

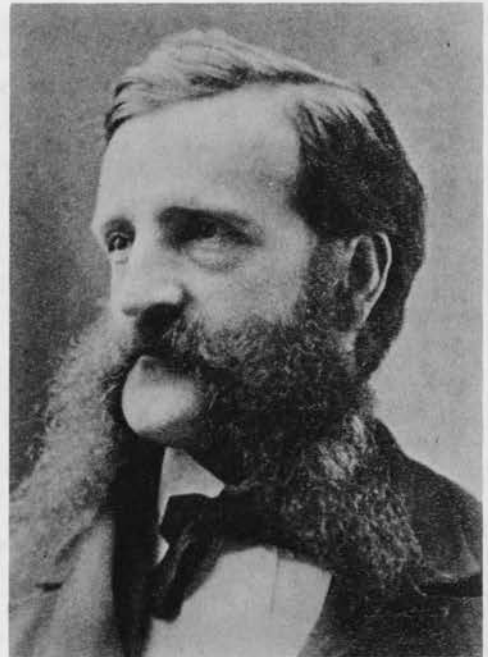
KEYES D. METCALF

Six Influential Academic and Research Librarians

IT HAS BEEN DIFFICULT to select a half dozen persons as subjects for this article, because I have known or known about so many important librarians during my library career, which began in 1902. I find on checking that I have met seventy-nine of the ninety presidents of the ALA in the past 100 years and had indirect connection with three of the other eleven. I shall simplify the arrangement of my story by dealing with the individuals concerned in order of their birth dates. I never met two of the men included here; they died before my library career commenced, though after I was born. With each of the four others I had professional dealings and friendly associations for an average of over forty years.

WILLIAM FREDERICK POOLE

William Frederick Poole was the second president of the American Library Association. His term began in 1885, and he was reelected the following year, making him one of the four men who have held that office for more than a one-year term. The others were his predecessor, Justin Winsor, Melvil Dewey, and Herbert Putnam. It had been hoped that the 1853 Library Conference, at which Mr. Poole had an important part, would be the first of a series of annual occurrences. But, because of a series of mishaps, the next meeting did not come until the 1876 conference. Poole had



William Frederick Poole

the distinction of being the only librarian who had an important part in both of these meetings. He was born in December 1821, one month before my father's birth. Lack of funds delayed his graduation from Yale until 1849. While going to college, he served as librarian of the Brothers in Unity Society Library, and by the time he graduated he had already published *Poole's Index*, a deservedly famous reference work which, in its later editions, is still in use.

After Poole's death, in 1894, his index was continued for some seventeen years, in one form or another, edited by William I. Fletcher, one of Dewey's successors at Amherst, on a partially cooperative basis. It was then found that it could no longer compete with H. W. Wilson's *Readers' Guide*. My library sister, Antoinette Metcalf, prepared the index for the *Harper's Monthly* during the last of these years.

Soon after I took charge of the stacks in the New York Public Library in 1913, I was asked by Harry Miller Lydenberg to go down to the New York Mercantile Library and arrange to bring back with me that library's gift of a large quantity of volumes. The library had stored them, because of lack of space, on the tops of bookcases in great piles three feet high. Over them I found about an inch of dust so I bought a pair of overalls before I brought them down from their perches. Among them were many, comparatively scarce, bound volumes indexed in *Poole*, that the New York Public Library did not have. Most of these were published before the Astor Library was founded in the middle of the last century. In checking, I found that the New York Public Library had lacked, surprisingly, well over 1,100 volumes that were indexed in *Poole*, and several hundred of these were among the Mercantile Library's discards.

I immediately decided to take on as a special project an attempt to complete the library's collection of *Poole* sets and began to check the current second-hand book catalogs and continued this as what might be called my first "research project," until I left the library in 1937. By this time the missing volumes had been reduced to well under fifty. In the meantime a second large windfall had come with volumes transferred to the New York Public Library from the New York Society Library, which was founded in the 1750s and was the third oldest surviving proprietary library in the

country. Again we found hundreds of volumes indexed in *Poole* not yet in the New York Public Library.

My other special interest in Mr. Poole comes from the fact that he was the first, and, to all intents and purposes, the only librarian in his day who pursued a special interest in library building planning and had an important influence in that field. He might well be regarded as our first library building planning consultant. During the last forty-five years I have been one of his numerous successors, a group which includes James Thayer Gerould, Joseph Wheeler, Ralph Ellsworth, Ellsworth Mason, Hoyt Galvin, Ralph Ulveling, and Charles Mohrhardt.

Mr. Poole was librarian of the Boston Athenaeum from 1856 to 1869, and my wife, Elinor Gregory Metcalf, was his fourth successor in this position. In spite of never having met Mr. Poole, I have a feeling that I knew him. Mr. Poole's life has been written by William L. Williamson, in his *William Frederick Poole and the Modern Library Movement*.¹

JUSTIN WINSOR

Justin Winsor was born in 1831 and became a librarian by an unusual route. In 1866 he was appointed a trustee of the Boston Public Library, and he became the librarian, or superintendent as he was called, only two years later as a result of a report on the library which he had written. This report pleased the other trustees so much that they offered him the position, succeeding Charles Coffin Jewett. (Jewett had been the first librarian of the Smithsonian Institution and the first advocate of cooperative cataloging who did anything about it; it was he who was more responsible than anyone else for the 1853 Library Conference.)

Nine years later, in the autumn of 1877, after several disagreements, to put it mildly, with the city authorities and his trustees, Mr. Winsor moved to Har-

vard. He had turned down that assignment earlier after tentatively accepting it. When the city authorities made trouble for him again, he reversed himself once more and became the librarian of Harvard College. I have been told that Mr. Winsor reported his final acceptance at Harvard only a few hours before Melvil Dewey (Melvil Dui if you prefer it that way, as he sometimes did) arrived in Cambridge at President Eliot's request, prepared to accept the position that Winsor had just taken. Winsor was the first president of the American Library Association. He served in that position for nine consecutive terms and was elected again in 1897, so that he could represent the American Library Association at the Second International Library Conference in London later that year, shortly before his death.

I have chosen Winsor to write about for several personal reasons. First, Mr. Winsor was my fourth predecessor at Harvard College, just as Poole was Elinor's fourth predecessor at the Boston Athenaeum.

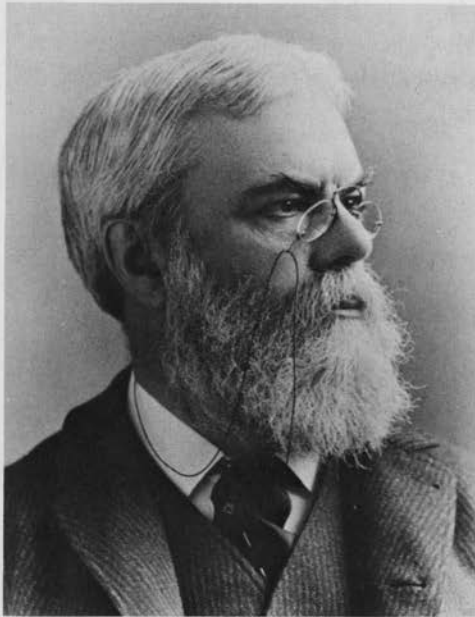
Second, his only daughter was a very close friend of my wife's mother, and his granddaughter is a good friend of the Harvard and Radcliffe libraries as well as of my own family.

Third, I sat during my eighteen years at Harvard at the very unusual desk that Mr. Winsor purchased for his own use in 1877 when he first came to Harvard. It was so large that it had ample knee-holes on all four sides, to say nothing of four sliding shelves over its four sets of drawers. On the under side of one of the sliding shelves I found a notation in Mr. Winsor's handwriting reading, "Purchased in November, 1877,



The Office of Justin Winsor

Harvard University Archives



Harvard University Archives

Justin Winsor

Justin Winsor." The desk is still in use by one of my successors, Louis Martin. Mr. Winsor had a superstructure built over the desk to hold maps, in which he was greatly interested, but this had disappeared before my time.

Fourth, the Harvard Library's financial officer when I came to Harvard in 1937, Mr. Gookin by name, had worked for Mr. Winsor as a young man, typing letters for him on the first typewriter that the library owned; it was purchased especially for Mr. Gookin, who was always glad to talk to me about Mr. Winsor.

Fifth, I kept near my desk Mr. Winsor's handwritten order book of instructions to the staff. It said among many other things that staff members must be sure not to use the library telephone (note: not telephones) for personal calls, and other strict rules which were pertinent in the nineteenth century, but many of which seem completely outdated or perhaps absurd today.

Mr. Winsor was a historian of note

and perhaps the leading cartographer of his time. His writings on Boston and on American history are still important and useful. In one way he might be called very much up to date because he taught a course in the field of geography but refused to give marks to the students at the end of the term. Finally, as a result of this, President Eliot told him that he could no longer teach the course. A biography of Mr. Winsor by Joseph Alfred Borome goes into his career in detail.²

HERBERT PUTNAM

Herbert Putnam, who is remembered primarily as the Librarian of Congress for the forty years from 1899 to 1939,



Library of Congress

Herbert Putnam

was born in 1861. He was a Harvard graduate, a member of the Putnam publishing family, and trained as a lawyer. But before admission to the bar, he became the librarian of the Minneapolis Athenaeum and later of the Public Library in the same city. He then practiced law briefly in Boston, before becoming the librarian of the Boston Public Library, which was in somewhat of a crisis in 1895 while its great McKim, Mead and White library building was under construction. Not long after this, when the appointment of a new Librarian of Congress was under consideration, Herbert Putnam was a representative of the American Library Association at the congressional hearing. He made such an impressive presentation that three years later, when the position was again open due to the death of John Russell Young (who was a journalist, not a librarian), President McKinley appointed Putnam to the post. He finally retired in 1939, after forty years of service but continued for many more years to go into an office assigned to him in the library. He lived until he was ninety-four in 1955.

I first met Mr. Putnam in the fall of 1911 when Mary Wright Plummer, the principal of the Library School of the New York Public Library, arranged to have him speak to the school's first class, of which I was a member. During the Christmas holidays in 1913, I visited the Library of Congress for the first time in order to fulfill one of the requirements for the diploma of the library school. I was a shy young man, and I was alone, not having come with the others in the class, which was made up largely of girls. I did not dare to ask to see Mr. Putnam, but while looking around the reading room, I saw him proceeding briskly past the round circulation desk, walking very straight as he always did and, I am sure, trying to conceal the embarrassing fact that one of his garters was dragging along behind

him, still attached to a sock that had fallen down to his shoe-top.

Although I saw him at American Library Association meetings several times after 1913, it was not until seventeen years later, in 1930, that I had my first opportunity to talk with him. In connection with my work as chairman of the American Library Association cooperative cataloging committee for a half a dozen years, beginning in 1930, I spent approximately one day a month at the Library of Congress with Winifred Gregory, who was in charge of the committee's work. On arriving at the Library of Congress on the night train from New York, I was generally waiting at the door to enter the library when it was opened. I always went directly to Mr. Putnam's office to make a courtesy call as I did not think it proper to be talking with members of his staff on library problems without his knowledge. He was always at his desk. He customarily arrived in his office between 7:00 and 7:30 a.m., long before opening time. He always greeted me cordially. Sometimes he asked me to lunch with him at noon in the library cafeteria which was then in the library tower. He often invited me to go around the library with him on one of his regular daily tours through it, and as we walked he would talk with me about the problems he faced in the library.

Cooperative cataloging work started to go very well, increasing the number of Library of Congress printed cards considerably. In due course it was found that the library's catalogers were unwilling to accept the copy for the cards that came in from the cooperating libraries. They held them up and revised them, thus delaying their publication as well as adding to the cost of the whole procedure. Mr. Hastings, Miss Gregory, and I were all concerned. Finally I spoke strongly to Mr. Putnam. In his younger days he had been a very able administrator and judge of the

ability of librarians and had built up a superb staff between 1900 and 1920. But by 1930 he had lost contact with the younger members of the profession. The quality of the staff had deteriorated as a result of his shyness and aloofness—as well as from poor salaries and poor selection. Mr. Putnam said he would do something about the head of the catalog department so as to improve the situation we had talked about. The next morning he made what proved to be a poor appointment. The individual was a very capable man who had good ideas, but he was completely unable to put them into effect with a group of “perfectionist” catalogers. (I have always felt somewhat responsible for that appointment.) As a result, the situation did not improve, and the American Library Association committee agreed that there was nothing to do but wait for Mr. Putnam’s retirement, keeping the project alive even if it were less successful than had been hoped.

I hesitated to write the foregoing paragraph because Dr. Putnam, like the two men of whom I have written earlier in this article, and the three who follow, were among our greatest librarians. Indeed, these six men did more, perhaps, than any others to bring American libraries to the stage they had reached by 1940 (Melvil Dewey and John Shaw Billings might be added to the list). I met Melvil Dewey on three occasions but never felt acquainted with him; I did know his son, Godfrey, who was a good deal of a “chip off the old block,” and I had dealings with him in connection with the great shorthand collection in the New York Public Library.

EDWIN HATFIELD ANDERSON

Edwin Hatfield Anderson was born in 1861, just six days after Herbert Putnam, in the little town of Zionsville in central Indiana. He graduated in 1883 from Wabash College and received his M.A. three years later. I never knew what



New York Public Library

Edwin Hatfield Anderson

he did in the years that followed until he went to Melvil Dewey’s library school at the New York State Library in the autumn of 1889. William F. Poole offered him the position of cataloger in the newly opened Newberry Library in Chicago before he graduated, and he gave up the Library School and spent a year at the Newberry. He then organized the Carnegie Free Library of Braddock, Pennsylvania, and served as its librarian for three years. This was followed by ten years in a similar position at the Carnegie Library at Pittsburgh, where he became well known. His work in book selection was noteworthy, the library’s book form catalog was remarkable, and he built up the strongest staff to be found in any large public library. After a year in other work, he served for two and a half years as successor to Melvil Dewey at the New York State Library and Library School following Dewey’s discharge from that position. During these thirty months he strengthened the library and the school and add-

ed James I. Wyer, Frank K. Walter, and Frank Tolman to the staff. He then went to the New York Public Library as assistant director under Dr. Billings on June 1, 1908.

Dr. Billings died in April 1913. Mr. Anderson's appointment as director in place of Dr. Billings took place in May. He had two years earlier found financial support from Mr. Carnegie for a library school at the library and I became a member of its first class in September 1911.

Early in 1912 Azariah Root, who was to be absent on a sabbatical, asked me to take charge of his office in the Oberlin College Library. Mr. Anderson tried to discourage me from accepting the position, saying that I would find the college students immature and boring. But I went anyway, fearing that as a result he would hold it against me on my return in January 1913 to finish the school year. This proved to be an erroneous assumption, and in the spring Mr. Anderson appointed me chief of stacks in the New York Public Library.

But my close connection with Mr. Anderson did not come until six years later in 1918 when, in addition to my stack work, I was asked to take over the administration of the economics and documents division following the departure of Adelaide Hasse from the library and until her permanent successor became available.

I saw a good deal of Mr. Anderson during the next six weeks. He had a bad lumbago attack and was quite provoked on one occasion when he could not reach me in either of my positions within a few minutes. This was one of the few times while I was working with him that he showed any sign of irritation with me.

I was asked by EHA (as we called him) to come into his outer office on January 1, 1919, as executive assistant. My only directions were to make myself useful to him and Mr. Lydenberg, the

chief reference librarian. I soon found that my duties included those of personnel officer. Mr. Anderson also asked me to prepare the budget for the reference department, suggesting salary changes and drafting the budget letter. I spent on the average at least an hour a day in his office during the next sixteen years and soon discovered the source of his greatest service to his profession—his insistence that improving the quality of the staff was the most important thing a librarian can do.

Comparatively few people remember Edwin Hatfield Anderson today, but he did more than anyone else in his time to improve the quality of library personnel, and clearly he was one of our most important and influential librarians. Twenty-four ALA presidents in the fifty years between 1910 and 1960 had worked closely with him or under his direction. EHA was very helpful to me personally. I have always had difficulty in finding the right word in talking and in writing—I was extremely lefthanded and was made to write with my right hand in the fifth grade. Mr. Anderson often asked me to draft important letters for him, and perhaps because he had had difficulty himself in writing, he recognized my situation and helped me to become a better if not a good writer. I well remember the first time when finally after years of effort I prepared a budget letter for him in which he did not change a single word.

EHA was not a tall man but always stood very erect and seemed taller than he was. He was handsome, with a fine, strong face. But in spite of my close contact with him, I never felt that we were personal friends. A close friend of mine, Paul North Rice, who had comparatively little to do with him professionally, however, talked with him casually much more easily than I could.

After Mr. Anderson retired in 1934, I saw him only once. We happened to be in the Williamsburg Inn in Virginia

at the same time. We met in the lobby and had our last talk. He still walked as straight as ever but was noticeably frail-er. He died only a few years later at the age of eighty-four.

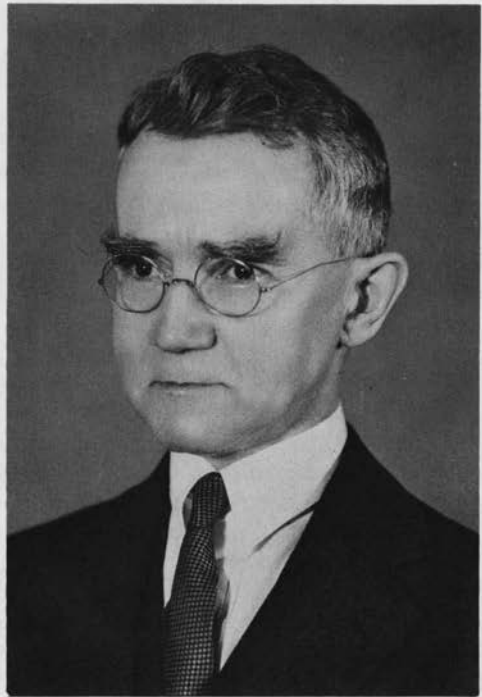
HARRY MILLER LYDENBERG

Harry Miller Lydenberg was born in Dayton, Ohio, in November 1874. He was still young when his father died as a result of a Civil War wound. His boyhood gang had fights with the gang to which Orville and Wilbur Wright belonged. Harry delivered newspapers winter mornings while the stars were still shining and would speak of it with pleasure forty years later when I used to drive him to the Catskills before daylight for a weekend of hiking. He worked in the Dayton Public Library through his high school days and then graduated from Harvard in three years, in spite of working long hours under Justin Winsor in the library. He did so well that Mr. Winsor wanted to keep him. But he shifted to the newly consolidated New York Public Library under John Shaw Billings, believing that it would be a better preparation for his life work.

Dr. Billings recognized his ability and saw to it that he had a great variety of experience in various parts of the library, including work with Wilberforce Eames, the great bibliographer. He soon made Mr. Lydenberg his personal assistant, and in that position Harry helped to develop the library's new classification and its subject heading list, edited its bulletin, and took a leading part in book selection and in the indexing of periodicals not included in standard periodical indexes. He was very much involved in the preparation for and the carrying out of the complicated move from the Astor and Lenox library buildings into the building built by the city for the private institution at Forty-second Street and Fifth Avenue. Before the move in 1911, he became chief ref-

erence librarian and the head of the reference department. Its research collection was one of the three finest in the country then as it is today, sixty-five years later. (The two others are those of the Library of Congress and Harvard.)

I first met HML (as we called him behind his back and as he signed his notes to us) soon after I entered the New York Public Library School in September 1911. He was slender, rather short, and wiry and energetic physically; he always climbed stairs two or three at a time. It seemed to me that he was a little gruff in his manner, but there was a warmth close to the surface. I went to work indirectly under him while still in library school early in 1913, and in July of that year, as chief of stacks, I came into regular contact with him. At first he seemed cold and unsympathetic when I appealed to him about problems that



New York Public Library

Harry Miller Lydenberg

I and others were facing. I am sure that he thought I was what we would call today an "activist," although I do not believe that I was inclined to be a troublemaker. But within a year, I came to understand that his gruffness was only a thin veneer covering one of the warmest and most likable and friendly persons I have ever known.

When I first became well acquainted with Mr. Lydenberg in 1913, I thought he was the most conservative and inflexible man I had ever met. By the time I moved into the main office of the library in 1919, as his executive assistant with contact many times a day, I began to realize that he was not so conservative that he would not listen to the other side of questions on which we disagreed. In another ten years we had become close friends, and he seemed "middle of the road," and in the 1930s I realized that he was becoming more liberal every year. Few of us in any profession as we grow older become less conservative as he did. This flexibility in the other direction was combined with tremendous ability in many fields of library work. I am ready to say without hesitation that in 1940 he stood at the top of the library profession. In his sixty years of active library service from 1890 to 1950, he was, all things considered, our greatest librarian.

But now I should explain the reasons for this conclusion.

(1) If you take the long-term view, success in book selection and building up collections are the most important parts of a librarian's task. In the more than forty years during which he was directly responsible or had close oversight over this phase of the NYPL's work, HML built up the collections in the fields that the library covered more successfully than any librarian in the United States and probably in the world. This fact is shown very clearly by the results of a study made by Professors Douglas Waples and Harold D.

Lasswell of the University of Chicago, who reported in *National Libraries and Foreign Scholarship* that after consulting with top scholars in the fields of the social sciences broadly interpreted in France, Germany, and England, they had prepared lists of some 600 of the most important books and journals published in these fields in the years 1927-33. These were checked by the Library of Congress, Harvard, the New York Public Library, the University of Chicago, the University of Michigan, and the University of California at Berkeley, each of which was covering the fields included. The western university libraries had 30 to 50 percent of the books; Harvard and the Library of Congress had 60 to 62 percent. Despite the fact that the New York Public Library book funds were smaller than those of the five other libraries, it had 92 percent, except for law which it did not attempt to cover because the Bar Association Library was only two blocks away.³

(2) While he was less interested than some librarians in administration pure and simple, that is, making the "wheels go around smoothly," he realized the importance of understanding persons and their abilities. While willing to give up detailed administration to others, HML saw to it that he was surrounded by able administrators and that their duties were carried out successfully. He retired before he needed to so as to avoid administrative crises which he saw coming; he preferred to leave these to others, who could deal with them as well as he could, while he went on to different and important work elsewhere.

(3) Although he suffered from color blindness, HML was interested in color and in good printing and with the able help of John Archer, the chief of his library's printing office, its printing was outstanding and a large number of its publications were chosen among the Graphic Arts Fifty Books of the Year.

(4) Mr. Lydenberg saw to it that the library did more with new photographic methods of reproduction and with the preservation of paper and leather than any other institution. In 1912 he purchased what I believe to have been the first photostat machine in a library, and its use by the library and its readers grew by leaps and bounds. By 1937 it was doing a quarter of a million dollars a year in business.

In 1914 the library, which had been without a shelflist, made one by copying the cards required from the public catalog onto a specially designed photostat paper stock, fifteen years before Yale undertook a similar, more widely advertised project. During the World War I years, Mr. Lydenberg made over twenty studies of methods of preserving paper stock that was deteriorating in a frightening manner, finally deciding to paste thin Japanese rice paper on both sides of each sheet of New York newspapers, which lengthened their life some twenty years; but then, alas, it gave out. He studied the life and strength of modern leather and buckram bindings, finding that most American leather was improperly tanned. As a result it gradually flaked badly. He obtained first-class leather for use by his library, particularly for heavily used reference books. Grease from hands kept it in good shape, and it was strong enough to prevent broken bindings.

In the early 1930s microphotography for libraries came into use for the first time. (The Library of Congress had copied *American Archives* before that for later enlargement for use.) He obtained a foundation grant for studying the suitability of microfilm for reference books and found that it was not desirable for material where one must continually look back to the index for the particular reference wanted, as is the case in genealogies, dictionaries, encyclopedias, etc.

HML also encouraged me to experi-

ment for the first time with reduced-size offset, which resulted in a trial of reducing the *New York Times* to a page one-fourth the size of the original, printed on a better paper. This reduced the bulk so much that the value of the space used for files equalled the cost of the reproduction. Unfortunately, this took place during the depression, and not enough subscriptions could be obtained to make it feasible. By the time the depression was over, use of microfilm had become so common for newspaper reproduction that it seemed unwise to make the change for the *Times*, which was the one paper in the U.S. for which it would have been feasible.

But this experiment led directly to reduced-size offset reproductions and Albert Boni's later success and that of others in this field. These are simply samples of the problems in the use of new scientific methods. HML was a leader in this field—a conservative librarian had become the leading innovator in his time, along with Robert Binkley with whom he worked very closely in the field of the reproduction of research materials.

(5) Meanwhile, during this same period Mr. Lydenberg demonstrated his reference ability by pursuing to a successful conclusion and putting into print solutions to previously unsolved reference questions such as the origin of much quoted sayings attributed to Abraham Lincoln.

(6) In all of these matters, HML was the driving figure but, in addition, he realized by 1930 that the time had come for him to take a leading part in the outside library world. He became the president of the American Library Association in the early 1930s at a critical time when the association was struggling to obtain federal aid for libraries. After his retirement this was to grow into the great program supported by the government, particularly in the 1960s.

(7) With the aid of William War-

ner Bishop, Andrew Keogh, C. C. Williamson, and James Thayer Gerould, he took the lead in bringing about the publication of the Library of Congress Catalogs; the British Museum Catalogue; the first two editions of the *Union List of Serials*; as well as the cooperative cataloging enterprise, started with the Library of Congress in 1930 but which did not come into full fruition until forty years later.

(8) After his retirement in 1941, at an age just under sixty-seven, instead of settling down for a well-earned period of reading and recreation in his beloved garden, he organized the first large information library in an underdeveloped country, the Benjamin Franklin Library in Mexico City.

He presided over the ALA International Relations Committee Office in Washington during World War II, succeeding, with foundation aid, in collecting important monographs and serials, to fill in or replace the volumes lacking in libraries of European countries because of the war. The U.S. Book Exchange later developed from this enterprise. And finally, he became the senior member of the Library of Congress mission, which, in 1946, brought back from Europe over a million volumes for some sixty American libraries that had been unable to acquire them during the wartime period.

As a result of this cooperative effort, it was made evident that the Farmington Plan, which was then under consideration, was practicable.

Shortly thereafter the Midwest Inter-Library Center was agreed upon, and a foundation was started for the literally hundreds of consortia which have grown up throughout the country, resulting in library cooperation on a scale which many of us had looked forward to but had not succeeded in achieving. Ultimately, this will do more than anything else, except the modern methods of automation, to bring our whole re-

search library enterprise in the country into one great unit hopefully without restricting the work of individual libraries. It should be remembered that Mr. Lydenberg had a large part in their origin and development.

Many librarians had talked of the things that HML started, but no one had been able to get them started on the path which is still being extended so rapidly in the 1970s.

CHARLES CLARENCE WILLIAMSON

Charles C. Williamson was born in January 1877, just a little over two years after Harry Lydenberg, but he did not begin library work until twenty-one years later than HML. He was a high school dropout who, after deciding not to be a farmhand, went to business school and, still unhappy, tried a year at Ohio Wesleyan University. Then, after two years of teaching in the Salem, Ohio, public schools, he entered Western Reserve University and worked his way through in the registrar's office, where he met his future wife. He graduated in 1904 at the age of twenty-seven. This was followed by two years of graduate work in economics at the University of Wisconsin and one at Columbia, where he received his Ph.D. in 1907. He was immediately snatched up by M. Carey Thomas, president of Bryn Mawr, who was remarkably successful in attracting brilliant young students to her college as associates, and for four years he taught economics and politics there. Mr. Anderson then selected him to organize and preside over the New York Public Library's newly established Division of Economics and Sociology when the library entered its new building in the spring of 1911. That autumn, as a member of the library's first library school class, I heard his lectures on the literature of his field, supplemented by a first-class bibliography of the basic books on the subject. Thereafter, I did practice work in his division, filing the

cards in the catalogs which were being started (working with William Seaver, his first assistant and later M.I.T.'s librarian) and was impressed by the preciseness with which the work was being carried on.

Three years later, when the newly established Municipal Reference Branch of the library was not going well, Williamson took it over and soon made it a success. In 1918 he shifted to the Carnegie Corporation as a statistician to carry out an Americanization study. But in the late fall of 1918 he was asked to return to the New York Public Library to take the place of Adelaide Hasse as chief of the economics and documents division, a position I had covered for six weeks until he could be freed.

Dr. Williamson was able during the next few years to reorganize the somewhat demoralized staff of his division and to start the *Public Affairs Information Service*, which recorded and indexed material on politics and government, particularly pamphlets and other materials that do not fit into normal library collections of books and periodicals. This has been one of the great reference sources in its field ever since. He also served as a member of a committee of which I was presiding officer and there devised the method of collections of minor uncataloged pamphlets in bound volumes and providing one subject card but no author card for each. This collection has now grown to some 500,000 items, few of which have been collected in other libraries. After Dr. Williamson left the New York Public Library for the last time, the *P.A.I.S.* was carried on with great success by Alice Jewitt, Rollin A. Sawyer, and in more recent years by John Fall; its usefulness has been maintained for more than fifty years.

After leaving the reference department, Dr. Williamson became the director of the Information Service for the



Columbia University

Charles Clarence Williamson

Rockefeller Foundation, where he remained for a little over five years. One spring day in 1926 I was talking with Mr. Anderson in his office about staff problems when a telephone call came to him from Frank Tolman, the Extension Division chief of the New York State Library. I got up to leave, but EHA signaled to me to stay, and I listened in to hear arrangements made by which the New York State Library School at Albany and the New York Public Library Library School were to be combined and transferred to Columbia University under the directorship of Dr. Williamson, who would become the director of the university library and dean of the Columbia School of Library Service. Dr. Williamson began his new assignment in May, taking over much of the staff of the two older library schools and reorganizing the university library, which was not in the best of condition and needed a new library building badly. The School of Library Service made an excellent start with a first-class faculty. In the years that followed, library education throughout the

country was to benefit from the example of Columbia as well as from the recommendations made by Dr. Williamson in his Carnegie Corporation report entitled *Training for Library Service*.⁴

With the library school going smoothly and with a top-level staff, Dr. Williamson went to work on plans for a new and much-needed main library building which would house the central library and also provide the best quarters for a library school to be found anywhere in the country at that time. By the end of the calendar year 1926 he had worn himself out. His long-time Western Reserve University registrar friend, who was now at the University of North Carolina but who had a summer home in Woodland Valley in the Catskills, suggested a quiet guest house where in the winter he would be the only guest with a very fine family.

For some six previous autumns, six librarians who had been at the New York Public Library—Paul North Rice, Carl Cannon, Charles McCombs, Charles Williamson, Frank A. Waite, and I—had spent the nearest weekend to Columbus Day in the Catskills, enjoying the autumn color and climbing mountains, stopping in various hotels in the area. As a result of Williamson's stay at Beechknoll, the group asked if they could come there each fall for their weekend walk. This was arranged and continued with the same group for forty years; those of us who were able continued until 1972. Harry Lydenberg was added to the group in the late 1920s, and Cannon dropped out after going to Yale. We naturally became very close friends.

But to go back to 1927, Williamson returned to work after a few weeks, fully recovered. Knowing of my interest in building planning, he often asked me to go over the plans with him, a process which took several years. Just when working drawings were completed and ready for tenders, Harry Lydenberg,

Frank Waite, Williamson, my son, and I went out for a spring walk up to the Farnsworth Park on the Taconic Parkway in Williamson's car. It was evident all day that he was not well. He said little, but he drove us all home and then drove himself directly to the hospital. There he had a major operation from which he never completely recovered, largely because a severe burn had resulted in an abscess. After a long period of convalescence, he was able to resume his duties, but with a series of unfortunate results.

The new building went out for tenders while he was incapacitated, and as often happens, the architects had underestimated costs, and the bids came in too high. Williamson's assistant was able to reduce costs by cutting down the size in unfortunate places, unduly reducing heights of mezzanines and the areas beneath them, and narrowing aisles too much in critical places.

Even so, the building became the first library building with modern fireproof construction, with a simple central bookstack, and with each floor of the stacks a separate fire unit. In most ways it was very functional and easy to use; it included the best library school quarters in the country, together with a separate undergraduate area, the forerunner of undergraduate libraries, which have since become popular. It was a great university library building; and, in spite of monumental features, it cost just about one-half as much as Yale's Sterling Library, which was built at the same time, had the same number of square feet, and was designed by the same architect.

The library's most unfortunate points would have been avoided if CCW could have been on the spot to decide on the ways by which costs could be reduced. One other unfortunate feature of the building was the lighting in the large reading room on the front of the second floor, designed by the dean of the

Engineering School and heralded the best-lighted large reading room ever found anywhere; this was a failure which has been avoided with improved lighting in many libraries constructed after World War II. During Williamson's illness and convalescence, his first wife became seriously ill and was hospitalized until her death in 1939, but he continued his work at Columbia until retirement age of sixty-six in 1941.

After his retirement as a librarian, Williamson served as consultant to the Connecticut State Education Television Commission until his death twenty-two years later in 1965 at the age of eighty-eight. Librarianship was not CCW's only talent; he was a skilled carpenter, mechanic, and gardener, building with his own hands a very handsome addition to his home at Hastings on Hudson, looking out over the Hudson River, and later repairing and bringing up to date at least three old Connecticut homes.

Williamson's career included a number of disappointments which would have soured many persons' attitude toward life but which did not affect him. He was in many ways a perfectionist and sometimes was unable to persuade his assistants and his colleagues to follow in his footsteps. He could make enemies by plain speaking to those with

whom he came in contact, both students and faculty, and while in many ways he was a very able administrator, he was unable to carry his staff and fellow faculty members with him in some of the strict rules he promulgated.

When he ran for president of the American Library Association in 1938 against Ralph Munn of Pittsburgh, who was seventeen years his junior, his loss was a surprise to him as it was to many of his colleagues. His unpopularity at Columbia was without question a bitter blow to him, although his work there as librarian and dean resulted in a well-run library and a very successful library school, carried out in the first really modern library building.

Finally, when one assesses influence on library development, his 1923 report on *Training for Library Service* clearly entitled him to rank with the five other great librarians of whom I have written. In addition, he was a fine and devoted friend to those who knew him well. His influence with the Rockefeller and Carnegie Corporations was a great help to library development. His knowledge of everything related to libraries and institutions of higher learning was tremendous, and despite his relatively minor idiosyncracies he was a great man who should be remembered.

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