



The Potentialities: Some Notes in Conclusion

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COOPERATION IS ONE OF THE FUNDAMENTAL motivations of human society. Books themselves are a kind of cooperation, being an extension of individual experience in time and space. Their wide uses and their unanticipatable values have led society to create libraries as a means of having at hand the experience and wisdom of its members, today and yesterday, at home and abroad. Librarians, who are presumably in the business because they recognize the universal and lasting values of books and their analogs, are by nature cooperators. The whole history of the modern library movement in the United States and elsewhere is a record of cooperation: the sharing of experience for the sake of better-operating libraries and of books for the benefit of the libraries' users. The library activity, however, to which "cooperation" is usually applied as a specific name is that which leads to the association of a book with a person having particular need for it. Thus, interlibrary cooperation is the expansion of the service philosophy of the individual library to comprehend a number of libraries.

It is true that libraries have displayed energy in cooperating with publishers (as through the American Library Association Committee on Reprints) and with each other in the economical purchase of materials (as under the Ohio State plan), in storage (Midwest Inter-Library Center and Hampshire Inter-Library Center), in centralized cataloging (provided for more than half a century by the Library of Congress) in the exchange of staff members, and in the provision of consultants and advisers; but, valuable as these kinds of cooperation are, they are incidental, rather than directly related, to the central task of bringing book and man together.

The activities of primary cooperation can be subsumed under three general headings which can be alliteratively termed assisting, acquiring, and advertising.

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The reader is helped to get the right book by having it brought to him, by being sent to it, or by securing an image of the book he desires. Most emphasis in the past has been placed on the book-to-man process, or interlibrary lending, but increasingly the transmission of an image of the book to man has become important, and copying by various photographic and transfer processes has begun to play a significant role in library cooperation. Man-to-book, or serving the individual after he arrives from the sphere of influence of another library, has had a lesser part to play, but is one of increasing importance.

Before book and man can be brought together, however, the book must be acquired and here libraries have developed notable projects under several headings: they have acquired jointly for the use of a cooperating group, e.g., the Association of Research Libraries Foreign Newspaper Project; they have bought according to a mutually exclusive pattern, as in the Farmington Plan; or have encouraged each other in the development of specialties, as illustrated by the innumerable microfilm projects for the duplicating of rare or bulky materials on a limited basis; finally, libraries have for many years carried on a profitable exchange of materials with each other, derived chiefly from the publications produced by parent bodies such as a university or a learned society.

It is impossible to exploit the results of acquisition, whether cooperative or otherwise, in the interest of the needy client without advertising, which may take a variety of forms. There are joint or union catalogs, such as the National Union Catalog, the catalogs of bibliographical centers, and that familiar monster, the *Union List of Serials*. There have been, for generations, and generations, individual lists or catalogs of whole libraries or special collections, or of subjects. There are summaries of holdings on a locality in a region, exemplified by the various compilations of regional resources. And, finally, there is advertising in reverse—inquiry, the SOS of the interlibrary lending fraternity.

It is interesting to speculate on the degree to which technology makes possible the development of interlibrary cooperation. Certainly it was the railway mail service that lay behind interlibrary loan success, a success nowadays enhanced by the availability of air parcel post and air freight. If one considers the cooperative opportunities realized in the field of unique materials, it is easy to see the role played by technology. Manuscripts, by definition, are unique and comprise an

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important segment of source materials for a variety of studies. Their singularity limits ownership of originals to a single agency. Access for generations, consequently, was via the man-to-book method, but it always was possible to employ an agent to transcribe unique records by hand, thus producing an additional copy. Whether the technological development of carbon paper ever was used by a transcriber to produce two handwritten copies simultaneously, history does not record, but certainly the advent of the typewriter, coupled with carbon paper, did produce this situation, and manuscript collections do reveal some instance of what appears to be cooperative efforts, based on the technology of typewriter and carbon paper, whereby two or more libraries could contribute to the cost of transcription. The advent of the photostat machine, however, raised the acquisitions of unique copies to the level of facsimile, eliminating the frailty of transcriber and expediting the copying process, but the step made by means of microfilm was the greatest and the most impressive because of the comparative cheapness of microfilm and the greater compactness of the cameras. It would appear that ingenuity has rather fully exploited the existing technological devices of transportation and duplication in the interests of cooperation. We can, however, hopefully turn to the immediate future for new technical developments.

Considering the future, the development of interlibrary cooperation is a landscape bright with opportunity but at times obscured by cloudy problem patches. These three problems, with further discussion, may be listed as assisting, acquiring, and advertising.

Assisting. Something is better than nothing and a book accessible through interlibrary loan is better than no book, but the impatient user finds it a poor second to a book now. If the cooperative use of materials is to be successful, speed of access is an essential element. Charles Babbage, that ingenious Victorian, concluded after examining Britain's early postal system that the real cost in handling the mails was not in transporting them from one town to another, but rather in gathering and distributing. The efficiency of the great and traditional cooperative device of interlibrary loan might be substantially improved through the application of more man hours by borrower and lender.

No library has yet fully exploited the capacities of television as a means of transmitting library materials. Offhand, and at the moment, it would appear that conventional television would do little more than satisfy initial curiosity about a book or enable a distant user to read short passages as the book is displayed before a television camera in

the owning library. But this is surely not the limit of televised transmission. Stanford Research Institute is investigating for the A. B. Dick Company the possibility of televised transmission by means of an apparatus which would include the option of converting the screened image to a paper copy. Assuming that the photographic process involved could proceed as rapidly as pages might be turned, one is then thrown back on a problem referred to by Verner Clapp of the Council on Library Resources, Inc., namely, that of an automatic, mechanical page turner capable of operating at economically high speeds.

Perhaps as important as rapid visual transmission over long distances is the development of a process which would produce rapidly and cheaply a reproduction of the printed and written page from bound volumes in a form legible to the naked eye. Here an appropriate, inexpensive sensitive paper or other substance capable of making rapidly legible, transmittable copies is needed. Processes like RCA's "Electrofax" offer hope along this line. Along with this sensitive substance is required an automatic photographic process to reduce labor costs. Given these facilities, scarce library materials unavailable in the open market to a practical degree could be duplicated on request as readily as microfilm positives can be printed on an automatic printer.

Closely linked to the problems of copying library materials is the imperative need for relaxation of tight copyright legislation. For some years, the full impact of these restrictions has been moderated by traditional practices growing out of the so-called "gentleman's agreement" which permits a learned institution to make for a scholar a single and non-profit bearing reproduction of a copyrighted work in lieu of lending the publication itself. In England, copyright restrictions have discouraged London's new Science Museum Library from assuming that much of its interlibrary lending load could be transferred to copying. There are, however, some indications that the interpretive regulations of the new Copyright Act shortly to be issued by the British Board of Trade, while they might increase the cost of photoreproduction, will expand the range of materials that may be copied by libraries. It is also interesting to note the recent decision of the National Library of Medicine in Washington to exploit copying as a substitute for lending.

Taking the man to the book will probably be used increasingly, especially in order to permit the use of collections. This change will,

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no doubt, come slowly because of budget difficulties, and the problems associated with the assignment of funds to applicants.

Acquiring. It seems reasonable to expect an increase in projects modeled on the A.R.L. Foreign Newspaper Project, where a number of libraries associate themselves for the purpose of acquiring a common pool of material which they share in ownership and use, and a decline in limited joint publication projects, as by microfilm. Exchange of publications may be expected to diminish because of rising publication costs. Universities have followed, in their research and curricular, the national concern with the economics and politics of the whole globe and have added a cultural interest. To meet these widening obligations the limited plans for cooperative acquisition in Russia will have to be enlarged and extended to the rest of Asia and to India. Africa, for most libraries, can wait a little. The Farmington Plan is an attack on current European and South American output—but there is no Farmington Plan for retrospective materials from these areas.

Advertising. At the moment it appears that the sun of regional union catalogs in the United States is setting. The great cost of establishing and maintaining them, borne initially by the relief programs of the Depression, militate against the creation of new regional catalogs. Rather, emphasis will probably continue upon the perfection of the National Union Catalog and the development of auxiliary services relating to it, such as the expedited handling of requests. This course is likely to be followed in Europe as well, with Germany an exception through preference for regional union catalogs.

The development of individual catalogs on the model of those issued by the Library of Congress has been hopefully approached at Harvard as a means of coping with the growing mass of cards in a central catalog. The many technical problems and the great cost incident to this device—as illustrated by the British Museum's recent problems—suggest that it will be successful only in extreme cases. Handy as a catalog-in-hand may be, the resources of rapid communication now available cast doubt on general developments in this area. Yet, from time to time, important catalogs will certainly be offered, as, for instance, the forthcoming publication of Columbia's Avery Memorial Architectural Library catalog.

Summaries of resources appear to be more valuable as the means of focusing the attention of a bibliographically impoverished region on its predicament than as a means of discovering the locus of a wanted

book or collection. One would not expect this type of advertisement to flourish in the future.

Inquiry—the obverse of advertisement—will remain the chief instrument of interlibrary borrowing. It seems probable that more attention will be given by libraries concerned about borrowing to the organizing of the records of other libraries' acquisitions—those “advertisements” which take the form of catalogs, union lists, local bibliographies, etc., so as to refine the process of identifying the wanted book—and to the servicing of requests for materials not owned at home. Again, we note the cost factor necessarily involved, which includes not only personnel but also the cost of exploiting rapid communication devices such as telephone and teletype.

Impressive as are the circumstances supporting cooperation, it must be pointed out that there are important counter influences. For instance, the enlargement of groups requiring a wide variety of books applies to the clientele of any given library as well as in general, and certainly will raise the pressure of the local demand, thus offsetting in some degree the library's ability to respond to demands from outside its clientele. Generally speaking, it must be agreed that a large library is more likely to satisfy a wider variety of needs than a small one; consequently libraries and institutions supporting libraries which are relatively wealthy are unlikely to forego opportunities to acquire materials which by some kind of plan or cooperative agreement might more appropriately go elsewhere. “Immediacy” (that is, the great convenience of having the books in which one is interested at hand rather than scattered and accessible by cooperative means) is perhaps incalculable as a factor, but certainly works against cooperation. Another facet of this idea is competition. Librarians manifest pride of possession and jealousy as well as do other humans, and institutions are not unaware of the values of ownership as an asset. This is especially true of universities which are engaged increasingly in competition for the best students, the best researchers, the best teachers. No library ever created research by itself, but, on the other hand, the absence of a library which goes beyond the immediate needs of its clientele is a powerful deterrent to investigation. Consequently, there are substantial conflicts between the idea of the library as an asset and the library as altruist.

Finally, it should be noted that interlibrary cooperation will not produce economies except in a special sense. It is true that cooperation may inhibit the rate of cost increase, but its primary function is to

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promote access. It seems apparent that one of the principal lines of development in the field of cooperation in the future will be the appropriation of substantial sums of money explicitly to the purpose of cooperation as a substitute for local acquisition.

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