Report of the Council

THE appointment of a new librarian is a step so critical in the life of an institution like this that we were uneasy until day-by-day contact convinced us that Marcus Mc-Corison is indeed the man for the job. He is the first holder of the office to have a comprehensive knowledge of printing, so no doubt his appointment has delighted the shade of Isaiah Thomas. His primary interest in collecting will be to build up areas which his predecessors have rather neglected.

Mr. McCorison could not come until the end of July, so for the greater part of this year we have been desperately short handed. In spite of this we have made surprisingly good progress at all levels of our work. This year we completed the classification of the Civil War Collection by the use of part-time, college student, labor. Ours has always been one of the major collections in the Civil War field, but it stood on our shelves with books, pamphlets, and broadsides in a single alphabetical order by author. Now the unbound material has been placed in properly labeled covers, and the entire collection has been arranged according to a simplified Library of Congress classification, drawing the material together by subject.

In spite of being short handed we have been able to serve as usual our correspondents and visitors. This year our most-traveled visitor was a professor who came from Jugoslavia to spend the summer searching our newspapers to prove his thesis that one of Herman Melville's literary creations had its origin in an actual occurrence. When after weeks of work the weary Jugoslav admitted defeat, our Mary Brown made one more suggestion, and a few hours

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later our visitor was dancing and singing in the reading room, his search successful and his hypothesis vindicated.

We can so serve scholarship, as I pointed out in my April report, only because we have limited our responsibilities so narrowly that we can fulfill them. The librarian of the American Antiquarian Society is not a collector in a kind of bookman's heaven where he can experience the private collector's very proper joy of acquiring what appeals to him. Nor would he be faithful to the purposes of the Society if he collected simply for the fun of completing some file or class of material as one would complete a jigsaw puzzle, without regard to the utility of the missing pieces or of the collection as a whole. Rather, his function is to build a sound structure for bibliographical and historical research. The rare book department of a college library usually collects selectively in the interests of aesthetics, building up a very specialized kind of art collection. This is a perfectly proper preoccupation for that kind of library, but not for a research institution which gathers books not for themselves, primarily, but for what they can tell us about human society. As a matter of fact, the library which collects only rarities and highlights frequently performs a disservice to scholarship; the bibliographer and historian do indeed need to consult rare books, but for every one of these they must also have access to hundreds of relatively common works which are not to be found in a strictly "rare-book" library.

The founders of the American Antiquarian Society went too far in the opposite direction when they attempted to collect everything. They assumed that this Library would serve as the archive of American society, preserving the entire printed and manuscript record of American life. Very soon it became apparent that no one institution could house this bulk of material, and that the historian would be suffocated by the mountain of his sources if the librarian and the

archivist did not make a preliminary selection. The historian who cries out that the librarian and archivist must do no selecting is like the cabinet maker who insists on having his wood in the form of a forest.

In this library the first decision had to be that we were concerned with printed works rather than with manuscripts. Every manuscript is unique, and for that reason it ought for the sake of historians to come to rest at the place of its greatest usefulness, which is usually at or near the place of origin. The fact that the Sam Adams manuscripts came to rest in New York and not in Boston has been a serious hindrance to scholarship, and the removal of the Samuel Cooper manuscripts to the West Coast was little less than a bibliographical crime. The rather important Virginia and Ohio manuscripts which rest on the shelves of this library came to us at a time when no nearer institution was preserving such material, and we must retain them because they have been fixed here by bibliographical references. When we acquire such manuscripts today we send them home before they become attributed to us in print.

The field of our major responsibility and work is that of the printed source materials of the history of the United States. In ordinary college and university libraries ninetenths of the call for books is for secondary material, for books about things. With us the proportion is reversed; scholars come here to use source materials. Our shelves are lined with these printed eye-witnesses of the past who are, compared with human beings, immortal; who can be called to the witness stand by generation after generation of historians, as we slowly learn which questions are really important; witnesses who answer questions like the automatons they are, not having, like living creatures, minds of their own to be influenced by the things which may have happened since their creation. Modern secondary works,

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by contrast, may be very useful assistants, but they are not eye-witnesses. Our library policy is to purchase only those secondary works which will aid research.

There comes a time in the collecting of source material when it is no longer practical to gather in every piece, a time when one must begin to select. In our collection of American imprints this point is reached at the end of the year 1820. In the field of schoolbooks, to take the outstanding example, the output after that date is so great, and the unit interest to historians so small, that it seemed foolish to keep a huge collection here when there were better ones at Harvard and Columbia. Now we keep only those schoolbooks which have some other interest for us, such as author or imprint.

About 1876 the output of American printing presses became such a flood that it is no longer physically feasible for any one institution to attempt to gather in the printed source material of the entire nation even when judicious selection is used. Such an inclusive collection, could it be made, would involve useless duplication, for today there are literally thousands of libraries and historical societies gathering the materials of their own regions or special interests. Our general rule of collection is this: if something is printed in the United States before 1877 we keep it unless there is a reason why we should not, as is the case with schoolbooks; if something is printed after 1876, we do not keep it unless there is a specific reason why we should.

We are often chided for renouncing the period after 1876 and reminded that history did not cease then; but the cold fact is that in any field of history after that date, any collection of source material which we might build up would be surpassed by the holdings of many other institutions; and we firmly believe that the waste of funds and space by such collecting would be bibliographically wicked. We are some-

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times reminded that if we had collections of a few thousand books on such subjects as the First World War they would be used by readers. That is true; but it is not our function to provide that kind of library service. Today a library must specialize or drown in the flood of print. We shall not lose any influence by restricting our work to the first two centuries of American life, for no one has attempted a systematic gathering of the printed source materials of this period, and the historians to date have only scratched the surface of what has been gathered for their use. Moreover the period is assuming an ever greater importance as the other nations of the world seek to understand the origins of our new Rome and its culture.

In my April report I described the general policies and goals of the Society. I shall take this opportunity to report on the holdings and policies of the Library as of 1960. Mr. Vail's Guide to the Resources of the American Antiquarian Society, published in 1937, made a schematic plan of human knowledge and described our holdings in each segment. This is enlightening, but it does not show our strengths and weaknesses, nor does it show the plan of arrangement, which is almost as important to the researcher as the contents of the collection itself. Mr. Brigham's Fifty Years of Collecting describes some fifty of our collections but not other areas in which we have large holdings. I shall take this opportunity to describe our major collections as they stand on the shelves, and to state our collecting policy in each field, in order to help our suppliers, the booksellers, and our consumers, the scholars. In the list which follows are the symbols used here to show our strength in each field and our policy of collecting in it:

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- **I**—1640–1820
- 2—1821–1876
- 3-Since 1876
- A-The best, or one of the best, collections in this field
- B-A good working collection
- C-A poor and inactive collection
- X-We collect thoroughly in this field
- Y-We keep or buy the key works only
- Z-We do not collect actively in this field

ALMANACS

1AX, 2AX, 3BY

Our collection of some 20,000 pieces contains 90% of those printed in the United States before 1821, and about half of those printed before 1850. It has also 650 Mexican almanacs, beginning in 1794, and a fair collection of the issues of Canada, Hawaii, and the West Indies. For a fuller description see Brigham, *Fifty Years*, pp. 11-17.

AMATEUR NEWSPAPERS

1AX, 2AY, 3AZ

About 50,000 issues, going back to the beginnings of this hobby in America in 1805. Because of the tendency of future authors of distinction to exercise their inclinations in such publications, the collection no doubt contains much unrecognized literary history. Sometimes these journals are the first printing done in a town. See Brigham, pp. 18-20.

AMERICA SOUTH OF THE RIO GRANDE 1BZ, 2BZ, 3CZ

For our first century this was one of our chief areas of activity, but with the development of collections in other institutions, we retired from the field. As it stands, the collection contains all of the old standard works in one edition or another; its usefulness lies in showing what the North American of the last century knew about South America. The imprint collection is not large, but contains a sprinkling of not-in-Medina items. Our only significant modern additions have been in the field of bibliography. See Brigham, pp. 123-126, and *Newspapers*, below.

ANTIQUES AND COLLECTING

So far as possible we obtain every work relating to every field of collecting and special study of American material and significant European background material; see Philately, however.

ART CATALOGUES

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We have a working collection of Art Catalogues, Art Auction Catalogues, and the publications of American Art Museums. We restrict ourselves to Americana, and avoid duplication with the Worcester Art Museum, but significant research is done here in this field.

BALLADS, BROADSIDE

A large collection, second only, apparently, to the Harris collection at Brown. The undated broadsides are arranged by title.

BIBLES AND PRAYER BOOKS

This is the largest single collection of American biblia, although not as strong in native language material as some special collections. See Brigham, pp. 27-31.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

It is our policy to obtain every bibliography relating to American life before 1877. We have a number of unique tools of our own creation, such as the Catalogue of American Printers, 1640-1820, and a number of half-finished manuscript bibliographies begun by other people. See Brigham, pp. 27-31.

BIOGRAPHY

Our collection of biography of Americans who flourished before 1876 is certainly the best so far as ordinary people are concerned. We do not, however, attempt to obtain every piece of printed Lincolniana, etc. Modern biographies of the potboiling type are purchased only when remaindered. No other collection in the library contains a larger proportion of "rare," i.e., small edition and obscure, volumes.

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1AX, 2BZ, 3BZ

2AX. 3AX

1AX. 2BY

2AX, 3AX

1AX, 2AY, 3CZ

BOOK CATALOGUES

This is by far the largest collection of the catalogues of private and institutional libraries, of the catalogues of dealers in secondhand books, and of auction catalogues. The annotated auction catalogues, including the Stan Henkels and the William J. Campbell house files, are an invaluable aid in tracing books and manuscripts. Of recent years foreign catalogues have not been preserved unless they were devoted primarily to Americana, and no typewritten or mimeographed copies have been kept.

BOOKPLATES

This is the largest collection of American bookplates and labels, both personal and institutional, numbering about 35,000 pieces. For those printed after 1876, we are interested only in the work of certain engravers. See Brigham, pp. 31-37.

CARICATURES

This collection consists of European cartoons relating to American subjects, and American cartoons on social and political subjects. Chronologically it breaks off with the passing of the lithograph. The early European section is good enough to have justified our making our own index to the Americana in the British Museum catalogue. See Brigham, pp. 37-42.

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

This is much the strongest collection for the period before 1821, numbering some 1400 pieces. The period 1821-1876 is covered by a merely representative collection of some 6000 volumes. European editions are kept only when they have interest as prototypes of American works. The related collections of catechisms, primers, and song books are each much the best for the period before 1821. See Brigham, pp. 42-45.

COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY 1AZ, 2AY, 3CZ For the period before 1821 this collection has sometimes proved

to be stronger than the archives of the institutions themselves.

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1AX, 2AY, 3BZ

IAX, 2BY

IAX, 2BY

For the middle period it attempts to include all works about these institutions and all of their publications, but no effort is made to obtain every leaflet. For the modern period we exclude undergraduate publications and keep only every fifth year of the annual catalogues.

COOK BOOKS

The collection of American cook books, numbering about 2000 volumes, is the strongest for the period before 1877; after that date we have only a scattering collection of works of historical or geographical interest. See Brigham, pp. 50-52.

CIRCUSIANA

The important part of this collection is the early broadside and poster material; for the later period we have only the standard narrative and secondary material. See Brigham, pp. 46-47.

DIRECTORIES, CITY

This is the strongest collection through 1860, and good through 1900. Telephone books are kept when directories are lacking. As we fill out the nineteenth century and the recent files for the smaller cities, we shall have to discard all but the fifth or tenth year of the modern large-city files. A mine of source material for historians in every field, directories are greatly under-rated. See Brigham, pp. 52-54.

GRAPHIC ARTS

Down to the Currier and Ives period this is the strongest collection of American engraving and lithography, including, for example, all but one of Revere's works. We do not collect generally in the post-1825 period because of the strong Goodspeed collection in the Worcester Art Museum. Here also might be mentioned the best institutional collections of early advertising cards, lottery tickets, valentines, watch papers, and similar minor manifestations of the graphic arts. See Brigham, pp. 135-161.

1AX, 2BZ

1AX, 2AX, 3CZ

1AX, 2BY, 3CZ

1AX, 2AX, 3BZ

FOREIGN HISTORY AND TRAVEL

This collection contains foreign works read by Americans who flourished before 1877, and works printed in America before 1876. For Great Britain the collection is lamentably weak, lacking most of the Victoria County histories and many of the parish records. The Canadiana was too long neglected and is now only a good working collection.

GENEALOGY

Although we ourselves do no genealogical work, we find that this collection is invaluable to the historian and bibliographer. For many years we have sought to obtain every printed American genealogy, but our collection is still only third or fourth best in the country. We do not in general keep genealogical manuscripts, charts, or typewritten or mimeographed material, unless it can be indexed and bound as a book. For many years we took all genealogical serials and the publications of all family associations, but we dropped most of the latter when they became mere newsletters, and many of the former as potboilers of no utility to the historian. See Brigham, pp. 66–69.

IMPRINTS

The collection of material printed within the present United States between 1640 and 1820 is much the strongest. Different samplings to determine the percentage of known titles held by this library have yielded figures from 43 to 75 per cent. The items which we lack are chiefly unique broadsides and odd printings of common works. Apparently we have about 90 per cent of the bulk of the printing in this period. For the period from 1821-1876 we keep most American imprints, excluding school books, reprint fiction, and the like. Here we buy imprint material only at rock bottom prices, at which the supply appears steadily enough to keep us busy.

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INSTITUTIONAL PUBLICATIONS

This collection contains three divisions: the publications of national organizations, of State organizations, and of local organizations. For the period 1820–1876 it includes everything with an United States imprint issued by a church, business house, etc. For the later period it includes only those of the publications of these institutions which relate to their history.

LEARNED SOCIETIES

In the fields which are of particular interest to us, we seem to have the most comprehensive collection. Originally we exchanged with learned academies all over the world, but some years ago we gave most of this early foreign material to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. Later we ceased current collection in such fields as anthropology, archaeology, and folklore, although keeping the files of publications which we had. Until recently we kept every publication of every State, regional, county and town historical society, but so many of these have become mere newsletters that today we reject them unless we have good reason to do otherwise. On the other hand, we attempt to obtain the publications of every specialized society, such as those devoted to the collection or study of swords, steamships, and covered bridges and the like, as well as the historical journals of every religious denomination.

LIBRARIES

This collection consists of the publications of institutional libraries and the catalogues of the libraries of private individuals. We formerly collected everything in these fields, but when we found that one library was issuing five publications, only one of permanent value, we culled our subscription lists to really useful items.

LITERATURE

This collection includes the works of foreign authors printed in the United States before 1877, and the American printings of

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American Antiquarian Society

American authors. Begun as a collection of first editions based on an extension of the Foley list, it is still the best collection in that field. It was more thoroughly catalogued than any similar collection, but after the formulation of the BAL program this bibliographical study of first editions was dropped as useless duplication of Jacob Blanck's work. No attempt is being made to collect the other BAL authors systematically. We collected Wright titles energetically and our holdings are perhaps the strongest in this field. There are supplementary collections of anthologies and histories of literature.

LITERARY ANNUALS

We have a collection of 1282 volumes of these literary repositories which flourished from 1825 to 1860. To judge by the fact that the growth of the collection has ceased, it is apparently nearly complete. See Brigham, pp. 20-23.

MANUSCRIPTS

In general, manuscripts are outside of our field of activity, but for historical reasons we have a million or more pieces. Being almost first in this field of collection, we early acquired the Curwen, Cragie, Mather, Bentley, Baldwin, Thomas, and similar papers, and we must keep them in spite of policy changes because they are credited to us in the bibliographies. We have served also as the repository of important local collections, such as the archives of the Foster, Lincoln, Paine, and Salisbury families, and we shelter the records of certain regional institutions. Because of our interest in the Forbes bibliography, we have built up the best collection of early American manuscript diaries. We have also important collections of papers relating to printing and publishing, such as the Mathew Carey and Lee & Shepard account books, which we took when no one else would preserve them. See Brigham, pp. 83-91.

MAPS

The map collection of about 10,000 pieces, all relating to America, is a late development. For the period of discovery and for the

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European background it is poor. For the eighteenth century it is good, with a few unique pieces. For the nineteenth century it is selective, but useful. It includes practically all of the New England atlases, but few for other areas. When our last stack was built we reluctantly decided that we would have to relinquish the very important field of state and county atlases.

MISCELLANEOUS PAMPHLETS

This is a collection of some 65,000 boxed pamphlets which are not of institutional origin and which have not been important enough to be catalogued. For the period 1821–1876 the collection includes everything with an United States imprint; for the period since 1876 it includes only works of historical interest.

MUNICIPAL DOCUMENTS

For the nineteenth century this collection is spotty; in general only documents of obvious historical interest have been kept. NewEngland town reports were collected with assiduity because of the vital records printed in them, but of late the policy of collection has been passive because the utility of the material does not justify the space which it requires.

MUSIC, SHEET

A very good collection of some 37,000 pieces of music printed in the United States before 1876, used as frequently for its lithographic covers as for the contents. There is also a collection of 19,000 pieces of recent music to which nothing has been added in recent years. See Brigham, pp. 97–101.

NEWSPAPERS

The collection of American newspapers printed before 1821 is by far the strongest, both as to the number of issues and the number of good runs. From 1821 to 1876 the collection is selective, but as good as any, usually for any State second only to that in the State Library. Since 1876 the collection is highly selective, and no attempt is made to obtain microfilm coverage of this

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period. The only European newspapers are British files which break off in 1800. The South American collection is fairly good; for Bolivia and Chile it is the best. The Canadian collection has some unique files. See Brigham, pp. 101–110.

PAPER CURRENCY

The collection of colonial paper currency, comprising some 1490 different pieces, excluding signature variations, is the second largest in an institution. The nineteenth century currency was collected from the point of view of the graphic arts rather than numismatics. The coin collection consists only of a few samples of colonial issues. There are good supporting collections of numismatic literature and catalogues. See Brigham, pp. 48-50.

PERIODICALS

In spite of a strong effort to build up the English magazines published before 1783, this part of our collection is only good. For American publications before 1821 it is the best. For the period 1821–1876 the collection stresses those publications which are source material for social and intellectual history. For the period after 1876 the collection included until recently every magazine devoted to American History in any form, but the rush of popular potboilers has compelled some selection. An effort to develop the collection of "intellectual" magazines of 1890–1914 exposed the fact that these are no longer obtainable.

PHILATELIC MATERIAL

Although we do not collect in this field, we have a strong collection of the older auction and priced catalogues, periodicals, and monographic literature.

PRINTING AND RELATED ARTS IAX, 2BY, 3BY

Although we have the greatest body of source material for the early history of this field, the background and secondary collections have been neglected. The coverage is, however, very inclusive, on the physical side covering such classes as ink, paper,

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IAX, 2BZ

IAX, 2AY, 3AY

2BZ, 3CY

watermarks (a great collection), type and type founding, proof reading, binding, etc. The Journalism section includes such classes as advertising, censorship, headlines, wallpaper issues, yellow journalism, etc. The collection of American type specimen books is strong for the early period.

PSALMODY

For the period before 1877, the collection includes some 5100 volumes and is the best; for the more recent period it contains some 3200 volumes, but we add nothing to this segment. See Brigham, pp. 115-117.

RAILROAD AND CANAL DOCUMENTS

Thanks to the Streeter gifts, the Society has the best collection of American railroad and canal material for the period to 1840, and after that for the formative period of railroading in the southern and western states. See Brigham, pp. 117–119.

REFERENCE WORKS

We have every useful published reference work relating to the fields of our interest, including the bibliographies, the old encyclopedias, dictionaries, etc. We have been particularly concerned in the making of bibliographies, and as a result we have a number of unfinished ones in manuscript. We have indexed obituaries and other vital statistics in several key newspapers covering the period from 1784 to 1930. Other specialized tools are a biographical and business dictionary of American printers and booksellers who were active before 1821, and a biographical author catalogue much fuller than any of the printed ones.

RELIGION

This includes a good working collection of the European background material, much of which was in the library of the Mathers, and the best collection of early American printed source material. The collection of American religious history is perhaps the largest, the Mormon and Shaker sections being particularly good.

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2BY

We have had wonderful coöperation in building up the collection of histories of Jewish congregations.

SCHOOL BOOKS

For the period before 1821, the collection of 2510 volumes is unrivalled. School books printed after that date are kept only if they have some other interest, such as imprint or author. See Brigham, pp. 120–121.

SCHOOL CATALOGUES AND HISTORIES 1AX, 2CY, 3CZ

Except for the early period, this collection is too weak to provide material for research in education.

SONGSTERS

This collection of song books without music begins with the unique 1764 item and continues down to recent comic and election campaign pieces. See Brigham, pp. 122–123.

STATE AND LOCAL HISTORY

For many years the Library has attempted to obtain every American State, regional, county and local history; it may well be that our collection is the best. Until recently we carefully gathered the serial publications of all local historical societies (there were a thousand active in this way at one time) but the degeneration of most of these into newsletters has led us to keep only the best. The California Centennial with its 400 volumes compelled us to adopt a selective policy in regard to State histories.

STATE DOCUMENTS

For the period before 1821 our New England holdings are excellent and our western material good, but for the later period the collection is uneven. We have all of the reprint series which with their indices are much more useful to historians than the original printings, of which no perfect files exist. We should strengthen the post-reprint period by acquiring a few collections of nineteenth century state documents, but we shall not purchase volumes separately.

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IAX, 2CZ

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1BY, 2CZ

STEREOGRAPHIC VIEWS AND POST CARDS 2BZ, 3BZ These two collections, numbering 60,000 stereos and 86,000 post cards, give the fullest pictorial report of the United States in the nineteenth century. All are American views, arranged geographically except for some 55 classes such as humor, sports, Civil War, etc. Because of the cost of searching and filing, we are not adding to this collection. See Brigham, pp. 126–127.

UNITED STATES DOCUMENTS

1AX, 2AY, 3BY

Our collection was begun before the foundation of the Library of Congress, and as a result it was discovered a few years ago that we had some 200 printed documents of the first 14 Congresses of which no copy was to be found in Washington. Other unique volumes of as late a period as the beginning of railroading have turned up in our holdings. For the period after 1876 our collection is restricted to historical and bibliographical material. See Brigham, pp. 130–132.

UNITED STATES HISTORY, CHRONOLOGICAL 1AX, 2AY, 3CZ

This collection is arranged by a simplified Library of Congress "E" classification. Slavery and Civil War are particularly strong in source material which was collected at the time, but no effort is being made to keep abreast of the volume-a-day flood of modern secondary works. For the period since 1876, in which every university has a good collection, we have only the tools useful to us.

UNITED STATES HISTORY, TOPICAL 1AX, 2BY, 3BY

Most of the books printed in the United States between 1821 and 1876 are arranged in a large number of subject classifications running from Advertising, Aeronautics, and Agricultural History, through Indian Captivities, Literature, Magic, to Whaling, the Whig Party, Worcester Authors, and Zoology. With these volumes of source material are shelved the modern secondary works relating to the same subjects. Among the more unusual classes are Counterfeit Detectors, Christmas Gift Books, Dream Books, Epitaphs, Hoaxes, and Slang. There are seven hundred volumes in the American Indian language section. Relatively the strongest is the great collection relating to the Plains and the Rockies, probably equal in strength to any other collection of printed Western material.

TRADE CATALOGUES, TRADE DIRECTORIES, AND YEAR BOOKS 1AX, 2CY, 3CZ

For the early period this is the best collection; for later periods it is very uneven.

It is very unlikely that the American Antiquarian Society will enter any new fields of collecting within our lifetime. In so doing it would be competing with a hundred other libraries with better book funds. On the other hand, a thorough bibliographical study, and the publication of the fields in which it is strong and ought to be stronger, will keep it very busy in the foreseeable future. In the very near future, we hope this winter, we shall publish the bibliography of American city directories on which Mrs. Spear worked for so many years. This winter we shall also replace the cumbersome and inefficient lighting fixtures in our reading room and offices. The present system, which was installed in 1909, has troubled us and our readers for years, but we felt that we ought to make do, until Mr. Streeter last summer offered to give us \$13,000 for the purpose of improving the lighting.

On behalf of the Council I must with regret report the loss of four of our members since the last meeting: Dudley W. Knox, died June 11, 1960; Arthur Adams, June 21, 1960; Arthur Hobson Quinn, October 16, 1960; Clarence H. Haring, September 4, 1960; St. George L. Sioussat, August 31, 1960. Obituaries will appear in our printed proceedings.

> CLIFFORD K. SHIPTON, For the Council

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