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# Library Cooperation in an Urban Setting: The Pittsburgh Story

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ONLY IN AN URBAN COMMUNITY in the United States it is possible for such conditions to exist as those which result from the concentration of faculty and students pursuing similar ends in private institutions of higher education, each maintaining services and facilities worth millions of dollars. The duplications are fantastic. Each institution has its hierarchy of administrative officers, its administrative staff, and its service staff devoted to producing the milieu within which the faculties and students function. When there are five colleges and universities within a distance which can be covered in a half-hour drive in city traffic—as there are in Pittsburgh—there are five English departments organized to teach parallel courses; five philosophy, music, fine arts, classics, speech, history, economics, political science, sociology, biology, chemistry, mathematics, physics, psychology, and perhaps other departments—expensively staffed and provided with city-valued space for offices, classrooms, and laboratories—all devoted to offering courses leading to what each institution regards as a liberal education. All five provide professional education as well: two only on the bachelor's level; three on the master's, doctoral, and postdoctoral levels. All grant accredited degrees which entitle graduates to enter schools for further study or to work in the professions to which their degrees apply. These neighboring institutions—the University of Pittsburgh, Carnegie Institute of Technology, Duquesne University, Chatham College, and Mount Mercy College—educate more than 19,000 undergraduates and more than 4,700 graduates yearly<sup>1</sup> at an estimated annual expenditure in excess of \$43,000,000.<sup>2</sup>

To serve the nearly 24,000 students and approximately 3,000 fac-  
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ulty and professional staffs,<sup>3</sup> these institutions maintain 5 libraries which represent huge capital investments, occupy city real estate, and employ costly professional and clerical staffs. For their 27,000 users, the libraries offer an aggregate collection of 1,355,173 volumes and expend \$960,000 yearly.<sup>4</sup> Less than 40 per cent of this expenditure, however, is devoted to the purchase of library materials. Staff costs exceed \$595,000 for the libraries involved. To consider students, collections, and costs in the aggregate is not to define the full extravagance of this typical American situation. Each entity is fundamentally concerned with providing for its own students, faculty, and staff, and since these individuals have to use similar sources for their results in knowledge, each of the 5 libraries is spending a large percentage of its funds yearly to buy exactly the same books, periodicals, and documents as are purchased by the four neighboring institutions and a larger percentage of its annual budget to provide parallel services. The collections as they exist represent huge duplications. Twenty-four thousand students, with their diverse interests and intensified twentieth-century demands, cannot draw upon 1,355,173 different works. They would be indeed fortunate if as many as a third of the total represented variety.

One might well ask whether or not this American system is worth maintaining when one considers costs and reviews the library facilities available at these costs. In the Soviet Union, where frightening educational rivalry has developed, the situation is not like this. At the urban University of Moscow for 30,000 students and 2,350 faculty,<sup>5</sup> the library is said to contain 5,500,000 volumes.<sup>6</sup> In the absence of precise data for comparison, one can only speculate upon the relative prices of maintaining 5 private institutions for 24,000 students and of maintaining a single institution for 30,000 students. One would probably have to conclude that of the two types of institutions in urban environments, the Soviet system is producing more impressive library results than the American system at what is probably a lower cost for institutional setting.

When one considers educational results, however, one finds overwhelming justification for American extravagance. The 5 private institutions in Pittsburgh—maintaining their 5 sets of facilities and their 5 individualized philosophies of education—contribute to the protective diversity which perpetuates a democratic system. For this one must pay, and one pays willingly. To eliminate some of the bad features of the system, one must apply intelligence to planning. In

Pittsburgh, certain plans have already been developed to meet the library needs of the local student and faculty population.

Students in Pittsburgh, like students in other urban centers in the United States, draw upon the resources of a great public library. The Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh adds over 1.5 million volumes to the 1,355,173 volumes held by its neighboring colleges and universities. The drive which swings one past the colleges and universities also takes one past the library's doors. The nature of its collections and services as well as its location places it in a position to be involved with the library problems of the educational institutions.

In recognition of the problems, the heads of the University of Pittsburgh, Carnegie Institute of Technology, Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, and Mellon Institute requested the formation of the Committee on the Coordination of Libraries in the Oakland District.<sup>7</sup> Members of the Committee were the librarians of the University of Pittsburgh, Carnegie Institute of Technology, and Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh. The Committee's task was essentially to apply human intelligence to the task of maintaining diversity while eliminating the worst effects of institutional independence on library development. All the work of the group had to be accomplished within the restrictions imposed by the legal structures of the separate institutions and within limits set by the obligations of each to a separate constituency. There was no outside, overall financial support. In spite of the severe limitations, however, the Committee made progress in solving the local problems, and their actions resulted ultimately in the extension of privileges and advantages to the three institutions not represented on the Committee.

The Committee studied and rejected the possibilities of a joint library building and of joint storage facilities because of the obligations of each to its own public, but it took other actions which have helped to make the collections mutually available, and it outlined a program for purchasing which made each library responsible for certain types of material in particular fields of knowledge.

Beginning in 1948, as a result of Committee recommendations, faculty and graduate students of Carnegie Institute of Technology and of the University of Pittsburgh have had mutual direct borrowing privileges, and these were almost immediately extended to other local faculty and graduate students. In return, Duquesne University, Chatham College, and Mount Mercy made their facilities available on similar terms. Undergraduates have gained mutual library use of

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reference, document, periodical, and book materials, and, under certain circumstances, they have also been given borrowing privileges. Mount Mercy lends books to all local college students. Senior tutorial students at Chatham College have borrowing rights, upon payment of the fee charged to general members of the community, at the University of Pittsburgh during the period in which they are preparing their theses. During regular college and university vacations, when local students are not in residence, Pittsburgh's library resources and services are heavily used by students from outside institutions.

A second action of the Committee was to liberalize local interlibrary loan services. The original agreement applied to the University and Carnegie Institute of Technology and provided that loans be made for faculty and graduate students of materials not available on the individual campus and not restricted to reference or reserve use at the home institutions. The loans were made for two weeks with renewal privileges for works not in demand. For research purposes, special school-term loans could be arranged for certain types of important material. Because of the nature of its commitments as a public-supported institution, Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh has not provided interlibrary loan services to local colleges and universities. The original agreement between the two institutions continues in effect, and it has been extended so that the other colleges and university enjoy similar rights and offer them. Although none of the libraries involved in this mutually beneficial system compiles statistics measuring the number of transactions involved, all interlibrary loan librarians report that the exchange is large. The University of Pittsburgh, Carnegie Institute of Technology, and Duquesne University report that a substantial proportion of their interlibrary loan services is extended to local business and industrial libraries.

Further to facilitate mutual use of resources, two union list projects were sponsored by the Committee—one of which has continued successfully. Because of the enormous expense involved, the Committee rejected the idea of a complete union catalog of the holdings of the three libraries in favor of a limited union catalog maintained by each of the libraries. A plan was instituted to exchange author cards in certain fields and to file these in the respective catalogs of the three participating libraries. The purpose of the system was to make graduate students and faculty immediately aware of the location of a desired work and to inform library staff responsible for the development of collections of the local availability of certain works.

The theory behind the plan was excellent, but in practice the system became difficult and expensive to maintain as the libraries' growth accelerated, and, in consequence, the project has been abandoned.

The second union list project has flourished, however, to the great benefit not only of the 3 institutions responsible for its financial support, but also of all local libraries. In 1948, the University of Pittsburgh, Carnegie Institute of Technology, and Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh took over the list of serial holdings of local libraries begun by the Pittsburgh Chapter of the Special Libraries Association. Under the Association's direction, 2 printed editions of the list were issued in 1926 and 1934, and a later printed edition was discussed as late as the spring of 1955, but publication was given up in favor of retaining service from the card file. As originally prepared, the list contained technical journals. In 1948, however, when the list numbered 5,000 titles, the cooperating institutions agreed to widen its scope to include periodicals in all fields and the number advanced in that year to 8,000 titles. By November 1, 1961, the number had increased to 13,661 titles. Since 1948, the number of calls made upon the list, which is housed in the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, has increased nearly 330 per cent. Currently, 56 libraries report holdings.

The great usefulness of the list can hardly be overstated. It facilitates interlibrary loan. Nearly 1,300 needed serials were located in 1960. Of 1,907 requests during the year, only 3 came by mail; 1,378 were telephone inquiries, and 526 were calls in person. The list serves the function originally intended by Pittsburgh's Special Libraries Association; it provides an indispensable community service.<sup>8</sup> In addition, the list has important usefulness in guiding purchase. At the University of Pittsburgh, Acquisitions personnel consult it faithfully before recommending purchase of major serial publications of specialized interest and, as a result, have been able, through information furnished, to divert nearly \$18,000 in the past year to materials not already held in the district.

It was to this problem of duplication that the Committee on the Coordination of Libraries further addressed itself, and it is in this area where its usefulness was potentially the greatest that its task was most complex. The Committee stated as its operating principle that it would concern itself with costly and rarely used materials—that each institution would have to be responsible for the materials supporting its own teaching and community commitments. Accordingly, it made the following large divisions of responsibility for the

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fields of knowledge, divisions which recognized the positions of the institutions at the time of agreement: University of Pittsburgh—research materials in the humanities, social studies, and biological sciences; Carnegie Institute of Technology and Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh—research materials in the physical sciences, engineering, and fine arts.

Within this framework, adjustments had to be made. Carnegie Library, through its Technology Division, had and continues to have obligations to local industries for materials both in the applied and pure sciences. Carnegie Institute of Technology, while its interest was and continues to be primarily in the field of pure science, nevertheless, needs much material in the realm of applied science. In December 1948, the Committee, wrestling with this problem, was forced to conclude that—except for mathematics in which Carnegie Institute of Technology had primary interest—the “division of purchases must be based largely upon special needs and ability to purchase individual items” and that the two technical libraries “must always complement each other in the same general fields, rather than develop in sharply divided areas.”<sup>9</sup>

Since 1948, however, the situation has changed for the University of Pittsburgh: there have been such developments in mathematics and other sciences and in engineering that the University has had to take a more active role in the collection of research materials than it did at the time the agreement was promulgated. Even at the time of the agreement, further clarification of the position of the libraries in relation to fine arts materials had to be made. The importance of the Henry Clay Frick Library of Fine Arts of the University of Pittsburgh had to be considered and the respective interests of Carnegie Institute of Technology and of Carnegie Library had to be defined. The interest of the latter two in the performing arts was emphasized. Again, however, the shift of institutional emphasis is apparent in this area; the University now has programs in painting, in music history, and in dramatics which require library support.

A striking example of the effect of changing institutional needs occurred in the matter of the decisions made in an agreement of 1955, between the University of Pittsburgh and Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, for the divisions of responsibility for back files of the *New York Times* and of United Nations documents. In that year, the University agreed to make its nineteenth-century files of the *Times* available to users referred by Carnegie librarians, and the public library

agreed to assume responsibility for the microtext edition of certain classes of documents published by the United Nations. The extreme lateness of this material—sometimes the lag has been as much as three years—forced the library to buy published versions of many documents to meet requests. But with the establishment of the University's Graduate School of Public and International Affairs in 1958, the pressure of demand increased, and in the summer of 1961, the University, to meet the needs of its own students, placed a standing order for United Nations' documents. Within six years, changes in the needs of one of the libraries involved made the agreement untenable.

These adjustments which have had to be made over the years indicate the basic problems faced by institutions existing under the necessity of evolving cooperative programs. No agreements can be set up by the wisest library administrators which apply for all times in the institutional lives with which they are dealing. Within the framework provided by the Committee on the Coordination of Libraries in the Oakland District in 1947 and 1948, there is still opportunity for sensible and constant cooperative effort. The mutual use of research collections is a requisite for cooperative acquisition, and enlightened administrations have extended this use and assure the continuance of this fundamental. The immensely useful union catalog of serials goes on and grows. Increasingly, librarians responsible for the acquisition of rare and costly serials consult it before purchase. An attitude of cooperation prevails among local librarians. When Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh considered the purchase of the latest monumental Italian dictionary, a call to the University of Pittsburgh assured the possession of the Bompiani to one library in the district. When Carnegie Institute of Technology considered the five volume *Biographical and Bibliographical Dictionary of the Italian Humanists*, a similar call prevented unnecessary duplication. The University of Pittsburgh was saved expenditure on Mansi's *Sacrorum Conciliorum* and on St. Louis University's microfilm series of Vatican materials because these are already held by Duquesne University and will be made available to all district scholars for whom this rare and valuable material is significant. But these efforts and others like them, important as they are, are not enough.

The Committee existed for only two years; no mention of this cooperative project appears in the annual reports of the University of Pittsburgh, Carnegie Institute of Technology, or Carnegie Library

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of Pittsburgh after 1948. In the past 13 years, major changes have occurred in the 3 institutions represented on that Committee. Both the University of Pittsburgh and Carnegie Institute of Technology have new administrations and new administrative goals. Both are being dynamically changed to meet the exigencies of a complex time. The Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, too, has altered; it now serves Allegheny County and not the city alone, and under Pennsylvania's library legislation of 1961, it has broadened responsibilities. All 3 of the institutions brought informally into Pittsburgh's cooperative library effort also have new administrative officers who have enunciated new philosophies and new goals. The nature of these changes has not been such as to eliminate the need for coordination of libraries; rather it has intensified the necessity.

To serve the combined library needs of the 24,000 students and 3,000 faculty concentrated in one section of Pittsburgh, a new Committee on Library Coordination should be formed, and its membership should be expanded so that it has representatives from the 5 urban colleges and universities as well as from the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh. To make the Committee function as more than a discussion group, however, its members must be able to come to its work with full knowledge of the specific institutional ends which each is to serve. Basic to the accomplishment of any real cooperative effort is the definition of academic and research plans of the institutions involved. Only from such knowledge can intelligent judgments on the allocation of individual responsibilities be made. Only within each institution can provisions be made for giving the representative to this Committee the immense detail about immediate and projected programs for which his work should provide library resources.

Almost equally important to the effective functioning of the Committee proposed is some financial support—funds independent of the budgets of the libraries represented. All of the recommendations of the original Committee had to be determined by the ability of the separate libraries to make certain purchases. If a library had the funds available, it could acquire research materials which contributed to the common good; if the funds were not there, even needed material had to be passed by. Most libraries function on such an economy. Purchase is determined by ability to pay, and within limits, perhaps, the necessity operates to produce a desirable selectiveness in acquisition. The limits can be reached, however, easily enough. If a



committee well informed upon local needs had funds at its disposal, it could contribute immeasurably to the richness of local library resources. Its function would be clearly limited to the area in which the research needs of the separate institutions intersected. Library autonomy would be maintained in all areas of unique research and for all general programs.

In the last annual report on the Union List of Serials in the Pittsburgh Area, the librarian in charge explains a decrease in 1960 in the percentage of journals located on the grounds that the demand for foreign technical journals, particularly Russian and Japanese, had increased markedly. The holdings of these in a city where major research in technical subjects is being carried on by important collegiate and industrial institutions is not adequate to the demand. This is one sort of material which the Committee, if it were in command of funds, could acquire. There are others. In 1958, the University of Pittsburgh was compelled, because of budgetary considerations, to refuse to participate in a cooperative project to microfilm the Pittsburgh *Press*. This, too, is the sort of venture a cooperative Committee might well sponsor. Committee support might go also to significant materials in the social sciences and the humanities since these disciplines have not, in this society as they have in the Soviet, been relegated to the unimportant.

In Pittsburgh, as in other urban centers in the United States, where institutions of higher education flourish, cooperation among libraries is an imperative economy if one is to enjoy the vital luxury of diversity. Only by maintaining a constant awareness of the emphases of the separate institutions and by constant mutual consultation can the costly and unnecessary duplication of research materials be avoided. This important awareness, it would seem, might best be assured through the establishment of a continuing group—with some financial power—whose function would be to take awareness to consultation in an orderly committee framework. The American system almost guarantees the continuance of 5 private colleges and universities within 50 city blocks. The American system should also guarantee that they can cooperate with one another and with the public library which is their neighbor.

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