



The Charity of Books

PAUL BIXLER

FOREIGN BOOK DONATIONS can be significant. In 1871 after the disastrous Chicago fire had destroyed the book collections of the Chicago Library Association and other city institutions, an Englishman, A. H. Burgess, wrote a letter to the *London Daily News* proposing "that England should present a new Free Library to Chicago, to remain there as a mark of sympathy . . . and a token of true brotherly kindness forever." Thomas Hughes, member of Parliament and author of *Tom Brown's School Days*, saw the letter, organized a general committee and invited book donations from British authors, booksellers, publishers, and learned societies. The response totaled more than 8,000 volumes and included gifts of their own works from such illustrious English authors as Alfred Tennyson, Thomas Carlyle, Matthew Arnold, William Gladstone, Benjamin Disraeli, Herbert Spencer, Robert Browning, Lewis Carroll, Charles Kingsley, Charles Darwin, and Thomas Huxley.¹ The project appears to have been a model of a people-to-people program long before that term came into common use in America. The following year, after a Chicago committee had joined a representative from Peoria in prodding the Illinois legislature into passing a bill authorizing the municipal establishment and support of public libraries, the Chicago Public Library was founded with the British donations as the nucleus of its first book collection. It seems possible that someone in Chicago thought of this British precedent decades later as America began a planned outpouring of book and periodical donations to the war-stricken libraries of Europe.²

Book donations divide most easily into those supported by private or people-to-people organizations and those sponsored by government agencies. But there is a third category, the exchange agency which is associated with and sometimes cuts across the work of what might be called the purely gift programs; though the gift-for-gift agencies have received less news space, are more institutional and less numerous,

Paul Bixler is Librarian Emeritus, Antioch College, Yellow Springs, Ohio.

The Charity of Books

their activities are in most cases library oriented and research minded. In the United States they were also the first type of donation agency to appear. The original plan of organization of the Smithsonian Institution in 1847 included a system of exchange of Smithsonian publications with those of similar learned societies abroad. Four years later the institution offered its exchange service to government agencies, learned societies and individuals in the United States. In 1867 the service was officially recognized by Congress when it authorized that all congressional printed documents, through the Joint Committee on the Library of Congress (detailed elsewhere in this issue), be placed for transmittal in foreign exchange through the Smithsonian Institution.

After the Brussels Convention of 1886, calling for international exchange of literary and scientific publications as well as government documents, the Smithsonian accepted a request from the State Department to act as an agency to carry out the purposes of the convention.³ A number of American universities, museums, societies and a few other organizations and individuals have for some years transmitted their publications for exchange "or as gifts" abroad by the institution's International Exchange Service, though the greater part of the material shipped out remains government documents. In the fiscal year 1969, the service handled for shipment to and from foreign countries 1,288,646 packages weighing nearly 900,000 pounds; since its beginning in the semi-decennium, 1850-54, the volume by weight has multiplied approximately a hundred times.⁴

Some book aid was given by the American Library Association to foreign libraries in the years immediately following World War I, but the first major book donation programs took place during World War II. Ralph Shaw has told the library assistance story in some detail.⁵ The background and the chief facts concerned with book and periodical donations may be briefly summarized from his account. Early in World War II separate committees of the ALA were already at work on a number of projects financed by the Rockefeller Foundation: library cooperation with Latin America, in which library books had a small part; aid to libraries in war areas consisting of the "purchase or acquisition by gift and storage of learned American periodicals for future distribution to libraries abroad unable to secure them during the war years";⁶ and a Books for Europe Project. In 1942 the ALA placed these and other developing wartime international projects under the direction of a newly established Board on International Relations, and in the following year created the board's operating agency, the Washington-located International Relations Office (IRO). Also, the board and the

IRO were responsible for government-sponsored book and library projects for China, the Philippines, the Near East, and Latin America (by far the largest project).

Shaw lists IRO projects with expenditures as compiled by Marion Milczewski, one-time IRO director,⁷ and he notes that the international relations work for these years, 1942-47, required an annual budget larger "than on all of the Association's activities together."⁸ An examination of Milczewski's figures shows that the greater part of the total IRO expenditures, 60 percent or \$1.1 million, were for books and periodicals.

Shaw concluded his article by giving reasons for the continuation and further development of non-governmental library aid abroad, suggesting that "the advisory services provided by the International Relations Office are now needed by official agencies more than ever before."⁹ Shaw's words were generally prophetic, yet neither he nor anyone else could have accurately predicted the shape of things to come in the next two decades.

It is difficult now to recreate the political climate of the time. World War II had scarcely ended when the Cold War began. The people, as well as government officials, were tired of wartime propaganda, yet under the threat of international Communism, a program was quickly mounted in which the chief ingredients were a sense of immediacy, an urge toward propaganda, and a belief in a mass approach to American communication abroad—a combination later examined by Dan Lacy for its effects on the United States Information Agency.¹⁰

On the donation of books and magazines overseas the effect was major. It has been estimated that the Soviet Union was donating abroad 50 million books in English a year.¹¹ Henry and Sophie Mayers of Los Angeles, traveling in Southeast Asia, saw so many freely distributed Soviet magazines in English (periodicals from the United States being few and expensive) that through a newspaper in Jakarta they offered to Indonesian readers contact with Americans who would send them used American magazines. Expecting possibly fifty replies, they received over 2,500; thus began one of the more informal people-to-people programs,¹² an enterprise that grew and flourished for more than a decade.

Quite as important as ideological opposition to Communism were two other influences. Coming out of their isolationism during the war, many Americans were accepting the obligation of learning how the rest of the world lives and were recognizing the need to attempt to put some kind of floor of information and understanding under the struc-

The Charity of Books

ture of international relations that appeared to be in the making. International periodical and book programs were a simple, immediate method by which the ordinary American could feel that he had become a personal part of this process.

Another influence was America's growing prestige and affluence. Private charity had long been a familiar activity for many Americans, and with more resources available and a wider opportunity to assist the "less fortunate," many were prepared to channel some (or more) charity abroad. The government's foreign aid program of the 1950s and 1960s had to fight annually against indifference and the fact that it had no constituency, but no one could raise objections to personal or people-to-people programs in a worthy foreign cause. The core of one such cause was reading matter, and book donations became a kind of everyman's foreign aid.

No complete roster of voluntary, private agencies for book and periodical donations appears to exist. "Gift Book Programs for Libraries," assembled by the ALA's International Relations Office, includes material about fifteen such domestic agencies in recent operation.¹³ The author has been able to examine the policy and performance statements of these organizations plus a half dozen more. In size the agencies run all the way from the Darien (Connecticut) Book Aid Plan, whose recent mimeographed statement says that in twenty-two years since its founding in 1949 it has shipped 840 tons of free books and magazines to "an estimated 25 million people in about 100 countries," down to the "Books-Across-the-Sea" program of the English-Speaking Union of the United States, which sends out annually some 300 to 400 critically selected adult and juvenile books, gifts of publishers, to English-Speaking Union headquarters in five British Commonwealth countries.

The list of agencies also includes:

1. The American Medical Association, with two gift programs: one called doctor-to-doctor and the other for American medical missionaries abroad.
2. The Medical Library Association's Exchange Service (begun in 1899) in which foreign libraries have for some time received equal treatment in requests for medical books and journals with those of American libraries.
3. The Iran Foundation, one of whose programs is strengthening the collections of Iranian hospital and medical school libraries.
4. Freedom House Books USA, a merger in 1967 of two similar, ingenious programs—the Freedom House Bookshelf and Books USA.

Donations are in small amounts of money for book purchase rather than in the books themselves.

5. The International Book Project of Lexington, Kentucky, a vigorous, voluntary book gift organization, one of whose special ventures included sending 900 books in Braille to a school for the blind in India.
6. Magazines for Friendship, in Los Angeles.
7. Rutgers University Press Fund (\$200 worth of books as selected for a library abroad from its current catalog at 75 percent discount, mailing prepaid).
8. Readers' Service, a substantial agency of the United Presbyterian Church.
9. Operation Bookshelf, a large program (615,000 volumes shipped overseas in fifteen years), run by volunteer assistance in Scarsdale, New York.
10. UNESCO Gift Coupon Programme.

In the 1950s one of the more ambitious efforts to build up the holdings of foreign institutions was undertaken by CARE, a non-profit organization composed of twenty-six agencies and supported by voluntary public contributions. CARE delivered books through its missions abroad to more than 1,750 institutions in forty-six countries—new technical and scientific works to universities, libraries and research centers under the CARE-UNESCO Book Fund, and more than 83,000 children's books under the CARE Children's Book Fund.¹⁴ The program officially closed in 1962, though a few books in law and medicine, donated by professionals, are still sent to their missions, and some children's projects are carried out on a limited basis.¹⁵

In 1957-58 the British Dominions and Colonies Program of the Carnegie Corporation provided several hundred libraries around the world with gift collections "illustrative not only of good American writing but of the entire range of American thought and behavior."¹⁶ This is noted here as an exceptional event, for philanthropic foundations do not customarily give book collections unattached to grants for other purposes. Foundation money, of course, has frequently been allocated for book purchases, but these sums are usually included as parts of larger foreign projects for total library, school, departmental or university development—a large, complex area somewhat out of the purview of this article.

Exceptional also in a different fashion is the Books for Asian Students Program of the Asia Foundation, a private non-profit organization incorporated in California. Operating since 1954 under the direc-

The Charity of Books

tion of Carlton Lowenberg, Books for Asian Students is the most broadly integrated of book donation programs. Gifts of books of great variety are solicited from private citizens, American student groups, civic and service organizations, state governments, and publishers; the publishing trade is the greatest source giving or donating at a fraction of their publishing cost unsold books which are tax deductible, overruns, and remainders. Donors are encouraged to screen their books for usefulness before shipping them to the foundation's San Francisco warehouse which has a 150,000 volume capacity, but there they are usually screened again before shipping to individual Asian countries.¹⁷

A significant story of still another sort is that of the United States Book Exchange (USBE), a non-profit organization founded by professional librarians in 1948 with a stock of 100,000 periodical issues inherited from the wartime clearinghouse, the American Book Center. In the beginning, the USBE was designed essentially for domestic library exchange, but with some small private funds and a combined program in which the U.S. Information Agency (USIA) and foreign libraries shared expenses abroad, a small initial participation by foreign libraries grew proportionately almost as fast as the domestic division. Beginning in 1954, a contract with the Agency for International Development (AID) in support of foreign library costs pushed the service ahead so rapidly that in two years its annual volume was consistently running about twice that of domestic exchange. In 1963 when the contract with AID came up for renewal, an extended union dispute disturbed negotiations and the agency failed to renew.¹⁸ The yearly number of publications sent abroad promptly fell off to where it was less than a fifth of the total annual volume of exchanges, and that is about where it has since remained.¹⁹

Government agencies with book donation or exchange programs have been fewer than private organizations, but their activities have been varied and some of them more complex. Most specialized government agencies that have material to exchange abroad will send it to the USBE, or more likely, to the Gift and Exchange Division of the Library of Congress where it may be transmitted to a foreign institution through the Smithsonian's International Exchange Service. One agency authorized to run its own publishing and distribution program, however, is the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC). The commission's *Reports*, both in full-size printed copy and in microform, and its *Nuclear Science Abstracts* and *Technical Progress Reviews* are now widely distributed to scientific agencies abroad. After five years' experience with a domestic depository program, the AEC opened a foreign depository

program in 1955 with a shipment of 6,500 selected *Reports* to eleven foreign libraries. Under a donation program and an accompanying exchange system, the number of foreign recipients grew in the next fourteen years to more than eighty, receding slightly after 1969 when free distribution came to an end. The total number of AEC *Reports* held in a typical foreign depository is about 89,000.²⁰

If, after the 1950s, foreign aid needed renewed commitment and a thrust into the next decade, it received them from the international charisma of the Kennedy administration, with a strong consequential effect on book donations. Although after the President's death collections of American books were established in unprecedented fashion in a number of John F. Kennedy Memorial Libraries abroad,²¹ it was the Peace Corps which best embodied his personal idealism in international relationships and which came to symbolize at home and abroad a special concern for the people of developing countries.

By law the Peace Corps had no money for book donations.²² But within its broad mandate it provided each "household" of volunteers with a book locker containing 250 paperbacks, ranging in subject matter from classics and current fiction to reference material, children's books, graded readers and books relating to the geographic area in which the volunteers were serving. Almost 50 percent of the volunteers in the first years of the Peace Corps were in the teaching program, many of them teaching English; although the first book collections were designed essentially for use by members of the corps, book-minded volunteers frequently put them to work as small libraries for the use of local students and teachers. Each year 80 to 90 percent of the titles were changed, emphasizing materials to assist host country nationals in understanding the culture and language of the volunteers as well as to give the volunteer materials to understand the culture in which he found himself.²³ As the program developed, the number of annual contributions increased until by 1969 the total distributed in this fashion reached well over 4 million.

In addition to book projects under its own complete control, the Peace Corps cooperated with the USIA in distributing books in a donation program of still larger proportions, called the Donated Book Pool. The bulk of these books were publishers' remainders and superseded editions, but they also included gifts from a number of private donation agencies. An agency like Magazines for Friendship sent its individual donors the list of APO box numbers of American embassies and directed the donors themselves to ship their material abroad. An agency like the Darien Book Aid Plan collected books from private donors and

The Charity of Books

did the shipping itself. Such arrangements assisted the private agency to some extent in locating individuals and institutions abroad who could use the donated material to the best advantage, and it also allowed the agency to avoid the difficulties and some of the costs of sending shipments to recipients through customs. The USIA was in charge of the Donated Book Pool, but the Peace Corps played a large part in making requests for books by subject category and reading level, in giving out shipping information, and in the large job of distribution. The total size of this program can be estimated from the fact that it received for distribution an average of 2.8 million items annually in the years 1966-68.²⁴

The Donated Book Pool was only one of the several book projects administered by the USIA. Something of the complexity of the agency's total program may be gleaned from Table 1 which shows figures summarized from yearly reports made to the *Bowker Annual of Library and Book Trade Information*, 1962-1967.

TABLE 1
USIA STATISTICS FROM ANNUAL REPORTS FROM 1962-67

Fiscal Year Ending June 30	Total Vols. Distributed	Translations (Pub. Abroad)	Published Overseas (in English)	Reprints & Simplified Editions	To USIS Libraries	Presen- tation Program
1961	6,000,000	4,800,000	—	1,000,000	230,000	227,000
1962	6,600,000	4,900,000	—	1,300,000	219,000	204,000
1963	11,200,000	7,000,000	2,300,000	1,500,000	201,091	208,507
1964	13,121,000	9,600,000	1,300,000	1,800,000	203,615	217,708
1965	14,175,000	10,751,000	1,724,000	1,300,000	201,115	200,000
1966	12,861,000	9,100,000	1,600,000	1,600,000	175,362	186,000

Source: *The Bowker Annual of Library and Book Trade Information*. New York, R. R. Bowker, p. 55, 1962; _____, p. 74, 1963; _____, p. 58, 1964; _____, p. 77, 1965; _____, p. 75, 1966; _____, p. 74, 1967.

In the grouping only the Presentation Program was an out-and-out donation operation. Its books were distributed to foreign libraries, bi-national centers, schools, and other educational institutions, in some cases supporting such activities as American Studies Abroad. Other programs received partial subsidies or were assisted financially in other ways, with the USIA giving material aid of various kinds to publishers at home and abroad. Such assistance included: obtaining foreign-lan-

guage rights for overseas publishers, paying translation and promotion costs, supplying support to lower the retail prices of American export editions, or purchasing part of a foreign edition. All translations were published abroad because of the lack of suitable translators in America, the higher cost of American publication, and the cost of shipping overseas.²⁵

The agency was interested in promoting the indigenous book trade abroad as well as, where possible, putting American books in a competitive price position with foreign books. It has also sought, basically, to support American foreign policy and to promote abroad the use of books which illustrate important aspects of American life and culture.

In late 1966 a revelation that the USIA had been secretly subsidizing manuscripts for domestic publishers²⁶ drew fire from a number of quarters including the ALA.²⁷ Coincidentally or not, in 1967 the agency began to phase down commercial assistance programs—coincidentally perhaps because such programs had reached their apogee, and because AID was by then well into large book development programs abroad of an associated type.

In 1962, the International Cooperation Administration handed over responsibility for a modest technical books program to its successor, AID, which greatly broadened and expanded its technical assistance program. In a conference sponsored by AID in 1964 at Airlie House near Washington, D.C., the agency recognized that "it is the policy of the U.S. Government to foster and promote the participation of private enterprise in our foreign economic programs," and it noted further the agency's responsibility for calling on the skills of U.S. publishers abroad and for encouraging them to "invest in the less-developed countries,"²⁸ a policy presently much broadened to include assistance to foreign publishers in a greatly expanded program for mass-producing elementary and secondary textbooks in numerous indigenous languages.

At the Airlie Conference the agency took note that its "interest and responsibility in the book and printed materials field includes all fields except fiction and cultural materials,"²⁹ which were left to other agencies. AID viewed books as tools for its many development projects in education, industry and assistance to foreign governments. In 1967 the *Bowker Annual of Library and Book Trade Information* reported that:

The Agency does not conduct a book program per se. Book activities are planned and carried out as a part of other programs and projects. Major book-related activities of A.I.D. have involved (1) the provision of U.S. reference books and texts in support of Agency-funded projects; (2) assistance to in-country development of books, including new manuscripts,

The Charity of Books

adaptations, translations, and low-cost reprints; (3) assistance in building the local capability to produce books. (Such assistance has included training of people and help in building physical plants. This help has been provided to privately owned book publishing firms, government ministries responsible for writing and distributing texts, centers for coordinating public and private contracting for translating, printing, and book writing); (4) local support of effective distribution systems, and planned programs for use of books.³⁰

Among the agency's achievements noted in the same report were that: 300 AID projects in 1966 included a significant book element; programs for the development of elementary and other school textbooks had been carried out in many countries; the largest textbook program to date had taken place in the Philippines where in six years, in cooperation with the local Bureau of Public Schools and private local printer-publishers, 25 million texts had been produced; similar programs in Vietnam and Laos would provide texts for every elementary school student; seventeen university libraries had been established with AID book assistance in such countries as Nepal, Ethiopia, Liberia, and South Vietnam; and over the years the agency had provided a total of more than a million books at some 400 other academic libraries.³¹ Two years later under an expanded policy statement, "The Use of Books in the A.I.D. Program," the agency reported that it had initiated large-scale bilateral textbook development programs, based on long-term, low-interest loans to the governments of Brazil, Chile and India; under the Brazil program, in support of the Brazilian Ministry of Education, efforts were under way to produce 51 million Portuguese-language textbooks, covering the needs of the national school system from the elementary to the college level.³²

If it seems ambiguous that an agency whose efforts have sponsored more book production and greater book distribution than any other operation since the invention of charity has "no book program per se," this is because of the nature of the agency. Books are distributed principally as related to other projects. AID conducts its work through contracts with other organizations. Books are a minor commodity within the agency's manifold responsibilities. In 1970, the Franklin Book Programs, which has successfully managed many translation programs abroad, was under contract with AID to bring some measure of efficiency into the procurement of books by the agency's overseas missions.³³

How effective have the book donation programs been in achieving their purposes? What of the screening and book selection? What about distribution and reception of books abroad? Has there been coopera-

tion and coordination among the private and government agencies? What has been the effect on libraries abroad?

Answers to these questions must be varied. Most established private agencies performed the chief elementary tasks acceptably. They prescribed the material wanted in clear terms: good physical condition; no technical or scientific books more than, say, ten years old; no comics or pulp magazines; and no popular periodicals older than the current year (except for the *National Geographic*). When they were in the business of providing expectant donors with addresses, they gave out clear rules for mailing and they warned that no material should be mailed without a request. And if they ran a center for assembling material for shipment for themselves, they generally insisted on the rule of nothing sent without request. Clearly, the closer the control by the central agency of its screening and shipping, the more effective its program.

Selection has often been an unsolved problem. Requests might be very specific and impossible to fulfill. Or they could be vague or general: some children's books, something on the English language, or something like the any-old-books-you-don't-want category. Where the mailing list was stabilized, a method of solution was to mail out periodically a list of available material. One of the most effective operations has been that of Readers' Service of the Commission on Ecumenical Mission and Relations of the United Presbyterian Church. It not only sends out occasional statements of the categories of books wanted from donors, but to potential recipients it mails an extended list of books to become available for shipment abroad. Mailed out January 1, 1971 was a list of 3,092 items "to be assigned Monday, April 12, 1971." For each item title, publisher, and date of publication (overwhelmingly in the 1960s) is given. These are broken down into broad subject areas: children's books, by age groups—38 titles; recreational reading—513 titles; education—1,345 titles; religion—1,047 titles; collective works and reference—147 titles. Most of the books under education could be found in any good college library, and many of those under recreation and religion would not be out of place there. The Readers' Service mails material overseas to about 2,000 individuals and over 200 institutions—schools, colleges, seminaries, hospitals.³⁴

The agency of scattered or more general interests cannot define its recipient clients so closely; in fact, it sometimes does not understand who they are. In 1961 after his first six years as chief of the Asia Foundation's book program, Carlton Lowenberg remarked:

It is a widely accepted premise that any and every book can be used in these emerging societies, now or later. The premise is false and has

The Charity of Books

resulted in the forced feeding of mountains of material to people incapable of ingesting them. Indeed, these materials have constituted burdens on communities too polite to refuse them. The more articulate Asian educators, administrators, and professional people point out that the need is selective. Wise assistance depends on the establishment of realistic goals for the use of books, and frequent reappraisals of the methods by which these goals are sought.³⁵

The keynote of the Asia Foundation's program has been selectivity according to Lowenberg, but he added, "bulk distribution [from many sources] over wide areas has tended to dilute this selectivity."³⁶

The selection of books has an important position in the organization of the U.S. Information Agency, to be specific, within the agency's Information Center Service. The importance of the Bibliographic Division, which evaluates books for use in the book programs, goes back to the Joseph McCarthy era, "when some books were withdrawn from library shelves under fire of public criticism because authors were Communist or pro-Communist or the subject matter was considered unsuitable."³⁷

The selection process, of course, is cumulative. Robert E. Elder, who studied the workings of the agency extensively in the period 1963-67, relates the process to foreign policy and continuity:

Reviewers are likely to judge books on the basis of four criteria. How closely does the book support policy? What might be "domestic" or congressional reaction to the use of this book? Is the book comprehensible to a foreign audience? Is it acceptable to readers with a different cultural background? The reviewers were well aware of the shift of emphasis after 1961 in the book programs. . . . During the Murrow period, a higher proportion of books selected were chosen for quick impact; fewer were aimed at a more diffuse or long-range result. There is a better balance in 1967. If a particularly lurid book arouses controversy when it is placed on sale in American cities or placed on the shelves of small-town libraries, USIA can be certain that an enterprising reporter will check USIA's book lists to see if the Agency has placed it in its libraries overseas or supported its publication abroad. Even if such a book had favorable policy overtones, the review staff would probably respond negatively to it. . . . The Bibliographic Division now has more than thirty-five thousand book reviews on hand, and believes it can assist the field in meeting requests for books of almost any type and fulfilling a wide variety of policy needs.³⁸

Though the agency has been technically well organized for selection of its own books, it could hardly have been prepared for the problems in selection which arose after President Eisenhower suggested in 1956 that people-to-people programs could establish cultural communication abroad in a way the government could not. John D. Henderson, in his

book on the USIA, comments somewhat ambiguously on the agency's early cooperation with people-to-people groups: "Probably USIA's most successful program of cooperation with private agencies has been with donated books. The program began with appeals to the public to turn over used books culled from attics and basements. The Agency was flooded with volumes that were unsuitable for use abroad."³⁹ What Henderson apparently means by "successful," is that the people-to-people groups came bearing many gifts, not that the gifts were generally usable.

The agency dropped this program, but some years later, a successor to it was inaugurated by another section of USIA, the Office of Private Cooperation. It may have had its problems in selection too, but they seemed more manageable. As Elder describes it:

The emphasis in recent years was on securing donations of publishers' returns (books returned to publishers from customers) and acquiring books collected at dead-letter centers of the Post Office Department. USIA wives, some seventy of them, worked half a day each week as volunteers on these programs, sorting and cataloging. The Agency in 1963 was obtaining fifty to sixty thousand books a year from these sources—but field requests based on notices of books available ran over one million a year.⁴⁰

There are no accounts and few hints concerning the selection of such materials.

Informal cooperation among two or more agencies has been a common occurrence in book collection and distribution. As already noted, the Peace Corps and the USIA not only collaborated with each other but assisted a number of the larger, better organized private groups in distributing books overseas. In recent years the chief function of the Smithsonian's International Exchange Service has been shipping and receiving materials for other agencies in and out of the country. Another whose role has been almost entirely cooperative is the U.S. Navy's Project Handclasp; with branches on both east and west coasts the navy's agency has frequently provided free transportation for books going abroad. More varied, with its many contacts in collection and distribution, the Asia Foundation's Books for Asian Students Program has supervised cooperative operations both domestically and abroad.

If informal cooperation among individual agencies has been frequent, overall or general coordination has not. A call from Africa for an American national clearinghouse,⁴¹ for example, went unheeded. Indeed, there is some evidence that if it was noticed at all, it was ignored or misunderstood. In the printed proceedings of the 1964 Airlie House Conference on book development, it is noted that in the fiscal year end-

The Charity of Books

ing June 30, 1964, the USIA's Office of Private Cooperation had shipped out 457,666 books to Africa, largest of its area USIA/Peace Corps Donated Book Programs at that time;⁴² on another page appears the statement of the African American Institute: "It is evident that the time has passed when it is useful to send used books to Africa. There is grave risk of giving offense to people proud of their growing educational systems. This risk far outweighs any possible benefit to be gained by gifts of used books, even in those remaining areas where books are truly rare."⁴³ Nowhere is any comment or notice taken of this dichotomy in policies and performance.

Since 1962 efforts have been made to establish coordination in book programs at the government level. In that year the secretary of state under the Fulbright-Hays Act established a Government Advisory Committee on International Book Programs "for the purpose of advising the Government on the policies and operations of its various overseas book and library programs and of serving as a liaison between the Government and the book industry and library profession to achieve closer coordination of public and private book and library activities overseas."⁴⁴ Confined to membership from the American book trade, the committee's first accomplishment was a mutual exchange of knowledge between leading commercial bookmen and officials responsible for book programs. In 1966, the committee's membership was broadened to include two educators and a librarian, and about the same time another attempt to improve coordination occurred in the formation of an Interagency Committee on Books, chaired by the assistant secretary of state for educational and cultural affairs.

Nevertheless, the effect of these changes has been limited. A report to the National Advisory Commission on Libraries three years later noted that "these two committees have continued to devote their attention predominantly to book programs of the United States Government and have made little attempt to coordinate their actions with either private assistance programs or the developmental efforts of American libraries."⁴⁴

Most private book donation agencies have mentioned libraries as among the recipients of their gifts abroad, but this remark often seems to be included in vague terms for the record. The conception of libraries has been that of a miscellaneous collection of books, large or small—something nice to have in a special kind of way or for an individual to have for his own, not something that requires purpose, organization, professional library personnel and a definite reader clientele.

Such a misconception, however, has had a less deleterious effect on

foreign library development than some of the unceremonious dumping of large collections on foreign doorsteps. Carlton Lowenberg singled out this problem when he noted the effect of bulk distribution on selectivity.⁴⁵ In Vietnam Richard Gardner wrote of the "avalanche of books" which began to assume "the proportions of a tremendous burden to the recipient institutions."⁴⁶ In 1967 when Indonesia had a dramatic change in government, officials agreed that one of the nation's immediate needs was books for its 40 million students. Within a short time, USIA acquired and shipped to Indonesia half a million American books.⁴⁷ This appears a remarkable response to a foreign crisis, but crisis or not, one asks what eventually happened to the books.

Harold Lancour suggested some of the possible answers to such outpourings as he saw them in Africa: "As any librarian knows a donation of gift books to a library can be a great trial and expense and bring nothing of value. Once a local and community problem, it has now become an international one. The characteristics of the problem remain the same—inadequate selection, poor condition, and quantities beyond the capacity of the receiving institution—but the dimensions of the problem have increased many-fold."⁴⁸ Although Lancour paid his respects to examples of careful planning and selection in a number of African book projects, he cited other examples of extensive collections sent to areas where the few available librarians were without preparation or tools to evaluate the materials, of books in such poor condition or so inappropriate as to be valueless, of books deteriorating in warehouses for lack of available attention, and of professional time spent in unrewarded sorting when it was needed elsewhere.⁴⁹

This may have about it an air of *deja vu*. In 1954 Dan Lacy wrote that an adequate program of presentation of American books must be done with intelligence and care:

Indiscriminate gifts will be wasted and resented; gifts of books unrelated to a larger purpose will generally be useless. Every gift of books should be part of a specific undertaking: to create, for example, or to strengthen a medical school at one university; to create an advanced department of economics at another; to establish an institute of international relations at a third; to strengthen the research resources of a ministry of agriculture. Each such undertaking should be sought by, and in significant part supported by, local authorities.⁵⁰

More recently the conditions and attitudes toward book donations to libraries have been under pressure of change. Where once crash programs may seem to have been in order and where the foreign recipients were often pleased to ask and receive anything in the shape of a

The Charity of Books

tome, the purpose and use to which library materials are to be put is being raised. Adam Curle, writing about a new role for Franklin Book Programs abroad, has summarized the changing atmosphere:

A few years ago the developing countries, with few exceptions, did not really know what they wanted nor, to the extent that they had ideas, how to achieve them. Anything we could give them was accepted and they listened to the contradictory advice of innumerable "experts" with a combination of naive expectancy and suspicion. . . .

But, and this is the great difference, they are now beginning in a few places to know this for themselves. The outside advisor is in a very different position than he was a little time ago because, instead of having the role of itinerant sage, he is sought for his particular skill in contributing to the solution of a particular problem.⁵¹

Under a contract with AID since 1968, the ALA's International Relations Office has been engaged in analyzing and planning improved assistance for overseas library development programs. A recent report on library-related collections of donated books in Asia took note of such problems needing examination or review as the following: that the prestige of owning books in Asia makes some librarians prone to accepting any gift offered; that cartons of a large private book donation can be stored out of the way (and away from any use) in the basement of a new national library, or that a still larger collection in science, technology and education given to a university which has no place to house it, may be kept in limbo in the expectation that the books will somehow attract a building and adequate shelving; and that the general proposition that book presentations need not be tied to other institutional requirements should be either abandoned or reexamined.⁵²

Three recent informal reports to IRO stress the idea that recipients of book donations should be involved in the selection of titles, and one suggests that a basic collection of evaluative book selection tools be an early selection for libraries expecting either donations or new book funds.⁵³ A report on Indonesian science libraries includes the conclusion that the recent application of a lower AID book budget to a few well organized libraries will be more useful and effective than the previous larger book funds spread around to a greater number of libraries that "didn't know how to handle them effectively."⁵⁴ A companion report on university libraries in Indonesia recommends that AID and USIS give up their book procurement activities (which fortuitously circumvent Indonesian governmental regulations, currency restrictions, and shipping problems) and give recipient institutions the responsibility of selecting their own books and acquiring them directly

from foreign and domestic dealers. Why? Because although it poses "very serious problems in U.S. Government regulations for accountability of funds," it has the great "potential for building institutional capabilities."⁵⁵

Recently American foreign aid has been in a period of reevaluation, if not of outright recession. Gone is some of the confidence and optimism with which Americans spread development aid abroad in the years 1953 to 1967, and disappearing also in some of the developing countries is the reciprocal confidence shown by those countries' leaders in direct acceptance of U.S. aid. As one economic expert has pointed out, "We are no longer so sure about the product we were selling so energetically around the world just a few years ago," and our uncertainty arises from "reasons that go far beyond Vietnam."⁵⁶

As part of foreign aid, donation book programs reflect the current climate of questioning and change. The year 1967 was a kind of climax that saw the issuance of the significant National Policy Statement on International Book and Library Activities by President Johnson. The subsequent directives for implementation, however, brought no follow-through. It was about this time that the USIA began phasing down its gift book programs. Private agencies like the Darien Book Aid Plan no longer sent book cartons to American embassies abroad, and some like Darien shifted part of their book aid attention away from foreign countries to domestic recipients.⁵⁷ In 1969 the Peace Corps ended its book program (although cooperation between Peace Corps volunteers and some private donation agencies still continues on a limited basis).

Currently, although its book activities have not come to general attention, the complexity of AID, "the only comprehensive aid agency in the world," has drawn criticism. Harvard Professor Samuel P. Huntington, member of President Nixon's Task Force on International Development, points out that "AID is simultaneously a bank, foundation, management consultant service, operations agency, economic developer and planner, political manipulator, and technical advisor."⁵⁸ He adds that during the 1960s AID's dominance in the area of foreign assistance has been in the process of erosion by other foreign affairs agencies, and he concludes, "What has developed, in short, is not so much an aid crisis as it is an AID crisis."⁵⁹ What this portends for the multi-faceted agency or for the multiplicity of its book assistance programs cannot be foretold at this time.

None of this is to say that organized book donations are coming to an end, or any more perhaps than that they are seeking their own level.

The Charity of Books

Book gifts have an honored place in foreign aid. The giving and receiving depend on careful selection, knowledgeable and well proportioned distribution, and on the consciousness that a process which is essentially human and thoughtful should not be smothered in a mass or a machine approach.

Effective programs continue. The private Asia Foundation services contracts with AID, though association with a government agency, as critics point out, occasionally embarrasses or hampers relationships in a foreign country. On balance, however, the Books for Asian Students program is in a position of visible priority within the foundation. Operating with an annual budget of about \$250,000, the program has combined professionalism and continuity, quantity along with quality, to produce a good track record; in its seventeenth year of operation in 1971, it passed the 10 million mark in book distribution. A significant feature of the program is that terminal distribution of books to individuals and institutions abroad is in the hands of field or country representatives, some of whom have their own sub-warehouses on which they can draw and do further screening, and all of whom know the people and the book needs of their particular territory.⁶⁰ The program, further, is unique in that library-associated projects naturally grow out of the book program. In the foundation's annual reports for 1968 and 1969 there appear forty-six grants in assistance to libraries for books, equipment or other aid, to library associations for meetings and seminars or to librarians for training and travel. The sums for these projects are modest, usually between \$1,000 and \$7,000, but all are directed to indigenous library improvement in Asia.⁶¹

No performance in book donation today surpasses that of Freedom House Books USA, the result of a 1967 merger of Freedom House Bookshelf founded in 1959 with Books USA initiated in 1963 by Edward R. Murrow when he was head of USIA. A people-to-people program, it accepts no gifts of new or used books, but ships overseas only new soft cover books of quality purchased with funds privately contributed to support the program. From the initial, tentative list of titles chosen by a small group, final selections are made and reviewed by a book selection committee of fifty-three prominent American writers representing a wide spectrum of taste, political views, and writing specialties. Most books are listed and offered in packets of ten under such headings as American History and Society I and II, Reference, Literature I and II (for adults), Literature I and II (for young people), Science (for adults), and Science (for young people). These groups include ninety titles, but under a heading Personal Bookshelf there are another thirty

titles generally more advanced in writing and subject matter.⁶²

Given liberal discounts by American publishers, a packet of ten books may be contributed abroad for \$6, a set of the Personal Bookshelf for \$15; these are for presentation to individuals, but occasionally the complete set of 120 titles is made available (contribution cost \$60) to a library, school or college. Distribution abroad is made by application through American field staffs of such agencies as the institute for International Education, the AFL-CIO, church service groups, and voluntary agencies with specialized activities in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Freedom House Books USA has distributed more than a half million books abroad, a number that only partially satisfied the demand by request. In the quality of selection and distribution, particularly in its Personal Bookshelf, it appears to come closer than any other donation program yet in operation to the ideal expressed by Dan Lacy,⁶³ that a book program should reach foreign professionals and intellectual leaders (some of them potential leaders).

There remains the United States Book Exchange, the sleeping giant of international book exchange. Its processed stock of over 4 million items, many of them periodical issues of research value, would be an invaluable resource for foreign library collections if they had access to the relatively small dollar account which would allow them to participate in the program. Nor would a substantial expansion of foreign participation put a strain on the basic stock of resources, for not only is the exchange operation a cooperative effort among libraries by which demand and supply are largely coordinated, but "much of the material USBE has to discard as surplus to its present distribution, much not yet shipped to USBE, as well as what is on the shelves, would . . . be useful to foreign libraries."⁶⁴

The experience of the years 1954-1963 when AID supported foreign library costs indicates some of the possibilities in an active foreign exchange participation. In that decade USBE distributed more than 2.7 million publications overseas and in the peak years 1962-1963 the annual average ran to approximately half a million pieces, a number estimated to have tapped no more than a fourth of the potential.⁶⁵ In succeeding years, left to its own support and in the face of rising costs in processing and shipping, foreign distribution has fallen to less than a shadow of what it could be. In January 1971, the total of participating libraries in developing countries (in Asia, Africa, Latin America), in which the need is greatest, was only 104 and the distribution a fifth of what it was in 1963.⁶⁴

Recently the USBE received a modest grant of \$48,000 from the

The Charity of Books

Council on Library Resources to improve staff salaries. This will put the exchange in training to perform the substantial job which was once expected of it domestically. But what it needs to reach its true potential abroad is a steady, basic infusion of government support.

References

1. Ladenson, Alex. "Chicago Public Library." In Allen Kent and Harold Lancour, eds. *Encyclopedia of Library and Information Science*. Vol. 4. New York, Marcel Dekker, 1970, pp. 531-32.
2. "English Gift Exhibited," *Library Journal*, 66:624, July 1941.
3. Smithsonian Institution. "Report on the International Exchange Service for the Year Ended June 30, 1963." Washington, D.C., U.S.G.P.O., 1964. (Reprinted from *Smithsonian Report for 1963*, pp. 64-65.)
4. Smithsonian Institution. International Exchange Service, "1969 Annual Report." Washington, D.C., U.S.G.P.O., 1970. (Reprinted from *Smithsonian Year 1969*, pp. 577-78.)
5. Shaw, Ralph, R. "International Activities of the American Library Association," *ALA Bulletin*, 41:199-232, June 1947.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 206.
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 231-32.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 228.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 231.
10. Lacy, Dan. "The Overseas Book Program of the United States Government." In Chicago. University. Graduate Library School. Library Conference. *International Aspects of Librarianship* (The University of Chicago Studies in Library Science). Leon Carnovsky, ed. Chicago, University of Chicago, 1954, pp. 98-111. (The article appeared also in *Library Quarterly*, 24:178-91, April 1954.)
11. Sussman, Leonard R. "Book Hunger is Insatiable," *ALA Bulletin*, 63:1578, Dec. 1969.
12. Mayers, Sophie. "Magazines from a Friend in the United States to a Friend Overseas." [n.d.]. (Mimeographed.)
13. "Gift Book Programs for Libraries," *Libraries in International Development*, no. 19:1-5, Feb. 1970.
14. *The Bowker Annual of Library and Book Trade Information*, 1960. New York, R. R. Bowker, 1960, p. 65.
15. Hecht, Suann M. (Director, CARE's Information Services). Letter dated March 5, 1971
16. *The Bowker Annual . . .*, *op. cit.*, p. 66.
17. Lowenberg, Carlton. Interview, Jan. 22, 1971.
18. Orne, Jerrold. "The USBE Story," *Library Journal*, 89:803-06, Feb. 15, 1964.
19. United States Book Exchange. "Publications Provided to Member Libraries." 1971. (Typed copy.)
20. "Ten Year Highlights, 1961-1970." Oak Ridge, Tenn., U. S. Atomic Energy Commission, Division of Technical Information Extension, Feb. 1971, p. 6.
21. *The Bowker Annual of Library and Book Trade Information*, 1967. New York, R. R. Bowker, 1967, p. 74.

22. Conference on the Role of Books in Human Development, Airlie House, 1964. *Books in Human Development; The Final Report*. Ray Eldon Hiebert, ed. Washington, D.C., American University, 1965, p. 82.
23. *The Bowker Annual of Library and Book Trade Information, 1967, op. cit.*, p. 73; 1968, pp. 85-86; 1969, pp. 265-66.
24. *Ibid.*, pp. 73-74; 1968, p. 86; 1969, p. 266.
25. Elder, Robert E. *The Information Machine: The United States Information Agency and American Foreign Policy*. Syracuse, N.Y., Syracuse University Press, 1968, p. 267.
26. "U.S.I.A. Will Spend \$6 Million in Books in Next 12 Months for Propaganda Purposes Over World," *The New York Times*, Oct. 3, 1966, p. 34, col. 1.
27. American Library Association. Conference, 1967, San Francisco. "San Francisco Conference," *ALA Bulletin*, 61:824, July 1967.
28. Conference on the Role of Books in Human Development, *op. cit.*, p. 61.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 54.
30. *The Bowker Annual of Library and Book Trade Information, 1967, op. cit.*, p. 71.
31. *Ibid.*, pp. 71-72.
32. *The Bowker Annual of Library and Book Trade Information, 1969, op. cit.*, p. 269.
33. Franklin Book Programs, Inc. "Book Procurement/Bibliographic Services," *Annual Report 1970*. New York, 1970, [n.p.]
34. Hazlett, Calvin H. (Director, Readers' Service, Commission on Ecumenical Mission and Relations, United Presbyterian Church). Letter dated Feb. 25, 1971.
35. Lowenberg, Carlton. "Book and Library Aid in Asia," *Wilson Library Bulletin*, 35:452, Feb. 1961.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 453.
37. Henderson, John W. *The United States Information Agency* (Praeger Library of U. S. Government Departments and Agencies, no. 14). New York, Praeger, 1969, p. 110.
38. Elder, *op. cit.*, pp. 260-61.
39. Henderson, *op. cit.*, p. 229.
40. Elder, *op. cit.*, p. 299.
41. Lancour, Harold. "Exporting Gift Horses," *Library Journal*, 83:3196, Nov. 15, 1958.
42. Conference on the Role of Books in Human Development, *op. cit.*, p. 80.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 124.
44. Knight, Douglas M., and Nourse, E. Shepley, eds. *Libraries at Large; Tradition, Innovation, and the National Interest*. New York, R. R. Bowker, 1969, p. 568.
45. Lowenberg, *op. cit.*, pp. 452-54.
46. Gardner, Richard K. "Library Aid to Vietnam," *Library Journal*, 84:3520, Nov. 15, 1959.
47. Henderson, *op. cit.*, p. 230.
48. Lancour, *op. cit.*, p. 3194.
49. *Ibid.*, pp. 3194-97.
50. Lacy, *op. cit.*, p. 108.
51. Curle, Adam. From a letter quoted in "President's Report," *Franklin Book Programs: Annual Report 1970*. [n.p.].

The Charity of Books

52. Mitchell, Eleanor. "Libraries: Key to Development in the Near East and Southeast Asia, a Report Based on Visits to A.I.D. Missions." March 1971, pp. 20-23. (Typed copy.)
53. International Relations Office. "Summary of Recommendations of A.I.D. Book Development Surveys." [n.d.].
54. Shank, Russell. "Science and Engineering Library and Information Service Development in Support of Research and Development in Indonesia: Report to the Chairman of the Indonesian Institute of Science." March 19, 1970, p. 14. (Typed copy.)
55. Williamson, William L. "University Library Development in Indonesia: A Report to the Ministry of Education and Culture of Indonesia." Sept. 18, 1970, pp. 8-9. (Typed copy.)
56. Wehrle, Leroy S. "Affluence and the World Tomorrow," *Foreign Affairs*, 49:427, April 1971.
57. Clark, Mrs. John A., Jr. "Book Aid Marks 20 Years' Service," *Darien Review*, March 6, 1969.
58. Huntington, Samuel P. "Foreign Aid for What and for Whom (II)," *Foreign Policy*, no. 2:115, Spring 1971.
59. *Ibid.*, p. 117.
60. Lowenberg, Carlton, Interview, *op. cit.*
61. Asia Foundation. *1968 President's Review and 1969 President's Review*. San Francisco, 1969, 1970.
62. Sussman, *op. cit.*, pp. 1577-81.
63. Lacy, *op. cit.*, p. 107.
64. United States Book Exchange. "USBE Services to Foreign Libraries." 1971, p. 1. (Typed copy.)
65. Ball, Alice Dulany. "International Program of the United States Book Exchange," *Libraries in International Development*, 12:2, April 1969.