Expanding Resources: The Explosion of the Sixties

SISTER M. CLAUDIA CARLEN

As early as 1932, after having surveyed some 205 liberal arts college libraries on behalf of the Carnegie Corporation of New York, William M. Randall came to the conclusion that "what the average college library appears to need more than any other one thing is a directing head capable of unifying its aims and translating them into books." If the term "books" is changed to "resources," this may still be the one thing the average college library needs more than anything else. With the passing of the years, however, the task of filling this need has become much more complex.

Today, as the National Advisory Commission on Libraries has pointed out, "a library—great or small, privately or publicly supported—has two major and unique functions. First, it makes possible meetings of mind and idea which are not limited by our normal boundaries of time, space, and social or economic level." Secondly, "it is the institution in our society which allows and encourages the development, the extension of ideas—not their passive absorption, but their active generation.”

At a time, however, when the complexity of modern life calls for an even greater integration of all knowledge, college librarians find themselves forced to perform new functions under conditions that threaten to jeopardize this unification of aims and the translation of them into useful resources.

The 1968 statistical summary of the American book publishing output lists a total of 30,387 titles, of which only a small proportion are new editions or reprints. If one adds to this figure 4,306 new U.S. Government publications and 20,166 theses from University Microfilms, the number reaches the overwhelming total of 54,849 new titles for this country alone. There are also currently being published in the

Sister M. Claudia Carlen is Librarian, Marygrove College, Detroit, Michigan.
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United States some 20,000 periodicals with an aggregate circulation of approximately half a billion copies per issue. These figures contrasted with those of earlier summaries make it obvious that the proportion of printed material which any one person can read or even scan grows less every year.

Lawrence Sandek estimates that in the scientific and technological field alone, approximately 3,000,000 articles "are published in some 35,000 journals in more than 60 languages each year, and the rate of discovery and of publication is increasing—doubling, according to one estimate, every 15 years . . . . So prolific is the published output," he adds, "that no worker in any field can hope to keep abreast of it and still have time for sleep, much less for useful work." As is evident, this publication explosion has in turn affected every phase of librarianship from book selection and acquisition to processing and circulation.

In addition to the books and journals being produced in such numbers, the librarian of the sixties must also cope with a variety of new media and new forms of publication. Libraries can no longer make a distinction in the kind of materials they will collect and service. Recordings, tapes, transparencies, films, filmstrips, slides, and microforms are among the many newer media that complement books. Each brings with it its own special problems for selection, processing, and servicing. The wide variety of purposes and needs in an era of electronic teaching methods will require continuing study and a familiarity with criteria for selecting many different kinds of materials on the part of the library staff.

Microforms, while they will not replace the conventional book, are becoming increasingly important for college library collections, particularly for back files of periodicals and gaps in serial holdings. Microform (roll and fiche), micro opaques, and miniprint are among the many forms available today for image storage and retrieval. Unfortunately, the smaller libraries seem to have emphasized the storage aspect of microform collections and have neglected the retrieval. Obsolete and indifferent practice in servicing, and lack of competence in handling the equipment, including reader-printers, have discouraged more than encouraged the development and use of these forms.

New conditions have arisen, too, not only from the expansion of numbers and kinds of library materials but also from the changing pattern of education: an increase in the number of students in graduate and undergraduate programs, an intensification of education on all
levels, the broadening of curricula, a greater emphasis on science and non-Western culture, the introduction of interdisciplinary studies, the wider acceptance of the concept of universal education, and the introduction of disadvantaged students to the college campus. All these have made unprecedented demands upon college libraries.

In 1965 there were approximately 41,000,000 students enrolled in schools from kindergarten through grade twelve as compared with 28,000,000 in 1950. Many of these students are now entering college and they will continue to come in large numbers until the declining birth rate is felt on the college level. In the seven-year period from 1959-60 to 1965-66 the number of students served by academic libraries increased 73 percent whereas the professional library staff increased only 44 percent, representing an increase from 378 to 454 students served by one professional staff member. As materials increase in number and complexity students are obviously getting less help from professional librarians.

The G.I. Bill of Rights, as Dan Lacy so aptly points out, “altered social patterns by making a college education available” to many “who otherwise could not have afforded it and might not even have thought of it.” The library-related legislative acts subsequently passed by Congress have considerably changed the course of education and the flow of publications created by them. With the explosively growing college market university presses have greatly extended the range of their publications; commercial publishers are more and more assuming an interest in scholarly works; and the rising level of technology and the expanding research programs of government and business have created an ever-increasing demand for many kinds of books.

Librarians have not yet become fully aware of the change in climate that has accompanied this stepped-up program of education. With emphasis on independent study, flexible scheduling, and other rapid and unpredictable changes, the necessary skills and attitudes are quite different from those needed in the past. Advanced placement and the revolutionary changes predicted for the future high school may even send students into college with preparation that now seems exceptional. Genuine literacy, the power of independent study, and well-developed intellectual interests would make certain courses on the college level superfluous.

With such an array of expanding resources, new media, and new teaching methods, how is the librarian in the average college library to direct the selection and acquisition of materials? The larger aca-

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academic libraries are efficiently solving the problem by adding bibliographic specialists to their staffs. In the smaller institutions, however, this is not possible. Unless a systematic, resourceful, and imaginative program for selecting and acquiring new materials is drawn up, even federal funds, institutional grants, and increased allocations will not result in first-rate collections for today's libraries.

In too many instances administrators have failed to realize that an increase in funds for library materials also requires an increase in staff to select, acquire, and process the accessions. In 1965, many college librarians found themselves in the awkward position of having to spend federal funds almost overnight in order to meet grant deadlines. This meant, in some cases, haphazard and superficial purchasing with little or no attention to actual weaknesses in the collections or to the economies that should be exercised by technical services departments.

A good college library cannot be built in a day or a month or a year but must be the result of careful planning by a working combination of administrators, faculty, and library staff. The careful consideration which in a more leisurely day characterized curriculum planning is likely to give way today to a frequent change of goals and a multiplication of courses with little or no regard for the adequacy of the support of the library. An effective selection program should be based on a clear understanding of the future plans of the college: whether maximum enrollment is to be 1,500 or 15,000; if the program will be limited to a four-year liberal arts course or will include a graduate program; if the emphasis will be on independent study and honors work or on the more traditional lecture system. Only when these and similar policies are clear and firm can a sense of direction be given to the selection process.

Although recommended book lists will never take the place of a first-hand acquaintance with books or the reading of critical reviews, there are many good ones compiled under the auspices of institutions or professional organizations that can be useful and stimulating if they are judiciously used. The college librarian in the sixties is fortunate in having a series of recent or recently revised standard book selection aids to guide him through the thousands of titles from which he must choose. While this article cannot consider these individually, a few should be mentioned and are described below since they set a new pattern for recommended book lists.

Choice, a book reviewing service for college libraries, evaluates
current publications of a scholarly or academic nature. Begun in 1964 under the sponsorship and funding of the Council on Library Resources, this monthly publication covers close to 5,500 titles a year with brief reviews by more than 2,000 subject specialists. Its “Opening Day Collection,” 8 has been well used by new college libraries as well as old ones, and its “In the Balance” column features valuable subject-centered bibliographic articles. The current series of articles on “The Crisis in Micropublication” 9 provides criteria and reviews of microforms not available elsewhere. The Choice reviews are also available on cards, a feature that began in March 1968.

*Books for College Libraries,*10 prepared under the direction of Melvin J. Voigt and Joseph H. Treyz, is a selection list of approximately 53,400 titles based on the initial selection made for the University of California's New Campuses Program. Designed to update Charles B. Shaw's 11 *List of Books for College Libraries,* published in 1931, the Voigt-Treyz list is retrospective and has been “deliberately and directly related to the reviewing journal *Choice,* in that it includes only titles published prior to 1964.” 12

The eighth edition of Winchell's 13 *Guide to Reference Books,* published in 1967, includes 7,500 titles, an increase of 1,500 over the earlier edition because of the large number of reference books now being published. The *Guide* covers titles only through 1964 but a *First Supplement* for 1965 and 1966, edited by Eugene P. Sheehy, followed almost immediately.14 The *Supplement,* which includes slightly more than 1,000 items, initiates a change in the pattern of publication in order to provide a more up-to-date list. It also includes Library of Congress card numbers as well as prices when known.

The library staff will obviously need to devote longer hours to materials selection than they have in the past: balancing completeness against coverage for need; selecting books for active as well as infrequent use; resisting the “persuasive authority” of book lists; risking investment in expensive but important purchases; overcoming a distaste for duplication where needed; searching secondhand catalogs and preparing desiderata lists covering retrospective as well as current needs; discovering the better books that have displaced the good; and avoiding waste and extravagance in the midst of spiraling library costs.

The changes that librarians have seen to date are as nothing compared with what is yet to come. Macrocop​ying, available commercially since 1950, is now a routine service in most institutions, but the de-
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velopments in microphotography and electronics are also beyond the theoretical stage and moving rapidly towards revolutionizing access to information. Facsimile transmission has been used primarily on an experimental basis but the technique has now reached the point where technical competence and lower costs give promise of making it possible to transmit to great distances the ever-increasing store of published material. High-ratio reduction microphotography, telefacsimile, and computers are no longer the concern of research libraries alone. These newer techniques will eventually make available to college libraries resources otherwise completely beyond their reach.

The U.S. Office of Education is presently giving financial support for the study of an advanced type of microfilming. The director of the study, James P. Kottenstette of the University of Denver Research Institute, has called this high-ratio-reduction "a major breakthrough in the storage, dissemination and use of printed materials," which should reduce library size and costs, bring massive amounts of information to smaller institutions, and increase the availability of documents throughout the country.15

In December, 1968 Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc. announced a new program designed to bring within the reach of every college and university library a series of research collections in a similar ultramicrofiche. This reduction (UMF) is a photographic reproduction of materials similar to a microfiche but with the capability of containing up to 3,000 page images at reductions up to 150X. The first "package" in the series will be the Library of American Civilization, a collection of approximately 20,000 volumes covering every aspect of American culture and which will be cataloged, indexed, and arranged for study and reading. Subsequent series will cover other areas in the same way. This technology will permit extensive library collections to be photographically reproduced in miniature form with great precision and at low cost. The plan insures that through careful selection, cataloging, and indexing each series will be a definitive and highly useful collection.

Only through information networks will libraries be able to overcome the problem of expanding resources, increased production costs, and the administrative burden of handling the world's information. The record of knowledge is now too extensive to be accommodated in a single library in a single form. Instead the various disciplines are supporting their own systems by making use of the new technology: they are reducing the volume of library holdings by means of micro-
filming devices; they are compiling indexes and scanning them with data processing equipment; and they are servicing readers at a distance by means of transmission equipment. MEDLARS is an application of the computer to the production of a major current bibliography; B.A.S.I.C. (Biological Abstracts Subjects in Context) provides a KWIK index for the biological sciences; WRAIR (Walter Reed Army Institute of Research) places a telecommunication system at the service of scholars; and LITE (Legal Information Through Electronics), a computerized version of the full texts, with indexes, of certain federal and state statutes, promises to revolutionize research on legal documents.

In the library field ERIC/CLIS, the Clearinghouse for Library and Information Sciences of the U.S. Office of Education's Educational Resources Information Center, is one of nineteen specialized clearinghouses that make up a nationwide network in the field of education. The clearinghouses are located at institutions of higher education and professional associations throughout the country. This decentralization is a special feature of the system.

The Conference on Bibliographic Control of Library Science Literature held at the State University of New York in Albany in April 1968 recommended that action be taken to improve existing indexing and library services, to establish urgently needed new ventures, and to support a long-range study of the problem of bibliographic control in the library field.16

In June 1967, the Library of Congress, the National Library of Medicine, and the National Agricultural Library announced plans for a coordinated library automation effort to make their research materials available to scholars. This will eventually involve regional centers for referral. Libraries in New York have already set up METRO (New York Metropolitan Reference and Research Library Agency, Inc.) to facilitate more effective utilization of the vast resources of the state. The agency includes academic as well as public and special libraries, and is typical of many projects that are underway throughout the country.

William Warner Bishop did not know how prophetic he was when he observed, more than half a century ago, that "we have just begun, in America, an era of huge libraries. The average size is increasing very fast. Our large libraries are getting very large. They are being run for wide constituencies on broad lines. More and more the practical American spirit is seeking for coordination and cooperation. . . ."
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Dimly one can see possibilities of mechanical changes and alterations, of the use of photography, instead of printer’s ink, possibilities of compression or even total change of form.” He went on to add, however, that “changes such as these will require an intelligent and sympathetic oversight to insure their success.” The vision has become a reality but unless college librarians become better informed and show greater sympathy for the newer technology as it affects library materials they are likely to lose their leadership in this area.

As comprehensive information systems develop it becomes urgent for college librarians to study more carefully the actual requirements of the college community. Need and use should determine the direction in which they move. Only when these are precisely defined can libraries offer adequate service. As more material becomes available through information centers it also becomes imperative for librarians to build up their bibliographic collections. Today a college library that does not make it possible for a faculty member to identify bibliographically most any published title is failing in service that should be rendered. The academic library of the future will have to depend heavily on catalogs, indexes, classification systems, and abstracting services to provide bibliographic access to the stores of materials that will be available to them.

The National Advisory Commission on Libraries has expressed itself as believing that the application of technology can play an extremely important role in improving library and informational operations but it “does not presently see a technological solution that will make either the printed book or the library itself quickly obsolete—nor does it see any near-term system that will inexpensively provide instant access to all knowledge at any location.” However, if librarians do not emphasize the tasks that are particularly appropriate to them, relinquish the inflexibility that clings to the physical library as we know it today, and move forward with the changes that are taking place they will not be ready to meet the modifications that seem to be inevitable.

References


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12. Voigt, op. cit.


