

Report of the Council

THE age of a century and a half suggests rheumatism and repose, but we who work in this library have rather the sense of being in the hot breath of a launching pad, with our own publications and those of our visitors going off in quick succession. With astronomical accuracy we are following the path calculated for us by Isaiah Thomas and the founders, and are achieving their purposes beyond their fondest dreams. I shall not here review our work and policies because I did so in my reports of April and October, 1960, but I shall mention a few milestones which we have passed this year.

Twenty years ago life in this library was a constant struggle to keep from being swamped in the wonderful rush of accessions typical of the Brigham era, and this work was carried on in danger of avalanches from the mountains of older material acquired when the whole world was our province. In those days when we saw something which needed doing, we made a mental note to get to it some time when we had a spare hand. This year we suddenly realized that we have reached the point where we can solve our routine bibliographical problems as we encounter them. There are, of course, a few major problems awaiting the proper opportunity. One of these is our collection of early maps and prints, which is in some fields the strongest. Here our ancient subject classifications have long since broken down, so that we can rarely risk buying in these fields lest we duplicate our holdings. A curator of maps and prints, if we could afford one, could spend a happy lifetime putting our holdings in order and describing them.

When, in 1951, I took up the bibliographical task which Charles Evans had laid down in 1935, Clarence Brigham cried out in joy that he had lived to see the resumption of that work. We completed Evans in 1955, and last month we completed the revision of his twelve volumes. The fruit of this labor is available in the Early American Imprints Series, and when our member Roger Bristol finishes his volume of titles omitted by Evans, the whole will be summarized in a one-volume, short-title, bibliography.

One of the chief problems in the publication of bibliographies is that such stock moves so slowly that it ties up large amounts of capital in paper and print. Our own revolving Bibliography Fund came to a halt last year for this reason, but a suffusion from two of our members has put it in shape again to publish Mr. Bristol's Additions and Mr. McCorison's bibliography of Vermont printing.

Our coöperation with Clark University in offering training in research in early American history at the graduate level has been satisfactory. It has always seemed absurd that this library, which is richer than any university library in the research materials of the early American field, has no resident students of its own. Had we the money to endow fellowships, we could not carry the extra administrative work involved, so our new association with Clark is all that makes this program possible. We have thoughts of expanding the work in order to utilize our facilities more efficiently, but such expansion must await the outcome of these first steps.

The most pressing major problem facing us is that of air conditioning this building. It has become apparent that there are two or three alternatives. To control the temperature and humidity of the entire building, and to eliminate dust and industrial gases from the air, would be very costly. To install air conditioning units on the top floor of the book stack would cost about \$6,000. Other separate units could be

installed to reduce dust and to provide winter humidity. This compromise plan would do nothing to eliminate industrial gases from the air.

During the summer of 1912, Professor French of W.P.I. made a study of the temperature of the top floor of our book stack and found that it was frequently 100 degrees and sometimes 110. Part of the roof was then painted with a white asbestos compound, which reduced the heat under the white portion of the roof to 90.5 degrees while it was 109.8 degrees under the black portion. This temperature reduction of nearly 20 degrees was so much better than the results obtained by installing roof-sprinkling systems as on other Worcester buildings, that we should again paint our roofs white. Whether we should in addition put perhaps \$10,000 into a partial control system on the top floor of the book stacks instead of waiting for a favorable time to raise the funds for an over-all system, is the question now to be decided. The decrepit condition of our heating plant should be a factor in our decision.

The relighting of the reading room and offices which was made possible by the Streeter gift was completed this summer. The improvement in the offices and the adjacent work areas is so great that we find ourselves using the lights all day in spite of our large windows. In the main reading room certain changes which we made in the plans in order to keep within the funds available have cut the illumination on the tables to 25 foot-candles, so additional lighting of this room is under consideration.

Although our reading room is no longer as full as it used to be when we made our facilities available to school children, we have in the past year, had more important research carried on here by our visitors than in any time in recollection. I stress the word "important" because so much of the research carried on by beginning bibliographers and his-

torians is ceremonial ritual. We were pleased to find that a majority of our visitors this year were doing serious work. Most of them came from other states, and most of them found that our collections were the strongest in their particular fields of interest. By and large these visitors were entire strangers to us, which illustrates the fact that the profession of history, including bibliographical and museum branches, is proliferating even more rapidly than the hordes of Asia. Apparently our present uncertainty as to the future of civilization has made the race more curious than ever before about its past.

This swelling growth of interest in history brings the members of the American Antiquarian Society to a policy decision. Since the day when its membership was set at two hundred, the number of professional and amateur historians in the nation has doubled time and again. Only twenty years ago we had to look around for professors interested in the early American fields. Any amateur who wrote a good book on early American history, compiled a useful bibliography or built up a significant collection of books, was sure to be elected. Today our problem is one of selection from among a number of qualified and potentially useful men; the times are making us a select group in a sense not formerly true. This society was founded in order to collect and preserve the materials of history, and to make them available by bibliographical tools and by publication. The members must now decide whether that purpose will be best served by an increase in the membership. The Director can say only that if there is such an increase, it should be slow and small because of the administrative problems involved.

The first pages of the chronological list of members in the next volume of *Proceedings* will be sadly changed, for we lost James Alton James on February 12, Henry Bradford Washburn on April 25, James William Foster on April 30, Solon

Justin Burleigh, Major-General of the 1st Cavalry, and Charles Edward Plummer, Major-General of the 1st Infantry, Hamilton, Bill, in 1842, were the only members of the Society at the celebration.

The difference between the two anniversaries (one hundredth and two hundredth) was slight. The only difference in form, we reflected, was that the authors of the 1842 address had signed their signatures in ink, while the authors of the 1942 address had given the leading a large, ornate flourish, as a reason for a well-adorned 'Taft' upon which to print and substitute a memorializing inscription which sent his gratitude to the people they had injured the most. The only significance of the difference is that it is a reflection over the practice of the Society in 1842. The Society has, however, stayed on its program and remains there. It has programs and projects, but it clays that it had a greater part to receive of some of our national problems. It has a field for its work, and we are to be glad to see it were in 1842. The Society is the core of our national

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