

**PAPERS AND PROCEEDINGS OF THE
TWENTY-SECOND GENERAL MEETING
OF THE AMERICAN LIBRARY
ASSOCIATION HELD AT MONTREAL,
CANADA, JUNE 7-12, 1900**

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AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

HELD AT

MONTREAL, CANADA

JUNE 7-12

1900

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CONFERENCE OF LIBRARIANS.

MONTREAL, CANADA,

JUNE 7-12, 1900.

TEN YEARS OF AMERICAN LIBRARY PROGRESS: ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT.

BY REUBEN GOLD THWAITES, *Secretary and Superintendent of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin.*

AT the close of a century, all of us become, in a measure, historians. Instinctively, the thoughtful man of affairs pauses upon the brink of the hundred years to review the status of his calling and its share in the progress of civilization, drawing from the past lessons either of warning or of inspiration. This is the key-note of the professional conferences of the present year. We librarians would surely be deemed eccentric were we not to take some account of ourselves on this occasion. For the sake of the historical record, and following the fashion of the year, I therefore devote my prescribed forty minutes to a consideration of library progress in America—not, indeed, to the progress of a century, for that would lead us very far afield, but to the progress of the past ten years, which is quite within the ken of the youngest of our number.

Scientists are fond of telling us that the science of to-day is not the science of ten years ago—another way of saying that the science of to-day is the science of all the past, expanded by the growth of its last decade. It is equally true that the American public librarianship of to-day is the librarianship of 1890, corrected by better methods, plus the broadened possibilities developed in the busy decennial period which has passed since this Association met at Fabyan's.

I think we will agree that public libraries were being, as a rule, most excellently conducted in America, previous to 1890. To assert otherwise would be stultifying the record of most of us. Nevertheless, in reviewing the progress of the remarkable decade now nearing its close, we can but be surprised at the many striking features of present-day librarianship which have either had their inception or been chiefly developed within these ten

years. State library commissions, inter-state, state, and district associations; library training schools; travelling and branch libraries; travelling pictures; library advertising; children's rooms; rooms for the blind; access to shelves; co-operation with teachers; co-operative cataloging; inter-library loans and exchanges; the general erection of superb library buildings; phenomenal gifts from philanthropists of library buildings and endowments; compulsory library legislation; improved methods of binding and issuing public documents—all of these, which to-day so largely engross the attention of American librarians, in their conventions and professional journals, are practically the outgrowth of this brief period. For the most part, they are efforts towards popularizing the library; and this is clearly the especial characteristic of our recent professional growth.

It was in 1890 that Massachusetts organized the first state library commission. There are now 17 such commissions in the United States, New Jersey and Iowa being the last to enter the field.* Differing materially in composition and in methods, according to varying local conditions and standards, their common aim is to inspire communities with a desire for library service, to foster zeal in library work, to aid by advice and example, to unify methods, and to act as an agency for the application of public spirit and private bounty in the direction of library interests. The results have not been uniformly successful in all

*State library commissions were formed as follows:

Colorado.....	1899	Minnesota.....	1899
Connecticut.....	1893	New Hampshire.....	1891
Georgia.....	1897	New Jersey.....	1900
Indiana.....	1899	New York.....	1897
Iowa.....	1900	Ohio.....	1896
Kansas.....	1899	Pennsylvania.....	1899
Maine.....	1899	Vermont.....	1895
Massachusetts.....	1890	Wisconsin.....	1895
Michigan.....	1899		

the states; for, like most library work, our commissions are still in the experimental stage. But in general it may be said that they have, in their brief service, done much good work, and methods are being bettered by experience.

Although the American Library Association was established in 1876, it was 14 years before a state association was formed—New York setting the example in July, 1890. There are now 20 state associations.* Within the past three years, in some of the commonwealths which are territorially large, it has been found that sectional organizations are useful as feeders to the state conference, just as the state conferences are feeders to this international body; and inter-state meetings, like the one recently held in Washington, are growing in favor. City clubs have not been uniformly successful; they doubtless will never prosper where one library largely dominates all others; in a community where there are several libraries with strong individual characteristics, a club in which the social feature is made as prominent as the technical will surely win a place for itself. Over-organization is often decried by some of our conservative craftsmen; but the fact that so many subsidiary conferences are successfully conducted, argues that there is need for them in a country where distances are vast and local interests varied. Where not needed, such associations will soon wither, and thus over-organization cures itself. In organization lies power; from the communion of kindred spirits are born better things—a wider outlook, kindlier views, more catholic sympathies.

The pioneer library training school was founded at Columbia University in 1887. It became the New York State Library School upon its removal to Albany, in 1889; but it was

the following year before the school took upon itself the aspect which it wears to-day. Within the present decade have also been established other excellent schools at Pratt and Drexel institutes, and at the University of Illinois.† As with the training schools of all professions, they encounter more or less adverse criticism, from those wedded to older methods; but I think that our schools have fairly won the commendation of a large majority of our membership, and their continual improvement is evident. The first summer school for librarians, who are too busy to go to the large schools, was opened in 1891, at Amherst College; and now, similar courses are offered in New York, Ohio, Indiana, Wisconsin, and Minnesota, with an annually-increasing interest and attendance. In these days, librarians are not content with possessing zeal and energy—they demand special training, under well-equipped teachers; this they obtain most readily from the library schools, which are well supplemented by our two admirably edited journals,‡ serving as free parlaments for the craft.

In some respects, perhaps, the most hopeful of all forms of recent library popularization is the travelling library. New York first tried the experiment in February, 1893. To-day, it is a public institution, carrying on its mission in every state in the Union save Mississippi, Arkansas, and Oregon; neither does it exist in Alaska, Oklahoma, New Mexico, and Indian Territories. In Canada it is thus far only known to British Columbia.‡

Perhaps nowhere on earth is human existence more hopeless than in the numerous small,

* Following are dates of establishment of state associations:

California (formerly Central Cal.).....	1898	Michigan.....	1891
Colorado.....	1892	Minnesota.....	1891
Connecticut.....	1891	Nebraska.....	1895
Georgia.....	1897	New Hampshire.....	1890
Illinois.....	1898	New Jersey.....	1890
Indiana.....	1891	New York.....	1890
Iowa.....	1890	Ohio.....	1895
Kansas.....	1891	Pennsylvania.....	1893
Maine.....	1891	Vermont.....	1894
Massachusetts (including Rhode Island).....	1892	Wisconsin.....	1891

Sectional associations have been formed as follows:

Central California (became Cal. in 1898).....	1895
Southern California.....	1891
Bay Path (Massachusetts).....	1898
Western Massachusetts.....	1898
Western Pennsylvania.....	1896
Fox River Valley (Wisconsin).....	1898
North Wisconsin (travelling libraries).....	1896

† Training classes were started at Pratt in 1890, but there were no entrance examinations until 1893. The first class at Drexel was formed in 1892. The library school at Armour Institute, Chicago, was opened in September, 1893, and removed to the University of Illinois in September, 1897.

‡ The *Library Journal* was first issued in September, 1876; *Public Libraries* in May, 1896.

§ Following are the dates of the establishment of the various systems of travelling libraries in the United States and Canada:

Alabama.....	1898	Minnesota.....	1898
Arizona.....	1890	Missouri.....	1898
California.....	1893	Montana.....	1899
Colorado.....	1896	Nebraska.....	1896
Connecticut.....	1898	New Jersey.....	1897
Georgia.....	1893	New York.....	1893
Idaho.....	1899	Ohio.....	1896
Illinois.....	1896	Pennsylvania.....	1896
Indiana.....	1899	Tennessee.....	1897
Iowa.....	1895	Texas.....	1899
Kansas.....	1898	Utah.....	1898
Kentucky.....	1896	Vermont.....	1890
Louisiana.....	1897	Virginia.....	1896
Maine.....	1899	Washington.....	1898
Maryland.....	1896	Wisconsin.....	1896
Massachusetts.....	1896	Wyoming.....	1896
Michigan.....	1895	British Columbia.....	1899

often decaying, hamlets of the United States, which are isolated from the strenuous life of more prosperous communities. The mental horizon of the majority of the people in such a village is narrow, their lives aimless, their aspirations dwarfed. Even to the boy in the city slums, few more incentives are offered, to low thinking and to actual vice; for in the city, are at least enough other lads from whom to pick his company, whereas at the cross-roads the vicious and the good are necessarily thrown intimately together, with the gossip of the postoffice, the hotel-saloon, and the railway station as their sole mental stimulus. The advent of a good travelling library into such a community, is a Godsend, bringing hope, inspiration, loftier ideals of life. Nothing more encouraging in modern reforms has been witnessed than the marked change already wrought by this single and comparatively inexpensive agency, in scores of wretched villages which hitherto had been dead spots in our American civilization.

The missionary of the travelling library system meets, in the more rural districts, somewhat different conditions. Here, the farmsteads are widely separated. The boy, busied with his round of "chores," and dealing at first hand with nature, has more with which to occupy his mind than has the somewhat pampered youth of the "corners," and is consequently less inclined to vice. But the adult rustic too often comes to find his toil a dreary task, and wastes his hours at the village, under pretense of trading; while his women-folk, with less relaxation, bent to their burden of cookery, chickens, and churning, grow haggard before their allotted time, and in their social isolation furnish an undue proportion of inmates of brain hospitals.

It was a blessed thought, worthy of the last decade of our remarkable century, to carry to these unfortunate people the blessing of good books. When the heralds of this new gospel first went forth into the clearings of northwest Wisconsin, in the month of May, 1896, it was found that the need was greater than had been realized. Dwellers in cities, daily surfeited with reading matter of every description, find it difficult to comprehend the conditions which prevail in regions where a stray copy of a magazine, several years old, is worn to shreds in the passing about from neighbor to neighbor; where illustrated journals are seldom if ever

seen; and the books which "everybody is talking about" are as unknown as the Koran or the Mahabharata. Travelling libraries and travelling pictures have now revolutionized the life and thought of hundreds of such communities on the hills, amid the forests, and on the prairies, from one end to the other of our land. The contemplation of philanthropy like this leads one to think more confidently of man's humanity to man.

At almost any large American city library of the present day, the work of popularizing books is seen in its highest development. Public taste is met more than half-way; it is aroused, cultivated, fed. The clientele of the library has come to be as varied as the lives of the people—old and young, grave and gay, from the boy of the slums to the president of the college. Advertising its attractions in the hotels, the street-car, and the newspapers, publishing reading lists for special occasions, posting prospectuses, and attractively displaying its new books, the large public library is everywhere going out to the people, urging them to come, to see, to enjoy.

Much of this energy in popularization is the product of the decennial period now drawing to a close; some of its most interesting features have but lately sprung from the brains of those strenuous "missionaries of the book" who are members of the American Library Association. Prominent among recent innovations are distinct collections and reading-rooms for children and for the blind. A desire to strengthen the commonwealth, by educating its future citizens, is at the bottom of our common school system, and sentiments of both humanity and self-interest induce us to establish special schools for the defective classes. In our day the library has come to be recognized as no less important than the schoolhouse in the system of popular education; like the school, it has at last become a democratic institution, in which the needs of every class of the people must be regarded.

The city branch library was not born of this decade, but it has herein reached its highest development. The idea of utilizing as branches the schools, hospitals, engine-houses, police-stations, and even shops and private houses, is distinctly novel; so, also, the thought of introducing neighborhood clubs, familiar talks upon books, art exhibits, and the loan of scientific collections, as features of branch library work. The spirit actuating these well-meaning efforts

for the betterment of the people is that which gives life to missions, social settlements, and child-saving, municipal improvement, and good citizenship clubs. The problems are those which also confront the settlement workers. The books must be pushed, but diplomacy is necessary. Once, at Hull House, in Chicago, an attempt was being made to introduce hygienic principles into the cookery of the neighborhood. A poor woman at last came, in utter despair, to remonstrate to Miss Addams. "I don't want," she cried between her sobs, "to have to eat hyg'enes; I'd ruther eat what I'd ruther!" Not only the librarian who works in the slums, but she who is trying to reform the reading of a village, must, to be successful, see to it that the "hyg'enes" are not only worthy but acceptable.

Perhaps in none other of its manifold activities has the American public library been so successful, within the ten years just past, as in its co-operation with the schools. This work was commenced at Worcester, Massachusetts, about twenty-five years ago, and was soon successfully adopted in a few other cities; but it is only within the past few years that it has come to be generally recognized as a necessary department of library administration. With its widened application, naturally have come important improvements and amplifications; so that it is fair to claim that the methods of to-day are to all intents and purposes the product of this remarkable decade. The public librarian who would best serve the schools, visits them and gains the friendship and confidence of the teachers. She invites the teachers to hold meetings in the library, wherein the resources of the collection are examined, the indexes and books of reference explained and discussed, and the forthcoming term's work outlined; the teachers, on their part, informing the librarian in advance as to the lines of work along which they purpose to conduct their classes. The teachers occasionally bring their classes to the library, and the simpler methods of consultation are exemplified, so that the child should, by the time he enters the high school, understand how to consult many of the ordinary sources of reference.

Boxes of books for instruction and entertainment, selected by the teachers, are sent to the schools—sometimes classified by grades; and travelling school libraries, to assist in certain courses of study, are not uncommon. Add to

this, the posting in the schools of bulletins and classified lists, the children's room at the library, the special card catalog of children's literature, and the organization among pupils of "library leagues,"—whose members are pledged to read certain specified books, and to treat all books as if they were personal friends,—and we have a community of interests between school and library, which can but make for a higher intelligence in the generation which is to succeed us. The teachers themselves, burdened with often excessive curricula, and with the ever-increasing machinery of school administration, undoubtedly were, as a profession, slow to recognize the practical utility of the library in their work; and, even after the recognition became inevitable, there were many who looked askance at this new labor-making device. But the relationship between these two great factors in public education is at last firmly established, and has come to stay. It was in recognition of this relationship that New Hampshire, in 1895, placed both schools and libraries upon the same plane before the law, by making the establishment and maintenance of libraries compulsory.

In 1896, the Wisconsin State Teachers' Association first organized a library section; and, the following year, the National Educational Association appointed a committee upon "the relations of public libraries to public schools," with instructions to propose "methods of co-operation by which the usefulness of both may be increased." The inquiry inaugurated by this committee has been continued as a permanent feature of the work of the National Council of Education.*

Another interesting development of library work, peculiar to this decade, is the relationship between the library and the women's study clubs. Our land is still relatively new; American men are yet busy laying the foundations for family fortunes; many of their sons or grandsons will be men of cultivated leisure, men with time and inclination for carrying serious studies into adult life. Meanwhile, the lamp of self-culture is, for the most part, being borne aloft by our women. To meet their multitudinous and omnivorous demands for information, the librarian is hard pushed; that he generally succeeds, speaks well for his resourcefulness and diplomacy. In many large

* See the excellent Report of the committee, dated May 31, 1899. (Chicago: University Press, 1899. Pp. 80.)

city libraries, the schools and the study clubs together absorb a large share of the time and energies of the reference staff. A few years ago, university extension centers were the chief patrons of the reference room; but extension lecturing has passed its prime—the woman's club appears to have largely taken its place. What will succeed the club, none can foretell; we may be well assured, however, that the tactful librarian will be ready to greet and to satisfy the new comer.

Freedom of access to shelves is a distinctly recent innovation. A few large and many small city libraries now grant practically complete access, reserving only rare and costly books. Others give partial access—for instance, in the children's room, the department of popular fiction, and the reference-room; many such would be willing to allow full access, were their rooms suited for the purpose; while a considerable proportion of the newest buildings, especially in small cities, have been designed with this end in view. It seems highly probable that, long before the close of another decade, open shelves will be the rule, not the exception.

Inter-library loans, especially between reference libraries, are now more frequent than ever before. Boards of trustees are gradually amending their rules, so as to permit their librarians, within certain obvious limitations, to both lend and borrow from sister institutions. Distances with us are so enormous, that the investigator cannot readily pass from one center of research to another; by overcoming in some measure this barrier to free intercourse, a blessing is conferred upon American scholarship.

Popular attention has been so strongly attracted by the evolution of the library as a municipal institution, conducted upon the most advanced principles in an age of audacious experiment, that many are apt to lose sight of the fact that the oldest type of library, that of the college and the learned society, has in America, at least, not remained stagnant amid the general advancement. Heirs of the old monastic institutions and the guilds of scholars, these bodies generally administer their libraries with cautious conservatism. Yet we find the best of them quite abreast of the age, growing rapidly in size, energy, and efficiency; and, while not easily affected by fads, willing to accept improvements, and to conduct experiments for the benefit of the craft.

It is quite within the present decade that our finest American library buildings have been erected. The Library of Congress heads the list with a structure costing \$6,300,000, the largest and most beautiful of its class in the world. The building which houses the Boston Public cost \$2,300,000, and easily leads in size and comeliness the city libraries of the country. The new and stately home of the Chicago Public cost \$2,000,000; that of Columbia University, \$1,200,000; of Princeton University, \$650,000; of the Milwaukee Public and of the Wisconsin Historical Society, about \$600,000 each; and Newberry Library, Chicago, \$500,000. In addition to these, libraries costing from \$100,000 to \$200,000 each have, within the decade, been built in considerable numbers throughout the United States; and buildings averaging \$50,000 each, have become fairly numerous.

Many of these structures are the products of private bounty. In endowments and in gifts for books, also, our American libraries have been liberally treated within the past ten years. Unfortunately, accurate statistics have not been kept; but, so far as is shown by the incomplete reports made to this Association and to the *Library Journal*, it appears that since 1890 the vast sum of approximately \$24,000,000 has been bestowed upon American libraries for buildings, books, and maintenance. As this computation omits the many individual gifts which fell below \$1000 each, it is fair to assume that the total, as here given, falls 10 per cent below the actual figures. These private beneficences, together with correspondingly generous expenditures of public money within the same period, aggregate a sum probably larger than the entire previous expenditure for libraries in the history of the United States.

In what has thus far been said relative to American library progress in the closing decade of the nineteenth century, account has only been taken of the library in its relation to the people. No less remarkable has been the development of professional methods, the evidence of which is less obvious to the public, although the results make in a high degree for the economy and efficiency of our service in its behalf.

Prominent in this department of growth has been the recent marvellous development of mechanical contrivances, with which American libraries of the most modern type are now well equipped. Mention might also be made of rad-