

---

# *Introduction*

RALPH T. ESTERQUEST

LIBRARY COOPERATION is at a crossroads. During the last fifty years we have developed in the United States and in other countries a variety of devices for locating and making use collectively of the library resources which exist in our many individual institutions. Today we recognize that these devices are not enough since they do not include any mechanism which insures that needed resources are acquired in the first place by one or more libraries. We are coming to understand that we must take positive steps to bring into our libraries those resources needed now or in the future which will not be acquired if libraries continue to base their acquisitions programs exclusively on their own individual needs or interpretations of needs. Increasing attention is being given today to the rationalization of collecting policies and programs, to cooperative acquisitions arrangements, to specialization, to regional and national coverage, to the central storage of reserve materials, and to the re-distribution of books among libraries. But we have hardly made a beginning with this large and important problem, and the techniques that have been used to make these beginnings seem clumsy, expensive, and fragmentary.

It therefore seems appropriate that an issue of *Library Trends* should be devoted to cooperation, even though there is already an abundant literature on the theme, a literature which unhappily consists mainly of (a) pious generalizations, (b) descriptions of projects and devices, or (c) brave hopes and grand plans for the future.

This issue does not attempt to cover the whole field of cooperation; its emphasis is placed on the cooperative approach to building and increasing library resources. For this reason, such important cooperative ventures as regional motion-picture film circuits and cooperative cataloging efforts are excluded as not being directed toward resource

Mr. Esterquest is Librarian, Harvard Medical School Library; formerly Director, Midwest Inter-Library Center.

building. An emphasis is also placed on research material rather than more popular reading; therefore, more attention is given to the efforts of university and research libraries than to those of public libraries.

In substance, this issue tries to do three things. First, it tries to trace some of the roots of library cooperation in the soil of library needs and to describe the important forms that cooperation has taken among libraries of different types in the United States and abroad. In the second place, it attempts to present a rounded picture of the present state of this varied aspect of library economy at the particular point in history at which we now stand. In these two respects, the present issue follows the usual pattern of earlier numbers of this periodical. In the third place, however, it departs somewhat from the usual format of *Library Trends*, in that it attempts to find an answer to an extremely important aspect of present day library development. The question is this: What is the reason why librarians have made relatively little progress with inter-institutional library cooperation in the face of the fact that during the last fifty years, library cooperation has been one of the most talked about and written about subjects of our profession? To the writer, the problem is a critical one. The need for a great deal more cooperation is the compelling need of the future. Yet we seem not to have discovered the technique by which significant progress can be made to meet this need through serious, meaningful, and wide-spread cooperation.

Because cooperation, by definition, reaches out from the individual institution and touches other institutions near and far, it has been difficult to compartmentalize the subject, and overlapping among the several articles in this issue was inevitable. Furthermore, the reader will find a certain lack of balance. This is easily explained. The issue editor considered that it was important to give each author considerable freedom to develop his own ideas. Each author, being an authority in the field, has been encouraged to develop his own essay within the general framework. For example, J. S. Richards, who writes about public library aspects, has elected to emphasize the effect on public library cooperation of the Library Services Act rather than to catalog projects in his field, a task performed with excellence by a recent issue of the *PLD Reporter*.

In his keynote chapter, K. D. Metcalf has discussed the broad aspects of the problem: the need, the reasons for reluctance, the difficulties, the obstacles, the emotional factors, and the barriers due to tradition and habit. He considers the legal and psychological problems,

## Introduction

and both the actual and imagined deterrents to inter-institutional cooperation.

W. H. Carlson discusses the machinery that has been erected for mobilizing existing resources, describes the purposes and operations of interlibrary loan, union catalogs, union lists, and the other devices used for locating materials now in libraries and making them more accessible to readers everywhere. In contrast, E. B. Stanford describes the more recent efforts to increase and enrich existing resources by bringing new materials into our libraries through collective action. His article takes up the need, the aims, and the areas of success and failure, basing his remarks on the premise that there is an impelling necessity for large-scale joint acquisitions to meet the needs of research in our society.

Eileen Thorton describes the problem as it relates to the college library, giving closer scrutiny to the forms of cooperation which are appropriate to the needs of non-research institutions. Richards' chapter on the public library is short, because it has seemed unnecessary to duplicate the information that has been assembled in the *PLD Reporter*, no. 5.

R. T. Grazier has examined cooperation for resource-building among libraries of different types located in close proximity, and H. H. Henkle has related the problem to special libraries.

Looking abroad, there is a chapter on cooperation in the British Isles, by J. C. Harrison, and a survey of cooperation on the Continent, by Rudolf Juchhoff. The issue concludes with a statement by Donald Coney on the potentialities of the future.

The demands of modern society require increased inter-institutional library cooperation in the future, and it is hoped that this issue may offer a few guide-posts in that uncertain new world. The basic will to cooperate is essential, but besides that there must be an understanding of the realities of cooperation, a facing up to the difficulties and the pitfalls, an honest recognition that the successful sharing of library resources depends upon the appropriateness of the specific items to be shared, and a real knowledge that the benefits of cooperation are not had without the initial investment of money. Our ability to provide the research materials needed in the future appears to be proportionate to our familiarity with the characteristics of the cooperation mechanism. We seem slow to learn that our task is to create access to, rather than simply ownership of, an increased variety of resources for research purposes.