

Research—But How Much Later?

Miss Reed is associate professor, Library School, Florida State University.

CHASE DANE¹ recently made a strong plea for research in librarianship, not for more of the heterogeneous studies now appearing but for investigations which would result from a logically formulated, coordinated research program of the nature outlined by Berelson² at the Conference on Education for Librarianship at the Graduate Library School in Chicago in the summer of 1948.

Bach³ agrees that research is essential to the well-being of the library profession, and, inspired by the now famous Princeton Institute, he has suggested establishing an institute for advanced library study as a suitable agency for assuming responsibility for important library investigations.

In 1949, at the Midwinter meeting of AALS, Tauber⁴ described a research outline series in librarianship which might be used to stimulate and direct research. Each such outline would indicate the status of research in a particular area of librarianship and point to problems warranting investigation.

In 1952, Wight concluded his comments on public library research by suggesting that "large public libraries and the state library agencies begin to explore the possibilities of

(a) cooperation in planning, conducting, and using the findings of factual studies and (b) developing cooperative plans with one or more of the graduate library schools for training personnel and carrying out research studies in the area of public library administration."⁵

These are only a few of the statements from library literature concerning the importance of research if librarianship is to continue to be flexible and inventive enough to serve the demands of society effectively.

Assuming then that research in librarianship is and will continue to be needed, the Berelson-Dane program, the Bach institute, the Tauber outlines, the Wight cooperative ventures—all merit consideration by the appropriate professional bodies. Were such deliberations to be arranged, it is here suggested that a well-planned, exploratory conference might have some value as preparation for the formulation of a sound research program. One form of organization for productive discussions of research needs might be a series of meetings on the various major areas of librarianship. Perhaps in view of the rather spectacular success of various committees using the device of working papers as springboards for discussions, a series of such working papers could be prepared as the basis for group sessions by committees representing library agencies and library schools. In addition, such committees would profit by the advice and help of people who have had experience with research techniques in the solution of library and/or related problems. Valuable assistance too would be forthcoming from ALA

⁵ Edward A. Wight, "Problems of Coordination and Research in Large Public Libraries." *Public Libraries*, VI (April, 1952), 13.

¹ Chase Dane, "The Need for a Research Program in Library Problems," *COLLEGE AND RESEARCH LIBRARIES*, XVI (January, 1955), 20-23.

² Bernard Berelson, "Advanced Study and Research in Librarianship." In *Education for Librarianship*, ed. by Bernard Berelson. (Chicago: ALA, 1949), pp. 207-25.

³ Harry Bach, "The Need for An Institute for Advanced Library Research." *Wilson Library Bulletin*, XXIX (May, 1955), 709, 711.

⁴ Maurice F. Tauber, "A Research Outline Series in Librarianship." In *Association of American Library Schools, Report of Meeting*. (Chicago: January 21, 1949), pp. 26-32.

and other library association personnel.

Following the presentation of a given working paper, which might well have also been circulated to registrants in advance of the conference, there should be ample opportunity for discussion. If these discussions were limited to invited participants, perhaps geographic and institutional representation could be assured. Another possibility might be to limit participation to invited registrants but to extend auditing privileges to other interested professional people. If the latter plan were used, one or two extracurricular open discussion periods might bring out still further useful knowledge and opinion.

Would any group or institution be willing to sponsor such an exploratory conference? Would any foundation be likely to provide funds for administering the meeting? Would anything worthwhile be done?

In contemplating sponsorship one naturally thinks first of the existing research committees of such groups as AALS, LED, and ACRL, and of the library schools already having active research programs. A joint sponsorship might have much to recommend it. The various library associations and library schools and many libraries, public and academic, could easily arrange for convenient conference quarters. Whether such a meeting were on a nationwide scale, or whether the previously mentioned working papers were used as the basis for regional meetings, there would seem to be no serious problem in sponsorship.

Similarly, if responsible sponsorship were assured and if a foundation were approached with a request in which the technique proposed seemed a reasonably reliable instrument for getting the kind of information essential to intelligent planning of a sound research program in librarianship, foundation money might well be forthcoming. Such a proposal should probably be in terms of the costs of duplicating and distributing the working papers; recording, transcribing and issuing the proceedings; and, if possible, food and lodging for invited participants. The ultimate effectiveness of the project might be considerably increased if money were available for at least a part-time paid coordinator.

Anticipated results from such a conference, properly planned and conducted, would include the working papers, the conclusions and suggestions emerging from the opportunity for experts to canvass together the library problems needing investigation and to re-examine appropriate research methodologies; and the stimulation such an experience affords the participants. Thus by bringing together a group of creative and informed scholars and practitioners, by letting them whet their minds on the ideas tossed out in the initial papers and by each other, perhaps such a conference could provide fresh insights. Certainly libraries can no longer afford not to plan for the future, and the maximum effectiveness of such planning may well rest on principles not yet fully recognized.

Rising Costs

During the past year the Executive Secretary of ARL asked the chairman of the ARL Serials Committee to investigate the rumored increase in the price of *Chemical Abstracts* and the general area of increase in prices of scientific serials. A report on the study made by the chairman, Charles Harvey Brown, has been mimeographed and is available from Mr. Brown, Iowa State College, Ames, Iowa. The report presents the problem of increasing costs in particular relationship to the state of library budgets, and points

out the inevitable results: the inability of libraries to purchase *Chemical Abstracts* and other highly priced scientific journals; the reduction in the number of these published. Two tables are included in the report: Table I is a "Comparison of Prices Paid in 1949, 1950 and 1955 for 37 American Scientific Periodicals, Selected Somewhat at Random"; and Table II is a "Comparison of Prices Paid by One Library in 1949, 1950 and 1954 for Thirty of Springer's Scientific Publications."