

*The Library and the Availability of Knowledge**

by S. LYMAN TYLER**

“There is nothing more to the credit of a library than that every man finds in it what he seeks, having failed to find it elsewhere.” So wrote Gabriel Naudé as he outlined the steps that were necessary to the establishment of a library in the 1640’s. The argument is as sound today as some 320 years ago, but the store of knowledge or information that is available to man, and the number of individuals seeking it have increased tremendously.

Possibly one of the most significant changes that have occurred since the Industrial Revolution relates to the classification, availability, and uses of knowledge. In our rapidly changing world, to avoid duplication of effort on the part of scholars, a research library must contain in books, learned journals, and technical reports an up-to-date record of recent progress in research as well as the documentary materials that allow one age to speak to another.

Scholarly pursuits lead into hundreds of specialized fields, and the results of research are cataloged and classified in order to bring them together, as nearly as possible, in the collection. Great universities with important libraries and competent faculties are in a position to significantly influence our modern societies, for today as in past times power follows knowledge. This powerful ally, knowledge, is a formidable tool in the hands of those wise enough to use it.

More than any other institution, the library of a university “is the custodian of the world’s actual knowledge and the reservoir of its potential knowledge.” It preserves and makes available the results of previous human seeking. It makes possible a fruitful continuation of that search. Each

*Because of the nature of their relationship to scholarly activities three Brigham Young University organizations have been invited to submit statements for this issue on their activity and growth: the University Library, the Institute of American Indian Studies, and the Institute of Government Service.

**Professor of history and director of libraries at Brigham Young University.

educational advance depends upon its resources, and the extent of the advance is in very direct proportion to the ability of the library to respond.

In the words of Paul Buck, formerly Provost and now Director of Harvard University libraries, "A quality education is impossible without a quality library." He states further that "You cannot have a quality faculty without a quality library."

The maintenance of strong libraries is one of the responses universities have made to the vast increase in the bulk of recorded knowledge. To invest in a well-balanced research collection for a university library is to make a permanent investment—one that will guarantee returns in terms of a creative faculty and well-trained students for generations to come.

It is a compliment to the faculty and students of Brigham Young University that the administrative officers and Trustees have had sufficient faith in them to approve the construction of a library building adequate to accommodate the growth of the collection through the 1960's.

It is a further compliment that funds have been secured and continue to be made available to assure an orderly expansion of the research collections. Our society is dedicated to the idea that man's salvation is secured only as rapidly as his knowledge grows: both religiously and secularly, the two to be judiciously combined in a way that will result in a well-balanced man. This was the goal of Brigham Young when he established the university. It continues to be its reason for being.

Great libraries do not grow accidentally. Given a well ordered building and adequate funds, they are the result of years of knowledgeable seeking and finding on the part of a well organized library staff and an informed faculty.

Friends of libraries in the form of collectors who have spent a life-time bringing together a meaningful collection in a specialized field; and bookmen who have sought out and acquired the landmarks of scholarship and of printing and publishing; all these combine to help in the work of accumulating the results of scholarship and of the arts and letters to build a monument to man's past seeking, a library.

To quote Naudé further:

And since it is commonly with readers as it was with Horace's three guests, "With gullet various seeking food diverse," libraries can be compared to nothing better than

to the meadow of Seneca, where every living creature finds that which is most proper for it, "the ox, grass; the hound, the hare; the stork, a lizard."

.

And besides, if one considers times, places, and new inventions, no man of judgment can doubt that it is much easier at present to possess thousands of books than it was for the ancients to get hundreds, and that therefore it would be a shame and eternal reproach to us to be inferior to them in this particular, in which they may be surpassed with such advantage and ease.

In the past ten years the number of volumes in the Brigham Young University Library has more than tripled, and the collection is now very near the half-million mark. If it can be doubled again before the end of the decade we will be able to more fully accommodate the ever-expanding program of the university, as well as the research efforts of its faculties.

Library usage at Brigham Young University in the past 10 years has shown a phenomenal increase. A recent library statistical report disclosed that while the student body increased 261 percent in the last decade, the use of library books and materials increased approximately 1000 percent during the same period. Another substantial increase in total library use is noted for 1963 which showed a 17.3 percent hike over the previous year while the student body enrollment for the same period increased about 12 percent. President Ernest L. Wilkinson in his annual address to the Brigham Young University faculty last September stated that "perhaps no single development has done more during recent years to raise academic standards and to increase scholastic achievement at Brigham Young University than the construction of the J. Reuben Clark, Jr., Library." The President paid tribute to the new library facilities and open stacks by asserting that this "has made it possible for the entire student body to have access to the book collection. As a result, the cost of making each item available for use is now only half what it was under the closed stack system in operation in the old library." Clark Library statistics also show that library materials are used far more extensively in the library than those that are checked out for home use.

To paraphrase the words of Yale University Librarian, James T. Babb, when the library fully satisfies the scholarly needs of its patrons, both students and faculty, the contribu-

tions of the Brigham Young University Library to the scholarly community in the intermountain area will be remembered long after the winning football teams of our neighbor institutions have been forgotten.