

tory and universal history, the geographical limitation of the term "medieval" to European libraries, and the breakdown in terms of Early, Middle, and High Middle Ages. The evolution of the medieval library system is well sketched:

From the simple form of the early Christian period, which had inherited from classical antiquity the combination of temple and library, evolve the great monastic libraries. Book collections of universities, of princes and private persons, joined in ever richer ramification from the XIII century on. With the growing realization of the educative value of the library, the number of founders, owners, and users increases. The patronage, originally limited to the few clergymen of a community, spreads, it extends to the laity, and finally includes all strata of educated men.

Walter Hofmann investigates the theoretical assumptions of an international classification system. He reasons that no universal classification system can be built entirely along strictly logical lines. The logical sequence is frequently influenced by "value" questions, issues which are intimately related to the Weltanschauung of a specific national culture. Therefore, a system developed on the basis of the national culture of people "A" will be meaningless to people "B," hence an international classification system, meaningful to the entire world, is unthinkable.

Hofmann has meticulously analyzed all parts of his carefully built-up conclusion except one conception—the validity of which he takes for granted without question—and that is the existence of national cultures which are elevated to the rank of living individuals. However, are *the* German, *the* American clearly definable realities as distinct from each other as is Mr. A. from Mr. B? What are the so-called "national characteristics," a term so glibly used? And to what extent are they relevant to the classification of books? Are we logically justified in labeling everything American as "foreign," from the point of view of German culture?

Furthermore, nationality is not the only, and by no means the most important, basis for dividing humanity into groups. Religion (for centuries all important in this respect), occupation, political ideology, education, income, color of the skin, sex, and age are much more potent nuclei for group formation. All these groups cut across national boundaries, and, following Hofmann's train of thought, would make a national classification system as meaningless as an international one. However, before we draw any con-

clusions in this respect, we need to know much more about the sociological characteristics of groups and their significance in terms of book classification.

The remainder of the issue brings interesting information about recent meetings of German librarians, a list of head librarians of the major German libraries, and a short bibliography of recent contributions to the field.

It would be unfair to criticize the scholarly contributions of German librarians without taking into consideration the extremely difficult circumstances under which our German colleagues operate. It is less the terrific physical destruction than the moral, mental, and linguistic confusion caused by fourteen years of Nazi government—a confusion which has not been mitigated by the conflicting ideologies of the different military governments.

FELIX REICHMANN

Cornell University Library

The Story Up to Now: The Library of Congress, 1800-1946. By DAVID C. MEARNS. Reprinted from the *Annual Report of the Librarian of Congress for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1946*, with the addition of illustrations and a slight revision of text. Washington: Library of Congress, 1947. Pp. iii+226.

"And so God send the good Ship to her desired Port in Safety." So concluded the bill of lading of December 9, 1800, covering the first purchase of books for the Library of Congress. And so say we all. The good ship is now vast and commodious, of majestic beam and burthen, guided by an extremely able master, who is supported by mates and crew of unusual competence. Now her log has been conned by a chronicler who knows his library currents and trade winds. He and his colleagues know what the desired port is, and they have laid sure hands on the tiller (which by now has become a Sperry gyroscopic compass, plus radar equipment).

The writing of institutional history is an exacting task, requiring talents well above the ordinary to rescue even the best and most important of subjects from trivial antiquarianism or appalling dullness. Just as the operation of a library is one of the most complicated and difficult of enterprises, so the business of plowing through mountainous library records of the past and selecting the relevant and significant, rejecting the unimportant, places an unusually

heavy responsibility upon the historian. Admittedly, David Mearns had a captivating subject, one whose importance would make even an indifferent treatment worth attention. But his is far from being an indifferent treatment. Indeed, though he modestly calls it a story rather than a history, he has produced a classic. It is worthy of serious attention by historians of political, religious, legal, and other social institutions, and it goes without saying that it is required reading for all librarians who desire a perspective view of their profession. Beyond this it ought also to be required reading for every member of Congress. Others have essayed the task that faced Mearns and have perhaps more formally attempted a history of our national library, but his story is, for all its brevity, the clearest and most penetrating analysis of its growth yet made. It is also the most interesting, being written in a style and with a maturity of judgment that unhappily are none too common in the literature of the profession.

His principal theme is the evaluation of a concept—how a collection of books for the use of members of Congress became, with the passage of time and as a result of historical necessity as well as national pride, our national library. Had the institution been named the "American Library" or the "Library of the United States" in the beginning, much of the story of the growth of the concept of a national library would have been unnecessary. There may have been, as always, those who would have joined the anonymous contributor to the *Independent Chronicle* of Boston in 1790 in asking: "Could anything be more foreign to the real business of Congress? What connection has a Library with the public? With our Commerce; or with any other national concern?" But even this extreme view, in a day when libraries were regarded to a large extent as cultural ornaments and not as indispensable necessities in the conduct of war or peace, was not universal. There were also those who declared then and later that "a good library is a statesman's workshop" or, in the words of the *Daily National Intelligencer* of 1823, "We do hope that the wisdom and liberality of Congress will . . . make such regulations for the increase and utility of this noble institution as will contribute greatly to the improvement of our country, and will increase our respectability in this respect, in the eyes of foreign nations. . . . There should be no work of high character and unquestionable utility, published in any part of the world, which ought not,

in time, to find its way into the National Library of the United States."

It was the play and counterplay of these two attitudes that make up the theme of Mearns's story. No one today seriously questions the absolute necessity of the Library of Congress as an instrument essential to government or as a cultural institution of incalculable importance to the American people and to the world. But the narrowness of the view expressed by the *Independent Chronicle* is still in part entertained and too often has prevailed over the enlightened view expressed by the *National Intelligencer*. Mearns has provided responsible statesmen with an analysis which links a great achievement in the past to a great opportunity—and responsibility—in the future. Let us hope that the Congress will study this perspective soberly and responsibly and with a determination to provide the national library with resources adequate to its needs. The magnificent accomplishment of the past, achieved with relatively slender funds, is the best of arguments for ample support in the future as the Library faces its immense responsibilities as a force in government and in the lives of the people. Representatives of the people would do well to ponder Mearns's comment upon the situation of the Library of Congress in 1824:

From the perspective of nearly a century and a quarter, this legislation and the report which led to its enactment have a nostalgic quality which identifies the present with tradition. Then, as now, the annual book fund was sufficient only to the maintenance of subscriptions and to the procurement of the current products of the press. Then, as now, the lack of adequate provisions forced neglect of materials of retrospective and antiquarian interest. Then, as now, there was that realization of "the absolute necessity of an extensive and judiciously selected library." Then, but fortunately now a little less, there were, in some quarters, misgivings concerning the actual utility of literature presented in languages other than our own. Then the problems were microscopic; now they are magnified; but they are the same problems and they are familiar.

Representatives who have the responsibility of legislating for the general welfare should also ponder Mearns's further penetrating observation: "Over and over again experience has made postponement [of timely support] profligate."

In illustrating the institutional metamorphosis of a collection of books for the use of Congress into a national library, Mearns has been singularly adept at making even familiar names live as vivid personalities. A single bio-

graphical fact, a brief quotation, or a word of description in his hands evokes an unforgettable portrait of the various Library of Congress figures from Beckley to "the brush of the comet" that was MacLeish. Three of these—Meehan, Spofford, and Putnam—directed the Library growth for more than a century, and the portraits drawn by Mearns of these three are admirable characterizations, particularly that of the remarkable and fascinating Spofford.

If Mearns's narrative contains lessons for the statesmen, it also contains warnings for Librarians of Congress. Watterston, he points out, "had been brilliant, he had been industrious, he had accomplished fine and often constructive purposes, but he had been Librarian of one side of the aisle rather than Librarian of Congress." Fortunately, the able men who succeeded Watterston lifted the Library of Congress above partisanship. The present Librarian of Congress, though his vigorous direction of the Library as a national and international force does not form a part of Mearns's narrative, has also stood steadfastly and courageously against demands in certain quarters of government for secrecy and witch-hunting.

Such an inspiring record deserves a better format and greater dignity of presentation than that of a reprint bound in paper covers. Mr. Mearns's essay was a splendid background for the 1946 annual report of the Librarian of Congress, but it also deserves to stand alone as a well-bound, well-designed book.

JULIAN P. BOYD

Princeton University

Annual Report of the Librarian of Congress for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1947. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1948. Pp. 181.

To review a report of the Library of Congress is not an easy task. The reviewer is never quite clear whether he is reviewing the report as a report or reviewing the record of the Library as an operating agency. Doubtless his proper duty is to evaluate the report as a piece of writing on an important library subject. This reviewer, however, cannot wholly concur in quite so strict a construction of his assignment. Although he is keenly interested in the methods and techniques of library reporting, he must confess to an even greater interest in the welfare of the Library of Congress as an institution.

But let us look first at this important document simply as a piece of reporting. Chief Assistant Librarian Verner Clapp, to whom Librarian Luther Evans generously assigns the principal credit for developing and drafting the report, and the other library officers associated with him have performed their task with distinction. The 1947 report is much less formidable in bulk than that for the previous year, but the 1946 report contained two special features not repeated in 1947—David Mearns's highly readable history of the Library entitled "The Story Up to Now" and the long reprint of the "Justification of the Estimates, Fiscal Year 1947." Otherwise, the two reports are rather closely comparable in length and general organization.

The student of exposition in writing on library subjects may well use this report as a model. It is well organized, clearly and forcefully written, and documented with discrimination. If the hasty reader (there should be none!) wishes a concise yet penetrating summary of the major events of the Library's year, he turns to the Introduction. If he desires more details in his own special field of interest, he turns to one of six subsequent chapters dealing with the operations of the Library. If still more facts are needed, there are nineteen appendixes providing a multitude of details. If he desires a visual understanding of the administrative structure of the Library, he refers to the organization chart exhibiting the departments and divisions, with the number and grades of the staff in each. If he wishes to pursue his study of the Library beyond the report itself to the source materials, he is provided with lists of general orders and publications and records of concerts and exhibits. And, finally, if the reader requires only a single fact, he consults an index of almost nine hundred entries, covering pretty much everything from "Constitution of the United States" to "Communism in Action."

More important than these details, however, is a judgment of the selection of materials included in the report and the objectivity with which the essential facts, favorable or unfavorable to the Library, are reported. On this point the reviewer's reaction is again most favorable. Skilful topical introductions to chapters and subdivisions orient the reader quickly in the essential subject matter of each unit of the text. Internal evidence seems to stamp the reporting as thoroughly objective. Not only successes but also failures and shortcomings are carefully re-

corded. The report is punctuated by an almost distressingly long list of negative synonyms, such as "eliminated," "still before Congress," "shortage of staff or funds," "a considerable backlog of work," and many other phrases indicating suspended functions or arrearages in work. Clearly, the administration is keeping close watch on the major and minor operations of the Library.

And now the reviewer may be permitted to extend his function somewhat and comment on a few aspects of the report which specially interested him. One sharp reaction can be summed up in an exclamation: What a labyrinth of detailed records and processes a great library is! As one reads about the arrearages in this record or that process, he is forced to speculate again and again on how many staff members and how many dollars would be required to keep every record, every process, strictly up to date. Think what administrative shock would occur if every department and every division head were to step into the Librarian's office on June 30 of any fiscal year and proudly report: "Sir, the records and processes for which my department or my division is responsible are complete as of today!" How long can this Library—or any great library—hope to match its monumental system of records with a commensurate labor force? This reviewer leaves the question unanswered.

Another topic of absorbing interest on which the reviewer might speculate is the activity of the Library of Congress in co-operative enterprises. He began a detailed list of examples of co-operative projects in which the Library has been concerned—co-operation with other libraries, with foundations and learned societies, with agencies of the United States and foreign governments, with library associations, and with other groups. The idea was abandoned because the record was too long for inclusion here and because it was only too probable that important items might be overlooked. Suffice it to say that the Library of Congress is very likely to be concerned in any major scholarly co-operative enterprise involving bibliographic controls, cataloging or classification, acquisition of materials, or special reference services. The administration and staff of the Library are obviously keenly alert to their responsibilities in this important field.

Finally, there comes the question which is in some danger of becoming perennial in this period of Library of Congress history: Is the Library the *national* library? As long as this ques-

tion remains unanswered, many decisions on library policies must be deferred. This year's principal contribution to the Library's defense of its status as the national library is the "Library of Congress Planning Committee Report," published in full as an appendix to the report. This important document in the history of the Library was drafted by a special committee of librarians and scholars appointed by the Librarian and headed by Keyes D. Metcalf. On the question of the Library's status, the committee was positive in its recommendation that the Congress "recognize by Resolution that the Library of Congress is in fact the National Library of the United States and that, whenever its name appears in print on official publications or on its own letterhead, it be stated as 'The Library of Congress, the National Library of the United States of America.'"

The issue is as yet unresolved. In the Librarian's own words, "the matter is still before the Congress." Friends of the Library of Congress will join in hoping that the correct decision will not be too long delayed.

CARLETON B. JOECKEL

*School of Librarianship
University of California*

Twelfth Annual Report of the Archivist of the United States for the Year Ending June 30, 1946. Issued by the NATIONAL ARCHIVES. ("Publication," No. 47-4.) Washington: Government Printing Office, 1947. Pp. v+99.

Thirteenth Annual Report of the Archivist of the United States for the Year Ending June 30, 1947. Issued by the NATIONAL ARCHIVES. ("Publication," No. 48-6.) Washington: Government Printing Office, 1948. Pp. vi+92.

Seventh Annual Report of the Archivist of the United States as to the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, N.Y., for the Year Ending June 30, 1946. Issued by the NATIONAL ARCHIVES. ("Publication," No. 47-2.) Washington: Government Printing Office, 1946: Pp. ii+14.

Eighth Annual Report of the Archivist of the United States as to the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, N.Y., for the Year Ending June 30, 1947. Issued by the NATIONAL