

# Acquisition Policy in the American Academic Library

Problems of acquisition policy are in many ways the most important confronting administrators of university libraries. This, unfortunately, does not mean that these problems have never been dodged; many of the difficulties now besetting great research libraries at Harvard and elsewhere result from failures to face such problems squarely.<sup>1</sup>

THIS STUDY is a summary, synthesis, and evaluation of past and present acquisition principles and practices in the American academic library. It focuses attention on what was, what is, and perhaps even what should be. In terms of acquisition philosophy and responsibility, it compares trends of the past with trends of the present, and trends of the present with trends of the future.

The word *acquisition* in this study applies to the acquisition of library materials whether they be by gift, exchange, or purchase. Since funds play a vital role in determining the adequacy of a library book collection, the emphasis is on acquisition by purchase.

*Policy* refers to the guiding principles adopted and followed by American academic libraries in developing their collections. *Acquisition policy* is interpreted in a broad sense and encompasses both written and unwritten, formal and informal statements of policy.

*Academic library* in the historical section of the paper refers primarily to col-

lege libraries; in the discussion of present practices it refers to (1) research libraries listed under Group I in the annual *CRL* statistics; (2) college and university libraries that in 1953-54 had a total book and periodical budget of \$50,000 or more, and (3) state university libraries that do not fall under either (1) or (2).

Information and statements were obtained from three sources: (1) published literature, (2) fifteen replies to a letter of inquiry which Robert Vosper, director of libraries, University of Kansas, sent out in 1953 to various university libraries in preparation for his paper "Acquisition Policy—Fact or Fancy?"<sup>2</sup> (3) replies to a letter of inquiry sent to 108 institutions in October 1955 by Professor LeRoy C. Merritt of the School of Librarianship at the University of California.<sup>3</sup>

To the 108 letters of inquiry a 50 per cent response was received. Of the fifty-five institutions which replied, fourteen have some kind of a written acquisition policy, thirty explained the essence of their unwritten policy in their letter, and eleven failed to comment. The fourteen written acquisition policies, roughly classified, fall into the following three categories: (1) five sketchy policies in outline form with the emphasis on ordering procedures rather than selection principles; (2) three policies which were short summaries of acquisition practices;

<sup>1</sup> Keyes D. Metcalf, "Problems of Acquisition Policy in a University Library," *Harvard Library Bulletin*, IV (1950), 293-303.

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<sup>2</sup> Robert Vosper, "Acquisition Policy—Fact or Fancy?" *CRL*, XIV (1953), 367-70.

<sup>3</sup> At the time information on their acquisition policies was asked for from American academic libraries, permission to quote was not requested. The writer deems it, therefore, inadvisable to identify replies.

(3) six full-fledged policies. The assumption must be made that the majority of the fifty-three libraries which did not reply do not have an acquisition policy, at least not a written one.

#### AGAINST ACQUISITION POLICY

The reasons advanced by librarians against the formulation of an acquisition policy are varied. First, acquisition policies, they feel, are out of date before they are drafted. A library within a university in which the program of study and research is in a state of flux—old programs being dropped, new programs being added—can hardly hope, even with faculty assistance, to draft a code that will meet the needs of students and faculty today and tomorrow. Any long-term program becomes merely an invitation to trouble. Second, acquisition policies are difficult to formulate when it is not clear what the university's curricular and research plans are. The acquisition program is expected to reflect the changing and developing programs of the university. It is rather difficult to spell out one without having first spelled out the other. Third, tradition may militate against the formulation of an acquisition policy. Fourth, delegation of book selection responsibility to the faculty renders the drafting of an acquisition policy impossible. To quote one respondent: "We have over eight hundred different codes, not drafted documents, but codes in the persons of living, changing, working, and loafing faculty members." Fifth, lack of faculty cooperation manifested in library interest on the part of a mere handful. Sixth, satisfaction with the *status quo*. The informal acquisition program has produced a good collection, so why go to the trouble of making a survey which would reveal little that is not already known? Seventh, difficulty of creating a document that would be useful. Eighth, impossibility of the task in view of the extreme com-

plexity of acquisition work and the necessity in many cases to proceed by intuition.

#### IN FAVOR OF ACQUISITION POLICY

"The ideal method of building up a great reservoir of research materials," wrote one librarian, "would be to have on the library staff a large corps of gifted and bibliographically sophisticated scholars representing the utmost competence in each special field of knowledge, working full time and buying with unlimited funds everything of possible research value, to be arranged and cataloged by an unlimited staff of superbly competent catalogers and stored permanently in a limitless building which would provide immediate access to any item in the collection." Since such an ideal situation does not exist, however, some thoughtful librarians have become convinced of the definite need for an acquisition policy to insure the even development of the collections. They fear that without a policy there will be extensive overlapping and a lack of knowledge as to what does and should get on the library shelves. Once the general direction of the acquisition program is determined, they claim, the mere existence of a stated policy will make for a continuity in collecting which will prevent the accumulation of "once strong, but now defunct" collections. If no policy exists, library funds will be spent in aimless and random buying which will result in a lessening of faculty interest in the library and, therefore, weaken rather than strengthen faculty-library understanding.

The librarian must exert control over the growth of the collections, for those faculty members who ask most are not always the most deserving. The filling of their needs may be to the detriment rather than to the welfare of the library.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Elmer M. Grieder, "The Foundations of Acquisitions Policy in the Small University Library," *CRL*, X (1949), 208-14.

Unless a library has a well-formulated buying policy, its development is likely to proceed along lines determined by the demands which are made upon it from day to day.<sup>5</sup> Fields to be covered will cease being clear-cut. Since no library can be all things to all people, the danger of overspreading seems evident. The ever-growing interdependence of libraries requires them to define the concentrated fields in which each hopes to attain distinction. An acquisition policy, at least a broad acquisition policy, is, therefore, becoming more and more a necessity.

#### HISTORICAL VIEW

During the first half of the nineteenth century librarians were more concerned with protecting their treasures from the eyes of inquisitive readers than with the present or future status of their book collections.<sup>6</sup> In 1850 according to Carlton 126 college libraries in thirty-two states possessed a total of 586,912 volumes. Columbia, the largest college library in New York state possessed 12,740.<sup>7</sup> Library resources during that period were so inadequate that they were more likely to duplicate than to supplement the scholar's own. The general collection of the college library was essentially a projection on a larger scale of the kind of library an educated man was expected to possess for himself.<sup>8</sup>

The second half of the nineteenth century was marked by an improvement in library conditions. New educational ideals, new methods of instruction, the introduction of the Ph.D., and the rise of the American university revolutionized the matter of providing resources

for research. The development of the library became a necessary corollary of the responsibility which the university had assumed. Books came to be regarded as tools rather than as treasures. The library was to play a vital role in the furtherance of research. Libraries felt it to be their duty both to identify themselves with the new movement and to acquire everything. "As long as the literature of Law, Medicine, and Theology were the only literatures appertaining to what men think and do for a living," affirms Winsor in 1879, "libraries were necessarily the monopoly, outside of literature itself as a study, of the Lawyer, the Physician and the Theologian. Once the warden of a castle who parlayed distantly with those that knocked, now, the expounder, the prophet, the missionary—or he should be—whose gates cannot be too widely opened, whose sympathy cannot be too broad. Nothing that is printed," he continues, "no matter how trivial at the time, but may be some day in demand, and, viewed in some relations, helpful to significant results. Therefore, if his storehouse and treasury admit of the keeping and caring for, the librarian feels the necessity of preserving all he can."<sup>9</sup> Even as late as 1916, President Butler of Columbia writes that: "The aim of the primary collection in the general library is completeness. While this can never be attained either theoretically or practically, yet the usefulness of the primary collection depends upon its being substantially complete and thoroughly representative of the main intellectual interests of mankind."<sup>10</sup>

Alfred C. Potter in 1897 gave a more specific account of acquisition policies at Harvard at the close of the nineteenth century. While for the student he thought it wise to provide only the best,

<sup>5</sup> Nathan Van Patten, "Buying Policies of College and University Libraries," *CRL*, I (1939), 64-70.

<sup>6</sup> Kenneth J. Brough, *Scholar's Workshop* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1953. Illinois Contributions to Librarianship, no. 5).

<sup>7</sup> W. N. Carlton, "College Libraries in the Mid-Nineteenth Century," *Library Journal*, XXXII (1907), 479-86.

<sup>8</sup> Arthur E. Bestor, "Transformation of American Scholarship, 1875-1917," *Library Quarterly*, XXIII (1953), 164-79.

<sup>9</sup> Justin Winsor, "College and Other Higher Libraries," *Library Journal*, IV (1879), 399-402.

<sup>10</sup> Columbia University. *Annual Report of the President*, 1916.



for the professor everything was necessary—good, bad, and indifferent. Since the books bought for the students related to the courses that they were studying, and those bought for the professors to the courses that they were teaching, Potter considered it only natural that librarians should turn to the faculty for aid in the selection of books. The college had a body of trained specialists who knew better than the librarian ever could what gaps existed in the collection and what was most needed to fill them.<sup>11</sup>

By 1930 some librarians recognized that the responsibility for the selection of suitable books for the library was not the concern of the instructors alone. It was apparent, however, that in many land-grant institutions neither the librarian nor library assistants engaged as active agents in the selection of a majority of the books which went into the library. In thirty-three institutions librarians indicated that their only function in book selection was to avoid purchase of duplicates. In ten institutions library books were ordered by departments without any supervision whatsoever by librarians. Some librarians evidently even considered supervision by the librarian over selection of books as dangerous because it might lead to a vacancy in the position of librarian.<sup>12</sup>

What is the situation today? Do librarians still believe in amassing tremendous quantities of materials in the combined fields of knowledge? Do they still believe that book selection is not their responsibility but the faculty's?

Two components make up acquisition policy in American academic libraries today: (1) the determinants of selection, and (2) the selectors. To put it different-

ly; what factors form the basis for the selection of library materials? And, who are the persons primarily responsible for the selection of library materials, the faculty, the librarians, or both?

*Determinants of Selection.* Book selection in the American academic library of today is determined by the following factors:

1. Information resulting from an evaluation of the collections among the institutions that submitted statements of policy only one reported having an acquisition policy based on an evaluation of the library collection. Unfinished as the document was, it indicated in great detail by means of priority ratings the various levels of depth of those parts of the collection which had been surveyed.

Another library listed some of the fields in which it was strong but gave no indication of whether or not an evaluation had ever been made of its collection.

A southern university reported a huge inventory of library needs made by a committee of faculty and librarians. The inventory resulted in an estimated \$800,000 want list. A "wonderful budget argument."

2. Users of the library and their needs.  
a. The immediate and current teaching and research needs of faculty and students.

Librarians were practically unanimous in viewing the university library as a service agency whose primary function is to support the educational and research programs of the university. "In view of the fact that we do not have money to buy everything that might conceivably be purchased," one library affirmed, "we feel that it is important to define clearly the research objectives of the various departments and to make the library acquisition program dovetail closely with them." Some libraries in their written policies proceed from there to identify those areas in some degree of detail. Fields in which work at the doctoral level is offered are treated as "primary fields of specialization and interest"; those in which work at the master's level is offered are treated as "special fields of interest." The former category

<sup>11</sup> Alfred C. Potter, "Selection of Books for College Libraries," *Library Journal*, XXXII (1897), 39-44.

<sup>12</sup> U.S. Office of Education, *Survey of Land-Grant Colleges and Universities*. Its *Bulletin*, no. 9, v. 1, part 8. (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1930.)

entails comprehensiveness and the latter emphasis on basic research materials. Statements on library policy concerning reference works, documents, maps, manuscripts, music, newspapers, periodicals, rare books, and college archives are generally also included in some of these policies.

One library viewed its acquisition program in terms of three objectives. First was its project to bring holdings up to the "college level" by which it meant a reasonably strong library in all fields, the kind of library that one would expect to find in a good, strong college rather than in a great university. Second, came the project of building a research library, by which it meant the backing of those departments in which the most research was done and where graduate enrollment was heaviest. Third, was the ideal of preeminence, by which it meant the duty of the university "to obtain the finest and most complete library in the United States" in a very small number of fields.

The majority of reporting institutions stop at this point in their interpretation of the library's function. "We buy very few books in those departments or fields where we offer no instruction," summarizes the general attitude.

b. The long-range teaching and research needs of faculty and students.

The library, they believe, must serve its users in something of the capacity of an archive of civilization. It must accumulate and preserve the evidences of the culture about it and acquire and preserve evidences of past culture. For the people of the future the library must attempt to build a full and round picture of the world as it is reflected in books at any one time. The soundness of librarians' judgment in the matter of selection will determine in part the library's success or failure in meeting the unpredictable needs of the scholar of future generations.

c. The cultural needs of the users.

In the interest of stimulating the students' desire to read and the reading habit the library should acquire publications designed specifically for recreational reading and the aesthetic needs of its users.

3. The strengths in the collection.

Four libraries expressed their belief that the strengths in the collection ought to be maintained. A library has the obligation to continue to purchase and maintain its strength in those fields in which it already has strong collections. No libraries expressed the opinion that the development of new fields should prevent the addition to those in which they already had depth.

4. Obligation to the region or state.

The library also has a local regional responsibility, that of assisting in preserving the written record of its immediate area. Such collecting should be based on sound planning and division of work with other institutions, but with the academic library lies a particular responsibility. The story of the institution's own history especially must be preserved, including full faculty archives and collections of alumni publications.

5. Quantity of print and near-print materials.

Librarians no longer believe like Winsor that they should preserve all they can. They fully realize that the growing volume of print has made it impossible for them to collect everything. They can be strong only by being weak. The piling up of materials is progressing along a rising parabolic curve. Under such conditions the attempt to be strong everywhere will only result in being mediocre everywhere. It seems better to subordinate certain fields in order to have the library a first-class research instrument in some fields.

6. Regional resources.

Only four of the fifty-five reporting libraries stated that they were influenced in their acquisition program by holdings of neighboring libraries. Some of the statements seem to indicate, however, that although cooperative measures of acquisition are not prevalent among American academic libraries, they are likely to increase in the future.

7. Personal convictions of librarians.

Library collections are bound to be in part the products of librarians' personal convictions:

"Since research is reported first in journals, the library should have at least the last ten years of the important journals in every field of the curriculum."

"The scholarly output of the major university presses should be acquired almost in toto."

"I have always believed it to be of paramount importance to approach the problem realistically and not clutter shelves with a considerable body of free materials on the assumption that perhaps some day it may be wanted by someone."

#### 8. Book fund allocation system.

The book fund allocation system, it will be seen later, places primary responsibility for the development of the library collection on the faculty. It is, therefore, a major factor in determining the ultimate shape and strength of the collection.

#### 9. Financial resources of the library.

It seems self-evident that the financial resources of the library would impose limits on the ultimate shape and strength of the collection.

*Selectors.* If libraries are classified according to their role in the selection of library materials, they seem to fall into three categories: (1) self-effacing libraries, (2) libraries in which materials are selected by the faculty with the aid and advice of the library, and (3) libraries in which materials are selected by the library with the aid and advice of the faculty.

#### 1. Self-effacing libraries.

These libraries are characterized by over-reliance on the faculty and a twentieth-century version of a nineteenth-century outlook on book selection. Libraries in this group disclaim almost all responsibility for the development of the collection. If there are titles which they think ought to be in the library, they recommend them to the faculty who in turn recommend them to the library. These libraries admit that the faculty neglects certain areas and is responsible for the addition of insignificant items, but the responsibility for the collection not being the library's, they abstain from taking

appropriate countermeasures. With the administration of the research fund under the control of the library committee, libraries in this group generally also lack the authority to pass upon expensive items. Among these libraries there are cases where the library's jurisdiction is limited to a mere ten to twenty per cent of the entire book budget. Libraries in this category number less than half a dozen.

#### 2. Libraries in which materials are selected by the faculty with the aid and advice of the library.

The selection pattern in this category is familiar. Book selection for the university departments is left almost entirely in the hands of the faculty. In some institutions a departmental library representative is designated periodically as the one person authorized to approve purchases from the fund allotted to a given department. The librarian and the library staff supplement and round out faculty buying in the various fields, and select those works which are not specifically needed for the work of particular departments. They also call faculty members' attention to important publications in their fields. Materials generally selected by librarians in this class include bibliographies, reference books, titles listed in the popular reviewing media, titles listed in professional and subject journals, and new periodical titles. Periodical subscriptions in some instances, however, need the formal or informal approval of either a committee of librarians, or a committee of faculty members.

#### 3. Libraries in which materials are selected by the library with the aid and advice of the faculty.

These libraries, numbering six, represent in the writer's opinion the *avant-garde* of librarianship in the matter of library responsibility in book selection. They come closest to the Metcalf-Osborn ideal of selection by library subject specialists.<sup>13</sup> At Columbia, for instance, according to the annual report of the director of libraries, supervising librarians

<sup>13</sup> Metcalf, *op. cit.*, p. 293-303; Andrew D. Osborn, "The Development of Library Resources at Harvard: Problems and Potentialities," *Harvard Library Bulletin*, IX (1955), 197-213.



and department heads do the day-to-day selecting of publications for the collections under their immediate control. Although faculty members make recommendations as to items to be purchased, the library relies upon its staff members to watch listings and reviews of new publications and to check bibliographies for the purpose of finding significant publications which should be acquired.<sup>14</sup>

A major midwestern library, evidently recognizing the library's present and future obligation to itself and the university, in addition to the traditional order department, has a book selection department:

"The work of book selection here is performed by our Book Selection Department, by some of our divisional librarians, and by some of the library committees of the colleges and of the departments of the Literary College. In the fields of the humanities and social sciences, the book selection department of the library does the basic work of selecting both current and retrospective publications, referring national bibliographies, catalogs, etc., to the various divisional libraries and departments after the Book Selection Department had done the basic job.

"In the natural and applied sciences, our book selection department does not undertake the selection work at all but defers to the divisional library when the divisional librarian has been authorized to do the selection work for the college or department. In the few cases where the college or department wishes to retain the authority to select the books in its fields, the Library Committee of that college or department does the basic selection work. Responsibility, however, for the development of the collections in all fields remains with the director of the University Library and at any time, if we feel that a library committee is not doing an adequate job, we are free to buy additional materials for that collection out of the library's general book funds."

Another library in the same category reports: "A close cooperation with the graduate faculty has permitted a reciproc-

cal arrangement whereby graduate study plans are tailored to fit the library's strongest fields, and in turn the library has attempted to build its strongest areas within fields of interest of the graduate faculty."

This last quotation may be taken to illustrate two points: First, a "class three" library, being more independent, may actually be in a more advantageous position to meet the faculty than either a "class one" or a "class two" library. Second, greater independence for a library, or to phrase it differently, less library dependence on the faculty does not preclude library-faculty cooperation. In the matter of library-faculty cooperation, it should be realized, of course, that the personality and competence of the librarian will always remain a major factor.

#### ACQUISITION POLICY—YES OR NO?

This heading may very well be regarded as inappropriate and unrealistic. All libraries as a matter of fact have some kind of an acquisition policy. By the very process of being selective in the materials that they add to their collections, libraries are following a policy. The policy may be illogical, inconsistent, and self-contradictory at times, yet it is a policy. The question may be asked: Since all libraries have a policy, why do not more of them endeavor to have a good policy? All libraries aspire to have a good collection. Would not a good collection be more likely to result from a good policy than from a bad policy?

The arguments against an acquisition policy, it has been seen, are manifold and not without surface validity. Librarians by and large do not seem to be opposed to a written acquisition policy as such. They recognize the desirability but question the feasibility of producing a workable policy. Written acquisition policies, they feel, are out of date before they are drafted. It is the writer's view that if an acquisition policy is properly written, the emphasis will be on flexibility. The policy, therefore, should not

<sup>14</sup> Columbia University Libraries. *Report of the Director of Libraries, 1949/50-1952/53.*

be dated before it is drafted. In its essence the policy should come close to being a permanent document, or at least a document which should not be difficult to keep up to date. Academic institutions generally do not reverse themselves very often in their aims and objectives. An occasional change in the curriculum should no more necessitate the rewriting of the policy than the insertion of a new sheet into Moody's requires the disposal of the whole volume.

The claim that acquisition policies are difficult to formulate when it is not clear what the university's curricular and research intentions are may be true but does not reflect the entire picture. "Curricular and research intentions" denote the future. Since changes are ordinarily gradual and slow, it would appear that contemplated curricular changes form but a minute fraction of a university's program and would, therefore, be unlikely to stand in the way of an acquisition policy.

Tradition can hardly be regarded as a valid argument against an acquisition policy. Although the future is built on the past, the past cannot be permitted to regulate the future.

"Delegation of book selection responsibility to the faculty renders the drafting of an acquisition policy impossible." It would appear that "difficult" is a more appropriate word than "impossible" and that a librarian with skill, tact and a degree of ingenuity should be able to obtain the faculty's support. The writer would also like to point out that a librarian, as has been shown, does not need to be "stuck" with a system that delegates book selection responsibility in toto to the faculty.

While it would certainly be desirable for the faculty to cooperate in the drafting of an acquisition policy, the library staff, the writer believes, can do the job alone if necessary. The faculty may perhaps be reluctant to take the lead in the

writing of a policy, but if the library assumes prime responsibility for the document their reluctance may change to cooperation.

"Satisfaction with the *status quo*" does not necessarily imply dissatisfaction with a change in the *status quo*. As an argument against a written acquisition policy, it has validity only if it is based upon an appraisal of the library collection. If it is not, then "satisfaction" may merely be blindness to reality. Should a library go to the pains of making an evaluation of its collection, it might as well go one step further and formulate a policy as insurance against possible future deterioration of the collection.

The claim that it is impossible to produce an acquisition policy can be easily disproved by existing acquisition policies. It should be noted that some of these policies have been written by libraries in the one million volume class.

The greatest difficulty in the formulation of an acquisition policy seems to be the drafting of a policy that is useful and workable. It must be recognized that the difficulty is great, yet libraries do exist that have been able to surmount it. The writer hopes that this paper will contribute, at least to a small degree, toward rendering the task somewhat less unmanageable.

#### COMPONENTS

It must be clear that there is no one acquisition policy applicable in its entirety to two libraries. It must be equally clear that there is no acquisition policy that can give a clear-cut answer to all questions of acquisition. Acquisition policies will facilitate the making of judgments and decisions; the judgments and decisions, however, will still have to be made by the librarian.

Most written acquisition policies contain some of the elements listed previously. None contains all of them. To be effective and meaningful an acquisition policy should be based on an evaluation



of the library collection, and an identification of the library's clientele. Unless a library makes an evaluation of its collection (the University of Chicago made one in 1930<sup>15</sup>) it will never know for certain what its strong and weak points are. Without that knowledge acquisition becomes a haphazard process, at least as far as filling gaps and building to strength are concerned. Without that knowledge acquisition also becomes wasteful, for a library may be unnecessarily strengthening its weak points instead of improving its strong points.

The statement that a library must serve its constituents has been turned into a truism if not a platitude. The statement, if it is not to be pious, should be carefully analyzed by the librarian. Who exactly are the users of the library? Which are the important fields of research on the campus? In which subjects is work at the Ph.D. level offered, and at the M.A., and M.S. levels? Do the library's strong fields coincide with those in which the doctorate is given? Does the library have an obligation to people other than the faculty and students? Can the library afford to cater to the cultural needs of its users? Can the library afford to build for the needs of the scholar of the future, and to what extent?

The next logical question for the librarian to ask and answer seems to be: What specific classes of materials should the library endeavor to acquire in order to support the needs of its clientele? Should the library collect manuscripts and archives? If so, what are the limitations? The works of which composers should the library attempt to acquire? What will be its policy toward phonograph records? How wide a map coverage should the library have? How wide a newspaper coverage? Should the library make available newspapers from all the cities in the state? The major

<sup>15</sup> M. Llewellyn Raney, *University Libraries* (University of Chicago Survey, v. 7) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1933).

cities in the United States? Which foreign newspapers? Which newspapers should be preserved, and for how long? What should be the policy toward rare books, documents, microfilms, microcards, and periodical sets?

Knowledge of the collection and knowledge of the clientele are, therefore, the *sine qua non* elements of the good acquisition policy. The two must be necessarily interdependent and compatible with each other. A collection that proves weak in the clientele's fields of interest and research must inevitably be strengthened. While a library may be weak in fields in which it should be strong, it may also be strong in fields in which its strengths do not meet any of the clientele's needs. This leads to a third point that it would be desirable to incorporate into the acquisition policy. Which are the library's untapped strong collections? What shall be the library's policy toward them? Shall they be strengthened or preserved unchanged?

Other features of varying importance that have a rightful place in an acquisition policy are statements on the library's interpretation of its collecting obligations toward materials of ephemeral interest such as current affairs pamphlets, and its collecting obligations with regard to materials pertaining to the region and state. In the formulation of a policy a library will, of course, be influenced by the existence of library resources in the immediate vicinity. If possible, these resources should be clearly identified. Once a policy has been drafted, if it is to serve its purpose, it must be implemented. Whose primary responsibility is the implementation of the acquisition policy?

#### IMPLEMENTATION

It seems obvious that if an acquisition policy is to serve its purpose it must be implemented. It seems equally obvious that before an acquisition policy can be

implemented it must be understood and supported by both the library and the faculty. The primary responsibility, however, must be on one or the other.

It is the writer's conviction that the librarian ought to assume responsibility for the development of the library collection. If a librarian fails to act the part of a librarian, what is he? He is a custodian of books, a glorified research assistant, a business manager at the most. It is difficult to understand how librarians on the one hand aspire to be accepted as the professional equals of lawyers, doctors, professors, etc., while on the other hand they hold themselves in bondage by not accepting the responsibility that is truly theirs. Librarians ought to consult with the faculty; librarians ought to take advantage of the specialized advice that is available to them, but librarians ought not to depend on the faculty to do three jobs, teach, do research, and develop the library collection. It is unfair to the faculty, and it is unfair to the library. Both stand to suffer. Several librarians in the study commented upon the fact that the faculty could not be depended upon to do a systematic and consistent job of book selection. Orr and Carlson in their *Survey of the Library of Texas A. and M. College* report that "A number of faculty members interviewed by the surveyors were frank to admit that they had not been as active as they should have been in developing the library and that they had not always, even at existing budgetary levels, used all the money available to them."<sup>16</sup>

If the premise that librarians should be actively responsible for the development of the book collection is accepted, then it would follow that they should also control the book budget. Apportionment—notwithstanding the general

library fund or the special research fund generally under the direct supervision of the librarian—means probable faculty control of selection policy. Non-apportionment means library control of selection policy. The position of the librarian who advocates both library responsibility for the development of the book collection and apportionment does not seem tenable. The librarian who favors faculty responsibility for the development of the book collection with the aid and advice of the librarian must by implication favor apportionment. The librarian who favors library responsibility for the development of the book collection with the aid and advice of the faculty must by implication favor non-apportionment.

If so few academic libraries have a written acquisition policy, perhaps part of the explanation lies in the characteristics of the apportionment plan. The very fact that so many different departments with different interests are involved in the apportionment plan undoubtedly makes it more difficult, if not more cumbersome, for the librarian to arrive at an intelligent and useful policy, satisfactory to both the faculty and the library. It may be argued that in many instances the librarian exerts direct control over as much as 50 per cent of the total book funds, and that, therefore, he is placed in a good position to formulate a long-range acquisition policy. There appears to be little doubt that a case can be made for this argument. It also can be said, however, that since the librarian already controls the money with which he buys periodicals, back volume sets, reference tools, and bibliographies, all of which are vital to the library, there is no good reason why he should not also control the second 50 per cent, especially since much of this goes into the purchase of current titles which could just as well be paid out of the general library fund as out of the

<sup>16</sup> Robert W. Orr and William H. Carlson, *A Survey of the Library of Texas A. and M. College, October, 1949 to February, 1950*. (College Station: Texas A. and M. College, 1950.)

evidently superfluous departmental apportionments. Why should the librarian have to work with one hand tied behind his back when the use of both hands would give him the greater flexibility which Vosper regards as a primary requisite of any book budget system?<sup>17</sup>

#### CONCLUSION

In every age remnants of the past and forerunners of the future blend with the present. The acquisition policy in the American academic library of today confirms this dictum. During the last part of the nineteenth century when the birth of modern scholarship caused libraries to emerge from their static condition and develop in all directions, the collections under faculty impetus grew without the benefit of either the continuity or the control that the librarian could have insured. Today likewise, as has been noted, there are still academic libraries growing under faculty impetus without the benefit of either continuity or control. In the majority of academic libraries, fortunately, the librarian through cultivation of faculty relations, a small degree of library initiative, and an increasing awareness of the need for planning, does exert a beneficial influence on the growth and the development of the collections. A small minority of libraries has gone one step farther. Without minimizing the importance of the contribution that the faculty can make in building up the library, they have come to the realization that library collections are more the

librarian's responsibility than that of the faculty. They have also come to understand that acquisition policies can be more easily defined under library leadership than under faculty guidance.

Very little has been said in this paper on the subject of cooperation. Yet the logical outgrowth of an acquisition policy is library cooperation. Until libraries know in which fields they are strong and in which fields they are weak, it will be difficult for them to form regional agreements that will supplement rather than duplicate regional library resources. An acquisition policy for the same reason might also come to form one of the bases for institutional curricular agreements. Carried to the ultimate, the acquisition policy might even develop to be the eventual foundation for library resource planning on a national level.

Cooperation needs to take two forms. One is the common agreement to share certain highly expensive facilities and personnel. It may even be desirable to transfer students from one institution to another, from one state to another, for highly specialized study. The other is to agree that when one or two institutions are especially strong in certain highly specialized fields of study, another institution will strive for strength in some other field. Institutional self-restraint and confidence in the validity and significance of its own program, can prevent an overexpansion of costly graduate and professional facilities. Competition among institutions should promote diversity, not a sterile uniformity.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Robert Vosper, "Allocation of the Book Budget: Experience at U.C.L.A." *CRL*, X (1949), 215-18.

<sup>18</sup> Commission on Financing Higher Education. *Nature and Needs of Higher Education*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952.)