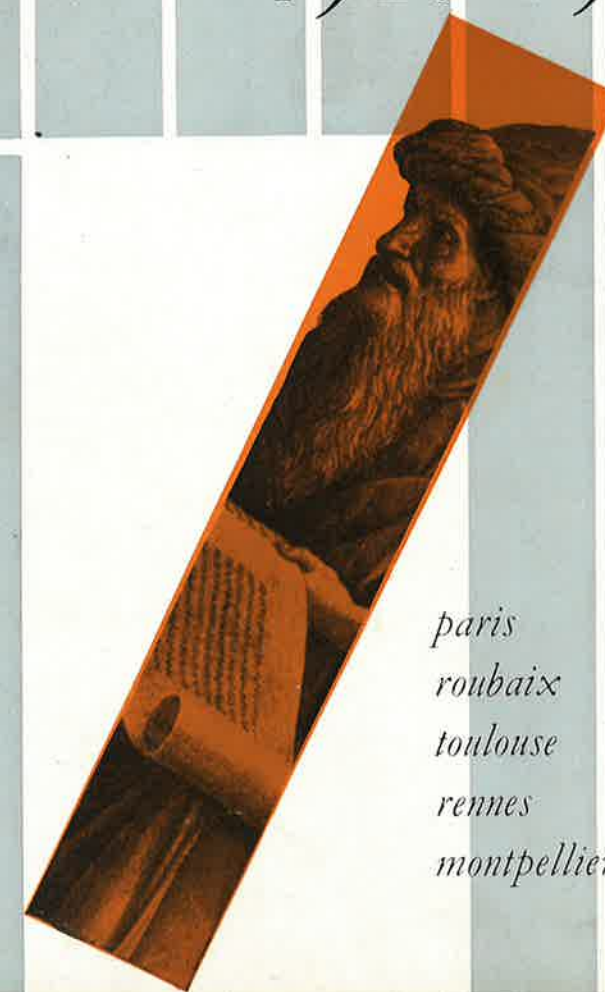
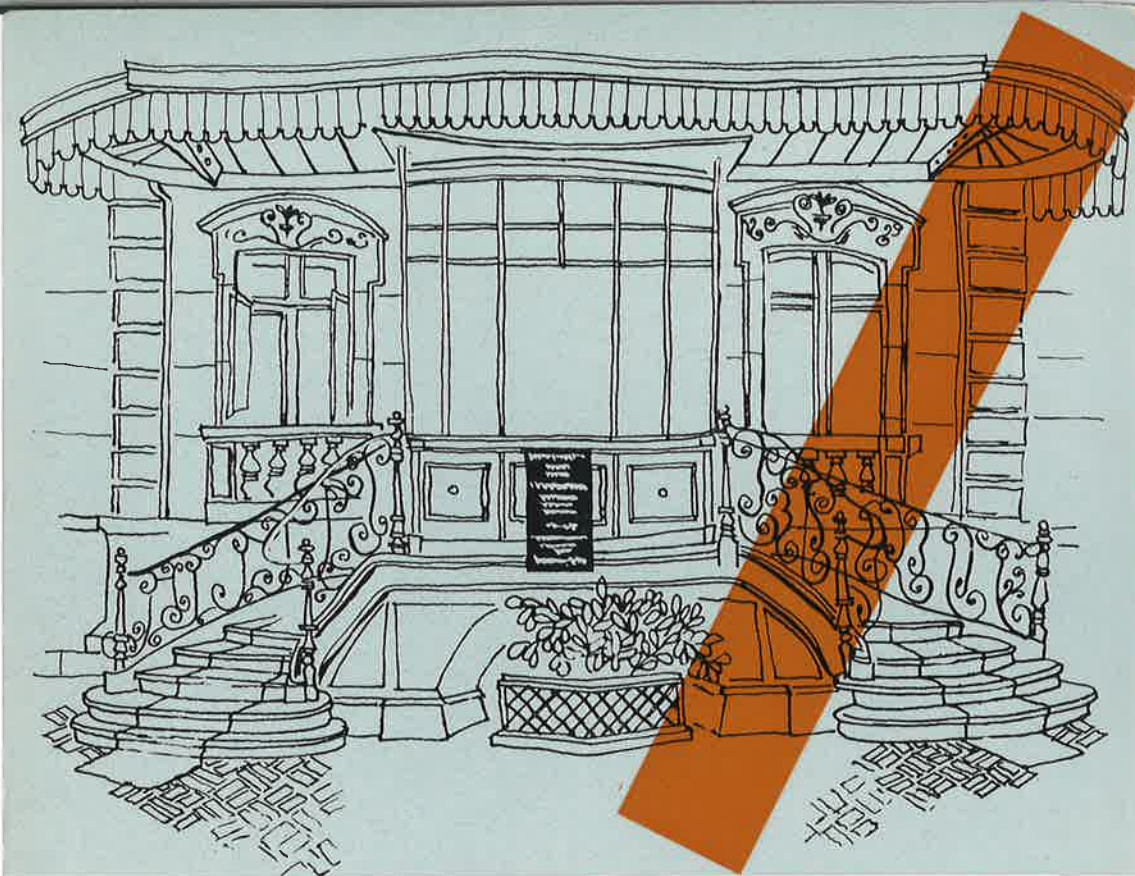


*the*  
**a m e r i c a n**  
**l i b r a r y** *in*  
**p a r i s**

1920 - 1951



*paris*  
*roubaix*  
*toulouse*  
*rennes*  
*montpellier*



report  
1951

*the*  
**a m e r i c a n**  
**l i b r a r y** *in*  
**p a r i s**

*9, rue de Tébérac, Paris*

*branches*

Left Bank, Paris, 173, Boulevard Saint-Germain  
Roubaix (Nord), 29, Avenue Jean-Lebas  
Toulouse (Haute-Garonne), 75, Boulevard Carnot  
Rennes (Ille-et-Vilaine), 7, Quai Chateaubriand  
Montpellier (Hérault), 5 bis, Place Alexandre-Laissac





## *report of the president*

William H. Wise  
President 1949-1951

In 1951 the American Library in Paris crossed the threshold into a new field of action offering enormous possibilities for better understanding of the American people by the citizens of France through the instrument of a private cultural institution.

Elsewhere in these pages is described this great step forward, the planned establishment of seven branch libraries where most of the books are in the French language. I foresee the creation of these seven islands of Anglo-Saxon culture as only the beginning of the ultimate role of the American Library. Every American who participates in this program can take great satisfaction from the

fact that his effort is being rewarded by an ever-increasing membership and an ever-expanding circulation of American books and periodicals.

The circulation figures speak for themselves. The operating statement indicates the Library is in a healthier condition than ever before in its thirty-one year history. Nevertheless, the need for funds becomes even more pressing in order to provide for expansion of this Franco-American effort. In this expansion lies the chance for everyone to take a real and personal part in the struggle for a free world.

As the presidency is passed to new hands this year, I wish to thank the members of the Board of Trustees and the administrative staff of the Library for their great personal efforts and able administration of one of America's largest private cultural institutions abroad.

*Pauline M. McBirney*

*director*

Ian Forbes Fraser, Ph. D.



*librarian*

Ruth McBirney



*supervisor of branch libraries*

Philippe Caneval



*officers of the american library in paris, inc.*

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## history

The coffee and doughnuts were plentiful. The American soldier had his own newspaper. He had enough to eat and plenty to drink and World War I Paris was a dazzling leave town.

The mails were somewhat late, but arrived eventually, and it was found that in the welter of packages of knitted wristlets, homemade cookies and the usually useless gadgets fond relatives send to the boys overseas, the most popular item was the American printed word. Long-outdated hometown newspapers and magazines received by the troops were handled tenderly and passed round and round until ragged.

To fill the need for books and magazines among the soldiers, the American Library Association in the United States set up an American library in Paris. So successful was the wartime venture that American residents in Paris in 1919 took over the small book collection to start a library of their own. On May 20, 1920, the American Library in Paris was incorporated under the laws of the State of Delaware as a private, non-profit organization. The American Library Association, which had already given its books to the new



group, established a \$25,000 endowment fund and the American Library in Paris set up shop. It has never since shut its doors.

The Library first opened at 10, rue de l'Elysée, moved, after 1936, to a private mansion at 9, rue de Téhéran.

During the 1920s and 1930s, the Library functioned as does any other in the United States. But the French found something new in its bookshelves open to all, its books available to members for home reading. This policy attracted many French readers as well as Americans, as did the Library's sponsorship of and participation in local cultural events. Its standing and influence grew.

Perhaps the most startling phase of the Library's operation came during World War II and the German occupation when the institution remained open and served as an open window on the free world.

It was largely through the efforts of Countess Aldebert de Chambrun, the former Clara Longworth, that the Library continued to function openly under the noses of the Nazis. Under her direction, the small, loyal staff did what it could to keep the building in shape, the files in order, the books in condition. An important phase of the Library's work at the time was getting books in English to the "racial undesirables" who were forbidden access to the Library by Nazi authorities. The Countess de Chambrun and her staff kept up a running service for such persons, personally carrying books to them at their homes. It was a circulating library on foot, for transport was at a premium. The French Information Center helped keep the Library alive with financial aid in the darkest days.

After the liberation, however, the Library needed a thorough face lifting. During the war, no books had been bought and maintenance had been at a minimum. In a surprisingly short time, the Library was back in shape and branching out into new and bigger activities.

The American Library in Paris, six years later, is still an open window on the free world and is playing a large part in helping to unite France and America.





branches of the american library

## *activities*

The American Library in Paris has become one of America's most important showcases in France. From its fairly small quarters in the rue de Téhéran, the Library has branched out in such a fashion that thousands of French citizens in the provinces today have the opportunity of learning about the United States.

The American Library is no longer merely a convenience for the American colony in Paris. It has become a working force for Franco-American understanding and is showing the French people a true and complete picture of the United States. Of its 3,000 members in Paris alone, 60 per cent are French.

The Library, a private institution, is doing a valuable job for America. It is making information—not propaganda—about the United States available to many who have been fed lies about Americans. This is the result of expansion through branch libraries in the provinces.

Perhaps the success of the new branches can best be measured in the enormous response of students to the first branch opened on the Left Bank in Paris in January 1948 in rooms made available by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Students of the West, unhampered by slogans and tracts, are a critical lot. Here they found no attempt to lead them, so they returned to read the varied collection of books and magazines. Fiction runs from John Steinbeck and Louis Bromfield to Mark

Twain and Joseph Conrad. There are works on English and American literature and language, and political science. Magazines cover a wide field.

The provincial branches started this year. At the end of 1950, the United States Information Service (USIS) asked the American Library to establish branches throughout France. The Library agreed, on condition that the branches be solely extensions of the Paris headquarters and totally independent. There is no question of government control, and, in the USIS contract with the Library, the government group states that the "policies of the libraries are established by a board of trustees composed of American and French citizens whose objective is a closer Franco-American understanding."

Today there are branch libraries in Roubaix, Toulouse, Rennes and Montpellier. More are planned for Sète, Nantes and Grenoble.

Basic collections for each branch consist of about a thousand books. As the English reading public is smaller in the provinces than in Paris, the branches, with translations of English and American literature into French, were able to enter a new field. Paper-backed editions, bound by the Library in stout buckram with the American Library stamp, are available now in French, and range from Raymond Chandler's "The Big Window" to General Dwight D. Eisenhower's "Crusade in Europe" and James M. Beck's "Constitution of the United States".

There are also books on economic, social and industrial questions, as well as works on American techniques which are applicable to the particular region. For example, Roubaix, center of the textile industry, receives books in English and French on textiles, factory organization, housing and health of industrial workers, and industrial organization, as well as ten textile trade periodicals.

Toulouse, a university town with an airport nearby, had no particular focus until recently when oil was discovered in the area. Today, the Toulouse branch features books and periodicals on the oil industry, and has already begun a collection of aviation material.

The popularity of the libraries was demonstrated at the opening of the Rennes branch where bookshelves failed to arrive on time. Nonetheless, the people of Rennes crowded into the new library, craning their necks to read the titles of books stacked in piles on the floor.

Each branch has a suggestion box where readers may deposit requests for specific books or books on a particular topic. Until librarians learn the preferences of their readers, basic non-fiction collections are quite small. However, librarians are local girls trained in French library schools and by the American Library in Paris, and therefore quickly learn the preferences of readers. Requests are filled when possible, and one branch was happy to be able to answer a rash of requests on American canning methods.

Branch hours are tailored to fit community habits. In Roubaix, for example, Sunday afternoon is set aside for family gatherings. The library therefore is open in the morning and does a brisk business with people on their way to and from church.

Community members are proud of the American branch libraries in their towns and handle their books gently. Recently, a librarian asked members to wrap their books in paper during wet weather to protect them. Her members went a step beyond her, always carrying paper and string, rain or sun, to wrap the books they carry to and fro.

In Roubaix, a factory worker returned his copy of Winston Churchill's memoirs and was delighted to find that day the director of the American Library in Paris visiting the branch. He thanked Dr. Fraser for the opportunity to get books at the branch and said that many of his fellow workers had joined since they had seen the books made available to him.

Since the opening of the branches, many other cities in France have requested similar libraries. The problem is to get enough funds to buy enough books. Although the USIS has contracted for branches, the American Library in Paris feels that the United States would be well served through the maintenance of the branches after contracts expire. The program depends, of course, on how important it seems to Americans to get across to the French people the true picture, and the whole picture, of the United States.

An important phase of the American Library's work is its out-of-town mail service, first set up regularly in 1947, although the Library has been sending books by mail from time to time since 1920. The mail service started as a result of numerous requests by students and French families and soldiers. Today, books go by mail to readers in forty departments of France, Algeria,

and the French-occupied zone of Germany and the Saar. Tastes vary. An eighty-five-year-old gentleman in the Oise, who has been borrowing books for four years, prefers to read about travel and hunting and fishing, while a French officer stationed in Germany likes light fiction. A middle-aged lady in the Charente, on the other hand, asks for books on agricultural problems. The books travel far and wide, but not a volume has been lost.

One of the most important sections of the American Library is its reference department, widely used by French and American students and professors, international organizations and business firms, as well as French government agencies. The reference section is open to the public free of charge, and is used by hundreds of persons who are not subscribing Library members. Such officials as the French Minister of Reconstruction are able to get information on American building techniques. SHAPE and UNESCO use the section. The Sorbonne sends its students to the Library for help in courses on English literature. Requests for information have come from behind the Iron Curtain. And recently a French matron came round to inquire about matrimonial agencies in New York. The Library obliged.

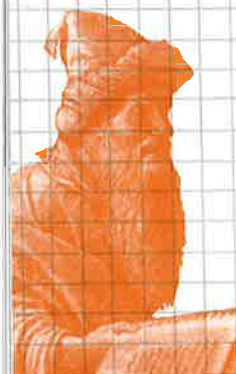
Children have their own nook in the Paris Library, and at their disposal is the largest collection of children's books in English on the Continent. Titles cover ages from five to fourteen. Red chairs cut to size provide comfort for the small fry.

There are eighty thousand volumes in the Library's collection. More than 200 periodicals are received. Specialized collections of books and magazines in the fields of science and technology, the fine arts and music, and the social sciences have been developed.

The American Library in Paris celebrated its thirtieth year in 1950. It was gratifying to hear high praise from the French who emphasized the Library's dominant role in bringing American learning and culture to France.



# circulation



## paris libraries

1946 . . . . . 91,784

1950 . . . . . 139,152

Representative Figures for Branch Libraries during September 1951	Number of Members	Number of Visitors	Circulation
Roubaix (Opened March 10, 1951)	513	1,131	2,087
Toulouse (Opened May 17, 1951)	306	645	1,038
Rennes (Opened June 23, 1951)	171	850	868

## financial statements

The financial statements for 1949 and 1950 are printed here. These two years represent fairly the new equilibrium reached in the finances of the Library through the generosity of many donors in France and the United States. During 1946, 1947 and 1948, the Library was financed in part from funds raised in 1946 and 1946 for the purpose of restoring the Library after the war and the German occupation, in part by the transfer of a portion of the Endowment Fund to the operating budget.

### 1949

On Hand 1-1-49 . . . . . \$2,224.80  
 On Hand (Book Account)  
 1-1-49. . . . . 1,470.83  
 Paris Operating Income . 12,983.68  
 Donations (Paris). . . . 2,679.77  
 Donations (U. S.). . . . 13,037.00  
 Investment Income. . . . 725.00  
 Book Account Income . . 2,396.97  
**\$35,518.05**

Salaries . . . . . \$11,833.68  
 Paris Operating Expenses . . . . . 13,921.98  
 U. S. Operating Expenses . . . . . 424.55  
 Book Purchases . . . . . 2,836.40  
 Balance 12-31-49. . . . 5,391.70  
 Balance (Book Account)  
 12-31-49. . . . . 1,109.74  
**\$35,518.05**

### 1950

On Hand 1-1-50 . . . . . \$5,391.70  
 On Hand (Book Account)  
 1-1-50. . . . . 1,109.74  
 Paris Operating Income . 14,541.62  
 Donations (Paris) . . . . 4,958.43  
 Donations (U. S.). . . . 8,721.50  
 Investment Income. . . . 1,658.55  
 Book Account Income . . 2,050.43  
**\$38,431.97**

Salaries. . . . . \$9,333.33  
 Paris Operating Expenses . . . . . 18,249.46  
 U. S. Operating Expenses . . . . . 217.02  
 Book Purchases . . . . . 2,591.33  
 Balance 12-31-50. . . . 6,823.79  
 Balance (Book Account)  
 12-31-50 . . . . . 1,217.04  
**\$38,431.97**



## *finances*

To keep its doors open to an eager public, the American Library in Paris depends on subscriptions and gifts. A non-profit organization, the Library has always operated at a deficit, a handicap it has done its best to overcome, striving to keep book and periodical collections up to date and at the same time carry on its increasing cultural activities.

Nonetheless, the financial state of affairs must be reckoned with at the end of every year. In spite of the Library's considerable membership, subscription fees cannot underwrite its wide activities and it depends largely on gifts of money to meet expenses.

Many interested persons have donated books to the Library, among them Miss Sylvia Beach, who operated the bookshop and lending library Shakespeare and Co. in Paris from 1919 to 1940. The 5,000 volumes Miss Beach presented to the Library represented one of the largest and most important collections of English and American books in France, and included important authors of the 1920s and 1930s, many of whose works are now out of print.

Miss Adelaide Spofford, long a resident of Dinard, recently left her valuable collection of 3,500 books to the Library. Funds realized from the sale of some of these volumes have been added to the Endowment Fund. Other notable gifts recently presented included a collection of books given by the North Carolina Division of the American Association of Teachers of French, and 300 volumes donated by the Macmillan Company of New York, including works on

science, sociology, medicine, history and art. Since March 1947, the publishing firm of E. P. Dutton and Company has been sending regularly to the American Library the best books it publishes each month.

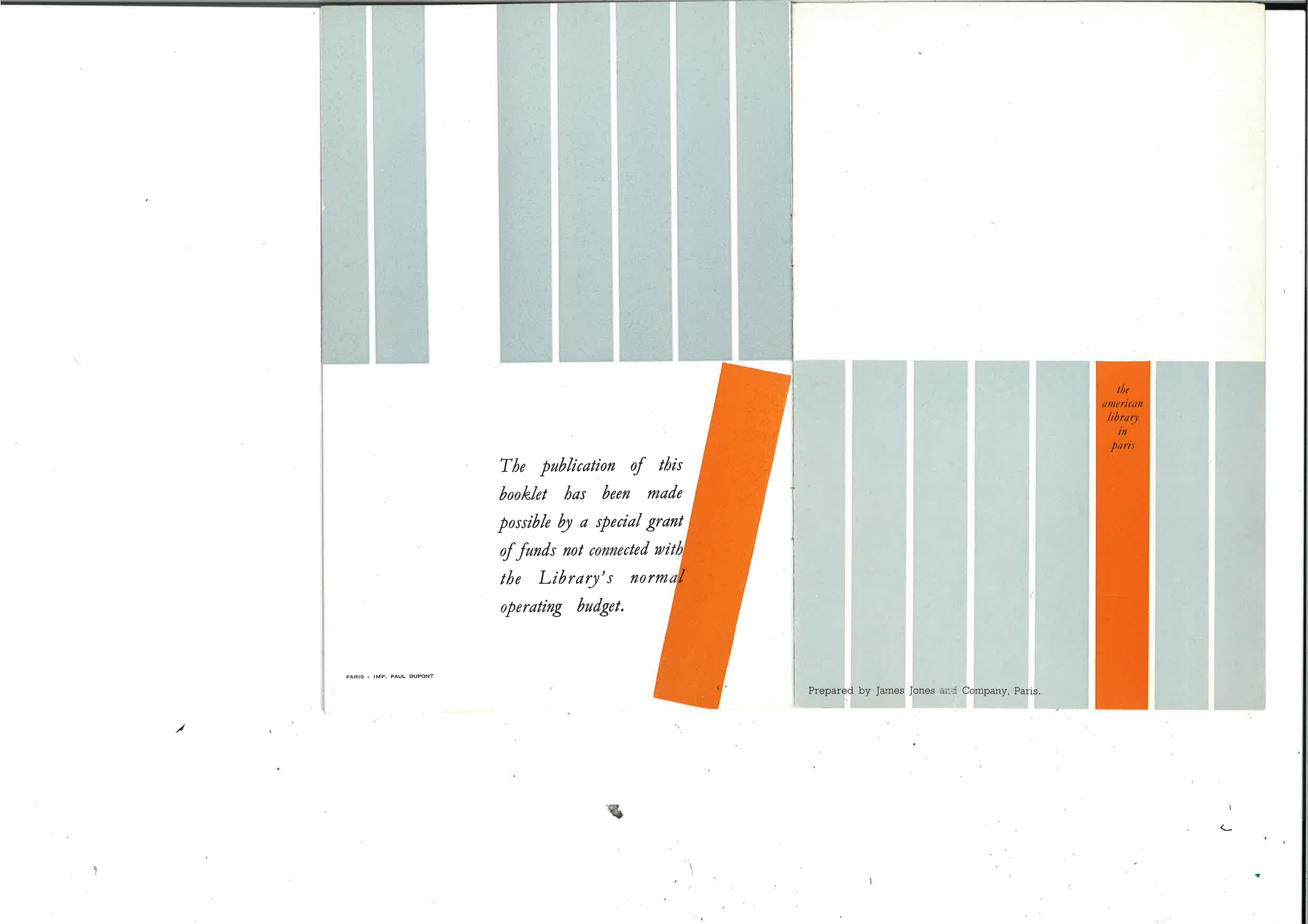
The American Library in Paris is looking forward to the future, a busy future in which it hopes to continue to play a part in strengthening and uniting the free world. To realize this future, the Library must be able to operate freely, and in order to do so, it must have financial independence.

In 1949, a resolution by the Board of Trustees said: "The Executive Committee authorizes the establishment of an endowment fund to consist of present holdings, plus all future bequests and donations not designated for current expenses or for other specific purposes."

The Library, therefore, is attempting to establish a \$300,000 fund which, wisely invested, could give the organization a \$12,000 yearly income. This would cover its running expenses and eliminate the pressing need for fund drives, usually initiated to raise enough money to meet expenses. Twelve thousand dollars a year would give the Library the kind of financial security that makes for a well-run enterprise.

Although the Library contains probably the largest collection of books in English on the Continent, its shortage of funds shows up in gaps on the bookshelves. For example, with a book collection of 80,000 volumes, the 1950 additions were only slightly more than two per cent, compared with five or six per cent in libraries of the same size in the United States.

The American Library now has \$42,000 in its Endowment Fund. This amount must be swelled if the Library is to continue to be one of the most important cultural links between France and America.

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*The publication of this  
booklet has been made  
possible by a special grant  
of funds not connected with  
the Library's normal  
operating budget.*

PARIS - IMP. PAUL DUPONT

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