

COLLEGE & RESEARCH LIBRARIES *news*

NO. 9 • OCTOBER 1979

In this issue:

The Library Selector	265
Collective Bargaining	268
Continuing Education Opportunities	268
SEES Bylaws Revision	269
Inside Washington	271
Continuing Education—XVII	272
News from the Field	274
People	278
Publications	289
Classified Advertising	292



by Robert W. Wadsworth

The Library Selector

Editor's Note: This is the first of a series of articles on the academic library profession and its vocations. This article is abridged and slightly revised from one that appeared in the Winter 1976 issue of the University of Chicago Library Society Bulletin.

The research library cannot acquire, organize, and find space for all recorded knowledge; priorities must be set and a selection must be made. The salvation of the library as an effective instrument for research depends upon the judgment that goes into this selection.

In many research libraries the responsibility for selection is reduced to manageable size by a group of selectors on the library staff. These subject bibliographers, as they are sometimes called, choose and order the publications they expect to be important for the library clientele. In no sense do these bibliographers "replace" faculty selectors; indeed, much of the work of the library selector depends on their understanding of the interests and wishes of faculty members and upon the judgment with which they draw upon their knowledge. Yet, the staff selectors do not wait for the suggestions of faculty or students. Their task is to get into the library the books that people need before they ask for them.

The success of the operation rests upon a delicate balance of forces. Not only the present and

the future but also the past must be taken into account, since the library has a heritage to maintain. Resources available elsewhere are kept in mind. Not every negative decision need be regarded as final: a book given up now may remain available for some time or become available at some later time as a paperback, a reprint edition, or a gift.

Whatever weight is given to any of these considerations, selectors face over and over again the hard question of whether to order (or even to accept free) this or that specific book on the basis of the information they have or can find about it. Because of the number of titles coming to their attention, they must decide quickly; at the same time they must keep in view the probable long-term value of the book to the library, concerning which there may well be difference of opinion. For something unusual they may send a carefully framed question to a member of the faculty. Some publications can be ordered "on approval" for examination; but the bulk of the ordering must be done sight unseen, with the selectors falling back on their education and training, memory, "awareness," sensitivity to any clues present in a title or a publisher's name, and skill in use of the reference aids in the library.

Most such decisions, fortunately, can be rapidly sorted into recurring categories. Perhaps the simplest problem is the book of unrivaled importance in a field intensively studied at the university—for example, an atlas of American speech in a given area of the United States. Here there is no real choice: a copy must be ordered at once. At the opposite extreme is the book that contains little or no new information and can be expected to be superseded by a similar (perhaps better) book within a short time. Other books,

whether good or bad, are essential as documents of their times.

A particularly thorny problem is the new periodical. Can it be considered certain (on the basis of one sample issue) to be worth perhaps twenty-five years of rising subscription costs, to say nothing of binding and shelving? Is it sufficiently interesting, as a literary effort, to call for a subscription now so that the library will be certain of receiving the first faltering issues—perhaps all that will ever appear? Would it be wise to subscribe for a single year only and examine the numbers received before deciding whether or not to renew the subscription?

Daily newspapers are expensive and, to a considerable extent, duplicative. The library can afford only the few that are thought necessary to reflect varying influences and points of view.

A recent complication is the growing flood of paperbacks. No longer can these books be dismissed out of hand as cheap reprints of substantial "library editions." Many paperbacks are sturdy enough to stand up under repeated use and expensive enough to discourage students from buying their own copies. Some important books are available only in paper covers; others appear in parallel paper and cloth editions at prices that make it economical for the library to buy paper editions and have them bound—if they are not in immediate demand.

By necessity a selector is also a "rejector": not only of the books he or she decides not to order but also of books actually received and examined. All books accepted, even those coming free, involve expense for preparation; and for a book that is clearly not desirable this cost can be dispensed with.

A related matter is the book that can be discarded from the library as no longer useful. As worn or damaged books are discovered in the library, the selector must decide (utilizing his or her knowledge of the collection, the literature, and the book trade) whether they should be repaired, replaced, or withdrawn.

A special case is the book supplied "on approval" by a foreign agent, acting under specific authorization by the library. Unless returned (at some expense), the book must be paid for, whether or not it is kept for the library. Hence the selector may be tempted to give the book the benefit of the doubt and add it to the library (at additional expense)—at the same time reflecting unhappily that if the book is never returned with an explanation, the lesson is lost on the agent!

There is, unfortunately, no easy path to success as a book selector. Experience is not merely the "best," it is the only teacher. There is no textbook to study, no bag of tricks to teach or learn; and no one ever graduates. As in all matters of judgment, mistakes are inevitable, and all selectors are sure to regret some of their own decisions. Ideal selectors are the equal—in age, in

formal education, and in language skills—of all those whom they serve; yet real-life library selectors are called upon to spread their efforts over more subjects than any professor would presume to teach. Their subject preparation must be supplemented by a developing knowledge of the collection itself, of the world of publication, and of the records and machinery of the library. Interest, observation, personal contacts, experience, and memory all come into play, together with humility, tact, and common sense.

The selector's work is never finished, and he or she has little to show for it until long after the effort is begun. To keep abreast of the international flow of publication as it bears on the day-to-day needs of a university is not easy; and when limits are imposed on effort and expenditure, the selec-

Instructional Materials for Serials

The RTSD Serials Section Library School Education Committee is operating an exchange center for the collection and distribution of library school instructional materials relating to serials (e.g., course outlines, printed visual aids, reading lists, etc.). The committee invites instructors to submit materials that they are willing to share with other library school teachers. Committee members will keep the materials on file and will mail copies on request to instructors who wish to use them. For names and addresses of committee members to whom documents may be submitted or from whom they may be ordered, contact William I. Bunnell, RTSD, 50 E. Huron St., Chicago, IL 60611.

College & Research Libraries News is published by the Association of College and Research Libraries, a division of the American Library Association, as 11 monthly (combining July-August) issues, at 50 E. Huron St., Chicago, IL 60611. Annual subscription: \$5; or to members of the division, \$2.50, included in dues. Single copies and back issues, \$2 each. Second-class postage applied for at Chicago, Illinois, and at additional mailing offices.

Editor: Jeffrey T. Schwedes, ACRL/ALA, 50 E. Huron St., Chicago, IL 60611. (312) 944-6780, Ext. 286. President, ACRL: LeMoine W. Anderson. Executive Secretary, ACRL: Julie A. Carroll Virgo.

Production and circulation office: 50 E. Huron St., Chicago, IL 60611. Display advertising should be sent to Leona Swiech, Advertising Traffic Coordinator, ALA, at above address. Send classified ads to ACRL. Change of address and subscription orders should be addressed to *College & Research Libraries News*, for receipt at the above address at least two months before the publication date of the effective issue.

Inclusion of an article or advertisement in *C&RL News* does not constitute official endorsement by ACRL or ALA.

A partial list of the services indexing or abstracting the contents of *C&RL News* includes: *Current Contents: Social & Behavioral Sciences*; *Current Index to Journals in Education*; *Information Science Abstracts*; *Library & Information Science Abstracts*; *Library Literature*; and *Social Sciences Citation Index*.

©American Library Association 1979. All material in this journal subject to copyright by the American Library Association may be photocopied for the noncommercial purpose of scientific or educational advancement.

tor's work becomes that much more important and at the same time that much more difficult. Even more demanding than the current ordering is the task of identifying and locating—in dealers' catalogs and elsewhere—the out-of-print books needed to fill the gaps in the collection. The larger and better the library, the greater the difficulty of finding the material needed to improve it.

Yet library selectors are among the happiest, most fortunate members of the academic community. Their personal rewards are rich. They work independently and develop their own methods and standards. They watch history unfold itself in the books and periodicals coming from the press. Little by little, they acquire a mastery of the records of publication and a feel for their own collection—a practical "erudition" all their own—that no power on earth can take away. And they have the joy of placing their accumulated knowledge and acquired skill at the service of their clientele and of seeing—in time—the results of their work on the shelves of the library.

Editor's Note: Robert W. Wadsworth retired in 1978 as bibliographer for English, librarianship, and general humanities, University of Chicago Library. ■■

ACRL 1979-80 BUDGET

At the annual meeting in Dallas the ACRL Board adopted the 1979/80 ACRL budget. Highlights from the budget include:

- An increase in projected income (including the reserve) from \$245,749 the previous year to \$348,730 in 1979-80 (42 percent increase).
- Deferral of action on the *Choice* budget (approximately \$600,000) until the new editor can conduct his own review.
- A significant increase in expenditures for *C&RL News* (up 72 percent to \$64,183), *College and Research Libraries* (up 14 percent to \$69,492), and preconferences (up 135 percent to \$35,288). Each of these activities has a corresponding increase in revenues.
- A reported surplus from the Boston Conference of approximately \$60,000, \$35,000 of which derives from uncompensated staff time and \$10,000 from outside contributions. This income will be applied to ACRL funds over a three-year period and used as front-end money for the Second ACRL National Conference in Minneapolis in 1981.
- The allocation of funds for a paid half-time editor of *C&RL News*.
- The addition of a half-time program officer with responsibility for continuing education and staff development for academic librarians.
- The implementation of the *ACRL 100 Libraries*

Project, which provides a quarterly survey mechanism for determining library practices.

- The budgeting of funds for stepped-up membership recruitment and retention program.
 - The allocation of \$5,000 to chapters of ACRL for activities at the local level. The \$5,000 will help to support the development of chapter newsletters, membership recruitment brochures, meeting announcements, directories, and operating expenses.
 - The provision of \$10,085 in funds for the projects of ACRL sections, including a \$6,000 project to gather library statistics from non-ACRL university libraries. This project will be helpful in determining the feasibility of gathering statistics from other types of libraries.
 - Approval of \$15,014 in funds for the projects of ACRL committees. One such project will be an invitational workshop on the accreditation process, which ACRL will cosponsor with the Council on Postsecondary Accreditation immediately prior to the 1980 Annual Conference.
- The 1979-80 budget demonstrates the commitment of the ACRL Board to programs and projects that will provide direct benefits to members at both the national and the local level. ■■

COPYRIGHT LAW REVIEW

The Copyright Office will soon commission a study to assess the impact of subsection 108 of the copyright law on library users, librarians, and copyright owners. (Subsection 108 governs the reproduction of copyrighted materials by libraries and archives.) The Copyright Office is now considering what information the study will seek.

Meredith Butler, chair of ACRL's Ad Hoc Committee on Copyright, suggests that academic librarians may want to convey to the Copyright Office their views on the sort of data the study should gather. She advises that librarians might want to express interest in the following areas of data collection: (1) a survey of library users to determine whether their information needs are being met under the new law; (2) a survey to assess the impact of the law on library services and archival preservation; (3) a survey of the law's impact on library operations, including personnel costs, increased work load, record keeping, etc.; and (4) a study of the experiences of librarians in seeking permission from publishers to photocopy or to obtain replacements, reprints, etc.

The Register of Copyrights 108 (i) Advisory Committee is a body that advises the Copyright Office on the mandated five-year review of subsection 108. You may transmit your suggestions about the proposed survey to the advisory committee by contacting Eileen Cooke, director of the ALA Washington Office, 110 Maryland Ave. NE, Suite 101, Washington, DC 20002. ■■