

## REPORT OF THE COUNCIL.

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The past winter has been a busy one at the Society's building, and in some respects a discouraging one. When the building was constructed, the sum of \$185,000 was taken, with the approval of the Society, from the invested funds to pay for the cost of land, construction, and equipment. This was, in the opinion of most of the members who were consulted, the wisest use of this money, without which the Society would not have been able to secure a building very nearly perfect for its purposes, and one which anticipated a long period of future growth. This use of invested funds, however, seriously reduced the amount of the annual income which could be used for the general expenses of administration, for the development of the Library and for the other current activities of the Society. During the past two years this income has been still further reduced by the failure of certain railway companies to make their accustomed payments. The loss is about a thousand dollars a year.

This Society has never been expensively administered, and the Council has not seen any practicable economies by which an appreciable amount could be saved out of the ordinary operating expenses. The loss of income must therefore be taken directly out of the money used by the Library Committee for the purchase of books. This means that there has been an interruption in the normal growth of the library, which is profoundly to be regretted. It is measured not so much by the smaller number of titles added to the collection, which include gifts as well as purchases, as by a greater change in the character of the accessions.

Since 1908, when Mr. Brigham became Librarian of the Society a steadily increasing number of books have been bought each year. The books purchased are those which supplement or help toward completing the collection. Valuable as are the books and manuscripts which come to the Society as gifts, they almost always have, and sometimes create, gaps which it is important to fill in order that students may find here the material for their investigations. The Librarian has been fortunate in reducing many of the most obvious of these gaps, and in making this collection more broadly representative of colonial American literature and political publications. He has been enabled to do this through the establishment of friendly relations with a widely extended group of antiquarian booksellers, who have become familiar with the work which this Society has undertaken to do, and who have on many occasions shown a generous desire to assist it by offering desirable volumes at a reasonable price. It is through these dealers that the most useful additions to the collection, year in and year out, must come. Even a temporary and partial interruption of this active co-operation is certain to lose the Society much of the impetus which it has gained during the years of the present administration.

One advantage has resulted from the fact that the Librarian has been reluctantly constrained to take less time than heretofore for reading the catalogues of auction sales and looking over the offerings from dealers. He has been able to devote this much more of his attention to the most important undertaking in which the Society is now involved, the list of American Newspapers, published prior to 1820. The members have already received two portions of this list, containing the notes on the papers which appeared in the several states in alphabetical order as far as Maine. Maryland is also in type and the Committee of Publication had expected to include it in the volume of

Proceedings recently distributed. The number of separate entries is proving to be so much larger than had been estimated, however, that it seemed wiser to hold back this portion, so as to issue the volume in a more convenient size. Maryland and the Boston papers will be listed in the next installment and the rest of the Massachusetts papers will follow six months later.

At the present rate of progress, the list will be completed in eight more semi-annual installments, or ten in all. If the money were available for assistance and travelling expenses, as well as for printing, this period could be shortened considerably. There are advantages, however, in continuing the work at the present rate. Mr. Brigham can give much more of his personal attention to the many details of the work, to examining widely scattered files and seeking for stray issues in unsuspected hiding places, which add largely to the completeness of the published results. The publication by sections makes it easier for other libraries to compare the printed lists with the files of papers which they chance to possess, and report to the Society any unrecorded issues or errors such as inevitably find their way into work of this character. These corrections and additions will be embodied in the revised list which will be issued after the sectional publication is completed.

The present Newspaper List ought to be followed by two series of publications, for which this Society's Proceedings are the most suitable place. One of these, and the more interesting, will put on record the story of each important newspaper and newspaper publishing house that has flourished in the United States. The other, of greater potential value to historical investigators, will provide a census of extant copies of each paper that is mentioned in the list, of which files are hard to locate.

The model for such a census is Miss Ayer's Check List of Boston Newspapers, printed by the Colonial

Society of Massachusetts. Another census, of the *Newport Mercury*, was printed in the *Bulletin* of the Newport Historical Society for October, 1914. The condensed form adopted for this publication makes it difficult for the occasional user to locate the desired information, but it may suggest a possible means for placing such information on record at a lower cost than a thoroughly satisfactory work inevitably requires.

The *Newport Mercury* illustrates the need of such a census. Established in June, 1758, about one thousand regular, supplementary or extraordinary issues are known to have appeared prior to November, 1776, when the arrival of the British fleet in Narragansett Bay forced the editor to remove to the interior of Massachusetts. Three hundred of those issues are not now known to be in existence. Of the 700 existing papers, the largest number in any one place is 287, in the Library of Congress. Of these, only 26 exist in the Rhode Island libraries. The Redwood Library at Newport has 227 issues, of which 90 are to be found nowhere else, and there are 157 at the Newport Historical Society, about half of these not in the neighboring Redwood Library. The Rhode Island Historical Society at Providence has 215, of which less than half have been found elsewhere. The Boston Public Library, Yale University, Massachusetts Historical Society, and British Museum, each possess one or more issues not found in any other place. To some investigators it will be only an irritation to know that the things which they ought to examine are in half a dozen different cities. To others it will be a slight satisfaction to learn that what they want either is or is not known to be somewhere.

The early issues of the *Newport Mercury* had a struggle for existence, owing to the British occupation of that naval base during the Revolutionary War. This fact does not entirely explain their disappearance, however, for the issues of that paper published during

the decade following the Peace of 1783 are almost equally hard to locate. The longest file of the *Newport Mercury* for the years of the Confederation belongs to the New York Historical Society, which possesses none of the issues of earlier date.

There are many other papers, as is shown by the Newspaper List, the extant copies of which are scattered in almost as many widely separated libraries.

This Society and the libraries with which it is most closely in touch seem to be, as is usually the case with institutions of an academic character, more or less behind the times. Just at the period when it has come to be politically and commercially bad form to be on good terms with rival organizations, and to attempt to work together for mutual advantages, a number of libraries are beginning to take up these now, perhaps temporarily, antiquated notions. There is a very general tendency among library administrators to enter upon schemes for co-operation in all possible ways. This Society has recently received about 32,000 issues of Bolivian and other South American newspapers as its share from the purchases made by an agent who spent over a year in South America as the representative of several institutions in different parts of the United States. The Society is also actively co-operating with other libraries to reduce the cost of reproducing historical material, and thereby increase the amount accessible for the use of investigators.

The accumulation of original publications is going on steadily in the several lines in which the Society's collections are strongest: newspapers, almanacs, and American imprints prior to 1820. In each of these fields the library at Worcester is superior to any other. Each of these departments has now grown to the point where it has become evident that there are certain things without which the collection must be incomplete for the purposes of systematic historical investigation, and which there is only the slightest probability of securing in the original form. An absolutely

complete file of a colonial newspaper is exceedingly difficult to find. There are only one or two surviving copies of a majority of the seventeenth century American almanacs. The broadsides of the colonial and the Revolutionary periods are equally hard to secure, and many of the most important ones are hidden uncatalogued in city or state archives. Most of the earlier tracts of political or economic, rather than religious, significance exist in only two or three libraries, usually near the locality where they were written.

Unless an investigator is unusually well endowed with zeal or other resources he cannot hope to complete his researches by going to all the places in which are preserved the different original publications which he ought to consult. Yet his work must remain uncompleted and his conclusions unsatisfactory until he has seen all the material which affects his opinion. The recent development of mechanical photographing devices has reduced the cost and the time required for accurate copying, and has made possible an entirely new attitude toward historical material on the part of the principal depositories. The experience of this Society's library is typical of what is taking place wherever there is a considerable collection of such material.

The colonial almanacs are not as important as the newspapers, nor do they occasion librarians or students so many difficult problems. They do embody, nevertheless, a large amount of extremely significant information. The fact that the Society has been enabled, through the zeal of one of its members, to secure more of these early almanacs than any other library, gives it a standing which it should be easy to maintain. This carries an equal obligation to make the utmost use of the advantageous position. Much has already been done, and the well-tilled field promises fruitful harvests. Mr. Chapin's paper on the Rhode Island almanacs supplements those contributed by Dr. Nichols and Mr. Bates on the Massachusetts and Connecticut

issues. Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont, are now being listed for publication by the Society. South Carolina has been done recently for the Historical Society of that State, and it is expected that arrangements can be made for the intervening states.

The bibliographical lists of almanacs ought to be followed by another series of studies of the work of the individual almanac-makers. Mr. Paltsits began such a series in the Society's Proceedings by his paper on Roger Sherman. Nathaniel Ames and Robert B. Thomas are the subjects of published volumes.

Hidden within these old almanacs is a long chapter, as yet unwritten, of the history of American science, an almost unknown but very illuminating story of the commercial development of colonial printing, and as Professor Kittredge has shown, more entertaining and not less important contributions to what is known about the extension of folk-lore and popular superstitions in this country, and the spread of religious ideas. The Proceedings of this Society should be the most natural place in which to look for information upon these and every other subject associated with the early almanacs.

The foresight of Dr. Nichols placed the Society some years ago in the leading position among collectors of American almanacs. He has strengthened this position whenever opportunity offered, and it is now so secure that it will be easy to maintain its pre-eminence. Strong as it is, the Library contains only forty-two of the sixty-five almanacs which are known to have been issued in Massachusetts before the year 1700. A few of the remaining twenty-three will undoubtedly find their way into this collection in the course of time, but students who want to consult them in Worcester cannot wait upon this chance possibility. Dr. Nichols has, therefore, undertaken to secure photographic copies of each of the issues needed to make the Society's set complete. Thirteen of these have already been obtained, and arrangements

are being made which it is expected will eventually secure the facsimiles of the others.

The photographic reproduction of colonial newspapers is a much more difficult undertaking. A beginning was made in 1898 by the Colonial Society of Pennsylvania, which published the first three volumes of the *American Weekly Mercury*, for 1719-21.

Within the past year the John Carter Brown Library and the Massachusetts Historical Society have undertaken to reproduce by the photostat machine the earliest Newport and Boston newspapers. The eleven issues of the *Rhode Island Gazette* of 1732 were easily handled, but the copying of 700 numbers, usually of four pages each, of the *Newport Mercury*, dated between 1758 and 1776, was a difficult undertaking, which has been very nearly completed.

The Massachusetts Historical Society has likewise supplied a set of reproductions of the *Boston News-Letter* for the years 1704-08, made from the nearly complete file belonging to the New York Historical Society. Two issues of these years, which were not to be found in that or any other library, were supplied from the collections of this Society, which will also be able to supply twelve other numbers not known to exist elsewhere, to complete the facsimile files of the ensuing ten years.

The Antiquarian Society benefits more than the other subscribing libraries which secure these facsimile newspaper files, in proportion as it has more newspapers altogether than the other institutions. It ought to benefit more than it does. If it is to secure the utmost advantage from the remarkable collections made by Isaiah Thomas and his successors, the Society must not let any other institution take the lead in any movement for utilizing newspaper material. The library building at Worcester ought to become the recognized center, the clearing house for every sort of information regarding American newspapers. The work of making photographic reproductions must be



done in most cases in the place where the papers belong. This Society might very properly and advantageously offer to undertake the task of distribution, and the general business management of every co-operative scheme of this character.

A number of plans for reproducing files of colonial papers are now under consideration. In each case the idea is that from six to ten libraries will agree to share the expense, paying a price for the reproductions based upon the actual cost to the library doing the work. A certain amount of conflict, and very likely a production in excess of the financial convenience of the supporting institutions, is likely to result unless someone, somewhere, will undertake to assume a general advisory control over these various schemes. It belongs to this Society to do this. There is more information concerning the location of individual issues in the Society's possession than anywhere else and all such information ought to be centralized at its building. If this work is not taken up actively, it will either be done haphazard, and in a dozen different centers, or some other institution will undertake to do it, and secure the credit to which the Antiquarian Society has properly a first claim.

GEORGE PARKER WINSHIP,  
*For the Council.*

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