THE LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

INFORMATION METHODS OF RESEARCH WORKERS IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

Proceedings of the Conference held at Chaucer House, Malet Place, London, W.C.1, on 1st June, 1960, under the Chairmanhip of
PROFESSOR CHARLES MADGE.

Edited by
JOAN M. HARVEY, A.L.A.

REFERENCE, SPECIAL AND INFORMATION SECTION
THE LIBRARY ASSOCIATION
Chaucer House, Malet Place
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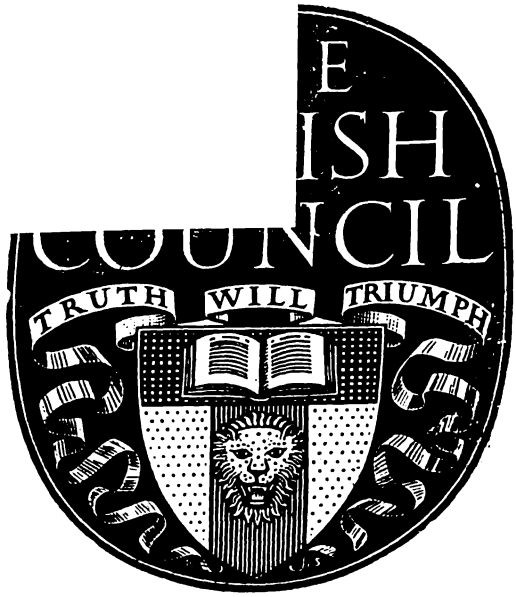

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FOREWORD

The librarian is at least as prone to the besetting sin of complacency as workers in other fields. He needs constantly to be reminded that he exists, as a librarian, to meet the needs of his users. To what extent is the research worker helped or hindered by library techniques? Does anyone apart from the library staff use the catalogue? Is there too much officiousness in libraries? Are librarians showing as much concern for consumers' needs in the social sciences and humanities as they are for needs in science and technology?

Professor Jack Simmons, as an economic and social historian, spoke forcibly on some of these issues at the 5th Annual Conference of the Reference, Special and Information Section at Leicester in April, 1959. He was in no doubt as to what was lacking in the facilities which we somewhat unquestioningly offer to our public. On the following day of the Conference Miss Barbara Kyle attacked the problem from another angle. She discussed how the social scientist did his reading and research and how the library approach fits into this. More consumer research was needed, she urged. It was on this note that a recommendation was passed at the end of the Conference to hold a one-day session in the following spring. Three research workers in the social sciences, at lecturer and postgraduate student level, were to be asked to state their views of libraries.

So came about the one-day conference held on 1st June, 1960, under the chairmanship of Professor C. Madge, of Birmingham University. The three papers were complementary and illuminating, and discussion was keen, although the audience was not large. We came away feeling that we had taken a first step towards improved understanding.

We are much indebted to Miss Harvey for her painstaking editorship of these conference proceedings, not least for piecing together an inadequate tape-recording of the discussion, and to Mr. Julian Roberts for his patience in organising the conference.

A. J. WALFORD (*Chairman*).

CONTENTS

INFORMATION SERVICES AND LITERATURE CURRENTLY AVAILABLE TO RESEARCH WORKERS AND LIBRARIANS

By DONALD G. MACRAE, M.A.,

Reader in Sociology, London School of Economics, and Editor of the British Journal of Sociology

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That the librarian should be a scholar or the scholar become a librarian has seemed since the invention of the book a most natural thing. True, relations have not always been happy: even the best of marriages has its *longeurs* and disagreements, but the union of scholar and librarian has been distinguished by a numerous and noble posterity which has peopled the world of learning. Alas that things could not have remained thus! Today we have divorce, misunderstanding, fugitive unions of Research and Library Science, and a bastard and ill-formed progeny of doctoral theses.

We are met, I take it, to see if in one area, that of the social sciences in general and sociology in particular, some sort of marriage compact might not again be possible. I doubt if we can do more than suggest the terms of settlement, the possible dower—in a sociological context I suppose I had better talk of " bride price "—and some of the points on which it is desirable to reach agreement. There is a story, to be found in one form or another in every peasant society, of the marriage-broker and the prospective groom. The broker praises the young woman; the young man asks, " But is she not hump-backed ? " " Perhaps a little. . . . " " And does she not squint ? " " Possibly, but not unattractively. . . . " " And is she not rather short tempered ? " " Possibly, but do you expect to find a girl without some fault ? "

No doubt they lived happily ever after. Let me play the broker and try to describe sociology to you, its kin, and suggest how we may all contrive to get on together. The great ancestor of all science is philosophy, and the social sciences are today still closer to philosophy than are the sciences of nature. This is, I believe, unavoidable and likely to continue. The social sciences can be classified in many ways, valid for different purposes: one of the simplest is the degree of this kinship with philosophy.

Political Science is closest kin; in some aspects still not emancipated from the rooftree of philosophy. Its theory is partly pure philosophy, partly modern sociology. Its theoretician must have access to both good editions of philosophical speculation from the pre-Socratics to the present, and to the crabbed journals of the sociologists as well as to his own specialist periodicals. The political scientist who is concerned more with the political behaviour and institutions will need the documents and commentaries of international bodies, of central governments, and—if they exist: often, in practical form, they don't exist—of local government. The professional will probably know better than any librarian what he needs of these, though he may need the technical aid of the librarian in finding it.

The beginner, however, will need help of another kind—and this is true for all the social sciences, not just politics. The intellectual formation of the scholar—as distinct from the mere researcher, whose ignorance may be his strength—can be helped enormously by the advice of a good bookseller (a dwindling race) or a sympathetic librarian. Now, for all I know, many librarians are ready to play this rôle: the truth is that most readers feel that the librarian has neither the time nor the vocation, nor—perhaps—the duty to do so. They feel that as readers they rather discommode the serious business of, say, cataloguing or bibliography, or just counting the books. Natural scientists and technologists, I am told, are ready to use the services of technical librarians. I believe that students and even mature scholars in the humanities and the social sciences often feel a deep unwillingness to consult the librarian as distinct from the library. Where books and journals are concerned this can do little harm. Where official papers, statistical sources, documentary and/or local sources are involved it can be a severe handicap not just to the political scientist, but to all library users. In truth, we are none of us very certain as to what the librarian does, or can do.

The sociologist, who has been on the academic stage though in small number, for fifty years, often feels that the librarian is simply against him. The classificatory system of most libraries is such that when he wants to consult material he may find that what he needs is concealed as economics, as politics, as history, as statistics, or as anthropology. If he goes only to the shelves labelled "Sociology" he may certainly find the *Sociological Review* or *The British Journal of Sociology*. He is also likely to find primers of sex education and episcopal dispositions on what is wrong with the world. This experience is quite likely to turn

him against librarians and to that never-ending conversation which begins, " The occupational disease of the librarian is . . . "

In part he is justified. Something, it is not my job to say what, is certainly very wrong with library classification. But much of the trouble lies in the nature of sociology itself, and should lead the sociologist back to the help of the librarian. Sociology is a comparatively new, a rapidly growing, and in many ways an eclectic discipline. At the foundation of sociology is the idea of comparative study where comparison substitutes for experiment in natural science. We compare patterns of social behaviour, institutions and social structures. We are therefore likely to need both primary and secondary materials from all sorts of areas and belonging to all kinds of other different disciplines.

But we are also concerned to study the social process in detail in a single society—usually our own. To plan and conduct such field research we need access to an even greater amount of official and local documentation and statistical data than the political scientist. A helpful and specialist librarian can be decisively important in saving time, effort and money in this work. He may not, however, always be thanked—quite often someone has already done much of the work, and this can be a shock to our ignorance and a disappointment to our hopes when it is revealed to us by the librarian or anyone else.

In addition there is a flowering of " special sociologies " within the discipline. Four of these are of great importance in modern Britain : Industrial Sociology which borders on some areas of (particularly) Applied Economics; Educational Sociology which lies close not only to the jungle of Education but to Psychology and even Local Government; Criminology which is similarly involved; and the sociological study of race relations. These are all examples of fields where the mastery of diverse material and the pursuit of field studies go hand-in-hand. The same might be said of the sociologies of politics, of law and even of art. Need and difficulty in these matters go together. Not even the British Library of Political Science could deal with all the problems of cross-reference involved—and I personally would be frightened to ask its help in any too detailed a way.

And sociology is unified—so far as anything but the antipathies of sociologists *do* unite it—by its theory. This body of theory is at least 90% identical with the theory of social anthropology. This means that the classics of our thought (and their growing points too) are as likely to be classed with anthropology as with sociology. I don't know that this causes trouble in practice.

though I suppose it might on occasion give the librarian a headache. Nor do I suppose that, except where archaeology and physical anthropology enter the picture, the librarian of the social sciences ever finds anthropology giving him the trouble that sociology can yield. But I had better not say too much about this—there is a worry about human geography at the back of my mind. . . . Anyhow this theory can present no great problem to anyone: the sources are few and well-known. It would be pleasant if one could be as sure of finding them in local libraries as one is of finding the major works of economics or psychology —if for example Weber or Durkheim were as widely distributed as Keynes or Freud. They aren't.

More serious is the difficulty common to both sociology and social anthropology of knowledge of and access to the mass of field studies and monographs. Despite such journals of summary information as *Current Sociology* and *Sociological Abstracts,* despite the reviews of the *British Journal of Sociology* or its American opposite numbers, much escapes. Local studies may be found scattered over diverse areas and 150 years of time. Expert knowledge of these studies costs time and tedium: the librarian who mastered it would be a pearl of very great price. If at the same time he commanded the literature of investigation into social problems he would be, as Aristotle was described by Dante, a veritable master to those who know.

For sociology is the skeleton round which that most practically important and successful of the social disciplines, social administration, has grown. Its literature is immense, scattered, fugitive ; an affair of articles, pamphlets, brochures, reports, minutes of evidence, and so on. It ramifies not only through the social life of every industrialised society, but increasingly into the " underdeveloped " or " primitive " world. Social services can precede even the use of money in the African bush: I have seen them do it. The academic social administrator wants, then, access to and guidance through this jungle of documents, largely official. He will also need the ordinary resources of sociology and very often—particularly if concerned with psychiatric social work— of psychology as well. Here at least he will find more adequate abstracting than elsewhere in the social sciences. Psychology mimics natural science in its forms of presentation : one undeserved benefit is such a journal as *Psychological Abstracts.*

With psychology we have moved far from philosophy. Let me return to sociology and social administration which are still (and rightly) largely patrilocal. You cannot study either without reference to problems of right and wrong—do you prefer me to

say "value judgements"?—and worries as to what "social knowledge" or valid social evidence really are. The ideal librarian, then, must if he is to aid research know not only the decisive theoretical article on *Functional Prerequisites of the Funeral* and the important research into the *Social Rôle of the Professional Mute in Bletchley;* he must also be able to assuage a philosophical worry with the appropriate article in *Mind.* As I go on I see the ideal, unreal librarian as nurse to the student, guide to the researcher, and therapist to the scholar who has lost his faith—and, in all earnest, all scholarship turns on an act of faith ever to be renewed.

One thing which I find important in my own work and which is of practical interest to the library and librarians is the contrast which the social sciences—perhaps economics is an exception—present to the natural sciences in that the latter regularly can and do discard their past. The sciences of nature and their associated technologies are ruthlessly progressive. On occasion an old paper may be of crucial importance, but in the ordinary business of research speed of access to a wide range of contemporary work is the vital thing. For reasons that are part of our subject matter, society itself, this is not true of the social sciences. We are bound to old sources and to history. If we wish to make comparative studies our apparatus is the library which has stored for whatever purpose the most miscellaneous writings of the past. Our knowledge and expertise grow by accretion, and we do not start anew, confident only in our methods, as do the physical sciences. And old sociological theories never die and seldom fade way. Our need for libraries of scope and depth is as real as that of the chemist for laboratory apparatus. Usually we don't get it, and have to engage in our endless debate with time aided by only scanty resources.

This is not an abstract point. In studying the social services in Ghana—surely a practical endeavour—I have found this problem. In my theoretical work on the nature of social structure I have met it in a different form. In yet another guise I have encountered it in my rather amateur forays into industrial sociology where, trying to understand problems in a motor tyre factory, I have wanted sources going back for sixty years. And in my hobby, the history of the social sciences, my need is of course constant. In all these areas I ought to make a nuisance of myself to librarians. Usually I don't do so for fear of disturbing their other tasks and also through doubt as to whether they could, fairly, be expected to be able to help me.

If I look at Mr. P. R. Lewis on *The Literature of the Social Sciences*, published by the Library Association, or at Ranganathan and Kumar *Social Science Research and Libraries* (Asia Publishing House), I am not re-assured. These are well-intentioned books, but they betray, where I am in some sense expert, odd gaps and an odder perspective. I think they could mislead both librarians and students. At best they are brave forays into a jungle, but their authors do not seem at all sure of the paths which we, the aboriginal inhabitants, most confidently tread. Later editions may rectify this—I hope, in particular, that Mr. Lewis's book will long serve in a revised form and many editions. At the moment they are maps of what seems largely a *terra incognita*.

Even economics, the most advanced, most independent and least typical of the social sciences, does not fare too well in Mr. Lewis's work. For example, Keynes' *General Theory of Interest, Employment and Money*, certainly the most influential and perhaps the most valuable social science book of our century, does not appear. This could be an incidental slip, but I expect I could parallel it elsewhere. If librarians and social scientists are going to get together we are—on both sides —going to have to work harder at preparing ourselves than we yet have done. Any *rapprochement* would be profitable.

One last point: despite what I have said about our constant need for past material, yet some better abstracting system is needed for the flood of new material. There are thirteen main economic journals in Britain, seven sociological ones (if one lumps social administration with sociology), three—at least—in political science, two in anthropology, and so on for statistics, psychology, etc. There are in my field three series of sociological books, one of which has published in sixteen years more than 200 volumes. Abstracts which would briefly say what is the content, the intention and above all briefly judge the merit of these, could improve the standard of our work and facilitate its progress more than any other factor except more money !

Such abstracts would be novel if they attempted evaluation. Yet in this would lie half their value. Perhaps this suggestion about judgement seems wicked or impossible. All I can say is that the librarian who wants to help the social scientist must be ready not just to know, but to judge. As a partial, less passionate outsider, he is unusually well-placed to do so. After all, nothing more is needed than a little courage, and we are more frightened of you than you are of us.

Morning discussion ; Mr. MacRae's paper.

Miss Barbara Kyle opened the discussion. She agreed with Mr. MacRae that the specialist did not need the help of the librarian or documentalist on his own special subject, but asked if he did not need the librarian's help when entering other fields of knowledge bordering on his own. She thought the Conference wanted to know how he viewed the services librarians tried to produce, not for his particular subject, but for borderline ones. That, perhaps, was where librarians could help. When the economist was temporarily being a sociologist what sort of guides to the material did he want ? How far should librarians attempt to classify, abstract and document the subject which was somebody's borderline subject ? In what ways could the abstracting services in the social sciences be improved ? Did Mr. MacRae think greater specialisation and greater help on small subjects would be useful ?

Mr. MacRae said one of the things he did when he wanted to find out something was to go and talk to a librarian, and he usually found this was extremely helpful. When he was interested in a subject outside his ordinary concern he talked to a librarian and also read the reviews in the relevant journals in the field, beginning with the most recent and going backwards over the last five or ten years. He felt that some specialist librarians were more interested in books and bibliography than readers, and regarded people who wanted to read books as enemies of classification and library science, but if the specialist librarian stopped before reaching that stage he was most useful and helpful in every way. There were four things he wanted from a social science abstract. The first was breadth ; secondly, a brief statement as to whether the article abstracted contained new facts and, if so, about what ; thirdly, whether it contained any proof or disproof of some particular thesis ; fourthly, a one-line judgement as to whether it had been well done, badly done, was worth doing, or was not worth doing. The last requirement was the most difficult of all but it would be the most valuable.

Mr. D. J. Foskett thought that in the field of the social sciences it would not be possible for an abstract to give any evaluation that had itself any value. The reader of the abstract should make his own evaluation and, because of this, brevity in an abstract was not necessarily a good thing.

It was suggested by Miss Kyle that as a substitute for evaluation, particularly for foreign material by unknown authors, the abstract should include information on the qualifications and past history

of the author of the article. Mr. MacRae did not agree; he felt that a judgement of the quality of the article by someone who was seriously concerned, and qualified to be concerned, about the subject, despite the fact that it was possible to make mistakes, would be better than none.

Mr. K. A. Mallaber said this implied that all workers in the social sciences were looking at a particular article from the same angle. This seemed to be a fundamental difficulty of the librarian being the writer of abstracts even when he realised that different research workers used the same material for quite different purposes. How could he evaluate an article from several different directions at once? This had come home to him very much during recent discussions about the best form in which to produce a guide to current British periodicals which would help librarians to select the titles needed for a particular job. It was decided that the periodicals must be described flatly, including all the facts necessary for evaluation but not including an evaluation. Users differed so much in what they wanted from a periodical that it was not possible to say that one periodical was better than another in a particular field. This seemed to him to be the only way to approach the problem of abstracts and descriptions of any books. Mr. Lewis's book was an attempt to describe rather than to evaluate and the basic difficulty was how to take each subject (economics, sociology, statistics, economic history, etc.) and relate them to each other without rewriting the book over and over again from the point of view of each of the social sciences covered (all books on the social sciences from the aspect of the economist; all books on the social sciences from the aspect of the sociologist; and so on). This difficulty of overlapping the subject to serve different research workers seemed to be one of the things that militated entirely against a classification in a general library being of any use because one could not really have so many approaches. Perhaps in libraries the catalogue was more use than the classification on the shelves.

Mr. Foskett asked if he could make one last point on evaluative abstracts. He thought it would have been easier to prepare evaluative abstracts in the natural sciences than in the social sciences, but the Russians, who insisted on evaluative abstracts in the natural sciences when they started the *Referativnyi Zhurnal* a few years ago, have now abandoned evaluation in the abstracts.

Mr. MacRae agreed with the point about catalogues and with what had been said about Mr. Lewis's book. He still felt that

evaluative abstracts were important but he wondered if this should be less the job of the librarian than of some expert on the subject matter who was also an expert abstractor. In theory the abstract which was as abstract as it could be was the best, but to the actual user this was not true and a bad evaluative judgement was, to him, very often better than no evaluation at all.

Mr. M. B. Line asked Mr. MacRae if he would agree that very often it was more useful to research work to have a librarian with a fairly wide sphere of knowledge in his field and related fields rather than a highly specialised knowledge in one subject which often, however well-trained the librarian might be, the research worker knew far better than he did. He suggested that the librarian's function was really to cover as wide a field as possible and not to try to be a specialist in any one narrow field. He also asked whether the average research worker would prefer, apart from abstracts, a detailed subject catalogue or whether a less detailed author and dictionary catalogue would be more use to him. Mr. MacRae said he agreed very strongly with Mr. Line's first point. On his second point, the catalogue was necessary to the beginner and to the researcher outside his own field. The more experienced the researcher the less use the catalogue was to him.

Mr. Mallaber remarked that the fact was, of course, that it was the librarian who needed the subject catalogue so that he could help the specialist to refresh his memory on books he knew about vaguely but had forgotten the precise titles. He had noticed that specialists seldom knew how to use a subject catalogue although occasionally they knew the name of the author or the title of the book they wanted. He regarded the subject catalogue as a librarian's tool and he thought that the catalogue should be organised for the librarians to use on behalf of the specialists. He wished to go on to a rather different problem which worried many librarians—the point which Mr. MacRae had raised about beginners in research. Life seemed to be full of beginners in research. They came to the librarian for information but were unable to formulate their problems and if their questions were to be answered the librarian must spend hours talking to the beginner on his own subject before he could help him with his immediate problem. What did the universities do to start off their budding research workers? Was there any training? What could be done and what was being done to help the beginner to find his feet?

Professor Charles Madge said he could give a personal impression on that point. He thought that in universities one did suffer from the unfledged researchers and would-be researchers. No doubt the faculty did not all give as much time to guidance as they could do but this was partly due to lack of academic man-power. However, part of the process of learning was to find out on your own and one had to suffer silently while the beginners either became better researchers or decided that they were not particularly fitted for research. There was a considerable 'falling by the wayside' of beginners in research.

Mrs. Floud thought she would try to discourage students from going to the librarian with frivolous questions. She had not yet recovered from the surprise of finding the Librarian of the Institute of Education preparing a bibliography which she had asked a student to prepare and she thought librarians should be very firm with students.

Mr. L. J. Sharpe leapt to the defence of the budding research students. He pointed out that the newly-fledged graduate is often left almost entirely alone; he has to search for a thesis subject and on top of that he has to come to terms with the library, which he has ignored largely in his undergraduate career (Mr. Sharpe thought there must be a deep psychological reason for this). Possibly one of the problems was that they did not consult librarians enough about the techniques of the library; how to go about research and what was available in the library. He felt this was also true of the junior members of the research staff themselves. They were not aware of the facilities available and libraries were not used to anything like the extent they should be. The trouble, he thought, really went back to the beginning of the student's life at the university when he had a quick tour round the library on the first day instead of a more detailed introduction four to six weeks after settling in.

Mr. MacRae said a detailed introduction to the library was very important to students. Compared with the United States of America the sheer lack of introduction at British universities was deplorable.

Another speaker said there appeared to be a good deal of emphasis on the personal service a librarian gave as against the impersonal service of the abstract. He wondered whether, as Mr. Mallaber had suggested that subject catalogues helped the librarians more than the research workers, all the abstracts they turned out also helped the librarians far more than they did the research workers. The librarian was becoming an impersonal filter through which material reached the research worker and

perhaps there was a danger that, in trying to mechanise librarianship, librarians would eventually be superseded by abstracts, punched cards, and tape recorder machines. There was a great danger in losing the personal element.

Another speaker reverted to the problem of educating the prospective research worker in the use of the library and suggested that the start should be made in the secondary schools where training could be given at least in the use of the basic reference books. There should be better libraries in secondary schools with qualified librarians in charge of them who could train the older schoolchildren in the use of reference books. Starting to train the undergraduate in the use of a library when he arrived at a university was too late.

Mr. MacRae asked if he might say two things arising from the discussion. Obviously much of the prime utility of subject classification was to the librarian so that he could do his job for the reader better but, all the same, the quality of the classification did matter because bad classification meant that the reader saw books together on the shelves which were not really on the same subject. The second point he wished to make was that he believed one of the great troubles for students and for those working for a post-graduate degree, was the lack of small libraries. Small manageable libraries with files of current journals covering a few years and a selection of books, not on one subject but within an area, were really important. Oxford University, for instance, had a number of small specialised libraries where one was not overwhelmed by the number of books, whereas at the London School of Economics and a number of provincial universities the large size of the collections was in itself a difficulty for students. He would like to see small libraries, small collections.

Professor Madge said he thought the discussion had thrown up a number of very interesting and worthwhile points and he also felt that, recurring in all that had been said, was the existence of a genuine problem that in the field of scholarship libraries were not adequately used. This was a really serious and increasing tendency; he did not think that the Conference had got so very much further towards solving it but it was a problem of which one ought to be very painfully aware.

PROBLEMS OF SOCIAL SCIENCE INFORMATION METHODS FROM THE USER'S POINT OF VIEW

I. The advanced research worker

By Mrs. JEAN E. FLOUD, B.Sc.(Econ.)
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Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen: I hope you will forgive a preliminary autobiographical note. Since you are interested in the users of library services, I thought I had better begin by listing and explaining my academic pre-occupations. I began academic life as an ex-Marxist, with a dominant interest in the institutions of property and social class. I was drawn into the work of the then Social Research Department of the London School of Economics, on interchange between the classes, or social mobility, and in that connection I developed a more specific interest in social selection and differentiation through education, out of which has developed what is again a much wider interest in the sociology of educational institutions. In the first instance I have always been a teacher, and this has been the main fact conditioning my attitude towards libraries; but I have also been concerned with two fairly substantial field investigations: a study of the relations of social class and educational opportunity in two contrasting English localities, and a national survey of the social, principally the demographic, characteristics of teachers in grant-earning schools in this country. And I have "co-authored", as the Americans say, a trend report of work in the sociology of education, illustrated by a classified bibliography of some eight hundred items drawn from the literature of this field in Western Europe and the United States. Thus, I have had occasion to use libraries in a number of different capacities—as teacher, research worker and bibliographer.

However, I must confess that only very recently—and with extraordinarily disinterested encouragement from our librarian at the Institute of Education—did I ever dream that a Librarian might be an Information Officer. A custodian of literature; a helpful, even an entertaining colleague—yes; but an Information Officer—no. The idea simply never occurred to me. In preparing what turned out to be a fairly elaborate biblio-

graphy, it did not occur to me to solicit systematic help from the Librarian, nor, indeed, help of any kind other than with the tracking down and acquisition on loan of out-of-print or relatively rare books or periodicals. I am sure the bibliography suffered both in coverage and presentation from lack of expert attention. As a matter of fact, I was somewhat taken aback to learn, on complimenting an American colleague on a similar production, how much he had taken for granted by way of assistance from the library, and how much the comprehensiveness and polish of his bibliographical effort must have owed to this technical assistance—which, I may also add, was not acknowledged in the text !

Now, however, I know that a Librarian can be an Information Officer. How might my life be changed ? I must confess at once, not greatly, unless I were to remodel what I suppose the psychologists would call my " self-picture ", and transform my methods of work. The question, therefore, is how far do my methods of work (in so far as my way of going on justifies the use of the term methods) reflect the intrinsic necessity or compulsions of my profession as social scientist, and how far are they merely antiquated and inefficient ways of going about my business which could be rationalised and made more productive ? I find it hard to say. The answer seems to me to be that I do not really work as a technician, and that this comes from the fact that I work, or try to work, in the tradition of what C. W. Mills in his recent book, *The Sociological Imagination,* calls "classic social analysis", rather than in the more "contemporary" mode of practically orientated field enquiry (using "contemporary" in the way that is meant by the manufacturers of wallpaper or furnishing fabrics).

Incidentally, Professor Mills' book can be recommended to librarians wanting a glimpse into the ways of thought and work of those of their customers who are academic social scientists. (Or should one call them " clients ", or " patrons " —or " colleagues " ?)

However that may be, the contrast in the social sciences between the research technician working with a team, and the individual scholar, reluctant to devolve *any* responsibility—and least of all that of keeping up with the literature—is not, it seems to me, necessarily a true alternative ; the fact is that most of us move uneasily, more or less systematically, between the two sorts of work. And I suppose that an Information Officer might play an important, though I really think, on reflection, a subordinate part, in the development of one's work in both cases.

Apart from teaching—which is what I really need the library for—the basis of my own work is, if I come to think about it, a continuous, widespread and informal interchange of views with other social scientists, punctuated by more or less useful meetings of seminars and professional associations to discuss problems and methods and theories. I suppose an Information Officer could help to stimulate this informal interchange of views in a number of fairly obvious ways: by indicating the existence and the whereabouts of unpublished material or work in progress; by noting the content of a wide range of periodicals as they are issued, particularly, of course, of marginal and foreign language periodicals across which one might not otherwise readily come. He can also help by preparing abstracts of papers that lend themselves to this treatment, or bibliographies for special purposes. In short, he can give one a delightful feeling of complacency on entering the Library, a feeling that the mounting tide of research reports and new work is not getting one down because the Librarian is there, helping one to tread water by supplying one with dockets and comments and abstracts, which one can file away until one has time to refer to them during the vacation; helping one to rise to particular occasions, whether as research worker or teacher; and giving one leads into unexplored corners of the field in which one is working.

But I must say that in my heart I know these are the lazy man's aids to mastery of his work; and although I am delighted if they are provided (as under the new régime at the Institute) I cannot help regarding them as a kind of illicit bonus—as a 'perk', rather than a normal condition of work to which one is entitled as of right. Of course, if I were a research technician working on *ad hoc* problems—today, the social impact of the mass media; tomorrow, the incidence of dental caries among schoolchildren, or the recruitment of married women graduates into teaching—then I should be more disposed to rely on an Information Officer for help in assembling and digesting the relevant literature. But as an academic, presumed to be working in a 'field' which it is *my* job to master, the best use I can have for a librarian is not as an Information Officer, in the sense that this is understood in the natural sciences, but as custodian of the literature. It seems to me that in this capacity, too, he is an indispensable part of one's social environment, one of the social pre-conditions of good work. One meets him in the Common Room, one talks to him, he will lend a hand in tracking down elusive material, and he occasionally provides the sort of specialised services that I have already talked about. But

primarily he is custodian and provider of books—of more and better books, and of ever more adequate and accessible source material. I would feel unhappy at the suggestion that to serve my more ephemeral needs, he should abandon, even temporarily, this primary task of building up and making accessible a fine collection.

II. The research student.

By L. J. SHARPE, B.Sc.(Econ.)

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In presenting this short paper I labour under two important, though I hope not disabling, handicaps. In the first place it is impossible for one person to speak on behalf of all research students in the social sciences because, as Mr. MacRae has described so admirably, the field is so enormous and so diverse. Much of what I have to say, therefore, will be coloured by the fact that my own field is that of political science. Secondly, the research facilities available to graduates vary so widely throughout the country. Nowhere is the disparity so great as it is between the average provincial university social science library and the libraries of London and Oxford. Working at the London School of Economics and Political Science I am fortunate in having on my doorstep the finest social science library in the country. Many of the problems which confront the research student elsewhere are absent from my own experience and in describing their problems I have relied inevitably on impressions acquired at second hand.

The major problem for research students working outside the London and Oxford nexus is a geographical one. Almost all the important research libraries, institutions of state and headquarters of private organizations are situated in the metropolitan area. The ability of the inter-library loan service to overcome this London-centredness is often nullified because of the sheer time it takes to transfer the book from one library to another. And some material, so often the most desirable, is not available for loan. The service, however admirable in conception, can never be an adequate substitute for having the book on the premises—which would require expenditure on a scale beyond the resources usually available. In my own field I think there is a good case for a thorough investigation into the archives of all the central government departments and sub-departments with a view to re-distributing to university libraries some of the material which at present is doing little more than collect dust. Much has probably already been consigned to the incinerator,

enough perhaps, had it been placed in university libraries, to have made a valuable contribution to the expansion of post graduate research.

Possibly the most fruitful avenue for the future development of the research facilities of provincial departments of the social sciences lies in specialization on a field of study which will be roughly within the financial resources likely to be available. Leeds, with its fine library in social history, provides an excellent example of the possibilities of this approach.

So much for particular problems. On the more general plane, Mr. MacRae referred to a certain tension which exists between the research worker and the librarian. I will be less discreet and call it antagonism. In short, I think that most people instinctively dislike libraries and rank them second only to dentists in the sense of unease they create. It is not so much physical discomfort, although some libraries would be better for a large-scale re-upholster, nor is it merely the frustration created by time spent in actually getting the material, although most people grudge any time and effort devoted to seeking out books (as when re-decorating the living room, the painting is infinitely preferable to the preparation). To enter a library is for the average man to leave the fallible, everyday world for one run wholly on rational lines. There can be nothing quite so daunting as the unshakeable logic of the Dewey classification and the card index. That this is combined with a demand for silence and no smoking only adds to the unreality. The average man, I suspect, and in this context I mean the non-librarian, needs to be comforted and re-assured. Who has not seen the reader, when referred to the index, go over to the drawers, hover in confusion, and then sidle off, hoping the assumedly disapproving eye of the librarian is elsewhere? If librarians are to expand their kingdom they might do well to acquire some of the attributes of the dentist's receptionist.

But what, it may be asked, has this to do with research students. Whatever may be the inhibitions of the general public, surely the student will be at home in what should be his own workshop. This is, of course, true but I believe that these basic attitudes are just as prevalent among most students, but in a modified form. He has been forced to some extent to come to terms with his library during his university career but, at the end of three years, may still remain woefully ignorant of the range of library facilities available to him. In consequence, the budding research student begins by spending considerable time and energy learning library technique which he should have

learnt as an undergraduate. This initial period is often painfully protracted because the graduate is afraid of revealing his ignorance or of wasting the librarian's time; and the librarian, for his part, cannot help since he assumes, quite reasonably, that the student knows his library. By not assuming that the customer is automatically an expert and by offering advice and information when it is not directly requested, the librarian can be, as no one else can be, of immeasurable assistance to the research student.

I am not suggesting that the librarian should do the research worker's job for him, nor do I deny that, by the very act of fending for himself, the post-graduate gains valuable experience. The ideal relationship would be some form of consultation between the research worker and librarian *before* he begins his project. In this way the library staff will be aware of new research being undertaken and the research worker can learn of the full resources available to him both in his own library and in other institutions. In addition he can draw upon the librarian's knowledge of those inevitable quirks in the library system which even the most dedicated scrutiny of the catalogue fails to reveal. This applies with particular force for those engaged in research involving published material of fairly recent origin. Subject catalogues are of necessity behind hand and soul-destroying hours can be spent in hunting down the wrong sources if the research student is unfamiliar with the various standard catalogues and works of reference.

There is also much to be said for tackling this problem at an earlier stage by encouraging the undergraduate to become thoroughly at home in the library as early as possible. Too often his introduction to the library takes the form of a brisk tour through the reading rooms sandwiched between interviews with his tutor, compiling his lecture timetable, and the hundred and one other tasks which crowd the first weeks of his undergraduate life. Understandably, he forgets half that he is told and descriptive leaflets tend to remain unread, lost among the vast pile of printed matter showered upon him. A more valuable introduction, one which would provide a solid foundation and relate the function of the library to something he has written himself, would be a bibliographic exercise. This could be set by his tutor in, say, the first month and follow the initial essay. By this method he would be driven into the library willy-nilly, get to know the catalogue, and generally acquaint himself with some of the basic works of reference. The exercise, with a wider scope perhaps, might be repeated in his second year. Just

as the raw recruit is not introduced to the intricacies of the rifle on his first day in the Army so the freshman should not be required to grasp the library system in the first confused days of his arrival at University.

I do not pretend that this procedure would reconcile all students to their libraries. There is clearly a need, particularly in the first year or so, for smaller less imposing libraries containing the basic texts and little else, a single large reading room might be the answer where the undergraduate can find most of the books he requires on the shelves. Certainly some thought along these lines should be given by local authorities to the needs of students at week-ends, in the evening and during the vacation when the university library is often closed. This need is greatest in the London area and other large urban centres where many students are compelled to live a considerable distance from the university. In these areas a well-stocked local library, and equally important, adequate facilities for reading and writing with the minimum disturbance, can be an invaluable aid.

Some local authorities do recognize this need and provide study rooms for the use of *bona fide* students and have valiantly built up excellent reference sections. Others have specialized in a field connected with the particular range of subjects taught at a local centre of higher education. In some areas, however, there is little provision for the special needs of students (or, it sometimes seems, of anyone in particular—but that is another story) although they may reside in the vicinity in considerable numbers. It was particularly unfortunate in this connection that in a recent survey of the public library service one of the Metropolitan Boroughs, with a long-established history as a student quarter, should have had one of the lowest expenditures on books per head of the population in the whole County of London.

I must apologise if I seem too critical of librarians since I do not believe that most of the criticisms raised can be ascribed to any particular person or group but are, rather, a reflection of what the American social historian R. K. Webb, has called 'the eternal struggle between librarian and reader'. We cannot, of course, eliminate the struggle but we can, I think, mitigate its effect. On the one hand, by encouraging library users to overcome their natural apprehension and ask questions, even at the risk of revealing their ignorance. On the other hand, by asking librarians to assume ignorance where there is no overwhelming evidence to the contrary; in short to act as colleagues rather than servants.

Afternoon discussion : Mrs. Floud's and Mr. Sharpe's papers.

Mrs. Floud said that it seemed to her to be quite wrong that librarians should spoonfeed the students; they should learn to use the library in the same way that everyone else learns to use the tools of their trades. Students should not be encouraged to ask the librarian to find books for them, at least not until they have first looked for themselves. She was not sure how far the librarian could give highly specialised and detailed help to people like herself. It seemed to her that only now and again was it practicable to enlist co-operation on a particular subject and, generally speaking, any help given by the librarian must be of a generalised kind. One went into a library to ask a question about a particular publication but not to ask for a list of books dealing with a particular subject. She did not think the latter was practicable and felt that the research worker should not delegate to the librarian the responsibility of keeping up with the literature.

Mr. C. W. Hanson said that in his experience the largest demand for the librarian's services was from the specialist who needed to go just a little outside his own field. At some point he must do the work himself but at the earlier stage it was of immense value to him to go to a library or information service and be presented with representative papers on the subject which helped him to find his way and direct his further reading and study. He was not clear how often this happened in the social sciences but in the natural sciences it happened very frequently. Most of the scientific information services did a considerable amount of researching, presenting the results, not necessarily in the form of a bibliography, annotated or otherwise, but quite frequently in the form of a memorandum which incorporated some assessment. This work was more or less taken for granted in the better scientific information services and the services were staffed accordingly. In the personal information service with which he had been concerned he had had a staff of twelve serving a research staff of about 35 and of his staff of twelve, six were graduate scientists (physicists because they were serving physicists). They were the same type of people and had the same qualifications as those they were serving but their tools were books and periodicals and such like instead of laboratory apparatus. It had been obvious from the discussion that this sort of thing did not exist in the social sciences but he did not know whether it could exist or whether the differing nature of the work would make it impossible.

Professor Madge thought the difference between the social sciences and the natural sciences was a very important point. Social scientists were very aware that at the present stage of the development of the social sciences they could not really expect to have the kind of service that they had in the natural sciences. There was a sort of question mark over the future and it was not known whether there would develop a time when a similar service would be possible, although it was probable that there would be some sub-fields within the social sciences where technical information would be appropriate and possible. There would, however, also be a much more diffuse branch of knowledge that perhaps would never be amenable to that sort of treatment. We did not know quite where the social sciences were going to develop.

Mr. MacRae also thought this a very important matter and mentioned that a research student of his had had great difficulty in finding certain material concerning Cornish metal mining. He finally got in touch with the institute for mining engineers and found that they had abstracted and cross-referenced on cards every article on the subject. The social information had gone on the cards with the most recondite information on mining techniques and what might have been several months' work was completed in a couple of days.

Miss Kyle said it was rather sad that relations between the social sciences and libraries were so much worse than between the natural sciences and their libraries. She suggested that, whereas those working in the natural sciences and technology had got used to farming out a certain amount of their work to librarians, the social scientists felt that if they let someone else do the bibliographical side of their project they would not get the real satisfaction of having done all the work themselves or perhaps even get the honour and glory. But this was not true. She did not think that any librarians who helped on the bibliographical side of a project ever expected or wanted to get any credit for it.

Referring to the problem of bringing the books to the reader, Mr. Sharpe mentioned that in some libraries there was a system of allowing research workers and private students to go to the stacks; this closed the gap between the reader and the library and also overcame the shortcomings of the public catalogues. It did mean, of course, that more space was necessary in the stacks and it was not a solution in those libraries, including that of the London School of Economics, which shelved the books in the stacks in order of accession and not in a classified order.

Miss Kyle said she thought the discussion had centred too much on university libraries. In a large social science library close co-operation between the users and the library staff was necessary if there was to be an interesting collection of material in the library. The specialists could so often suggest or supply new acquisitions which the librarian had not thought of or was unable to acquire. The user had valuable contacts in his own field and could often obtain material not generally available. If the librarian had no contact with the specialists he could not get even photocopies of this type of material.

Mr. Foskett thought that two very important points were emerging from the discussion. The first one was the readers' fear of librarians and he thought the explanation for that was quite simply that librarians had never been borrowers in libraries, because they had always been behind the scenes. It had frequently been said that the only people who got a decent library service were the librarians, and there was a lot of truth in that. Librarians learnt all about catalogues in a few days ; they grew up knowing about catalogues and were shocked, dismayed and astonished when they discovered that people whom they respected as research workers did not know how to use the catalogues. Mr. Sharpe had mentioned the fear of confessing ignorance to the librarian. This seemed to be a very important point for both librarians and readers because, if catalogues were useful things for readers as well as for librarians readers should be taught to use catalogues in the same way as were librarians. A certain amount of this kind of work was already being done in schools, and also in the universities, but very often in the teeth of opposition from academics who resented the time taken away from the students' normal time-table for attendance at lectures or demonstrations on the use of the library. This was a vicious circle which must be broken and consideration should be given to means of creating a more favourable climate of opinion. In a number of universities and university colleges, of course, very good work of this type had been going on for years.

Mr. Foskett's second point was to what extent the social sciences offered parallels to the development of the natural sciences, particularly with regard to information services. Mr. MacRae had said earlier in the day, that the social sciences were becoming accretive, whereas the natural sciences had always been accretive and so past literature was expendable ; and he had referred to the increasing number of journals arising out of

the increasing number of research centres in the social sciences. We were conscious of the need for research in the social sciences (what was the use of all the research in the natural sciences and technology if all we succeeded in doing was destroying the world?) and such research must be purposeful. Mr. MacRae had also commented on the development of the nature of research publications in the social sciences into what he called "short, succinct accounts of little bits of research work". This, of course, was precisely what happened in the natural sciences and we had, therefore, a certain number of parallels. How far were we justified in inferring from the parallels the sort of information service libraries could give? There was one large difference between the social and natural sciences—in the natural sciences books and library stock were not the primary sources of information whereas in the social sciences they were. It was the job of the research workers in the social sciences to work on the literature but the natural scientist worked in the laboratory and this might mean that we could not develop the same kind of information service in the social sciences as we had in the natural sciences. But where librarians seemed to have a very definite place as information officers in the social sciences was in the organisation of the literature and in the provision of keys to the literature. Mr. MacRae had given a splendid illustration of this point when he spoke of his visit to the Institute of Mining and Metallurgy; what he had discovered there was absolutely commonplace and the accepted thing in libraries serving the natural sciences, but not in libraries serving the social sciences. There was a need for indexes, guides and keys to the literature of the social sciences and it was the sort of information work that librarians in the social sciences could do. Mr. Lewis's book was a good attempt at doing this kind of thing and what we needed now was informed criticism and collaboration from the social science research workers. We could learn from the experience of the natural sciences but we could not afford the colossal and wasteful duplication of keys to the literature that has gone into the natural sciences. When he was in industry he subscribed to about 35 abstracting journals and one subject could be found in any 20 of them at the same time. We could not afford to do this in the social sciences.

Mr. MacRae agreed with Mr. Foskett about the benefit of collaboration but asked if the librarians had sufficient time and were the social scientists numerous enough. It was important to realise just how very few professional social scientists (excluding economists) there were in the country. He thought there

were about 80 professional sociologists in the whole of Great Britain. They were all busy teaching and doing research and they wanted some leisure. Regarding the reader's use of the librarian, it was not possible to evaluate what one was interrupting when one went to the librarian for information or advice. What the librarian was doing might be much more important than the information the reader wanted, which might turn out to be completely irrelevant and useless, anyhow.

Mrs. Floud said that, given the choice, she would prefer to spend more money on duplicating the books in the library, so that copies were always available for reference and were not out on loan when one needed them, rather than on additional library staff, even staff with special qualifications who could do work for her. Mr. Mallaber thought that a great service to research workers was some form of either temporary or permanent collection on their subjects, even though it implied extra money and the books might be useless to the library after a particular piece of research had been completed. Mrs. Floud agreed with this and suggested that when an organisation applied to a foundation for money for a particular piece of work it should budget not only for the salary of the research worker but also for a library allocation for books. Professor Madge remarked that no money was provided for books when new lectureships and new research projects were started in the universities but the person appointed always went to the library and found the books he required were not there; at Birmingham University, however, they had recently been able to budget for some books in the natural sciences but not in the social sciences.

In reply to a question about the provision of books in the libraries of the new universities, Mr. MacRae said he had seen three of the new university colleges in Africa and they had shown him that if you were willing to spend money you could build up a good library very quickly indeed. Money in universities should be spent on human beings, on books, on scientists, and on laboratories. All other expenditure might be pleasant, ascetic and conducive to the happy feelings of ministries, local aldermen, etc., but it was completely irrelevant. A university could go on in cow-sheds if the light got in and if there were books in them.

Mr. Foskett suggested that the people at universities working in the social sciences should make claims on the university funds for their primary materials, books, in the same way as the natural scientists made claims for their primary materials, laboratory equipment.

In summing up, Professor Madge said that although a whole crop of interesting new points were being raised there was not time to deal with them. He felt the conference had justified itself by the number of questions which had been raised and which had not been answered. The conference had touched on two easily distinguishable problems which were going to be with us in increasing measure over the next ten or twenty years. The first was the problem of getting undergraduate students accustomed to the idea of reading books and making intelligent use of libraries. The second was whether the librarian could give more help to research people. "I am inclined to think," he said, "that it would be worth while going back to talk to my librarian about one or two points just to see what he could do to service me." He thought he felt more keen about this than he had done at the beginning of the day and he also wished to discuss with his librarian how much other people, such as post-graduate students, should be invited to take up more of the time of the librarian and his staff. It had occurred to him during the curious 'back and forth' of invitations from the librarians and reluctance from the social scientists. Possibly the whole thing might be made a little simpler if one had some system of making an appointment to go and see the librarian, since one was a little diffident at walking into a library at any time of the day and interrupting the great man in whatever his labours were at that moment. A final point which he hoped could be followed up in some way was the fact that many librarians, and indeed many research workers, too, were out of touch with and inadequately briefed about the actual research in progress. There had been a *Register of Research in the Social Sciences,* which had lapsed, unfortunately. What was wanted was not only a register of research projects under way but also information about those still in their early stages and those contemplated so that contact could be made between those ready to do the research and those holding relevant material. He did not see how this could be done but there did seem to be a lack of contact between librarians and information centres and people who were hatching up research.

Professor Madge did not think it mattered that the occasion had not resulted in a set of formal resolutions; he did not think the stage had been reached when resolutions could be implemented. But a discussion such as had been held would be extremely helpful and one hoped it would be the start of a series of such discussions which would bear fruit in due course.

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