

The Report of the Council

October 21, 1981

THE SOCIETY'S one hundred and sixty-ninth year was one marked by the increasing tensions among growing demands upon our staff to accomplish a multitude of increasingly complex tasks within the constraints of available manpower, our ambitions for the Society to take its rightful place as a vibrant center for advanced learning also within the limits of available staff and funds, and the disheartening and frightening inroads of monetary inflation into the magnificent increase in support to the Society from evermore generous members and friends. Despite these tensions—which have taken their toll on members of the staff leaving a good many of us with somewhat frayed nerves and weary minds—the accomplishments of the year have been truly remarkable.

In past reports we have referred to our activities pertaining to computerized methods of cataloguing. During this past year we have established our own internal data base which now accepts records of early American printed materials and which we plan to expand to link these records in useful ways to data on other kinds of research materials such as graphic arts, music, and manuscripts. In short, we are taking our first halting steps toward developing a computer system that will integrate finding aids for all of the research materials at the Society. In addition to working with our own system, many of our staff members have been involved in activities of the Research Libraries Group and its computer system, RLIN (the Research Libraries Information Network), with which we became linked on October 2, 1981. I am delighted to report that our own sys-

tem is running very well and we look forward to active participation in RLIN. The latter will give our staff and readers access to different kinds of bibliographical records at major research libraries located across the country.

Less dramatic, but equally important, were the activities that transpired in the readers' services, manuscripts, graphic arts, and newspaper departments. Staff members in each of those departments have been hard at work developing finding aids and lists of heretofore uncatalogued materials available only through piece-by-piece searches. For example, a project staff in the graphic arts department is constructing records that will provide manual access to early American engravings; members of the newspaper and serials department have made substantial progress in cataloguing our nineteenth-century collections of newspapers and other periodicals; people in the readers' services department, including volunteers, have built card files and lists of our excellent collection of institutional reports—both by name of the institution and by subject; and our colleagues in the manuscript department have catalogued new collections and revised some previous cataloguing. All of this effort, of course, enables our readers and staff to locate materials much more efficiently than heretofore. In fact, in many cases the new finding aids inform readers and staff practically for the first time of materials that have been collected and shelved in years past. These are never-ending tasks in a collection as large and diverse as ours, but, to make our collections more effective for scholarship, they must be undertaken.

Visits by scholars declined slightly during the past year yet the use of the collections increased to an all-time high. This ironic combination of statistics may suggest that our collections are becoming better known and more intensively used by a somewhat smaller but more experienced clientele. Upon analysis, the statistics also indicate that the fellowship program is alive and well, for it is our resident fellows who make the most active use of the collections—the very objective for which

the fellowship programs were developed. The number of visitors (other than readers) increased substantially, no doubt reflecting the broad range of publicity that has been generated by recent activities at the Society. Visitors and readers came from some forty-four states, the District of Columbia, and nine foreign countries, indicating a gratifying spread of the knowledge of the Society amongst an extended scholarly community.

The staff numbers forty-four individuals, working full- or part-time, making a full-time equivalent of forty-one. Some thirty percent of the staff are engaged on specific projects that are chargeable to grants of one sort or another. The most significant change in our staff situation was the departure in August of William L. Joyce who was at AAS since 1972 as curator of manuscripts and more recently also as the Society's education officer. Mr. Joyce served with great distinction. He supervised the cataloguing of the Society's manuscripts. He encouraged their use; in fact he encouraged scholarly use of all the collections of the Society through his wide acquaintance with historians of American history and culture. He represented the Society through a variety of professional contacts and we will miss very much his acute critical faculties, good humor, friendship, and professional abilities. Mr. Joyce was one of the few members on our staff who found sufficient time to devote to the encouragement of scholars outside of the Society. Through his contacts he brought many of them to the Society as readers or as participants in colloquia, seminars, or conferences. These contributions were of importance to the life of the Society and it will be difficult to replace them.

Mr. Joyce's tenure was typical of the devotion and excellent service that all members of the staff give to the Society and that we enjoy. We are very much concerned by the discrepancy that exists between compensation delivered to colleagues in institutions such as ours and that of employees in the academic or commercial fields. This problem only emphasizes the financial difficulties that underlie the life of scholarly institutions with

no visible product to sell. The Council offers to each member of our staff our warmest thanks and would like to mention, in particular, our associate librarian's constant attention to all of the activities of the Society and his calm and efficient influence on those activities.

In the Society's offices, more phone calls, more mail, more accounting problems—more of everything was noticed during the last year. It has become more and more apparent that within the next several months we shall have to take steps to improve our ability to handle the growing flow of work that is due in part to increased activity of the Society but also to more complex requirements that follow all the elements of our work. For example, for several weeks we enjoyed the presence of members of a CPA firm who audited our NEH grants. A number of shortcomings were discovered in our methods of record-keeping, so steps have been taken to correct the important ones. It seems likely that a computerized accounting system would help us meet the need for the more detailed financial records that our work entails.

With regard to the fabric of the building, the last major energy conservation step was taken with the insulation of the final portion of the roof. The copper dome was repaired, at last, following many months of delay. Of course, a significant event in the life of the Society was the receipt of the property at 190 Salisbury Street, the former home of Eleanor Goddard Daniels. Plans are well under way for the renovation of that beautiful house so that it will become a useful adjunct to our activities. Present plans call for the first floor to be used for offices and public functions, the second floor as housing for visiting scholars, and the third floor as an apartment for an AAS staff member.

As far as the collections of the Society are concerned, we have already referred to the staff's efforts to improve access to them. In addition to better accessibility, the collections were enlarged and, we hope, improved through the acquisition of some 3,600 pieces. The collections were also sharpened in

scope inasmuch as a large accumulation of twentieth-century publications of colleges and universities was carefully examined and much of the material transferred through an agent to Connecticut College in New London. In the process, many nineteenth-century collegiate periodicals were transferred from the so-called 'College Collection' to the periodical shelves. This weeding of collections has gone on for generations here at AAS. It is part of a continuing policy, approved by the Council, of constantly improving the collections not only through acquisitions but also through the weeding of irrelevant or non-research materials from the collections.

As for acquisitions, last year we added 370 pieces issued before 1831, 1,578 imprints issued between 1831 and 1876, and 1,652 items published after 1876. Donors accounted for 127 of the pre-1831 items, 390 of the 1831-1876 materials, and 824 of the post-1876 publications. For those interested in such matters, the purchase price of the earliest materials averaged \$140, materials published in the middle period averaged \$37, while the modern materials came to us at an average cost of \$22. For the first time we kept a record of the monetary value of gifts of materials to the Society. Gifts of books and other library materials represented more than \$30,000 worth of acquisitions. To all of the donors we are particularly grateful. We received substantial gifts from Jo-Anne and Ross Beales, Marjorie Inman, Burton A. Robie, Avis M. and Esther R. Kemp. The Lowell Historical Society gave us a large number of unusual nineteenth-century newspapers as did the Pejepscot Historical Society of Brunswick, Maine. In addition, Mrs. John B. Petter and the Mesdames Frances S. Hill and Katharine S. Lasell (Mrs. Eveleth V. Hill and Mrs. John W. Lasell) gave the Society particularly uncommon and useful research materials.

The departure of William Joyce caused us to reorganize some portions of our work, resulting in the appointment of John B. Hench as the assistant director for research and publication. Mr. Hench had held the position of research and publication officer for several years, editing the Society's publica-

tions and directing its fellowship programs. In addition he had recently been assigned the general oversight of our several public and private grants. Thus, it seemed quite logical that he would step in to the vacated position of education officer. Under the new dispensation, Mr. Hench will oversee the Society's publications, fellowships, research activities, and educational enterprises. This is a rather substantial order and in order to deal adequately with all these matters Mr. Hench soon will have a full-time assistant whose duties will focus to a large extent on the preparation of publications. Mr. Hench assumed these added responsibilities on September 1, the first day of our new fiscal year.

However, lest one think that Mr. Hench had not been very busy last year, we should point out that Robert B. Winans's bibliography, *A Descriptive Checklist of Separately Printed American Catalogues of Books, 1693-1800*, appeared in 1980-81. The volume is seeing a respectable sale even though reviews have not yet appeared. We are even more pleased by the sale last year of more than 1,000 copies of *The Press and the American Revolution*, edited by Bernard Bailyn of Harvard and Mr. Hench. Hench has also negotiated the assignment of paperback rights to Northeastern University Press, which will be bringing out the softcover edition before the end of 1981.

Under Mr. Hench's oversight Margaret Donoghue and her assistant, Joan Pingeton, have seen the final item, entry number 51960, of the Shaw and Shoemaker bibliography pass beneath their watchful gaze. Still to be done, of course, is a great deal of mopping up but in essence the filming of most of the items in the Shaw and Shoemaker bibliography, 1800-19, is complete. This truly is an achievement of major proportion. The Society since 1955 has devoted thousands of hours of staff time to the task of paging, borrowing, and begging American imprints that were listed in the Evans, Bristol, and Shaw-Shoemaker bibliographies from the beginning of American printing in 1640 to 1819, roughly the end of the handcraft era of printing. I think it is fair to say that the Society's contribution, made

in conjunction with the commercial interests and expertise of the Readex Microprint Corporation, has resulted in an enormously important contribution to American scholarship. Without the firm base offered by our own preeminent collections and the contribution of bibliographical expertise by our staff, as well as the wholehearted cooperation of hundreds of our institutional colleagues, this project could not have been completed and American scholarship would have been far the poorer. In recalling the people who have contributed to this project, one must think of the late Clifford K. Shipton, our director, and the late Albert Boni, the founder of Readex, who were the chief instigators of the work. One passes on to the late Nathan Cohen of Readex and James E. Mooney, of our staff, who carried on the work and finally to John Hench and Readex's Stanley Shapiro, who have nearly completed the work with the help of many others, including Mary E. Brown and the present project staff. Congratulations go to all of them. We look forward to working with Albert Boni's son, William F. Boni, in completing this important work.

Filling Mr. Joyce's other shoe is Kathleen A. Major who, since 1979, had been the assistant in the manuscript department. On September 1 Mrs. Major was appointed keeper of manuscripts. She reports to Nancy H. Burkett, head of readers' services, who, because of her past work with our manuscripts, will exercise general supervision of that department.

All of our professional staff have maintained active interests beyond the Society. Many of them are trustees, officers, or committee chairmen of professional organizations that fall within their interests and competence. The Council is proud of each of our staff members and we congratulate them not only on their contributions to the Society but also on their valuable labors for the scholarly professions at large.

All of the above activity costs money and it is to our development officer, Mary V. C. Callahan, that we are indebted in substantial measure for activities that gather the funds to carry on the work of our Society. During the past fiscal year new

cash contributions or pledges in the amount of \$1,714,000 have arrived. Of particular importance was the sum of more than \$122,000 in annual, unrestricted gifts, the largest sum by far that has been donated for this purpose to the Society. Gifts for specific purposes amounted to another \$77,000 and a number of bequests and gifts to endowment were received.

Of particular importance to the future of the Society was an intense study of our present situation and future prospects. This resulted in the establishment of a number of programs and goals for the Society in anticipation of our 175th anniversary in 1987. President Jeppson will have more to say about that matter before this meeting adjourns. The Council wants to make clear, however—and in this we know that we speak for all members of the Society—its profound gratitude to the more than 750 donors who have contributed to the financial well-being and stability of the Society. This includes individuals, corporations, and foundations from all parts of the United States and even from Canada. To each we are grateful and to all we extend our warmest thanks.

This brief overview of our activities for the past year hardly does justice to our staff, to our members, or to the variety of things that went on here. Let me close by adding a personal note. I would like to thank John Jeppson for his faithful and enthusiastic interest in the work of the Society. I would like to thank the Council members for their unfailing support and understanding of the work of the Society, and also I would like to thank each of my colleagues on the staff for his or her loyal, enthusiastic and, indeed, inspired work in support of our Society. Finally, I want to thank the members of AAS for their interest and support of this learned society and for their encouragement to us as we all attempt to make our institution a more useful instrument in the years ahead.

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