

Notes & Essays

LIBRARIES & PHILANTHROPY, THE PROCEEDINGS OF LIBRARY HISTORY SEMINAR IX, SPRING 1995, THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA, TUSCALOOSA

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Students of library history will be pleased to learn that the Graduate School of Library and Information Science at the University of Texas at Austin has published the proceedings of Library History Seminar IX, titled *Libraries & Philanthropy*. The proceedings originally appeared as the Winter and Spring 1996 issues of *Libraries & Culture*, but are reprinted in a single, hard-bound volume edited by Donald G. Davis Jr. Major improvements over the journal version are the combined tables of contents and an index compiled by Hermina G. B. Anghelescu.

The twenty-eight research papers and five prefatory essays of *Libraries & Philanthropy* bear witness to the exciting exchange of ideas at the seminar, and they provide extensive coverage of the issues and themes associated with the history of libraries and their benefactors. The papers offer diversity in chronology and geography; topics range from the ancient world to the computer age and cover five continents. These scholarly works provide a meaningful contribution to the historiography of libraries. They also carry a particular relevance to the present funding troubles confronting many libraries, a fact not lost on the seminar participants.

The Library History Seminar is a quinquennial event bringing together an international library history community for three days of scholarly interaction and collegiality. The University of Alabama hosted the ninth and most recent gathering on 30 March–1 April 1995. Approximately eighty librarians and scholars attended, representing twenty-four states and nine countries. Library History Seminar IX was dedicated to Edward G. Holley, William Rand Kenan Jr. Professor Emeritus and former dean of the School of Information and Library Science at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

The thematic choice of Library History Seminar IX, "Libraries & Philanthropy," proved to be a timely one. The planning committee received more than the usual number of submissions on the conference topic and was able to accept many fine manuscripts directly related to library benefaction. Listeners received these papers with a recognition of their current relevance, often making *ad lib* comparisons to the budgetary crises threatening the library world.

Three plenary papers by an interdisciplinary group of distinguished scholars provide a broad context for the philanthropy theme. Together, these papers provide a sense that the history of libraries has been closely associated with philanthropy and that studies of funding and organizational patterns in the past speak to the financial challenges of the present. Peter Dobkin Hall's essay on "Libraries and the Origins of Civil Society in the United States" asserts that America lacks an adequate understanding of its fundamental institutions, an understanding that might prove helpful in the post-Cold War atmosphere of restructuring and shrinking resources. He believes that scholars can learn from the variety of organizational possibilities represented in the history of library development. Dr. Hall is the Associate Research Scientist for the Yale University Program on Non-Profit Organizations. Neil Harris, professor of history at the University of Chicago, provides the second plenary paper, entitled, "Public Funding for Rarity in America." He examines the mixed public-private system of collecting rare books and manuscripts in the United States, finding a general reluctance on the part of American legislators to pay for rarities with public funds. Studying "American Public Libraries and the Third Sector," Phyllis Dain asserts that philanthropy and nonprofit organizations have been as much a part of American library development as has governmental support.

The majority of the remaining twenty-five papers elaborate on the central theme. Selected from over a hundred proposals, they highlight research on library philanthropy within specific historical contexts. The diversity of the papers selected creates an interdisciplinary appeal and provides opportunities for comparison. Topics covered include women and philanthropy, libraries in India and Ancient Greece, Rockefeller gifts, philanthropy by beer and tobacco tycoons, reading during the Cold War, the Council on Library Resources, and libraries and literacy in Europe.

No general work on library philanthropy would be complete without a study of Carnegie's gifts, and *Libraries & Philanthropy* offers five. Notable among these is Maxine K. Rochester's paper on the Carnegie Corporation British Dominions and Colonies Fund in which she asserts that Carnegie philanthropy abroad served to "Americanize" international librarianship. Nancy Becker Johnson highlights the influence of two

previously neglected figures, ALA Associate Secretary Sarah C. N. Bogle and Andrew's wife, Louise Whitfield Carnegie, on the Carnegie Corporation. Johnson argues that these women helped to "shape the face of philanthropy" (433). In a paper on "Melvil Dewey's Designs on Carnegie's Millions," Wayne A. Wiegand contends that Dewey failed to obtain Carnegie support for his work largely because of damage done to his reputation by charges of anti-Semitism and sexual improprieties. Wiegand's presentation of the study provided one of the lighter moments of the seminar. He adopted the character and dress of Dewey to deliver the paper and afterwards "Mr. Dewey" fielded questions—and several good-natured barbs—from the audience.

Three papers address philanthropy within the context of the American South. Edward G. Holley describes the rise of the University of North Carolina as an institution of national prominence within a region that generally lagged in higher education. Robert Sidney Martin and Orvin Lee Shiflett study the development of library training for African Americans in the segregated South. In his paper on North Carolina's public libraries, Patrick Valentine asserts that philanthropists helped to create a public expectation of library service. He emphasizes, however, that these benefactors failed to promote systematic library development, especially where African Americans were concerned. On this issue, a study of the Julius Rosenwald Fund County Library Demonstrations would have been an illustrative addition to *Libraries & Philanthropy*.

Four papers on European libraries demonstrate the international nature of the issues involved in library organization and funding. These papers are significant contributions in their own right, but they also inspired insightful comparisons by the Americanists during the discussion at LHS IX. A paper by Ilkka Mäkinen addresses the social and political implications of fund-raising efforts among the masses for Finnish public libraries in the nineteenth century. Margaret S. Dalton examines Germany's Borromäus Verein, a Catholic library organization that worked to promote library development in the interest of "good reading." Two papers cover philanthropy in France, Martine Poulain's "American Philanthropy and Libraries in France, 1917–1929" and Mary Niles Maack's "Study of the Role of Libraries in Contemporary Efforts to Combat Illiteracy in France and the United States." Paul Sturges provides a well-received study of the library philanthropy of beer magnate Michael Thomas Bass.

Libraries & Philanthropy bears witness to the exciting exchange of ideas that characterized Library History Seminar IX, and it chronicles the participation of library historians in the renewed scholarly activity associated with philanthropy. The papers that are a result of the event make a meaningful contribution to the historiography of libraries, and

also for some engaging reading. In his plenary paper Peter Dobkin Hall warns of a historiographical gap regarding libraries; one result is a lack of understanding of the association of librarianship with its benefactors. This volume of essays has done something to narrow that gap by providing a timely exploration of the role of philanthropy in the history of library organization and development.