

## *Report of the Council*

IN LAST APRIL'S Council Report, we remarked on the fact that the number of our visitors and the amount of our correspondence had fallen off remarkably. Hardly had we got back to Worcester after reading that report, than a swarm of researchers descended on the library, the forerunner of the busiest summer in, certainly, the last quarter century. Most of them were serious and mature scholars, doing the kind of work which we exist to further. For the most part, they came knowing our holdings and equipped to make the most of them. For example, this summer a half a dozen scholars either examined our two contemporary copies of the Cambridge Platform, or ordered xerox prints of them, whereas it has been usual to have that particular manuscript examined once in a decade. The most obvious cause of this increase in patronage is the dissemination of the new bibliographical tools.

In previous reports we have stressed the necessity of creating new research tools because the research libraries can no longer accommodate the numbers who wish to use them. The most important of these new tools has been the Early American Imprints series, reproducing in microprint form the full text of all non-serial material printed in the United States between 1640 and 1802. There are now beginning to appear in the quarterly journals articles based on research which a decade ago would have required thousands of miles of travel, but which can now be done in any one of two hundred libraries which subscribe for our microprint. The availability of this tool in all major research

libraries should have cut down the number of visitors to this library, and apparently did briefly, but the prodigious increase in the amount of research being done in our field has reversed the trend.

The increase in visitors and inquiries hit us just as our staff reached, numerically speaking, a low ebb. We have usually had a staff of fifteen, but for some time we have been down to twelve, of whom this year there have been seldom less than two in the hospital, or out of service with a broken wrist, or the like. Our average of absenteeism this year, almost all of it necessary, was about twenty per cent.

The staff of a library is usually thought of as having a purely custodial function, handing out books to those who ask for them. Our staff, however, spends the greater part of its time in bibliographical research and study, identifying authors, printers, and booksellers, and finding other information for the research tools which we make, and for our visitors. A typical visiting researcher is one rounding off his work and coming to us for assistance in finding or explaining away elusive material.

This being the case, the problem of finding or training staff members is a serious one. Ten years ago, a member of the Council pointed out that we had perhaps the third best collection of early American prints, shamefully arranged, sometimes a dozen in one folder to their great physical detriment. He offered to find the means to obtain a curator of prints and maps to replace the one who had recently retired. After this offer was made, a decade went by before we could take advantage of it, for the simple reason that to obtain any adequate curator we would have to pay a salary which would throw our whole scale out of order. Now, having raised salaries twenty-five per cent over a period of three years, we have at last been able to take advantage of the subsidy offered by three members of the Council, and

have obtained the services of a young woman who in the two months she has been with us has been of great assistance. Incidentally, she is a granddaughter of Mr. John H. Scheide of Pennsylvania, long an active member of our Council.

Blessing though this appointment is, it is but a temporary respite, for our salary scale at the professional level is still much below those of the other institutions in our class, with which we must compete for staff. In the past three years the situation of recruiting and placement services in our and related fields has been entirely changed by the competition of hundreds of new colleges whose bidding for historians, archivists, and librarians has driven up salaries quite as fast as union wages.

This year we actually spent \$132,000 of a budget of \$147,000, this remissness on our part being due chiefly to the fact that we could not fill the vacancies on our staff. This has also been one of those years in which much more money went into our rotating funds than came out of them; our publishing commitments will automatically take care of this surplus.

This year we spent nearly \$25,000 on books, much the largest sum in recent years. This was possible because of Mr. McCorison's great success in selling the duplicates from Dr. Nadeau's gift, and various items irrelevant to our fields of collection. These irrelevancies have been a source of space as well as of income. It is twenty years since our last stack was built, and a scholarly library is expected to double its collections in such a period. Naturally, people are beginning to inquire solicitously about our space problem. The answer is that there is none, at present. Our predecessors set out to collect everything in print, and although Clarence Brigham saw the error of such a policy, he was too eager a collector to spend much time at the less exciting task of

sorting, discarding, and placing the discards properly. A library which has a collection which is too weak to be a good working tool is laying a dangerous trap for its customers. We had many such weak collections, and the finding of proper homes for them has given us additional funds for book purchases, and afforded space for the expansion of our strong collections.

For example, we used to collect all American broadsides. That segment of the collection between the years 1640 and 1876 is the strongest in existence, so far as one can determine from existing bibliographies and catalogues. For the period after 1876, the collection, although very voluminous, was such a weak representation of a vast field that it has not been used once in twenty years. In discarding such weak collections, we make a practice of first offering them to institutions strong in these fields, but almost always such proffered gifts are declined, because the cost of processing them would be prohibitive. Yet sometimes collections which cannot be given away to institutions can be sold for thousands of dollars to booksellers, who can sort out individual pieces and place them in collections where they fill gaps. Such was the case with our post-1876 broadsides; with the proceeds we bought a handful of rare or unrecorded early imprints, and acquired the space which the reorganization and proper preservation of our map and print collection demand.

Our librarian will report on accessions, but we would like to stress one point which he has been too modest to make—his incredible success in gathering material to the core of our collections, American printing before 1820. This is a field which bibliographers and collectors have worked over assiduously for a century and a half, yet he this year acquired sixty-six hitherto unreported items. This simply incredible success is the result of his searching for material usually

unrecognized by the trade, and of the helpfulness of some of our good friends.

In no other year in modern times has the Society lost from the membership so many of our oldest and most faithful friends. We have only just heard of the death, on December 3, 1963, of Archibald Henderson, a giant in the profession when most of us were beginners, which had escaped our attention because of his long retirement. Also long retired were our old friends, Earl Gregg Swem, who died on April 12, 1965, and Roger Wolcott, who died on April 21. Both unexpected and a bitter loss were the deaths of Thomas W. Streeter on June 12, of Albert W. Rice on August 8, and of James B. Hedges on October 13. Truly, these men will not be replaced; the best that we can hope is that their successors will develop the same devotion to our mutual interests.

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*For the Council*

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