

Latin American Union Catalogs

THE international character of bibliography and librarianship lends importance to all major efforts for recording published materials. Of particular significance are undertakings in this field for Latin America, because of widespread interest in Latin American books and the generally unsatisfactory state of national and trade bibliography in the countries south of us.

In the course of their extensive trip in the summer of 1944 on behalf of the American Library Association, Harry Miller Lydenberg and Carl H. Milam were impressed by the number and scope of bibliographical projects, especially union catalogs, in the countries visited. On the basis of information supplied by these two travelers, complemented by correspondence with and reports from individual Latin American librarians, the present brief review has been prepared.

The three United States libraries in Latin American capitals, operating with funds supplied largely or wholly by the United States government, are playing significant roles in the union catalog movement, for much of the current activity stems from these three sources. All founded in 1942, the libraries are the Biblioteca Benjamin Franklin in Mexico, the Biblioteca Artigas-Washington in Montevideo, and the Biblioteca Americana de Nicaragua in Managua. Other noteworthy union catalog or union list enterprises are under way in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and possibly additional countries about which no data were available.

Beginning with our immediate neighbor, Mexico, the Biblioteca Benjamin Franklin is sponsoring a valuable project for serial

publications. When Mr. Lydenberg first went to Mexico, in 1941, as director of the Benjamin Franklin Library, he found an urgent need for a union list of serials. Accordingly, "El Catálogo Colectivo de Publicaciones Periódicas Existentes en las Bibliotecas de la Ciudad de Mexico" was established in March 1943, under the direction of Rudolph H. Gjelsness and with financial support from the Rockefeller Foundation. The recently organized Comisión Impulsora y Coordinadora de la Investigación Científica has actively collaborated with the undertaking.

To date, eighteen Mexico City libraries have been cataloged. All except one are in medical and biological fields. Omitting only newspapers, holdings have been recorded of every type of periodical literature, including magazines, government documents, pamphlets in series, and publications of societies, institutions, and congresses. The catalog is restricted to author entries. As for use, a statement from Harold W. Bentley, present director-librarian of the Biblioteca Benjamin Franklin, indicates that the catalog is being utilized for study and for professional research by students and graduates in medicine and biology, mainly in conjunction with the *Quarterly Cumulative Index Medicus*. The entries thus far recorded in the catalog are in process of publication and work is continuing in Mexico City's scientific libraries.

By the usual definitions, union lists rather than union catalogs are the chief contributions of the Biblioteca Americana de Nicaragua. The principal example is *A Bibliography of Books and Pamphlets Pub-*

lished in Nicaragua (with 1942 or Earlier as Date of Publication), to Be Found in Certain Private Libraries of Nicaragua. Issued in January 1945, as the fourth publication in the library's bibliographical series, the work records, with location symbols, 2663 titles held in six private collections. These six are rated by the former director-librarian, Edward Martin Heiliger (now in Santiago, Chile), as "among the best in Managua, the capital city of Nicaragua." The listing was made by a group of library staff members who visited and examined one collection after another. Among factors which induced the library to embark upon the project were the need for supplementing its small collection of Nicaraguan publications, the desirability of acquiring further knowledge of Nicaraguan books, and to encourage bibliographical work among Nicaraguans. All Nicaraguan imprints encountered, except periodicals, were recorded. Arrangement of the catalog is by author, with a subject index. In the short period since its appearance, the bibliography has proved its usefulness, especially as a staff tool for locating desired materials.

Prior to publication of the bibliography, the Biblioteca Americana, in July 1944, issued another union list, *Lista de Libros de Medicina, Folletos y Periódicos*, a record of books, pamphlets, and periodicals pertaining to medicine available in the Biblioteca Americana, the headquarters office of the Sociedad Cooperativa de Sanidad, and the Escuela Nacional de Enfermeras. This twenty-seven-page pamphlet, designed for the use of doctors and medical students, is arranged by subjects. A majority of titles originated in the United States, though there is a considerable sprinkling of Latin American imprints. Medical publications in the Managua libraries have increased to such an extent since the list appeared that a new edition is under consideration.

As to future plans, Mr. Heiliger wrote that there are other libraries rich in Nicaraguan materials, especially in Granada and León, and probably these will be listed early in 1946. Each new issue published of the union catalog will show the holdings of items recorded in previous parts, as well as additional titles.

On an average, over sixteen thousand persons are served each month by the Biblioteca Americana. The patrons are preponderantly Nicaraguan, but a high percentage of requests for information comes from United States citizens, chiefly soldiers, interested in a variety of topics. The present director-librarian is Gaston L. Litton.

Biblioteca Artigas-Washington

The third of the three United States-sponsored libraries is the Biblioteca Artigas-Washington, in Montevideo, Uruguay. In June 1945, this library began the compilation of a union catalog of works by United States authors and about the United States to be found in the principal libraries of Montevideo. At present the catalog is limited to author entries only. Both books and periodical publications are being entered. The problem of obtaining records of current accessions from each library is not yet fully solved. In the case of one institution, the University of Montevideo's School of Engineering, the information is received through current mimeographed lists of accessions. Symbols similar to those in Gregory's *Union List of Serials* are assigned to participating libraries. Arthur E. Gropp, the librarian, believes the union catalog will be of increasing value as it develops because of numerous requests for publications relating to the United States. Mr. Milam reported there are many substantial collections in Montevideo, with twenty thousand English books, it is said, in the National Library alone.

Several other Uruguayan union catalog undertakings are deserving of mention. The National Library maintains listings of materials which it sends to libraries, created under its sponsorship, in the interior. Printed cards are issued for all items cataloged; the receiving library is supplied with sets of cards and duplicate cards are retained in the National Library's central file. The library school of the engineering association has devoted some attention to union lists. One student, as a thesis, prepared a list of "Periodical Publications in English in the Field of Medicine in Libraries of Montevideo," recording 133 entries found in three libraries. Another student wrote a similar thesis in the field of library science. Recently, an Association of Teachers of English was formed. Among the organization's first projects was the compilation of a list of materials, useful for the teaching of English, available in about ten libraries of Montevideo. Still another hopeful sign is the establishment of an official library school. The law creating the school specifies also a bibliotecological commission, charged with responsibility for setting up a national centralized cooperative catalog.

Union Lists in Brazil

In Uruguay's neighbor to the north, Brazil, a union list of scientific periodicals was issued as early as 1936. This work, in two mimeographed volumes, was done under the direction of Prof. Jayme A. Cavalcanti and covered the holdings of the leading libraries of São Paulo, plus one Rio de Janeiro library. Another union list of serials, for Brazilian biological and medical libraries, was undertaken in 1945, again under the supervision of Prof. Cavalcanti, who is president of the Serviço de Divulgação Bibliográfica of the Fundos Universitarios de Pesquisas at São Paulo. The catalog

now in preparation is on cards and will record the holdings of some fifty libraries.

Except for these instances, Brazilian libraries are reported to have made no noteworthy progress in the union catalog field. The president of the University of São Paulo, in 1942, suggested that libraries send cards for all books cataloged to the Biblioteca Municipal of São Paulo, then under the direction of Rubens Borba de Moraes who has since gone to the Biblioteca Nacional in Rio de Janeiro. For various reasons, the proposal has never been put into effective operation.

Union Catalog in Chile

Chile has a single example of a union catalog. There the Central Library of the Ministry of Agriculture at Santiago, in June 1944, started a catalog to record the holdings of libraries serving the various specialized divisions of the agriculture department. Seven such bureau libraries are now included, and, in addition, contributions of cards for their collections are being furnished to the catalog by the libraries of the Agronomy Society of Chile and the University of Chile's School of Agronomy. At present, the union catalog contains only author entries, but a complete dictionary catalog is planned for later development. Among the patrons of the catalog are professors, technicians, agricultural students from the University of Chile, and the Ministry of Agriculture staff.

Interesting future plans were described by Héctor Fuenzalida y Villegas, librarian of the University of Chile Central Library. A group of librarians are to be trained in the university, through a Rockefeller Foundation grant, to prepare a union catalog of the twenty-two libraries associated with the different faculties or schools of the university. According to the program, which it is estimated will require eight

years to complete, the most important libraries of the university are to be recataloged at the beginning. An individual catalog for each library, with author and subject entries, will be made and a duplicate card forwarded to the central library for the union catalog. The university's collections total more than 300,000 volumes.

Another potential development noted by Señor Fuenzalida is in the field of law. The library of the University of Chile's School of Juridical and Social Sciences is attempting to obtain a duplicate of the excellent catalog of the National Congressional Library in Santiago. The latter institution, with approximately 200,000 volumes, is rich in legal materials. The school would use the combined record as a basis for a union catalog of law and legislation.

Some important work in the union catalog field is under way in Argentina, but efforts to obtain direct information from that country have failed. One project which attracted Mr. Milam's attention in particular, and which he considered an excellent beginning, was a printed union list of current periodicals in and around Buenos Aires. Another undertaking centering in Buenos Aires is a union catalog for each of the six Argentine navy station libraries, with central accessioning and cataloging.

A grant from the Rockefeller Foundation was made to the University of Buenos Aires in 1942 for the establishment of a bibliographical center. The university has a college and six professional schools served by libraries located in various quarters of the city, possessing a total of some seven hundred thousand books and pamphlets. One of the center's first activities was to begin the preparation of a union catalog of all holdings in the several libraries of the university system.

From Caracas, Venezuela, while no

union catalog was reported, Enrique Planchart, director of the Biblioteca Nacional, wrote that a solid foundation for a future union catalog was being laid by recataloging operations now in progress for the National Library, the Ministry of Health and Social Assistance Library, and the Biogen Foundation Library. All three are dictionary catalogs on cards, the last two principally concerned with medicine. One of the services of the Biogen Foundation Library is the preparation of medical bibliographies, at the request of students, indicating libraries where the works listed may be consulted.

A similar situation exists in Peru, where union catalogs have not been established, but whose National Library at Lima and the University of San Marcos Library are developing modern catalogs that might be used eventually as a basis for one or more union catalogs.

Distinctive Features

Two distinctive features of the union catalog situation in Latin America emerge from the foregoing discussion. First is the stress on medicine, biology, and other scientific and technical fields—a natural emphasis in this scientific age. Second is the fact that the union catalog movement in Latin America is in its infancy. With one or two exceptions, all union catalogs now in existence were founded within the last five years. The impetus, as in the United States, has come primarily from governmental funds and foundation grants. Financial assistance from the Rockefeller Foundation, for example, has been received for the bibliographical centers in São Paulo, Buenos Aires, and Santiago. There is every probability that the union catalog idea will spread to other Hispanic-American countries, stimulating them to record and make better known their resources.