

## *Report of the Council*

SINCE last October, the activities of the staff of the American Antiquarian Society have been of the unspectacular kind characteristic of people very busy at those tasks which they regard as their peculiar contribution to life. It has been a particularly busy period because illness and accidents have kept us shorthanded for the entire period.

Fortunately, the requests for service have continued to follow a pattern of change noticeable for some years. We have fewer visitors, and we spend more of our time on the preparation of bibliographical tools for the use of scholars the world over. For reasons not at all apparent, the use of our collections by genealogists, both in person and by mail, has fallen off. The wisdom of our rules denying access to students doing practice research has been emphasized by the requests of one university and one college to permit their students to use this library as their own. Such a service, if afforded, would take the entire time of our staff.

More normal now is the pattern by which individual historians come from California or England to settle down for several months of work in our collections. Xerox, microfilm, and the several new bibliographical tools greatly reduce the number of visits needed to cover the same ground. The most useful of these tools is, of course, the Early American Imprints Series, which has now been placed in some 200 libraries. Some of the new mushrooming universities are very properly advertising that so far as research in early

American history goes, they have available for their students riches which no university could offer a decade ago. By means of these 200 sets of microprints we have multiplied the use of this library 200 times over, and we have set down this segment of its collections in cities from Stockholm to Sidney, Australia.

Besides continuing the publication of the microprints into the Shaw-Shoemaker period, we have begun the reproduction of all of the not-in-Evans items recorded in Roger Bristol's forthcoming volume of additions.

We have another bibliographical announcement which gives us the greatest satisfaction. For many years it has been apparent that there ought to be a systematic reprinting of all early American newspapers in microform, and that the only possible center for such work was our library. However, the cost of microfilm, of obtaining film of papers not in our collection, and of the very difficult editing involved, have each time made us turn discouraged from our calculations. Now, however, as the result of the microprinting of some trial runs of colonial newspapers, we can announce a beginning of a systematic reproduction of everything listed in Clarence Brigham's bibliography. Of course, we alone could not launch such a great publishing project; the mere bookkeeping would swamp us. So the Readex Corporation has undertaken the work under our sponsorship and direction, installing another camera operator in our basement and designating their man, Nathan Cohen, to do the editing. Clarence Brigham and I often talked about such a publication, but he never believed it possible.

This is only the spectacular of our bibliographical activities. We are cooperating with several major projects, the most important of which is d'Alté Welch's bibliography of American children's books. We had hoped by demonstrating the interest and utility of the Parkman diary to induce

a university press to take over that publication, and so release our space and funds for several important bibliographical projects which are ripening now.

Thanks to the air-conditioning of the building, we face this summer influx of visiting scholars cheerfully. We can now give selected individuals working space in the newspaper stacks, which in previous years only a cactus could have survived for long. The theory is that every twelve days that printed material is exposed to 210°F. heat is equivalent to 100 years of aging at normal temperatures. If on this scale a 110° temperature ages material 50 years, I calculate that we aged our newspapers 2,000 years before we installed air-conditioning.

Our accessions have been voluminous and rich, if not spectacular. Mr. McCorison, at our next meeting, will report on gifts from Mr. Tinker and Mr. Streeter. As other libraries follow our lead and discard material unimportant to their main interests, they contribute to our collections items of great interest and value to us. In our own boxes of hitherto uncatalogued pamphlets, Mr. McCorison occasionally makes finds which really shake him. Thanks to the sale of some thousands of dollars of duplicates from the Nadeau and other gifts, we have been very busy buying modern books which we usually have to pass up because our funds will not cover the older material which naturally has the first call upon them.

The body of our friends is a constantly shifting one, and it is with particular regret that I must report the deaths of George Sumner Barton on December 14, 1964, of Frank Luther Mott on October 23, 1964, and of Hermann Porter Riccius on February 11, 1965. We shall benefit extensively from the will of Mr. Riccius and the library of Mr. Mott.

We are aware of the strong New England tinge of the nomination list which we are about to present to you, but

we defend it on the ground that a real interest in our activities is such an important criterion of membership that we ought not to disregard it in order to preserve a wide geographical distribution.

Thanks to our recent publishing activity, particularly the Early American Imprint Series, the Society is more widely known than at any time since perhaps 1820. We think that this will in future years serve to redress the geographical distribution of our membership.

CLIFFORD K. SHIPTON,

*For the Council*

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