

Essentials in the Training of University Librarians—I

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IN CONSIDERING the essential training of the future university librarian, I wish to deal with the subject from three points of view. First, the nature and complexity of the position for which the university librarian is to be trained; second, the character and extent of the demands which the university administration may make upon the university librarian and library staff; third, the appropriate preparation of the librarian and library staff for the effective discharge of their duties.

The modern American university had its beginning in the establishment of Johns Hopkins University in 1876, the year of the founding of the American Library Association. Even though it grew out of a colonial college or early state university, it has assumed its present organization, characteristics, and functions within the period of the lifetime of some of us who are participating in this program. And, just as the activities of the university have become infinitely more diverse and complex since 1876, the demands which the university makes upon the university library have become correspondingly diverse and complex.

These variations may be readily illustrated. In 1900, Harvard led in enrollment with 4062 students. Today Cali-

fornia leads the state universities with 25,530, and New York the private universities with 37,677. The physical plants required to house such universities are so immense and so complicated that special maps and organized tours are necessary to enable new students to find their way about. Curriculum offerings have multiplied many fold, and departments, schools, and institutes have similarly increased in number. Funds for endowment and research have likewise greatly expanded. Johns Hopkins had \$3,000,000 for endowment in 1900. It has approximately \$31,000,000 today. Harvard had approximately \$14,000,000 in 1900. Today it has over ten times this amount.

Each of these developments has had an indirect effect upon the university library. Certain changes within the library itself have also contributed to its complexity. In 1900 the Harvard book collection numbered 525,000 volumes. Today it numbers approximately 4,000,000, and for the past ten years it has added an average of 117,000 volumes annually. Universities in each of the six major regions of the country have book collections of more than 500,000 volumes, as well as special collections of pamphlets, manuscripts, prints, films, and other highly specialized materials.

Research Work Increasing

Though the American university has

always served undergraduate as well as graduate students, it has encountered the most serious challenge to its service at the graduate level. In 1900, graduate schools awarded approximately 2000 Master's degrees. In 1938, the number was 20,000. The number of Ph.D. degrees showed an even more spectacular proportional rise. From 200 in 1900, the number rose to 3000 in 1938. The demand upon libraries for research materials and for staff members to organize and administer them increased in similar proportion. Chinese collections at Harvard, Hispanic American materials at Tulane, western history at California, Near East objects and materials in the Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago, and the seemingly endless variety of materials available today through microphotography and other forms of reproduction suggest the range and complexity of these materials.

Card distribution by the Library of Congress and other libraries; the publication of union lists of serials, manuscripts, newspapers, and catalogs of major world-famed libraries; the development of local, regional, and national union catalogs have likewise placed responsibilities upon university libraries which were all but unknown in 1900.

Recently the American university library has been called upon to organize and direct significant programs of cooperation. These programs have taken the forms of mutual agreement, as at North Carolina and Duke; contractual agreement, as at Vanderbilt and Peabody; and state legislative action, as at Oregon, Oregon state, and other state institutions in Oregon. In the southeast, the responsibility for the description of the holdings of the research libraries of a whole region has fallen largely upon the shoulders of a

group of university librarians. Such cooperative undertakings are not limited to local situations, but operate also upon an international front. The demonstration of microfilm apparatus in Paris in 1937, participation in international conferences, and recent cooperation with Hispanic-American libraries and scholars serve as illustrations.

Other Responsibilities

Not only has the library been pressed into service on these different fronts, but in the past twenty-five years it has in many instances become responsible for training students in bibliographical method and the use of libraries, and for the direction of library schools with curriculums covering all phases of library work leading to the A.B., M.A., and Ph.D. degrees. All of these developments have profound implications for the university librarian. They clearly reveal situations with which he must deal, the kind of imagination and leadership he must exhibit, and the character and extent of the subject matter with which his training must be concerned.

In 1865, Daniel Coit Gilman resigned from the librarianship of Yale because the university did not pay him an adequate salary and did not support the library well enough to carry into effect his recommendations for the development of an effective library program. Later, at Johns Hopkins, he could say:

The librarian's office should rank with that of a professor. He will be the better administrator if he cultivates his own special branch of study, for thus he will have a sympathetic relation with other investigators, and he will be the better investigator if he is also a teacher. . . . The profession of a Librarian should be distinctly recognized. Men and women should be encouraged to enter it, should be trained to discharge its

duties, and should be rewarded, promoted, and honored in proportion to the services they render.¹

But he could point to few universities which had developed their library staffs in accordance with the several principles set forth by him.

In 1901, in my first annual report as librarian at the University of North Carolina, I was confronted with the fact that the library had no well-defined policy. The concluding recommendation of my report read as follows:

That the University make the position of Librarian such that he, from a financial point of view, can remain in it for several years at least. Within the past thirty months, four men have filled the position. . . . If the present system of low salary and frequent change continues, I am unable to see how a policy can be devised and carried out which will result in the steady upbuilding of the Library. . . .²

Although some of my then-colleagues saw in the statement not an indictment of the inadequate conception which the university held of the library, but certain Scotch traits which they attributed to me, it is the one recommendation in the thirty-one annual reports written by me in which I now take most pride.

Role of University Library Today

In contrast with the situations described in these two instances, many university administrators today have a clear, informed conception of the role which the library should play in the university. Such administrators know (1) that the library must aid the university in conserving knowledge through the conservation of materials; (2) that the library must assist

it in the transfer and extension of knowledge through the acquisition of materials for instruction and research; (3) that the library must make its services available to student and teacher by means of appropriate quarters, adequate bibliographical resources, and trained staff. If the university engages in extension service, the library must also participate in that service.

If the library is to meet these varied and complex demands, the librarian and his staff will have to possess correspondingly varied and high qualifications. Fundamentally the librarian should have a broad general understanding of the objectives of the university as a whole as opposed to a narrower departmental view; he should possess a scholarly knowledge of library science and related fields of scholarship; he should have a thorough understanding of the functional relationships which exist among the various departments of the library, and ability to organize and direct library personnel.

These demands upon the librarian, however, go a step farther. He should be able to participate effectively in formulating the administrative and educational policies of the university and to administer the library upon a sound functional basis. This is fundamental as there are few aspects of teaching or investigation that are unaffected by library performance. Through his training in scientific investigation and mastery of his special field, he should understand and promote the scholarly activities of every department of the university, and at the same time enrich librarianship through administration, investigation, and writing in the library field. He should also be able, through his personality and interest in books, his knowledge of materials for instruction

¹ Daniel C. Gilman, *Development of the Public Library in America*. Ithaca, N.Y., 1891, p. 10.

² Louis R. Wilson, "Annual Report of the Librarian" (typewritten manuscript), 1901.

and research, and his cooperation with students, faculty, and other librarians and scholarly organizations, to bring the library into a closer relationship with the educational and scholarly activities of the university and of the scholarly world.

Staff Has Its Part to Play

The librarian will not be called upon to achieve these results single-handed. The staff has its part to play. The university administrator will naturally expect the professional staff and experts in charge of special collections to possess the technical and bibliographical knowledge essential to carry on the normal processes of administration, to be conversant with both the subject matter and the literature of the department or school with which they are associated, and to be skilled in working effectively with students and faculty.

So much for the nature and complexity of the position of the librarian of the modern university and the demands which the administration may make upon the librarian and his staff. What should be the nature and extent of the training necessary to prepare them for the effective performance of their duties?

In discussing this question, I wish to refer to "Libraries and Scholarship," by Mitchell; "The Librarian of the Future," by Rush; and "College and University Libraries," by Wriston, which recently appeared in *The Library of Tomorrow*.³ They may well be supplemented by "Staff Specialization: A Possible Substitute for Departmentalization," by Hurt; "A Look Ahead for Library Schools," by Reece; "Why Graduate Study in Librarianship?"

³ Sydney B. Mitchell, "Libraries and Scholarship," Charles E. Rush, "The Librarian of the Future," and Henry M. Wriston, "College and University Libraries," in Emily Miller Danton, ed., *The Library of Tomorrow*. American Library Association, 1939.

by Carnovsky; and the "Report of the School of Library Service for 1931," by Williamson.⁴ All of these papers bear upon this subject and serve as excellent background for its consideration.

Let me say at once that university librarians have been successfully trained in the past in a variety of ways. No single way has been chosen to the exclusion of all others. In the light of the development of universities, however, and of the consequent demands made upon university libraries, the training of the university librarian must necessarily fit him more exactly for his duties than it has in the past. In European universities, where the major objectives of students and scholars have been more narrowly formulated and where student bodies have included only students above the junior college level, more precise patterns of training for librarians have long been prescribed. And the training will be recognized as a more professional pattern than it has been in the past. Furthermore, it will differ from that of the public or school or other type of librarian, who is confronted with different conditions and duties. Not only this, but the differentiation will begin in the pre-professional period, including general undergraduate training and will continue through the first-year professional and graduate professional periods.

Basic Training

Fundamentally, the pre-professional training should consist of a broad general education. The present new plan of the

⁴ Peyton Hurt, "Staff Specialization: A Possible Substitute for Departmentalization," *A.L.A. Bulletin*, 29:417-21, July, 1935; Ernest J. Reece, "A Look Ahead for Library Schools," *A.L.A. Bulletin*, 32:32, January, 1938; Leon Carnovsky, "Why Graduate Study in Librarianship?" *Library Quarterly*, 7:246-61, April, 1937; C. C. Williamson, "Report of the Director of the School of Library Service for the Period Ending June 30, 1931," *Columbia University Bulletin of Information*, Jan. 2, 1932.

University of Chicago illustrates what I mean by broad education. Through a connected, well-ordered course in the humanities, running throughout an entire year, this plan provides a splendid introduction to all the subjects embraced within this general field. It provides similar introductions through three other courses organized in similar fashion to the subjects embraced within the social sciences, the biological sciences, and the physical sciences. And accompanying these courses, which require two-thirds of the time of the student during the first two years, are other courses which lay the foundation for specialization in the junior and senior years and lead to the A.B. degree. Other institutions offer comparable undergraduate courses upon which later study leading to the A.B. and higher degrees or professional training may be appropriately based.

Such a basic training seems to me indispensable to the university librarian. Students who have come up through such studies should be recruited by library schools, and those whose specialization has been in the fields of the social, biological, and physical sciences, should be sought as well as those in the field of the humanities from which they have been so largely drawn in the past.

Final Desired Element

The value of such undergraduate training for the later professional training of the university librarian would be enhanced if it included courses which would give the student command of tool subjects such as French, German, and statistics; courses which would acquaint him with the general principles of administration and personnel management and the educational aims and administrative practices of universities; and courses in the use of refer-

ence materials and the library in general. Part-time assistantships in actual library activities would constitute a final desired element in such undergraduate preparation.

Some Major Objectives

The major objectives of the first year of professional training should be: (1) to give the student a broad overview of librarianship; (2) to acquaint him with the library's role in an educational institution; (3) to set forth for him in their appropriate relationships the theories and principles underlying the major subjects within the field; (4) to acquaint him with the body of literature pertinent to these subjects; and (5) to give him, through course assignments and observation, the command of library procedures which will be foundational for future professional performance.

Upon such a basic foundation, followed by a period of service, if possible, specialization in the university library field may be begun. The student should begin work leading to the Ph.D. degree in library science. If he wishes, he should be able to do this in two stages. He might first work for the M.A. and then for the Ph.D. In either instance, he should know definitely what is expected of him at these levels. At the M.A. level he should be expected (1) to become acquainted with the methods and spirit of graduate study and research in the fields of library science; (2) to extend his knowledge of library science generally; (3) to increase considerably his knowledge of the special field of university librarianship and related subject fields; and (4) to demonstrate his ability to use research methods in the preparation of a report or thesis in the field of his specialization.

At Ph.D. Level

At the Ph.D. level, the student should be expected (1) to extend greatly his general knowledge of the various fields of library science; (2) to master the particular field of university and scholarly libraries; (3) to supplement his knowledge of this field with that of other subjects related to it; and (4) to carry out an original investigation within it. At both the M.A. and Ph.D. levels, he should be free to take courses in the library school and other departments which would extend his undergraduate and earlier graduate interests and give him a firm foundation in subject specialization as well as mastery of his special field. In this way he should become thoroughly acquainted with the methods and spirit of graduate instruction. The thesis should grow out of research carried on independently and should make some new contribution to the subject chosen.

For some of the professional members of the university library staff, the B.S. in L.S. and the M.A. programs may be sufficient; for others, the Ph.D. is clearly desirable.

The question may now be raised whether individuals drawn from the teaching, legal, or other professions or fields are preferable as university librarians to the type of librarian trained in the manner above indicated. I should like to cite two commentaries which are at least partially relevant to this point.

Fifteen years ago the Commission of the University of Chicago on the Future Policy of the University Libraries declared that the library existed solely for the facilitation and encouragement of research, and therefore that it must be directed by a member of the faculty who had demonstrated such interest in his

work.⁵ In short, the librarian should be a teacher-investigator. The second commentary comes from President Henry M. Wriston of Brown University.⁶ He argues that the least important qualification of the librarian is his training; furthermore, that the individual with ideas and appreciation of problems, with resourcefulness and energy, can learn many of the technical details as he administers the library, but all the courses in the world will not supply imagination or tact, industry or a feeling for scholarship.

Overlook a Fundamental Fact

It is true that these statements were made without reference to the type of preparation for librarianship which I have outlined; nevertheless they merit careful consideration, as much for what they include as for what they omit. They clearly fail to recognize that librarianship, instead of being concerned with mere technical routines, is a many-sided, far-ranging subject in which an individual possessing tact, imagination, and resourcefulness in dealing with problems may achieve scholarly distinction as well as in other fields of learning. They overlook the fundamental fact that the education of the university librarian is designed to give him not only a scholarly command of his field, but a knowledge of the functional organization and administration of the materials and personnel under his control with which the scholar or specialist trained in another field is wholly unacquainted. Though a scholar may be quite profound in his own field, this carries no guaranty of particular competence in any other field, and, in fact, it is at least conceivable that

⁵ Commission on the Future Policy of the University Libraries, *Tentative Report*, January, 1924. University of Chicago Press, 1924, p. 47.

⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 147.

a too narrow subject specialization may lead to a parochial rather than a universal point of view.

My major quarrel with these statements is that they do not go far enough. They mistake the indispensable for the possibly sufficient. Because it is vital that the university librarian have an appreciation of research and an understanding of research needs, it does not follow that this is all he must have. When one argues, as I do, in favor of an individual with library training, he is not pleading for this *to the exclusion* of research training; he is simply saying that both are indispensable, and that neither one by itself is enough. I would even say that in the light of the changes which are taking place in student selection by library schools, and in the nature of the training which is now available, the prospective librarian should possess an enthusiasm for research and the capacity to carry it on himself—and all this without sacrificing an interest in and an ability to look after the administrative and routine processes of the university library.

Regarding Untrained Librarians

This answer, however, should not close the door to persons of ability and scholarship in other fields to entrance into university library positions. A director drawn from the ranks of the faculty or a subject specialist may bring rare ability and knowledge to the administration of the library or to the handling of materials in a special collection or subject field. The probabilities that he can do this successfully are attended by considerable risk unless several precautions are taken. First of all, he should be caught young enough to make new adjustments easily. It should be demonstrated that his tact, scholarship,

and imagination will concern themselves with the major considerations of librarianship rather than with the narrow aspects of his former specialization. And before he begins to make important decisions concerning the administration of the library, he should acquire, through systematic study, an understanding of the principles upon which successful functional administration is based. Thus equipped, he should be able to conceive of the library as a major functional unit of the university or the special collection as an integrated part of the library as a whole. Provided he bring his entire abilities to bear upon his work as librarian, his accomplishments in the field of administration and his professional writings may contribute significantly to the advancement of librarianship.

Four other aspects of the training of the university librarian may now be briefly considered. I refer (1) to certain desired characteristics of library schools which provide the training; (2) to the training of staff members; (3) to internship; and (4) to recruiting.

Library School Policies

The policies of the library schools concerning admission, curriculums, and degrees are largely controlled, for the first year of study leading to the B.S. in L.S. degree, by the schools themselves. But at the M.A. and the Ph.D. levels, although library science is usually selected as the field of specialization of library school students, the programs of the schools conform more strictly to the regulations of the graduate school and of the various departments involved. The rigidity of departmental requirements frequently makes it difficult for the student to select those courses in the library school and the university as a whole from which he would

profit most. In the case of the Graduate Library School of the University of Chicago this difficulty is obviated, as the school has complete control over the student's program of work and can have him take such courses in other departments as may be most suited to his needs without subjecting him to departmental degree requirements.

A similar difficulty in securing the kind of training which would be of most value to him is also encountered by the professor or subject specialist who wishes to enter the library profession. Questions of admission, of required elementary courses, and of conformity to regulations for duplicate degrees frequently prove too difficult for appropriate solution. They also support the conviction of many critics of the graduate school in the American university that it should re-study (as it is now doing in a number of institutions) the pattern which Johns Hopkins gave it in 1876 and which, so far as the Ph.D. requirements are concerned, has not been seriously modified since. For librarians, a less departmentalized and more flexible type of training seems to me particularly desirable.

What the training of professional staff members should be has, in a sense, already been indicated. Obviously, the majority of staff members will come up through the colleges and library schools. Many of them will complete work at the level of the Master's degree, and others will go on to the Ph.D. Others not interested in degrees but with sound basic training and an understanding of professional requirements and subject fields will take advantage of the freedom which library schools and graduate departments will increasingly provide for the pursuit of studies to fit the student's individual needs.

Internship has yet to make its place as an integral part of training for librarianship. The case for it has been argued on the basis of the analogy of internship in medicine, but this argument has not as yet carried great conviction because of the fundamental differences in the responsibilities of the young librarian and physician. Here and there, particularly in those university libraries where close connection is maintained between the library school and the library administration and where adequate supervision of the work of the intern may be combined with his training, internship gives promise of greatly aiding in the professional and administrative equipment of the student of university librarianship. However, the opportunities for such close cooperation must be considerably extended if it is materially to affect present conditions of training.

Recruiting Personnel

Many indications lead me to believe that the question of recruiting suitable personnel, while not answered satisfactorily in the past, will be answered more satisfactorily in the future. One of the most significant influences operating in this direction has been the action of the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools in setting up qualitative standards for determining excellence of college and university library performance. College presidents have begun to seek intelligently for librarians who understand the educational objectives of the college, the relation of the library to their achievement, and who have acquired an understanding of investigation and its place in the work of higher institutions. They seek such librarians, not because of their "academic respectability," but for what they can contribute to the

formulation of general administrative and educational policies, and for their ability to administer libraries effectively.

The grants of the Carnegie Corporation of New York to libraries of liberal arts, junior, and teachers colleges have likewise contributed to this end. College presidents have had to study carefully the problems of library and institutional relationships in securing and administering these grants. As a result, many of them have gained a realistic conception of the function of the library in the college program. The same end has been achieved in other ways at the university level. The survey by Brown of land-grant college libraries, and the surveys by Raney, Works, Carlson, and Wilson-Branscomb-Dunbar and Lyle, of university libraries, and numerous articles dealing with various aspects of university library administration, have played their part. And recently, the cooperative arrangements for increasing library resources have brought the attention of leaders in higher education in general to a new appreciation of the part which the university library is to play in the cooperative enterprises which are getting under way and will multiply in the field of higher education.

These influences have had a bearing on the placement and salaries of students who have fitted themselves through advanced study and investigation for college and university library positions. In spite of the depression, there have not been enough qualified graduates to meet the demand and at salaries frequently above those of associates who have become college or university teachers.

All the foregoing influences have been indirect. They are, nonetheless, powerful. A direct influence may now be cited.

A survey conducted last year of admission practices of the accredited library schools revealed the fact that tests of varying kinds are being given by a number of schools to determine the fitness of applicants for admission. This is in addition to the personal interview, testimonials, and academic records previously required. The recent experimentation with tests devised by the Social Science Research Council for the selection of its graduate fellows, the experimentation with tests now being carried out in four large eastern universities to determine the abilities of graduate students, and the proposed study of the Association of American Library Schools of tests specifically designed for prospective librarians, similarly point in the direction of sounder bases of selection for those who will become the future librarians of American universities.

In summary, I wish to point out again the tremendous expansion which the American university library has undergone. University administrators have become perceptibly clearer in their conception of the role the library should play in university life, they have accorded the librarian an increasingly more important field of activity in the university's affairs, and the rewards of the librarian compare favorably with those of other members of university staffs.

Finally, let me say to the prospective university librarian that a rigorous period of training, undergraduate, professional, and scholarly, will be required of him in the future, but that if he meets the requirements adequately, he will create for himself an opportunity for service comparable in extent, nature, and satisfaction to that open to anyone with whom he may be associated in the modern American university.