

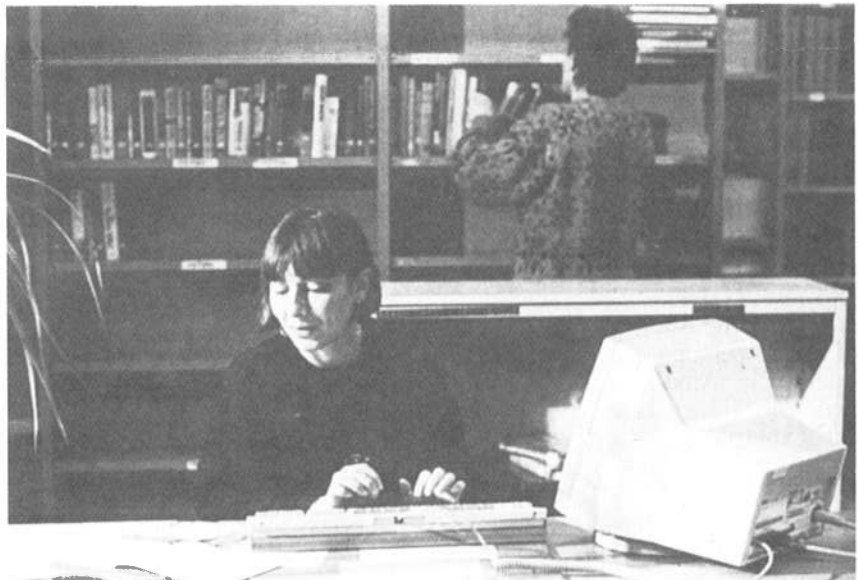
A COLLECTION ON THE MOVE FOR MORE THAN 70 YEARS

Founded in 1920, the American Library in Paris is heading into a future where bookworms will tunnel for reading through computer networks

Just around the corner from the Eiffel Tower, merely steps from the Seine, is one of the most unusual community libraries in the world. The American Library in Paris, Inc., reflects the ongoing supportive relationship that has linked France and the United States since the First World War. And it reflects the diversity of the neighborhood and the community which it serves.

During its almost seventy-year history it has provided both uninterrupted service to its community -- regardless of the political environment -- and a model of the American library system. Its history is as exciting and engrossing as many of the novels it contains.

Americans are often characterized as tenacious, open, and innovative. Few institutions reflect that characterization as effectively as the American Library in Paris. During its long history, it has survived a variety of environmental and financial crises including wars and depression; it has disseminated American culture and thinking through its volumes and seminars; it has expanded and is currently updating its services to make them



Books by wire: soon the library's computer will be able to access materials in other institutions outside Paris.

more efficient through computerization.

Born of World War I, the American Library in Paris evolved from a wartime effort undertaken by the American Library Association (ALA). The Library War Service, created in 1917, provided reading materials to American troops in camps throughout France and at a

central library housed in the YMCA in downtown Paris.

INTERNATIONAL FUNDING

After the Armistice in 1918, the materials were collected from the camps. What was not shipped home was distributed to educational institutions, the French government and the central library.

During demobilization, the library was open to the public. The uniquely American open stacks, reading rooms and discussion areas became popular meeting places for American, British, and French readers. Thus, when the ALA announced that the library would be closed in 1920, there was a public outcry. There was an overwhelming demand from French students and teachers, American, British and French individuals, as well as British and American organizations (including the Chamber of Commerce).

HOW YOU CAN HELP

In recent years readers have increasingly sought hard-to-find business materials. Although computer networking will eventually allow access to such material, the system will not be operational in the short run. The library would thus like to acquire some basic reference materials such as Moody's and Standard and Poor's, among others, for day-to-day use by readers. Companies could contribute back issues of these materials to help the library begin building a significant reference collection in this area. In services, the library already receives help from Continental Airlines, which airfreights periodicals to the library. For further information on contributions, or on library services of interest to you or your business, contact the Director, Robert Grattan.

THE LIBRARY: WHERE, WHEN AND THANKS TO WHOM

The American Library in Paris is located at 10 rue du General Camou, 75007 Paris (Metro: Ecole Militaire; RER: Pont de l'Alma; bus: 42, 69, 80, 87 and 92.) It is open every afternoon from Tuesday through Saturday, 2 to 7 p.m. and on Wednesdays and Saturdays beginning at 10 a.m. Closed on Sunday and Monday. Telephone: (1) 4551-4682.

Several Chamber members play an active role on the Library Board of Directors: J. Wallace Hopkins, of the International Energy Agency, is the Board Chairman, while John H. Riggs Jr., on the Chamber's Board of Directors, is Second Vice Chairman on the Library Board. David McGovern, on the Chamber's Board and chairman of the Chamber's External Relations Committee, also sits on the Library Board.

As a result, the ALA acquiesced and turned over the facilities, contributed books, equipment and furniture -- and provided a 25,000 endowment. By the time the gift was officially received, the American Library in Paris, Inc., was a legal entity: a private, nonprofit corporation under the laws of the State of Delaware. Sufficient funds were raised from French, American and British supports to continue services through 1920.

In roared the twenties with a wave of exotic personalities. As French interest in American culture waned, the library became a refuge for expatriates. Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas, Stephen Vincent Benet and Allen Tate, among others, were active supporters. Sufficient financial support remained to offer in-house services free of charge and borrowing services at a nominal fee.

FROM DEPRESSION TO CONCESSIONS

The Depression years were bleak. Staff were dismissed, salaries were cut for those lucky enough to be retained, there were no acquisitions, no binding was done, few repairs were made.

Nevertheless, the library remained open, albeit for shorter hours. Readers endured the hard times, but donations plummeted to less than 10,000 francs in 1935, while the ALA endowment was consumed in operating expenses.

In 1936, as Paris began to brighten, the library was unceremoniously moved to less sumptuous quarters in rue de Teheran. Fortunately, funds began to flow again, including 100,000 francs from the French government. Solvency seemed attainable.

When World War II broke out the library almost immediately provided free services to French and British troops in Paris and distributed materials in the field. French readership increased as Paris libraries closed, and even the German occupation did not make the library flinch. Interestingly, the German Director of Libraries had met American Library Director Dorothy Reeder and admired the American library system. And the library made several concessions to avoid closing. Banned French books were removed from the shelves (though not destroyed), and Jewish readers were barred from the library, but ingeniously not from its resources: staff delivered books to their homes!



During World War II, by law Jewish readers were not permitted in the library, but they were not ignored: staff delivered books to their homes.

FRENCH READERS IN FORCE

By the end of 1940, a majority of staff had returned home; Reeder left in late spring 1941. The Directorship passed to the Comtesse de Chambrun (nee Clara Longworth), who operated the library with the assistance of French librarians. A slight ruse provided operating expenses. With the consent of the Board, the library became "The Information Center," a fictitious corporation that received funds collected in the U.S. during the 1930s to combat German propaganda.

Thus, with shorter hours, limited funds and just one casualty, the library remained open continuously until the Gestapo arrived in July 1944.

It reopened in September 1944 under American directorship facing another funding crisis. Money was desperately needed to refurbish the collection and purchase books and periodicals that had been published during the war years. As Americans returned to France, so did their support. A renewed French interest in the United

States as well as in American literature and ideas spurred additional giving. Readership reached a peak, with a new twist: the preponderance of readers were French!

In the 1950s the United States Information Service selected the library as a model when creating its vast international network of libraries during that era. A more direct impact came through the library mail service. Initiated shortly after the war, it was reaching readers in France, Germany and Algeria by 1950; further, deposit collections were started in large municipal libraries. Concurrently, in 1951, as French education became more open and accessible, eight branches were opened adjacent to regional universities. Today five remain: in Grenoble, Montpellier, Nancy, Nantes and Toulouse.

INTERNATIONAL STATURE

Accessibility to local subscribers grew when the library moved to the Champs Elysees. The elegant surroundings provided ample space for the Americanized activities that the French had come to enjoy. A Department for the Blind was added in 1955 with the American Foundation for the Blind and the Cleveland Public Library. It provided living books (records and tapes) for blind subscribers throughout Europe. The American Library was thus no longer a community library; it had attained international stature. It could no longer rely upon crisis intervention techniques.

The 1960s and the 1970s were a turning point. The library was finally freed from the global catastrophes that had plagued its history.

One of the first steps was to move to a library-owned facility, the first in its history and its present site, at 10 rue du General Camou in the seventh arrondissement.

Shortly after, it contracted with the newly founded American College in Paris to provide space and services for students and faculty -- an arrangement still in practice today. The Dillon Wing, funded in part by a donation from C. Douglas Dillon, former Secretary of the Treasury and Ambassador to France, was built to house the Center for American Studies, an invaluable resource for French and American scholars. In fact, the library is one of the principal resources for participants in the European Association for American Studies, who rely heavily on the re-



THE HARDWARE BEHIND THE LIBRARY'S COMPUTERIZATION

A computer in Hewlett Packard's MICRO 3000 series was selected by the American Library in Paris for its computerization, according to Librarian Robert Grattan. The computer will be used to start a data base of the library's 100,000-volume collection and will eventually access other data bases and be linked into other libraries' computers via an international network.

Hewlett Packard markets the 3000 series as offering "mid-range performance at entry-level prices". Its top-of-the-line Micro 3000XE is particularly appropriate for departments and larger branch offices with many users and the need for multiple network connections. The computer can serve as many as 56 users and function in both local and remote networks, making it highly "connectable" as an entry-level system. The MICRO 3000 meets the needs of branch offices and smaller departments with up to 16 users, offering reduced operating and training costs and a simple, menu-style operation.

sources for participants in the European Association for American Studies, who rely heavily on the reference and periodical departments.

A NEW LEAF

Improved management of these valuable resources, as well as membership, office, personnel and cataloguing services, are the priorities for the 1980s.

The library's Board, formerly chaired by Stephen B. Pierce and currently J. Wallace Hopkins, has initiated an extensive modernization program. With the expertise of the new Director, Robert Grattan III, appointed in 1986, the library is entering one of the most exciting phases in its history. A two-pronged program of preservation and computerization will be followed by an array of sponsorship pro-

grams to support the Children's Room and programs, a new Business Reference section, and a revamped Music Collection.

In order to preserve the contents of the vast periodical collection (many date from World War I), older issues are being microfilmed and microfiched, so that they are available to subscribers without damaging the yellowing periodicals. One quarter of that project has been funded by a grant from the Florence Gould Foundation, while the remaining funds are being raised through subscriber donations.

The Children's Collection was the first one on the continent when it was started in 1920.

COMPUTERIZING AT ALL LEVELS

The computerization project is twofold. Personnel, bookkeeping, correspondence, and membership files have all been computerized with equipment and software contributed by IBM and Ashton-Tate (La Commande Electronique). This system allows the library to share information with other organizations, permitting broader-based membership and fund-raising campaigns.

The second computerization project is more extensive and will be implemented over approximately five years. This project will link the American Library with other libraries and cataloguing services throughout the world to provide expanded services to recreational, academic, business and professional subscribers.

A Hewlett Packard computer (see box) has been selected for this project. The purchase of this hardware has been made possible by a

partial grant-in-kind from Hewlett Packard and through extensive fund raising activities by staff and volunteers. However, additional funds are still needed.

A Virginia Tech Library System (VTLS) software package will permit a variety of applications to facilitate user access and circulation control. The project initially will get under way in early 1988 with computerization of the 100,000-volume collection. A second phase of the automation project will hook the library into a network of libraries and services to exchange information on nearly any subject.

Discussions to study affiliation with the American Library Association and networking with the British Council of Libraries and their French counterparts are under consideration. Once completed, the library will be capable of sharing its extensive holdings in American literature, literary criticism and biographies with other facilities, providing an internatio-

nal information base for its subscribers.

The Children's collection was the first on the continent when it was started in 1920 and is still the largest collection of children's materials in English. Nevertheless, the library would like to add new materials for its youngest constituency and refurbish the children's area.

The Library would like to facilitate use of the music collection by adding laser discs and a larger variety of cassettes. With sufficient backing from its large leadership and active Board, the American Library is well-positioned to tackle the technologies spawned by the seventies and eighties as it enters its own eighth decade. But oh what a far cry laser recordings are from the torn books circulating on World War I battlefields.

-- **Valerie Shulman** is director of Writers and Researchers Inc., in which capacity she has become acquainted with libraries all over the world.

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