

THE AMERICAN COUNCIL OF LEARNED SOCIETIES

REPORT TO THE AMERICAN ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY
October 20, 1926

SINCE the last report to the Society on the activities of the Council of Learned Societies the work of the latter has continued along the lines then indicated. In most cases satisfactory progress has been made and there seems good reason to believe that the Council is assured of a future of useful and important activities, indispensable to the advancement of the humanistic studies in America and beneficial to the constituent societies.

The survey of learned societies has been carried forward during the year, though somewhat delayed by the absence of the undersigned from America. A good part of it is now, however, in manuscript, and every effort will be made to bring it to a conclusion at the earliest possible moment.

The survey of research, under the direction of Professor F. A. Ogg, of the University of Wisconsin, has been actively pushed during the year. All the members of the Society have doubtless received the questionnaire that has been sent out, and it is to be hoped that all have replied to it. Other questionnaires have been sent to institutions and bureaus of research and to universities, and a great wealth of material has been gathered which will be digested and the results made public during the coming winter. The task has proved to be one of the greatest magnitude, for about 20,000 questionnaires of one sort or another have been distributed, and the tabulation of their results, checking up replies, co-ordinating all the information secured, and drawing the appropriate conclusions from these varied data cannot be done in a few weeks.

Bulletin 5 of the Council was issued in June and distributed to the constituent societies. It contains the proceedings of the Council at the annual meeting last January, reports of the first

two conferences of the secretaries of the constituent societies, reports of committees, etc. In thus making public from time to time all the activities of the Council the member societies are enabled to keep fully in touch with everything that the Council is doing. On the basis of this complete information it is hoped that the member societies will propose activities from time to time and will make use of the Council for the advancement of their interests.

The Dictionary of American Biography, under the direction of Dr. Allen Johnson, one of our fellow members, is well on the way towards the publication of the first volume in 1928. Offices have been established in Washington and Dr. Johnson has secured the assistance of Dr. Harris E. Starr as associate editor.

A plan has been drawn up for a catalogue of the foreign manuscripts which are to be found in American libraries and collections. This is a task of great magnitude and of great importance, and its performance is a moral obligation laid upon American scholars by the possession of these vast stores of material.

The first awards of the small grants in aid of research, made possible by the Laura Spelman Rockefeller subvention, were made to twenty-one scholars in April, as published in the Bulletin. The second awards will be made in April, 1927, and applications must be presented before the end of January. The Council is endeavoring to extend this system of encouragement of research by securing funds for a small number of larger grants, since those now made do not exceed \$300 to any one scholar. The Council is also engaged in seeking funds for two or three special undertakings of research that have been proposed by as many scholars, for which important subventions extending over periods of years are required. The Council has likewise under consideration an important program of research to be initiated by itself, in the general field of the cultural relations between Europe and America and the mutual influences of American and European civilizations upon each other.

A second conference of secretaries or executive officers of the constituent societies was held in New York last January, at the

time of the annual meeting of the Council, which the secretaries were also invited to attend. The principal problem discussed at the conference was the raising of funds for endowment purposes. The librarian of the Antiquarian Society and the secretary of the Historical Association took a leading part in this discussion in explaining what had been done by their respective societies in the way of carrying on an endowment campaign. The third conference will be held next January and will be in charge of Professor Burgess of the University of Chicago, secretary of the American Sociological Society.

An important step in the advancement of mediæval studies in America was the organization last winter of the Mediæval Academy of America. In a sense this step was taken under the auspices of the Council which had maintained a committee on mediæval studies for the purpose of organizing and co-ordinating work in that field. This committee has now been dropped as the Mediæval Academy will assume its functions. In the same field however, the committee on the dictionary of mediæval Latin, which is carrying on the American share of the undertaking of the International Union of Academies, has been active under the guidance of Professor C. H. Beeson of the University of Chicago, as has also the committee which is co-operating in the Anglo-American enterprise of a dictionary of late mediæval British Latin, under the direction of Professor James F. Willard.

In the field of international relations the most important event has been the action of the International Union of Academies, at its meeting last May, looking towards the entrance of the German and Austrian academies to membership. It is hoped that by next May the admission of those important learned bodies will be accomplished and that thus the ranks of the Union will be notably strengthened. The Union adopted the proposal of the American Council, presented by its delegate, the undersigned, for a survey of the present status of current bibliography in all the humanistic fields of learning. This will be a first step towards improving the current record of publications and should prove to be most useful in preventing duplication of effort and in filling in existing gaps in current bibliography. The Union also discussed a proposal presented by the Dutch

Academy of Sciences for an encyclopedia of international law, of historical and retrospective character. A decision was reserved for the meeting of the Union next May. Satisfactory progress was reported on all the enterprises of the Union, the Corpus of Ancient Vases, the Catalogue of Alchemical Manuscripts, and the Dictionary of Mediæval Latin, as well as on the enterprises carried on under the auspices of the Union but not by it, as the archaeological map of the Roman Empire, additions to the corpora of Greek and Latin Inscriptions, the corpus of ancient Greek mosaics, the dictionary of Indonesian customary law, and the search in European archives and libraries for documents relating to the history of Japan. The financial condition of the Union is good, with a balance at the end of 1925 of more than 125,000 francs, Belgian. The Council has been able for some years to make a special annual contribution of 4000 francs to the scientific work of the Union, in addition to its annual dues of 2000 francs for administrative expenses.

This brief summary of the work of the Council and of the Union during the past year is far from complete but is sufficient to indicate its scope, variety and importance. Earnest efforts are now being made to place the Council on a solid foundation financially, and it seems likely that they will meet with the success that they deserve.

Respectfully submitted,

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to the American Council of Learned Societies*

Paris, Oct. 6, 1926.

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