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## The University of Dayton Library in the Next Two Decades

Rutherford David Rogers

On either side of the entrance of the library in which I work are companion inscriptions almost a foot high. One states "The Library is the heart of the University;" the other "The Library is the summons to scholarship." These statements may seem a bit trite in 1971, but one wonders what kind of institution Harvard would be without the Widener and Houghton Libraries, or Yale without the Sterling Memorial and Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Libraries. I hope it is this vision that has animated you in bringing your fine library building to fruition.

Someone is reported to have observed as he gazed at the outside of Yale's new library in 1930: "This is not the Library; the Library is inside." It is true, to paraphrase Hamlet, that "the book's the thing," but a librarian knows that it is impossible to fashion a functioning university library without a suitable physical plant. I congratulate you on recognizing this and placing it high on your list of priorities.

I have the inexcusable temerity today to act as prophet, presuming to project for you the nature and environment of your library during the next 20 years. I am sure to say some things that you won't like; if I do I hope you won't, in Ogden Nash's words "bite the hand that puts its foot in your mouth." Rather, I trust that you will find what I say, as someone said of the music of Wagner, "better than it sounds."

Samuel Johnson, who worked on his dictionary for nine years and received £1675 for his labors, said that dictionaries are like watches: the worst is better than none, and the best cannot be expected to go quite right. This is not a bad characterization of libraries, and I think I ought to confide in you that we librarians sometimes think that librarianship, like virtue and, I guess, lexicography, is too often its own reward. However, what I have read about your new library leads me to believe that it has already proved to be highly successful, and not only can your librarians take pride in their work, but you can face the future with confidence.

Fifteen thousand years ago, primitive man drew pictures of animals on cave walls and on bones in a style that we now call the X-ray style. Instead of merely drawing the outlines of a deer or bear, our ancestors drew in the

An address by Rutherford David Rogers, University Librarian of Yale, upon the occasion of the dedication of the new University of Dayton Library, September 25, 1971.

viscera, especially the heart. This practice surely reflected a perception of, as well as a curiosity about, the inner being and function and not just the outward appearance of the creatures that shared the environment of the naked ape. As we gather to regard the outward manifestation of a great library, it seems to be appropriate for us to emulate primitive man and examine the viscera of university libraries as well as some of the creatures who share our environment.

I venture to assert that we have reached, if not surpassed in many cases, the capacity of university budgets to support the library growth-rate characteristic of the last decades. Certainly this seems to me to be true for many of the very large private university libraries, including the one for which I work, but I hope it is not true here, and I think it need not be considering the present size of your collection. There is considerable evidence that many libraries, however, have at least temporarily reached a plateau in acquisitions budgets and growth rates that up to now have followed an amazing upward curve.

We are living in an era of equally incredible library building activity with numerous projects in the \$5,000,000-\$20,000,000 range, and some as high as \$30-\$40,000,000. Universities that have not undertaken single projects of this magnitude have undoubtedly engaged in numerous smaller building and remodeling efforts that place them in the multi-million category. However, I have talked to enough university presidents and trustees to know the anguish that such activity is causing on many campuses, and it seems to me overly optimistic to expect that the present era can be duplicated again from the standpoint of campus real estate, let alone finances. There is a story, perhaps apocryphal, that when the Widener Library was dedicated, Harvard's Librarian, Archibald Coolidge, observed to President Lowell as they were leaving the ceremony that it was none too soon to start planning the next main library. Whether it is true that President Lowell never spoke to Mr. Coolidge after this incident or whether there was just a long, frigid interregnum, I don't know. I do hope that history won't repeat itself today on this campus.

Despite the lack of clear-cut advantages in off-campus storage, I predict that in another generation this University will be weighing (as Yale already is) the advantages of a storage library. It is reasonable to believe that Ohio or a larger region may offer an opportunity for participation in such an enterprise by 1990. I hope this will be true by the time your building begins to get crowded—which will be sooner than you anticipate.

As to the financial problem generally, I think we all hope for greater support for universities and perhaps their libraries from the Federal government. However, I wonder if we in Universities are not guilty of regarding the Federal coffers the way George Washington on more than one occasion seems to have weighed the attractions of the opposite sex. May Eliza Philipse, better known as Polly, was romantically linked with Washington when he visited New York in 1756 at age 24. Douglas Southall Freeman describes the young lady as "erect and deep bosomed with a neck that had some indication of goitre. Her eyes

were clear and confident, her nose was large and her mouth broad, with a half dimple at either end. If she showed then what later was her most marked characteristic, she was of a nature to dominate and to shape others to her will . . . Still, any unmarried girl who owned 51,000 acres of valuable New York land was interesting, even if she might wish to have her own way."<sup>1</sup>

Despite what I have just said, I would be ungenerous if I did not admit to being impressed by the amount of Federal Aid you have mustered for your building, and I also compliment you, your architect and your contractors on the value you have received. The dollar-per-square-foot cost of your building is truly phenomenal.

I am sure that you rely to a substantial degree on gifts from alumni and friends to support the library and other operations of the University. wonder if any of these people are as ingenious in eluding you as an alumna of Stanford University, whom I shall call Hortense Schwimmer. Hortense did not respond to several appeals for funds. Unwilling to take no for an answer, her class agent wrote yet another letter, to which the following reply, obviously designed to cut off further correspondence, was received:

I regret to inform you that Hortense Schwimmer is dead. While working last week as a volunteer in a mission on Market Street she fell into a gigantic cooking pot and was drowned in 600 gallons of split pea soup. Those of us who knew her best agreed that this is the way she would have wanted to go.

I see no real relief from the influx of printed material from all over the world with which every research library struggles. It is reasonable to hope that in another ten years we can look forward to some compacting of the storage mass. It would surely be overly optimistic to expect that higher education microtext is going to play a significant role before 1980. It seems to be equally certain that the remarkable invention, the codex, is going to be with us for a long time. I hope so. At the present time, storage of a volume in a library such as yours costs approximately twenty cents, per annum. Computer storage *offline* of an equivalent amount of intellectual data would cost 35 times as much, and on-line 1,000 times as much.

Once upon a time when zealous computer experts would spin fantasies about the application of their art to libraries, those of us who were struggling with day to day problems reacted like the chuckwills lizard who, when threatened, opens his mouth, thereby frightening the opposition even if no sound is uttered. If this fails to scare away an intruder, the lizard dashes into a rock crevice, puffs up his body to half again the normal size with the result that a predator finds nearly impossible to dislodge him. Librarians have abandoned this lizard-in-the-rocks attitude and have learned a great deal, not always pleasant, about automation. Some day, the younger members of the audience will look back on our present level of computer application in libraries as fairly elementary. And yet those

of us who have been most involved with automation feel like Ogden Nash and his bath:

I test my bath before I sit  
And I'm always moved to wonderment  
That what chills the finger not a bit  
Is so frigid upon the fundament.

It has been demonstrated that an Ohio farmer expends more calories in the fossil fuels he uses to sow, cultivate and harvest his corn crop each year than the resultant harvest represents in energy. What is worse most of the grain is not directly consumed by humans but is fed to livestock with a 90% energy loss, so that only 10% of the corn's energy reaches us in the caloric value of meat, milk and eggs. I sometimes think that a huge research library, in its processing operations and in user efficiency, suffers similar losses of energy that make it extremely expensive and unresponsive. We have not really succeeded in making optimum use of centrally developed cataloging data, and we confront our users with a mass of undifferentiated information that can be consumed, at best, with 10% efficiency. The computer may very well be the key to this situation.

Before the end of this decade we will have mastered the technicalities of making efficient use of machine readable bibliographic data and will make some inroads into processing costs, but to do this, all of us—readers as well as librarians are going to have to accept a degree of standardization in classification and subject headings that some are going to find unpalatable.

You are indeed fortunate to be located in a state that is far out in front in the use of computers. It is perfectly evident that individual libraries, no matter how large or affluent, cannot independently maintain the data bases necessary for automation. If the data on a catalog card costs sixty cents per year to store in a computer, a single library would soon be bankrupt if it were to add \$100,000 in annual increments for bibliographic storage as its book collection grew. It seems certain that the University of Dayton is more likely than libraries in other regions to realize the benefits of automation because of your location in Ohio.

Although you are in that halcyon period with a great deal of book storage space, it is none too soon to be alert for materials that can be discarded. It is equally important that gifts be rigorously evaluated because of the space they occupy and the cost of processing them.

However, in discarding gifts or other apparently unneeded material, I am sure librarians will be more discriminating than the thief who once stole the Savoy Book of Hours. This is one of the great treasures of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library of Yale. The Savoy Book of Hours was created in the fourteenth century for Blanche of Burgundy, Countess of Savoy. Later it became the property of Charles V of France, and still later was damaged in a fire in Turin. The surviving leaves were found in Portsmouth, England where, in 1941, the manuscript was again endangered, this time by bombing. It was removed to

the Presbytery at Winchester Cathedral for safekeeping, where it rested for twenty years on a open shelf. The man who eventually bought it visited the Presbytery, and when Father Bernard Fisher learned how precious the book was, he put it in the safe. The next morning he was horrified to find the safe missing. It was found in the basement with the door broken open and the contents missing: £ 2.10.0 and the Savoy manuscript. In the consternation that followed this discovery, a curate was strolling down a path and found an open book—the Savoy Hours—tossed into a bush. This time it was returned to the open shelf, and Father Fisher could not help reflecting on the fortune that had been cast away when the thief chose \$5.00 in cash rather than an old book—an old book, incidentally, that just happened to be worth several tens of thousands times as much as the cash.

I have had more than one faculty member assert that the university library must acquire every publication, well-reviewed or not, in a field like history. I understand the reasons advanced for this assertion, but this is not a tenable position for any library with which I am acquainted. I think it is not hard to demonstrate that everything that is written is not necessarily grist for our mill. If I may return to our friend George Washington, at age 16, he wrote an acrostic poem. As you know, in an acrostic, the first letter of each line, if read vertically, is supposed to spell something. The object of George's attention was named Frances Alexander, and I need not point out that the "x" in Alexander was a tough nut to crack. George's deathless poem, began as follows:

From your bright, sparkling Eyes, I was undone;  
Rays, you have more transparent than the sun,  
Amidst its glory in the rising Day,  
None can you equal in your bright array;  
Constant in your calm and unspotted Mind;  
Equal to all, but will to none Prove kind,  
So knowing, seldom one so Young, you'll Find.  
Ah! woe's me, that I should Love and conceal,  
Long have I wish'd but never dare reveal,  
Even though severely Loves pains I feel;  
Xerxes that great, wasn't free from Cupids Dart,  
And all the greatest Heroes, felt the smart.<sup>2</sup>

Having conquered the "x" in Alexander, George apparently gave up exhausted, for which we can be thankful, and I respectfully suggest that such poetry should only be preserved when it is written by future Presidents.

As world publication increases, which it certainly will, we must select more wisely. I have no doubt that an expert in Middle Eastern Studies has correctly stated that there is "a great deal of junk in present publications," and we have the unenviable task of avoiding the redundant and the junk.

We have talked a great deal about cooperation and we have achieved a fair

amount over the years, but I am confident that there will be—in fact there already is—mounting pressure from university administrators for more cooperation. At long last, we are working at the national level on a periodical lending library which can greatly benefit this university and all others by providing rapid access to centrally-stored, lesser-used periodicals. The cost of serials and their handling and storage are taking on the character of a Frankenstein monster in most large libraries. We subscribe to tens of thousands of titles; subscription costs advance 10-15% each year; unit costs of cataloging are extremely high; binding is appallingly expensive—in short, we are threatened with a major crisis if we don't find a solution to this problem. I believe we will, both at the national level and through regional consortia like the one in which UD participates. Yale is exploring similar arrangements in New England. I think that never has the climate been more right for real progress in cooperative ventures of this kind.

As pressure increases to meet the cost of current publications, we must necessarily de-emphasize retrospective buying on the grand scale that some of us have been engaged in. More and more, we must limit ourselves to purchasing those older publications for which there is a clear demand.

The rare book markets are not going to dry up any more rapidly than they already have, but there may be less inflation brought about by institutional as opposed to private buyers, although Iranian potentates and oil barons, not to mention museum directors, continue to drive up the prices of Chippendale desks and Rembrandt, Velasquez, and other paintings. Anyone who has sat in weekly meetings to make decisions on items offered in the trade or at auction must realize the capriciousness of the present market and some of the "creatures" who inhabit it. Last month we acquired a valuable eighteenth century letter at Yale by bidding at auction. A faculty member especially desired this particular item because it shed light on a major literary figure. We were uncertain how much to bid. Our agent said that the letter could easily fetch £800. We felt that we did not wish to bid more than £400. As luck would have it, the letter was knocked down to us at £180. On the other hand, a year earlier, a rare book that we thought could and should be bought for \$45,000 was sold to a private dealer for \$75,000, who, the same week, had the nerve to offer it to us, the unsuccessful bidder, for \$90,000. My reaction to this is the same as d'Alembert's two hundred years ago. When Voltaire tried to ingratiate himself with the Russian court by writing Peter the Great "a collection of gross compliments disguised as history" d'Alembert said that the book made him very nauseous, only he used more vivid language not appropriate to this occasion.

The privilege of access to university collections will be greatly restricted in the next 20 years. This will affect those in and out of universities. In response to faculty and student demand in several libraries—and I believe UD is no exception—limitations have been imposed on the circulation of the last ten years, on all bound volumes of journals, and entire collections in some departmental libraries are similarly restricted. It would not surprise me to see this practice

extended to intensive-use libraries and core collections that are evolving in some universities.

I regret to say that I am also convinced that the decade will not reach the half way mark before some charges are made for interlibrary loans by those libraries that are predominantly givers rather than receivers. These operations are costing \$50,000-\$100,000 in the biggest libraries, and this is the kind of expense that is coming under increasingly rigorous examination in the university community. Those users who object to paying for borrowing may eventually regard such a system the way Samuel Johnson regarded marriage which, he said, has "many pains, but celibacy has no pleasures."

I would also suggest that those colleges that want to become universities and those small universities that want to multiply their doctoral programs might consider the possibility of a cooperative arrangement with an established neighboring university library. It is a constant concern to me that we in large university libraries build on such a grand scale and so expensively for a relatively limited clientele. If we could broaden our user base at minimal incremental costs—and I am aware of all the possible complications—it could be advantageous for all parties involved.

While it is true that many of our problems could be corrected by more funds, these are not likely to be forthcoming in the amounts needed. This suggests that University administrators must realize that the uncontrolled venturing into new fields, new disciplines and new areas of the world carries with it almost unbearable library costs—not of the magnitude of \$10-20,000 but literally hundreds of thousands of dollars continuing far into the future.

A library cannot continue to absorb demands of this kind with an unchanged budget, and yet I often feel that faculty and university administrators expect of us the sleight of hand reflected in the old Yiddish proverb: "Sleep faster, we need the pillows." I respectfully submit that many of our library headaches could be controlled if others in the university would stop producing new curricular offspring. If this does not happen, librarians are going to become as clever as seeds in the desert which will germinate only in response to water that comes from above bringing with it certain chemicals that are leached from the soil. Ground water that may rise from below produces no such germination. Since this is an audience that understands parables, I will let you make of this what you will.

In the best of all possible worlds, the faculty and even some students will understand that no library can have every publication that they might want and that it might be entirely reasonable to wait a week for a microfilm file from a central repository.

I can see a number of things as near certainties for the next two decades. My optimism, like the virtue of the French Lieutenant's Woman is less certain or at least not equal to visualizing a revolution in university attitudes in so short a time. But these changes must and will come, hopefully in the 1980's when I plan to be relaxing in Portofino, Mallorca, or the Greek isles.

Despite all the woes of the libraries, we should take heart in the essential greatness of our mission, perhaps most lucidly and succinctly enunciated by Clarence Day:<sup>3</sup>

The world of books (he wrote) is the most remarkable creation of man. Nothing else that he builds ever lasts. Monuments fall; nations perish; civilizations grow old and die out; and, after an era of darkness, new races build others. But in the world of books are volumes that have seen this happen again and again, and yet live on, still young, still as fresh as the day they were written, still telling men's hearts of the hearts of men centuries dead.

These are words that the members of this community, grounded as you are on the rock of faith and tradition, will surely comprehend.

Yale University

### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Douglas Southall Freeman, *George Washington*, Vol. 2, 160.

<sup>2</sup>The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 17-45-1799. John C. Fitzpatrick, ed. Washington, G. P. O. 1931 Vol. 1.

<sup>3</sup>*The Story of the Yale University Press Told by a Friend*, 1920.