

THE AMERICAN LIBRARY IN PARIS, INC.

10, rue du Général Camou
Paris VIIe

REPORT OF THE LIBRARIAN
FOR THE YEAR

1969

LIBRARY GROWTH

Nineteen-sixty-nine marks the last year of the Library's first half-century. It is not a coincidence, but rather the result of an exceptional effort that, in terms of achievement, the Library's forty-ninth year has proven to be the most successful in its history.

During the twelve month period, from January 1 to December 31, 1969, membership increased by 34% (from 2,301 to 3,079 subscribers). The majority of new members are French students. This means that the Library not only handles a third more regular users than a year ago, but that it serves a more "demanding" clientèle that visits the Library more frequently, uses its resources more heavily, and requires more specialized services.

The Library's "population explosion" is thus reflected in spiraling ratio by nearly every other phase of activity. The circulation statistics -- 112,399 books and periodicals lent for home-reading in 1969 -- give only a partial notion of the increasing use of the Library's resources, since many times that number are consulted within the Library. The following figures give a clearer idea of the developments that are now taking place:

* In 1969 the Library produced 28,212 photostats for the public, as compared with 9,204 in 1968, and 1,352 in 1967: an increase of 2,000% over the two-year period.

* In 1969 the Library obtained 81 books and other materials on inter-library loan from the United States, as compared with 40 in 1968, and 12 in 1967: an increase of nearly 600% over the two-year period.

* In 1969 the Library prepared 757 bibliographies, principally for out-of-town members, as compared with 390 in 1968, and 130 in 1967, an increase of nearly 500% over the two-year period.

A CENTER FOR AMERICAN STUDIES

The orientation of the Library as a center for American studies during the past five years has prepared the ground for the present spectacular development, which has been further stimulated by the recent educational reform in France. The Library has several advantages that enable it to fulfil its mission more effectively:

1. It is a private, non-governmental institution. This facilitates relations with French students, professors, and institutions without the constraint that might be felt were it an "official" organism. The private character of the Library was a decisive factor in the success of the agreements that were negotiated with the French universities for the cooperative operation of the branches.

2. The Library has the advantage of a fifty-year head start in building its specialized collections and services. Beginning with a collection of 30,000 volumes donated by the American Library Association (designated at the time as "the best selected library in the world"), the American Library has grown to 150,000 volumes and 750 periodical titles (of which 100 have been added during the past four years).

3. The Library has the advantage of a close relationship with the American Library Association, which makes available to it the counsels of some outstanding leaders in the profession and the participation of five ALA-nominated trustees on its Board.

4. The Library has the advantage of possessing specialized collections for American studies numbering 25,000 volumes, in addition to the 50,000 books relating to American civilization in its general circulating collections. An efficiently organized out-of-town service makes it possible for any person living in Europe to receive books and periodicals as easily as a member in Paris.

5. The Library's role as a center for American studies will be highlighted by the inauguration of the Dillon Wing for American studies in May 1970. It is planned to house in this wing a collection of books on American studies that will grow to 100,000 volumes in the coming period.

The opening of the new wing will not only provide the space necessary for the Library's specialized collections and the public that uses them, but will also permit an expansion of the main reading room by around 20%. This will enable the Library to provide seating facilities for 150 readers at a time in its various reading rooms. Five years ago, on the Champs-Élysées, fifty seats were more than sufficient for the Library's studious public.

BRANCHES

The growth of the Library in Paris is matched by the growth of its four university branches in Montpellier, Grenoble, Toulouse and Nantes: Their total membership has grown from 3,182 at the end of 1967, to 3,360 in 1968, to 3,749 in 1969. The number of out-of-town subscribers who receive books directly from the main Library in Paris has increased from 37 in 1967, to 64 in 1968, to 147 in 1969. The number of books lent by the main Library to its branches and out-of-town members rose from 1,386 in 1967, to 1,818 in 1968, to 2,429 in 1969. The branches circulated 52,705 books from their own collections during the past year.

There are several reasons for this success:

1. The terms of the cooperative agreement negotiated by the Librarian with the various universities clearly defined the status of the branches as annexes of the American Library in Paris, while giving important advantages to the faculty of letters in each university.
2. The Library benefits from the competence and relative stability of its librarians, who have been directing their branches for periods varying from five to fifteen years, and who serve as perfect links between the Paris Library and their respective universities.
3. The Library is fortunate in having an excellent administrative assistant for the branches, Mademoiselle Nicole Villard, who has proven herself to be a capable and efficient administrator. She is now assisted by Madame Elaine Taveau, former branch cataloguer, on a full-time basis.
4. The services rendered by the Library have won the enthusiastic support of the students and faculty in the various universities. Perhaps the most important factor has been the development of the branch collections, which have become indispensable instruments for the English and American studies programs. A total of nearly 8,000 books have been added to the branch collections during the past four years, which now have holdings of over 6,000 volumes each.

In 1969 the Librarian prepared bibliographies to constitute basic collections for American studies in every branch. Orders corresponding to these bibliographies were sent out last spring, and most of the books have already been received, catalogued and shipped to the branches. The funds for this project came from a special indemnity of \$10,000 received in Toulouse.

THE LIBRARY'S ROLE IN FRANCO-AMERICAN INTELLECTUAL AND PROFESSIONAL EXCHANGES

The relations between the American Library and the French milieu have not been confined to the academic sphere. The Library continues to serve French business firms, laboratories, and news media on an expanding scale. Some of the most important magazines in France, such as L'Express, Paris-Match and Réalités, subscribe to the Library's services.

On another plane, the American Library has considerably developed its potentialities as a link between libraries in France and the United States. The high increase in the number of inter-library loans is one example. But the new ground that has been broken has other fertile possibilities:

The Librarian has been involved as a consultant to Monsieur Jean-Pierre Seguin, Director of the proposed "pilot" library due to open in the Halles, as

part of a great cultural complex, in 1973. The Bibliothèque des Halles will constitute the most important development in French librarianship of this century. With the help of Mr. Foster E. Mohrhardt and the American Library Association, the Librarian was able to assist in the arranging of a study tour of U.S. libraries undertaken by Monsieur Seguin and his colleagues last fall.

It is significant that Monsieur Seguin has chosen the American Library in Paris as a "training ground" for some of the staff now being built up for the new library. The main idea is to illustrate the spirit of service that animates a library like ours.

Mademoiselle Paule Salvan, Director of the Ecole Nationale Supérieure de Bibliothécaires, has written to ask the Librarian if he could receive some classes for orientation on American techniques and concepts of service. These marks of recognition reflect the growing reputation of the Library in France.

THE LIBRARY AS A FAMILY CENTER

While the Library's services are solicited by an ever-widening French public, the demands of the English-speaking public in Paris have increased considerably during the past year. Non-student memberships (American for the most part) grew from 1,057 at the beginning of the year to 1,262 at the end.

A strong effort has been made to develop the Library as a family institution. A Committee for the Improvement of the Children's Department, under the Chairmanship of Mrs. Edwin M. Martin, has done much to give this Department the important place it deserves in the Library. Two film benefits were organized by the Committee in 1969, and the proceeds are being used to improve the collection. In addition to the enrichment made possible through these funds, the juvenile collection benefited from a gift of 200 books donated by American publishers. An inventory of the children's collection, carried out during the summer by Mrs. Martin and Mrs. John E. Fobes, with the assistance of Mrs. Clifford H. Gross, prepares the way for further improvements.

The Librarian has submitted a plan for the development of a popular library, to be stocked with 25,000 books. This would be a "browsing collection" of the finest in fiction and non-fiction, all for loan and all on open shelves in the front area of the Library. The popular library would contain an adequate "pasture" of reading for the entire family, and some minor building changes will give a "new look" to this part of the Library. The project has been approved by the Board, and will be carried out when the necessary funds become available.

SERVICE TO THE AMERICAN COLLEGE IN PARIS

Even without such new projects, the Library now has more activity than it can conveniently handle. Probably the heaviest single concentration of demands for service come from the students of the American College in Paris. This service began in 1963 when the newly created College had just about a hundred students enrolled and an embryonic collection of a few hundred titles.

In 1966 the Librarian negotiated an agreement with the American College which recognized the institutional service offered by the Library and provided for fees amounting to more than \$12,000 a year. Since that time, the mutually helpful arrangement has been working out well. College enrollment is now up to 350 students and its collection has grown to more than 5,000 volumes, though the students continue to rely heavily on the resources of the American Library. The enlargement of the main reading room in connection with the Dillon Wing will benefit principally the American College, which will gain more seating space for its students and more shelf space for its collections.

DEPARTMENT FOR THE BLIND

In 1965 the administrative assistant who had directed the Department for the Blind during its first ten years resigned. The Librarian was fortunate, at that time, in obtaining the cooperation of Mrs. Henri Smith-Hutton, Chairman of the Junior Guild Reading Project for the Blind, to direct the entire Department on a volunteer basis. During these past four years the Department has continued its services to blind members in eighteen different countries. In addition, it has developed new services of great interest and potentiality: particularly, the recording of books on magnetic tape for blind students preparing university degrees in English or American studies, and the distribution of deposit collections to the national libraries for the blind in Sweden, Holland, Switzerland and Israel.

VOLUNTEERS AND STAFF

The Library has won the help of volunteers not only for its Department for the Blind and its Children's Department: it has used volunteer assistance in the Catalogue, Periodicals, and Circulation Departments. It is obviously not possible for the Library to meet the challenge of its rapid growth with volunteer help alone, precious as it is. Many aspects of the Library's activity are specialized, requiring a staff sufficient in numbers and professional qualifications to ensure the highest standards of service. Under the present circumstances, most staff members hold down two jobs (like André Lardinat, who

has added to his responsibilities as Head of the Periodicals Department, the direction of the Library's photoduplication service). To avoid a constantly accumulating backlog, the staff are obliged to devise short-cuts, move "on the double", and share the work. This system has given rise to an "esprit de corps" which is rare in any institution.

It is also worth noting that in addition to their responsibilities in the Library, nearly half the staff members are now attending evening courses at the Bibliothèque Nationale, at the Sorbonne and other schools in order to improve their professional qualifications. Six of the Library's twelve full-time staff members have received, or are now receiving, specialized library training. In September the Library engaged another librarian with an M.S. in library science, from Columbia University: Mrs. Vlada Angeleski, who brings to her work excellent personal and professional qualifications. The Library has also acquired a bi-lingual librarian for its Circulation Department, Mademoiselle Christiane Ossude.

The inevitably difficult transition after the retirement of Miss Wedd, the Library's accountant and office-manager for nearly forty-five years, has been weathered. Madame Visiers de Rivas, her successor, has fitted very well into the Library, and is meeting the requirements of a difficult job.

THE TURNING POINT OF THE LIBRARY

As encouraging as such additions are, they cannot constitute a solution to the Library's staffing problems. As it enters its fiftieth year, the Library finds itself at a turning point. Its rapidly accelerating growth has been prepared by years of careful planning and successful initiatives.

During the past five years the Library...

- * Succeeded in solving its financial difficulties on a year-to-year basis;

- * Saved its four branches and laid the groundwork for their unprecedented development;

- * Acquired the bulk of the 30,000 volume collection of the Benjamin Franklin Library (U.S.I.S.) at a time when its own future seemed precarious;

- * Agreed to serve as the college library of the American College in Paris on a contractual basis, with a full range of college-library services;

- * Planned to expand its useful facilities by 30% through the creation of the Dillon Wing for American Studies;

- * Laid the groundwork for the Library's present and future development

as a family institution and a center for cultural exchanges between France and the United States;

* Acquired ever-widening recognition as the bibliographic center for American studies;

* Handled a skyrocketing growth of activity with a small staff of hard-working, devoted, well-organized librarians and assistants.

FINANCES

The Board of Trustees, conscious of its responsibilities for ensuring the support of the Library, has been making an effort to find a permanent solution to its financial predicament. During the past four years, Mr. Harvey S. Gerry has been notably successful in obtaining a series of gifts from the Library's benefactor, Mr. Thayer Lindsley, to whom the Library also owes its newly reconstituted endowment fund of \$200,000. Mr. Gerry has already received other pledges for the endowment.

At the meeting of the Board of Trustees held on August 22, 1969, Mr. Theodore Waller, Chairman of the U.S. Committee of the Library, expressed the hope that he would be able to match the funds raised by the trustees with equivalent contributions when the U.S. campaign gets underway.

A special effort will be made in connection with the fiftieth anniversary celebration to raise the income necessary for the Library to continue its growth during the coming year.

At present, the Library's regular expenditures on a minimal budget amount to \$120,000 a year. Regular anticipated income amounts to about \$70,000. There is an annual gap of \$50,000 that can be bridged only by an extraordinary fund-raising effort (which could not be repeated every year); by windfalls and special subsidies (which are highly uncertain); or by the income provided by a sufficiently large endowment fund.

Every effort is being made to realize the last solution, which offers the only guarantee for the Library's future: for, if current income is not very expansible, it must also be admitted that expenditures are hardly compressible. Most items on the budget constitute relatively fixed costs of operation: office expenditures, building charges, branch commitments (\$6,000 a year), and necessary furnishings. The only items that might be considered compressible are books and salaries. At present the Library spends less than \$10,000 a year of budgeted funds for books and periodicals. If this were cut in half for an economy of \$5,000, the Library would soon show signs of anemia, for books are its vital substance. The payroll, though theoretically compressible,

is now pared down below minimum requirements. Any further reductions could only disorganize or eliminate the services affected.

CONCLUSION

The Library's present growth is irreversible. It corresponds to new developments in French higher education, a growing interest in the forces that are transforming American society, increased travel and study abroad, and the fact that the American Library constitutes the major source of documentation relating to the United States in France. The Library has no choice but to succeed. The only problem is how to finance its success.

A measure of the interest that Library projects are able to arouse is the series of generous gifts that were made to finance the symposia being sponsored by the Library in connection with its fiftieth anniversary celebration. This success would seem to indicate that a large-scale campaign to win support for the Library in France and the United States might be crowned with equally encouraging results.

The Library has proven its potentialities as an instrument of enlightenment, intellectual exchange, and better understanding between France and the United States. The response of the public will now determine to what extent it can continue to fulfil its mission.

Harry Goldberg

Librarian

January 8, 1970