

Introduction

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MAP LIBRARIANSHIP is an intense and isolated occupation. Its adherents belong, in effect, to a relatively small, somewhat fluid group that meets at most a few times a year. There are few libraries that can afford or even justify employing more than one map librarian, so the map librarian at any one institution has only herself to talk to *in situ*, and may be the only one of her kind for a hundred miles. Perhaps it is the relief of finally being able to talk to others who understand the problems of map librarianship that leads to such fruitful camaraderie at conventions. But in the lengthy interims (at least six months) between these conventions, and the even more lengthy interims between meetings which any given map librarian can afford to attend, map librarians are linked together by the printed word in the form of the three basic journals in the field—the *Special Libraries Association Geography and Map Division Bulletin*, the *Western Association of Map Libraries Bulletin*, and the *Association of Canadian Map Libraries Bulletin*—and by acquisitions/news-and-notes publications. Thus it is that although the authors of the articles in this issue of *Library Trends* come from all over the United States and from foreign countries and therefore meet relatively seldom, there is a strong thread of commonality and understanding running throughout the issue.

An additional reason for this connecting thread is that the nature of map librarianship demands that the practitioner be capable of performing selection, classification, cataloging, administration, preservation,

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and reference work for the collection. This engenders an awareness in the librarian of the connecting relationships among these various facets of library life, and tends in turn to cause papers to touch and overlap slightly.

We are in what some of us may be fond enough to consider the golden age of map librarianship, and what others of us, perhaps more realistically, consider to be the "interesting times" of the Chinese curse. Whichever is the case, it is evinced by an awareness among map librarians of the problems in the profession; almost every paper in this issue has some good news and some bad news, tending more toward the latter. There is also a considerable interest in the collection and analysis of basic statistics; not only is the field a long way from being analyzed into boredom (a state just west of tedium), it is not even completely comprehended, as evidenced by several authors pointing out the need for further research in specific areas.

An effort has been made to include topics concerning matters of current interest, with the basis for choice of topics being the amount of change in a specific area or the amount of literature already available; that is, if the proper descriptor in the first case were "considerable," or in the second case, "almost none," the topic was judged to be a proper one for inclusion. Thus there is, for example, nothing on map storage and preservation; no good new answers have appeared in the last few years. On the other hand, cataloging has changed more in the last three years than in the preceding seventy; there is no other literature on security in map collections; reference is seldom written about; and the acquisition of large foreign topographic series is considered to be so commonplace that little has been said about it. The articles were solicited—in some cases on bended knee—from map librarians at the top of their field, and in their own special areas of interest.

We begin with selection and acquisition—for it is extremely difficult to do anything with maps until you have them in hand—specifically, with a thorny problem of the present: acquisition of national survey topographic sheets, which constitute by far the vast majority of almost all map collections. We then move on to a thorny problem of the future: what to do about microcartography and cartographic data bases, and what to expect and beware of in those areas. A status report on cataloging and its directions for the future is followed by two papers on patrons: who they are and what they need. The basics of the administration of a map collection, security in map collections, and education for map librarianship are the next three topics in line. The issue finishes with a section on map collections generally, first in North

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America and then in New Zealand and Australia—an appropriate ending, considering that map librarianship has for so long been in the antipodes of library science. Several of the articles may well be considered a joint project of the North American map library world, since obviously anyone not actually *writing* an article filled out at least two questionnaires, and some did both.

The editor sighs with regret over the articles that got away—atlas cataloging, the state of cartobibliography, a study of Western European map collections—but is most pleased with the papers landed, and proffers her fervent thanks to all who participated in putting the issue together, be it by writing a paper or by filling out a questionnaire.

Here, then, is map librarianship.

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