International Exchanges

Robert B. Downs, *Director,*
University of Illinois Library, Urbana, Illinois

IN THE TEXT OF THE THREE-POWER STATEment on atomic energy, released in November 1945, there are several references to the desirability and necessity of interchanging scientific information. "Scientific literature" is mentioned specifically. This is believed to be the first time on record that the heads of three great governments have jointly advocated the exchange of scientific publications. Other evidence pointing in the direction of growing recognition of the importance of international exchanges is the extensive use of scientific publications by the General Staffs, the unprecedented demands made upon libraries by wartime research, and the regrettable frequency of calls for foreign publications not available anywhere in this country. Mention should also be made of the attention paid to foreign scientific and technical books and journals by the Alien Property Custodian; the careful scrutiny and digesting of enemy documents, still in process; and the distribution of information from these sources to American industry. It seems obvious that, as Vannevar Bush has commented, "adequate technical libraries are an indispensable tool for research workers."

Support for the idea of international exchanges has come also from another source, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. The UNESCO constitution states as one of the primary functions of that body the maintenance, increase, and diffusion of knowledge "by encouraging cooperation among the nations in all branches of intellectual activity, including the international exchange of persons active in the fields of education, science and culture and the exchange of publications, objects of artistic and scientific interest and other materials of information; [and] by initiating methods of international cooperation calculated to give the people of all countries access to the printed and published materials produced by any of them."

The role to be played by the United States in any plan for international intellectual cooperation will undoubtedly be of first importance because of the advanced state of scientific progress here, our efficiently organized libraries and other cultural and educational institutions, wide experience in the international exchange field, well-developed bibliographical services, and like factors. It is certain that a large measure of national initiative will be essential to the success of any such comprehensive program as UNESCO is contemplating.

The interchange of literature, information, and personnel on a world-wide scale is, of course, a problem with numerous ramifications. It involves, for example, exchange of publications between institutions; exchanges of official documents among governments; commercial exchanges; national bibliography; indexing and abstracting organs; cooperative acquisition agreements among libraries; reproduction of research materials; copyright, tariff, and postal regulations; interlibrary loans; traveling exhibitions; and reconstruction of war-devastated libraries. Certain major aspects of these and related problems will be reviewed briefly here.

Exchanges Between Institutions

International exchanges of publications between universities, learned societies, and other agencies are chiefly concerned with institutional publications, particularly current serials, on a title-for-title basis. Comparatively few American libraries—probably not more than 100—have benefited substantially from foreign exchanges. The most active exchange programs are carried on by large universities having strong presses associated with them and willing to allot sufficient funds and material for the purpose. When properly supported, exchange relationships with organizations abroad have proven extremely profitable. Several difficulties, however, are still unresolved, even though the exchange movement in the United States began at least three generations ago. No list of foreign publications available for exchange is in print, and, consequently, arrangements must be negotiated directly between libraries, frequently on a hit-or-miss basis. One result is many gaps and much unevenness in library collections. Another problem arises in connection with the Smithsonian Institution's International Exchange Service, an agency subsidized by Congress to transmit foreign exchanges (*Science*, August 9, 1946). As the system is now organized, individual libraries ship materials to the Smithsonian in Washington. From there the materials are forwarded to a foreign national bureau, which then transmits them to the receiving library. Actual delivery of publications under this plan is often excessively slow, perhaps requiring as much as six months time, because shipments are allowed to accumulate and are then sent by slow ocean freight. Such delays may be quite serious in the natural sciences, for example, if

This article is based in part on proceedings of a Conference on International Exchanges, sponsored by the American Library Association, held at Princeton University, November 25–26, 1946.

research on a particular problem is under way simultaneously in two or more countries. The solution would appear to be in the use of air freight, or in sending microfilm copies by air post, for the most urgently needed publications. To deal with the entire problem of exchanges between institutions, possibly a central coordinating agency is needed in each nation to expedite arrangements, to secure more complete coverage, and to stimulate the forming of exchange relationships.

Incidentally, the needs of scholars and scientists in the United States require the resumption of normal cultural, educational, and scientific relations with former enemy countries as promptly as possible. Many American universities, learned societies, and research libraries are holding shipments of their publications, especially for Germany and Japan, awaiting removal of wartime restrictions on transmission of such materials. At the same time, they wish to receive scholarly publications from functioning institutions in the ex-enemy nations. A high proportion of such material is of no military significance whatsoever, but does have a direct relationship to the activities of American scholars and research workers. At present, publications from Germany and Japan can be obtained, if at all, only through military channels and with great difficulty. There seems to be no alternative to opening normal peacetime communications except sending special missions on the War Department's authorization, and this procedure is expensive, slow, and cumbersome.

Exchange of Government Publications

Because of the expense involved, lack of bibliographical information, restrictions on distribution, limited demand, and space requirements, only a limited number of American libraries have been able to develop adequate collections of publications of foreign governments. Nevertheless, research workers are intensifying their interest in foreign documents—an interest which received its greatest impetus during the war years and is increasing with the continued emphasis on international organizations of all sorts. The Library of Congress is designated by Congress as the official recipient of foreign documents coming, by treaty or executive agreements, from other governments in exchange for our own Federal publications. A single copy in the national capital falls short, however, of meeting the demand. The need might be met, on the other hand, by the designation of certain strategically located centers in the United States to receive all important foreign documentary publications in exchange for official American publications to be sent to depositories abroad. Countries not wanting additional sets of publications of our Federal Government could be offered state documents or nongovernmental books and journals. In view of its strategic position, the Library of Congress is the logical agency to serve as a clearinghouse and coordinator for an expanded scheme of distribution of foreign official material.

National Bibliography

One of the major obstacles to international exchange is lack of information concerning the publishing output of various countries. Few nations maintain adequate records of book production. The gaps are conspicuous for virtually all Latin America, the Far East, and most of the minor countries of the world. Retrospectively, the situation is less satisfactory than that for current publishing. In the case of Italian printing, for example, national bibliography is almost a blank from 1500 to 1850, a 350-year period. Even in countries which have long been active bibliographically, the record is incomplete, e.g. 18th-century English printing and American printing for the first three quarters of the 19th Century. The United States is certainly now the leading nation in bibliographical matters, yet none of the three principal media for listing current imprints—the *Cumulative Book Index*, the *Publishers' Weekly*, or the Copyright Office's *Catalogue of Copyright Entries*—is more than a partial record of American publishing. Omitted are nearly all government documents, periodicals, newspapers, many private press imprints, a majority of pamphlets, and a considerable percentage of noncommercial and institutional material.

To achieve reasonably complete coverage of world book production is a Gargantuan bibliographical task. It calls for the full cooperation of UNESCO, the International Federation of Documentation, national governments, national libraries, library associations, pertinent commercial organizations, and any other agencies having an interest in finding a satisfactory solution. In countries with limited resources and little bibliographical background the stimulus must come from the outside.

The bibliographical treatment of periodicals calls for special comment. Particularly needed is a world list of current periodicals, noting such information as inclusion in abstracting and indexing services, availability on exchange, subjects covered, and all essential bibliographical details. The lack of a work of this kind is keenly felt during the present period when many periodicals abroad have discontinued, new journals have started, and national directories of periodicals have suspended publication. Negotiations for exchanges and purchases can hardly begin when the very existence of a journal is not definitely known. During the war the Library of Congress undertook the compilation of a union list of American holdings of scientific and technical periodicals issued in the Axis and Axis-controlled areas. This tool proved of frequent research value in the war effort and was especially useful because of its location feature. The list should now be expanded to serve as a guide to libraries trying to fill gaps in their files and as a basis for a republication program.

Indexing and Abstracting

Closely related to the whole periodical situation is the question of abstracts and indexes. In this field there are serious problems of overlapping, with abstracting and indexing services in different countries, or even the same country, covering the same materials. On the other hand, contrasting with this unnecessary and expensive duplication of labor there are numerous valuable journals and broad areas (the social sciences, for instance) now omitted from any indexing medium. Careful consideration should be given to determining what kinds of activities—national and international—will reveal most satisfactorily the results of research in all countries. The disappearance of the German indexing and abstracting publications left a substantial void, and the United States, with its vast resources, has an excellent opportunity to step into the breach. Such complex problems must be solved, however, as finding qualified abstractors to deal with scientific and other literature, in a variety of languages, throughout the world; deciding whether indexes and abstracts should be complete or selective; obtaining funds, amounting to hundreds of thousands of dollars annually, for preparation and publication; and, finally, overcoming the difficulties of getting access to journals of all countries. As a first step, to help define the size of the undertaking, it would be desirable to have a world bibliography of indexing and abstracting periodicals, giving under each title a list of publications indexed or abstracted. Such a tool would serve as a guide for the establishment of new indexing and abstracting organs and for reduction of duplication of effort.

Reproduction of Research Materials

The problem of reproduction of research materials divides itself into three parts: the need, the technical processes, and the potential uses. Because of destruction of research materials during the war years, the limited editions in which books and journals were issued in countries at war, and the increasing demands for materials on the part of libraries, scholars, and research workers, it has long been apparent that the available supply will fall short of requirements. The dilemma can be met satisfactorily only by an extensive program of reproduction by printing, photo-offset, microfilming, microprinting, or other methods. Here, too, international cooperation will be essential. It will be far more economical, for example, for a publication to be reproduced only once, to supply the demand in all countries, than to have each nation repeat the process separately. This would seem to call for the establishment of a central agency, or agencies, to coordinate the reissue of journals and other materials needed by American and foreign libraries and to determine what titles are in sufficient demand internationally to produce in the original size, in reduced facsimile, or by microfilm. Because of gaps in information, it might be necessary to develop, to some extent, bibliographies of publications of the war years before items which should be reproduced can be identified.

Also a part of the same field is international cooperation in the improvement of methods of reproducing library materials. Much experimentation and research are needed, as, for example, in microfilm and microprint techniques and mechanical indexing systems, before a reasonable degree of perfection is reached. As one instance, is the Rider "microcard" proposal capable of being developed to a point where it will be a feasible tool for the large-scale reproduction of research materials? Or, again, what are the comparative costs of reproduction, by the several processes now in common use, of materials of different lengths, types, and in varying numbers of copies? Closely related to the problem is a definite need for adoption of an international code of standards for technical reproduction. Interchanges of material are now handicapped by variations in practices and work quality.

A third phase concerns use. Studies are needed of the use of microreproductions for interlibrary loans, for exchanges between institutions, and to determine how satisfactorily reproductions serve the purposes of the scholar and student. In view of the hazards of transportation, extensive lending of original materials between countries is not practicable, and we must look toward increasing utilization of microfilm or other photographic reproductions to replace originals. The idea of international interlibrary loans is, of course, appealing and idealistic. In happier days it apparently worked well in western Europe, but, from a realistic point of view, there is considerable risk now of damage or loss in sending valuable materials across oceans and other great distances, and other means must be found. Uniformity in international interlibrary loan practices might be achieved by the establishment of a national clearinghouse in each country. The Library of Congress would be the natural center for the United States and could make decisions on whether original publications, films, or photostats should be sent.

Coordination of Book Acquisitions

From a practical point of view, it is impossible for even the largest libraries to hold more than a fraction of the world's literature. Originally under the sponsorship of the Library of Congress, and more recently taken over by the Association of Research Libraries, a far-reaching plan is being developed for cooperative coverage of foreign publications by American libraries. The aim, in brief, would be accomplished by having participating institutions, each of which would agree to specialize in one or more given divisions of knowledge, acquire at least one copy of every book of potential research value published anywhere in the world. The 45 institutional members of the Association of Research Libraries, supplemented perhaps by an equal number of nonmember libraries,

have the financial and other resources necessary to put this program into effect, and there is every probability that rapid progress will be made with it. The mechanics of the program are still to be developed, but purchasing methods will need to be coordinated for economy and speed. The usual pattern of checking national bibliographies, making selections, and ordering individual items from various dealers is not applicable to mass purchasing. Instead of each library negotiating separate contracts, it is probable that one or more responsible central agencies will be set up in each country to select and ship material to cooperating libraries.

As a corollary to the American plan, similar arrangements are even more necessary abroad. In view of the devastation they have suffered and the acute problems they face in restoring their book resources, European libraries should work out acquisition agreements among themselves. It is important for these libraries to obtain a wide coverage of research materials, even if only in a limited number of copies, and this can best be achieved on a coordinated basis. If understandings of the nature indicated could be reached in the areas receiving aid from agencies in the United States, the reconstruction of foreign research libraries would be greatly facilitated.

Reconstruction of Foreign Libraries

Many libraries in war areas suffered devastation ranging up to complete destruction. Library associations, individual libraries, learned societies, foundations, and relief organizations have performed notable service in aiding war-damaged libraries. The American Book Center, a cooperative agency set up in the Library of Congress for this purpose (*Science*, August 2, 1946), has distributed hundreds of thousands of volumes to libraries abroad, and its activities are continuing. The Inter-Allied Book Centre in London is performing a similar function. Appeals continue to be received, however, and needs have been met only partially. It has been suggested by several persons closely in touch with the situation that the aim should be reconstruction rather than rehabilitation of libraries. This means, in some instances, placing materials where they would be most useful rather than attempting to restore the prewar status. The proposed policy would be to determine what institutions should be strengthened and then to concentrate in them any resources that could be provided. Preferential treatment would be given those libraries that suffered heavily in the war only if their restoration would prove of greatest benefit to the nations in which they are located. It is suggested further that in most devastated countries there are established agencies which could advise on most effective placement of materials.

Copyright, Tariff, and Postal Regulations

Without question, three of the chief impediments to the free flow of ideas across national boundaries are copyright, tariff restrictions, and postal regulations. The question of copyright, for example, immediately comes to the fore in considering the reproduction of books, journals, and other research materials, even though the original editions may be completely inadequate to meet the demands. In 1935 a "gentlemen's agreement" was reached between the Joint Committee on Materials for Research and the National Association of Book Publishers, whereby libraries are permitted, extralegally, to make reproductions for research purposes. No such principle of fair use, or rule of reason, has ever been incorporated in the copyright law, even though library and publishing interests are not in conflict. The present law handicaps American libraries when they are called upon to microfilm single copies of American books for the use of foreign scholars. The War Department is reported to have met with some success in persuading authors to waive their royalty rights on translations to be used in the occupied countries in order to spread the results of American scholarship of the past few years.

By increasing prices, tariffs restrict the distribution of publications from one nation to another, further limiting scholars' access to the world's knowledge. One such instance is our own Treasury Department's requirement that consular invoices be presented for import shipments of library printed materials. Postal regulations also serve as a deterrent to the general distribution of published materials across national borders. A possible solution is adoption of an international book post system, to reduce postage and expedite transit.

It is quite apparent that no more important or perplexing problem faces UNESCO, libraries, learned societies, and other interested organizations than the removal of these barriers to the free flow of informational materials.

Translations

Both the State and War Departments have successful translation programs for overseas use, and these projects have turned out to be of great value in informing foreign peoples about the United States and in making widely available the works of American scholars and other writers. In our cultural relations with other nations there is a need for translations of both popular and technical literature. Also needed is a comprehensive international record of printed translations. For this purpose, a revival of the *Index Translationum*, published annually from 1932 to 1940, or a similar compilation would be useful. It has been suggested further that machinery should be established through which publishers might organize, possibly under the sponsorship of UNESCO, to exchange translation rights. Such an agency would aid in determining what works should be translated and would facilitate settlement of copyright and other problems.

Exhibits

A direct and effective method of informing world scholarship of the results of research everywhere would be traveling exhibitions of publications. It would be practicable, for example, to select several hundred of the most significant European publications of a particular year and to circulate the collection for exhibition purposes to the principal research centers of the United States. A similar group of American works could be sent to Europe, Latin America, and elsewhere. Possibly the larger libraries, public and academic, could devote a certain portion of their display facilities to such exhibits continuously. Apart from the value of traveling exhibits for bringing foreign books to the attention of scholars and informing the libraries' general clientele, the collections would be useful also in guiding library buying and helping to fill in gaps of important books that might otherwise be overlooked.

Interchange of Personnel

The principle of international exchange of students is well established. International travel by college and university professors on sabbatical leaves is also traditional. Further interchanges of this character should be encouraged, because of their favorable effect on relations between scholars of different nations. In addition, ways should be found to facilitate interchange of specialists in various fields, from one country to another, to aid in the study and solution of particular problems.

Specifically in relation to libraries, the American information libraries, established abroad, principally under the State Department's direction, during and since the war, have served as excellent training grounds for American librarians, as well as introducing foreign peoples to one of the most democratic of American institutions, the free public library. All the available evidence indicates that these libraries have contributed greatly to the spread of American culture and to a sympathetic appreciation of the United States in foreign lands.

The State Department has also strengthened the cultural relations program by bringing foreign librarians to the United States. Experience has shown, however, that librarians who wish to take advantage of this opportunity should be carefully screened, that they should spend an orientation period of visiting or study in this country before beginning work, and that consideration should be given to the type of work they are to do after returning home. The lack of training agencies for librarians in other countries emphasizes the strategic place occupied by American library schools.

Before further expansion, a thorough study is desirable of both the needs and the geographical areas that might be served by the personnel exchange program and the mechanics of the program.

The foregoing discussion outlines some of the principal features of international exchanges, broadly interpreted, as they relate to libraries, educational institutions, and cultural organizations in general. It is appropriate that the United States should assume leadership in the field. Our own cultural productions were not severely curtailed by the war; our financial and personnel resources are strong; and our libraries and scholars are ready to absorb and use the publications of all countries.

The free interchange of cultural, scientific, and educational information is unquestionably one of the most critical needs of the world today. Society's progress depends upon the extent to which scholars and scientists have unrestricted access to all sources of information. Likewise, international understanding requires that the cultural records of every nation be fully available to all other nations. Finally, intelligent and informed world opinion must be based upon the wide dissemination of educational materials. These are our stakes in efforts to perfect the machinery for international exchanges.