

ARTHUR T. HAMLIN

*The University Library
in the
United States*

ITS ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT



UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA PRESS
Philadelphia

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Preface

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The genesis of this book was a casual conversation with Maurice English, my friend and college classmate who was then director of the Temple University Press. "What," said he, "needs to be published in the field of librarianship?" I thought for a moment, then replied, rashly as it turned out, "A history of university libraries in the U.S." This interested him and we discussed it. The question then was, who should do it? My recommendation was Robert Downs, and shortly thereafter a letter went from English to Downs. The reply triggered the event, for it was a polite refusal, coupled with the suggestion that Temple had on its own faculty just the man for the job. By this time the seed was planted and investigative work began.

The demands of a senior administrative post are such that progress was slow until the university granted a study leave for 1976-77. A major portion of this book was completed in those months. The material was then left "fallow" for some twenty months until I took early retirement in order to complete it.

This history is written for the academician outside the library profession who is a user of libraries and interested in them. It is also written for younger members of the profession, both prospective and already committed, who want to know the general background of growth and development. It lays no claim to being the definitive history. It is rather the story as viewed by one individual who has read extensively in background material and who has been, over a period of forty-eight years, a staff member of six of the largest research libraries in the country (Harvard, Columbia, the New York Public, University of Pennsylvania, University of Cincinnati and Temple University). As executive secretary of the Association of College and Reference Libraries in the fifties I visited literally hundreds of campuses, and came to know the leaders in the field, and was then and subsequently, personally involved in many professional developments.

This material, then, is based in part on personal experience and

observation. It is also based on a considerable reading of university histories. "It wonders me," as the Dutch say, that so many otherwise reputable historians can write extensive histories of their alma maters with hardly a reference to the library except possibly that a building was built, or a director appointed. Athletics, social events, parking provisions, inaugural addresses of presidents, and a host of petty matters all too frequently crowd out any reference to "the heart of the University." Robert Vosper once wrote, "The powerful and steady growth of book collections in individual American university libraries, particularly during the mid-twentieth century, has been a major achievement in American cultural and educational history. It has both matched and fostered the ebullient and questing intellectual life of the universities themselves, and it has been a marvel to many foreign observers." It is well known that every distinguished complex university also has a library equally distinguished for its collections and its library services. Yet the library, which is vital to the attraction of a superior faculty and for its function, rates little or no mention in a majority of institutional histories. But there are exceptions, and here and there one will find a whole chapter, a glorious, thoughtful, constructive review of the building of the library. To such as so write, all praise.

Most of the source material used has been strictly the literature of librarianship. A small number of doctoral dissertations and Brough's *Scholar's Workshop* give detailed historical data on such major universities as Harvard, Yale, Columbia, Ohio State, Illinois, Indiana, Chicago, California at Berkeley, and Texas. Other dissertations and many masters' theses deal with other institutions and with particular aspects of librarianship. In addition, many brief histories of university libraries have been issued, some as separate volumes of some length, others as articles, usually in a library or university publication. Many, but by no means all of these have been examined. Finally, of course, there is the journal literature; particularly useful have been the *Library Journal*, *Library Trends*, *College and Research Libraries*, and *The Library Quarterly*. The findings here are based on this literature, not on examination of trustees' notes, annual reports of directors, or minutes of committees.

Footnotes are given only when considered essential and as briefly as necessary for identification. Reference must be made to the bibliography for the full citation of any footnote. The section on sources is intended to give the principal authorities used for each chapter. In several cases this section is also used to refer readers to other material which is be-

list of books and writings of one
author or about one subject.

lieved to be especially important or because it presents a different view.

University names are generally abbreviated and reference is generally assumed to be to the library of the institution. Thus it is "Columbia" from the very early days, not its first designation, "King's College," and it is Duke, not Trinity. Further, state universities are often referred to only by the name of the state; a full form is used where necessary for clarity. Thus it is Pennsylvania and Oregon for the University of Pennsylvania (Philadelphia) and the University of Oregon (Eugene) and it is Penn State (State College) and Oregon State (Corvallis).

The bibliography is limited to publications referred to in this work. It would be foolhardy to duplicate the excellent work of Michael Harris and Donald Davis, Jr., whose *American Library History, a Bibliography* (University of Texas Press, 1978) fills this need.

The literature of librarianship in recent years has become distinguished for its obscurity. Alas, some of the younger members of the profession are so learned that their published findings are beyond the comprehension of their seniors. In England a decade ago, the director of a university library in whose office I sat opened a new issue of *College and Research Libraries* and read to me a few paragraphs of the lead article. "Arthur, what kind of writing is that!" he exclaimed. Neither of us could make any sense of it. More recently I took something, recommended as essential for every library school student, to a fellow director for elucidation. No help. Then to a dean of a library school. He was equally nonplussed. These are by no means unusual cases. The literature of librarianship has its full measure of jargon, and this is a reflection on us all. The matter is mentioned here in defense of the terms used in this book, which may seem unnecessarily simplistic to some of my learned colleagues. I hope and pray that the exposition is reasonably clear to any and all with collegiate level backgrounds, regardless of special interest.

The presentation of the university library is given here first with a chronological overview, then with chapters on some principal topics. There is necessarily some duplication, but every effort has been made to hold it to the minimum. The chronological approach includes relatively full treatment of some topics which did not seem to fit in the later chapters.

Certain topics, treated here as chapters, can obviously only be handled properly with book-length treatment. This is particularly true of Cataloging and Classification, of Library Buildings, and of Technology.

To continue with these apologies, a word of warning about the

statistical tables. Data on the size of libraries, their budgets, and other essential information varies enormously. Does the figure for volumes represent all collections in a university? The truth is, "almost never." Is it a really reliable figure in other respects? Again, seldom, if ever, because of variant methods of counting, unrecorded losses, clerical errors, etc. Then does the volume count include material in microform? Some reports include it, others do not, and in the large library this count runs into six figures. Financial figures also vary. In my own experience the annual expenditure for a major departmental library was reported by its librarian to one professional journal as nearly \$950,000.00; for the same year it was recorded on the comptroller's books as just under \$700,000.00, while the figure sent to the federal government (HEGIS) was an official \$558,000.00.* Which figure does a responsible person use? In academe the explanations generally lie in a welter of obscurations that seek to justify such wide variation. Figures for university enrollments are equally treacherous. Do they include all branches of the university? Do they include all who took a course at any time during the year or are they figures for enrollees at a particular time? Are they full-time equivalent? The variations are quite considerable. The figures used in this history are believed to be as accurate as obtainable. I have held the statistical presentations to a very few because of chances of misuse.

Generalizations as to what was happening in university libraries as a group at a particular point in time cannot reflect the situation in the emerging institution. A considerable number of great university libraries, as represented in the select membership of the Association of Research Libraries, have grown to maturity in recent years. Their libraries of a few decades back might not have done justice to a junior college of that time. So the generalizations given here usually apply only to the well established.

A considerable number of acknowledgements for permissions and for aid and assistance are a pleasant obligation: to Temple University for a study leave at half salary to pursue the work; to the University of Illinois Press for permission to reproduce the statistical table from Brough's *Scholar's Workshop*; to Robert Downs and Richard De Gennaro for critical comment on portions of the manuscript and for encouragement; to Charles Churchwell and H. Glenn Brown for data on Brown University Library; to Donald Davidson for information on the University of Califor-

*Approximate figures used so as to obscure identification of the institution.

nia at Santa Barbara; to Walter Woodman Wright for material on Dartmouth; to Kendon Stubbs of the University of Virginia Library; to William Carlson for data and for a copy of his history of the Oregon State University Library; to Edward G. Holley for many favors; to Gerhard Naeseth of the University of Wisconsin at Madison; to Hendrick Edelman for permission to reprint his tables on university libraries and for much informal discussion of history; to Harold Billings for material on the building-up of the University of Texas collections in the last twenty-five years; to Ernest Earnest of Temple for advice on the history of higher education; to Rutgers University Library for courtesy borrowing privileges; to Beverly Feldman of the Harvard College Library for information; to E. L. Inabinett for answers to queries on the early history of the University of South Carolina, and particularly to Kenneth Toombs for many courtesies regarding data on that institution; to William C. Roselle for data on the acquisition of the American Geographical Society Collection by Wisconsin at Milwaukee. Alas, this list includes none of my own staff at Temple's Paley Library, who were always ready to help, but their very number precludes such designation.

Newcastle, Maine
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Contents

Preface	ix
<i>Part I Chronology</i>	
1 The Collegiate Libraries of the American Colonies	3
2 Growth and Development, 1790-1876	22
3 Emergence of the Research Library, 1876-1920	45
4 Between Two Wars, 1920-1946	60
5 Expansion in the Generation Since World War II	68
<i>Part II Aspects of Librarianship</i>	
6 Building the Collection	87
7 Governance and Leadership	110
8 Financial Support	122
9 The Pattern of Service to Students and Scholars	134
10 The Library Building	147
11 The Problem of the Departmental Library	168
12 The Growth of Cooperative Enterprise	182
13 Systems of Cataloging and Classification	197
14 The Technological Revolution	211
Epilogue	226
Appendices	
Appendix 1. American College Libraries in 1849	230
Appendix 2. College and University Library Holdings and Ph.D.s Awarded, 1876-1975	232
Appendix 3. Holdings of the Twenty Largest University Libraries, 1876-1978	238
Appendix 4. Expenditures for Library Materials and Volumes Added, 1947 and 1978, for Fifteen Large University Libraries	239
Appendix 5. Resident, Degree-credit Enrollment of Colleges and Universities, 1899-1976	240

Abbreviations	241
Notes	242
Sources	246
Bibliography	254
Index	264

Part I
Chronology

CHAPTER 1

The Collegiate Libraries of the American Colonies

There are approximately 150 universities in the United States which have professional schools of some stature and a variety of respectable study programs at the doctoral level. Both aspects of university work require sophisticated library services and extensive library collections for the progress of students, for the vitalization of teaching, for the research essential to dissertations, and for the extension of knowledge carried on independently by the faculty.

These libraries now gather their collections from all over the globe and routinely handle material in scores of languages. The enormous growth of knowledge of the last several decades has resulted in a similar growth in publications of research value, which must be acquired, recorded, and serviced. With all this goes a dependence on technology that would have bewildered the librarian of the 1920s: microreproduction of many types, reading machines, telex, reader-printers, a wide spectrum of audio-visual aids, laboratories for paper and film conservation and restoration, and finally and dramatically, the computer with its multiplicity of services for use and misuse. The handling of programs of such magnitude and complexity requires budgets in the millions and staffs numbered in the hundreds with language competencies and technical knowledge of high order.

It was not always so. Our institutions of higher education were all on the collegiate level until late in the nineteenth century, when the true university began to develop, and these collegiate institutions depended on libraries which, for the most part, were limited to a few thousand poorly selected volumes and virtually no service programs. Libraries were increasingly emphasized in university growth in the fifty years following the founding of Johns Hopkins in 1876, but their real growth has come within the lifetimes of librarians still professionally active. It is only a slight exaggeration to say that the growth of these research libraries which are the foundation of the modern university has been as dramatic

and far-reaching since World War I as the growth of air travel. While all this seems to have developed with bewildering speed, it is not at all unlikely that similarly dramatic change lies in store for research libraries in the two decades remaining in this century.

Enough of this speculation; let us turn to first beginnings. The "seed" of a university library was sown with the founding of Harvard College, on October 25, 1636, when the General Court of Massachusetts voted "to give 400£ towards a schoole or colledge, whearof 200£ to be paid the next yeare and 200£ when the worke is finished, and the next Court to appoint wheare, and what building." It was at least as late as the summer of 1638 before any collegiate instruction was inaugurated. A firm date for its origin is established by a letter written by one Edmund Browne in September of 1638 in which he reports: "Wee have in Cambridge heere, a College erecting, youth lectured, a library, and I suppose there will be a presse this winter." That same month another wrote, "Newtowne now is called Cambridge. There is a University house reared, I heare, and a prity library begun." John Harvard enters the picture, also in September of 1638, when he died at the age of thirty and left one-half of his estate, estimated at 1,700£, towards the erecting of a College, and all his library. Word of this reached New England some months later and on March 13, 1639, the General Court, "ordered, that the Colledge agreed upon formerly to bee built at Cambridge shalbee called Harvard Colledge." The "prity library" mentioned in the two letters undoubtedly refers to books given locally, recorded in a contemporary document as "the Honoured Magistrates and Reverend Elders gave. . . . out of their libraryes' books to the value of £ 200."¹ *come before in time.*

Readers who are librarians will agree with the writer that surely the first university library antedates the university, this out of loyalty rather than solid historical fact. In any case, the first university did indeed begin its first very feeble movements with a sizable collection of books. Aside from the gifts mentioned above, John Harvard's bequest added 329 titles in more than four hundred volumes. To this beginning were shortly added other works so that by conservative estimate the holdings in 1655 had increased to eight hundred titles in about nine hundred physical volumes.

We know that a "prity library" was provided before the John Harvard donation, but there is no record of the number or nature of the books. We only know that the educated people of the colony had been dunned for books. Harvard's first building, which lasted scarcely a generation,

had a small room termed "library" on the second floor. Closed to students, it was a locked room to house the book collection. Was this the "prity library," housing a hundred or more miscellaneous volumes?

In any case, the shelves were soon filled with the bequest of the Reverend John Harvard, sometime Minister of God's Word at Charlestown, who had arrived, with his library, in the Bay Colony just the year before his death.

This was a gentleman's library. About 65 percent of the works were theological, mostly in Latin. But it was broad in scope and included some Catholic, indeed even Jesuit, authors. The classical authors were represented in the original and in some of the famous translations, such as Chapman's *Homer* and North's *Plutarch*. Bacon was there and Descartes, Poliziano, and Erasmus, a goodly number of grammars and dictionaries, some English poetry, a very little classical drama, and a few medical books. It was a catholic collection and, if theology predominated, we must remember that this was the principal interest of the educated men of that time. It was quite contemporary since more than a quarter of the books had been printed after 1630. It is of interest that so extensive a library was shipped safely to the new colony at such an early date.

Other gifts followed. President Dunster found time from his oppressive lecturing schedule and other duties to appeal in 1647 to the New England Confederation on behalf of the library. It is the mark of the man that he recognized, as few others did in that day, the need for books in all branches of learning. In particular he noted that the library was defective "in all manner of bookes, especially in law, phisicke, Philosophy and Mathematickes, the furnishinge whereof would be both honourable and profitable to the Country in generall and in speciall to the schollars, whose various inclinations to all professions might thereby be encouraged and furthered."²

While this appeal fell on stony ground, gifts began to come with some regularity from other sources.

A touching picture both of concern for the Harvard library and of how it operated is given in a 1663 document by one Jonathan Mitchell.

1. Forasmuch as a Compleat & well-furnishd Library is altogether necessary unto eminent degrees of Learning in any Faculty. And to Have at least one such in y^e Country is needfull for y^e publike & Common good, as well as for the (p)rofit of particular scholars. It is [er]go a needful & would be a N[oble?] work to Inlarge the L(i-

brary of t)he Colledge at C[ambridge] [torn] And should it please any to contribute either particular summes, or any Annuity to that end It would be a worthy & renoured service to y^e publike. provided Alwayes that the Trustees abovesayd doe with y^e Help of the President & Fellows take a speciall & extraordinary care for the Keeping & well-ordering of y^e Library, & to prevent all Abuses therein; & that (as soon as may be) the Bookes may be chained as they are in other places. In y^e mean time y^t the president and senior Fellow with some one or two of y^e Trustees, doe every quarter goe into y^e Library & take a strict account of y^e Library-Keeper y^t no Book may be so lent out or disposed as to be in Hazard either of being lost or abused.³

Just as later colonial libraries to a degree were patterned on Harvard practice, Harvard's first library conformed to the experience of the leaders of the Bay Colony, who were mostly Cambridge University men. Of those who came before 1650, one hundred were Cantabrigians as contrasted with thirty-two Oxonians. And of the Cambridge colleges, Emmanuel had by far the greatest number of these students. No less than ninety-eight colonists were ministers of the gospel in New England. Obviously, then, this little group of leaders in the New World thought of the college they were founding principally in terms of Cambridge, just as later on the founders of Yale, mostly Harvard graduates, thought in those terms.

Instruction at Cambridge University was very largely in the hands of the tutors, as it was at Harvard. In the former it was extremely flexible, dependent on the interests, taste, and conviction of the tutor, whereas in the New World it was anything but flexible. The key to instruction until the nineteenth century was the tutor. Of a Cambridge tutor in the early seventeenth century Morison writes:

A college tutor at that time had almost absolute control over his pupils, with whom his relation was more than paternal. He seldom had more than six pupils, and usually less; for he was supposed to spend much time on his studies. He might be highly conscientious, or otherwise. . . . He might teach his pupils in a class, or individually. But in any case, one or more pupils shared his chamber, his compensation was a matter of personal arrangement with their parents, and he was responsible to the College for all their bills . . . Simonds d'Ewes, on leaving the University, notes: "My loving and careful tutor, Mr. Holdsworth, accompanied me home, not only to perform the last loving office to me, but to receive some arrearages due to him upon his bills."⁴

At that time at Cambridge University the pupil rose in time for a five o'clock chapel followed by a breakfast of bread and beer. Then came lectures or recitations and some study until an eleven o'clock main meal "in hall." This was followed by an hour for recreation and supposedly by several hours of study. Then more bread and beer in the afternoon, supper at five or six, relaxation, and finally, if the tutor was conscientious, an hour of "improving conversation" before early retirement. Evening reading was not expected because of obvious limitations in lighting.

Libraries played no part in this program. In 1610, Emmanuel College had 503 books, of which 30 were reported missing! In 1637 the number had grown to "about 600." These were for the tutors, should they be inclined to study. The entire library came by gift, and was largely theological in nature.

Instruction at Cambridge, as later at Harvard, William and Mary, and the other colonial colleges, was based on the seven liberal arts as laid out by Martianus Capella in the fifth century. These were the Trivium of Grammar, Rhetoric, and Logic and the Quadrivium of Music, Arithmetic, Geometry, and Astronomy. Six of the seven, together with the three Philosophies brought in by the twelfth-century Renaissance, and the Greek literature introduced in the later Renaissance, remained the backbone of the undergraduate course in European and American universities well into the nineteenth century.

Throughout the centuries the study of grammar remained fundamental. Of course, it was Latin grammar, although Benjamin Franklin was partly successful in introducing English grammar at the University of Pennsylvania. Rhetoric, whether verbal or written, was the art of persuasion. Logic was a principal preparation for both the pulpit and the bar. Whereas rhetoric encouraged interest in belles-lettres, logic exercised a stultifying influence on originality and scientific investigation.

The basic preparation for these studies was a sound knowledge of Latin and a smattering of Greek, which any boy could acquire in the early days of the New World from his clergyman. Thus while seventeen was a usual age for acceptance in a college, English or colonial, some students were matriculated much younger.

The daily life of the colonial student conformed to the English pattern. It remained basically the same until the early nineteenth century. For example at Harvard the student gained admission by a brief examination at the college to show thorough grounding in Latin and some knowledge of Greek. In effect he then entered college, which meant he was