

Report of the Librarian

ONE day this summer a young woman came into the Library prepared to start on a dissertation which her professor calculated would require several months of research and several hundred miles of travel. It happened that the segment of source material in which she was interested has been covered in our revision of Evans, and the text of all surviving editions has been made available in microprint form in our Early American Imprints series. As a result, she completed the research for her thesis in one day's work in front of our microprint reader. Probably we shall never again have such an extreme example of the economies of time and travel afforded by one of these new research tools, but in our own work we have daily experience in the utility of being able to consult, with a turn of the wrist, the Huntington or the British Museum copy of a book.

A recent study has shown that men doing research in the physical sciences rarely have occasion to consult works more than ten years old, whereas men doing research in the arts, and particularly history, sixty-six per cent of the time call for works more than twenty years old. Because the terms which the physical scientist handles are precise, he can, by the use of indices and catalogues, build squarely and confidently on the work of his predecessors; but every historian must himself go back to the sources, must himself repeat the "experiments" with his own set of values, before he can draw his conclusions. For that reason these new tools of research will give the arts and the social sciences assistance in their struggle to keep abreast of the enormous gains made in the physical sciences during our lifetime.

Two years ago we in this region were the envy of students of American history and literature because the bulk of printed sources was readily available to us. Today the text of every existing item in the most important segment of this source material is being placed at the finger tips of researchers in a hundred widely scattered libraries.

By means of the microprinting of this segment of our own collections, our reading room has been extended from Sweden on one side to Australia on the other. There is one aspect of this work which gives me particular pleasure. In the front of each book given to us we pencil the name of the donor. Some of you have smiled when I have told you that your gifts would further research and scholarship. Well, the readers in more than a hundred libraries will now note your names and be grateful.

In this Readex-Early American Imprints project we have now solved most of our problems and have gotten well ahead of schedule, thanks to the hearty and unselfish coöperation of a score of institutions. The revision of Evans has proceeded through 8000 titles and microprints of most of the first 6000, covering the first century of printing in the United States, have been published. As a result, I can begin to relieve Dr. Brigham of the part of the librarian's duties which he has been carrying for the past eighteen months. Incidentally, his knowledge of the world of bookmen has been of great assistance in tracking down unique books in private hands.

The project of completing the Evans bibliography by the publication of the thirteenth volume is closing out in a very satisfactory way. Because the publisher of the reprint edition would not tell us how many copies he had printed, we had to gauge our printing so as to recover our manufacturing costs if his edition was small, and yet to complete all existing sets if his edition was large. It turned out that

the number of sets in use about equaled our maximum guess, with the result that we have turned up with a handsome profit to replenish our revolving publication fund, which, like all such, has been revolving out of existence.

One result of the success of these projects has been that pleased users of these publications are calling upon us to undertake others. Because of the strength and condition of our collections three of these suggestions are particularly enticing. These are the micro-publication of all early American newspapers, of all significant historical society serials, and of all early American diaries now in print. The last is particularly interesting because the diaries are widely scattered through a great number of serials, many of them rare and obscure.

Related to these is the exciting proposal that we publish a chronological type-specimen book, giving the first American appearance of every typographical ornament, and perhaps every cut as well. It would serve to identify the printer and place of printing of hundreds of items whose origins are now disputed. Such a type-specimen book is for the first time made feasible by our Early American Imprints reproductions.

There is no doubt that some, at least, of the proposed projects could be set up in such a way as to return as much of a profit as a nonprofit, tax-exempt, institution like this can properly make, but we have no intention, at the present time, of tying up a larger segment of our funds, equipment, and man-hours in such publishing ventures. If we were to receive a great increase in endowment, this would be the field in which we could be of unique service; as things are, we must take care not to neglect the other fields, particularly the making of collections, in which we have so long served.¹

¹ This year we accessioned 2134 bound volumes, 2216 pamphlets, and 750 maps, prints, etc. The total count for the Library is now 294,672 bound volumes and 454,481 pamphlets.

When I came to Worcester as librarian sixteen years ago, our old friend George Parker Winship told me that the ideal rare-book institution was one in which the librarian should read every book acquired, so that he might be a master of his subject and a guide to others. This idea, on an entirely different scale, was reflected in Ralph Shaw's presidential address before the American Library Association this year:

There are really two kinds of research libraries. The research library dealt with most in our discussions and literature is primarily a passive institution; a great collection in which others may do research. This might more properly be called a researchable library. The other type of research library is one in which a great deal of research is done by the library staff as a normal function of the library. This type, which might be termed the researching library, has not received nearly as much attention as has the former.

If the difference between a researching library like ours and a passive library, such as publicly supported institutions must tend to be, were generally understood, we would be saved a good deal of embarrassment. For example, some professors are irritated that we do not welcome the students whom they send out with instructions to "explore," not realizing that even verbal exploration by uninformed young men can halt the turning of our complex bibliographical machine.

Another problem is the fact that we, like many other institutions, cannot keep abreast of orders for microfilms or photostats. The fact that public institutions feel that they must fill all orders as received, without regard to priority, has given scholars the impression that the right to obtain microfilms is as natural as that to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. As a result they often ask us for microfilms of all of the newspapers of certain periods and areas. The time of assembling and then redistributing such collections is far more than our staff could give, and the true labor cost would be several times greater than our

customers are accustomed to pay for microfilm. So in practice we must distinguish between the order which is of general importance, such as one from a library making a collection of films of all of the newspapers in its area, and an order from a graduate student for a film which will be used only in the preparation of a thesis which will never be read by more than a dozen people. When an institution or an individual is doing really important work, we feel it a justifiable expenditure of our own income to bear a part of the cost.

A very serious aspect of this general problem is the wear and tear resulting from repeated refilming. This is particularly true of newspapers, but it applies to all old books as well. Once this summer when we told a visitor that we could not again film our unique dance material, he solved his problem by reading the text onto a tape recorder. Since then, we have reacquired one of the negatives of this material and have supplied several prints from it.

In an institution such as this, one service is fundamental to all others. This service is the collection of the material which we make available to our readers here, or to the public in some reprint form. Usually this collecting takes the form of long, laborious, and happy searching, but a few times in a century an institution such as this receives the gift of a mature collection which represents the expenditure of years, of wisdom, and of a small fortune by some collector-scholar. Such is the Thomas W. Streeter collection of American railroad material which we received this year. For the American male, railroad material has a fascination which can be rivaled only by the frontier; and, indeed, the two are inseparable. For North America, the railroads were the arteries through which civilization flowed; they served this continent as the Roman roads served barbarian Europe.

Inseparable from the railroads are the canals, and the Streeter collection is strong in this field, and in related material as distant as early improvement plans for Montreal harbor. The strictly railroad material begins in 1805, with a remarkable number of pieces printed in the next two decades, before the beginnings of practical railroading. The accurate foresight of some of this prerailroad literature is uncanny—in 1813 Oliver Evans correctly foretold the schedule of the modern New York-Washington run.

For the northeastern area, the greater part of the Streeter gift falls into the pre-1841 period, thus affording interesting comparisons with the Thomson bibliography. The collection includes 77 Thomson-type pieces not in the bibliography, and 74 more recorded there as unique. For the southern and western states the collection covers the entire formative period of railroading, and includes some of the spectacular rarities of the field, such as the first Indiana item. In all the material relates to 136 different railroads, and many canal, bridge, and harbor companies.

One of the most fascinating groups consists of national, regional, and state guides to turnpikes, canals, and railroads. Few things better record the swift advance of civilization across the continent, better give the flavor of travel in those generations. Besides the folding maps which accompanied these guides, the collection contained 25 early railroad wall maps, only one of which was duplicate, despite the fact that we already had 150 such maps for New England alone.

Where there was duplication with our original collections, we usually substituted the Streeter copies because he carefully annotated his with bibliographical notes and remarks on the contents. It is a typical Streeter collection in that it is important for its subject matter as well as for the rarity of the items in it. It is not likely that in the future any

thorough study of early American railroading can be made without using it.

This collection, one of the greatest gifts the Society has ever received, will continue to grow, for the donor has kindly offered to contribute to the cost of future additions in order that, as he says, the Library "will continue to have supremacy in that field."

More than ever this material brought home to me the fact that the really great book collections are no mere magpie agglomerations of rarities acquired chiefly to forestall the other fellow, but are carefully planned and studied bodies of source material.

Not that Mr. Streeter does not have a nose for rarities. When there appeared on the market this year a hitherto unknown dance item, *The Ladies and Gentleman's Companion: Containing the Newest Cotillions and Country Dances* (Dedham, 1803), we leaped, only to find that he had been quicker. When he was reminded that, after all, this Library has the great collection of this kind of material, he cheerfully (or so it appeared) gave it to us.

This year's book market turned up the smallest amount of early American printing of interest to us since I have been connected with the Library. The only important seventeenth-century piece acquired is another of that first series of American book labels, most of which were made for Harvard undergraduates. This label, dated 1698, was made for Samuel Clark, who was not a Harvard man, and who cannot be identified; but the type flowers used for a frame on his label reappear on that made for Samuel Phillips, then an undergraduate, in 1707. The fact that these particular flowers do not, so far as I can remember, appear in Boston printing, strongly suggests that some type and at least some proving equipment was left at Cambridge, and that these labels are Cambridge printing. Now that

our microprint project has advanced through this period, this point and others like it can be quickly established by anyone with a few hours to devote to the study of type ornaments.

An interesting eighteenth-century piece among this year's acquisitions is the only known complete copy of the Boston, 1743, edition of Bland's *Abstract of Military Discipline*. One Thomas Winslow bought this copy in 1744 and bound it in crude homemade covers which withstood muster-day wear in his pockets and in those of two other members of his family. One can imagine that there still clings to it the odor of gunpowder, rum, and muster-day gingerbread.

By far the most important of the early imprints acquired this year is the first issue of *Common Sense*, which was presented to us by Colonel Richard Gimbel of New Haven. We had no less than nineteen editions of that title published in its first year, but this first issue, if it ever appeared on the rare-book market, was far beyond our purse. Colonel Gimbel presented the pamphlet in a morocco case with a specially printed bookplate stating that the gift was made to honor the outgoing and incoming presidents of the Society at the annual meeting of 1955.

Among the imprints acquired which are important because they are editions hitherto known only by advertisements are *Amusement Hall; or, an easy Introduction to the Attainment of Useful Knowledge. By a Lady* (Philadelphia, 1796), and a New England Primer printed at Concord by Nathaniel Coverly. Rarities which have enriched special segments of our literature collection are a copy of the New York, 1800, edition of *Robinson Crusoe* (hitherto known only by the Yale copy); a *Tom Thumb Folio*, John Norman, c. 1793; *A New History of Blue Beard* (Stonington, 1801); and a very rare Freneau item, the *Historical Sketch of the Life of Silas Talbot* (New York, 1803). The most important

of the modern literary items is a copy of the rarest and most desirable of Amy Lowell's works, *Dream Drops*, published anonymously in 1887. It came to us as the gift of C. Waller Barrett and John S. Van E. Kohn.

In view of the fact that the reprinting in the near future of all early American newspapers by some micro process is a certainty, we are particularly pleased to fill gaps in our files now. This year we have acquired the *New York Weekly Post-Boy* for 1746, the *New York Journal* for 1769, the Newburyport *Essex Journal* for 1790-1794, the Danbury, Connecticut, *Republican Farmer* for 1803-1806, and the Harrisburg *Pennsylvania Intelligencer* for 1820.

In the field of later periodicals we have profited particularly by the gift of odd volumes by other institutions which were cleaning out broken files. By purchase we acquired one particularly interesting magazine, the *Illuminated Western World*, published at New York from January 2, 1869, to January 29, 1870 (vol. 1, no. 1 to vol. 2, no. 57). This is apparently a complete file and the only perfect file located. Its interest, and perhaps its rarity, is due to the fact that all of its illustrations and its masthead were printed in color. This was claimed to be the result of a new invention. In the final number George W. Wheat states that he was the founder of the journal and also the inventor of the color presses used. The periodical was established by French & Wheat who continued as publishers through the issue of March 27, 1869, after which it was published by the Western World Company. With the issue of January 1, 1870, the title was changed to *The Western World*. In the last issue, January 29, 1870, George W. Wheat was given as the publisher, and it was stated that he had purchased the paper. No later issues are known.

A much more valuable addition to our collection of the graphic arts is the very rare print, engraved by Thomas

Johnston for Stephen Whiting, entitled "Quebec, the Capital of New-France." Stephen Whiting advertised in the *Boston Gazette* of August 13, 1759, and in the *Boston News-Letter* of August 16, 1759, that he had this print for sale, and that it was taken "from the latest and most authentic French original, done at Paris." Nearly a score of Whiting's advertisements are printed in G. F. Dow's *Arts & Crafts in New England*, ranging from 1747 to 1773. Calling himself a print-seller and japanner, he sold prints, glass and artist's supplies. He married Mary Grover on April 26, 1745, had several children, and died June 4, 1789, aged 69. His career is best traced in D. M. Stauffer's *American Engravers* (1907), with Mantle Fielding, *Supplement*; Cornelia B. Williams' *Ancestry of Lawrence Williams* (1915), p. 177; F. W. Coburn in *Art in America*, XXI (1932), 27; Carter Brown Library, *Annual Report* for 1944-45, p. 59; Mary H. D. Babcock's *Christ Church* (1947), p. 137; and Lawrence C. Wroth, "Thomas Johnston Maps of Kennebeck Purchase" in *Tribute to Fred Anthoensen* (1952), p. 77. Copies of the print of "Quebec, the Capital of New-France" are located also in the John Carter Brown Library, the Connecticut Historical Society, and the New York Public Library.

The greatest surprise of the year came when Theron Damon walked in and laid on my desk the two fat manuscript commonplace books of Benjamin Franklin, the uncle of the great Benjamin, who came to Boston in 1715 and became a member of Josiah's household. Apparently Parton, who used this manuscript in the preparation of his biography of Franklin a century ago, was the last historian to see it. Later writers have assumed that young Benjamin was influenced by this literary uncle, but a reading of the poems and other literary exercises in these volumes will give the impression that Uncle Benjamin was, potentially

at least, a far greater influence than has been supposed. They show that there was at least a respectable amount of genius lying around in the Franklin family before Ben was born.

According to Jared Sparks, this manuscript was a century ago in the possession of "Mrs. Emmons, of Boston, great-granddaughter of Benjamin Franklin, their author." Recently it was in the possession of a Mrs. Arthur Brewster Emmons of Newport, from whom it passed to a niece, Mrs. Dumont Clarke, sister-in-law of Mr. Damon. At his suggestion Mrs. Clarke graciously presented it to the Society.

Mr. Loriman S. Brigham, of Montpelier, Vermont, has presented to the Library an exceptionally interesting collection of manuscripts, consisting of 450 letters and four journals of the Gale Family. The letters are mostly the correspondence of Frederick W. Gale and Anna D. Gale, from 1828 to 1854. The journals were kept by Frederick W. Gale in 1847, 1849, and 1850, and by Anna D. Gale in 1837-1838. Frederick Gale was born in Northboro, June 22, 1816, attended Harvard College until his graduation in 1836, practiced law with Isaac Davis in Worcester from 1838 to 1841, and from 1844 to 1846, practiced in St. Louis from 1841 to 1843, traveled abroad in 1847-1850, and after another stay in Worcester in 1851, was drowned when the ship *Arctic* was sunk off Nova Scotia in September, 1854. His letters describing social life in Worcester are of much local interest, as are also his letters written during his undergraduate days at Harvard. His younger sister, Anna Gale, attended school in Providence in 1837-1838, and her impressions of Margaret Fuller, tellingly described in the *New England Quarterly* for March, 1956, are of much literary interest. Frederick Gale's mother was Eliza Davis, sister of John Davis, Governor of Massachusetts and United States

Senator. Through his Davis connections he was related to many well-known people in Worcester, some of whom were members or officers of this Society. Local interest aside, the collection is of unusual value as social history, and is made readily usable by an excellent index of names, and a chronological calendar of the letters and journals.

Manuscripts have a time-bomb quality; one never knows when something of importance is coming out of them. Librarians have long been troubled by the problem of the authorship of four anonymous tracts, *Thoughts on Agency* (New Haven, 1765), *Theory of Agency* (Boston, 1771), *The True Nature and Cause of the Tails of Comets* (Boston, 1772), and *An Essay on the Agitations of the Sea, and Some Other Remarkables Attending the Earthquakes of the Year M,DCC,L,V* (Boston, 1761). Our copies of the essays on agency and that on comets have contemporary inscriptions ascribing them to "Dr. John Perkins," which is not much help because there were several physicians of that name. We have for many years had the manuscript memoirs of the Dr. John Perkins who was born in Lynn on March 9, 1697/8, and died there on January 23, 1781. Miss Avis Clarke undertook the dreary task of wading through the entire fat manuscript, and came up with the evidence of authorship which has hitherto been lacking. On page 5 Dr. Perkins mentions a "late small tract on the causes of earthquakes" which he "wrote for the New Jersey Magazine after the shock of November 1755 and afterwards published with some corrections and additions in a small pamphlet, but anonymous." This essay, we found, ran serially in the *New American Magazine*, published at Woodbridge, New Jersey, from June through August, 1758. A similar reference together with internal evidence shows that the Doctor was the author of the two tracts on agency. The memoirs do not mention the pamphlet on the tails of comets, but we have attributed

it to him on the basis of the contemporary attribution which it shares with the agency tracts.

This is typical of the kind of study which goes on as our Imprint catalogue reaches completion. This year we have incorporated into the Imprint Collection several small collections, such as Election Sermons and Trials, the contents of which have for the first time received thorough bibliographical study. The process of recataloguing and reclassifying the material in the old Alcove collections is proceeding smartly, to the great improvement of our general efficiency. Our Spanish-American collection is undergoing a reclassification now fifty years overdue, thanks to the kind help of a new member, Mr. Alden Johnson, who spends a few hours each week at this task, as laborious as it is fascinating.

Our house is in order, and our bibliographical machinery runs more efficiently every day. Never before has this Library been nearer the center of the midstream of American historical activity than it is today. It is an exhilarating experience to have a part in its work.

CLIFFORD K. SHIPTON

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