

Report of the Librarian

IT IS with the greatest of pleasure that we report that the confusion and upheaval consequent upon the building of the new stack is at an end. Far ahead of schedule every book on our miles of shelves has been vacuum-cleaned and moved to more roomy quarters. The great backlog of cataloguing which accumulated during the years when the shelves of many collections were too full to admit another book has been whittled down to a stub by the expedient of having everyone take a lick at the job whenever a free moment appeared. Indeed, the backlog would be entirely gone if it were not for the diversion of our energies created by the Tinker collection of Louisiana, which has demanded slow and careful cataloguing.

We have made good progress even in the reclassification of the books remaining in the old alcove arrangement which was devised perhaps a century ago. In the process we are discovering hundreds of items which have slumbered on the shelves concealed behind the informal cataloguing of earlier generations, and we are, thanks to modern tools, for the first time supplying author entries for scores of anonymous items. One result of this activity has been the crowding of our catalogue trays to the point where we must soon undertake a long-foreseen, but none-the-less unwelcome, reconstruction of our facilities.

We on the staff become so accustomed to the bibliographical tools which we have constructed that we are sometimes surprised by the enthusiasm of visitors for them. One of these tools which I have never described in my reports is the supplement to our imprint catalogue which we call our

“authority file.” This contains a card for practically every author of a book or pamphlet printed in English America before 1820, giving the concise biographical data needed for bibliographical work and, equally important, the “authority” for that information. It is far better than the various printed dictionaries of American authors which copy folklore one from the other, and often combine and divide individual authors for lack of clear identification. Visitors use the “authority file” to shear the fringes from their bibliographies.

The daily appearance of our reading room is no criterion of our activity, for we handle a dozen inquiries by mail for every one presented in person. Naturally our bibliographical machinery grinds fastest when we have few visitors to distract us. We have served rather more out-of-state researchers than usual this year. One morning there were parked at the Library, cars from California, Colorado, Michigan, Ontario, and Wisconsin. One Canadian professor spent the Summer with us, working nights in a lunch-cart to support himself. Appreciative of our services, some leave roses and candy for the staff. Occasionally we can put the more appreciative ones to work on our collections.

In the past we have remarked on the occasional author who, without setting foot in the Library, pads his list of references by thanking us for purely imaginary services. This year a Western Ph.D. candidate who remained with us for some weeks forestalled any such suspicions by fortifying his footnote references with photographs of the members of the library staff. One serious problem is the inconvenience of our five-day week to visitors, particularly to those from a distance. We simply do not have a staff large enough to permit us to institute a staggered schedule and keep the Library open on a seven-day week. Mr. Brigham is kind-hearted, and he likes to work Saturdays and Sundays, with

the result that he sometimes spends the two days serving out-of-town visitors who have discovered his presence in the Library.

One of the commonest complaints of visitors is that we do not advertise widely enough to forestall their wasting their time pursuing their material through scattered libraries in ignorance of the fact that it is here gathered into one place and backed by unique bibliographical tools. So it is with the excuse of providing some useful data that I indulge in a little boasting about our holdings. Few people realize the strength of our collections of American literature. The new edition of Wright's *American Fiction* shows that we have 1818 items, Yale has 1535, and Mr. Babb has 442 not held by the University. The competition between Worcester and New Haven has been fierce, and we are content to accept second place. The bitterness of the rivalry may be judged by the fact that we have made a practice of offering Yale our duplicates, and Mr. Babb has given us some of his.

We have never made any particular effort to collect Catholic Americana, but Forrest Bowe's supplement to Parsons' bibliography shows that we have 72 per cent of his titles, followed by the Library of Congress with 27 per cent, and the New York Public, Harvard, and Yale, each with about 22 per cent.

We naturally expect to have a margin in the field of American imprints. A careful inventory of the works of the men in the last volume of Sibley shows that the American Antiquarian Society has 124 items, the Massachusetts Historical Society, 104, the Boston Public Library and the Harvard libraries, 90, the John Carter Brown, 89, the Boston Athenæum, 82, Yale, 58, and the New York Public, 55. These figures represent primarily New England imprints. The new volume of Evans affords a sampling of country-wide printing during the years 1799 and 1800. This shows the

American Antiquarian Society to be first with 1520 items, followed by the Library of Congress with 1254 and the New York Public with 1034. The difference in order in the Sibley and Evans lists is due to the great number of unique New York and Philadelphia ephemera, such as broadsides and election circulars, owned by the Library of Congress and the New York Public.

Our acquisitions this year have been designedly less than in the past. We used to attempt to acquire and preserve everything printed on our major fields of collecting, but the flood of modern popular books has compelled us to be selective. We have added 2,400 volumes and 4,626 pamphlets, raising the total official count of the Library to 285,113 volumes and 428,853 pamphlets.

Our most important accession of the year was the Spargo collection of early Vermont imprints. There is much to be said for the point of view of the collector of assorted rarities who holds that it is his final duty to disperse his holdings at auction in order to permit other collectors to have the pleasure of gathering. John Spargo, however, did not want to see scattered the collection of Vermont printing which he had been forty years gathering. For him, the purpose of collecting was not fun alone but the building of a useful library. So he made it possible for us to purchase the fruit of his labors. As a result we have added forty-nine titles printed by the Haswells at Bennington from 1783 to 1818, and twenty-five early imprints of other Vermont towns. Among the especially interesting titles were Pope's *Essay on Man*, 1785; *The Fatal Effects of Seduction, a Tragedy*, 1789; *Vermont Journal of the General Assembly* for 1791; *Account of the Remarkable Conversion of a Little Boy and Girl*, 1794; *Address of George Washington, September 19, 1796*; Ezekiel Bacon's *Oration on the 4th of July, 1799*; Anthony Haswell's *Oration at Temple Lodge on General*

George Washington, 1800; Haswell's *Republican Songs*, 1809; and *Original and Selected Essays*, 1815. These were all printed at Bennington, as were ten broadside poems written by Haswell and delivered at Masonic and patriotic occasions. Among the imprints of other Vermont towns were the *Faithful Narrative of Polly Davis*, Windsor, 1792, and *Narrative of the Singular Sufferings of John Fillamore*, Windsor, 1806. Also should be mentioned a number of early almanacs, and the pamphlet *Journals of the General Assembly and of the Council of Censors*. The manuscripts included eleven autograph letters and three autograph manuscripts by Anthony Haswell, and a journal of his journey from Bennington to New York in 1796.

Mr. Spargo's collection was beautifully preserved and bound, with the manuscripts and rarer items encased in morocco solander cases. It is now added to the M. B. Jones Vermont collection, presented to us several years ago, and to the accumulations made by our librarians over a period of forty years, giving us a remarkable representation of early Vermont printing. Of the 508 Vermont imprints before 1800 listed in Cooley's bibliography, including ephemeral legislative broadsides and titles known only through advertisements, the library has slightly over half. Since we also have a practically complete collection of Vermont local history, and long files of its early newspapers, so far as printed sources are concerned the study of Vermont history can best be carried on here.

We have already been able to improve the Louisiana collection which came to us from Mr. Tinker last year. Neither he nor we, although we have tried for years, had been hitherto able to obtain copies of the legislative Acts of that State before the year 1817. This year we were able to purchase the acts from the first in 1804 to the point where our file begins. The rarity of these documents is demon-

strated by the fact that we have been aware of this lacuna since 1819. Such was the enthusiasm for a national society of antiquaries when this institution was founded that some of the State legislatures, including those of Delaware, Kentucky, Indiana, Mississippi, and Louisiana, followed the lead of Congress in sending us sets of their public documents; but apparently the early Acts of Louisiana were even then unavailable. There is no need to enlarge upon the value of these early State documents as historical sources.

The Library has also acquired by purchase a number of unique or very rare items which are of importance chiefly as imprints. Among these are the Philadelphia, 1784, edition of *The Life and Adventures of Ambrose Gwinnett* and the Northampton, 1816, edition of *A History of the Voyages and Adventures of John Delure*. A copy of *The Hermit of Virginia*, printed at Wilbraham by Terry and Learned in 1807, is our first record of these printers. Among the items for which we have been searching for years is Moreau de Saint-Méry's the *Description de la Partie Francaise de l'Isle Saint-Dominique*, printed by the author in two quarto volumes in 1797 and 1798. We have been able to purchase a copy in contemporary calf with a fine fresh impression of the map. Our collection of the dramatic works of Mercy Warren has been completed by the purchase of a copy of *The Adulateur. A Tragedy, as it is now Acted in Upper Servia*, alias the Boston of 1773.

Among the newspapers which we acquired this year was a run of *Ming's New-York Price-Current* for the years from 1806 to 1816, one of the best sources for economic and maritime history for the period of the War of 1812. For some years the private collection of early American newspapers most important as a supplement to our holdings has been that in the possession of J. Bennett Nolan, described by him in detail in his excellent checklist of *Newspapers of*

Berks County, published in 1951. We have acquired this collection by purchase, and so added to our holdings many important files, including the *Weekly Advertiser* for 1796-1799, and partial files of the *Neue Unpartheyische Readinger Zeitung* for 1792-1802, the *Standhafte Patriot* for 1812-1815, the *Welt Bothe* for 1812-1827, and the *Readinger Postbothe* for 1817-1823, all printed in Reading.

We have been able to increase notably our collections of newspaper-carriers' addresses, broadside ballads, and similar ephemeral records of American life. The most interesting piece of this character is *Canada Subjected, a New Song* published in Boston in 1759 using a cut left over from the last earthquake for lack of a more apt illustration. A large folio broadside advertising "Horsemanship and Rope-Dancing, at the Circus" in Broad Street, Salem, on March 27, 1810, describes in detail the appearance of the clown, Mr. Ricketts, which makes it unique in our collection of early circus posters and advertisements.

The most significant addition to our unrivaled collection of early American trade cards is an elaborate one engraved by Nathaniel Hurd for Joseph Palmer & Co. "at German-town near Boston," advertising their spermaceti candles, and including in its design a picture of a whale.

In the various fields of Americana collecting there is no subject that has attracted more enthusiastic effort in recent years than the acquisition of children's books. They have unusual charm because of their attractive woodcuts or copperplate engravings, their small size, and their quaint text. They are of importance for the graphic arts, and for the history of printing and literature. Being printed for children they were usually defaced or lost, with the result that they are exceedingly rare, and surviving copies are often unique. Dr. Rosenbach's bibliography, *Early American Children's Books*, contains 816 titles, representing per-

haps one-fifth of the number issued; but partly as the result of the interest which it created, prices have advanced ten times over in the last fifteen years. Before collectors began to bid up these books the Society had an outstanding collection (mostly gathered after 1910); and we now acquire all that are offered unless the price is insurmountable. During the past year we have added about a hundred titles printed before 1820; among them the following are of especial interest: *Tom Thumb's Folio for Little Giants*, Boston, circa 1780; *London Cries*, Philadelphia, 1787 (first printing of the title in this country); *Divine Songs by Dr. Watts*, Springfield, 1788; *Lessons for Children from Two to Four Years Old*, Philadelphia, 1788 (W. Charles engraving); *New England Primer*, New York, 1791 (only copy located); *The Toy Shop*, by R. Dodsley, Exeter, 1793; *The Mountain Piper*, Hartford, 1798; *The Farmer's Daughter of Essex*, New York, 1802; *The History of Two Horses*, Philadelphia, 1811 (W. Charles engraving); *New England Primer*, Walpole, 1811; and *Adventures of Old Dame Trudge*, Philadelphia, 1817 (W. Charles engraving).

A collector and student of children's books, Mr. d'Alte A. Welch of Cleveland, spent part of the Summer at the Library, microfilming all of our juveniles through the year 1820, numbering over a thousand. He proposes to issue a bibliography which will include photographs of every item included. Both the technique and the subject have enlisted our interest and co-operation.

Early American songsters, or books of secular songs have always interested us, and we have been particularly active in developing and organizing our collection during the last year or two. This increased activity has been greatly furthered by the help of Miss Lucile K. Wilkin of Colorado in arranging, listing and improving our holdings. Miss Wilkin spent two months in the Library last Summer, and a

month this Summer, working upon the songbooks with a view of preparing a bibliography going through the year 1850, the terminal date of our specialized collection. She finds that we have 124 songsters dating from 1764 to 1820, and 167 from 1821 to 1850. She has covered all of the other large collections, or plans to do so in the immediate future. It appears that we will be the largest contributor of titles and much the largest contributor to the store of bibliographical information which her study requires. Among the two-dozen songsters which we have lately acquired, the following are of especial rarity and interest: the *Columbian Songster*, New York, 1797; Wrentham, 1799; Pittsburgh, 1818; the *Nightingale*, Amherst, 1797; the *Vocal Medley*, Alexandria, 1801; the *Baltimore Musical Miscellany*, Baltimore, 1805; the *Virginia Nightingale*, Alexandria, 1807; the *Naval Songster*, Charlestown, 1815; and the *Masonic Museum*, New York, 1816.

The librarians whose chief function is adding rare books and prints to already great collections are spared many of the troubles of those whose institutions must, in the interests of knowledge, preserve at least the most important of the bulky records of recent generations. This year we accepted, in order to save them, the United States Census Records for Worcester County for the years 1850, 1860, and 1870. A similar task is that of maintaining files of New England town reports which contain, among other useful material, the only full printed records of births, marriages, and deaths, and which periodically list all property owners and their holdings, thus being little Domesday books. The cities can be trusted to keep their own documents, but the towns, particularly the small ones, are another matter. These little pamphlets are not to be had of booksellers, and Mr. Sherman Haight, who has been in the field gathering them for us, has had on occasion to help water the cows in order to obtain the favor of the town clerk.

To record the activities of the other members of the staff would be to repeat in large measure the reports of previous years. Mr. Gaucher continues the bibliography of psalmody which divides the early music field with Miss Wilkin. One long step has been the sending to press of the thirteenth volume of Evans. Efforts to obtain new funds to meet the printer's bill have been unavailing, so we shall have to recover the cost from the sales, which will tie up a part of our funds for several years. On this, too, hangs the demand for a supplement of additions and the very real need of an index to the whole thirteen or fourteen volumes.

So, through the past year the staff has been very busy, searching, cataloguing, revising, editing, answering questions, giving advice, and guiding research. The visitor who knows other institutions often expresses amazement that we accomplish so much on such a comparatively small budget. The answer is momentum. We have behind us the collections built up by Thomas, Baldwin, Vail, and Brigham, and we have in hand the tools which have been created by the present staff. The average length of service of the twelve full-time employees, including two new assistants, is twenty-one years. So with the collections, the tools, and the knowledge and skill developed in individuals by long years of service, the output of our product, which is historical information, has been maintained at a thoroughly satisfactory volume.

Respectfully submitted,

CLIFFORD K. SHIPTON,

Librarian

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