

## *Report of the Council*

THE most important happening in the Society's affairs during the past six months has been the moving of books into the new stack. The stack was finally completed by mid-winter, and on the first day of February the procession of books started for the new locations. The process will necessarily be slow, for the regular staff has little time to devote to it, and the extra help engaged for the purpose is untrained. The books in the lettered alcoves, from A to W, a system of classification inherited from the old library building on Lincoln Square, was first moved *en bloc*. These books can now be reclassified into a subject arrangement, which has long been a desideratum. All books currently received will be catalogued by the new classification scheme. In the stacks formerly occupied by the books in the old alcove classification will be placed the local history of the States outside of New England, New York, and New Jersey, which will remain in the front part of the Library surrounding the rotunda room.

A considerable portion of the bulky newspaper collection has been moved to the new stack, which increases our capacity for newspapers by one third. Nothing yet has been done in moving books to the basement and third floors. No speed in moving can be made because of the great amount of time that must be spent in cleaning the books. Every book in the building must be vacuum-cleaned before it leaves its present location, and this is a time-consuming proposition, which is being accomplished by engaging student help. But no person can vacuum-clean more than thirty newspaper volumes in an hour, and there are twenty

thousand bound newspapers and portfolios. It will be years before all the books on our twenty miles of shelves are finally settled into their new positions.

Meanwhile the routine of the Society's work is steadily going on. Books are purchased, visitors are received, and the correspondence, to the extent of hundreds of letters each week, is taken care of by the Director and the Librarian. Because of the great development of the Library during the past four decades, books are here which cannot be found elsewhere, and certain research projects can be pursued here better than in other libraries. This results in many visits from scholars and in many letters of inquiry. All of these we attempt to answer if the researches are serious and helpful to scholarship in general.

The preparation of the two semi-annual numbers of *Proceedings* entails a large amount of time, and in this respect Mr. Shipton is fortunately well equipped for the task. No small amount of labor goes into the writing of obituaries of members. During the past six months ten members have died. Harry Andrew Wright, historian of Springfield and authority on the Algonquin Indians, elected in 1939, died October 20, 1950. Sir Arthur Clapham, elected in 1942, died October 26, 1950. Charles Eliot Goodspeed, dean of American booksellers and a constant donor to this Library, elected in 1921, died October 31, 1950. Randolph Greenfield Adams, Director of the Clements Library and a historian of distinction, elected in 1924, died January 4, 1951. Ogden Codman, who for recent years has lived in France, a collector of early New England records, elected in 1937, died on January 8. Luke Vincent Lockwood, historian of American furniture and a long time friend to this Society, elected in 1927, died on January 23. Robert Francis Seybolt, professor at the University of Illinois and author of many books on colonial education, elected in 1930,

died on February 5. George Gregerson Wolkins, of Boston, for many years treasurer of the Massachusetts Historical Society, elected in 1934, died on March 2. William Gwinn Mather of Cleveland, industrialist, collector, and sponsor of the monumental Mather Bibliography, elected in 1920, died on April 5. Forrest Waldo Taylor, of Worcester, a generous donor of funds to the Society, elected in 1926, died April 16. Obituary notices of these members will appear in the printed *Proceedings* of this meeting.

The death of Mary R. Reynolds, of Worcester, on March 15, 1951, brought to a close a lifetime of devotion to this Library. As Mary Robinson, a young woman of twenty, she entered the service of the Library of this Society in September, 1881, at the suggestion of the elder Stephen Salisbury. She retired, because of illness, in April, 1941. For nearly sixty years she served the Society as cataloguer and researcher, helping visitors with their quests, and indexing the Society's printed *Proceedings*. For many years, under Mr. Barton, she was the sole "staff" of the Library. Always unassuming, courteous, and kindly, she spread among visiting scholars the reputation of the Society for friendly service. She outlived all of those who were members of the Society when she joined the staff in 1881. She knew all of the historical scholars who flourished in this country for a period of over half a century. Her reminiscences, published in the *Proceedings* in April, 1945, with the title of "Recollections of Sixty Years of Service in the American Antiquarian Society," preserved in print a story of the Society in its early days that could have been told by no other writer.

The finances of the Society are in excellent shape. In spite of the fact that we had to pay for the cost of a portion of the expense of building the stack out of our principal, the income so far has not suffered, due to the increase in

dividends from stock holdings. Also we had to figure last year on an increase of salaries for the staff because of the new Social Security law and an improvement in wages, already too long delayed. Again this year we must arrange for another raise in wages due to the increased cost of living.

Yet we must always remember that the purchase of books to complete and round out our special collections is paramount if we wish to continue the prestige and usefulness of the Library. If we hadn't made the decision some forty years ago to expand our collections in certain special fields, we should have no need of a staff, even so small a staff as that which at present administers the Library. For many years this Library, like many others, merely accepted what came to it, without any thought of expansion or the establishing of new collections in various important fields. In the year 1909 a new policy was adopted. The newspapers and early American printing, in both of which we already had a good start, have been increased tenfold. New collections, such as almanacs, children's books, bookplates, early American graphic arts, Hawaiiiana, the West Indies, and early American literature, were begun, and soon became the most notable collections in the country. The two collections of genealogy and of local history, especially for the West and the South, were trebled until they now rank with the largest existing. The large collections of general history, voyages, travels, and biography were added as occasion offered. Such evidence of progress and aggressiveness appealed to many of our members, and as a result the Hunnewell collection of Americana, the Frost collection of Western narratives, the Cole collection of Bermudiana, the Tinker collection of Louisiana books, and the Streeter collection of early railroads, not to mention many smaller collections, came to the Library by gift, thus greatly expanding our usefulness.

All of this emphasis upon the value of collecting does not mean to imply that proper wages for the staff should be neglected. In fact, three times within the past year slight increases have been granted. Also it is true that most of our special collections have been completed within reasonable limits, and the chief problem now is to fill in the gaps. The primary object at the present time is to make the contents of the Library more available to students, and it is only through a skilled and veteran staff that this can be accomplished.

The above brief resume of activities since 1910 is not presented with any thought of pride or praise. It is made only to show that the purchase and acquisitions of books in our special fields constitute the most important phase of the Society's activities. It is the fact frequently demonstrated that scholars and researchers come to Worcester, or use the Library as a clearing-house of information, because they find here notable collections nowhere else so readily available.

Respectfully submitted,

CLARENCE S. BRIGHAM,

*For the Council*

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