

CHAPTER 12

THE LIBRARY

THE library must at all times be the center of the intellectual life of a college or university, from which the accumulated knowledge of the ages flows freely to each department. If the library is inadequately financed, or if its administration is ineffective in making all its resources easily available, the flow of knowledge, past and present, is impeded or wholly cut off from some or from many departments. Unless each department can draw easily and surely, according to its needs, on such knowledge as an adequate library can supply, the institution cannot be maintained at a high level of service.

It at once becomes interesting to discover what is meant by a library adequate to the needs of the particular institution with which one is concerned. First it can be said that very rarely indeed is the library of an institution too good. Very rarely indeed is the support available so generous and the administration of the library so excellent that the library is superior in quality to the needs of the institution.

There are at least five requirements that any library must meet before it can be regarded as adequate in service. The larger the library the more important it is that each of these is met.

The Library Must Be in Charge of a Competent Librarian

The best library administration is secured by appointing an able librarian and giving him full authority. If a library committee is appointed, the librarian should be chairman, providing he is competent. A good library committee can often aid the librarian in maintaining proper regulations and in a wise distribution of book purchases. In the large

universities there is especially a need of a library representative of each important department who will be responsible for looking after the collection of important material in his department.

The librarian, like all administrative officers, should be the servant of the faculty, aiding them in the use of books. To do this he must often protect the faculty from some members who tend to be too demanding for their departments; he must keep a reasonable balance throughout the institution.

The librarian in a college, if fully competent, should be of the rank of a full professor. Usually, if it is impossible to pay the librarian a full professor's salary, it is wise either to arrange to secure a librarian who can teach part time, or to appoint as librarian a full professor who does teach but who would be most able properly to supervise the library, and give him trained librarians as assistants.

In a university the fully competent librarian should probably rank in position and salary with the deans. Unfortunately, in spite of the large number of persons trained in the different technical phases of library work, there are very few first-class librarians in the country. The supply is slowly increasing, and proper appreciation and recognition of the importance of first-class ability in this field will increase the supply. Even now a diligent search and an attractive salary can secure a good man. It cannot be overstressed that no library can be developed to service of high quality unless an able, informed, and adequately trained man is at the head. While an equally competent woman may give excellent service in the library of a woman's college or of a small college, a man can usually deal much more easily and effectively with department heads and other influential library patrons.

More Must Be Spent for Salaries of the Staff Than for Books

In all except the smallest libraries more must be spent for the salaries of the librarian and his staff than for books and

periodicals. In forty large university libraries the average is 40 per cent for books and periodicals and 60 per cent for salaries. In smaller libraries the ratio will be nearer 50-50.

This always strikes one as unreasonable on hearing it for the first time, but after considering all the work which must be done in a modern college library by the librarian and his staff, it is not so hard to understand. The work of the staff is chiefly made up of the following duties:

Buying new books.

Cataloging.

Aiding students and faculty in finding what they need—reference work.

Issuing books and receiving returned books.

Receiving, checking, supervising periodicals.

Attending to binding of books and magazines.

Aiding the members of the faculty in selecting new books to be bought.

Consulting with faculty members in the preparation of lists for required and supplementary reading.

Representing the interests of the library in the faculty and on committees.

In an institution well served by the library, the annual use of books within and outside the library building will run from 100 to 150 books per student and faculty member. The total work in a library is surprisingly large, and an adequate, well-trained staff is necessary.

The Library Must Be Well Supported

To state definitely what it is wise for any particular institution to spend on its library is difficult, but the generally accepted standards are as follows:

In a Junior College enrolling from 250 to 1,000 students, \$10 per student is regarded as reasonably adequate. With a smaller enrollment it would be very desirable to increase this per capita allowance, if possible to \$15. If the enrollment

is 1,500–3,000, the per capita might reasonably be \$7.50 or even \$5.00.

In a liberal arts college 4 per cent of the total college budget, or \$25 per student enrolled, is regarded generally as reasonable support for the library.

A university library differs chiefly from a college library in that the university must meet the demands of research for books and periodicals. The policy of the trustees in defining clearly the fields in which major research will be developed will have an important effect on expenditures. Inasmuch as the budgets of all institutions doing real university work are large, 4 per cent of the budget, or if the enrollment exceeds 8,000, \$20 per student, will provide reasonably well for the library.

Forty of our leading universities spend for library books, periodicals, and binding, and for staff salaries, an average of 3.92 per cent of their entire budgets. The range is from 1.03 per cent to 8.50 per cent. Twenty-three spend from 2 per cent to 4.5 per cent, three spend less than 2 per cent, and twelve more than 4.5 per cent. The two factors that necessarily push up the library cost are, first, departmental libraries—the more and the better they are administered the higher the cost; second, the number of fields in which major research work is pursued. In every such field probably over 80 per cent of all important material in all languages should be available in the library, and this involves the purchase of many periodicals in complete files and current subscriptions.

*The Chief Object of the Library Administration Must Be
to Have the Books Used*

While formerly the chief function of the library was to keep and preserve the books, now it is to secure the widest possible use of the books. Reference librarians aid students and faculty in securing the material they need. Every effort is made to familiarize the students with the resources of the library and

how to find the books they wish. Unless the per capita book use is large, the library administration or the teaching methods of the institution must be at fault.

The Service at the Delivery Desk Must Be Prompt

If a student is forced to wait any considerable length of time at the desk for a book he will be inclined to use the library as little as possible. In a well-run library not over 2 minutes should elapse between turning in a call slip and receiving the book, or being informed that the book is out. A wait of 5 to 8 minutes or more for a book greatly discourages the use of the library.

A library which scores high on each of the above points is a good library.

While a library is primarily maintained for use, it is also a reservoir of knowledge.

As one looks into the use of books in any library he finds many new books and periodicals that have not been used at all or used extremely little. This suggests that many books have been purchased that are not needed. Of necessity much must be available that is not immediately needed. The trustees and administration, here as in other areas, must rely on the good judgment of a wise and well-informed librarian. A search of any large physical or chemical laboratory will always disclose large quantities of apparatus, equipment, and chemicals unused or used very little, or outmoded, or in reserve. Here we expect it. We must expect a similar situation also in the library.

There are a number of special library problems on which some things may be said of interest to the trustees.

Departmental Libraries

Departmental Libraries are a desirable luxury. Our largest and richest institutions maintain these to great advantage. However, where funds are limited it is far preferable to have

all books in one well-administered library, open from 8 A.M. to 10 P.M. There are two serious objections to departmental libraries when funds are limited. In the first place, library needs of departments are now so largely overlapping that unless duplicate copies are extensively provided for departmental libraries, great inconvenience will often result. Where funds permit the purchase of duplicate copies for departmental libraries, they are, of course, a great convenience. The second objection is that unless funds are available to provide the service of competent librarians for department libraries, the service there is usually poor, the hours the library is open are short, and the loss of valuable books is large. But if funds are available for adequate service the department library is very useful.

Since in the vast majority of college and university libraries, support is below minimum requirements, it is generally to everyone's advantage to concentrate on one library, containing all the books and giving the best possible service.

Reserve Books

Today many departments, especially those in the social sciences, require students to read extensively in certain library books usually kept in a room or on shelves designated "Reserve Books." Such books are not taken outside the library except over night. Usually several duplicates of each of these books are necessary. Where funds are easily available, sufficient duplicate copies can be provided. Where funds are limited it is much more satisfactory to assess each student in a class using reserve books, \$1 a year and provide ample duplicates. These books are essentially textbooks, and it is entirely reasonable to require the students to pay for them.

Duplicate Copies

The purchase of duplicate copies must be left to the judgment of the librarian. Often a casual survey of a library

discloses many copies of an outdated book, and its purchase seems to have been extravagant. However, this is a matter that must be left in the hands of the librarian.

Special Gifts

Libraries are often tendered gifts of books with the request that they be shelved together. It is an excellent rule to accept no gifts of books under any restrictions. A library can always accept unrestricted gifts of books, using what is valuable and disposing suitably of the remainder. Those used can be marked with a suitable book plate giving due credit to the donor. It is well to remember that the labor of cataloging a book and the cost of shelf space is about \$1 per book. Shelf space is always limited. Furthermore, the use of a book is increased materially by shelving it in its proper place according to its catalogue number. Collections given under shelving restrictions are expensive, awkward to use, and lead to bad library practice.

Microfilms

Most libraries are now provided with equipment for making and reading microfilms, and for suitably preserving them. Their use is steadily increasing. Since they may work a revolution in library policies and practice, trustees should be familiar with the institution's needs in this respect.

Library Exchanges

Interlibrary loans of books are now common place. In this way rare books can be secured for scholars needing them, the library's services increased, and its purchasing obligations lessened. As the volume of these interlibrary loans increase, much saving in the purchase of rare and little used books will result.

Of the making of books, and of technical periodicals, there is no end. No library can possibly collect all material on all

subjects. The smaller college libraries should concentrate on working collections. Rare books and specialized journals should be bought with great care. The large university libraries should agree on certain fields in which they will collect exhaustively and not attempt to duplicate outstanding collections in nearby cities. The fields of research are so many and so important that even the greatest institutions should decide where they wish to build and maintain outstanding strength.

Probable Growth and the Library Building

The problem of providing adequate room for books faces every library. In meeting this problem there are several factors that should be kept in mind. It is highly improbable that any good institution will ever buy fewer books annually than it is buying now. Fields of knowledge are all growing, needs for books are expanding. So if we multiply present annual accessions by 50 or 100, a reasonable estimate is secured of the books that will be added in the next 50 or 100 years. Also it is most desirable so to locate and design the library that the portion containing book stacks can be extended. Nothing, except poor administration, does more to defeat the service of a library than overcrowding the stacks with books. There should always be plenty of room on the shelves of the active collection. If adequate stack room is lacking it can be easily relieved by providing storage shelves in some available fireproof room, or by erecting a cheap building shell for storage stacks. In every library a relatively small fraction of the books is in active use. Many books which are too valuable to be discarded can well be placed in storage outside the library. A daily messenger service to this storeroom can secure all books called for with little delay. Usually such a storeroom is very much cheaper to provide than an addition to the library.

The library building, as it houses the institution's most important equipment, should be designed first to permit the most efficient service. Far too often a selfish donor and an architect ignorant of library needs plan a library which is beautiful as a building and a striking monument to the donor, but is most inefficient and unsatisfactory for library purposes. Certainly every library should conform first to library needs and services; only a competent librarian can determine these matters. The architect should be required to make his plans conform to the librarian's specifications and adapt the architectural design to the requirements of the building. A beautiful building in a central location should house the library, but the efficient distribution of the books to readers is the major requirement.

The library has a strong appeal to many people, and it is one of the causes for which funds can be raised rather easily. Princeton has developed this appeal by designating donors to the library as "Friends of Princeton Library" and this recognition has been appreciated.

It is the responsibility of the trustees to fix a policy for as generous support of the library as possible; to see that it is administered ably and efficiently, and to assure themselves that the library, its books, and services are suitable for the institution's needs.