


11-1-1914

Special Libraries, November 1914

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Recommended Citation

Special Libraries Association, "Special Libraries, November 1914" (1914). *Special Libraries, 1914*. Book 9.
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Special Libraries

Vol. 5

NOVEMBER, 1914

No. 9

PUBLISHED BY THE SPECIAL LIBRARIES ASSOCIATION

Monthly except July and August.

Editorial and Publication Office, Indiana Bureau of Legislative Information, Indianapolis, Ind.
Subscriptions, 93 Broad street, Boston, Mass.

Entered at the Postoffice at Indianapolis, Ind., as second-class matter.

Subscription.....\$2.00 a year (10 numbers)

Single copies25 cents

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D. C.

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A Review of the Year's Literature of Special Libraries

**How to organize a municipal reference
bureau, by John A. Lapp**

[The American City, Sept. 15, 1914.]

In this article, by the Director of the Indiana Bureau of legislative information, in the series published by the American City, "What to do and how to do it," the scope and purpose of the special library for municipal officials is discussed. Municipal reference is defined as "a scheme for collecting, preserving and having ready for use, information which will help to solve problems of municipal government. It is a method by which the experience of the world is brought to bear upon specific problems of city government."

The importance of such a bureau of information is emphasized by the study of the complexity of the problem of city government. "Scarcely any problem confronts a modern city," says the writer, "which has not at some time or other confronted other cities; and scarcely a solution which is being sought for any municipal problem is not sought in many other cities at the same time. Out of the experience of all cities come valuable lessons to each city."

The necessity of keeping the municipal reference bureau closely related to the immediate and practical problems of the city is emphasized. "To study the actual needs of the city; to learn its physical condition and

to know the needs for its physical development, to understand its legal and other limitation, to see clearly the aspirations of its citizens and its government, and to make the information gathered for use focus upon the present and future needs," is the program laid down.

The article puts emphasis on the practical reference material with particular reference to those things which serve the workers in all of the departments of the city government. The sources of material are stated as follows:

- 1 Local documents including statutes, ordinances and decisions and reports of officers and local organizations;
2. The reports of special value from other cities;
- 3 The works of the best recognized authorities;
- 4 The publications of associations organized to study city government or social welfare;
- 5 Magazines and newspapers;
6. The special researches of the bureau and other similar bureaus based upon first hand investigation.

Finally the article emphasizes the use of the knowledge of the individuals in the community. "The brains of the community should be indexed and the telephone directory should be close at hand for use—lawyers, engineers, sanitarians, accountants,

architects, landscape architects, artists, artisans and business men can all be pressed into service by an efficient bureau"

The writer contends against the designation of municipal reference work as library work and argues for the separate bureau, except in those cities where the library has become a forceful institution in public affairs. Connecting a municipal reference bureau with the city library is condemned. The article states that "most of our city libraries, unfortunately, do not have a standing among practical men. Too many of them devote their attention exclusively to the esthetic and cultural. In many cities the majority of the patrons are women and children and circulation consists largely of light literature. Most of our city libraries are manned by people having little conception of the practical functions of the municipal reference library. Many public libraries are located at considerable distance from the seat of administrative and municipal activity. Obviously, such a library is not a satisfactory place in which to establish a municipal reference branch."

The control of a municipal reference bureau, it is declared, should be non-partisan and non-political. "A bureau which serves political purposes will soon lose its usefulness. It must be prepared to serve all parties and all men and any evidence of partisanship will impair its efficiency." The writer favors a separate ex-officio board of non-partisan officials as the proper controlling board of such a bureau. Emphasis is put upon the necessity of having a minimum staff to permit practical work.

The classification of material is discussed briefly and emphasis is put upon the desirability of the simplest system which will make the material accessible for quick use. "A bureau must be prepared on a thousand subjects and an efficient arrangement of material is imperative. Probably the most effective classification would be that which confines itself closely to the different functions of the municipality, emphasizing through minute subdivisions, the particular functions upon which the municipality is most active."

The conclusion of the article follows: "It should be emphasized that a municipal reference bureau, to be successful, must be practical. In all of its work the utility aim must be kept in view. It is not a place where sentiment should play a part. It ought to show results on the profit side of the ledger or it ought not to be maintained.

"It is primarily a bureau of information and not a place to supply reading material for general education. The public library can well supply all that is needed for the general reader. There is grave danger that a bureau may take the path of least resistance and confine itself to those more obvious matters upon which material may be more readily accessible. This should be

avoided. The bureau should strive to be a pioneer in municipal knowledge, leaving the more obvious matters to more superficial agents.

"A municipal reference bureau with a broad vision and steady grasp of the best thought concerning municipal activities has the opportunity of being a city's most useful institution."

How to use the technical journal, by J. W. Alvord

[Electric railway journal, Oct. 3, 1914.]

Using the technical journal, by G. W. Lee

[Electric railway journal, Oct. 17, 1914.]

Indexing technical information, by A. R. Herrick

[Electric railway journal, Oct. 24, 1914.]

A good word for the card index, by H. I. Brewer

[Electric railway journal, Oct. 24, 1914.]

Indexing technical information, by C. H. Fuller

[Electric railway journal, Oct. 24, 1914.]

The above group of articles, all appearing in the Electric railway journal, form an interesting symposium on a topic of lively interest to both librarians and engineers and the two professions share the honors of authorship so that both points of view are brought out.

The first article by Mr. Alvord, Chicago, Consulting engineer, which furnished the inspiration for the ensuing communications, is an abstract of a paper presented at the Convention of the Federation of trade press associations, Chicago, Sept. 24-6. For the purpose of presenting his problem, the author divides the users of technical journals into three classes, the young engineer, the middle-aged reader and the mature specialist, showing what in the technical journals appeals to each of these classes and what various card indexes, filing devices, note books, etc., seem to these different ages of readers of technical literature, best suited for sorting, preserving and rendering available the current literature of their profession. Of one thing the author is certain and that is that, "technical papers, along with the technical societies and their proceedings, form the repository of the professions; they are the interchange of experience, the common store upon which we all draw. Without them we would be strangely helpless. We are more or less indebted to everyone who records his experience for the common use, and that debt we should endeavor to helpfully repay in kind, but wisely, concisely and thoughtfully." He warns us that "it is really wonderful how much repetition there is in engineering writing and in the production of

engineering papers" and that "it thus happens that we are under the necessity of seeing much the same facts and principles repeatedly published in varying forms." The whole gist of the article is that, properly understood and used, technical literature contains inspiration and encouragement, experience and interest for young and old in varying degrees but that to get these results from the journals is not always an easy matter owing to inexperience in the young men, limitation of time in the older men, lack of proper indexes and the difficulties met in selecting and arranging the best from the mass of such technical literature.

Mr. G. W. Lee, Librarian of Stone and Webster, Boston, suggests the trained librarian as an answer to some of the difficulties in indexing presented by Mr Alvord. He says that he has "long urged that the library world should so organize as to provide a custodian for every idea and every article needed by men in business or professions . . . This same idea carried to its ultimate development is what we need the country over, professional men of every description standing sponsors for or subscribing to the work of those who will collect information and have it available when wanted. . . . Believe that the well-trained librarian can generally advise about the ways and means of getting information on almost everything and insist that he thus make himself useful to you"

The next to take up the subject under discussion is Albert B. Herrick, Consulting engineer, who advocates a classification scheme, based on the Dewey decimal system, for grouping current technical literature. As an example he gives the following main heads for classifying electric transportation material: 0, historical; 1, general description; 2, finance; 3, engineering; 4, operation; 5, power station; 6, transmission system; 7, equipment; 8, track; and 9, maintenance. Mr. Herrick mounts his clippings on cards or folders according to their length. An interesting detail is his use of different colors in folders and cards for different years so as to give a chronological idea of the date of the information.

In the same issue of the Electric railway journal which contains Mr. Herrick's article, H. I. Brewer, Librarian of the New Jersey Public service corporation, takes the stand that a card index is an absolute necessity, whether the material is placed in a subject file as Mr. Alvord prefers or arranged according to the Dewey or some such decimal classification, according to Mr. Herrick.

To close the discussion, Carl H. Fuller, formerly Engineer of right-of-way, Macon railway and light company, describes "a file that has been in constant use for nearly ten years, holding many hundreds of valuable clippings, photographs, small drawings,

cuts, typewritten sheets, etc., put up in a shape sufficiently portable to be carried in an ordinary suit case yet admitting expansion or contraction to any desired degree. Scarcely any of the original matter remains in this particular case, as it is constantly being discarded for fresher or more desirable data, the prime object being to retain a compact working library of such material. Yet the matter discarded has not been lost track of and may readily be located in any of the larger libraries located about the country." The method thus described consists of files of carefully selected clippings bound together and an accompanying index volume for each file and must certainly prove interesting in its simplicity and practicability.

A Routine for Methods and Plans for Directing the Reading of Department Heads and Workmen.

[Factory, Nov., 1914.]

Accompanied by copies of the library forms used, two very interesting methods of keeping employes in touch with current printed information, as worked out at the Hamilton plant of the International harvester company and at the B. F. Goodrich company, Akron, Ohio, are described in a recent issue of *Factory*. In the former, the circulation of reading matter, limited to magazines, is accomplished as follows: "The magazines are received by the mailing division of the order and schedule department and the circulation slip is pasted on the first page. It is attached at the top edge only so, that, if any one is interested in the ads which happen to occupy the first page, they can be perused by lifting the bottom edge of the slip.

"The name of the magazine is inserted on the slip and the names of all those who are on the list for this particular magazine are set down in the first column. These lists of 'subscribers' have been carefully arranged for each magazine with the object of getting it first into the hands of the man most interested. For instance, the trade papers go first to the purchasing man for immediate perusal of the market reports, *The American machinist* goes first to the master mechanic, *Factory* goes first to the superintendent."

"One of the troubles is to get everyone to let go of the magazines within the prescribed time so that the next fellow can get a look at them. This is regulated fairly well by the mail department which keeps a tickler record of just where each magazine is and jogs a man's memory if he keeps it too long overtime."

An interesting item is the ultimate disposal of the magazines—some are filed in whole or in part in the various departments of the business for reference, some

distributed to the stations of the city fire department where they are much appreciated.

In the B. F. Goodrich Co., books as well as magazines are distributed from a library department. "The library is complete in every detail, and subscribes to a large number of periodicals, both foreign and domestic. The books, of which there are over two thousand are for the most part limited in scope of technical subjects covered at some point in the organization—such as chemistry, mechanics, selling, automobile and other trade statistics.

"The library is open to everyone in the organization at all times. Any employee may choose a book and keep it two weeks, unless it is recalled by the librarian. A subject record of the book is kept. The names of the books are filed alphabetically. There is no means of 'following up' and the book is seldom recalled unless at the request of some patron of the library. However, this company's experience shows that few books are lost.

"Employees are kept informed by regular bulletins of new accessions and of articles in the current magazines. Many of the departments issue 'data sheets' giving summaries of the leading trade articles of the month in which members of the department should be interested.

"The librarian knows the particular subjects of interest to the individual department heads and frequently calls their attention to articles in the current magazines. . . . A messenger service is maintained, by which books and periodicals can be delivered at a telephone request. . . . Each man is supposed to hold a magazine not to exceed three days. Names of employes who are to receive a magazine are listed at the extreme left of the magazine card. The periodical is sent to them not in the order of the list, but in the order of their station. For instance, 'President Smith' will get a magazine before 'Assistant Manager X' and 'Assistant Manager X' before 'Mr. Jones'. Several copies of most magazines are received."

Summing up the situation for the question the article concludes with: "Comparatively few factories are large enough to warrant special departments to handle books and magazines. For those that do have a legitimate use for a special library this outline of the Goodrich company's practice will be found of suggestive value in shaping the routine. For the average plant the first system outlined is well adapted."

Special Libraries—A Report on Fifty Representative Libraries, arranged by R. H. Johnston

[Library Journal, April, 1914.]

This report, arranged by Mr. R. H. Johnston, Librarian of the Bureau of railway economics library of Washington, D. C., em-

bodies certain information obtained in response to a questionnaire sent out at the joint instance of the editor of the Library Journal and the president of the Special Libraries association, and is designed to exhibit a compact, tabulated summary of the location, scope and operation of fifty representative special libraries. The tabulated statement discloses the name and location of the library, the date of its foundation, its special field of activity, the name of the librarian, the number of books, pamphlets and other documents constituting its collection, and a general description of the reports, bulletins and publications which it issues. An inspection of the table discloses the fact that the creation of special libraries is a movement of comparatively recent origin; thirty-two of the fifty libraries enumerated have been organized since 1900; the two oldest have been in existence since 1823 and 1824, respectively, and two others for approximately half a century. The territorial distribution of these libraries is interesting and suggestive. Thirty-nine are located in the eastern states, ten in the middle west, and one in the far west, Boston has seventeen, New York twelve, Chicago five and Philadelphia four. An astonishingly large number of industries and institutions is represented, including technical and professional societies, manufacturing, official information, statistics, insurance, taxation, agriculture, forestry, banking and investments, transmission, transportation and illumination companies, public and social service and benevolent and philanthropic organizations. The documents constituting the collections of these special libraries are chiefly fugitive and ephemeral. The number of books ranges from 500 to 62,000; the number of pamphlets from 400 to 150,000; and the number of separate items of other material, such as clippings, pictures, catalogues and periodicals, aggregates over 320,000. The brief introductory statement of this report tersely narrates the history of the organization of the Special Libraries association, defines the scope and purpose of special libraries, records the pre-emption of this field of activity by a large number of experts and specialists and concludes with a description of Special Libraries, the official organ of the association.

The Function of the Legislative Reference Bureau, by S. Gale Lowrie

[The Library Journal, April, 1914.]

This is an excellent and well written summary of the functions of a legislative reference bureau. In the opinion of the writer, Mr. S. Gale Lowrie, whose experience as Director of the Ohio state legislative reference bureau justly entitles him to speak, the duties of a legislative reference bureau are threefold: Its function as a library is to collect and classify material relating to

current public affairs; its corps of trained experts should supply directory service to investigators comparable to what might be obtained in the seminaries of our higher institutions of learning; and its bill drafters should assist legislators in expressing in concise legal terms the provisions which they may desire to formulate into law. The reference work of a legislative bureau has certain characteristics which distinguish it from the work of a general library. Certain phases of the work must be developed disproportionately from time to time to satisfy popular demands; the material collected consists largely of "fugitive sources," such as magazine articles, newspaper clippings and correspondence; and the material collected must be so classified, divided, subdivided and arranged as to respond promptly and yield the information desired. The information obtained by the examination and inspection of documents must be supplemented and interpreted by the trained experts who constitute the staff of the Bureau and when necessary other experts may be consulted. The newest phase of the work is that of bill drafting, which has been successfully and extensively elaborated in England under the direction of Sir Courtenay Ilbert. Mr. Lowrie justly insists upon the political impartiality of the Bureau, its confidential character, and its administration by a non-partisan board. Legislative bureaus are agencies of reform only in so far as full knowledge and information are conducive to that end.

Libraries that pay, efficient business houses are systematically bringing managers and mill-hands into touch with classified information, by Metta M. Loomis.

[Independent, June 26, 1913.]

The author, herself the Librarian of the College of Medicine, of the University of Illinois, has thoroughly investigated several commercial libraries, and proves as satisfactorily as possible, in such a limited space, that both from the point of view of the manager and of the workingman, such libraries are "business assets." Her opening anecdote, concerning an assistant in a large contracting firm who has been instructed to collect in a short time certain local information necessary to submitting a bid for a large contract, concludes as follows: "The assistant spent three days visiting railroad offices, land agents, libraries and newspaper offices, but the information he secured was indefinite and unreliable. He found trade journals—hundreds of them, transactions of every conceivable society, government documents covering an innumerable range of topics, and house organs constituting veritable business encyclopedias; but to secure definite information was a hunt for the needle in the haystack. Without a knowledge of the sources of in-

formation and experience in gathering data from masses of printed matter, it was not surprising that the meager report prevented the bed-rock bid that might have landed the coveted contract." Other instances of the value of promptly delivered, up-to-date reliable information to department managers and employes are cited and a brief description is given of one large commercial library which includes a library conducted by departments and a library working directly with the "overall workmen." On the much mooted question of whether a special librarian should have library training or specialized education in the subject matter on which the material is collected, Miss Loomis has a decided opinion. She says "The librarian of any business library should have special training in collecting and handling masses of printed matter. Specific knowledge is not so necessary as the ability to get information into or out of people; the daily work with the literature of a subject will give the librarian a constantly increasing fund of technical knowledge."

The business library, by D. N. Handy and G. E. Marion

[System, July, 1914.]

A very practical exposition of business library methods is this of Mr. Handy, Librarian of the Insurance library association of Boston, and Mr. Marion, Librarian of Arthur D. Little, inc. The six photographs included, showing methods of binding clippings, handling pamphlets, "carding" correspondence, filing catalogues and price lists, filing magazines, and storing samples, are accompanied by clear explanations. There is no better way of presenting modern methods as used in special libraries than by exhibits such as are displayed at national and state library meetings. This article does in a limited way what the exhibits do and will prove of practical help to those in doubt about the best filing systems to employ.

List of Descriptions of Special Libraries, appearing in Special Libraries, 1914

- Legislative reference bureaus as a factor in state development, by A. E. Sheldon, Jan., 1914. p. 2-8.
- Notes concerning the library of the Geological survey, Canada, Jan., 1914. p. 8
- Legislative reference bureaus for political parties, by D. R. Richberg, March, 1914. p. 38-42.
- Applied education and the specialized library, abridged proceedings of a joint meeting of the Engineers club, Special libraries association, Eastern district and the Efficiency club of Boston, Mch. 8. Apr., 1914. p. 55-9.
- Evolution of the special library, by John Cotton Dana, May, 1914. p. 70-7.

- Commercial museum of Trieste, May, 1914. p. 77-8.
- Library of the American bankers' association, by Marian R Glenn, May, 1914. p. 78-80.
- Boston Co-operative information bureau, by G. W. Lee, June, 1914. p. 92-4.
- Collected information in print and the training of employes of the Curtis publishing company (summary), by E. A. Wolf, June, 1914. p. 96-7.
- Index office; its nearer purpose and its larger aim (summary), by A. G. S. Josephson, June, 1914. p. 98.
- National bureau of municipal information (notes) by J. C. Dana, Sept., 1914. p. 104-6.
- Library of highway engineering, by Emma D. Lee, Sept., 1914. p. 106-7.
- Vocational library on women's work, by Ethel M. Johnson, Oct., 1914. p. 116-8.
- Lithographic art gallery and library. Oct., 1914. p. 124.

List of References on Railroads in War

Prepared by the Bureau of Railway Economics Library,
Washington, D. C.

October 10, 1914.

PREFATORY NOTE

The following libraries are represented in the bibliography of railways maintained by the Bureau of Railway Economics. The books and pamphlets in this list may be found in the libraries respectively indicated by the key letters:

- APS —American Philosophical Society
ASCE —American Society of Civil Engineers
AmhC —Amherst College
Belg —Bibliothèque de la Commission Centrale de Statistique, Brussels
BA —Boston Athenaeum
BPL —Boston Public Library
BowC —Bowdoin College
B —Bureau of Railway Economics
Clark —Clark University
ClevePL —Cleveland Public Library
CU —Columbia University
CtHS —Connecticut Historical Society
CtSL —Connecticut State Library
CornU —Cornell University
DCL —Dartmouth College Library
FJL —F. J. Lisman & Co., New York City
HU —Harvard University
HDG —Collection of Prof. Henry D. Gardner, Providence
HF&S —Harvey Fisk & Sons, New York City
Hh —Private Collection of James Hillhouse, Esq., New Haven*
H —Hopkins Railway Library, Leland Stanford Jr. University
IndSL —Indiana State Library
IntrC —International Railway Congress Library, Bern
ICC —Interstate Commerce Commission
JC —John Crerar Library
JHU —Johns Hopkins University
LU —Lehigh University
LibCo —Library Company of Philadelphia
LC —Library of Congress
LSE —London School of Economics, University of London
MeHS —Maine Historical Society
MeSL —Maine State Library
MassHS —Massachusetts Historical Society
MIT —Massachusetts Institute of Technology
MassRR —Massachusetts Railroad Commission, now Public Service Commission
MassSL —Massachusetts State Library
MechL —Mechanics' Library of Altoona, Pa.
NHSL —New Hampshire State Library
NJSL —New Jersey State Library
NY —New York Public Library

- PrU —Princeton University
Prussia —Bibliothek des Konigl. Ministeriums der Oeffentlichen Arbeiten, Berlin
Rgy —Ridgeway Library, Philadelphia
StLPL —St. Louis Public Library
SpqPL —Springfield City Library Association, Springfield, Mass.
SU —Syracuse University
TPL —Toronto Public Library
TrentPL —Trenton Public Library
Tufts —Tufts College
UCal —University of California
UC —University of Chicago
UI —University of Illinois
UM —University of Michigan
UMinn —University of Minnesota
UP —University of Pennsylvania
UT —University of Toronto
UW —University of Wisconsin
WRHS —Western Reserve Historical Society
WorcAS —Worcester Antiquarian Society
WorcPL —Worcester Public Library
Y —Yale University

*Use of this library may be granted to special students by arrangement with the owner.

Files of general periodicals, such as the Arena, Atlantic Monthly, Forum, Fortnightly, etc., are to be found in all the larger libraries, as well as in those especially indicated.

Files of the Railway Age Gazette are to be found in most of the public and university libraries. The Archiv für Eisenbahnwesen is to be found in most of the university libraries.

A., H. von. Uber die militärischen und technischen Grundlagen der truppen-transports auf eisenbahnen. Darmstadt und Leipzig, 1861. Prussia.

Abbott, John S. C. Heroic deeds of heroic men. VIII—A Railroad adventure. (Harper's magazine, v. 31: 164-74; July 1865) B, BPL, LC, NY.

Capture of a locomotive at Big Shanty, Tenn., by Federal men.

Albaugh, H. M. Stealing a railroad train. (Four-track news, v. 6: 48-50; Jan. 1904) B, ICC, LC.

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Destruction of bridges by the Boers.
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