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AMONG MAINE LIBRARIES

*A Report Prepared for the Larger
Libraries of Maine*

BY

KEYES D. METCALF

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

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Cooperation Among Maine Libraries

This report has been financed by a grant to Bowdoin College by the Council on Library Resources for a survey of cooperative measures that might be undertaken by the principal Maine libraries. An informal group representing the larger libraries of Maine has been meeting from time to time for a quarter of a century. It includes the libraries of Bates College, Lewiston; Colby College, Waterville; Bowdoin College, Brunswick; the University of Maine, Orono; the Bangor and Portland Public Libraries; and the Maine State Library at Augusta. In recent years the librarians of these libraries have discussed among themselves the joint storage of little-used materials, joint acquisition programs, and other matters relating to inter-library cooperation. I was asked to make the survey and have carried it through, with the hope of developing a firm basis for cooperation by the seven libraries that have been mentioned, as well as other libraries in the State having research materials or serving patrons who require research materials in connection with their work.

Similar problems have been treated in my report on *The Hampshire Inter-Library Center*, which was published by the Center in the spring of 1957, and my chapter in the January, 1958, issue of *Library Trends*, where I wrote on "General Problems of Inter-Library Cooperation," discussing the various factors which have delayed advances

in cooperation, and listing some of the objectives of programs for cooperation. In both of these publications I have emphasized the following points:

1. That libraries — particularly research libraries — tend to grow more rapidly than other parts of educational institutions because they add to their collections and rarely discard from them. Books remain in a library, but students in due course graduate or leave.

2. That unit costs in libraries tend to increase, rather than decrease, as collections grow larger. It takes more time for the acquisition librarian to make sure that a book considered for purchase is not already in a library; cataloguing becomes more expensive as the catalogue becomes larger and more complex; the costs of public service rise because it takes longer in a large library than in a small one to find a volume on the shelves, deliver it to a reader, and later return it to its place; and, finally, librarians have not been able by the use of mass production techniques to counteract the increase in unit costs.

3. That improved library service almost inevitably stimulates demand for service without automatically producing additional income, so improved service, while it may solve old problems, is likely to create new ones.

4. That as library collections grow larger, they inevitably include an increasingly large proportion of infrequently used books.

Hence a vicious circle develops — more books, larger unit costs, greater demands, an increasing percentage of little-used books. Some of these difficulties, it must be admitted, arise because the faculty members in our institutions, on whom we very properly depend to a large extent for recommendations for purchases, tend to have an in-

satiabable appetite for material which they believe they or their students may want now or later, and they quite naturally fail to understand the financial implications of purchasing, cataloguing, and storing continually increasing masses of acquisitions.

These basic facts of library life have brought with them throughout the country financial problems that force those responsible for finding necessary funds to search for ways and means of preventing unbalanced budgets. Whether it is considered "grasping at a straw to keep afloat" or a logical solution of the problem, inter-library cooperation is one of the possibilities that ought to be examined. I am a firm believer in inter-library cooperation, but it is only fair to call to the attention of those responsible for libraries in Maine the fact that difficulties seem to be unavoidable when cooperation is attempted — difficulties inherent in the nature of libraries and of academic institutions and of human beings. It would be misleading if I said that I thought these difficulties could be completely overcome, for they are bound to recur, and a cooperative enterprise must continue to deal with them as long as it lasts. Some of these difficulties can properly be summarized here:

Administrative officials and librarians, perhaps more than professors, tend to regard other institutions as rivals of their own and to be impatient with the restraints on complete freedom of action that are bound to be entailed in cooperation. At the same time it must be admitted that rivalry has often resulted in progress in the building of library collections, and that an institution can not be expected to join in a cooperative project unless it can look forward to benefiting from the results. On the other hand

cooperation becomes difficult if each participant is determined to profit from the project more than any other participant.

Professors may be less prone to inter-institutional jealousy than administrative officers, but they are likely to be impatient with delay, and some delay is inevitable when the book one needs is not in one's own library building. The professor does not like to admit that such a delay is partly at least to be blamed on his own failure to plan his work properly; his natural inclination is to blame the inefficiency of others or to attack the cooperative project that seems to have separated him from his research material. If there had been no cooperative project, the nearest copy of the book that he wants might be several hundred miles away, but he is likely to assume, instead, that it would have been at hand if cooperation had not interfered. Other problems that are bound to be encountered in inter-library cooperation include the legal and practical difficulties that may arise in contributing funds to support inter-library storage or joint acquisition projects, and it must always be remembered that a cooperative project is like a machine. No matter how well it is designed, it will not run indefinitely without a vigilant operator to see that it is oiled and repaired. Neglect may lead to a costly breakdown. Any successful inter-library cooperation must have an able supervisor, alert to symptoms of trouble, however minor they may seem, and an equally alert board of directors representing the cooperating institutions.

With this brief summary of the basic facts of library life and special problems of cooperation as a background, I shall now outline the library situation in Maine as I see it, and propose cooperative action that seems to be desirable

in view of this situation. I believe that the proposals in question deserve serious consideration by the seven libraries, their library committees, and the administrative officers of their institutions.

I estimate that the seven libraries directly involved in this study include in their joint holdings some 90 percent of all the different titles held by all the libraries in Maine. The seven libraries hold approximately 1,500,000 volumes, but these probably represent no more than 600,000 to 700,000 different volumes, or total resources approximately equalling those in the Dartmouth College Library, and probably amounting to no more than one-eighth of the strength of the Harvard University Library. Since libraries in the State of Maine are as isolated from large collections in other parts of the country as any group of libraries, with the exception of those in the Rocky Mountain States and in some parts of the South, it is evident that researchers in the State are sorely handicapped, and it is not strange that the libraries have considered cooperation in order to increase local resources.

There are four major types of inter-library cooperation: (1) Joint storage; (2) cooperation in various aspects of what is sometimes known as bibliographical control; (3) joint acquisition programs; and (4) inter-library use.

JOINT STORAGE

I believe in joint storage. I have been involved in the development of each of the joint storage libraries now operating in the United States: the New England Deposit Library, the Midwest Inter-Library Center, and the Hampshire Inter-Library Center. Maine libraries should look

forward to some type of joint storage in the future, but this does not seem to be the psychological moment to propose it, and I am not ready to recommend it at this time. Only two of the seven libraries are in immediate need of storage space for their less-used material; these two are the Portland Public Library and the Bowdoin College Library, which are from 30 to 140 miles away from the other five. Bowdoin is studying the problem of new library space in Brunswick, and, until a decision has been reached, it is doubtful if it should act on joint storage. The Portland Public Library is in a more or less desperate situation despite the small addition that is now being made to its building, but it should be able to solve its book storage problem temporarily by discarding or transferring to other libraries in the State some of its less-used public documents, periodical sets and newspapers. Substantial portions of its collections in these fields are used very little.

I recommend that the possibility of joint storage be kept in mind when any one of the seven libraries considers enlarging its shelving facilities. For instance, if the Bowdoin College Library should decide to build completely new quarters, its present book stack in Hubbard Hall, which would be practically useless for purposes other than book storage, might be made available to other libraries for less-used material at a reasonable rental.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL CONTROL

There are various cooperative methods used to help obtain bibliographical control over library collections. Their objectives might be summarized as follows:

1. To make it unnecessary for two or more libraries to duplicate each other's work by cataloguing the same volume. This is the basis of plans for cooperative or centralized cataloguing.
2. To make available in some way to librarians and scholars information as to the location of volumes which someone would like to use.

With one comparatively minor exception, there seems little need for cooperative or centralized cataloguing in Maine. Even with the unfortunate demise (temporary, it is to be hoped) of the program for "Cataloguing in Source", the availability of Library of Congress and H. W. Wilson Company cataloguing in card or book form has made it possible for libraries of the types found in Maine to avoid original cataloguing to a large extent. The one exception, where cooperative or centralized cataloguing should be considered, is for Maine material, that is, for material published in Maine, written by Maine authors, or about the State of Maine. This material would include, of course, official publications of various Maine governmental bodies, both State and local. I suggest that the Maine State Library ought to accept a definite responsibility for cataloguing new publications which fall into this category and for making the results available to others at cost. The three college libraries have holdings in this field, but do not specialize in it and probably should not do so in the future, except for the publications of their own institutions and those of the towns in which they are located. The University of Maine, as the State University, should continue to acquire Mainiana, but it is doubtful if it should purchase with State funds collectors' items which sell at a premium. The Bangor and the Portland Public Libraries

have unusually good Maine collections, as does the Maine Historical Society in Portland. If all the libraries could rely on the State Library for cataloguing copy for new publications in this field, it should save money that could then be used to advantage for other library purposes.

My first positive recommendation is that the Maine State Library should acquire and catalogue as promptly as possible all newly published Maine material and make the cataloguing information available to others at a price sufficient to reimburse it for its actual out-of-pocket expenditures in preparing the extra copies of cards required. In addition, one copy of every new entry for Maine material should be sent from the State Library to the Library of Congress as the State Library's share of the effort to provide in the National Union Catalogue a record of the location of at least one copy of every American publication.

One other suggestion is made in connection with Maine publications. A Union List of Maine material would be useful. It should include a record of the holdings of all Maine items in Maine libraries. The Bangor Public Library has available some 11,000 entries for such a list. The Maine State Historical Society in Portland could readily make available its catalogue cards relating to Maine which would mean a large percentage of its catalogue, and the other libraries might likewise contribute copy for their entries. The State might make an appropriation for editing and publication. The financing of this project should certainly come from Maine sources. It is recommended that the librarians of the State Library, the Bangor Public Library, and the Maine Historical Society Library act as a committee to develop plans for carrying out this project.

The Maine imprints constitute only a small part of the problem; a system of bibliographical control ought to cover as large a percentage as is practicable of all publications that may be wanted by scholars. The Union Catalogue at the Library of Congress, as published in book form, cannot attempt to include the holdings of all the Maine libraries, beyond a record of one or more copies of the Maine material that has been discussed above and perhaps a few unusually important publications of other kinds which are rarely found in American libraries. If the Maine libraries are to make as much use as they should of each other's collections, ways must be found to make available to each of them information about the books held in the State which it has been unable to acquire itself, which are ordinarily little used, but which are of importance for research, so this material can be used either by inter-library loan, through microreproduction, or by going to the library owning the material.

One obvious way of making the desired information available would be to provide a Union Catalogue in each of the seven libraries for the holdings of all seven. But anyone who has had experience with the cost of establishing and keeping up to date inclusive Union Catalogues realizes that the cost would be far greater than the results would justify. The cost of catalogue cases and the filing would be sizeable enough as the years go by to swamp the project. I estimate that the cost of duplicating the main entry cards in the seven libraries would be at least \$125,000, and probably considerably more. This is based on an estimate of 750,000 titles altogether (one for every two volumes) with six new copies of each. This would mean four and a half million cards. I do not recommend the formation

of a complete Union Catalogue in each of the seven Maine libraries at this time or later. Nor do I recommend the formation of a single complete Union Catalogue for Maine libraries to be housed in any one of them, either at this time or later.

I believe, however, that a way can be found to provide one selective Union Catalogue which would include as much as 90 percent of the desired and really useful information, and I believe that this can be done for only five to ten percent of the cost of seven complete Union Catalogues. This selective Union Catalogue is recommended and should include:

1. A complete Union List of current and back files of serials, periodicals and newspapers, bringing up to date the 21 year old Union List of Serials in Maine libraries. The work will probably have to be done over again from the beginning, but the total number of entries would be less than fifteen thousand, and probably much less judging from the information given me by the seven librarians.

I recommend that the libraries agree to provide from their own funds the cost of making a copy of the record of their serial and newspaper holdings, to be interfiled at the Maine State Library, and that this record be kept up to date. (The work of making these copies should probably be done by microfilm negative, blown up onto cards, with equipment rented for the purpose, and if the work in the seven libraries were carried on as part of a continuous operation with equipment going from one to the other, the total cost should not exceed a thousand dollars for any one and would be considerably less than that for the smaller libraries.) The responsibility and expense for the interfiling should be carried by the State Library.

2. A Union List record of all holdings of microreproductions in each of the libraries, except those for single volumes or parts of volumes. This record should include serials such as those prepared by the Microcard Foundation if they are not included in the Union List of Serials proposed above, and also the holdings of the great projects such as English printing up to 1640, American publications before 1801, American periodicals before 1850, the early English plays, the British sessional papers, the United Nations and United States documents, and other large programs as they are developed and the reproductions are acquired in one or another of Maine libraries. The cost of preparing this file and placing it in the Maine State Library should be comparatively small.

3. A Union List of expensive research sets that, though important, are not used heavily and probably need not be represented by more than one or two copies in the State until holdings of material of this kind are considerably increased. These might include Migne's *Patrologiae*, the German diplomatic papers entitled *Grosse Politik*, the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, the *Victoria History of the Counties of England*, and the British Roll Series. Again, the cost should be small.

4. A Union List of all publications before the year 1700, all American publications before 1801, and all rare individual volumes kept in rare book collections. Each library will have to judge what to include, but it is suggested that books which today are valued at \$50 or more should be recorded. The total cost of providing cards for this material should be comparatively small, the reproductions should be made at the same time the serial cards are copied, and the file should be kept at the State Library.

5. A Union List of the holdings in each library relating to the State of Maine. (It has been recommended that new publications of this kind be catalogued in the State Library and the cards made available to others.) These should be handled at the State Library as recommended for the groups under one to four above and the lists provided in the same way.

Supplementing the Union Lists that have been mentioned would be detailed descriptions of collections for which complete listings seem unnecessary. These should include:

1. Detailed descriptions of special collections. Colby has a number of these such as its Healy Irish literature and its Hardy collections. Bates has Free Baptist material. Bowdoin is strong in a number of fields, and so on. Descriptions of all these special collections should be prepared and made available in each library so that a scholar interested in special materials could learn without delay where they could be found within the State.

2. Detailed descriptions of collections in the field of public documents should also be placed in each of the seven libraries. Here, again, a complete listing of individual titles is unnecessary. Public documents might be divided into three groups as follows:

A. United States Federal documents. At least five of the libraries are selective depositories. It is suggested that each of the Maine librarians bring to a meeting the check list of materials his library is receiving, that the lists be gone over together, that decisions be made on dropping material which is now duplicated unnecessarily and that libraries volunteer to acquire other titles which no one of them is now receiving.

B. Maine public documents, both State and local. These can be left out of consideration here, if the recommendation made earlier for all Maine material is followed.

C. Documents of other states in the United States, of the United Nations, and of Canada, the rest of the British Commonwealth, and other foreign countries. Comparatively few of these are held in any Maine library. But the holdings should be listed in just enough detail to direct scholars to the library where they are. Whether this list should be in each library or only at the State Library should be decided after it has been prepared. This should make it unnecessary to appeal to Boston, New Haven, New York or Washington for material available in the State.

In the next section of this report there will be further suggestions in regard to public documents.

When the Union Lists and descriptions of special material, as recommended above, are available to them, Maine libraries will be ready for the next type of inter-library cooperation — joint acquisition programs.

JOINT ACQUISITION PROGRAMS

It might be said that there are two basic types of joint acquisition:

The first is the purchase of material by the group as a whole, with the cost divided among them equally, or by an agreed-upon formula. I doubt that Maine will be ready for this method until a joint storage program, such as was discussed earlier in this report, is put into effect. Joint acquisition programs which divide the cost of purchases between libraries have always been difficult to carry out

on a permanent basis, unless the acquisitions are housed as well as purchased cooperatively. If such a plan were adopted, I suspect, for instance, that Colby would hesitate to pay part of the cost of a periodical subscription when the periodical was to be kept at Bowdoin, and so on. However, I believe that in due course a joint acquisition program may become desirable, with the cost divided according to some formula agreeable to the group, and the material stored in a mutually controlled storage building or possibly in the State Library.

The second type of joint acquisition program is one in which each library in a group avoids as far as possible in its purchasing unnecessary duplication of little-used material, whether in serial or monographic form. This can be done by specialization in collecting, with each library paying for what it buys. Such specialization should be agreed upon, covering practically all of the types of material listed above for inclusion in Union Catalogues and descriptions of special collections. It is discussed in the following paragraphs.

There are, of course, a considerable number of periodicals and serials that should be in each of the four libraries belonging to the institutions of higher learning in the State, and some of these same periodicals should also be in the two public libraries and the State Library. These include the general periodicals which are heavily used, but they represent only a small fraction of the total periodical literature being published. There are, for instance, 10,000 different medical publications published in the world today, and the total number of serial publications runs into the hundreds of thousands, while the joint hold-

ings of the Maine libraries probably include no more than one or two percent of the total.

1. I recommend that each library draw up a list of periodical titles not now received in the State, which it would like to have and which, if subscribed for, would cost three percent of its present budget for books and periodicals. The seven librarians should then meet and cancel out the duplicates and make other revisions in these lists in order to bring the total subscription costs down to two percent of the joint budgets. They should then assign the titles on that basis to the different libraries to subscribe for, keep, and bind, agreeing that each will make its holdings available to the others. In this way, it should be possible to increase the total current and future periodical resources in the State by perhaps 35 percent of the number now received by the average institution. I believe that this could be done at the cost of only two percent added to the book and periodical budgets of each library. If this plan works out satisfactorily additional new subscriptions might be added on the same basis as time goes on. It should be remembered, of course, that there will also be charges for binding.

2. I recommend that when the librarians check each other's lists of United States public documents as proposed above, they should also consider possibilities of reducing where there is now unnecessary duplication, and take up the slack with new material that is not now received.

3. I recommend that the librarians agree that they will not buy a book or a set costing more than fifty dollars without checking the proposed Union Catalogue to see whether another copy is already available. If another copy is available and it is deemed adequate for the State, the sum

that would have been spent to duplicate it could be used to help purchase something else not now in the State.

4. I recommend that one of the seven librarians volunteer to take responsibility for keeping in touch with the different organizations which are making or have made microreproductions and to present regularly at the meetings of the seven librarians a list of material that is available for purchase and not now in the State to see if volunteers can be found to acquire any items that would be useful in Maine libraries.

5. I recommend that the libraries which collect Maine material agree not to compete against each other in auction sales or in purchases from second-hand catalogues or book stores for material which is sold at a premium and for which the demand by research workers is slight.

If these five recommendations are carried out, the total resources of the State should increase much more rapidly than at present, and the added cost should be comparatively small for all concerned.

INTER-LIBRARY USE

Lists recording material available in the State of Maine have been recommended in order to make it possible for the libraries and their patrons to find easily titles available within the State that might be wanted. The joint acquisition programs were proposed in order to increase the amount of research material in the State. It is equally important to see to it that, when material is in Maine, it is made available to scholars and others who need it, and that inter-library use, either by inter-library loan, by photoreproduction, or by scholars going from one library

to another, is pushed as far as practicable. It is generally more convenient for Maine libraries to use material already in Maine, instead of trying to obtain it elsewhere; if they do this they will reduce the burden they place on libraries outside of Maine for inter-library loan, and will find it less embarrassing to borrow material which is not in Maine when it is desirable to do so.

Inter-library use should be greatly facilitated and increased by the Union Lists and the descriptions of material that have been recommended above. Although these lists would include less than ten percent of the holdings, as far as total titles are concerned, they should give locations for a major percentage of the material now in the State that ought to be made readily available for inter-library use. In this connection, however, it needs to be emphasized that each library should have within its own four walls the material which its patrons use heavily, particularly material used by undergraduates in their regular course work. It is not desirable to borrow material of this kind for undergraduate course work except in very unusual cases.

But there will still be many thousands of titles of comparatively little used and older and out-of-print material which will not be included in the recommended Union Lists and which could properly be lent through inter-library loan if they could be readily located. For this material it is possible to recommend a simple plan that promises to be effective. The seven libraries should jointly make arrangements to have printed a multiple copy form of the type that is now used at Bowdoin for book orders. This form would be printed with the symbols of each of the seven libraries on it, and with space for the insertion

of the symbols for other Maine libraries. With it six copies could be made at one typing, giving author, title and date of publication of a volume wanted by a library patron but not in his library. By slipping it into a printed addressed envelope, a copy of the form could be sent out to any library within the State where it seemed likely that the book might be found. Each library would agree to search the forms that it received daily, and, if it could make the book available by inter-library loan or by photographic reproduction, it would simply circle its symbol and return to the asking library. If a library did not have the volume, it would make no reply. It is recommended that agreement in regard to the form be reached at a meeting of the seven librarians and that a reasonably large order of the forms and envelopes be printed and made available to each library at cost.

I recommend that each library acquire as soon as possible, if it has not already done so, one of the comparatively inexpensive cameras for making photographic reproductions, so magazine articles and rare material that should not leave its library can on occasion be copied and sent to another library in place of inter-library loan.

I recommend that microreproductions in each library be lent freely on demand for scholarly purposes to others on a regular inter-library loan basis if it is known that there is a master negative available somewhere from which reproductions can be obtained if the one lent is damaged.

But inter-library loan and the use of microreproductions instead of the originals will not take the place in many cases of a scholar going to the material that he needs, particularly when he wants to consult long and complicated sets of books and serials or a large body of material on a

subject. It is all right to lend a few volumes at one time to a scholar, but it is generally doubtful whether a large number should be lent. I recommend that each of the libraries in the four institutions of higher learning place in its annual budget a small sum, perhaps one percent of its appropriations for books and periodicals, to be used at the discretion of the librarian, but in line with a policy adopted by its library committee or governing board, for travel grants to pay at least part of the expenses of faculty members, and, in special cases, of graduate students or even advanced undergraduate students working on honor theses, to travel to another library, preferably in Maine, to obtain material required for their work. This might be extended to Boston and even further on occasion.

It is further recommended that the librarians should keep in mind that, in spite of increased inter-library loan between Maine libraries, as research work in their institutions increases in amount, their calls on the larger libraries outside Maine may and probably should increase to such an extent as to become an undue burden on privately endowed institutions such as Harvard and Yale. If and when this occurs, I recommend that the Maine libraries be prepared to reach an agreement with these institutions to pay for the actual cost of inter-library loan when books are borrowed, perhaps on the basis of two dollars for each volume borrowed. If this is agreed upon, I think it would be found that Harvard, Yale, Columbia, and other universities would be more liberal in their inter-library loan policies and it should help the whole situation at a comparatively small cost.

I further recommend that each of the Maine libraries be prepared to reach agreements with the larger universi-

ties in the northeastern part of the country by which, at an agreed-upon cost, they could have library privileges granted to faculty members and graduate students if that use grows so large that it becomes a burden.

CONCLUSION

These recommendations and suggestions should form a basis for a development of inter-library cooperation through which the resources available to scholars in Maine would be greatly increased.

Maine libraries should help each other as far as possible, through inter-library cooperation, and then be prepared to call on libraries outside the State when additional research resources are required, but they should avoid imposing on others unduly.

The proposals and recommendations made in this report will increase current budgets in Maine libraries by comparatively small amounts. The returns should be far greater than the percentage of increase. It should be noted that the proposals place a special burden on the State Library, which seems natural and proper because the resulting increased resources will be available to all residents of Maine.



