



Recent Developments in University Librarianship in Great Britain

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ONE OF THE MOST NOTABLE FACETS of the social revolution that has taken place in Great Britain in the last fifty years has been a great extension of educational opportunity, especially since the end of the Second World War. The Education Act of 1944¹ and the Education (Scotland) Act of 1946² made secondary education effectively available to all children, and as a result there has been an enormous increase in the number entering the senior classes of the schools.

This has inevitably had its effect on applications for admission to the universities. In 1945/46 the total number of full-time students attending universities in the United Kingdom was about 50,000³—no more and no less than it had been in the last pre-war session, and very little more than in 1920/21. The pressure of ex-service demand brought a rapid expansion that reached its peak in 1949/50, when the total was over 85,000. On the analogy of experience after 1918, a significant decline could have been expected to follow. But by this time the effects of the Education Acts were beginning to percolate to university level, and the fall was both slight and short-lived: the lowest point was 80,000 in 1953/54,⁴ and the succeeding ten years have been a period of steady growth, to nearly 120,000 in the current session.⁶ It is now clear that this is merely a beginning. Next year the tidal wave of post-war births is due to break upon the universities; and only a few months ago there was published the eagerly awaited report of the Committee on Higher Education (the Robbins Report) recommending, from a formidable background of statistical analysis, a target of 350,000 university places by 1980/81.⁵ By American standards the figure is no doubt a mere trifle; nevertheless for the uni-

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versities of Britain it represents a sevenfold expansion within the period of a single generation.

Even at this early stage in the development of British universities, their world has changed completely. Their financial dependence upon the state has grown to the point at which more than 70 per cent of their recurrent income comes from the Treasury,⁷ and some recent events have shaken confidence in the continued ability of the University Grants Committee to act effectively as a buffer against state control. Then, too, the economic and social background of the average student has greatly changed; many more come from families with no previous tradition of higher education, and much that could once be taken for granted has now to be given detailed consideration. Even the balance of studies has changed; political and economic necessities have led to a growing emphasis on science and technology, and the dominance of the liberal arts is now less marked than it was. But the biggest change of all has been the creation of many new universities. In 1945/46 there were (counting the independent university colleges) only twenty-one in the whole of Great Britain. Now there are eight more (six of them founded within the last three years), and the addition of a further six is under urgent consideration. As yet, these new institutions have been able to do little or nothing to relieve the growing pressure on their older fellows—most of them, in fact, have not yet opened their doors to their first students. But already their influence is felt in the stimulus which they have given to fresh thinking about the fundamental purposes of university education and the best methods of achieving these purposes.

So far as libraries are concerned, it is not yet possible to say much about the new universities. Problems by the thousand their librarians will have, and an account of them, and of how they are faced, should make fascinating and rewarding reading; but it will be for those who have taken part in the struggle to draft that account. The present study is concerned with the new foundations only incidentally, as they may affect the work of the existing libraries or professional thinking in general. But it should be noted at once, in passing, that they have already been the cause of one development which may have the most profound effects for all: namely, the setting-up by the University Grants Committee of a sub-committee on libraries.⁸ Although clearly inspired by motives of economy-seeking, this move has been not unwelcome to librarians, since it does at least give them the opportunity to present directly, as a body, their views on some of the

administrative problems with which they are beset, and their common need for more generous financial support.

Except on the last point, however, it may well be difficult to find a united voice with which to speak, for the university libraries of Great Britain form almost as varied a company as those of the United States. At one end of the scale are the Bodleian and University Library of Cambridge, great copyright libraries with nearly three million volumes apiece—each, moreover, supplemented by an extensive system of college and institute libraries in the same university, which absorb much of the undergraduate and teaching demand. Then there are the libraries of the four ancient Scottish universities, each with from half to three-quarters of a million volumes, rich in older books in comparison with the equally quick-growing libraries of the larger civic universities of England, with which they have much in common, and with which they can be grouped. Even within this group, however, the problems of different libraries may be very dissimilar; Edinburgh, for instance, must serve teaching departments which are widely dispersed about the city, while Birmingham finds itself the center of a relatively compact cluster, with only the Medical School at any distance. Liverpool, again, with a system of Faculty libraries, creates dispersal problems of its own.

Then there are the smaller English universities and the four colleges of the federal University of Wales, with libraries of perhaps 150,000 to 250,000 volumes, and in many cases a much more restricted range of teaching departments for which to cater—no Faculty of Medicine, perhaps, or no Law, or no Technology. Many of this group of universities have a high proportion of their students in residence; not, as at Oxford and Cambridge, in colleges, but in halls. By contrast, most students at the civic universities and the Scottish universities (other than St. Andrews) live either at home or independently in lodgings. One other major group still remains; London is quite *sui generis*—a complex of university colleges (each of which is in a sense a self-contained university on its own) and of specialist institutes, chiefly for post-graduate work but sometimes, as in the case of the London School of Economics, for first degree work too within their special field. Each has its own considerable library. The University of London proper, as a separate entity, comprises simply an administrative headquarters—and a University Library which was originally established chiefly for use by graduates of the University but now serves all its members, including the many thousands of students

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studying for "external" degrees, and (in the words of its present librarian) "acts as a central agency to libraries of the University in many ways." ⁹

Departmentalism

If, then, only one or two problems of administration are here selected for discussion, it is partly because in such diversity only a few are of common importance to all. Among such, at the present moment, one of the most insistent is the question of departmentalism. This has always been latent at least; expansion has brought it very much to life, for two quite distinct reasons. There comes a point in the growth of an academic department when its staff, because of their number and their combined range of specialized knowledge, begin to feel themselves a self-sufficient unit. From then onwards, their contacts with the rest of the university, and the university's central services, tend to weaken; and among other manifestations of the change comes a demand for an adequate library within the department. At the same time the central library, constrained within a building designed for the lighter and simpler pressures of earlier years, finds it increasingly difficult both to maintain its standard of service and to accommodate the greater demands now being made upon it. So discontent grows in the department; and the library itself may come to see attractive prospects of relief through decentralization. Up till now this is a problem which has affected chiefly the older and larger universities; but others will soon feel it too.

In all this trend the example of London is a potent influence. London-trained scholars, used to the excellent Institute libraries, many of which are the strongest in their own subject areas that can be found anywhere in the country, miss them badly when they move to other universities, and, missing them not only for their strength but also for their convenience, tend to press for the establishment of departmental libraries as the nearest equivalent, forgetting that the great difference in scale may rob such a policy of all its real value. So tense situations may develop, which are resolved perhaps more often on the basis of personality and emotion than on that of reason; and even where reason prevails it may lead to diverse answers because of diverse local circumstances.

One general trend is, however, becoming noticeable (although there continue to be many exceptions to it). This is towards the separate establishment, in some of the larger universities, of sectional

libraries in certain fields. This is commonest of all in Education, partly for special administrative reasons. Institutes of Education, combining with research functions and teaching at university level a responsibility for oversight of teachers' training colleges, have been established at many of the English universities—the Scottish system is quite different—and it has been customary for these Institutes to have their own libraries. Most usually they are administered as loosely dependent branches of the main university library; some are quite independent of it. Law, too, is a field in which it is becoming more usual to find the library detached from the central library. Cambridge has the Squire Law Library, Oxford is building a separate Law Faculty Library, Edinburgh and Aberdeen also follow this practice. Separate libraries in Medicine are almost the rule, for obvious reasons of location; separate Science Faculty libraries are not uncommon, with Oxford (the Radcliffe Science library), Manchester, and Durham among the best-known examples.

Another group of decentralized collections arises from a post-war development in methods of financing the universities—the allocation of "tied" grants to certain universities for the promotion of research and teaching departments in certain fields of study too specialized to be sought after by universities in these days without such specific encouragement, but considered for reasons of national policy to be necessary. Such grants have been made for Slavonic, Oriental, and Latin-American studies, among others, at particular universities; and while it does not invariably follow that the library will be detached, that is at least commoner than not. A somewhat similar practice is the establishment of departments purely for research, with no teaching commitments; these again are apt to set up their own libraries.

A further variant in this pattern is the establishment of departmental libraries of moderate size which duplicate, rather than substitute for, holdings of the main library. This is, understandably, to be found mainly in the larger universities; Glasgow, with ninety-two such collections, probably heads the list. There is much to be said for the system, if kept under control from the center; it provides for very necessary duplication of heavily-used material without making heavy demands on the shelf space of the main library, and it does not narrow the main library's scope.

The older and larger universities are also having to give serious thought to the possible desirability of establishing separate undergraduate libraries. Oxford, in the Radcliffe Camera, has made pro-

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vision of this kind for many years; so also, in a limited way, has Glasgow, where a Reading Room for junior undergraduates was opened in 1939, with a collection of 13,000 volumes on closed reserve, and seats for 530 readers. But the new plans for the development of Leeds University include a separate undergraduate library on more generous lines, which it is hoped to complete in the later 'sixties.¹⁰ Others may follow suit, particularly under the pressures of the still more rapid expansion that is being asked for in the next few years; for the pattern of service suitable for a student population of 5,000 is not necessarily the best for 10,000 (the target now being aimed at by the larger civic universities for 1970). Interest in American experience, especially in such well-established buildings as those at Harvard and Michigan, is consequently widespread.

Buildings

But whatever decisions may be reached on this question, nearly every university, old or new, large or small, faces in the next few years the need for a new building, or substantial extension, for its main library. Hardly any pre-war building is in any sense adequate for the demands now being made on it; and even post-war buildings are already proving quite insufficient in size, if in no other respects, because they were nearly all designed during the lull of the mid-fifties, when it seemed that numbers had stabilized after the passing of the tide of ex-servicemen. Fortunate those, such as Birmingham, which allowed in their plans for subsequent additions to the original building! Others, which envisaged future expansion only in terms of book-stock, find themselves already in serious difficulties about accommodating readers.

For the first time in the history of university libraries in Britain, the problems of building design have presented themselves as an urgent preoccupation to a large number of librarians simultaneously—and, what is more, have done so against a background of uncertainty about future aims and requirements such as has rarely been experienced before. At the same time the financial framework within which planning must be done has become year by year more rigidly constraining as the University Grants Committee, faced with Parliamentary concern about rising costs in a sector of public expenditure exempt from the full rigors of detailed public accountability, have elaborated increasingly precise standards of permitted costs and rules of procedure for all building projects.¹¹ (They do things differently

in Eire, where Trinity College Dublin recently held an international competition for plans for the extension of its library, to which Keyes Metcalf acted as expert adviser.)

In these difficult circumstances, librarians have been at pains to pool their experience and thoughts on planning and design. The Standing Conference of National and University Libraries (SCONUL) has set up a sub-committee to work out standards which it will offer for the information of the University Grants Committee as the minimum acceptable to professional opinion; and the librarians of the seven newest universities have held a conference, to which architects also were invited, to debate the particular problems facing them in the design of buildings for their nascent libraries. It remains to be seen whether this beginning can be developed into a British equivalent of the series of Building Plans Institutes held in the United States.

Interest in developments abroad (particularly in America and in Scandinavia, where the same kind of problems have already been faced) is widespread. When SCONUL last summer held a joint meeting in Copenhagen with the Nordisk Bibliotekchefsmøde, a group of those attending took the opportunity to make a ten-day tour of libraries in Norway, Sweden, and Denmark. Many have made more prolonged individual tours of American libraries in recent years, and all have gained greatly from the experience. The American ideas which have attracted perhaps most attention are modular planning, storage libraries, and the separate undergraduate library. The last of these has already been discussed in this paper. The first storage library in this country has been set up by the University of London, on the New England model rather than that of the Midwest Inter-Library Center. The attraction of the modular idea is that it seems to offer, through adaptability of interior space, at least a partial solution to the complex of uncertainties about future developments, whether in numbers of students, methods of teaching, or the relative importance of different subject fields, under which we in Britain appear likely to have to labor for long to come. The first important British modular library has yet to be built, but more than one is in the planning stage.

Resources

Another important series of questions relates to provision of books. As the proportion of "first generation" students among the undergraduates increases, so does their dependence on libraries for curricular

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as well as background reading. Here again British librarians are being faced for the first time with a situation that has long been familiar to their American colleagues; but because of differences in tradition, practice, and perhaps in some of the details of the general background, they have to think the answers out afresh, instead of taking the American solutions on trust, ready-made. Most British undergraduates now receive regular maintenance grants, of which a certain proportion is supposed to be used for the purchase of textbooks. But there is no machinery for ensuring that this sum is so used, and in any case it is insufficient to cover anything beyond their basic curricular requirements. Librarians are, therefore, conscious of a need to provide for undergraduate reading on a far larger scale than hitherto, but troubled on the one hand by the feeling that some books (but which?) should be left for the student to buy, and on the other by inherited inhibitions against multiplication of copies which, although unrealistic in the current situation, are still nourished by the relative stringency of their financial resources.

This dilemma has led to a number of surveys of library use, some designed specifically with this one question in mind, others of wider range, such as the very thorough investigation carried out at Leeds University in 1957, under the auspices of the Nuffield Foundation.¹² The picture that emerged in this case was highly informative about such points as the wide subject range of reading by research workers (especially in Arts), the extent to which periodicals are used by undergraduates, and the proportion of undergraduates who make little or no use of the library. But perhaps its most interesting facet was the production of a list of all books actually used by undergraduates during the year, and the frequency of demand for each. Similar studies in other libraries might produce fruitful comparisons; but those carried out so far have been too general for this purpose, although each has helped to strengthen the case for the improvement of undergraduate reading facilities in general.

But the needs of undergraduates are not by any means the only, or even the chief, problem. Expansion of student numbers brings in its train a corresponding increase in the numbers of staff, and in the changed economic and social climate of the day, teachers too are much more dependent on the library than were those of an earlier generation, who could often rely on their own private collections for most of their needs. As each newly appointed member of staff brings with him his own special research interest, which must be catered

for retrospectively as well as currently, the cumulative burden on existing library resources is everywhere becoming almost impossibly severe.

In consequence, university librarians have become much more interested in every aspect of library cooperation. The inter-library loan system among learned libraries began nearly forty years ago as an enterprise of the Association of University Teachers; and although the National Central Library now acts as the organizing executive body, the Association still retains an interest, through a Joint Standing Committee on Library Cooperation, on which the other members come from the University and Research Section of the Library Association. The most important practical achievement of this Committee in recent years has been the establishment of a rather specialized scheme for cooperation in purchasing "background materials"—those unconsidered trifles which are overlooked when current, and become important only when the passage of centuries has converted them into primary evidence for the social and cultural history of their period. The scheme is limited to books published in Great Britain, and to the two-and-a-half centuries from 1550 to 1800. Participating libraries (which include a number of important public libraries) undertake to cover, not a particular subject area, but a particular period of years—usually a decade. Compared with the Farmington Plan, this scheme is, of course, very limited; yet it has achieved some genuine enrichment of the nation's available resources within the field which it covers, and has given useful experience in the techniques of cooperative acquisition.

There exists as yet no British equivalent of the Farmington Plan, although in the view of many librarians such a development is long overdue, and the possibilities of bringing it about are continually under discussion. The main stumbling-block (equally effective whether it be real or imaginary) is apprehension about costs, for few British librarians have any funds at all to spare after catering for the bare day-to-day necessities of their own libraries, and the possibility of persuading committees in these circumstances to authorize the setting aside of any reasonable sum for participation in a cooperative scheme for supplementary purchasing is usually thought to be very slight indeed. The general feeling is that the scheme would need to be financed by special grants from some central source, but no such source has yet been found.

There are those, too, who would altogether prefer a quite different

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plan—namely, the establishment of a National Lending Library for the Humanities, like that which already exists for Science.^{13, 14} They argue that central purchasing would cost no more than a Farmington-type plan, and that the prospect of securing the necessary funds from official sources would be much better. Moreover, they point out, such a library might perhaps be accorded the rights of copyright deposit, whereby all libraries would stand to benefit through their powers of borrowing from it—even if some restriction were to be imposed on the lending of books until several years after their publication.

This is not the place to argue the respective merits and demerits of either type of plan. The important thing is that it has come to be generally realized how woefully inadequate are our combined resources in many fields, especially where foreign publications are concerned, and that there is a widespread consciousness that something will need to be done about it—and that very soon, for the new universities will undoubtedly have to lean heavily for many years upon resources other than their own.

At the same time there is serious concern about the actual machinery for inter-library lending. Originally this business was mostly transacted through the clearing-house of the National Central Library, or through one of the Regional Bureaux which serve as its local subsidiaries. But with finding-tools such as the *World List of Scientific Periodicals* and the *British Union Catalogue of Periodicals* now available, universities generally have come to prefer dealing direct with each other (or with the National Lending Library for Science) over loans of periodicals, because of the saving of time that often results, and only the more difficult requests are now routed in the traditional way. How quickly these are satisfied depends very much on whether the work concerned appears in the still very imperfect Union Catalogue maintained by the National Central Library. If it does not, a cumbrous procedure has to be followed, involving the circulation to cooperating libraries of lists of desiderata which they are asked to check against their holdings. As the lists may well comprise two hundred or more items per week, replies are often delayed, and it is hardly surprising that the average time taken in meeting requests routed through the National Central Library is more than twice as long as for direct loans.

This fact has been used as an additional argument by those who favor the creation of a National Lending Library for the Humani-

ties, which would, like its scientific counterpart, be capable of satisfying requests directly from its own resources. But it is argued with equal force and validity that the completion of a truly comprehensive national union catalog (the nucleus for which already exists) would not only make it possible to secure comparably quick service by the traditional method, but also make available a far more comprehensive range of works, in a far greater number of copies, than any newly-established library could ever hope to acquire, however lavishly it were supported. A possible alternative method of achieving the same end has recently been suggested.¹⁵ This is to print, by the same kind of unconventional method as was used on the Library of Congress catalog, the catalogs of some of the larger university libraries; the necessary subsidies would be made conditional upon an undertaking to lend books on direct request from other academic institutions.

Technical Processes

In the field of the so-called "technical processes," there is less to comment upon. Certainly in one area of that field it is possible to discern a marked trend. More and more British university libraries have since the war decided to set up their own bookbinding departments, instead of sending out all their work to commercial binderies. The motive is not so much to affect economies as to increase convenience, and it becomes steadily more pressing as the size of research departments, and hence the demand for as nearly as possible uninterrupted access to periodicals, continues to grow. This development has sometimes been on a considerable scale; the bindery at Birmingham University Library,¹⁶ for instance, has been said to be among the best-equipped in the whole country.

But in cataloging and classification no great developments can be claimed, although individual librarians have undoubtedly done a lot of original thinking upon such topics, and tried some far-reaching experiments. One or two specific examples of this kind of isolated development may be indicated.

Some of the older and larger libraries, which inherited fixed-location systems of shelf-arrangement (often married to broad subject grouping), have tended, in changing to the principle of relative classification, to experiment with home-made schedules in the hope of achieving a closer correlation with the pattern of teaching in the university than is possible with any of the better-known general schemes. One such is the scheme elaborated at University College

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London from a model earlier devised at the University of Leeds.¹⁷ Another is in process of application at the new University of York.¹⁸ To what extent these experiments will prove to be of lasting value outside the particular libraries in which they were carried out is something that only time can reveal. But in a period when most of the creative theoretical study of classification is focussed upon the problems of subject indexing and information retrieval it may be salutary to have such down-to-earth reminders that the business of arranging a collection of books upon the shelves of a library, in the order that will prove most helpful for the readers who use that library, is something very different—an art rather than an exact science. Mention should also be made of the adoption of the Bliss classification in certain British academic libraries—including the University of London library and those of several of the Institutes of Education. Their experiences, in thus putting to the test of actual practice a major scheme which has been largely ignored in its country of origin, may eventually prove to be of some general importance.

In cataloging, the university libraries have even less to show. The continued faith of the more ancient among them in the book form of catalog, as opposed to cards, may be a point of some interest to American librarians at the present time, but cannot in Britain be claimed as a new trend. The extensive revision of the Bodleian catalog, reflected in successive editions of that library's cataloging rules, has been going on for too long, and is in any case too esoteric an operation, to qualify. One contribution of genuine value to the theory of the subject has indeed emerged from preliminary studies for a similar revision at Glasgow,¹⁹ but it stands well-nigh alone—for it is not yet possible to assess what part is being played in discussions about the revision of the Joint Anglo-American Code by the few university representatives on the British sub-committee.

Why is it that university libraries have exercised such scant influence in this field? Possibly the reason lies in the very varied histories of the British universities, or in the rugged individualism which is a national characteristic, and of which they have their full share, so that they have rarely had either the occasion or the inclination to speak with one voice. More probably it may be found in the story of their uneasy relationship with the dynamic public library movement, from which, for a complex of reasons more emotional than rational, they too long held themselves aloof, and thereby cut themselves off from the main stream of professional development. For in

Great Britain professional education was organized and supervised almost exclusively by the Library Association—the one exception, until this year, was the post-graduate diploma course of University College London—and through their withdrawal the Library Association came to be very largely dominated by public librarians. It was the latter, therefore, who showed the deepest concern to elaborate a coherent body of professional theory; the university librarians were more preoccupied with the pragmatic business of running each his own library, and the training of their talented and academically well-equipped but basically amateur staffs was conducted on the apprenticeship principle, and in general related only to the practices of the particular library concerned. This background picture is changing very rapidly—how rapidly and how completely is the subject of the next section of this paper—but the administrative stresses and strains of the coming quarter-century are likely to be equally effective in precluding any very significant contribution by university librarians to developments in the theory of cataloging and classification during that period.

Professional Development

Perhaps the greatest developments of all have taken place in the sphere of professional attitudes and relationships. Expansion of the existing universities and the founding of new ones have created unprecedented opportunities of promotion for established staff who are willing to move to other libraries, and an unprecedented rate of recruitment of new beginners. The consequences have been far-reaching. In the first place, the increased mobility of staff has brought variety of outlook into libraries that were mostly suffering from too much in-breeding. Many have undoubtedly felt both the immediate benefit and the stimulus to further new thinking that is generated by the clash of ideas. Moreover, there has been created a general atmosphere favorable to further deliberate interchange of ideas and experience—in short, to professional organization.

The Standing Conference of National and University Libraries (SCONUL), founded in 1950 on the model of the (American) Association of Research Libraries, was the first fruit brought to maturity in this new climate. It provided a forum in which matters of common concern to large learned libraries can be discussed by the senior officials responsible for their administration; and—even more important—it has sought from the very first to ensure that discussion is

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followed by action. The scope of its activities has been very wide indeed, omitting only questions of salaries and conditions of service (which are the concern of the Library Association and of the Association of University Teachers). Problems of continuing importance are watched over by a series of special sub-committees; among such topics are the export of books and manuscripts of historic or literary importance, cooperation in acquisition (both generally and as regards such special fields as Latin American and Slavonic Studies), the professional training of librarians, problems of preservation of books and manuscripts, palaeography and the cataloging of manuscripts, and the planning and design of buildings.

Practical work undertaken or sponsored by these sub-committees has included a number of pilot surveys of holdings in selected fields; the institution of a system of one-year apprenticeships in member libraries for students preparing to take the post-graduate diploma course at the School of Librarianship in University College London; the formulation of standards for conditions of storage of books and manuscripts; preparation of a catalog of dated manuscripts in Britain, with a list of scribes; and a catalog (by N. R. Ker, now nearing completion) of medieval manuscripts in British libraries not previously described. The Conference has also organized various short training courses each year—by courtesy of certain of its member libraries: in bibliography, in historical book-binding, in practical book-binding, and in the use of bibliographical tools in the field of science and technology. To widen the scope of book-selection, by giving academic staffs as well as librarians the opportunity to examine a wider range of foreign publications than is normally accessible in this country, the Conference has arranged, through the appropriate embassies or publishers' groups, a number of travelling exhibitions, which were put on display for about a week at a time in any university which asked to receive them.

The full importance of this flowering of cooperative activity must await assessment by observers from a more detached standpoint, who are also aided by greater opportunities for hindsight. But undoubtedly much useful work has been achieved which would not otherwise have been attempted. Moreover, it is clear that the Conference has already been accorded acceptance in official circles as a mouthpiece of responsible professional opinion on matters affecting academic libraries and librarianship; this in itself must be accounted no small gain.

It might well be thought that the emergence of this new and specialized group meant a loosening of existing links with the profession in general, organized in the Library Association, which has had its own University and Research Section since 1928. But this impression would be wrong. What has in fact occurred is not so much a transfer of function from the older to the newer body, as a successful exercise by the latter in the exploration of areas of professional interest to which the other, for various reasons, had rarely been able to give sustained attention. The University and Research Section of the Library Association is a much more heterogeneous body than SCOUNL; its membership (rapidly growing, and now in the region of 2,500) includes, irrespective of grade, all members of the Association who work in national, academic, or special libraries, or who, although not thus qualified, profess an interest in the work of such libraries. Understandably, therefore, much of its most resolute and effective work has been concerned with conditions of service, including salaries. In this large and important field, and to a large extent also in the field of professional education, SCOUNL has chosen not to operate.

University librarians have thus had the opportunity, and encouragement, to continue their participation in the affairs of the Library Association, and through that their links with the rest of the profession. Indeed, thanks in part to their rapidly growing numbers—each year they constitute a larger proportion of the total membership, and so speak with a louder voice that is more easily heard and taken seriously—they have come to exercise a noticeably greater influence within the Association than at any time within the last half-century. In the recent drastic revision of the Association's constitution, provision was made (among many other changes) for a standing committee of Council specifically to advise upon, and to deal with, matters affecting national and academic libraries. The cause of mutual understanding has been greatly advanced by this step; but the step itself was made possible because such understanding had already begun to develop.

Among the most important stimuli to such rapprochement has been a growing interest on the part of university librarians in formal professional education, about the need for which (especially as organized in this country by the Library Association) many of them were formerly, for various reasons, not a little skeptical. The great expansion of the universities has resulted in serious dilution among their library staffs, through the need to recruit many completely inexperi-

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enced new members, not only to fill new posts but also to replace some of the more experienced lost on promotion to other libraries. In these circumstances the system of in-service training, upon which reliance was traditionally placed, began to be found wanting; its results were won too slowly, and the experienced cadres which alone make it possible had been too seriously weakened. At the same time, pressure began to be exerted by other elements in the Association for improvements in the examination syllabus, and signs became evident of the growth of a more liberal attitude generally to the whole question of professional education. The convergence of these two trends has not only produced a complete revision of the Association's own educational arrangements, but also the establishment, with its goodwill and encouragement, of two new post-graduate schools (at the University of Sheffield and at the Queen's University of Belfast). Perhaps (in the long run) more important still, it has created a large area of common ground upon which diverse groups within the Association can meet in harmony and with a mutual will to understanding.

Other influences too have contributed to the same end. The wider dissemination of higher education has meant that the clientèle of the public libraries now contains a greater proportion of readers with academic interests—students who cannot find room in the overcrowded university libraries, or who find it more convenient to use their local libraries in the evenings, graduates who maintain their interest in study after they have gone down, scientists and technologists in local industry. To satisfy the needs of such readers, the public libraries are more frequently finding it necessary to call on the resources of the universities through the inter-library loan system; and there has also been a greater stimulus to consider, within local groupings, some measure of cooperation in acquisitions. And so there have been more frequent contacts both in correspondence and on committees.

Interchange of staff promises to be an equally fruitful source of better mutual understanding. As yet this is confined at the professional level mainly to the brief periods of practical work which students in the library schools are required to do as part of their course. But it seems likely that in the very near future the university libraries may find it necessary to change their staffing arrangements very considerably, as the needs of teaching departments in an era of very rapid expansion make increasing demands upon a pool of highly-qualified graduates which cannot in the nature of things grow com-

mensurately. Indeed the last two annual conferences of the University and Research Section have included sessions on this problem, at which signs were discernible of a trend away from the traditional two-tier pattern of staffing (non-graduate juniors for routine work, and highly-qualified honors graduates for all professional and semi-professional duties) to something more like the German system, which would distinguish between administrative and executive levels in the professional group, and make separate provision for each. Should this trend develop, there would be much more opportunity for movement of trained librarians between one type of library and another.

The times are exciting. Accepted standards and practices, unchallenged throughout the long period of stability between the wars, are having to be abandoned, or at least thoroughly re-examined, under the fierce stresses of the current rapid expansion, which promise to become even fiercer during the next decade or so. Never has there been such scope for experiment, such encouragement to those with new ideas to try them out in practice, such need to rethink the fundamentals of the craft. From this aspect, the immediate future is one of glittering promise.

From another aspect it looks less attractive. Higher education has become one of the major political issues of the day, and the risk that crucial decisions affecting the universities may be made on a basis of political expediency, rather than on one of full and sympathetic understanding of the true nature of the case, is correspondingly increased. Moreover, the degree of expansion which is being planned must involve such a heavy increase in the total national expenditure on higher education that pressure to economize in detail is bound to become very heavy indeed. It will require immense ingenuity and unceasing effort by the universities to guard against a progressive lowering of standards.

But that, too, is a challenge and a stimulus.

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