe’s *Tamerlane*. However, as its only claim to distinction lies in this uncommonness, as it has no other virtue, no other appeal, will anyone want it? If not, its extremely attenuated supply still exceeds demand, and no monetary value can be justifiably attached to it.

Though unplentifulness is, of itself, incapable of producing unusual monetary value in a book enjoying no demand, the excess of demand over supply productive of such value is obviously more readily attained by books printed in editions of a few copies than by those printed in normal trade editions of several thousand. The same is true, of course, when a book’s normal supply has been artificially destroyed. The age of a book by no means always contributes to a lessening of supply sufficient to give demand ascendancy, but it is apt to do so and frequently does. Books printed centuries ago naturally have been exposed to more hazards of damage and destruction than have those less ancient. For similar reasons books printed on flimsy, inferior paper or bound in boards or wrappers have less chance of survival than sturdier types.

Such physical characteristics contribute directly, though perhaps intangibly, to decrease supply and thus facilitate the ascendancy of demand over supply, which in turn brings about or accentuates a book’s monetary value. But the most potent and pronounced single
factor in reducing supply is demand itself. This non-physical factor, though direct and tangible, results from any one of several intangible characteristics—or perhaps from a combination of them—such as: a book’s recognized fame or the fact that it was written by a famous author; its unusual literary excellence; its unusual merit or importance as a contribution to an interesting phase of history or of thought. All of these, while directly accentuating demand and thus indirectly lessening supply, may or may not be determinative in raising a book to unusual monetary value. The result must always depend on whether the demand they develop is sufficient to outweigh available supply.

A spectacular example will elucidate this point: the Personal Memoirs of U. S. Grant is a famous book, written by a famous man. As the personal narrative of the soldier who must be awarded chief credit for winning the Civil War, it is surely the most important single contribution to the history of that crucial American event. Furthermore, its simple, direct style rivals the literary excellence of Caesar’s “Gallic War.” And yet, in spite of this array of favorable characteristics and of the continuous, steady demand they have inspired and maintained for seventy-five years, the two volumes of its original edition have today no unusual monetary value. They sell for less than their published price. Demand, though great and long-continued, has not yet been capable of outweighing the supply still remaining at large from its colossal initial printing. As long as this supply continues preponderantly to exceed demand that great book can enjoy only a nominal value.

A few other influences may be mentioned as having a two-edged effect upon demand and supply. A sudden quickening and widening of interest in a special subject effects a notable increase in demand (and a concomitant decrease in supply) for all significant contributions to that subject, while a directly contrary effect is produced when interest in some subject evaporates or seriously declines. Economic conditions affect all classes of books. In periods of widespread prosperity, demand increases and few book-owners are forced to sell. The result, a decreased supply. Conversely, periods of depression produce a lessening of demand and the throwing of books upon the market by owners forced to sell. These unite in effecting an increase in supply.

How does the current market price for any particular book become established? Preferably this is arrived at from the prices asked for it by informed dealers specializing in the subject group to which it belongs. These approximately uniform prices are based on expert appraisal of all the tangible and intangible influences mentioned in
the foregoing analysis, together with concrete knowledge gleaned from long experience in the actual selling of this particular book. A consensus of such prices supplies a dependable figure that is never seriously questioned, a price recognized and accepted as one that a dealer is justified in asking and that a buyer is justified in paying.

A more readily available means of establishing value is supplied by auction records. This method is widely popular, but prices so obtained are far less reliable. They do not always represent cool, dispassionate, informed opinion, and should be used with caution. The "common" books, the vast horde of undistinguished books that nobody wants, or worth-while but easily obtainable books existing in conspicuous over-supply, are easily recognizable as having only ordinary monetary value or none. For them no dealer is so uninformed as to feel justified in asking, no buyer is no uninformed as to feel justified in paying, more than a nominal price of less than $10.00, in most cases much less.

All parenthetical explanations deemed necessary for clarifying certain aspects of the general class of books having more-than-ordinary monetary value have now been concluded. Attention may then be shifted from that general class to the three separate grades into which the more valuable books can be divided conveniently. Books belonging to any one of those grades all exhibit, of course, the same two great basic characteristics: excess of demand over supply, and a market price above common books. They differ from one another only to the extent, only to the degree, to which those characteristics vary in each.

The degree of variation in respect to the first mentioned of those characteristics is indicated for each grade by means of the well-chosen labels "uncommon," "scarce," or "rare." To establish the degree of variation in each grade respecting the second characteristic of books of this class there must be added appropriate price-brackets within which fall all books belonging to it. When this has been accomplished, and only then, each grade will be definitely isolated and every book belonging to each will be made clearly recognizable and unmistakably distinct from those belonging to other grades. No emphatic distinction between grades can be established until it is shown clearly where one grade ends and the next one begins, and that can only be effected by means of specific dollar prices. Even though deflated, nothing is more definite than a dollar.

In the light of this understanding it is now possible to formulate a workable, concise definition of each of the three grades under consideration. The percentage estimates and the approximate price-figures used in arriving at these definitions are not arbitrarily imposed. They
A Rare Book: Its Essential Qualifications

are based on a study of, and on extensive samplings from, a list of 10,000 legitimately priced titles.

An "uncommon book" is one belonging to the lowest value-grade of the class under consideration. For books of this grade, estimated as representing in the aggregate about sixty per cent of the whole class, demand exceeds available supply only slightly; they are obtainable with varying degrees of slight difficulty; and they command justifiable prices ranging, as of this writing, between $10.00 and $30.00.

A "scarce book" is one belonging to the medium value-grade of the class under consideration. For books of this grade, estimated as representing about thirty per cent of the whole class, demand considerably exceeds available supply; they are obtainable only with varying degrees of considerable difficulty; and will be found to command justifiable prices ranging, approximately, from over $30.00 to $100.00.

A "rare book"—the kind with which this study is exclusively concerned—is one belonging to the highest of the three value-grades constituting that class of books having more-than-ordinary monetary value. Books of this grade may be estimated as representing, numerically, only about 10 per cent of the class under consideration; demand for them is preponderantly in excess of available supply; they are obtainable only with varying degrees of conspicuous difficulty; and will be found to command prices ranging, approximately, from a minimum of over $100.00 to a maximum equalling the highest sum that has ever been paid, or that ever will be paid, for a printed book.

Anyone wishing a concise definition of "a rare book," that curious example of an inanimate object made most animate by an adjective, must be content with one not too greatly abbreviated. The definition just submitted is rigidly confined to basic essentials, none of which can be omitted without causing some mental confusion, without blurring the clear outlines of the silhouette that even a succinct definition should present.

Anyone wishing more than a mere silhouette incorporating only the barest essentials cannot expect to obtain it within the circumscribed limits of any terse, nut-shell definition. To touch even lightly upon all the diverse complexities and complications involved in this problem, to attempt a comprehensive and detailed coverage, requires the use of that which has been employed in the investigation here drawing to a close: the lengthened prolixity of a rather elaborate explanation.

The conclusions here embodied may seem to be rather rigidly technical. They are not, however, far off the mark. It is hoped they will correct some prevailing loose concepts as to distinctions between
“uncommon,” “scarce,” and “rare” books, and induce those prone to the reckless practice of describing as “rare” all books of unusual value to adopt some more discriminating terminology. Historically and properly a book so described means just one thing: that it belongs to the most exalted of the three grades composing the hierarchy of extra-value books. Using it to designate the whole group is a distortion, a misnomer, completely unwarranted, improper, and unscientific.

This investigation has been primarily directed towards arriving at a definition of a “rare book” clearly and unmistakably distinguishing it from all books of lesser stature. We have been able to find in its higher dollar value the one infallible and readily recognizable feature which supplies that differentiation. Inasmuch as that value results from the greater disparity between demand and supply, attention has been more particularly focused on this single phase of our problem.

Another highly interesting phase, that having to do with the various causes which produce demand, has been subordinated. Within the limited confines of this paper it could not be seriously developed. Detailed investigation into all the alluring attributes in books that arouse a passionate desire for ownership—literary excellence, historical importance, provenance, beauty of binding, perfection of typography, etc.—would infinitely transcend our allotted space. And anyhow, for the immediate end in view of arriving at a working definition of “a rare book,” there is no need of analyzing the causes of demand. All that needs to be known about demand is this: does it exist? If so, does it exceed available supply? And to what degree does that excess extend?

No illusion is entertained that either the definition submitted or the method used in approaching it will be accepted by anyone as entirely satisfactory, adequate, or competent. Perhaps all that complacency can hope for will be that some of the suggestions presented in these findings might prove useful to later investigators engaging in this same academic quest: the search for a definition.

**General References**

Library Trends
Index to Volume 5

PREPARED BY BETTY M. E. CROFT

A
Acquisitions procedures, rare books, 418, 445-447.
Adams, Thomas R., "Rare books: their influence on the library world," 426-433.
American books abroad, 3-188.
"American books in Latin America," Cline, 151-188.
"American books in South Asia," Rutter, 98-120.
"American books in Southeast Asia," Griffith, 121-150.
"American books in the Middle East," Smith, 46-72.
Architecture and building, 216-224.
Archives and manuscripts, 309-416; cataloging, 310-311, 352-360, 391-392, 403; collecting, 309-310, 313-343, 366-367, 384; conservation and restoration, 310, 344-351; inventories and guides, 327, 328, 369-377, 386, 392-393, 394; policies regarding use, 311, 320, 361-368, 386-387, 396. See also Business records; Government archives.
"Audio-visual materials in the library," Quinly, 294-300.
See also Digital computers.

B
Blasingame, Ralph, "Gadgets: miscellaneous, but not all trivia," 239-243.
Bolté, Charles G., 4.
Book collecting, 476-480.
Books, prices, 417, 446, 480-482, 491-493.
Books abroad, American, see American books abroad.
Books and reading, in Africa, 34-45; in Asia, 98-150; in Europe, 73-97; in Latin America, 151-188; in the Far East, 17-33; in the Middle East, 46-72.
Byrd, Cecil K., "Rare books in university libraries," 441-450.

C
Cappon, Lester J., "Reference works and historical texts [in the archival and manuscript fields]," 369-379.
Card catalogs, 203.
"Care and handling of non-governmental archives," Lovett, 380-389.
Catalog cards, production, 198, 204, 257, 259, 260, 261, 263, 282.
Cataloging and classification, 197-198; archives and manuscripts, 310-311.
INDEX


"Charging machines," Geer, 244-255.
Cline, Howard F., "American books in Latin America," 151-188.
Closed-circuit television, see Television.
College and university libraries, rare book collections, 441-450.
Communication systems, see Telecommunications.

D
"Duplicating machines," Dawson, 256-264.

E
Exchanges of library materials, 15-16.
See also United States Book Exchange.

F
Facsimile transmission, 212-214, 261, 283.
"Fashions in collecting and changing prices," Tree, 476-492.
"Films and sound recordings," Spear, 406-416.
Franklin Publications, 13, 52, 58, 59, 63, 115, 130, 138, 140.

G
Geer, Helen T., "Charging machines," 244-255.
Government archives, Federal, 312, 390-396; State and local, 397-405.

H
Hardkopf, Jewel C., "Office machines and appliances," 225-238.
Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery, Friends of the Huntington Library, 483-488.
"Historical manuscripts, including personal papers," Mears, 313-321.
Historical Records Survey, 370, 373.
"How American books reach readers abroad," Jennison, 5-16.

I
Information libraries, American, 9-11; in Africa, 41-42; in Asia, 112-113, 123, 125, 128, 131, 134, 138, 142, 147; in Europe, 74-75, 76, 77, 78, 80, 81, 83, 85, 86, 87, 88, 90, 92, 93, 94, 96; in Latin America, 174-175; in the Far East, 19, 22, 26, 28, 29; in the Middle East, 47-48, 56-57, 60.
Information storage and retrieval systems, 196, 200-202, 301-308.
Informational Media Guaranty Program, 10, 11-13, 29, 32, 66-67, 84, 86, 88, 89, 91, 94, 97, 109, 113-114, 123, 126, 144, 146, 149, 176.

J

L
Lacy, Dan M., 4.
Libraries, in Africa, 38-42; in Asia, 106-107, 112-113, 123-124, 125, 126,
Library Trends

128, 131, 134, 138-139, 141, 142, 147; in Europe, 73, 74-75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81-82, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91-92, 93, 94; in Latin America, 171-175, 183; in the Far East, 19, 22, 26, 28; in the Middle East, 47-48, 49, 56-57, 60.


Library of Congress, 209, 324, 328, 362; Archive of American Folksong, 413-414; Hispanic Foundation, 178; international exchanges, 15, 177-178, 185-186; Rare Books Division, 459-466; "Talking Books," 413; union list of manuscripts, 311, 376-377.

"Literary, artistic, and musical manuscripts," Hill, 322-329.

Lovett, Robert W., "Care and handling of non-governmental archives," 390-389.

M


"Machine retrieval of information," Taube, 301-308.

Machines, use in libraries, 191-308. See also entries under particular types of machines.

Manuscripts, see Archives and manuscripts.

Mearns, David C., "Historical manuscripts, including personal papers," 313-321.

Microcards, 280.


Microprint, 279, 280.


Motion pictures, 295, 312, 407-412.

Museum of Modern Art, Film Library, 409-410.

N

National Archives, 312, 370, 381, 390-396.

National Book Committee, 3-4.

National Historical Publications Commission, 311, 394.

National Records Management Council, 382.


"Office machines and appliances," Hardkopf, 225-238.

Overseas libraries, see Information libraries, American.

P


Phonorecords, 296-297, 312; 412-415.

Photoduplication processes, 268-286; costs, 286.

"Photography and the library," Ballou, 265-293.

"Physical care, repair, and protection of manuscripts," Minogue, 344-351.


"Policies regarding the use of manuscripts," Peckham, 361-368.


Punched cards, 203, 248-251.

Q


R


Rare books, 417-494; acquisition, 418, 445-447; care and preservation, 443; cataloging, 418-419, 423-424, 447; in public libraries, 451-458; in university libraries, 441-450; policies regarding use, 418, 467-475; prices, see Books, prices; qualifications, 417-418, 448, 489-494.

"Rare books in university libraries," Byrd, 441-450.

"Rare books: their influence on the library world," Adams, 426-433.

"Reader policies in rare book libraries," Haugh, 467-475.

"Reference works and historical texts [in the archival and manuscript fields]," Cappon, 369-379.
INDEX

Research libraries, 434-440.

S
Smith, Datus C., “American books in the Middle East,” 46-72.
Society of American Archivists, 370, 381, 397.
Sound recordings, see Phonorecords.
“State and local government archives,” Jacobsen, 397-405.

T
TWX, see Teletypewriter Exchange System.
Teletypewriter Exchange System, 210-211.
Television, 208-209, 297-299.
“Transportation equipment,” Vitz, 216-224.
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X
Xerography, 261-263.
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October, 1957, Research in Librarianship. Edited by Association of American Library Schools Committee on Research.

January, 1958, Library Cooperation. Editor: Ralph T. Esterquest, Director, Midwest Inter-Library Center.

April, 1958, Legal Aspects of Library Administration. Editor: John B. Kaiser, Director, Newark Public Library.

The numbers of LIBRARY TRENDS issued prior to the present one dealt successively with college and university libraries, special libraries, school libraries, public libraries, libraries of the United States government, cataloging and classification, scientific management in libraries, the availability of library research materials, personnel administration, services to readers, library associations in the United States and British Commonwealth, acquisitions, national libraries, special materials and services, conservation of library materials, state and provincial libraries in the United States and Canada, American books abroad, mechanization in libraries, and manuscripts and archives.