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## Special Libraries, April 1911

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# Special Libraries

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A Warning .....	33
New York State Library .....	34
The Insurance Library at Boston, by D. N. Handy, Librarian .....	34
Fire Insurance Organizations .....	36
Select List of References Charities and Corrections .....	37

## A WARNING.

The following extracts from a letter written by Dr. Charles McCarthy, of the Wisconsin legislative reference department, calls attention to a serious danger in the movement for the establishment of legislative and municipal reference departments.

"I have received," he said, "many letters from state libraries and from cities in this country proposing to start legislative reference departments or municipal reference departments. These letters show me that there is a widespread movement in this country for the establishment of such departments, but they also show me that there are self-seeking people who are trying to establish these departments for the purpose of giving themselves jobs. One-half the letters received are in earnest and

from able people. About one-quarter are plainly letters of people who are trying to get some kind of political job. Another quarter is, perhaps, made up of earnest people who have no idea about the work and who are probably totally unfit to manage such work.

"Now I think the movement in this country is in a dangerous situation because of this. I think that every librarian in this work should do his best to stop the formation of departments when it is found that there are no trained people who can take charge of them. The work cannot be done by people who have no training or experience in it. It will be a failure and we ought to be frank with the legislature if trained people are not secured for these places.

"I think that your publication, 'Special Libraries,' ought to issue this warning. A great harm can be done to a good movement by rushing into it or by allowing politicians or people totally unfit to work in such departments to have charge of them. You know and I know that there are no experts in this work, so difficult is the work, and a great deal of training and experience in political science and in law and in the technical details of statute law is necessary before any such work can be undertaken by anybody. The same thing is true in the cataloging and classification work connected with it.

"I hope you and your association will discourage the building of departments where it is found that they are to come in under political conditions or from some other pretext or to furnish jobs for somebody."

The National Municipal League committee's report on municipal reference libraries declares that the qualifications of the head of a library should be "a liberal education, with special training in political science, economics, municipal government and methods of organization and administration, and he should be selected for merit alone."

The editor wishes to commend these statements to everyone who is interested in this progressive movement. A department in politics is practically useless; a department in charge of persons who do not have the necessary training and the proper outlook is sure to be a disappointment. No person should be considered for such a place unless he has training and ability, and extraordinary zeal for progressive service.

## NEW YORK STATE LIBRARY.

On March 29 the New York State Library was destroyed by fire. A few thousand books and perhaps one-tenth of the manuscript collection were saved, both much injured by fire and water.

The legislative reference section and its incomparable collections, the work of twenty years, were completely destroyed. These included a consolidation on cards of the annual indexes to legislation from 1891 to 1908, inclusive; the manuscript for 1909 and 1910 was ready for the printer; and the 1911 index had been started. In taking up the work again it has seemed best to begin with the index for 1911, with the hope that the years 1909 and 1910 may be completed at some time in the future, and that the consolidated index may be reconstructed from the printed copies of the bulletins.

Active work on the Biennial Review of Legislation and other legislation bulletins will have to be discontinued for the present, but there is no intention of definitely abandoning the series.

## THE INSURANCE LIBRARY AT BOSTON.

(D. N. Handy, Librarian.)

The insurance library at Boston is the most complete collection of fire insurance literature in existence. There are other libraries of insurance containing larger and equally valuable collections of life and miscellaneous insurances, but in the field of fire insurance it stands quite alone.

The library was founded and is maintained by the Insurance Library Association of Boston, incorporated under the laws of Massachusetts in 1887. Membership in the association is of three kinds, Active, Life and Associate, and at present numbers about four hundred. Its income is derived from membership fees, contributions from certain underwriting organizations having headquarters in Boston in return for certain privileges, and from funds invested.

While the association's activities have been directed chiefly to the upbuilding of the library, they have incidentally engaged in the development of technical lectures, and in evening courses in fire insurance and related subjects. At the present time it has enrolled in its evening classes one hundred pupils, most of them young men actually employed in the business of insurance.

The library contains much of value on branches other than fire insurance and its related subjects. Its files of insurance periodicals, state reports and insurance law digests for example, cover all insurances; but nevertheless it remains essentially a library of fire insurance only.

The field of related subjects is broader

perhaps than would appear on first thought. It comprises (1) The fire waste, which lies back of and makes possible the fire insurance transaction; and, (2) Fire protection and prevention, which today accompany all fire insurance activity. The former includes all data bearing on the nature, extent, causes and social significance of destruction of life and property by accidental fire. Its literature is found in the proceedings of fire prevention associations, reports of fire marshals and police, daily fire records, the elaborate statistical studies of the National Board of Fire Underwriters and the "Chronicle" Fire Tables, and others of like character. The literature of fire protection and prevention is even more comprehensive. Building construction, building materials, fire department organization, equipment and management; water supply systems, power, pipe distribution and water storage; fire apparatus and fire extinguishing equipment and even town-planning may properly be included in the literature of fire prevention and protection.

The library's collection may be roughly grouped as follows:

- a. Theory and practice of fire insurance, including its history.
- b. Related subjects as described above.
- c. Fire insurance maps.
- d. Memorabilia.

The maps, of which there are nearly six hundred, form an important part of the library's equipment. Intended primarily for the use of rate making committees of the Insurance Exchange, their up-keep is a matter of some importance. The smaller maps are renewed every few years; the larger ones are corrected by means of correction slips usually about once a year. At times the correction slips for a single map will exceed 1,000. These have to be pasted on by hand. All small maps are bound by the association and are filed by states alphabetically. As a rule but one map is placed in a binder they are filed flat, with labels on the back. Two thousand cards arranged in filing cabinets furnish the key to the maps. Large maps are placed on rollers in specially prepared cases, the tops of which afford tables for consulting them.

The "memorabilia" of the library consists of early fire insurance policies—many very rare—fire policy collections gathered from all parts of the world; fire marks, house plates, fire engravings and other material of like character and many photographs.

The activities of the library are spent first in making accessible the material in hand; second in discovering and getting hold of current material and of material needed to complete sets already partly secured; and third in extending the library

service among those who are, or ought to be, its users.

Many books and pamphlets are duplicated, the duplicate being subject to loan by members. The loaning privileges are open to all members on signing an application blank which is approved by the trustees.

Approval of the application gives the right to draw books until December of the current year. Applications must be renewed annually. Borrower's cards are issued to approved applicants and must be presented for stamping when books are drawn. Books may be retained seven days.

During the lecture season and while evening courses in insurance are in progress the library regularly issues special reference reading lists covering the subjects under consideration. These are posted on a bulletin board and later are brought together in a loose leaf binder. The library aims to assist very directly those engaged in evening class work.

The library has a card index comprising about 28,000 cards arranged for the most part in dictionary form, with frequent grouping of cards under guide headings. In this respect its methods do not differ essentially from other libraries. It finds pamphlet literature a source of trouble, but manages very well by filing all pamphlets as soon as received in "Grip" binders of the standard correspondence filing case size. Binders are numbered serially and filed in drawers, vertically. They are marked BP T. 1, 2, 3, 4, etc. "BP," stands for "Bound Pamphlets;" "T" stands for "Temporary." From time to time pamphlets bearing on the same subject are withdrawn from the "BP. T.'s" and placed in permanent bindings of uniform appearance and lettering. The transfer is noted on a transfer slip pasted on the inside of a temporary binder. Permanent binders are designated by "BP," and the serial number. Permanently bound pamphlets are filed numerically on the shelves although as the collection increases and specialization is further extended it becomes a question whether the bound pamphlets should not be distributed among their several classifications.

The method employed to keep in touch with current literature is probably similar to that of other special libraries. First current insurance periodicals, of which there are about one hundred coming to the reading rooms, are scanned for book or other notices of interest. Everything to be sent for is noted. Memoranda of forthcoming reports, publications, etc., are made and filed in a desk card tray. Such indexes as "The Engineering News," "Technical Index," "Reader's Guide," etc., also are gone over. Everything believed to be of importance is

noted and placed in the desk tray. From time to time these memoranda cards are assorted and such inquiries and requests sent as their data calls for. A dating stamp is used to show when inquiries were mailed; and replies, further references, etc., are noted on the back of the card. When publications noted have been secured the corresponding card in the desk tray is destroyed.

For periodical publications other than journals, such as annual reports, proceedings, etc., a different method is pursued. There are some three hundred associations, state departments, commissions, etc., issuing publications at stated intervals in whose literature the library is interested. To keep in touch with them a loose leaf form has been prepared, adapted to a Moore binder, size A. 1½. This form is printed in two colors (blue, original and salmon duplicates, triplicates, etc.). All associations, departments, commissions, etc., are entered alphabetically on the blue sheets, a carbon duplicate being made at the same time on the salmon sheet. The blue sheets are filed alphabetically by classes, all fire marshal's reports together, for example, and the salmon alphabetically by the date when the publication is usually issued. (See Appendix A.) The sheets contain spaces for name, address, periodicity of publication, date of issue, most favorable time to write for and price if for sale; also in vertical columns for "Date of issue written for," "Date written for," "Date received" and "Remarks." On the first of each month by reference to duplicate of the corresponding month one is kept currently advised of what should be written for to keep his file to date. This, of course, is supplemented by regular review of current publications. The originals become a desk index of all publishers of periodical matter with which it is desired to keep in touch. The duplicates serve constantly to remind one of what he ought to begin to write for. The record, kept on the duplicate, shows what has been done and with what success.

The library publishes quarterly a bulletin of current fire insurance and related subjects literature, of which six numbers have been issued. Its aim is to provide in convenient form for the use of fire underwriters and students of underwriting references to current publications of interest.

Scrapbooks and clippings files are used for much fugitive material. Gummed leaf scrapbooks, each book devoted to a special subject, and for smaller clippings a vertical, folding file almost self-indexing, are used extensively.

The library finds its field of related subjects steadily widening and the need of keeping an alert patrol on the borderland

growing. The increasing complexity of business, its manifold changes in method, the bewildering multiplication of manufacturing processes, all of which have some bearing on the fire hazard; the congestion of the cities with its piling up of values and fierce competitive strife, and numerous other factors are forcing upon fire underwriters a recognition of the fact that somewhere must be lodged for immediate use the varied information that will enable the expert to properly advise those charged with the conduct of the business. But where the actual collection of related material should end and co-operation with other libraries begin is difficult of decision.

Experience shows that the least promising information is sometimes the most valuable and that the less one has to direct members to other libraries the better satisfied they are with their own.

Some attempt has been made to index related material in nearby public libraries, but while this work would doubtless prove extremely valuable in the case of material which could not for one reason or another be otherwise obtained, it is open to question whether it pays for any pertinent material which might be obtained for one's own.

The library receives many inquiries by mail, which, within reasonable limits, it endeavors to answer.

#### FIRE INSURANCE ORGANIZATIONS.

**Fire Insurance Society of Philadelphia**, Fred W. Neuber, Secretary, 140 S. Fourth street, Philadelphia, Pa. Publishes "Bulletin." Also at intervals printed proceedings containing papers read at winter lecture course.

**Fire Underwriters' Association of the Northwest**, N. E. Briggs, Secretary, Chicago, Ill. Prints annual proceedings containing articles and papers read at annual meetings. Reports 1871—date, 31 vols.

**Insurance Institute of Hartford**, Louis N. Denison, Secretary, Hartford, Conn. Issues annual proceedings, including papers on insurance subjects read before the institute during the year.

**Insurance Society of New York**, E. R. Hardy, Secretary, 84 William street, New York City. Issues "Bulletin." Also occasionally reprints of papers and addresses read before its members.

**Policyholders' Union**, George H. Holt, Manager, Manhattan building, Chicago, Ill. Issues occasional pamphlets, etc., dealing

with fire insurance subjects from the policyholder's standpoint.

**The Insurance Library Association of Boston**, F. C. Brush, Clerk, 141 Milk street, Boston, Mass. Publishes quarterly "Bulletin" containing matter relating to the association and an index of current fire insurance and related subjects literature.

**Association of Life Insurance Presidents**, George T. Wright, Esq., Secretary, 1 Madison avenue, New York City. Publishes annual proceedings and occasional pamphlets on subjects of current interest to life underwriters. Especially good for timely discussions of matters affecting life insurance practice from the life company standpoint.

**Fire Insurance Club of Chicago**, Newton L. Sample, Secretary, 205 LaSalle street, Chicago, Ill. Publishes a "Bulletin." Also at intervals, in book form, lectures on fire insurance subjects delivered in its winter lecture course.

**Association of Casualty and Surety Companies**, William C. Mulvey, Secretary, New York, N. Y. Publishes annual proceedings. Reports of committees usually of interest.

**International Association of Accident Underwriters**, F. Robertson Jones, Secretary, Fidelity and Casualty Company, Cedar street, New York City. Issues annual reports of proceedings containing committee reports, papers and addresses. Also collects, through librarian of association, policy-forms showing all forms in use by accident underwriters.

**American Museum of Safety**, William H. Tolman, Director, 29 West 39th street, New York City. Devoted to study of safe-guarding hazards to life or industrial undertakings. Publishes descriptive pamphlets and bulletin.

**Board of Casualty and Surety Underwriters**, F. H. Kingsbury, Secretary, Scranton, Pa. Annual report contains valuable papers, reports of committees, etc.

**National Board of Fire Underwriters**, W. E. Malliere, General Agent, 135 William street, New York City. Publishes annual proceedings and occasional monographs on fire insurance subjects. Annual report contains, among other things, very carefully compiled tabulation of fires in cities of 20,000 inhabitants or over in the United States.

**American Association of Mutual Insurance Companies**, secretary's office, Erie, Pa. Publishes annual proceedings containing papers, reports of committees, etc.

#### Foreign.

**Belfast Insurance Institute**, James Williamson, Hon. Secretary, 79 Royal avenue, Belfast, Ireland.

**Birmingham Insurance Institute**, C. P.

Carson, Hon. Secretary, 10 Bennett's Hill, Birmingham, England.

Insurance Institute of Bristol, H. S. Simons, Secretary, State Insurance Company, Bristol, England.

Insurance Institute of Cardiff, Edward H. Schiele, Hon. Secretary, Cardiff, England.

Insurance Institute of Edinburgh, D. M. Cameron, Secretary, 95 George street, Edinburgh, Scotland.

Faculty of Actuaries in Scotland, Wm. G. Walton, Hon. Secretary, 14 Queen street, Edinburgh, Scotland.

Insurance and Actuarial Society of Glasgow, Stewart Lowrie, Hon. Secretary, 151 West George street, Glasgow, Scotland.

Insurance Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, Charles Stevenson, Secretary, 9 Albert Square, Manchester, England. Publishes annual journal containing selected papers read before affiliated institutes. Vols. 1-13. (1898—date.) Price, 6s

Insurance Institute of Ireland, Wm. A. McConnell, Hon. Secretary, 31 Dame street, Dublin, Ireland.

Insurance Institute of Liverpool, Hugh Tyler, Hon. Secretary, 5 Titheburn street, Liverpool, England.

Insurance Institute of London, G McKay Morant, Hon. Secretary, 8 Bucklersbury street, E. C., London, England.

Insurance Association of Manchester, E. A. Chambers, Hon. Secretary, 16 John Dalton street, Manchester, England.

Insurance Institute of Manchester, F. W. Holding, Hon. Secretary, 4 Chapel Walks, Manchester, England.

Insurance Institute of Montreal, Arch. H. Howell, Hon. Secretary, 485 St. Catherine street, West, Montreal, Canada.

Insurance Institute of Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, James Hopper, Hon. Secretary, Collingswood street, Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, England.

Insurance Institute of New South Wales, W. R. Day, Hon. Secretary, 35 Blyth street, Sydney, New South Wales.

Norwich Insurance Institute, W. Thouless, Hon. Secretary, 9 Surry street, Norwich.

Insurance Institute of Nottingham, T. Henshall, Hon. Secretary, 25 Victoria street, Nottingham, England.

Insurance Institute of South Africa, Wm. Mathieson, Secretary, P O Box 486, Cape-town, South Africa.

Insurance Institute of Toronto, A. G. Portch, Secretary, 27-29 Wellington street, Toronto, Canada.

Insurance Institute of Victoria, R. J. White, Hon. Secretary, 405 Collins street, Melbourne, Australia.

Insurance Institute of Yorkshire, E. Bagshaw, Hon. Secretary, South Parade, Leeds, England.

SELECT LIST OF REFERENCES ON STATE SUPERVISION AND ADMINISTRATION OF CHARITIES AND CORRECTION IN THE UNITED STATES.

(Compiled under the direction of H. H. B. Meyer, Chief Bibliographer, Library of Congress, with the co-operation of the State Libraries and State Legislative Reference Departments.)

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New York: Columbia university, 1898. 207 pp. (Studies in history, economics and public law. Ed. by the Faculty of political science of Columbia university, vol. IX, No. 3.)  
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#### INTERNATIONAL MUNICIPAL CONGRESS AND EXPOSITION.

The Chicago Association of Commerce is already making active preparations for the International Municipal Congress and Exposition which is to be held in that city on September 18-30, 1911. This Congress and Exposition will cover in a practical as well as theoretical manner matters of interest to all branches of municipal service. Upon each day of the Congress papers will be read and discussed by prominent municipal officials, and prominent municipalities of this country and foreign countries will have attractive exhibits of municipal undertakings in which they excel. The manufacturers of municipal appliances will have elaborate exhibits that will interest and instruct municipal officials everywhere. Edward H. Allen, 77 Jackson Boulevard, is general manager. John MacVicar, one of the commissioners of Des Moines, Ia., as noted elsewhere, has been selected as commissioner general of the exposition.

#### CIVIC BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR GREATER NEW YORK.

An important bibliography for Greater New York has been issued by the Russell Sage Foundation. The bibliography is classified under the following: Description, history, population, government and politics, public works, public finance, economic conditions, transportation and communication, public health, housing, crime and correction, poverty and charities, education, religion, recreation and social organizations.

These main subjects are subdivided into one hundred forty divisions and subdivi-

sions, thus making quick and easy reference possible to any phase of the city, its life and activities. It is admirable as a model for imitation by city librarians in every city. Charities Publication Society, N. Y., 1911. 296 pages, including an index of 40 pages. Price, \$1.50.

#### CONGRESSIONAL LEGISLATIVE REFERENCE DEPARTMENT.

To the Editor:

Publicity through the library press of the country should be given the efforts of Senator Owen of Oklahoma and Representative Nelson of Wisconsin to have a legislative reference library established at our national capital.

During the third session of the Sixty-first Congress a Senate bill was introduced with the intention of creating a United States Legislative Reference Bureau (S. 10, 041), and a House measure sought to create a "Legislative Division of the Congressional Library" (H. R. 31, 536).

It did not seem opportune to urge either bill at the short session just closed, but the House bill may again be introduced at the coming special session in April, if it seems adviseable. In any event, it is not too early for library workers and others interested in providing for our law-makers in Washington the best facilities for comparative study and expert assistance to enlist themselves in the ranks of those who will endeavor to impress upon the members of Congress from their respective districts the wisdom of these bills. If not at the April session, then at the opening of Congress late in 1911, some such measure as these will be pushed vigorously.

JOHN BOYNTON KAISER,  
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