



Introduction

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SOME YEARS AGO¹ the present chairman of the Committee on Research of the Association of American Library Schools prepared a brief paper on the need for an outline of needed research in librarianship. With the development of the master's program in the accredited library schools and the introduction of the doctoral program in five schools (California, Columbia, Illinois, Michigan, and Western Reserve), in addition to the older program at Chicago, the time seemed ripe for a review of the present status of research in the various segments of librarianship. Moreover, it appeared desirable to point up those areas of the field in which research might prove fruitful for faculty members, students, and practicing librarians. In order to pinpoint the achievements which have been made, it was considered relevant to discuss to some extent the nature of research as carried on in the past. The real concern, however, is for the development of a program for the future.

In his paper at the 1948 Conference of the Graduate Library School of the University of Chicago² B. R. Berelson observed that "It is not surprising that research in librarianship (as in other fields outside the natural sciences) is spotty; it would be surprising if it were not . . . some areas within the field have received more attention and some less. (Whether any areas have received *enough* attention is another question.)"

Berelson commented further upon the unevenness in research and proposed a planned-research economy for the library schools to sponsor. Designation of research problems of first importance "would provide for the continuity and the coral-like development of genuine scientific activity." Although it is almost ten years since Berelson made these observations, one is led to conclude that the picture has not altered to any significant degree.

Various writers on the problems of research in librarianship have called attention to the scarcity of librarians with proper training and

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background in research methods. Moreover, many of the graduates of a doctoral program have gone into administrative positions which leave them little time for original studies. Finally, the financial support of library investigations has been so meager that there is little opportunity to do more than peck at major problems, without the continuity and coral-like development suggested by Berelson. He further observed in this connection that "Research takes people, brains, energy, time, money—and it takes a lot of them."³ Compared to other fields, librarianship has had relatively little with which to work.

In the last few years, there have been some changes in this respect. The grants of foundations to libraries and to library schools have been stepped up to a significant degree. Industry, too, has begun to associate itself with advanced study and research in library schools. The establishment of the Council on Library Resources, Inc., in 1956 under a \$5,000,000 grant from the Ford Foundation is a development of the greatest importance.⁴ The purpose of the Council is to support research and the progress of libraries. Librarians, library school faculty members, and advanced students have an opportunity to work with the Council in the isolation and study of major and basic problems which will promote and extend the usefulness of libraries.

Turning to the contents of this issue Lowell Martin in his paper states that "Research produces knowledge. Knowledge is needed for understanding. Understanding combined with skill leads to effective action." In many ways, these three sentences serve as a theme for the issue. The contributors have had a difficult task in combing the segments of librarianship assigned to them. As Jesse Shera points out in his paper "research" is a "slippery word." Leon Carnovsky, who has been responsible during the past few years for the compilations in the *Library Quarterly* of studies prepared in library schools, has emphasized that the inclusion of certain investigations, reports, or surveys does not automatically qualify them for the label of "research." In the present issue, Carnovsky further notes that librarianship as a field of research depends upon the successful application of the methods and techniques found useful in other disciplines.

Undoubtedly, readers will find that certain studies of which they have knowledge are not considered by the contributors. They have differed in their treatments of the fields assigned to them, and have used such examples of research as they believe make the points with which they are concerned. Further, it should be observed that the differences among the several fields required a variety of approaches.

One of the fields in which there is much discussion is known as docu-

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mentation. The consideration of research and developments in documentation is provided by Shera. Many librarians have been somewhat puzzled by the scope of this field, and Shera's paper clearly suggests its umbrella-like coverage of such areas as bibliography, reference, information services and user problems, cataloging and classification, indexing, microreproduction, preservation, and publication. Mechanical searching and translating systems are associated with the field. In his listing of current research in documentation, Shera includes certain titles which are referred to by Rudolph Gjelsness in his review of cataloging and classification. Since it was considered desirable to have the entire field of documentation outlined, this overlap has been allowed to remain. The observation should be made, however, that librarianship and documentation interweave to such an extent that it is often difficult to note the differences between the two. In his review of research in documentation, Shera makes the pertinent reference to the non-library school sponsoring of studies by business and industrial organizations, universities and other non-profit organizations, governmental agencies, and private individuals. One factor in respect to some of the research by groups outside of library schools is financial backing; another is the presence of expensive apparatus not usually possessed by the schools.

Although it may be hazardous to do so, it may be worth while summarizing salient points expressed by the contributors. These may be listed as follows:

1. The most successful research in backgrounds in librarianship has recognized the importance of social, cultural, and other influences upon the library.

2. Research in the fields of philosophy of librarianship and the relations of libraries to government and society has barely begun.

3. A good start has been made in the study of library history and bibliography, but the areas are wide open for research.

4. Much research needs to be done on the relations between the various media of mass communication.

5. Librarians should be intimately concerned with research into problems of communication, even though the areas of study outlined will be undertaken primarily by social scientists in the many branches of their discipline.

6. Studies showing the results of research in library management in a variety of types of situations, including the untouched field of human relations, should be one of the goals of individual library administra-

tors, as well as professional organizations, state agencies, and similar groups.

7. The quality and effectiveness of service to individuals is largely undetermined; research on the methods and the resources for expanding and extending such service is necessary.

8. Research into all phases of resources (Farmington Plan, inter-library centers, specialization in collecting, union catalogs, bibliographical centers, storage libraries, regional distribution of resources, micro-reproduction, serial literature, acquisition policies, and inter-library loans) is essential if librarians are to get beyond guesswork in their operations and services.

9. Studies are needed for the development of standards in descriptive cataloging, subject cataloging, and classification on national and international bases.

10. Exacting investigations of various types of catalogs, as well as of the administration of cataloging departments, would provide the knowledge that librarians need as records become more complex with growing collections.

11. Because of the pressures upon librarians serving researchers (in science and technology, particularly, but not exclusively), investigation into ways and means of content analysis, storage of information, and immediate retrieval has been accelerated.

12. Basic examinations are needed of all aspects of library education—programs, curricula, instructional methods, relations between performance on the job and library school training, and the place of the library school in the structure of higher education.

13. Successful research in librarianship requires recognition of the rigid methodologies of other disciplines.

14. Coordinated support of research by professional associations in relation to the library schools and other agencies is essential if investigation is to be continuous and systematic.

15. Library school faculties, particularly those associated with institutions having advanced or doctoral programs, have a special responsibility for the development of integrated programs of research.

16. Financial support is necessary for qualified students who need to be free from day-to-day work responsibilities if they are to complete investigations which would be useful to the profession.

There are some librarians who deplore any emphasis upon research in librarianship. Is not librarianship an art, they say, not subject to the exact measurements of scientific inquiry or objective study? What is

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wrong with what we are doing? What possibly could be added to our knowledge through systematic study? To these individuals, the answer to our problems is simple: librarians should read more books.

There is no question that librarians should improve their effectiveness as they acquire depth in book knowledge. Actually, there should be no conflict between the point of view of the book-reader and the exponent of research. Libraries—public, academic, governmental, special, and school—have become complex organizations, and as the contributors to this issue show, careful studies of problems arising out of the complexity should provide the librarian with a basis for greater understanding, should improve his judgment, and should reduce the load of his work. Research will never replace the art in librarianship; it may, however, make the practice of such art easier and more effective.

The Committee on Research of the Association of American Library Schools hopes that this issue of *Library Trends* will prove useful to those interested in studying problems of librarianship which require solution. It would be revealing, especially since research in the field is beginning to attract financial support, to re-examine the situation periodically. Chase Dane proposes a formal group for reviewing, evaluating, and pressing the application of research. Certainly there is the need for the coordination which he suggests.

References

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3. *Ibid.*, p. 223.
4. Council on Library Resources, Inc. [Press Releases dated September 18, 1956.] *College and Research Libraries*, 17:469-473+, Nov. 1956.