



French University Libraries

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UNDER THE ANCIEN RÉGIME the collections intended for university education were found principally in monasteries and convents and in the schools run by the regular and the secular clergy. At the outbreak of the French Revolution, the wealth of the collections surpassed anything which foreign universities could offer except for the Bodleian.

Unfortunately, revolutionary confiscations spared few libraries. The great body of nationalized books had already been allotted when a system of higher education was re-established in 1808. The collections were at first deposited in warehouses, then placed at the disposition of regional schools, and finally in great part entrusted to the municipalities and placed in municipal libraries. The university libraries except in a very few cases (the Medical Faculty of Paris, the Medical Faculty of Montpellier, and of course Sainte-Geneviève) have no old collections. In 1865 there were only 348,782 volumes held by the French faculties while the twelve German universities at this same date had two million.

In 1855, the decree of March 18 had determined that the special libraries of all the faculties in each academic center should be united into a single library to be called the Library of the *Académie*. However, even in 1893 when the academic faculties were organized as corporate bodies, becoming universities by the law of July 10, 1896, this principle had been applied only from the administrative point of view.

French university libraries today, with three exceptions of which the Library of the Sorbonne is one (it has borne this name since 1846), have been created thanks to a persistent effort which has continued since 1872 and in the development of which the example of

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the libraries of the German universities was certainly determining. (The National and University Library of Strasbourg which has had since 1926 a unique status—it is not part of the University, is not under the control of the Rector, and has corporate status and financial independence—was founded in 1872 under German occupation.)

The libraries of the French universities are now in a period of great change, and this change is due primarily to the increase in the number of students registered in the universities. The total number of students was approximately 4,200 at the outbreak of the First World War, and some 80,000 in 1939. In 1948/49 the figure was 116,000, and in 1959/60 it was 194,405. For 1964/65 the estimated figure is 327,152, for 1967/68 it is 440,940, and for 1969/70 it is 505,936. In other words the 1969/70 totals will be approximately 4.3 times those of 1948/49 and approximately 2.6 times those of 1959/60.

It will be readily understood that neither the university buildings nor the libraries in particular (three library buildings only were put up between the two wars: two at Nancy and that of the Medical Faculty at Lyon) were in any position to cope with such an increase and that a program of enlargement and of new construction was essential.

But the policy adopted for the university libraries is not limited to a policy of construction, important as this aspect is; the program constitutes in fact, a basic reform of the university libraries.

Before sketching the general lines of this reform, which is actually under way and of which all of the methods have not yet been worked out, a few general remarks are necessary. To begin with it must be understood that by university library we mean here the general library of the students and the faculty, even if it is composed of several establishments and several divisions, and that we exclude the libraries of institutes, of laboratories, and of student groups, concerning whose role in regard to the university library we shall have something to say later.

France is divided into a certain number of regions, administrative, military, economic, etc., which do not generally coincide. Among these regions we must distinguish particularly the regions called "academic" which are the regions of the Ministry of National Education. Each *académie*, which includes several départements, is endowed with a university, an establishment which has corporate status, financial independence, and at its head a rector. (The Ministry of National Education subsidizes the university libraries of Dakar and Tananarive, and the centers of higher education of Abidjan, of Brazzaville, and of

Yaoundé.) Until 1945 the universities as well as their libraries were, within the Ministry of National Education, responsible to the Board of Higher Education (Direction de l'Enseignement supérieur). This situation was modified at this period by the creation of the Board of French Libraries (Direction des bibliothèques de France) within the Ministry of National Education, and by placing under the jurisdiction of this Board the university libraries, which continue to form part of the universities. This change has been beneficial for the university libraries, since it permits consideration of their particular problems, notably in the case of technical problems, funds, and staff. The libraries have ceased to be the poor relations of higher education. And since the Board of French Libraries administers or supervises along with the university libraries, the Bibliothèque Nationale, the libraries of the great scholarly establishments (Institut, Mazarine, Museum national d'histoire naturelle, Musée de l'homme, Ecole nationale des langues orientales vivantes, Académie de médecine) the municipal libraries, and the central lending libraries of départements (rural book-mobiles), coordination among libraries has been assured. Recently, in 1961, the boundaries of the *académies* were modified and their number, which was sixteen, has been raised to nineteen by the creation of the *académies* of Nantes, Orleans, and Reims, the latter two at the expense of the former *Académie* of Paris.

The number of faculties has been increased in certain universities, for example at Clermont-Ferrand by the transformation in 1956 of a national school of medicine into a mixed faculty of medicine and pharmacy, but also by the creation of a faculty in cities which up to that time had had no university, for example the creation of a faculty of sciences and a faculty of law at Nice in the *Académie* of Aix-Marseilles, of a faculty of sciences at Rouen in the *Académie* of Caen; or by the creation of several faculties in a single discipline in the same city, e.g., faculty of sciences in Orsay to the south of Paris (Seine-et-Oise), a second and even a third faculty of science at Marseilles in two different parts of the city. And along with the faculties, new establishments of higher education called university colleges have been opened in non-university cities. Newly opened are fourteen in the sciences (from 1958 on), eight in letters (from 1960), the latest, legal (from 1963), while the reform of medical studies has brought about the creation of university hospital centers.

If we leave to one side these latest centers whose establishment is too recent to permit us to say that the status of their libraries can

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definitely be fixed, all of the libraries serving the faculties and university colleges constitute for a given university "the university library" even if these establishments are dispersed among several cities.

The divisions are as follows: "Letters," "Law," "Sciences," "Medicine," and "University Colleges." Certain divisions are combined, and the "Letters" division continues generally to be considered as the central library, thus assuring the administration of the whole. The creation of a new division is not necessarily due to the creation of a new faculty but often to the transfer of the faculty into a new building, in a part of town distant from the library, sometimes even into the suburbs. The library has to follow the students and the professors; this is the case at Bordeaux where the Faculty of Sciences having been installed outside the city, at Talence, a "Sciences" division has had to be planned for Talence also, and at Lyon where the Faculty of Sciences has begun to emigrate to La Doua in the township of Villeurbanne.

Let us take an example, that of the *Académie* of Rennes. This *Académie* in 1961 was reduced in size, the two départements of Maine-et-Loire and Loire-Atlantique being attached to the new *Académie* of Nantes. Rennes today corresponds to the five départements of Finistère, Côtes-du-Nord, Morbihan, Ille-et-Vilaine, and Mayenne. The buildings near the Faculty of Letters, which the library has occupied since 1911, were enlarged between 1956 and 1961. At present the library still serves four faculties: Letters, Sciences, Law, and Medicine. But this situation is undergoing a change; now under construction at Rennes-Beaulieu is a library ("Sciences" division) near the new Faculty of Sciences, in proximity to the Ecole Nationale supérieure de chimie, the Institut de physique nucléaire, and the Institut national des sciences appliquées. (The "Sciences" division will be utilized as at Lyon and at Lille by the students of the Institut national des sciences appliquées.) Also under study is the construction of a division of "Letters" and a division of "Medicine" near the two new faculties which are to be built at Rennes-Pontchaillou. On the other hand, a university scientific college and a university college of letters were created at Brest in 1959 and in 1960 under the jurisdiction of the *Académie* and constitute the "University colleges" division of the University Library of Rennes. One wing of the newly constructed scientific college has been reserved for the library, and a building is planned for the library of the college of letters.

In the *Académie* of Paris, reduced as we have said by the creation of two new *académies* at Reims and at Orleans, the Library of the University, administered by a head librarian (*conservateur en chef*), includes: the Library of the Sorbonne (letters and sciences), the Library of the Faculty of Law, rebuilt across the street from the Faculty in 1958, the Library of the Faculty of Pharmacy, the Library of the Faculty of Medicine, the illustrious and ancient Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève (open freely to the learned world as early as the eighteenth century and still a public library today), the Nordic Library or the Finno-Scandinavian Collection set up in 1868, the Library of Contemporary International Documentation, the Library of Art and Archaeology, and the Central University Library for Students. All of these libraries have been extended and modernized. The most critical case remaining is that of the Library of the Sorbonne which, constricted as in a corset by amphitheaters, laboratories and the administrative services of the Sorbonne, has succeeded in obtaining only a very small amount of additional space in an annex in the Rue de la Sorbonne. However, the establishment of the new faculty of sciences at Orsay has been followed by that of a "Sciences" division put into operation in 1962. At the edge of the Latin Quarter, on the site of the old wine market, the buildings of the new faculty called Saint-Bernard are already going up and to it will be transferred little by little the Faculty of Sciences of the Sorbonne for which a library is already planned. To the north of Paris, in the district of Villetaneuse, a new faculty of sciences is to be erected which is to include an important library. To the west in the district of Nanterre, a university complex is planned, to include a faculty of letters and social sciences, faculty of law and economic sciences, and a scientific college, all of this already necessitating the study of library facilities. The Library of Contemporary International Documentation will most likely find its place there.

In all, 114 million francs' worth of construction has been completed since 1945 for the benefit of the university libraries, but it was especially after 1960/61 that relatively important grants were obtained by the Board of French Libraries, the costs being borne entirely by the State. Construction has been undertaken in practically all libraries. To emphasize the important work accomplished, let us cite Caen which had been entirely destroyed in 1944 along with its 300,000 volumes and which today, thanks to grants from the State and gifts

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from within France and from abroad, has more than 260,000 volumes, and Aix-en-Provence (Letters-Law), Marseilles (Sciences), Besançon, Dijon, Grenoble, Rennes, and for Paris the new building for Sainte-Geneviève, the new Library of Law, and the Library at Orsay (Sciences).

Up to the last two or three years, the construction by the Board of French Libraries was according to the classic plan for French university libraries: reading rooms with reference collections, offices, stacks in which the books were classed by format and by accession number according to a regulation going back to 1878. This plan denied free access to the shelves, except in the case of professors.

This system was closely adhered to for a long time, in the first place because lack of both funds and staff forbade a complete structural reform. But when it became necessary not just to reconstruct existing libraries, but to create new ones (including book collections) from the ground up, it was decided that reforms could no longer be deferred and that it was time to adapt to modern demands in documentation.

The new policy of the Library Board was defined on the occasion of the *IVème Plan d'équipement 1962-1965*. The traditional type of library has been retained for the great mass of students, while at the same time contemplating an increase both in the number of seats and in the reference collections at their disposal. But for the students who have reached the last stage of their studies, for the professors and for research workers, it was deemed necessary to facilitate direct access to all current books and journals, the closed stacks being reserved for older, less used material. The new university library is then established on two different levels.

This decision involved the delicate choice of a classification system for the books. Two possibilities were open: (1) to adopt the Universal Decimal Classification which has not always had a good press in France and which besides is judged to be far from satisfactory in many countries, but which had the advantage of existing, or (2) to create a new classification system which would have required several years of work. The Universal Decimal Classification system was chosen by the Board of French Libraries (the medicine sections being provisionally excluded) even though it was clearly realized that this system might have to be abandoned in fifteen or twenty years if a new international classification should be agreed upon.

The classed catalogs under the old Brunet classification, conforming to the 1878 rules and which had been abandoned almost everywhere, will then be redone according to the U.D.C. rules.

It is hoped that these reforms which were set forth in the directives of June 20, 1962, will offer better working conditions particularly for professors, who have a tendency to develop their own libraries in institutes and laboratories. The university libraries find it difficult to keep track of these latter collections except perhaps in the case of periodicals. It is well known that liaison between university libraries on the one hand and the libraries of institutes and laboratories on the other raises difficulties which are not confined to France. The necessary measures could not be taken by the Board of French Libraries unless the libraries of institutes and laboratories, whose usefulness is not questioned, could be placed under its authority along with the necessary staff and funds.

It can be understood that considerable work is required to accomplish this reform, both in the central administration and in each library. It is estimated that fifty-six establishments must be constructed between now and 1971. It is not a question of building construction alone, but of the book stocks which must be brought up-to-date and in many cases built up from scratch. The difficulties here are not financial alone; many works and runs of periodicals which must be acquired are out of print and are becoming rare in the secondhand market. Other countries than our own are experiencing these difficulties, notably those countries which are in the course of development. A program of reprinting should be undertaken without delay and the possibilities of micropublication utilized.

The transfer of collections demands the sorting of thousands of books and periodicals, demands cataloging and classification, and unhappily the staffs of university libraries, although they have been increased in the course of the last years and even given priority, still remain inadequate. As an example here is the staff for 1962 of the University Library of Lille, with a registration of 11,290 students, a central letters-sciences-law library and a medical division, in other words two establishments: five librarians, six assistant librarians, twelve attendants, six clerical staff, twenty-nine people in all. The total number of librarians in all French university libraries at the end of 1963 was only 202.

The librarians of the university libraries form part of the total "corps scientifique" of all French libraries. They are accordingly re-

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cruited in the same way as other librarians. They can be transferred to a municipal library, to a central lending library (rural bookmobiles), or to the Bibliothèque National in Paris, and vice versa. These possibilities can remedy unfortunate career assignments, especially at the beginning. Like other librarians, university librarians have parity with teaching professors of the second grade in the *lycées* and *collèges*; the head librarians (*conservateurs en chef*), of which there are seven in Paris and seven in the provinces, are on a level with *professeurs agrégés*. But university librarians have not been able to re-establish the parity they formerly had with certain members of the schools of higher education, the latter have been re-classified upward. It is to be hoped that reform of library education (a school which will recruit its students by competitive examination from among those already possessing a *Licence*, and which will pay them a stipend) will help recruitment, but it is to be feared that the number of candidates, especially in the scientific disciplines, will be less than required, given the more remunerative careers open to young people in scientific fields.

The administrative budgets which the university libraries have at their disposal come from: (1) library fees instituted in 1874, paid by students (but from which many are exempt) and fixed since 1949 at six francs a year for each student, and (2) the grants from the Ministry of National Education which have not stopped increasing and which constitute the more important part. In 1963 the grants to university libraries amounted to 9,287,500 francs.

The university libraries benefit from a certain number of services in common. First of all there are the union catalogs, in which they are obliged to participate:

- Catalog collectif des ouvrages étrangers*. Card index begun in 1952 for works received after that date.
- Catalog collectif des périodiques conservés dans les bibliothèques de Paris et les bibliothèques universitaires des départements*. Multigraphed publication in 43 volumes of which printing has just begun and which gives the holdings of the collections.
- Inventaire des périodiques étrangers en cours*. 3d edition, 1963; 30,000 periodicals titles, 2,000 participants.

Loans between university libraries are of long standing, going back to 1886, and these libraries have enjoyed the postage frank since March

22, 1887. University libraries do not limit their loans to other university libraries; they participate, in addition, in general inter-library loans in France (in conformity with the decree of December 12, 1935) and abroad.

Most members of the schools of higher education use the photographic services of the Center of Documentation of the National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS) to obtain microcopies of periodical articles which are of interest to them and particularly those cited in the *Bulletin signalétique*. The CNRS has photographic equipment in the libraries of the University of Paris, and the Library of the Faculty of Medicine of Paris has its own well equipped laboratory for producing microcopies, but in the provinces only the University of Nancy has its own laboratory. The Board of French Libraries intends to develop facilities for photographic reproduction in the university libraries during the next few years.

In France there is no national or even regional plan of acquisitions like those found in several foreign countries. This question is only in the study stage. The university librarians themselves establish their own acquisitions programs, but they are advised by a faculty committee.

Nevertheless in 1962, in order to assist the university libraries in the selection of part of their acquisitions, there was established the Bibliographical Information Service (SIB). Each month, this Service distributes a selected list of some thirty foreign works, newly published, including new periodicals, and intended for the "Sciences" divisions. The Service furnishes with a minimum of delay the required number of standard catalog cards with the Universal Decimal Classification number and subject headings. It does the same for the divisions of the university scientific colleges, but in this case it is concerned with both French and foreign works. The Service is expected to extend its activities shortly to the social sciences. It has issued a selected list of periodicals. A selected list of basic works for the university scientific colleges has already been prepared for mathematics, physics, and chemistry and is expected to be completed for biology and the earth sciences.

The lists and the catalog cards prepared by the SIB are multigraphed by the Multigraphic Service, which provides a centralized service for all the university libraries and which like the SIB is under the jurisdiction of the Board of French Libraries. Established some years ago, in 1953, the Service has multigraphed for libraries as a whole (including municipal libraries) the catalog cards for continu-

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ations, and it has also prepared since 1957 catalog cards for foreign theses, basing its work on catalog cards prepared by libraries in Paris and thus making them available for use by libraries in the provinces. The distribution of foreign theses among university libraries is taken care of by the University Exchange Service of the Sorbonne. Exchanges of theses were regulated anew by the decree of September 11, 1951.

As far as French theses are concerned, each university library has since 1952 prepared and multigraphed catalog cards for theses submitted to the university (printed and typewritten). Each library does this work for all of the university libraries and for a few large organizations which have deposit rights for printed theses. It is on the basis of these catalog cards that the Bibliothèque Nationale of Paris has since 1947 published supplement D of the *Bibliographie de la France* which in its turn is the foundation for the *Catalogue des thèses de doctorat soutenues devant les universités françaises*, an annual publication begun in 1884. Of concern at this time is a method for more rapid listing, and by subject, of French theses. The problem of providing wider distribution for typewritten theses (continuance of an exception made on a provisional basis during the war, in 1943) remains unsolved. Typewritten theses are kept in a single copy in the library of the university to which they have been submitted. A study has been made recently of reproduction in microcopy form of typed theses; the transparent microfiche would seem the preferred solution.

Since 1952, the university libraries have agreed on the use of a catalog card measuring 125 x 75 mm., and the alphabetic subject catalog has been made obligatory by the Library Board. Cataloging standards are prepared by the Commission on the Cataloging Code (*la Commission du Code de catalogage*) which has its headquarters at the Library Board. These standards distributed by the French Standards Association (*Association française de normalisation, AFNOR*) are to be applied by the university libraries.

In a little less than a century the collections of the university libraries have been multiplied twenty-seven times, since we can estimate today's holdings at about 9,500,000 whereas they did not total 350,000 volumes in 1865. The rapid growth, already begun, in the number of establishments will in the course of the next few years raise the difficult problems not only of funds and staffing but also of organization. The university libraries will need to be provided with the means to receive an ever larger student population and to

provide them with books, and the libraries also must be able to meet the needs of professors and research workers and to play their part in the organization of documentation, which latter problem is under study by the General Delegation of Scientific and Technical Research (*la Délégation générale à la recherche scientifique et technique*).

The great needs for which we must provide demand the closest cooperation between all groups concerned with the gathering, the organization, and the dissemination of knowledge.

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