Introduction

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Scholarship and libraries depend on each other. The scholar's search for truth is based on his/her interpretation of evidence; the library, fulfilling one of its several functions in the society which supports it, serves as a repository for the documents which preserve that evidence. The results of the scholar's labors become, in turn, a part of the record of civilization, which is incorporated in libraries and which, through the efforts of future scholars, will be extended, reevaluated, and revised. The record thus accumulates and expands in its comprehensiveness (as Bacon might have it), as the problems which it addresses and the methods which it uses change (as modern philosophers of science might prefer to have it).

When the history of mid-twentieth-century scholarship is written, the list of major events will almost certainly reflect some of the major events in the recent history of libraries. One thinks of the following:

1. Growth of research library collections. Fremont Rider's now-classic predictions of library expansion have held up rather well, and a new kind of institution has been the result, with problems of storage and access, operational complexity and cumbersomeness which were virtually unknown a generation ago. Furthermore, the number of research libraries has also increased significantly. The proliferation has created an intense competition for scarce and valuable materials, as well as a decentralization of resources. (Even without an economic crisis, in other words, the concept of "resource sharing" would have made good sense; now we need only to figure out what it means.)

2. Expansion of the scholarly literature. Publishers of research books and journals have been flourishing, thanks in large measure to the

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support of library acquisitions programs. Despite the short supply of new scholarly texts needing to be published, a surplus demand for materials from libraries could for a time be comfortably accommodated by the brief bonanza of the reprinters. More recently, with the demand from libraries down and the supply of productive scholars up, the specialized newsletter has been emerging.

3. *Improved bibliographical resources.* No way has ever been devised for measuring meaningfully the increasing number of bibliographical citations in published lists, but the increase has undoubtedly been significant. In the absence of any coordinated planning (which in any event would surely be quite impracticable), it has perhaps not quite kept pace with the proliferating literature which it has sought to cover; and the bibliography of bibliography now ranks as one of the most poorly covered of all topics, all the more so since the announced retirement of Theodore Besterman several years ago. Published library catalogs have been returning in force, however, while the National Union Catalog, complemented by improving foreign counterparts, has been of monumental significance.

4. *Better access to distant copies.* Microfilm and other forms of photocopying have brought the mountain to Mohammed. To be sure, Mohammed has never been averse to travel. (He enjoys quoting Goethe: “Wer den Dichter will verstehen, muss in Dichters Lande gehen.”) The document in Boston, London, or Florence may indeed be more meaningful in its authentic environment (or what may be left of it). Probably no less important to the scholar’s insight, however, is the intensity which results from having taken considerable pains to see the document there, not to mention the clearheadedness which can result from either having removed oneself from the political pressures of the home environment, or the likely interaction with colleagues along the way. It takes time—often many months—to collect photocopies from distant libraries, as it takes time to travel: slow time spent waiting compensates for fast time spent inefficiently. Bibliographers also enjoy reminding us of the important things which the camera can not copy for us. The fact remains that the jet airplane and the camera have vastly changed the scholar’s work.

Librarians will take justifiable pride in their major contributions to these improvements. But the good news, naturally, is followed by the bad news. The scholar, we must remember, works at the frontier of
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knowledge, and makes his or her most meaningful contributions when telling us what we do not already know. As an explorer of the unknown, the scholar's task is to uncover new evidence and to view old evidence in new ways. Our library service, then, is provided with the hope and expectation that the scholar will, in a sense, make our particular service to him or her obsolete. With this awesome prospect in mind, the present group of essays, describing some of the major trends in the scholarly use of library resources, should help librarians plan for more effective service in the future.

Our topic, vast and expanding in many directions, has as many possible contributors as perhaps different scholars in different disciplines, at different times in their careers, approaching different topics from different viewpoints. Comprehensiveness is quite impossible. For this collection of essays, approaches have been selected which reflect some of the important trends with significant implications for the research library. Two other areas of importance—sound recordings¹ and archival materials²—have been omitted in deference to major recent surveys; for several other possibilities, the right contributor did not come to mind or was not available. The topics are for the most part delimited in terms of particular kinds of library materials and library use of those materials rather than by particular academic disciplines or research methodologies, although the overriding consideration was a balanced selection of diversified contributors, approaching their topics from a variety of different angles.

Specifically, the first two contributors speak essentially from experience with printed books, but with some basic implications for all kinds of library materials. The first paper is descriptive in its concern for the broad field of recent Renaissance scholarship, while the second is more prescriptive of library service to all kinds of bibliographical work. The others are devoted to what, in the conventional wisdom of librarianship, are called the nonbook areas. The studies of visual information and of popular culture will be seen to converge in a number of basic attitudes, although the orientation of the first comes from the critical field of art history, while the latter has developed more out of the normative fields of the social sciences. Apart from their different origins and objectives, the two fields also pose totally different problems for the librarian seeking to identify the specific documents involved for purposes of acquisition, description, and special maintenance as a research collection. In many ways these two inquiries seem still waiting to be born as proper scholarly "paradigms," although their arrival has long been a foregone conclusion,
Maps and music, in contrast, are well established; however, there is an interesting juxtaposition of the two which is well reflected in the two essays included here. Maps are portrayed as serving an increasingly diversified audience, while music appears from the present description (and I think it is an honest one) to be serving an increasingly specialized scholarly community (at least as it involves scholarly research, it should be emphasized; the impact of music itself on human experience is another matter). Meanwhile, among the totally new kinds of library materials is the computer data base-born joyous and oversize onto the scene, like Gargantua, and with some of his same social adjustment problems, at once something of a field, a method, an objective, and a kind of library material in its own right, but in each of these respects with its political reality better established in the world of scholarship than its intellectual orientation. Thus, it seemed appropriate that these essays should be tied together by a library administrator concerned with the implications for library management policies and practices. The quantitative growth of research library collections is well enough documented; it is the qualitative effect of these developments on the mission of the library which particularly needs attention.

The choice of topics may at first seem to be biased toward the humanities. As the responsible editor, I am reluctant to concede this point, partly because the very concept of humanities has so many different meanings which become confusing and often rather meaningless in relation to each other—all the more so when they are applied to library policy matters. More importantly, there is another bias, more meaningful in its implications on library policy, which has been built into the choice of essays, and to which I would like to call special attention.

Library resources, viewed in the classic dichotomy of form and content, have a physical and an intellectual existence. Such a distinction results in the use of a library for its artifacts and for its information. The two manifestations are reflected in the modern cataloger's differentiation between the "book" and the "work"; elsewhere, one is the medium and the other is the message. Because all library resources are simultaneously both, the consideration of their scholarly use in libraries must be concerned with both. The student of the physical objects, in any event, usually begins with bibliographical citations, many of which are conceived for work with the intellectual content; while the scholar working basically with the text itself will
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often find it necessary to delve into the physical form of the evidence.

Throughout these essays—directly or implicitly, in general or specific terms, and otherwise variously manifest—runs the underlying concern for the different kinds of physical objects which make up the library's collection. The topics and the contributors, to be sure, were chosen with this expectation in mind; and to the extent that the concern for physical evidence may itself be labeled as "humanistic," the present topic may be viewed as one "limited" to the humanities. Instead, it seems more appropriate to view the concern for physical objects as one of the scruples which distinguishes all scholarship claiming to be authoritative. Above all, let us remember, the concern for physical objects does not in itself necessarily disparage the search for intellectual content, or such research as can be limited to intellectual content without recourse to considering the physical objects. Nor should the librarian's work in providing information be disparaged; indeed, the improvement of enumerative bibliographies in particular will continue to be one of the major concerns of the librarian. One has only to recall the experience of the medievalist whose literature was scattered among thirty periodicals and collections in six different languages:

This great physical difficulty has had the result that few of those who have [contributed to this controversy] have had a complete knowledge of all that has already been said or suggested or settled, and they have consequently flogged dead horses, passed red lights, pushed at open doors and barked up the wrong tree. Sometimes even, through a sense of frustration, they have abandoned any hope of contributing to an understanding of the matter. If every writer had been able and willing to find out exactly how things stood before he wrote, the literature of the controversy would have been less bulky, but perhaps more helpful, and some at least of the hazardous guesses would never have reached the printed page. \(^3\)

The staff of the research library makes many decisions as it organizes its program to meet the needs of its users. It apportions its staff, collection development program, space and bibliographical activities in terms of its various objectives—service to undergraduate and general use (as opposed to advanced study), to different academic departments and special programs, to its local or interinstitutional public. Similarly, decisions are made which, intentionally or inadvertently, will favor or damage the service to the users of either the physical or the intellectual resources of the collection. To be specific,
it was assumed not long ago that the users of the physical objects
needed some special favor among scholars: their instincts were likely
to be sympathetic insofar as they were bibliophilic, and their willing-
ness to go to the trouble of visiting and coming to know us in person,
rather than to work from photocopies, made special friends of them.
Quite innocently, we could also see our service to scholarship—in-
volving the acquisition of rare books and special collections—the rarer
and the more special, the better we were doing our job. In reaction,
the notion arose that the intellectual resources of the library (gener-
ally what humanists called "ideas," and scientists later "information")
could be extracted, thereby liberating the institution from a vain,
outmoded and expensive materialism. Much of the unique agony
suffered by librarians in contemplating the dilemma of "the two
cultures" is derived from such simplistic attitudes.

The library, of course, handles both the physical and the intellec-
tual resources, whether it likes it or not. Furthermore, the costs of
handling each (to the extent that they can be separated) are rising
sharply—mostly, it may be proposed, as a result not of inflation so
much as of scholarship itself. As I hope the bias of these essays will
suggest, it is the costs as well as the opportunities involved in physical
handling which will necessitate some major reconsiderations for the
research library, in two respects:

1. Librarians and scholars need to consider the cost of authenticity.
   Scrupulous scholarship calls for the use of best evidence, but the
   most significant scholarship is not necessarily the most scrupulous,
or vice versa; in view of the costs involved, it behooves us to
   consider the difference. Specifically, the costs of authenticity in-
   volve the acquisition of those scarce documents which incorporate
   the best evidence, then control of their use, and finally—very
   important today—conservation of them. Furthermore, such doc-
   uments call for a specially trained staff, knowledgeable in both
   analytical bibliography and its offspring dealing with the other
   media, able to make responsible decisions about acquisition, han-
   dling and conservation, and aware of the characteristics and needs
   of the scholars themselves. (For one thing, these librarians will
   need to communicate with scholars and with each other through
   the languages of descriptive bibliography, especially in the light of
   recent simplifications and alterations of library descriptive cata-
   loging practices.)

2. The special advantages, characteristics and problems of the dif-
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different library media need to be better comprehended in order to overhaul our programs for handling each. That favorite whipping post, the so-called “book orientation” of libraries, needs to be recognized for the friend and the enemy which it indeed is—at once the giant on whose shoulders our dwarves are standing, and the basis for the consistency of foolish minds. (By and large, I might propose, in terms of the library’s intellectual resources it is more the former; in terms of the physical resources, more the latter.)

“I can wait five hundred years for an interpreter, as God has waited five thousand years for an interpreter.” Kepler’s classic statement of faith will obviously place one more responsibility on the overburdened librarian. The very notion of a frontier of knowledge five hundred years from now is surely too visionary to consider; about all we can hope and plan for is the preservation of evidence. Serving the relatively immediate needs of tomorrow’s scholars is a more meaningful problem, to which this collection of essays is addressed. Deliberation will lead to some painful decisions, for both the scholar and the librarian (both of whose instincts are still largely libertarian and whose sensitivity to hubris no doubt helped in formulating their career decisions). Furthermore, that very cornerstone of modern librarianship known as “service to the user” (Ranganathan’s Very First Law, no less) could come under fire, due to the fact that services to today’s users might result in some disservice to tomorrow’s users. The differences among use, misuse, and even abuse are not always obvious, and even the most careful and purely intellectual use will require some handling of the physical item, and in any event will encumber handling expenses which might be deployed elsewhere. Viewed in terms of three classic prototypes from library history, we must avoid defining our mandate so narrowly as to relegate ourselves to a niche in history next to John Bagford; nor dare we use the long-range future as an excuse for becoming a new breed of medieval dragon-librarians guarding our treasures; nor, alas, can we hope to enjoy the laudatory success of the New York Public Library as a public service institution to scholars without inheriting the massive conservation problems which that great library faces today. The need for informed policy decisions in libraries for purposes of continued service to the “cutting edge” of scholarship must continue to be served.
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References


