

Report of the Council

THIS has been, as those of you who live in this part of the country are well aware, a very hard winter. We have lived in daily apprehension that the Library's ancient boilers would fail, but they came through it all with flying soot. We are, unfortunately, no nearer to the achievement of the air-conditioning of the building than we were a year ago. A compromise which we are investigating would be to install in the stacks a ventilating system which on summer nights would blow the warm air out of the upper windows and draw cool filtered air in at the bottom. If we can do this, we ought to consider replacing the single-pane windows, which are loose and too good conductors of heat and cold, by glass blocks.

The problem of replacing the 1909 lighting in our reading room and work rooms has been solved so far as finances go by the generous gift made for that purpose by Mr. Streeter. We have engaged the services of the best available lighting engineer, who, incidentally, did the work on the State Mutual building, and knows Worcester contractors well; but the problem of designing an efficient system which will not clash aesthetically with our classical architecture has proved to be a serious one.

The Streeter gift was the largest in a year marked by more contributions from members than ever before in our history. The sum total of the gifts toward our annual operating expenses, however, was considerably less than in some previous years, an inevitable result, I suppose, of the levelling of fortunes by taxation. The increase in the operating expenses of the Society resulting from a change in

administration and the introduction of a pension system compelled us this year to cut in half the sum we have usually budgeted for book purchase. This situation has been eased somewhat by the sale to a neighboring institution of a sizable collection of Latin American imprints of bibliographical significance but of no historical value. These were gathered for the Society in the days of our activity in that field, but for fifty years they had sat on our shelves, wrapped in bundles, unlisted and uncatalogued. The cost of cataloguing this material would have been very great; its utility here was nil, but it fitted very well into the collections of the John Carter Brown Library.

This is typical of the shuffling of collections among libraries which is now gathering speed as colleges and universities face such mountainous problems as the acquisition of the government documents of the new Asian and African states. Similarly, public libraries are driven by the new flood of printing to transfer small and rarely used collections of source materials to neighboring research institutions where they can more usefully be incorporated into larger collections. This is particularly true in the newspaper field in which short, broken, and scattered runs are more exasperating than useful to the researcher. The fact that post-1820 newspapers in general have no substantial value on the second-hand market makes them the most obvious candidates for transfer. The most important agreement of this kind is the one recently concluded with Harvard by which we shall have first call upon their short or broken runs of post-1820 newspapers to complete our files. Similar agreements for other kinds of material are being negotiated. This means that we must face the space problems which our friends are thus solving, for we long ago took advantage of the savings in space to be made by this type of swapping. However, the unused wooden shelving in the basement will

for some years accommodate the growth resulting from our assuming the responsibility for the printed source material for American history through the year 1876. The McCorison administration will have either to relinquish some of these fields, or to build a new wing to the stack.

Ever since the death of Senator George Frisbie Hoar, one-time president of this Society, in 1904, we have been deeply concerned with the disposal of his personal papers and his library. Since that day, the Massachusetts Historical Society has become so preëminently the proper custodian of Massachusetts political manuscripts, that when the Hoar Mansion was cleaned out under the direction of the executor, Mr. Rice, we guided the papers toward Boston, and sent along with them our own small collection of Hoar papers built up from other sources. From the Senator's library we acquired a number of items in the fields of collection which are particularly our own. The most important of these was the unique Cambridge almanac of 1661 which is so significant to us that we have issued three photographic editions of it in the last half century. The Librarian in his annual report will describe the Hoar gift fully.

One of Mr. McCorison's first duties with us was to see through the press Dorothea Spear's Bibliography of American Directories, which was some twenty years in preparation before Mr. Brigham put the final touches on the manuscript last year. Although this work is the key to a mass of source material of interest to historians in many fields, it is likely to tie up our revolving publication funds for several years; we had to print a thousand copies in order to keep the price down to ten dollars, and sale is slow.

Work on the Early American Imprints Project flows smoothly. We have revised Evans and published the microprint editions of the works printed before the year 1795.

Mr. Bristol is making excellent progress on his volume of additions to Evans. We plan to print the bibliography and to microprint the titles which it describes.

For years we have been searching for a method of re-printing early American newspapers more convenient than microfilm and less expensive than any other process used hitherto. When after years of investigation a conclusion as to method was reached, we faced the problem of raising the necessary capital to buy a new camera, hire an operator, and to meet the other initial costs of such an operation. Various efforts to raise the money failed. Two members of the Society who have worked with us for years on this project have now formed the Micro-Research Corporation and raised the money as a business venture. We shall house the operation of the corporation for the time being, and it will undertake the newspaper publication program we have so long had at heart. This year it has reprinted in microcard form the entire text of the *Boston News Letter* from 1704-1776; it fits into a single box the size of a plump octavo volume, and costs the subscribers about three cents an issue. The corporation hopes to swing into full-time production this year.

The next issue of our *Proceedings* will contain an addendum to Mr. Brigham's *History and Bibliography of American Newspapers* prepared by him and by Mr. McCorison. Mr. Brigham has been house-bound most of the time since last summer, and he asked me to extend to you his greetings. He is now by nine years the senior member of this Society, for we lost Alfred Louis Kroeber on October 5, 1960. Since the last meeting we have lost Mark Antony DeWolfe Howe, on December 6, 1960, William Smith Mason on January 11, 1961, Alexander Samuel Salley on February 19, Roger Kinnicutt on February 2, and William Law Learned Peltz on March 27.

In October, 1962, we shall celebrate the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the founding of this Society. Its officers would be very grateful to you for suggestions of suitable ways of observing it.

CLIFFORD K. SHIPTON,
For the Council

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