

Report of the Council

DURING the past six months the Library has been increasingly used by researchers. In spite of the severity of the winter, with the consequent impediment of travel, scholars have journeyed here from distant points to consult material either rare or elsewhere unlocated. Such subjects as Mormon publications, factory conditions in New York State, colonial observations of the Transit of Venus, advertisements of Virginia printing, and the American scene as shown in stereoscopic views are only a few of the subjects recently studied. The publication of the *Bibliography of American Newspapers* has brought additional readers, since for the first time an accurate listing of early files has made such inquiries possible. One embarrassing result of the printing of the Bibliography has been the demand for microfilms and photostats of unique newspapers, but unfortunately we have no such photographic equipment, and have to depend upon local commercial firms, a practice which we find unsatisfactory since it requires the temporary removal of rare material from the building. Eventually this defect should be remedied, but it will not be soon, as it requires the purchase of expensive equipment and also the employment of additional labor.

There have been no notable changes in the interior of the Library or in the arrangement of the books. Always there is present the pressing need of more space, but nothing can be done in the way of new construction during this period of excessive cost of labor and materials, and even of repair. The unusual severity of the past winter has proved to us

that this building was exceedingly well constructed when it was erected nearly forty years ago. A few leaks, the first in many years, developed in the rotunda ceiling, but this slight damage was immediately obviated when the snow was cleared from the dome. The roof, with all the parapets and coping, is always kept in good condition through pointing every year or two.

Inspired by the need of more shelf room, there has been some attempt during the winter to weed out books foreign to our fields of collecting. This Library existed for almost a century largely upon gifts of books, and working upon the theory that a gift horse should never be looked in the mouth, many books were accepted which had no place whatever in our collections. Many of these volumes, generally bulky and unsuited to a private library, were merely discarded by their owners. Dutch books printed in Amsterdam, classics printed in Germany and Italy, and hundreds of volumes of theology printed in England and Europe took up space on our shelves, kept apparently for no reason other than sentiment. Such volumes have now been removed and sent to libraries, through exchange or sale, where they might be appreciated. The process will continue slowly, as care and discrimination should be exercised in ridding ourselves of books which have been kept for so long a time. The slightest reference to America causes such books to be retained. The result is easily apparent in emphasizing the value of the scores of specialized collections which remain.

Some exceedingly rare and important books have been recently acquired. Among these are the *Journal of the Legislative Council of Tennessee, 1794*, and the *Declaration of Rights, also the Constitution of the State of Frankland, 1786*, both very scarce and early Tennessee source documents. These are only two out of a dozen important rarities which will be described in the Librarian's Report at the annual

meeting. Such items as early American printing and early newspaper files are constantly being acquired, to fill in collections which are already outstanding.

Mr. Shipton has been working as time allows on the examination and appraisal of the books received in the Donald Frost collection. Most of the rare items we lack, but in the more common fields of Western history and biography, a careful comparison of the Frost and our own copies is required in order to decide what is duplicate. The Librarian has also been working steadily on the amassing of titles for the completion of Evans' *Bibliography* through the year 1800. All of this work has to be done in addition to the usual routine duties.

Five deaths have occurred in the membership during the last six months. George Simpson Eddy, authority on Benjamin Franklin, elected in 1924, died October 20 last. Hermann F. Clarke, author of books on early American silversmiths, elected in 1935, died October 29. William Sumner Appleton, director of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, elected in 1924, died November 24. George H. Haynes, Worcester teacher and author, elected in 1896 and the second senior member of the Society, died November 30. Alexander W. Weddell, president of the Virginia Historical Society, elected only at the last annual meeting, died January 1. Obituary sketches of these members will appear in the printed *Proceedings* of this meeting.

As usual the income available from our funds is not sufficient to maintain our collections and our service to scholarship. An appeal will be sent out later in the spring, inviting members to make contributions for the needs of the Society. An especial overture will be made this year for gifts to aid in the increase of salaries, particularly for the lower paid assistants. It is the staff of the Library which makes it

possible to maintain the collections and to answer the appeals of researchers. In spite of the increased cost of living, no increase in our wages has been made in several years. Some recognition of the faithfulness of the staff should be made as soon as income is provided.

Respectfully submitted,

CLARENCE S. BRIGHAM,

For the Council

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