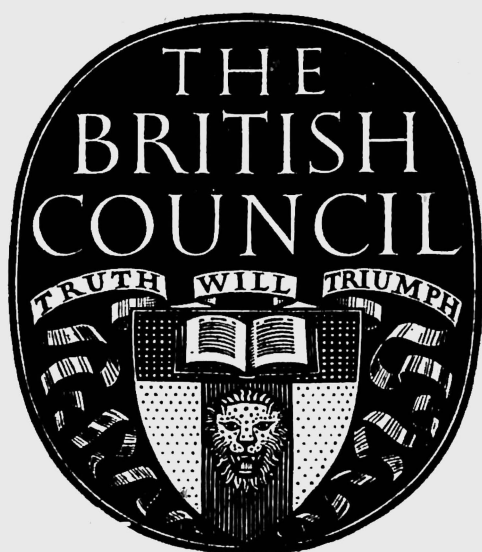




REQUIREMENTS FOR A NATIONAL LIBRARY SERVICE

Being papers read at the Week-end Conference
of the London and Home Counties Branch of
the Library Association, held at Margate,
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THE LIBRARY ASSOCIATION,
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THE INTERNATIONAL VIEWPOINT

By E. J. CARTER, B.A., A.R.I.B.A.,
Head, The Libraries Division, UNESCO.

This is a meeting on the requirements of a National Library Service and, with all the prejudices of an international civil servant to back me up, I am, of course, delighted that you should have decided that the international viewpoint is one from which national library service can usefully be observed.

I have tried to convince myself in preparing this paper that there is such a thing as an international viewpoint—presumably some people think there is and I may be supposed to earn my bread, butter and jam from serving that idea—nevertheless, the more I think about it, the more I am led to an heretical opinion that there is, in this question of national library service, no such thing—or nothing, at least, which can be isolated. There is no detached and firm pinnacle from which your activities as national librarians can be watched with a more accurate or revealing eye than is possible from inside. At least I know that in the job which I and my colleagues do, our competence to help in the development of national library services is largely in proportion to our skill in dismounting from an international high horse into the scene as it exists in each country. The international position is a good jumping off point, as long as one jumps in the right direction—which is into the mêlée of each nation's own problems and anxieties and not into a de-natured, abstracted unreality conceived from a position apart from the stress of the kind of life you live. If UNESCO has a view of these things worthy of transmittal it is one composed of actual experience in several nations. The experience is good just in so far as it is realistic in national terms.

Having thus half-convinced myself and I hope entirely convinced you that there is really nothing for me to talk about, I can come back to my job as it were from inside and suggest that the really worth-while thing for a UNESCO librarian to attempt would be an admonitory lecture on the international obligations of a National Library Service. Although this is in fact turning the subject inside out there is really something in it, because I believe (perhaps this is the reason for my presence here) that there is a constantly increasing awareness that national library services, of every kind, have international obligations. Some kinds of libraries have international communications as their principal duty, all university and research libraries have obvious duties to make foreign publications available, and even small public libraries, the most local in their service and interests, have very big services to contribute to international understanding. I can hope that each of the subsequent contributors to your meeting will have something to say about their rôles in terms of international communication. If they don't I can assume that it is only because the fact is so obvious that it does not need exposition in a meeting primarily concerned with purely national problems.

For either reason, that there is no international viewpoint, or that the national view of international library service is not on the agenda, I might close now. But I must assume that more is expected and can continue with some observations formed, as I must repeat, not from some special viewpoint but from the day-to-day routine work of penetrating on behalf of an international organization into the briery bush of national library service in many countries.

First, this meeting itself provides the substance for one of my observations—the need to recognize when facing the kinds of library development problems which most concern me, as you recognize here, the unity as well as the diversity of national library service. I find it immensely encouraging to go to a meeting which pulls together all, or almost all, the various types of librarian to discuss one subject each from his own point of view but with a general sense of co-operation prevailing. We have all been worried by the constant internecine warfare between research, academic and public librarians, although we have all, I expect, got a good deal of fun from participating in the squabbles. We see our library associations (not specially in Britain) divided into opposed camps and both of them opposed by documentation associations. Much of this is due to historical causes which are not repeated in many countries, such as those in which UNESCO has most interest, where national library services are only just starting. We do our utmost to help these countries to avoid the faults of a schismatically conceived system or from drifting without system into a general state of unco-operativeness.

I have used the word “unity” but I think the word “coherence” gives my meaning more clearly because it has both senses of “sticking together” and “intelligibility,” even of “articulation.” Appropriate tributes should no doubt be paid to Humpty Dumpty at this stage, but my point is a serious one which I know to be directly relevant to the problems of library development faced by many UNESCO Member States.

The elements which compose this coherent national service extend in my opinion from the extremes of “documentation” to the simplest service of a public library in lending fiction for recreational reading. They include the techniques, which librarians must understand how to use, of, at one end, advanced methods of electronic selection to, at the other, selection on personal and psychological grounds inherent in the readers’ advisory services of a public library. They extend from the astringent exposition of science abstracting to the popular exposition in lectures, exhibitions, film-shows and so on which are entering more and more into the scope of public library work. I know that in saying this I am seeming to take a lot for granted and that by implication the old definitions of librarian provided by the curricula of most library schools break down. However, without labouring to fill in all the detail, it seems to me that somewhere near the centre of all these varied focal points of service is the librarian; a man trained to make the printed word available. Wherever he is—in all his fields of work as a national, academic, research or public librarian—he has a power, which he seldom exploits fully, to co-ordinate the immense range of services for the improvement of access to literature which his profession commands.

The rigid boundaries between types of library are, I think, breaking down and there are many examples in Britain. More of us now than twenty-five years ago look over the fence to borrow our neighbours' equipment and chat about the climate and the flowers in our garden. Dr. Urquhart's paper to your sister organizations in Scotland in 1953 was largely concerned with the importance of the larger public libraries to industrial science and he has referred to the question again in his paper "Facts and faith" published in the September 1954 *Journal of documentation*. There are equally relevant examples of learned society and research libraries which are more ready than they were in the past to give public services. In a recent visit to Rangoon I saw a very remarkable demonstration of a scientist's initiative in this respect. The Burmese Government have recently created a national laboratory for scientific and industrial research which is being directed by an adventurous American, Dr. Bartels, from the Armour Institute, Chicago. Dr. Bartels has an enthusiasm for popular education which the Burmese climate has stimulated and given chances of practical demonstration. Having to create a science library for his institute, Dr. Bartels decided to make it not only a library competent to serve the purely scientific interests of his science workers, but also to serve as a centre for popular scientific education. Although his laboratories are some distance from central Rangoon, his library has been placed in a main Rangoon street where it is visible to and open to the public free. His collection includes highly specialist periodicals and books and, in addition, everything he can lay his hands on which will help the ordinary young Burmese to understand science and to become a competent technologist in his every day affairs of motor repairs, house repairs, photography or what you will. Perhaps in the future, as the institute develops, its demands will become more exacting and, as public reading develops, the public's demand for literature will outgrow the capacity of the institute. Nevertheless his enterprise is entirely good and highly significant for the general development of library services in Burma. I hope, also, that whatever course future development takes, a close association between the national research institute and popular reading will be maintained.

Of course it is quite wrong to take an example where scientific use of a library and popular reading coincide and to assume because it works now and then that it is necessarily a good thing. Often it is quite the wrong thing, resulting in mediocre service at both ends—sometimes because the more popular use will swamp the more scientific or the other way round, or often because the natural bias of the librarian for one side of his work will let the other sink to the level of a second-class service. This is very much UNESCO's concern in those many countries where one institution has to combine the functions of national library and public library, in the sense of a library for the general public, and possibly also those of a general government secretariat library. In such situations it is by no means easy to know what advice to give. The solution has to be provided in organizational terms: direction by a broad-minded, erudite, scholarly librarian with a lively interest in popular education, even if such a man can be found, is not

reliable because even such paragons retire in time and may be succeeded by that other kind of librarian, narrow-minded, finicky and pedantic with a genius for what the Americans call politicking. I believe that first-class men for this all-round job can often be found more easily in countries where library services are only beginning to develop than in countries where specialization has already crystallized.

This is a very real problem in several South Asian countries as I have recently seen for myself. In Burma and Pakistan, for instance, great energy is being shown in creating their national libraries and in both countries the first idea was to make the National Library not only the National Library in the B.M. sense, but also the national public library, open to all and lending books for home reading. "Open to all" inevitably means that the national library becomes a library for the overflow of students who cannot get what they want from the university library. (In Cairo, to give an existing example, the librarians agree that wide-spread borrowing of books from the National Library largely by students undoubtedly limits its value for advanced research.)

A similar problem, of course, arises when a national library is expected to fulfil the exacting needs of specialized organizations, such as government departments or scientific research bodies which do not always fit in with a general national library's obligations. Even in the Library of Congress there is an element of friction, so I have been told, and Congressmen have been known to protest that the Congress Library is in fact their library and that all its other great services are *ultra vires*.

And yet what is to become of this idea of integration if it is unworkable in places where there seems to be a chance of carrying it to its logical development by complete or nearly complete centralization? One answer is to allow or encourage each need to be met completely separately on the strength of specialized or local initiative, and to rely, as you are relying, on the librarians to assure co-ordination of ideas and practices at their personal and professional level through their associations and journals and by the maintenance of certain well organized and centrally established but nevertheless autonomous service agencies such as the N.C.L. Another answer, which I believe to be the best in very many countries, is to create a system which will assure the largest possible co-ordination at the governmental level by the establishment of a national library directorate such as exists in many European countries. La Direction des Bibliothèques de France is a classic example, although it is in fact a fairly new set-up established only after the war. The idea of central direction, which is generally unacceptable in Britain, is in fact not only acceptable in countries of the kind I am mainly concerned with, but also is probably inevitable if there is to be a real, and, which is important, a rapid advance in library services. This applies particularly to public library services. Local authorities seldom have the strength or, perhaps more significantly, the knowledge to institute public libraries on their own initiative. The risk, if public library services are neither a local government or national government responsibility, is that

they will be started—if at all—by partisan interests and be off the rails from the beginning. There must be a point, as was provided 100 years ago in Britain by the Public Libraries Act, from which a good influence—that is a bit weak—a hard hitting national promoting energy can radiate, and which can back its good influence and promoting energy by direct practical contributions in acquisition, cataloguing, inter-library loan, exchange of publications and so on. Many of these common national services are just as necessary in the other fields of library service. As for scientific and industrial libraries, it is probably true that the demand for them is so great everywhere now that they are being forced into existence but, unrelated to an integrated national library service, they are apt to be illogically dispersed and feeble. The argument in terms of status and prestige is also considerable. The activities which can attain the status of a national service are accorded more money and more attention than purely local or private enterprise ventures.

At the centre of the problem is the big challenge of the provision of adequately trained librarians and documentalists who will not only have good technical and academic qualifications for their jobs, but status to maintain their positions. The saddest experience of a librarian visitor to many countries is to learn of the miserable salaries which his colleagues are receiving for their work. The men who have chosen to give their lives to librarianship see their university friends who chose other professions earning vastly more for no more arduous or responsible work. In one country it was recently pointed out to me that a teacher—and heaven knows teachers are not well paid anywhere—at thirty-five could have a job worth at least half as much again as the highest paid librarian in his country. Sometimes the national librarian—a personality, perhaps, of national status—will receive a worthy salary (small nevertheless) but not be allowed to pay any of his assistants a living wage or not the wage properly due to a university graduate in a responsible post. This means that it is extremely difficult to recruit good enough men and women for library work and only too many who start in librarianship trail off into more remunerative jobs as soon as they can.

Thus all talk about library development or education of librarians is meaningless unless something can be done to improve their economic status. UNESCO has been able to help in several places by assuring that any project to develop libraries includes activity to train librarians and has provided many fellowships to give training abroad, and we are active in promoting national library associations. I would wish only to add that British librarians can do few things more useful to help the development of libraries in these less advanced countries than by giving all they know of their experience, and friendship too, to the students and fellowship holders who come here. I wonder if it would be possible to do even more by creating a Library Association—ASLIB fund to give two or three training fellowships each year, or to support exchanges between British Commonwealth and foreign librarians. I believe that many governments would cover the expenses of transport if the students or young librarians could be fully maintained in Britain for a year. Few things contribute so much to the rise in national

prestige of a profession as the knowledge that it is the subject of privileged invitations for study abroad.

As a UNESCO activity to promote education for librarians I can mention in passing the UNESCO seminars on public library work which are now widely known. The first was held in Manchester and there have since been seminars in Malmo and Ibadan, and this year a fourth will be held in Delhi—in the UNESCO pilot library. The international viewpoint dominates in these meetings but not so much more than a psychological or moral influence which conditions the participants to be receptive of ideas from abroad by which their national work can be improved or reinforced.

I have talked a lot about one aspect of librarianship viewed from an international perch mainly as it relates to the needs and opportunities of countries newly creating their library systems. There are, of course, many others not concerned with library development in a missionary sense, but with the inter-dependence internationally of the most fully advanced national library services. This naturally enough is another principal interest of UNESCO—and of the international non-governmental organizations for librarianship and documentation, principally I.F.L.A. and the F.I.D., and of their younger sister, the International Association of Music Libraries. Here there is, I suppose, a special international viewpoint.

National bibliographies and national exchange or loan services are relevant to my subject in terms of their extension abroad. In these three types of service satisfaction of the home market must come first. National interest can be, and generally is, the stimulant which makes the creation and maintenance of national bibliographies and inter-library loan and exchange possible. Even the great bibliographical and abstracting services which have achieved international status were mostly created first to satisfy purely national ends rather than as expressions of internationalist altruism. Of course when we study these bibliographies and abstracts from the international viewpoint (and this is constantly being done) we can see that there are many things which could be done to improve their international value, such as the publication of abstracts and annotations or translations of titles in a second language, but this is generally out of the question. Several strikingly interesting attempts are being made currently to compromise constructively between national and international interests and techniques, among which the efforts of building science documentalists to internationalize their services on the basis of existing national services are deserving of study by specialists in other fields. In the social sciences much is being done in an equally adventurous way through the International Committee for social sciences documentation.

However, I am wandering somewhat from my main point which is to emphasize, from the international viewpoint, that even if satisfaction of home demand is the main purpose of a national service, almost all national services can be developed so as to serve international needs and by so doing can themselves gain in comprehensiveness and quality. If this is to be achieved the fact that it is possible must first be recognized and then viable techniques must be developed.

In helping international exchanges for several years UNESCO's Clearing House for Libraries has been instrumental in giving a very considerable boost to international exchange services, but paradoxically perhaps, since this seemed to be one of the few services which could be operated from an international centre, a principal objective all along has been to stimulate national exchange centres to take over the work; indeed one of my first UNESCO jobs was to help switch the old Inter-allied Book Centre into the N.C.L. where it still is. It is by no means easy to persuade many national centres to extend their services internationally in the way proposed by UNESCO but centres in twenty-four countries have agreed to do so. Unfortunately at the time this paper is being written Britain has not yet joined in the UNESCO scheme; though we recognize that she is active in many other ways in distributing publications abroad.

In emphasizing the national side of international library services I have followed the theme of this meeting, avoiding questions of what should or could be done to develop purely international services. But, in fact, this kind of work must find a place in the discussion because these internationally founded and managed activities depend on national interest for their creation and maintenance in most cases and their effective use in all.

There are three principal classes of international work which deserve mention. Firstly, many international bibliographies and directories, mostly edited by the international non-governmental subject specialist organizations but occasionally by the United Nations and its Agencies. Secondly, the promulgation of international standards, which, for bibliography and documentation, are prepared by the International Standards Organization in collaboration with the F.I.D. and I.F.L.A.; and, thirdly, the organization of international conferences and meetings of experts by the non-governmental bodies and by UNESCO. The need to establish a theoretical and practical relationship between international work and similar work at the national level is important, because there is always a danger that international activity elevated above the day-to-day needs expressed nationally may lose touch with the ground work of national activity which in the final analysis must support it. An international bibliography, for example, is generally the accumulation of national contributions which are good or bad, adequate or inadequate in direct relationship to the vigour of the national bibliographical activity in the subject. Failure to assure this national-international association in practical terms has accounted for the weakness and eventual death of many remarkable attempts to create great international services. Among the reasons for this is undoubtedly the difficulty of bringing together for meetings sufficiently representative groups to plan and edit the works, and the difficulty which many of the non-governmental bodies have in maintaining secretariats to administer their projects and particularly to promote the sales of publications.

These things reflect on national library activities. It is a recognized function of many national library associations to maintain committees for international relations and one of the duties of such

a committee might well be to assure that good national contributions are made to international bibliographies and guides and that they are well distributed at home.

International standards, by the nature of I.S.O.'s relationship with national standards institutes, are permissive at the national level. They cannot be otherwise : but the two principal national functions—to make creative contributions to the formulation of standards and to be active in assuring the application of agreed standards—are already recognized as matters of national responsibility best centred in the professional groups concerned : in a national library directorate, the national library itself, or in the national library association and the comparable documentation bodies, always, it should be said, in collaboration with the national standards institute.

The same argument can be made with regard to international conferences which, however, freely organized to bring together specialists in their individual capacities, gain immensely in strength during the actual meetings and in their capacity to engender a good follow-up if the individual genius of the participants is backed by co-ordinated and centralized national support and if the actual contributions authoritatively represent national opinion. How this is to be done is a matter for each conference and each co-operating country to decide for itself. It must be recognized, nevertheless, that in some conferences co-ordinated national contributions are not only not wanted but conflict with the essential nature of the meeting. The World Congress of Libraries and Documentation Centres to be held in Brussels next September is being organized so that planned national discussions form the basis of the international business and it will be interesting to see how this works out. UNESCO library seminars, in contrast, while they admit working papers descriptive of national activities, would never tolerate a participant who sought to refer every matter raised in discussion to some authority at home before he could join the debate. Nevertheless a seminar participant who has no active association with his national library movement is weaker than a person who knows his way round in the library scene at home and who can apply his lessons learnt at the seminar through the organized body of his national library system.

If I may attempt to summarize my somewhat discursive thoughts from an international viewpoint, I would say that whatever way you look at them national and international library activities are inter-dependent. No international library project can be effective unless it is based on the actual experience of librarians working each in his own environment, which for almost all of us is a national scene. As a counterpoint to this, practically no libraries—there may be some—can do their whole job well without regard to the benefits they can derive from international communication and the contributions which they can make to it.

In the first part of my paper I was on the somewhat different theme of the integration of a National Library Service. This is important everywhere but UNESCO experience shows that it is nowhere more important than in the countries where library service is just beginning to evolve. The faults, disintegration, schism and lack of will to co-operate, can be avoided if the idea of an inte-

grated service is established at the foundations. Mr. Vollans in his report on library co-operation, in the final paragraph, said: "the main ideal of a library service is the sharing of wealth". The less the wealth the greater the need to share it. What someone looking at these matters from the international viewpoint has to offer is not ideas for a new system, or some superior world-wide wisdom, but just ideas and occasionally means to help the sharing of the library resources of the world.

THE NATIONAL LIBRARY SERVICE: A MUNICIPAL LIBRARIAN'S VIEWPOINT

By JACK DOVE, F.L.A.

Borough Librarian and Curator, Hove

At the outset of this paper, concerned as it is with the past, the present and the future, it may be well to attempt to define its title. It has three interpretations. Firstly, it infers a service, common to the whole nation, countrywide in extent, so far as county borough, borough and urban district councils are concerned. There are 5,751 municipal library service points controlled by 484 authorities, ranging from the smallest, Cromarty, a Scottish burgh of 726 population, to the largest, Birmingham, with 1,118,500 residents. These libraries have a stock of 37 million books, of which 34% are adult non-fiction books, 28.5% reference books, 24.5% adult novels and 13% books for children. The total expenditure on municipal libraries is £8,238,000 and they spend £1,875,000 on books. 83 libraries spend over 6s. per head of population on their service, whilst 29 spend under 2s. 24 spend over 2s. per head on books, 272 between 1s. and 2s., whilst 30 spend under 6d. As for full-time staff, 86 have 1 person per 3,000 or less of population whereas 32 have 1 per 10,000 or more.

Secondly, it infers a service, characteristic of the nation, rugged, slow to develop, ruthlessly determined when on the move, proud and steeped in tradition. That it was slow to develop cannot be gainsaid. From 1850 to 1900, 352 authorities adopted the Libraries Acts; from 1900 to 1919, 199 more; and from 1919 to 1939, a further 37. The momentum certainly increased in the glorious thirties and the post-war years have witnessed a determination to shoulder manfully ever increasing responsibilities. It is an uneven service, but notwithstanding this facet, librarians are proud of their vocation. The municipal library tradition is not lengthy and moreover, tradition dies hard. Especially so in our case, witness the many sombre buildings we have with even more dismal interiors and bookstocks.

Thirdly, it infers a service, part of our social structure, which is vitally necessary to our well-being and future development as a nation. It is not difficult for us practising librarians to believe this, and I assume many users share the same belief—12½ million of them—but what about the other 38 million?

Mention of a National Library Service inevitably brings to the forefront the McColvin Report¹ of 1942, a stupendous achievement compiled when so many of us were far removed from librarianship and unable to take part in the frank discussions which ensued. Its revelations were truly startling and if time and expense were not so material another review now would be more enlightening and probably even more hair raising after ten years of peace with cold war, a rare dish. Would most of the 101 urban libraries then surveyed still present a picture of drab buildings, insufficient and poverty-stricken stocks? I think not. There has been considerable progress and a fresh enthusiasm since 1945 but the situation overall is far from satisfactory and the unevenness is appalling. In fact, another total review of the library service of the country is needed.

MUNICIPAL PUBLIC LIBRARY STATISTICS, 1953-54

FIGURES PER HEAD

Population group	No. of libraries in group submitting returns	Lending Library issues			Total Expenditure		
		Highest	Lowest	Average	Highest	Lowest	Average
Over 500,000	6	8.0	3.75	6.0	7/-		5/2
3—500,000	5	9.2	5.0	7.9	4/2½	4/2½	4/8
2—300,000	13	10.3	4.9	7.7	5/1	3/6	5/3
150—200,000	19	12.3	4.7	8.1	7/4	3/4	5/7½
100—150,000	39	14.7	3.9	8.4	9/9½	2/9½	5/8
75—100,000	(a) 32	11.6	3.8	8.5	10/6	3/1	6/1½
60—75,000	(b) 32	14.5	4.7	9.1	8/4	3/-	5/11
40—60,000	27	14.9	2.8	9.1	12/2½	1/1½	5/8
30—40,000	48	13.4	2.6	8.6	10/6	11d.	5/-
20—30,000	(c) 55	15.5	4.0	7.6	10/8	2/1½	4/4½
15—20,000	37	14.0	3.4	8.9	8/-	1/3½	4/9
10—15,000	38	15.1	0.4	7.9	7/8½	4½d.	4/1
Under 10,000	37	15.1	1.2	7.3	5/6	9½d.	3/5
			2.0	6.7	5/5	11d.	3/3½

Population group	No. of libraries in group submitting returns	Book Expenditure			Staff		
		Highest	Lowest	Average	Highest	Lowest	Average
Over 500,000	6	1/2	9½d.	1/-	1/-		1/-
3—500,000	5	1/5½	10d.	1/2	2.47½	4.175	3.510
2—300,000	13	1/9	10d.	1/2	3.829	4.266	4.000
150—200,000	19	2/4	6½d.	1/3	2.355	5.263	3.390
100—150,000	39	2/1½	7½d.	1/3½	2.388	5.187	3.440
75—100,000	(a) 32	2/1½	8½d.	1/5½	1.914	6.178	3.280
60—75,000	(b) 32	2/1	7½d.	1/4½	2.345	6.213	3.280
50—60,000	27	2/10½	4½d.	1/4	2.314	6.384	3.270
40—50,000	47	2/2½	4½d.	1/6	1.811	10.018	3.320
30—40,000	48	2/5½	5½d.	1/6	1.908	21.180	3.710
20—30,000	(c) 55	2/2½	4½d.	1/3	2.000	8.953	3.930
15—20,000	37	1/1½	4½d.	1/3	2.500	21.790	3.560
10—15,000	38	1/5	2d.	9½d.	2.375	17.900	3.960
Under 10,000	37	2/2	3d.	9½d.	2.614	10.982	4.190
					1.750	9.500	3.920

(a) Excluding Westminster.

(b) Excluding St. Marylebone.

(c) Excluding Holborn.

May we now look rather more closely at the wide divergencies in the municipal library services of the country, revealed by the table on the previous page.

You may remember that, in 1927, the Kenyon Report on Public Libraries in England and Walesⁱⁱ advocated that urban areas with under 20,000 population should not attempt to provide an independent service. Incidentally, this report was the first official pronouncement of a national service. Admitting that "the size of the unit of independent service measured by population is very material" to library provision, all depends upon the amount of money which can be raised. Obviously this introduces the factor of rateable value. Buxton, for example, with a population of 19,200, has a rateable value of £8 12s. 2d. per head, whereas Ashton-in-Makerfield, with 19,280 inhabitants, is only £4 12s. 5d. per head. Llandudno (16,320) and Sevenoaks (15,750) are £12 3s. 11d. and £12 7s. 11d. respectively whilst Mexborough (19,240) and Swinton (12,120) are as low as £4 3s. 10d. and £3 16s. 5d. Of the authorities under 10,000 residents, Windermere (6,474) is £11 17s. 1d.; Horbury (8,044) is £5 2s. 2d. whilst Henley-on-Thames (7,920) is £7 10s. 10d. and spends £495 on its library. And yet, from statistics of books issued, the 10,000—15,000 and under 10,000 groups have a highest per head average of 15.1, nearly double that of the over 500,000 group.

Do not these figures provide evidence, on the one hand, of intense local pride, keen interest and a willingness to raise enough money, and on the other, a dismal and complete lack of the value of an efficient library service? The ability to pay is a factor of importance, too, although local rating systems are unrelated to it and to the benefits received. National taxation is much more equitably levied.

The situation is further aggravated by unevenness in local government generally—and we have seen and heard much of this since the Boundary Commission's activities were dissolved by Act of Parliament in 1949. Canterbury is a city of 29,600 population, Eastbourne a county borough of 57,200, Ilford a borough of 181,200 and Enfield (109,300) an urban district. Local government reform is engaging the attention of the Minister but there is a serious cleavage of opinion between the various local government associations. The Association of Municipal Corporations, representing 54% of the population in England and Wales, is ranged against the other four associations. These, comprising the County Councils Association, the Urban District Councils Association, the Rural District Councils Association and the National Association of Parish Councils, favour a new system of "one-tier" authorities as the simplest, the best and the most democratic form of local government. Thus, a great number of municipalities would have the say in the matters which are now the concern of county councils. It is argued that the inter-dependent interests of town and surrounding countryside would be best so served. The A.M.C. advocates two-tier government in administrative counties and one tier elsewhere.

Where does the library fit into this scheme of things? It is one of the few services remaining under the entire control of local

authorities. Is this a source of strength? I think not. We need uniform standards of provision, and this in my opinion is the crux of the situation. Municipal librarians are at the mercy of local authorities. Some are progressive, vigorously demanding value for money, yet providing generously for services administered. Others are niggardly, unprogressive and look upon the library as an undesirable luxury. We suffer badly from insularity. As Frank Gardner said in the *Library Review*ⁱⁱⁱ "We are at present hypnotized by major deficiencies in the organization of the profession as a whole".

The expenditure on rate-supported libraries in England and Wales is not high compared with other services. £11,183,439 is a mere drop in the ocean of gross local government expenditure of £1,414,200,000. On education alone the net expenditure is £447,000,000^{iv}. Public librarians spend about £3 million on books and periodicals, yet the country's total expenditure on them is £177 million. Viewed from this angle, our expenditure is quite small but in the light of individual library provision it is all important. To the municipal librarian, every £5 has to be spent with care. To the County Education Officer, £5 is a paltry amount.

But to come back to standards. May I remind you of the Library Association proposals promulgated at Blackpool in 1946? "The Council believes that the provision of an adequate and efficient local library service is a national necessity and should be tackled nationally and that it should be no longer completely at the mercy of local interest and local financial ability." In other words, it is a national necessity and a joint national and local responsibility. Here are the four main points:—

1. Public library provision at adequate standards must be obligatory on all suitable library authorities.
2. There must be a department of central government responsible for guiding, encouraging and co-ordinating the work of local library authorities and insisting upon efficiency.
3. All local authorities must be rendered financially able to attain efficiency.
4. The composition and size of local government areas must be such that the best results are made possible.

This last proposal is by no means the sole prerogative of the Library Association and is still a pious hope. To quote from the Boundary Commission's Report of 1947: "We have come to the definite conclusion that effective and convenient units of local government administration cannot everywhere be procured without a fresh allocation of functions among the various types of local authorities, particularly where the larger towns are concerned". What has been done regarding the first three? Are we awaiting new legislation to make these proposals effective? And if so, how far are we along the road? The membership at large is blissfully unaware of the position.

That we need to be a national service on these lines I do not need to reinforce. I accept the necessity as one of urgency. Many individuals have written down their ideas of such a service,

involving a government department charged with the duty of promoting and encouraging the development of local library services, exchequer grants, compulsory standards of service and inspection. As Raymond Irwin said, "We want a service that is not uniform but uniformly good". The Scandinavian countries have developed their libraries on these lines and there has been a definite state policy in Sweden since 1905.^v Those of us who heard Bengt Hjelmquist at last year's Conference were impressed by his description of Swedish libraries^{vi} and the photographs we saw of their libraries reinforced his statements. Their basic practice includes the provision of scrupulously clean bookstocks in equally clean buildings and local initiative is not stifled, but encouraged by the Library Division of the Board of Education.

In Norway a Bureau within the Department of Education is responsible for helping and co-ordinating local effort and supervising grants made from government funds. The provision of public libraries attaining the specified minimum standards is compulsory. It is significant here that, over and above the state appropriation, an amount not exceeding 5% each year is paid into a writers' fund, available for the support of Norwegian writers and their widows. It acts as compensation for the lending of library books.^{vii}

In Denmark there are 1,600 independent libraries and 1,500 parish libraries in an area of 17,000 square miles. There is widespread acceptance here of the fact that the upkeep and financing of public libraries is a government matter.

What benefits, then, could and should a British National Library Service confer?

1. **A national building programme**, as there is for educational establishments. Some central library buildings need immediate dismantling and rebuilding and branch library provision is more pressing in some areas than others. We see educational establishments going up all around us but the likelihood of new libraries is extremely remote.
2. **A uniform service** with prescribed standards of provision. The best library in the 50,000—60,000 group for example spends 12s. 2½d. per head against 1s. 1½d. by the worst, with an average of 5s. 8d. As for books, in the 40,000—50,000 group, the best library spends 18 times more than the worst, whilst in the 15,000—20,000 group, the lowest expenditure is 1¼d., equivalent to a maximum bookfund of £145! For staff, in the same group, the highest in relation to population is 1:1,908, the lowest 1:21,180 and the average 1:3,710. Some libraries have gramophone record collections, others would like them but cannot get them. Why? Lack of enthusiasm, the inability to pay or an unwillingness to foot the bill. There are many other instances I could cite, but these will suffice to indicate the unevenness in the services we render.
3. **Uniform staff establishments and gradings.** Libraries easily fall under the economy axes of domineering and uninterested local authority representatives. The library department is an easy target, being non-profit earning in the sense of £ s. d. So

you might think, is the Town Clerk's department, for example. Oh no! In my own authority, the respective numbers of professional staff in these two departments are 21 and 20. The salary payments are £6,748 against £13,251!

Salaries constitute one of our biggest bones of contention. The Library Association has issued its own recommended salary scales. They are only recommendations backed by no joint negotiating committee and therefore only applied by local authorities if there is a large measure of good will. And the longer the spiral of all-round salary increases continues, the less the likelihood of implementation of the Library Association scales. There must be nationally negotiated gradings. They are woefully overdue. How can a professional association such as ours consider the blacklisting of posts with disciplinary action against individual members when we have no scales of salaries recognized by negotiating bodies? If a truly national system could bring this about—and I am sure it could—the biggest professional canker would have been removed.

4. **Uniform staff training**, by full-time schools, part-time lectures and correspondence courses with proven tutors. The post-war library schools constitute one of the most significant developments in librarianship and I am sorry it was never my lot to attend such a school. But there are very wide and unjust differences in grants to students, and not every assistant gets leave of absence! I have known some assistants who have had to resign their posts in order to attend. And what of the provision of libraries for the library schools? It is hardly self-congratulatory for tutors of budding librarians to have to beg, borrow or steal material for the use of their students. Additionally, could there be a placing of students in jobs, operated nationally?
5. **The interchange of staff** between various libraries, at home and abroad. The assistant in the small library would benefit considerably from a spell of duty in a large system and, I submit, surprisingly maybe, the reverse process would be equally beneficial. It was Harold Laski who, ten years ago, advocated three months leave of absence every five years for all permanent library staffs, for the observation of foreign library services.^{viii}
6. **Central cataloguing**, including the issue of printed catalogues, with uniformity in cataloguing and classification practice.
7. **The issue of the National Bibliography**, this being the second landmark in post-war British librarianship. The B.N.B. was only possible because the members of the British Library Association were willing to guarantee the project against loss, a loss that would have been borne not by the government but by independent local authorities. How much better if a state department had accepted this responsibility. It is a castigation on our present system that we have been unable to produce a cumulated B.N.B. I cannot believe this is

because of lukewarmness on the part of librarians. Rather do I subscribe to the view that every penny spent on libraries is dug deep from the ratepayers' pockets and many librarians just could not find the money.

8. **Directives from the Library Directorate.** Conscientious librarianship calls for no small courage and many of us have frequently experienced that sickening feeling of despair when failing to persuade our committees, consisting as they do in many cases of unbookish men and women, to release a few pounds from the public coffers for improvements by way of books, staff and equipment. A public librarian should not have to fight all his battles by himself and statutory minimum standards would eradicate this.
9. **An evenness in our Bureau schemes.** Mr. Vollans in his report of 1952, a third landmark in post-war librarianship, called for uniformity in application forms, postal charges and union catalogues. Yorkshire hasn't a catalogue; the North-Western catalogue consists almost entirely of reference holdings; the West Midlands Region, until recently, had a limited area, covered by its union catalogue in Birmingham. Not one of the union catalogues is up-to-date, due to the increased demand, insufficient staff and lack of funds. Surely here is a co-operative venture which grew up on a voluntary basis but which now screams for Treasury aid. We, in the south east, know how appalling the arrears and deficiencies are, but the money for rectification would have to come out of rate funds. How many of our union catalogues hold records of books no longer in existence? An officer, within the Library Directorate, specially appointed to supervise and direct all the Regional Library Systems, seems to me to be a necessity and, moreover, he should be a competent, practising librarian.
10. **Uniformity of method.** At the present time we are all doing the same things in many different ways. For example, look at the vagaries in readers' tickets alone. Take the area in which I spend my days—and most nights! A reader in the East Sussex County Library area can have two tickets, one general and one non-fiction, whilst a reader of the Lewes Public Library may have three tickets without restrictions. In Hove, two general tickets and one music ticket is the rule, with up to six students tickets, whilst in Worthing, one general ticket and up to four non-fiction tickets applies. The West Sussex County Library issues one general ticket, one non-fiction ticket and one additional ticket for students, whilst in Brighton it is one general and two non-fiction tickets. And yet we advocate, and rightly so, the free inter-availability of tickets.

Consider the different regulations in regard to reservations and overdue books, the recording and reporting of statistics and the variety of stationery items we use. According to Henrik Jones, 61 libraries made no return of statistics for

1952-53, whilst at last year's Conference, K. C. Harrison wondered why we could not have uniformity of stationery. Why not? Because with the present set-up it is impossible. Many authorities, and their librarians, are far too insular to do something so revolutionary. A standardization of practice would not only be economical but would certainly help the readers we serve.

In 1944, Edward Sydney wrote: "It is not difficult to imagine the energy with which the librarians of Great Britain will tackle the formation of standards, when any Department of the Government officially includes the public library in its scheme of national resources and boldly states its considered opinion of the expenditures necessary for the provision of adequate service. As our statistics show, only a super optimist could be satisfied with the present chaotic condition".^{ix}

We hear much today of education and further education. These services are considered absolutely vital to our livelihood and heritage. The growing population is educated to use books for its work, its development and its hobbies, but the provision of them is left to the generosity or otherwise of local authorities. Even the school library has only just come into its own. The number of citizens willing to do battle for larger book funds and more adequate buildings is not large enough to influence public opinion. A minority of our populace would suffer if public libraries suspended their activities whereas the majority are largely dependent on our schools, water, gas and electricity supplies and waste disposal. "If the Government closed all cinemas, there would be a bloody revolution" said Raymond Mortimer. "If it closed all bookshops, most people would not notice the fact."

The problem of public library development is not one of large fiscal adjustments. It is one of "policy, improved organization and political persuasion".^x Municipal librarians have a traditional attitude, favouring autonomy within local government boundaries. This will have to give way to the implications of a broader framework. The Carnegie United Kingdom Trustees Report of 1921 said "it would be eminently satisfactory if statutory provision could be made by which all public libraries could be co-ordinated on a county basis". Could the child become father to the man? Education, the Fire Services, Town and Country Planning, the Welfare and Health Services and the Police have passed out of municipal hands into the laps of the counties since 1944. Hospitals, electricity, gas and water have become nationalized.

Robert Ashby in his prize essay of 1954, under the title "Memorandum on a national library system," portrays his ideas of the organization of a library system after the Third World (Atomic) War. I took heart in being convinced by him that there will still be libraries after this catastrophe but I sincerely hope it will not need such a disastrous event to bring about a national library system in the truest sense of the phrase.

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- ^{iv} *Municipal Journal*, January 7th, 1955.
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A COUNTY LIBRARIAN'S VIEWPOINT

By K. J. LACE, F.L.A.,
County Librarian, Essex

Each individual book user must be provided with the books he requires for any reason, when and where he requires them.

L. R. McColvin, 1942.

I have suggested too many plans for the betterment of library services which have never come to fruition—nor are likely to—to have any illusions.

L. R. McColvin, 1954.

This body (the Metropolitan Boroughs Standing Joint Committee) has by its very existence done much to break down some of the tendencies to parochialism and much to promote a spirit of helpful co-operation.

K. G. Hunt, 1947.

. . . collectively we have the major holdings in sources of information . . .

R. D. Rates, 1953.

I regard the inclusion of all special libraries in the inter-lending system as of fundamental importance.

S. P. L. Filon, 1953.

Most certainly it would be sounder administration to have regional clearing houses which were in a position to sift the loans before passing on anything to the National Central Library.

R. F. Vollans, 1952.

Following each Report the respective commissioning bodies diluted moderation with their own recommendations . . . The basis remains however, the re-inforced individual library.

J. H. Haiste, 1954.

I have no great enthusiasm for blue prints of Utopia. To be of value they must be based on personal research and experience and to be effective they must be sponsored by a recognized and authoritative body. There have already been too many theorists on the idea of a National Library Service and the original blue print has become a confused jumble of lines because of the innumerable modifications which have been suggested since first it was drawn. I do not wish and have no intention of adding to this jumble. When first I accepted the invitation to prepare this paper I thought I might make a useful contribution if I re-read most of what had already been written and endeavoured to present a "1955 Progress Report" so that the agreed might be set aside from the debatable, and the field of controversy thereby so limited that further discussion would extend the area of agreement.

My disillusionment was rapid and complete. There can be few who realize just how much has been written and said on this subject in the last fifty years. Not a little of the confusion has been caused by the fact that the solution of the problem is not entirely in the hands of librarians and certainly not in the hands of public

librarians. Every report and suggestion launched draws behind it a turbulence of criticisms, comments and reservations which seethe and foam for a little and settle again to the calm of inaction. It would appear that the most straightforward and obvious reforms and developments conflict with some interest or threaten some autonomy. Inaction is the only assurance of calm and in consequence, although much is written, little is done.

My reading, therefore, far from having given me the hope of some constructive effort, had damped my enthusiasm to a mere flicker when I was still further discouraged by the thought that in no other Branch of the Library Association would my task be so confined to preaching to the already converted. In London the advantage of having an official body already in existence as a forum for the expression of ideas and an instrument for transforming proposals into realities has enabled at least some progress to be made along the lines which have so often been suggested, and some experiments in the application of the theories of a planned and unified service to be carried out.

By now I was in black despair! I resolved to write withdrawing my acceptance of the invitation to prepare this paper with the explanation that my feeling was that further effort would serve no useful purpose.

But then, like Whittington, I turned again to London. What requirements, I wondered, had been met which had made it possible to amalgamate at least one area into something resembling a "unit" system with an agreed plan to give a uniform library service? From there it was but a step to "CICRIS"¹ and "The Sheffield" Schemes and with welling hope I realized that some things can and are being done by librarians backed by progressive committees within the present framework in spite of its disadvantages. With this inspiration I reconsidered the mountain of material at my disposal and felt I might quarry sufficient to raise an edifice worthy of your attention.

It has always been to me a symbol of good hope that there have been library authorities in the past, with understanding and confidence to enable librarians to put into operation schemes, such as the Regional Bureaux and Subject Specialization, which have been devised and have proved useful as steps towards a "National Library Service"! This being so there seems to be no reason why further steps in the same direction could not be taken in the non-controversial fields. The comments I submit for your consideration and discussion are offered against the background of existing organizations and present conditions. If there are advances towards a National Library Service on which library authorities and librarians of all types of libraries can agree, it may be possible to integrate more closely libraries of all types and so make available to the reader a much more valuable and effective supply of books and information, without the delay inevitable if these developments are to await major upheavals or the realization of hopes which have been so long deferred.

1. Co-operative Industrial and Commercial Reference and Information Service.

The wish to integrate

The most important requirement of a National Library Service at the present time is a decision on the part of library authorities and librarians that such a service is really desirable, and an intention to support suggestions and experiments which contribute to the creation of such a service and tend towards the ideal of providing the reader with the required book. In spite of the years of inter-lending experience the tradition of local service is deeply ingrained. It would be a great step forward if all concerned were able to think always of the stock of any particular service point as part of the "national" book stock and consider every reader as one of their readers. I am led to this comment not chiefly by my own experience but by the published reactions of the profession to the reasonable and carefully documented proposals which have been advanced. This reaction is often an objection to comparatively minor details and expressions of the necessity "to consider the effect on the autonomy of . . ." Unless and until the "What's in this for Joe?" attitude becomes less prevalent, it is difficult to hold very strong hopes of progress.

A definition required

It would help considerably if a clear and definite statement of the scope and purpose of the National Library Service could be formulated, agreed and publicized. The statement at the head of this paper is inclusive of the widest needs, and is incidentally the ideal to which I myself would subscribe. My impression is, however, that many, and especially those concerned with inter-lending schemes and with non-public libraries, wish to hold a much narrower concept of the service than this. I doubt if the majority would agree that "Because I want to read it" is as acceptable a reason as "Because I must read it." In contrast to the ideal mentioned above, most librarians would wish to retain the right to evaluate the bookuser's requirement and impose certain stringent reservations. In many cases these reservations applied locally are illogical from the "national" point of view for, as has already been pointed out elsewhere, a hobby in S.W.1, may be an industry in S.W. England. It is not, however, my purpose here to argue in favour of any particular point of view but to call attention to the "requirement" of a definition of what the National Library Service is to be.

The component parts

Within individual libraries the basic requirements are improvements in staff training and in bibliographical aids. There is a whole world of difference between training in a really large library and training in Middletown. Middletown may be proud of its reference library and have a reference librarian on Grade III— . . . but the assistant who has had the advantage of experience in Manchester or Birmingham or Bristol or Sheffield or . . . has advantages which cannot be gained from study nor from any other source.

The only satisfactory solution is an arrangement for staff to obtain experience in the really large libraries for a period of not less than one year, and some attention should be paid to the

arrangements for staff interchanges which have already been made with a view to overcoming the difficulties inherent in making experience in our larger libraries a fundamental part of staff training.

With regard to the question of bibliographical aids, the problem is again that of paying too much regard to "local" stock. It is infinitely more important for a reader to be able to discover what has been written on his subject than to discover what a particular library has been able to buy on that subject. A change of attitude is required to bring the bibliographies out of the cataloguing department into the library, where they can be used by readers in consultation with librarians, and money should be diverted to these "tools" from the "standard reference books" which clutter the "reference libraries" in many systems. The idea of a National Library Service makes the local public catalogue an expensive anachronism, but the professional periodicals are full of articles describing ingenious ways of reproducing parts of the wider bibliographies, and the necessity for a comprehensive catalogue is so little realized that the Five Yearly Cumulation of the B.N.B. failed for lack of support. Here is an immediate "requirement" which can be obtained without Treasury grant or local government reform.

The right to borrow

It must seem ridiculous, and be very frustrating to readers, that our system of co-operation ("if you want the book we will get it for you") has fourteen "buts" and nineteen reasons why a book cannot be supplied. A basic problem apparent in all the writing I have read and referred to is that book stocks are not large enough to meet all the demands made by the public and the only real solution to this problem is a larger unit of supply. The inter-lending systems are capable of development to provide this larger unit ("the re-inforced individual library") but their value to readers is seriously reduced by the restrictions which are placed on the service in an endeavour to handle only worth-while requests. There are at present considerable doubts concerning the real value of the inter-lending services based on the cost of individual transactions. These high costs are caused by the restrictions placed on the service and the nature of enquiries handled. It is inevitable that the cost of individual transactions will be high if the use of a machine with high overhead costs is unnecessarily restricted. The true economy is to have books used and the way to achieve this economy is to exploit the mobility of the book. This method has been tried and proved in large systems with many branches and there is no doubt of its value. In this matter the N.C.L. and the Regional Bureaux in their efforts to restrict the amount of work they are called upon to do are restricting the service which librarians can give to all types of readers, restricting the development of a National Library Service and restricting their own importance as the pivots of that service.

The current fallacy is that every library should buy any book costing less than 25s. This suggestion, which perpetuates the idea—which I imagined had long ago been forgotten—that the value of a book bears some relation to its price, is deliberately introduced

to reduce the number of applications handled which in turn keeps up the cost of individual transactions. This looks to me like running "widdershins." As long as the number of requests handled is restricted each periodical review of the cost of an inter-lending transaction will reveal an increased cost per volume lent which in turn will result in a still higher figure in the bar on borrowing and fewer and fewer readers receiving the books they require. There are many books, of considerable merit, but limited in their potential number of users, which cost much less than 25s. and which the smaller public library is justified in expecting to find available through the inter-lending service. The availability of the book with limited issue value, whatever the cost, is a major advantage to be derived from the larger unit of supply with complete mobility of stock. It is moreover with this type of book that the main advantages of co-operation between non-public and public libraries are to be found.

There must surely be some relation between the number of copies of a book and the number of potential readers in a given area, and true economy and efficiency must be based on achieving and holding this balance. I wonder if there are many others who, like myself, are tired of reading and hearing jibes at the book selection of their colleagues based on evidence collected from Bureaux applications. There are many reasons, besides inadequate book funds, why such applications are made and the most praiseworthy one is a desire to obtain a copy of a book for a reader as quickly as possible. It is in part this evidence of the attitude of some librarians which prompts me to wonder if the idea of a National Service has ever really struck home and if librarians would not rather see a book on the shelf waiting to be used than know it is in use in some reader's home.

The integration of all types of libraries

The inclusion of all types of libraries in the inter-lending system is a fundamental requirement of the realization of a National Library Service and this is closely related to the general problem of inter-lending which I have noted above and to the function of the N.C.L. I regret the rejection by the National Central Library of the very sound suggestion that all types of libraries should be integrated into the Regional Bureaux and am of the opinion that the decision to maintain the *status quo* will not help towards the establishment of a truly National Service. It would be interesting to have some comparable facts about the respective contributions of public libraries and special libraries to the inter-lending service which would confirm or correct the impression that public libraries have the major holdings in sources of information. The only relevant material I have found is the information on the sources of supply of 179 books from the N.C.L. on 11th January, 1951. Of these 13.9% were supplied from outlier libraries, 48.4% through Regional Library Bureaux and 37.7% from the N.C.L. These figures are, however, not conclusive since the source libraries of the requests satisfied by the Regions are not apparent. It appears, however, not unreasonable to suggest that the supply is at least on a 50-50 basis and that both public and special libraries have

much to gain from closer integration. The reasons for the reluctance of special libraries to become part of a Regional Bureau and for the N.C.L. to favour the policy of "direct approach" by special libraries appear to require further explanation.

"Most certainly it would be sounder administration to have regional clearing houses which were in a position to sift the loans before passing on anything to the National Central Library." It would also, I am sure, contribute to closer understanding and help to bridge the gulf which at present is regrettably "wide and deep"

Professional integration

The problem referred to in the previous section is aggravated by, and may be connected with, the rather difficult position of the special libraries within the Library Association. If recently written history and current opinions are correct it would appear that the Library Association after a period of hostility to the expanding public library movement in its earlier years is now so dominated by the public libraries that the present situation is the entire reverse of the previous one and that the pendulum has in fact swung too far in the opposite direction. That the interest shown by members of the staffs of university and special libraries in the Association is less than is desirable can hardly be disputed and there is, I feel, also no doubt that the status of the Association would be enhanced if the senior librarians of the great national and university libraries were more directly interested in its affairs. The "requirement" here appears to be a re-appraisal of the situation by a small group of experienced librarians in an endeavour to produce an Association which would represent the best interests of all libraries; would enjoy the highest possible status and would encourage rather than impede closer relations between all types of libraries and librarians.

The "Super Bureau"

A "requirement" frequently mentioned in the literature of the National Library Service is the establishment in one form or another of a "central regional library". The function of such a library is summarized in the phrase "the second line of supply". The various schemes of co-operation at present in operation are based on the principle of allocating to individual libraries responsibility for a part of each project and in the main this involves book storage. The majority of libraries have little space to spare and such book storage is inevitably expensive. The problem is particularly difficult so far as periodicals are concerned and there seems to be good reason for not storing in any one region more duplicates than are absolutely necessary. The establishment of a central regional library which would be the storehouse for the region and possibly house the Regional Bureau might be a solution of this problem. The requirements for such a library would be: the co-operation and financial support of the constituent library authorities; a suitable large building preferably in a "less expensive" area, and a responsible body on the lines of the Metropolitan Boroughs Joint Standing Committee as the controlling authority. If all libraries agreed to offer to their respective central regional library all reasonable withdrawals, a valuable stock could be collected,

which besides forming an important second line of supply more cheaply and quickly than the present system of dispersed stocks, would also be at the disposal of the staff of the Regional Bureaux—a consideration of some importance since access to a fairly large collection of books is essential to the success of the inter-lending services. Such an organization would have many advantages and an investigation in the probable cost would be justified. I imagine the cost would be in the region of £15,000 per annum, which appears to be about 3 times the present cost. This estimate would make provision for a staff of 22 and a book stock of half a million volumes. It should also be remembered that although subscriptions would be 3 times the present rate, considerable local economies would be possible and more efficient and speedy service would result.

Acknowledgments

The sources of ideas repeated must be obvious to all who are aware of the discussions which have taken place on the subject of a National Library Service. The writers of the documents and articles used are all so well known that I feel sure they will not feel slighted at not being listed, yet once again, at the end of this paper.

LIBRARIES AND THE FUTURE: A PERSONAL VIEW

By Councillor GEOFFREY FINSBERG,
Chairman, Hampstead Public Libraries Committee

A great change has taken place in the scope of public libraries since the passing of the first Act in 1850. The character of the population has undergone a radical alteration during the past century. Public libraries in their early days were designed to cater for the very elementary education of young people and the desire for further enlightenment displayed by many of the artisan class of the nation. Those pioneer libraries provided little other than standard text books and a large display of newspapers. In the hundred years which have passed, the early opposition to the provision of free library service has not died and Colonel Sibthorp has many descendants. Many local government services such as education or public health have their standards dictated by a central government department and, with their ever increasing costs, the needs of libraries may tend to be squeezed out of the picture when the rate is being levied. Many library chairmen know only too well from personal experience how much harder it is to obtain another £500 for their book fund than it is for other chairmen to get £2,000—£3,000 for sewers or road works. It is, perhaps, as well that one is not too easily daunted by the task which lies ahead.

There are many weaknesses in the present structure of local government as it touches the library service. Standards vary enormously from borough to borough and it would be difficult to justify some of the poorer now in being. It may well be that we have failed to show our colleagues there is a vital need for a good library service. It may be a truism—but it must be said—that a second-class service is little better than none at all and there is not such a large margin between a poor service and a good one as many people would believe. In the modern world, with unlimited free schooling, it is quite indisputably true that there is more compulsion and less education. Libraries must be regarded as a voluntary extension of the education system of the land. Still too many children leave school too early and, half-educated, are thrown into the hurly-burly of industry or commerce. They are ill-equipped to sift fact from fiction, truth from lie, and it is only the library with its inexhaustible supply of knowledge which can help.

Our first need is to define the new system and decide how best it can be administered. Should it receive a government grant? How far is centralization desirable? Does every library assistant desire to be a chief? All these problems are familiar to librarians but need some careful examination in the light of changing conditions.

We must ensure that every inhabitant of these islands has access to a library system with a minimum standard of effectiveness. How can this be achieved? In the first place we must look to the Treasury for an increased government grant towards the National

Central Library. The aim should be that the grant should provide sufficient money to run the National Central Library as it was intended by the Royal Charter of 1931. It may be contended by some impartial observers that the library service is becoming too vast and impersonal so that its essential purpose—that of providing books for study and leisure—is becoming overshadowed by the provision of frills and trimmings. To what extent should gramophone records, art exhibitions and the like be encouraged by library committees when they really have insufficient money available to provide an adequate coverage of books, dispensed by a qualified staff?

The trend of the post-war years has been to increase the powers of the larger authority at the expense of the smaller. This can be justified because the larger authority has much greater financial resources and can afford to pay an adequate salary to a specialized and qualified officer. The grave disadvantage of such a transfer is the loss of contact with the reader who tends to be a much happier individual when in his local authority's building than when he has to deal with someone at the centre, or, even worse, finds nobody willing to take responsibility, with the consequent need for letter writing. The problem of providing an adequate service falls most heavily upon the smaller authority with limited financial and material resources and it becomes well nigh impossible for it to carry out all the tasks assigned to it. It would seem difficult to justify a separate library authority where the population does not exceed 50,000 and in order to assist some amalgamations, there might be some additional Treasury aid on a population basis, weighted in favour of the recognized unit and given on a basis of 25% expenditure rebate. This grant would have to be paid in relation to the amount expended in strict relation to performance with, needless to say, a service no-detriment clause. Any claim by the Treasury to control policy would have to be resisted and standards would need to be improved by encouragement and co-operation. Specialized libraries can, for obvious reasons, never become fully incorporated into a national system of municipal or county libraries but a greater degree of integration should become possible, thus enabling the student to have ready access to their collections. County libraries would seem to fit into the picture as liaison bodies rather than separate entities, as they must tend, by their very nature, to be rather too impersonal, except that they would remain responsible for serving rural areas and those urban districts which decided not to become library authorities. The scope of the new areas would need very careful definition of many aspects. The very pressing problems of central book storage and the establishment of bibliographical centres are but two. The ever increasing spread of school libraries must be watched so that they can be incorporated in the overall service with a maximum of goodwill. With the growing number of new publications, schemes of subject specialization must be re-examined and in the light of practical experience, adjusted to meet the new situation.

A library will be more likely to succeed if it has an efficient staff. The first essential is to recognize the status of librarians. Too little effort seems to have been made in the past to obtain full recognition

and to lay down a minimum salary scale based on a population basis. There may be some difference of opinion on this point but it is a fair comment to say that conditions without a recognized basis are quite chaotic. A well paid post demands an efficient and well trained man to fill it. The establishment of a National Library Service would give rise to gigantic problems of staffing, training and recruitment. It is conceivable that such a service would restrict opportunities for promotion. For this reason it becomes vital to encourage variety of experience and mobility. Employing authorities should look with favour upon exchange visits whether they be internal or abroad. Anything which can broaden the outlook of our library staff is to be welcomed. I wonder if enough attention is given to this problem. However well trained a man may be, it is only too true that there is a limited field of promotion in librarianship. How far can a person progress before reaching a promotion bottleneck? It would seem to be clear that intending entrants into the profession should have pointed out to them quite clearly the limitations they would encounter. It is doubtful if it will always be possible to find a sufficiently large number of people willing to do the routine counter work at libraries with the uncongenial hours involved and yet receiving the same salary as their colleagues in the town halls, who work a regular 38 hour week. It must be considered, therefore, whether it would be advisable to introduce a special salary structure to give sufficient compensation to the staff. It would appear to be a sounder method of solving the problem than the alternative of creating a "Wellsian" robot—a sort of book charger, shelf filler—in order to create an additional class below the qualified A.P.T. and unqualified General Division Assistant.

In a national scheme, the tendency may grow of concentrating upon routine matters and allowing the chance to slip past of research into current problems. We should encourage such investigation lest we become, all too easily, mere automata neglecting the possibilities of future expansion. There should be an expansion of the library schools which should aim at teaching more of the practical side of the work than perhaps is done at present. It may be stating the obvious to point out that unless the library schools are headed by people who have had practical personal experience of the responsibilities entailed by holding a post of chief librarian, it must make both their task and that of the students far more difficult than they need be. I would suggest that this difficulty might be overcome by a refresher course from time to time whereby chief librarians and school heads exchange posts for six months.

The status of library authorities needs to be enhanced. It is time that the appointment of a separate library committee and a chief librarian were made statutory, and new legislation will be needed to give effect to this. Committee members should be carefully chosen on their merits and a seat on the committee should cease to be regarded as one of the minor duties devolving on a councillor. Thought should also be given to considering whether the term of office of a committee chairman requires limiting. It would be fair to say that after a continuous period of three years, a chairman may tend to become set in his ways and unresponsive to new ideas and

methods. Nothing should be done, however, to prevent his returning to the chair after an interval of at least one year. The keen young politician may shun the committee; it may become the restful backwater for elderly members. Both these extremes must be avoided. Of necessity, the local authority member is a layman and there is a strong case for the co-option of outside members who can bring a specialist knowledge to the committee's proceedings. They should be chosen from the best people available and political nominees should be avoided just as much as the sentimental choice of an ex-member. In some quarters co-option is considered as one way of rewarding political stalwarts for their work. This is something to be avoided for we already have enough politicians on our councils without finding an excuse for still more. There is the point of view to be considered that co-opted members should have full voting powers except on matters with a financial bearing. It can be argued that it would be quite wrong for a committee to recommend the expenditure of money when that decision may have resulted from the votes of members who are not responsible to the ratepayers.

Shall I give decent burial to the old problem of the legality of fines by stating that I would envisage power to impose fines being granted in the new legislation which I have suggested. Fines should not be looked upon merely as an income but as a means of reminding borrowers that books need to be circulated more swiftly in order to get the best use out of them. Can our present local government system support by means of its rate resources the necessary and urgent improvement in the library service? Are we justified in deciding whether the reader should pay for special services? Perhaps the one question which will give rise to discussion is whether power should be given to make a charge for extension services such as a gramophone record library. One hears so often today in these times of high rates and taxation, that many people living on pensions and fixed incomes feel resentment at having to help in providing records when they themselves cannot afford a gramophone. I would be inclined to favour such power being given in order to relieve the rates to some extent.

Regional Cataloguing Bureaux might be created in order to aid co-operation and a fair measure of standardization would be vital in order to get the fullest possible value out of them. For co-operation and mutual aid it would appear essential for some form of standard cataloguing procedure to be adopted, based on the B.N.B. which should become more widely used, and in order to increase its use a Treasury grant of 50% of its subscription might be available to libraries within the framework of the new plan. There is much to be said for the introduction of a regional cataloguing system whereby a central point would, by mechanical means, run off sufficient entry cards for all member libraries to use. This should reduce many overheads and allow individual libraries to employ their time and money more profitably, although the question of central book purchase would require investigation if this proposal was adopted in its entirety. There must be a realization amongst librarians that a greater degree of co-operation will be needed if a new plan is to succeed. Differences of opinion upon such matters

as collation would have to be sacrificed if economies are to be effected. A well qualified organization akin to the "O and M" team at present operating within the Metropolitan area might be asked to conduct a detailed survey of libraries with a view to seeing whether any streamlining of procedure is possible or desirable without damage to the service. In our new structure it would be better to have one Ministry to whom all library matters could be referred, preferably the Ministry of Housing and Local Government. It will be essential for the staff of the Ministry to contain qualified librarians who have held positions of experience within the local government service. In this way they will know the size and nature of the problems to be involved. Few laymen can gain a clear conception of the detail and work involved in providing a good library service—the size and scope of potential demand is vast and can only be fully realized by librarians. It is obvious that, sooner or later, some re-organization will take place and that it is necessary for the Library Association to channel any changes into a co-ordinated plan for a National Library Service.

All these problems which have been posed to you and answers attempted have been a source of discussion and divergence of opinion within—and indeed outside—the profession for the past twenty years. This paper may have served its purpose if it has placed the questions in clear perspective, taking into account the difficulties on each side of the public library service. Books reveal the heritage of man and it must remain our function, whether in a new structure or under present legislation, to encourage all to become aware of what has been created in the past and to see the potentialities of the future.

A LOCAL AUTHORITY VIEWPOINT

By Councillor JOHN HIGH

Chairman, Acton Public Library Committee

It must be made clear at the start of this paper that it is my view that any National Library Service should be firmly based on the local authority as at present. It should be financed, as now, chiefly from the local rates. Development of the service should proceed by co-operation between library authorities in the way in which it is developing at the present time, and any intervention by higher authority should be confined to the barest minimum. The final form and requirements of the library service will depend on many imponderables but it is my firm belief that, if it is built on a firm foundation of real local control, the form will be that which is best suited to its requirements and that these requirements will be met in the way best suited to the means available.

Whilst this may sound rather complacent, it must be added that it is my experience that many chairmen are second only to their librarians in recognizing the shortcomings of the present service and of the need to develop one which will serve the public as the public should be served. This paper will seek to establish the point that the alternatives to the present system contain such undesirable elements as to rule them out of consideration, and an attempt will be made to show that librarians need not necessarily be helpless spectators in the development of their service.

The main attractions of a National Library Service to librarians include such things as adequate book-funds, established status, national conditions of service and pay, a realistic approach to staffing problems, a more far-seeing building policy and, in general, the strengthening of the service by generous transfusions of financial help. These ideas may be the stuff of which dreams are made, but the reality is that it is now a firmly fixed rule in local government that there shall be no taxation without representation. The major part of this paper will, therefore, be devoted to an examination of the probable consequences of the adoption of some of the ways in which national help could be given to the library service.

Possible forms of National Assistance

1. National Health Service System

There may be some advocates of a National Library Service in its literal sense in which the individual libraries function as service points of a centralized authority. The organization could either be similar to that of the Ministry of Labour's inter-linked local employment exchanges or to that of the National Health Service with its regional boards, hospital management committees and boards of governors for the teaching hospitals. Few of these advocates will be found in the ranks of the public librarians since they, more than anyone, realize that the problems facing individual libraries differ so widely that there must be a very large measure of local control and initiative if they are to be satisfactorily met.

It could be objected that the National Health Service does, in practice, give a measure of local control and allows of some local initiative, but it should be pointed out that the boards and committees are appointed by the Ministry of Health. Whilst they contain members who are familiar with their local problems they are, to an extent which would be utterly intolerable to a local authority, responsible to the central authority. Thus they have to work to imposed budgets and can be subject to directives against which there is little appeal. Nor, it must be added, is there any reason to suppose that these bodies are any more enlightened than the local authorities in their area.

2. The Swedish System

There will be more advocates of a system similar to the one operating in Sweden. In this, to quote Bengt Hjelmqvist at Hastings in 1954:

- "1. The State pays half of all expenditure in small libraries up to a maximum of 10,000 Swedish crowns . . .
4. Public libraries are controlled by the communes, not by the State, whose officials are advisers rather than inspectors . . ."

This system works well in Sweden for two main reasons. The first was admirably put by Mr. Hjelmqvist:

"Let me present my country. From north to south it is as far as from Oxford to Rome, From east to west it is as far as from Oxford to Glasgow . . . It covers an area considerably larger than Great Britain. You have to add Ireland, Holland, Belgium and Switzerland to equal Sweden in size. On the other side, it has only as many inhabitants as London, Middlesex and Surrey altogether . . ."

Sweden has over 1,000 library authorities and some form of central help is essential if a library service is to be available to those not living in the larger towns. It is only in the remoter parts of these islands that any conditions similar to these occur.

The other reason for the success of the Swedish system is to be found in Bengt Hjelmqvist himself. Whilst it is true, as he says, that the libraries are controlled by the communes and that the State officials are advisers rather than inspectors, the ultimate authority nevertheless lies with the State as, if the advice offered by its officials is refused, the State grant may be withheld. Much, then, depends on the officials who are chosen to represent the State and, whilst Sweden has obviously chosen the right man in Mr. Hjelmqvist, this is no guarantee that this would always be the case with similar appointments over here.

There is a parallel here with H.M. Inspectors of Education. Whilst it is the formal responsibility of headmasters to arrange the curriculum of their schools, they disregard the advice of their inspectors at their professional peril. H.M. Inspectors regard themselves as co-operating with their headmasters and assisting them by bringing their wider experiences of education to bear on the school

problems, but it needs little imagination to realize that this *could* result in the imposition of a drab uniformity and the stifling of initiative locally.

The financial arrangements for the Swedish scheme resemble those in force here with the police and with civil defence. In these services the whole or a part of the cost is borne by the State, as it is necessary to ensure that local apathy or opposition does not result in the failure to maintain a minimum level of efficiency. The reaction to Coventry's attitude to the civil defence question is of interest in this connection.

3. The Subsidy System

Libraries could be helped financially in a way similar to the help given to local authorities in respect of their housing projects. The essence of such a scheme is that the central authority gives the local authority a stated annual payment to its housing fund provided that the local authority, in its turn, also makes a stated payment. The local authority may pay more than this minimum payment if it wishes to do so but it is only led to do it by the force of local public opinion or by its own convictions. A subsidy on these lines for library purposes could be given in respect of either the service as a whole or of a part of it—*e.g.* the book fund and/or the reference library—but there is no need here to discuss the precise form it would take.

There are several drawbacks to any such scheme, no matter how it is applied. One is that any such help would be given so that *minimum* standards are maintained. Anything over that minimum would be a charge on the local authority. This might benefit some library services but there would be many who would either not benefit at all or would even have to face a reduction in their standards. It is all too easy for a local authority member to regard as wanton extravagance any expenditure above the necessary minimum.

Whilst the housing subsidies are paid at a fixed rate on the individual houses or flats throughout the period during which subsidies are payable, this rate varies from time to time in respect of new building and there is no reason to think that a subsidy for library purposes would be unalterable. Nor would the minimum standards be unchanging. This has not been the case with housing, and the phrase "Owing to the current . . . difficulties, there will a temporary cut of 10%" is all too familiar to those concerned with housing.

Another difficulty is to be found in the habit which Whitehall has of concerning itself with the running of schemes for which it provides financial help. A librarian might merely feel irritated to receive from "The Ministry" a circular telling him that it is desirable to increase the service life of his books by rebinding them after a given number of issues, but his feelings would be somewhat different if the circular went on to lay down the types of rebinding he should use. There could also be circulars requiring a standard system of book-issuing, or pointing out that a readers' advisory service is a "frill" and that enquirers should be directed to the (standard)

catalogue. More serious, there could also be circulars instructing librarians not to purchase specified "unsuitable" books, or telling them not to purchase, say, more than two copies of any one book so as to avoid undue competition with booksellers.

In Britain we have tended to take it for granted that there is, in our book selection policies, a minimum of small-mindedness or of political censorship. This is in a large measure due to the circumstances of local government. Public criticism of a library on the grounds that it favours the "Reds" or that it has too many "sexy" books is unlikely to result in anything more than a temporary increase in the demand for the books in question as, in general, it is accepted that book selection is largely the professional concern of the librarian. It is not, however, impossible to visualize a situation in which the scales in a closely-fought general election could be tipped by the accusation that a Minister has been politically "soft" or that the government has shown itself lax on the question of morals. Indeed, there have been some close parallels to such a situation across the Atlantic. This being the case, it would only be civil service human nature to play safe and to try to avoid trouble before it arises.

It is not necessary to be intimately concerned with housing matters to be aware of the question of the rents payable by the tenants of a local authority can arouse deep feelings. Why, it is argued, should council tenants have the benefit of subsidies when they can afford to purchase television sets and cars? The controversy over the 1s. charge for prescriptions in the National Health Service may not be as acute as it was, but it is still alive. Could not similar views be held in respect of the use of public libraries were they to be receiving government subsidies? There could be strong pressure for the imposition of charges in a period of rising prices, and they could also be used with the intention of limiting the use of libraries when, for instance, book issues are increasing. The results of action along these lines would not merely, at one stroke, destroy the essential basis of the public library system, but would almost certainly drag it into the region of acute political controversy

4. The Education System

There is probably a lot of support for the idea that the administration of our libraries should be centred on the county councils somewhat on the plan of the present system for education. In many areas this is, of course, the case to-day but for obvious reasons this section does not apply to the existing county libraries.

There will not be much enthusiasm amongst public librarians for the idea of their incorporation in the present county libraries without some major modifications in the system. The most obvious modification would be to vest the ultimate financial control of the libraries in the county council whilst leaving the day-to-day details of administration and much of the long-term planning in the hands of a committee appointed by the local authority. Annual estimates would be prepared by this committee and would be submitted by it to the county council for approval—or otherwise. The system of "excepted districts" in education is an example of this type of

delegation of powers and, indeed, were the libraries to be incorporated into the education system the local library committee would become a sub-committee of the local divisional executive for education.

There are some superficial advantages in arrangements like these. The difficulties over the intervention of national authority would, for instance, be minimized, if not avoided altogether. Financial resources would, in some cases, be on a sounder basis and the governing bodies would still be close to their libraries. The county might well follow a more broadly-based development policy and tend to raise the level of the service in the more "backward" localities in its area.

Considerations such as these led to the present organization in education, but would they apply with equal force to the library service? It would be wrong to suggest that "all is well" in the relations between the county councils and their excepted districts and experience would suggest that serious difficulties are bound to arise in this type of relationship between authorities.

In education, the excepted districts are jealous of their standing and authority. It irks them, for instance, that they can appoint their own junior staff but have to join with the county council when it comes to the appointment of a headmaster. This is particularly the case when, as is the position in Middlesex, political considerations are laid down by the County Council which have to be observed in making the appointment.

Difficulties more easily arise when there are political differences of outlook between the two authorities, but it is only fair to add that these are mainly in the field of long-term planning and that, even where there is political agreement, difficulties still arise. The fact that the county council has the final word assists in the resolution of differences, as the excepted district may content itself with a public expression of its feelings and, on the other hand, the county council may be prepared to give way to a determined expression of local opinion if matters of only secondary importance are involved or major principles are not called into question.

A major source of friction between the county council and its excepted districts is the annual estimates. These are prepared by the excepted district in a similar manner to their present preparation for the local authority with the exception that they have to be prepared in a form, and under headings, laid down by the county council. There is no evidence to indicate that this leads to a more generous attitude on the part of the estimating authorities. Indeed, the opposite is more likely to occur since the consideration of the estimates by the county council is concerned with the deletion of items. A librarian under similar circumstances would not only have to cope with Councillor A and Alderman B who, for instance, believe in "saving" on the book fund, but would also have to reckon with County Councillor C and County Alderman D. If *either* of these two sets of people get their committee to say "no" to a project, then that negative would stick. It could also be noted in this connection that whilst most local authorities outside the Metropolitan area have annual elections, the county councils have

triennial ones. It is noticeable that many county councils become acutely rate-conscious in election years and this would tend to militate against continuity or stability in library affairs.

Is National Assistance really necessary ?

The previous section of this paper has been concerned with the examination of some of the ways in which a higher authority could intervene in the formation of a National Library Service. The existing services which have been examined as possible models are all of such importance to the community that the State accepts the necessity of ensuring by financial help that the administering authority can maintain a minimum standard of efficiency. Thus, homes *must* be built at rentals which the prospective tenants can afford, but must also be of such a standard that they will not become the slums of the future. Crime must be controlled, and it is generally agreed that we should have some form of preparedness in case air raids recur. Our children must get an education if we are to hold our own in the world. With the increasing complexity of modern medical treatment, the cost of an adequate health service is beyond most pockets other than that of the State.

There will be many librarians who will maintain that it is also essential for our future in a competitive world that we have a first-class library service. Some may even maintain that the only way to ensure this is to call in higher authority despite the objections noted in this paper. But is this really necessary? The resources are available to the local authorities *if* they wish to use them. Thus, in my Borough, the library rate is less than 1/12th of the education rate. Another borough was referred to at the Hastings Conference which has a population of over 20,000 with a penny rate of only £350. In cases like this it must be remembered that the local authority receives very substantial help from rate equalization grants which can be used in part to assist the library rate.

The resources are there if the local authorities wish to use them. Is there, then, no reason for national help at all? There is, of course, a fair amount already being provided. Thus H.M.S.O. publications are provided to public libraries at a 50% discount. There are Treasury grants for the maintenance of the National Central Library, the British Museum, the Science Library and the Patent Office Library. Government departments are encouraged to co-operate with the public libraries in matters such as loans, lists of books received and the provision of information. This help is valuable—professional librarians can assess this better than I can—and it is of such a nature that it is best provided by the central authority. It is, indeed, essential if any form of a National Library Service is to be developed, but it does not involve the intrusion of the central authority into the affairs of the individual public library.

Mention must also be made here of the school library service as this is an example of a direct grant being made for a specific service undertaken by local public libraries. In Middlesex, the County Council, as part of its responsibility for the provision of education, has the duty of seeing that books are available for the reading of their pupils. The practice of the County Council dele-

gating its powers to the local authorities is growing, a grant being made to cover administrative costs and a *per capita* book allowance is made. This system works well as the financial basis (although it may vary from year to year) is known and is not subject to detailed estimation. Many local authorities are prepared, if necessary, to supplement this service and, finally, there are few regulations which need to be laid down.

It can, to sum up this section, be said that we already have the seeds of a National Library Service with us, and, indeed, some of these seeds are in a fairly advanced state of germination. National assistance is being provided where it is of most help to the development of the service but it is of such a nature that it does not interfere with the local administration.

Librarians and the Future

It is a fascinating pastime to attempt to peer into the future and no doubt many Library Association Conferences will try this, but it would ill befit an amateur to be too dogmatic on this theme. However, I am convinced that the future of the service will be best served if it is left in the hands of the local authorities as at present. When it is recognized, for instance, that the resources of the individual library can be extended by co-operation with other libraries, that co-operation is best ensured by the agreement of those concerned rather than by the imposition of a system from above.

Similarly, should the libraries of this country feel, for example, that it is desirable that junior library staff should have more experience of different library systems than is possible now, then a scheme which will really work and will best fit the needs of those concerned, whilst it may well need co-ordination, can best be planned by the libraries interested in it.

New ideas of ways in which the library service can be expanded can also be tried out locally and if they prove satisfactory, can be adopted by other libraries with such modifications as best suit them. I would like to give two examples of this as they illustrate the points I have been trying to make.

Firstly, in my Borough we used to have a central library and three branch libraries. As Acton is a compact and thickly populated Borough, it might be thought that this would be a sufficient library coverage. However, there are pockets of population which are cut off from the central part of the Borough by factories, main road and railway lines. Mobile libraries have a great use in country areas, but their use in urban ones is not so obvious. Indeed, it took a lot of persuasion to convince the members of the Council to agree to the provision of one as an experiment, but it would have been very much harder to try to convince a remote authority. In the upshot, the mobile library has proved to be a great success and it is planned to enlarge this service.

The second example is CICRIS, the West London Commercial and Technical Library Service, which has been in existence for a few years. In this scheme the resources of the ten public libraries co-operating are pooled with the resources of industry in the area,

and with the assistance of other sources such as those of embassies and government departments, including the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, provide a quick, free and authoritative information service at a very small cost to those running it. In view of the private resources made available it would have been out of the question for such a scheme to have been imposed on the area by any central authority.

If ideas and methods are developed in this fashion and it is found that national help is necessary for their full implementation, then it is possible to seek this help and obtain it without any surrender of the independence of the libraries. It is along lines such as these that we will get the most satisfactory National Library Service.

A SPECIAL LIBRARIAN'S VIEW

By MISS M. EXLEY, F.L.A.,

Chief Research Librarian, Boots Pure Drug Co., Ltd.

The regular publication by the Library Association of public library statistics is an excellent yardstick for both public librarians and public library authorities, since the service such libraries give can to some extent be measured by the populations they serve. It would be quite impossible to issue such statistics for special libraries because there is no basic factor, or common principle common to them all, on which a comparison could be made. Your inclusion of the special point of view in your discussions, however, confirms that special libraries are in fact an important part of library provision in the country to-day. Before the war, at least outside London, this was not the case and the increase in the number of special libraries is to a great measure due to the increased interest in research, primarily encouraged by the Government. This interest is in no way diminished and special libraries are in the interim stage of development. When public libraries were first set up just over 100 years ago they were able to develop quietly and slowly, but special librarians found themselves in quite a different position as they were able to see the good and the bad in existing libraries and library techniques, and special librarianship, therefore, seemed early to be surrounded by experiment, critical appraisal, etc. They seemed compelled to express themselves in new ideas, techniques, etc. Much of this experiment has now been proved and tried and some standards have arisen from it. The old arguments about language qualifications, subject qualifications, documentary reproduction, the word documentation itself, punched cards, special classification schemes, etc., are problems common to all librarianship and not just special librarianship.

Since Mr. Francis is later to talk on the research library point of view, I am presuming I am intended to look especially at the problem from the industrial library point of view, this being the generally acknowledged connotation of the adjective "special". You may, many of you, have read the Manchester Joint Research Council publication *Industry and Science*. However debatable the findings of such a survey might be generally, from a library point of view I would say its findings are generous, since there are so few areas as heavily industrialized as Manchester. London would, of course, be quite a different picture and even less typical of the rest of the country. Of the 502 firms visited by the surveyors, 225 claimed to have library facilities, only 96 a library of their own, and only 11 had a trained librarian. Manchester is an area where the benefits of a good library service should be appreciated, since the excellence of the public, university and technical college libraries is well known. From these figures it will be seen that the number of industrial concerns sufficiently large to justify a separate library are few, and those to appoint a qualified librarian very few indeed. There is no one factor which can be judged to determine when a separate library becomes

of the original documents if they were available. We have all used microfilm for many years now but reading in this way is still only regarded as a good expedient, and not the best way for a busy man, frequently working away from the library.

The whole scheme of interloan has recently been given a thorough overhaul and various recommendations for the improvement of the service have been made. I feel a development in the use of photocopies might well be explored as an adjunct to the interloan service. Borrowing a book to-day is an expensive business. Stationery, postage both on the application, intermediary correspondence and on transport two ways, as well as the cost of paper, corrugated, string and labour for packaging are considerable. Furthermore the continued packing and transporting of bound volumes causes undue wear on bindings and some of our rarer files (thinking nationally) will become unusable. This, I realize, is looking at the problem from a very long-term point of view. Ought we to make considerably more use of photocopies? I fully realize the problems involved in copyright but we have been promised legislation in this matter and we already have the Fair Copying Agreement. The Science Museum Photocopying Service is known and accepted. You will, many of you, know the American Chemical Society Scheme which, by the use of prepaid coupons, allows every subscriber to *Chemical Abstracts* to purchase a photocopy of any item which is abstracted in the journal. I would hesitate to suggest any scheme should be based on the various journals which have succeeded *British Abstracts*, and in any case science and technology are not the only subjects with which we are concerned. Is it fantastic to suggest that a similar scheme of prepaid coupons could be based on the *World List*, or to widen the scope of the scheme on "B.U.C.O.P."¹ I visualize the publication of a list of all the libraries which have signified their willingness, or even preference, to supply photocopies of any of the titles which they hold according to whichever location list is the basis for the scheme. This suggestion may bristle with problems but many of them are not insuperable when we face the fact that the impedimenta and mechanics of lending increase in cost, whilst cheaper methods of photocopying are being produced very freely. I think it is agreed that special libraries have co-operated freely in the interloan schemes, particularly some of the older society and private libraries whose prime concern must always be the readers for whom, or by whom, the library is maintained. Many industrial libraries too have become Outliers of the N.C.L. and members of Regional Bureaux and I think strong measures should be taken to insist that all libraries, however small, should join in the national and regional schemes. Many smaller libraries may hesitate to join the schemes because they feel they have little to contribute; they have no orthodox catalogues and they may even fear too heavy a call on their specialist material. Though it is possible to limit the time for which a book may be borrowed, readers from general libraries repeatedly seek renewal. Photocopies would offset this inconvenience of repeatedly lending material which is scarce, and, in a special library, in heavy demand.

1 The British Union Catalogue of Periodicals.

The part which special libraries might have played in the national library provision of the country has, in my opinion, been seriously affected by the attitude of the profession generally towards special library staffing and training. I do not propose to enter into any lengthy discussion of the pros and cons of graduate versus professional qualifications. I hope we can foresee the day when *all* librarians in responsible positions—be they special or public—are qualified both academically and professionally. An even bigger stride forward would be to see all librarians judged by the same standards. When I say that every public librarian should know as much of the special librarian's problems, methods, literature, subject fields, etc., as the special librarian is expected to know of the general librarian's problems, methods, etc., I am not thinking in terms of Library Association examinations. I am thinking of the National Library Service as a whole. When the additional national libraries and regional reference libraries are set up they cannot hope to give the country a full and complete service unless the local and special librarians drawing from them really appreciate the aims of a full library service and, even more, are equipped, by their subject knowledge, their skill in handling an enquiry, and their knowledge of national resources, to use the full service. Many librarians of all kinds to-day are giving such an ideal service. Many are not. The full realization of the professional requirements of special librarians has, in my opinion, been handicapped by the diversity of title—librarian or information officer. Again I do not propose to dwell on the old arguments since there is a use for both titles. Where an information officer is responsible for the organization of a library he is surely a "Librarian and information officer". My point in even mentioning this matter here is that I feel we must not let the wider education of librarians everywhere suffer because there is some doubt about the definition of, and therefore training of, an information officer. An information officer not responsible for the organization of a library is a library user. There is a place for him in the industrial hierarchy since I think it would be wrong to visualize the establishment of an ever-increasing number of industrial libraries large enough to justify the employment of a trained librarian. Information officers undoubtedly give a valuable service drawing from their own current resources and more from their intelligent use of the larger and improved national resources which it is our duty to foster and administer.

To sum up the points I have made, I feel we should first of all work for the development of national library resources, organized on a regional and subject basis. We should consider seriously whether we are not overloading the present interloan schemes and consider photocopying as an alternative scheme. Finally we should look seriously into the education of all librarians, education not only for examination but for service. When doing this we should not allow our plans to be complicated by consideration of the education of information officers, who are not, in fact, carrying out any of the duties of librarianship proper

A RESEARCH LIBRARIAN'S VIEW

By F. C. FRANCIS, M.A., F.S.A.,

Keeper, Department of Printed Books, British Museum

The words "National Library Service" slip easily off the tongue. They do not, perhaps, form what is called a cliché, but it is certainly necessary to guard against using the phrase as we use clichés—without fully realizing what it means and understanding how it can be brought about.

There is no doubt that these words are indicative of the current approach to library work and express an urgent desire on the part of librarians to organize their work so that they can play their full part in the intellectual and practical life of the present day. They are also indicative of the growing feeling that libraries as a whole are engaged in what is fundamentally one operation and that in performing their day-to-day work they are contributing their share of what is a common task. They are finally indicative of the appreciation of the fact that no library is self-sufficient or can be a law unto itself.

The words can, therefore, be regarded as expressing a thoroughly estimable idea, and as indicating a goal towards which we need to move if we are to carry out our functions satisfactorily. There is all the more reason therefore why we should beware of wishful thinking and of assuming that the expression of a wish is the same thing as its fulfilment. I mean that we must realize what problems we are up against, so as to be able to surmount them. We have not yet anything approaching a National Library Service, and some of the plans which have been suggested, for organizing libraries into a general scheme, pay little regard to the quite understandable difficulties which many of our libraries would have to face if they were to be organized in the manner suggested. This is why I am very happy to have the opportunity to-day of hearing the discussion and also of contributing to it in some small degree.

I have been given the assignment of dealing with this matter of a National Library Service as it affects university and research libraries. I shall try to be severely practical.

First of all, what are the requirements, in general terms, which university and research libraries have to meet? In view of the fact that Miss Exley is dealing with the subject libraries, I am taking the term "research libraries" to mean the British Museum, the National Libraries of Scotland and Wales, the Science Library, the Natural History Museum and Patent Office Libraries.

University libraries, and in particular those of universities with a complete range of faculties, will need, apart from the requirements of undergraduates, in the first place, for research students and teaching staff, a complete range of basic reference material. By this I mean bibliographies, dictionaries, encyclopædias, catalogues of other libraries, and general works of reference. They will need also to provide as complete a range as possible of source material, in particular authoritative texts for students in the humanities, and

for their scientists and technologists a wide range of periodicals, and comprehensive series of abstracts and indexes. For undergraduates they will need not only text-books at the university level, but an attractive range of books which might be called recreational-instructional. By this, I mean that the librarian should be able, by well stocked shelves and by careful arrangement, to encourage the best kind of general reading, and enable that process of mental and intellectual expansion, which is the basic feature of a good university education, to go on continuously and automatically.

In the case of the universities which are designed for some special area of study—the best example of what I have in mind is the scientific college such as the Imperial College of Science and Technology, in London, and the great Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and similar institutions, in the United States—in the case of these institutions provision must be made for as wide coverage as possible in subjects in which the institution specializes, but the general educational side must by no means be neglected. Indeed there is much to be said in these cases for even greater stress to be laid on the cultural side of the university's activity. There are, for example, in the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and in the Georgia State Technical College, well developed faculties of literature and music, and the libraries are designed to support their needs.

How far are the university libraries able to meet these basic requirements from their own resources? I must confess that what I am going to say on this subject is not the result of detailed enquiries in the institutions concerned, but is based rather on general impressions. Allowance should be made, therefore, for error, and I hope that if there are serious misconceptions it will be possible for some members of the audience to correct them.

I suppose it would be reasonably true to say that far from all the university libraries are able to provide even the basic reference materials. Moreover where university libraries have good basic reference collections and can in addition provide good special collections, which have grown up, perhaps owing to some generous gift or gifts, perhaps because of the special interest of the librarians themselves, it is certain that the historian will not find all his source material, the professor and student of English literature all his authoritative editions and out of the way books, and even more, the classical scholar all his early continental editions, inscriptions and archaeological works. The economist will not find the full range of business documents, pamphlet material, etc., on which his studies must be based, and the scientist many of the more unusual periodicals.

In saying this, no reflection is intended on the libraries concerned. The growth of literature, and the increase in the amount of research carried on at the universities, and the demands of research itself, have increased so enormously in recent years that it would be quite unrealistic to expect any library to be self-sufficient. In fact, this problem of comprehensiveness and self-sufficiency is one which affects not only the university libraries but national libraries as well. I shall return to this point later.

What steps are being taken by these libraries to meet demand which they cannot meet from their own stock? In the first place, there is a great deal of inter-library lending based on the National Central Library, but also to a considerable extent on good personal relations and mutual goodwill between the libraries themselves. Universities have also entered into local schemes of co-operation, and draw on specialist libraries both in their own localities and elsewhere. Furthermore, an increasing amount of material not available in a normal form is supplied in microfilm or photocopy. But, when all is said and done, this cannot amount to very much when compared with the size of the problem involved. By its very informal nature, co-operation of this kind is at best only chancy.

In order to improve it, a great deal more carefully planned co-ordination would be necessary. The university libraries of the United States have joined together in the Farmington plan to provide between them complete coverage of foreign material. By this arrangement, individual libraries agree to buy extensively, if not absolutely comprehensively, in particular fields of study, and by means of the Union Catalogue in Washington, make their stocks available throughout the country. In this country we have not yet arrived at the position where such a plan has been seriously debated. There are, indeed, many problems connected with it. Libraries which partake in it have to adapt their own library planning very carefully to fit in with it, and it has to be understood that the books needed can only be supplied after the interval necessary for them to be located and sent from the place where they are to the library which needs them. Such a plan, in fact, can only apply to very out of the way books and is capable of only limited application. This is not, however, to say that I do not think it an admirable idea and one which might very well be applied in this country as in the United States.

Another enterprising and promising development in the United States, not yet paralleled in this country, is embodied in the Mid-West Inter-Library Center. Here a number of libraries have banded together to provide for themselves not only storage space for little used materials, but an institution which can acquire materials likely to be needed for research but not important enough to justify individual purchase; for example, out of the way periodicals, publications of American States, trade catalogues, business archives, and such like material. Here again is an excellent example of voluntary collaboration designed to increase, what might be termed in modern jargon, the research potential of all the universities participating in the scheme. The main requirements for a development of this kind, besides readiness to co-operate and to contribute a due share of the cost, are a keen, imaginative and energetic librarian of the centre, and easy communication. In the case of the Mid-West Inter-Library Center, all the libraries which participate in the scheme are connected by teletype printer. Easy and speedy communication is essential for the proper working of a centralized deposit, as indeed for all kinds of co-operative work between libraries.

The resources of the universities might be materially increased by a much greater use of microfilms. In the United States the use of microfilms has been very much more extensively developed than in this country, perhaps because the institutions have much more difficult access to rare and out of the way material than libraries in this country, but perhaps to a greater degree because of the enterprising services offered by certain firms specializing in the production of microfilms. One firm has prospered very considerably through offering to libraries microfilm services which are of great value for their research programmes. Outstanding examples are *The Microfilm of English Books printed before 1640*, *The Microfilms of Early American Periodicals*, and similar ventures. Libraries in this country have to some extent increased their resources by the use of microfilms, but I suppose it would be true to say that we have a long way to go in this respect before we can really feel satisfied about the provision of material.

A further prerequisite of fruitful collaboration between the institutions and co-ordination of effort is a Union Catalogue and Location List or a series of smaller union catalogues. Considerable progress has been made in this direction in this country, both in the National Central Library and in the Regional Library Bureaux, but much remains to be done. A recent promising development is the collecting of material for a Location List of all Short-Title Catalogue books in this country, excluding the national libraries, the Bodleian and the University Library at Cambridge. Other ventures which will greatly assist in this way are the Union Catalogue of Music up to the year 1800, now being compiled, and the British Union Catalogue of Periodicals.

It is at the point where the university libraries have exhausted both their own resources and those of their collaborators that the research libraries come into the picture. The research libraries must be looked upon as the final reserves for all the necessary material on which the scholar can base his research or find his out of the way references.

The great research libraries, however, are not without their own very considerable problems. The radical change both in the type of service which is expected from libraries and also in the intensity of the requirements of library users, which has come about in recent years, has made it necessary for them to examine once more their functions and the range of their activities. It is worth making a brief digression on this point.

The demands on libraries have been given direction and force largely by the needs of science and technology for speedy and accurate reference to literature on specific problems. These demands have led among other things to the creation of special libraries, many of which are performing extremely valuable service in this respect. In their turn special libraries have helped to make clearer both the kind of service which may be demanded from a library and also the quality and extent of the service which a library can offer. It is these modern requirements for specialized information and developments of the kind indicated above which have vitally affected the policies and work of the comprehensive learned libraries.

In the 19th century Sir Antonio Panizzi, the great librarian of the British Museum, laid down a principle for that library as the National Library, that it should endeavour to be the best library of the literature of every country outside that country. To some extent this principle has been the basis on which the work of national libraries all over the world has been planned, but it must be confessed that no library has succeeded, or is ever likely to succeed, in attaining this ideal. The speed with which completely new "subjects" are developed, especially in science and technology, coupled with the increase of literature in all subjects renders it more and more unlikely that any single library can ever attempt to be comprehensive in every subject, even if sufficient funds were available to keep pace with this growth and facilities made available for accessioning and storing the vast numbers of books which pour from the presses of every country in the world.

The British Museum, for example, owing to lack of specialist staff and lack of means, can no longer claim to be complete with regard to foreign publications in science and technology, using these terms to indicate such subjects as chemistry, physics, engineering, applied mathematics, etc. In the case of the Library of Congress—the library which has made the greatest efforts in the last twenty years to provide complete coverage in books published in every country in the world—arrangements have been maintained for some time past whereby the Army Medical Library, the Department of Agriculture Library, and the Library of the Geological Survey are allotted responsibility for maintaining comprehensive collections in the fields in which they are interested.

Allowing for these developments, it seems to be imperative that national libraries should decide what their function is to be, *i.e.*, are they to maintain an effort to be comprehensive; or are they to be selective in the subjects with which they deal, or selective in acquiring books on all subjects?

Before this question can be decided there are a number of considerations which have to be taken into account: (a) The national library has an obligation to the nation to which it belongs to provide a library service; (b) it has in most subjects rich collections which have been acquired by legal deposit, by purchase or gift; (c) it is often the only library which provides information on subjects for which there is not yet any specialized library. Furthermore, the national library has financial and moral support from the government, and is for this reason in a more powerful position to maintain a satisfactory library service than any other libraries in the country, which are all subject to local or specialist control and are often dependent for finance upon institutions which themselves have only limited means. National prestige has also to be considered, and most countries place great stress on the place that a great national library can play in the intellectual life of the country and the position it can attain in the world as a whole. Finally, it seems reasonable to suppose that one library in each country should have the task of keeping a copy, in some form, of all the books that have been published in that country, and all the literature which has been found to be of use in any library in that country.

Once it is admitted that no one library can expect to attain adequate coverage in all subjects, it seems reasonable to suggest that the national library, which has been entrusted with the task of providing a national library service by the government, should be looked upon in some way as responsible for the full development of library services, whether provided by itself or by other libraries. In fact, it should look upon the co-ordination of library services as of almost equal importance with providing services itself. This does not suggest that the national library should be in any sense a dictator, but that it should initiate and participate in discussions on library services and be looked upon as responsible for seeing that proper library services are provided in every field where library service is thought to be necessary, whether by itself or by other specialist libraries.

We are thus forced back once more on the idea that libraries must be looked upon as being collaborators in providing a library service.

I have already said at the beginning of my paper that this is a real praiseworthy objective, but as I also hinted, it is by no means easy to bring about. First and foremost, if there is one thing which librarians value above everything else, it is their freedom and independence to develop along their own lines and with due regard to the local circumstances of the region in which their library is situated. Furthermore, in library work as in everything else, proper development depends not so much on instruction and precept, but on individual imagination, energy and judgment. It is therefore unlikely that the best results for library service can be hoped for by authoritarian mandate from above—though this clearly does not exclude strong leadership. It also follows that if a library system is not to be imposed from above, it will depend on a wide degree of generous co-operation and frequent discussion. Putting it another way, it should spring from the bottom upwards, though I see no reason why, as with rhubarb in the spring, a little forcing may not be both possible and legitimate. This does not, however, get over all the difficulties. Elaborate schemes for library co-operation do not always take into account the special duties and obligations which many of the libraries have to carry out. The prime duty of the university librarian is to provide a library service to the staff and students of his own university. This may be said to be an overriding consideration. He may thus be unable to meet a perfectly legitimate request for a volume, on the ground that it is being used or may very well be used by a member of his own university. He may find that books which are requested by other libraries are kept, quite legitimately, for long periods by university teachers or research students. He may find that the staff time required to deal with requests for loans and with demands for their return is more than can be justifiably met by his ordinary library staff. How difficult these problems can be is shown to some extent by the experience of the Science Library in its relations with the Imperial College of Science in London. One of the most prized possessions of universities in this country—and this is reflected in the very satisfactory system by which they are financed—is their almost complete freedom from outside direction, and I do not think that any of us

would wish to change this feature. In any case I am sure that even the most hardy protagonist of library co-operation would quail before the fiery determination of most universities to retain their freedom.

The same considerations apply with even greater force to the libraries of the great research associations. Even though many of these associations receive grants from the Government for their research through D.S.I.R., they are maintained to a considerable extent by the subscriptions of their members. Here again, the library may be said to have an absolute over-riding responsibility to provide the material necessary for the members at the moment it is needed. This is not to say that there is not a great deal of collaboration from librarians of research libraries. But it is to say that no scheme for National Library Service can afford to ignore these considerations.

Does this sound defeatist? If so, it gives a completely wrong impression of my intentions. I hope I have made it clear that I do not think that any library can be self-sufficient and that the only means of providing a proper library service is by mutual help. This can best be built up by mutual discussion and mutual aid. A most useful step in this direction has recently been taken by the national and university libraries, who have set up a body called the Standing Conference of National and University Libraries, both to discuss matters of mutual interest and also to work out practical schemes which can assist libraries in playing a proper part in the library service. Two pieces of work which are being actively carried on as a result of the activities of this body are, the compilation for publication of a Location List of copies of S.T.C. books in libraries other than the great national libraries in the country; an attempt to publish lists of the whereabouts of English literary manuscripts. It is plain that once this body really feels its feet, it will be able to initiate, after discussion, schemes of collaboration which will assist in the kind of developments we have in mind. There is also a very great degree of collaboration between groups of librarians from specialized libraries—I might instance particularly the medical libraries—which materially assist towards the same end.

The picture then, as I see it and as I have endeavoured to sketch it for you to-day, is drawn in much weaker lines than might have been hoped. This does not, however, mean that the picture is not there, or that its final accomplishment will be any less striking or satisfactory, because I feel at this stage it would be both unwise and unrealistic to paint it in any more definite colours.

It appears to me that the problem of securing a National Library Service depends, in the first place, on ensuring and accelerating a natural growth. It will be necessary, in season and out of season, to encourage librarians to look at a picture which is bigger than their own small surroundings. In a majority of cases it will be preaching to the converted, but always it will be necessary to encourage rather than dictate. It has been suggested that a pre-requisite of a National Library Service will be some kind of Library Authority which would have the function of co-ordinating library effort, and, it is hoped, doling out grants for approved library

purposes. I have long felt that a body similar to the University Grants Committee, that is financed by the Treasury but with a very high measure of independence in policy and planning, would provide the best means of administering the national libraries. I must confess, however, that I had envisaged it as a body which would encourage rather than regiment. In other words, it would leave the institutions free themselves to develop, much as the universities develop without the imposition of any rigid framework. I, too, prize the independence of libraries.

On the other hand I have already said that I think that leadership is necessary. This should come from the libraries themselves. There will probably always be some who, out of waywardness or independence, or even laziness, will differ from the rest and be unwilling to co-operate. It would be injurious to proper library development, I feel, to attempt to use the whip in any way. We are thus at the position that there is a very great need for action, but that, in order to arrive at the sort of library service which we consider desirable, we need a strong lead towards co-operation and the rationalization of our operations. I have already instanced the Standing Conference of National and University Libraries for the discussion and planning of mutually advantageous developments. There are similar schemes being actively carried on regionally and in the big towns. These beginnings will, in some cases, need further encouragement and will have to acquire greater momentum. The rationalization of our library services will have to be based on an accurate assessment of our existing library resources. I am glad to say that this is a matter which is engaging the attention of the Library Research Committee of the Library Association Council, and I hope that it will be possible to plan the carrying out of this scheme.

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