Introduction

RALPH H. PARKER

The objectives and achievements of libraries, like most undertakings which involve groups of people, are shaped largely by their financial administration. Provision and allocation of funds determine the level and emphasis of specific operations, and the effectiveness of financial controls has a profound influence upon the responsiveness of the total operation to guiding policy. The articles in this issue undertake an evaluation of recent developments in the many aspects of financial administration.

Certain limitations were necessary. For example, discussion of capital expenditures and of endowment investment and management has been excluded. The financial problems of special libraries are so divergent that trends are difficult to identify. The administration of school libraries is in general indistinguishable from other school administration. This issue deals solely with current operations of public libraries and those in institutions of higher learning within the United States.

In organizing the contents of this issue, the editors have proceeded from inquiries into the sources of financial support, through consideration of the purposes for which expenditures have been made and of forces which have caused changes in patterns of expenditure, and finally to a discussion of developments of administrative procedures and techniques.

A maturing and increasingly literate society, together with an opulent economy, has contributed to increases in financial support for libraries, but these have in large measure been offset by continued inflation and the failure of libraries to benefit from the general increase in productivity of labor which has occurred in industry.

Although automation has not yet made much impression upon the finances of libraries, there is now significant interest in the subject. Financial records will perhaps be the first area of general automation

Mr. Parker is University Librarian, University of Missouri, Columbia.
in libraries because the problems of such records are similar to those in business and in other institutions which have adopted such systems. There have already been developments in procedures in budget formation and control, in purchasing, and in cost accounting, which are essential preliminaries to automation.

The development of these techniques may well reverse the trend of the past quarter century for personal services to consume an increasing share of the library budget. There are already signs that the rise in library salaries is slowing, and with the potential increase in productivity of library staffs, this facet of library costs may not increase more rapidly than the price levels of the economy as a whole.