

10-1-1911

Special Libraries, October 1911

Special Libraries Association

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Recommended Citation

Special Libraries Association, "Special Libraries, October 1911" (1911). *Special Libraries, 1911*. 8.
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Special Libraries

Vol. 2

OCTOBER 1911

No. 8

PUBLISHED BY THE
SPECIAL LIBRARIES ASSOCIATION
Monthly except July and August
Editorial and Publication Office, State Library,
Indianapolis, Ind
Subscriptions, 93 Broad street, Boston, Mass
Entered at the Postoffice at Indianapolis, Ind.,
as second-class matter.

Subscription...\$2.00 a year (10 numbers)
Single copies25 cents

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ANNUAL MEETING OF SPECIAL LIBRARIES ASSOCIATION.

The Annual meeting of the Special Libraries Association was held in New York City September 26th and 27th, 1911. Upwards of 125 librarians mostly representing special libraries, were present at the meetings and the interest manifested gave a sure indication of the success of the association. Three sessions were held,—the first two at the Engineering Societies Building and the last at Columbia University.

The first session was devoted to the trades and engineering indexes. A report by Joseph L. Wheeler on the trades index and a paper by W. P. Cutter on an international engineering index formed the basis for a general discussion on their purposes and use.

The president's address by John C. Dana, was devoted to Newark's experience with manufactures and trades catalogues of the city.

At the second session, Mr. F. N. Morton of the United Gas Improvement Co. of Philadelphia, read a paper on the work of his library and Mr. R. H. Johnstone of the Bureau of Railway Economies, Washington,

gave a paper on the library of that institution. Mr. Crowell of the Wall Street Journal described the work of the statistical and information bureau of the Wall Street Journal. A discussion of the office and statistical library followed and was participated in by many representatives of such libraries.

At the third session, public affairs libraries were taken up. The meeting was opened by a report of progress on a public affairs index, by John A. Lapp, editor of Special Libraries. Horace E. Flack, Baltimore municipal reference library, spoke on the subject "The Present Status of Municipal Reference" and Mr. Clinton Robers Woodruff, Secretary of the National Municipal League spoke on the sources of municipal material and the possible work of the American Municipal Review in furthering the organizations of municipal information. Mr. M. S. Dudgeon, Secretary of the Wisconsin Library Commission outlined what should be the qualifications of legislative and municipal reference librarians. The discussion which followed was one of the best of the sessions.

The following officers were elected for the ensuing year:

President—R. H. Whitten.
Vice-President—H. O. Brigham.
Sec.-Treas.—Guy E. Marion.
Members of Executive Committee:—
W. P. Cutter, of New York.
G. W. Lee, of Boston.

It was determined by the executive committee that the next meeting be held in connection with the American Library Association. The meeting will be held at Ottawa, Canada, at a time to be announced.

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON A TRADES INDEX.

Joseph L. Wheeler, Chairman.

This committee was organized to bring about some sort of an index to the current magazine material on the various trades and crafts. The need for such an index is very great, and the response to the first plans and suggestions of the committee showed very plainly that the index would meet with wide acceptance.

The original plan of co-operative indexing on the part of several libraries was abandoned a year ago. At that time, the H. W. Wilson Co., of Minneapolis, intimated that they would be willing to undertake the

publication of a trades index on a commercial basis, if there seemed to be enough encouragement. The committee thereupon drew up detailed plans for the trades index, as to its scope, arrangement, form of entry, etc., and also formulated suggestions which would help the Wilson Co. to advertise the index most effectively.

Last February the Wilson Co. had the material in hand for the general plan, and began to take the necessary steps toward starting the indexing itself. They were unsuccessful in locating a person qualified to edit the index, and from press of other business were compelled to pass the matter over until this fall.

To sum up the present situation: The committee made plans and received assurance of support for a trades index and were very pleased to turn the matter over to the Wilson Co., for carrying out. The company has been subjected to delays, but it is our understanding that the magazines of 1911 are to be indexed by the end of the year. A letter from Mr. Wilson, dated Sept. 9, states that he has partly decided on an editor, but will be glad to consider the qualifications of others.

It will be seen that the details of the work and the actual method of carrying on the index are no longer in the hands of the committee, and as we have been successful in having the publication put on a permanent basis, I recommend that the committee be discharged, and that subsequent suggestions from librarians be made individually.

From the correspondence of Mr. Wilson the plan which he is now practically decided upon is as follows: An index of about 75 periodicals on the trades, including the titles listed in Special Libraries for June 1910. These magazines are on manual trades and not on the commercial or engineering aspects of industrial work. It is very possible, however, that the index may in time branch out into a field which will include engineering and business as well as the trades. The term Trades Index is somewhat indefinite, as the general public would be very apt to seek therein material on the business trades, like Grocery, Hardware, etc. The title of "Artisans' Trades Index" defined the original purpose of the work exactly. In time, the publication may become an "Industrial Index," in which artisans' trades, business methods, selling trades, engineering, will all be covered. The libraries would welcome such an index very eagerly. Where, for instance, can articles in "System" and in "Advertising and Selling" be found indexed, or anything of note on business methods, except as applied in

manufacture? This matter is not in the hands of the committee however, except to make suggestions. The discussion will show to some extent the attitude of the libraries on the general scope.

The arrangement will be that of the dictionary plan, now followed in the Reader's Guide. The classified arrangement of the Engineering Index, even when supplemented by a short subject index like that of the Technical Press Index, does not meet the needs of libraries, especially public libraries, few of which can employ assistants trained in technical subjects, and where it is very often very desirable that readers shall consult the indexes themselves, and not call on the assistants. The dictionary arrangement makes every topic immediately available. The classified arrangement has an advantage to the specialist in one branch of work, in that it collects for him the material on all the minor topics under the main heading and thereby calls his attention to more material than he would find in a dictionary arrangement, while looking through it for things of interest to him. It is a question, however, whether the dictionary arrangement will not become so valuable even to specialists, when given a proper tryout, that they will prefer it.

As for the fullness of entry, the plans call for entries similar to those of the Reader's Guide, and this will probably be carried out, although the length of the article will also be given.

The index will be a monthly publication, with a full cumulation four times a year, at the end of each quarter. The last information from Mr. Wilson indicates that the subscription price will be made on a sliding scale. Each library will pay according to the number of magazines which it receives, that are indexed. The small public library will be paying \$6.00 for the index service to thirty magazines which it receives, the large public library that has a list of 70 magazines will pay \$14.00, and the manufacturer who takes only a dozen magazines in his special field will receive the index for \$2.40. On this basis alone can the index be available to all who should use it, and consequently this is the only proper basis for the publisher.

To close this report, the committee would ask very earnestly for the support of all the members of the Association and of all public libraries in cities of more than 50,000 population. An investment of \$25 or \$50 in trades magazines with the index service will open up a new clientele in any public library, and it seems as though very great results should come from this work. The special libraries will of course find the index in-

dispensable in their work, giving references to the application of chemical and mechanical engineering in minor ways that have up to date eluded most of the searches which library workers have had to make for them.

AN INTERNATIONAL TECHNICAL INDEX.

WALTER PARKER CUTTER

Librarian, Engineering Societies, N. Y.

"We are today spending time and money in discovering facts and processes which have already been discovered; inventors are trying to perfect apparatus and processes which have already been perfected; and the engineer in the field is working on projects which are similar to those already executed. Conservation of that highest type of energy, the energy of the human mind, requires that the effort thus lost should be minimized. An index to the literature of technology, if comprehensive, detailed, world-wide in scope, would do much to assist the progress of the world by making readily available those discoveries, achievements, constructions and processes as soon as they have been completed"

After a description of the international catalogue of scientific literature, issued by the Royal Society through international cooperation, and the publications of the Institut International fur Techno-Bibliographie in Berlin, the paper continued as follows:

"With a view to inaugurate a movement toward the compilation and support of such an index on a truly international basis, I have suggested that the four great engineering societies of the United States appoint a committee on invitation, to devise a plan for a first international congress for technical bibliography, and to issue invitations to such congress. This congress might well consider a proposition to extend the International Catalogue of Scientific Literature to cover applied science, a proposition to join forces with the Institut International fur Techno-Bibliographie, or the institution of a separate enterprise."

"It seems to me, that the requisites of a perfect index are the following.

Frequent and prompt issue; frequent and prompt cumulation; adequate classification; an author index to all entries; an index of specific subjects for all entries; illustrations where necessary; and the inclusion of important patents."

Frequent and prompt issue precludes cooperation in the actual work of prepara-

tion of the index by workers separated from each other by long distances.....It means that the use of volunteer unpaid assistance should be discountenanced. It would require the organization of an efficient central printing and mailing service. Frequent cumulation would require the use of type-setting machines, and the provision of storage of type until the cumulation was issued, if not longer.

A classified index, as opposed to an alphabetical one, is of course essential if the use is to be international, as no alphabetical arrangement of subject headings in one language could be conveniently used by all.

Adequate classification is difficult. As we have seen, the International Catalogue of Scientific Literature only escaped abandonment because the majority of the delegates refused to accept the Decimal Classification. It is probable that the advocates of that and other classifications would attempt to dominate any international congress. Men's minds differ widely on subjects of classification; but the prominence of such delegates as would naturally be selected should insure men of great judgment, and conservative action might be expected.

An author and subject index to each article is absolutely essential. The subject index should not be limited to one language, but should have in one alphabet the terms in English, French and German, and perhaps in Italian.

In connection with the central bureau of the index, there should be established a section which would furnish accurate transcripts of any article desired, with reproductions of the necessary plates and illustrations, and transactions from any European language into any other."

"The chief reason for my advocacy of international action is to ensure adequate financial support. The duty of the Government to support such an enterprise has been recognized by nearly every civilized government in the support given to the International Catalogue of Scientific Literature by these governments, and the extension to the support of a technical index should follow as a matter of course. The index well started might well attract substantial endowment from some of our wealthy men whose fortunes have come to them through the advance in applied science, and such endowment would be more certain were it known that the permanency of the index was assured by international action. This would add one more link to the chain which is slowly being forged to hold the nations of the earth together in an international peace."

DISCUSSION.

MR. G. W. LEE, (Stone and Webster, Boston): About Mr. Wheeler's paper, it seems to me that whether it is a classified index or an alphabetical index should depend a great deal upon which can be done the easier.

MR. DANA: I would like to ask Mr. Wheeler if he would like to say just a word about whether these two indexes would touch one another.

MR. WHEELER. I am a little uncertain about that point myself and that is why I wanted to hear Mr. Cutter. It seems to me Mr. Cutter's index would appeal especially to a few of the large public libraries and the special technical libraries. It would not appeal to the general run of public libraries. I think when the index is started there will be no difficulty about support. The sliding scale basis will make it possible for the small libraries to subscribe. The library I am from is in a town of 50,000 inhabitants and we would find that very valuable, and if it were put on a large subscription basis it would be impossible for us to take it. I understand its idea is to take only the general engineering magazines, like the News, the Record, etc., and in that way the field of engineering as covered by the American periodicals, at least, would be taken up in the index, of course very unsatisfactorily for the special library but perfectly satisfactorily for the public library.

MR. G. E. MARION, (Arthur D. Little, Inc., Boston). I think the world is full of indexes now and that we want fewer and better ones rather than more such as we have. I should say that the trades index should be confined to its own field and index the less technical things and more of the general articles, but stop there, and not aspire to this other field because it would not accomplish anything definite.

MR. WILSON, (Clark Univ., Worcester, Mass.): At this point I want to speak as to my contention against the sliding scale. He has no right to sell it to one library for one price and to another library at another price. I do not think that is a proper way to do business and I do not think that we, as librarians, ought to support any man that does business in that way.

MR. R. H. WHITTEN, (Public Service Commission, New York): As to the form of the technology index proposed by Mr. Cutter, I find the present Engineering index very valuable in my work, on account of its appearing as a monthly classified index in which I can go through the three or four main subjects in which I am specially interested and pick out the articles that are

of particular value in my work. The classified arrangement has its difficulties, but I think that for weekly or monthly issues it has very great advantages to a special library that is trying to keep track of some particular subject. I have some doubts as to the value of attempts at international action as distinguished from national action. I think that probably an index of this kind undertaken by the engineering societies of America with a view to providing an index that will be most valuable for their purposes and for American purposes generally will make a more serviceable and valuable index than an index planned upon international or universal lines. I do not think that an international movement would probably be so permanent and stable as a national movement backed by the Engineering Societies. I agree most thoroughly with most of Mr. Cutter's most excellent paper. I certainly agree with his statement that this index to be successful must not be a purely voluntary or co-operative movement, but that it must be on a firm financial basis and must be carried on by some single institution that will do all the work and not have it scattered all over the world. Moreover, the index must be published promptly.

MR. H. H. B. MEYER, (Library of Congress, Washington): I would like to see this index published in sections by languages. Then American libraries can use the index in the English language and with some likelihood of finding the material indexed. My suggestion is, let the English and American workers combine for an index in the English language and let the Germans and Austrians have an index in the German language, and the French prepare an index for their magazines and periodicals and the Italians the same, then in a large library—take the library of Congress, for instance—you would find all of these indexes. You would probably find men who would use these various languages. In an international index you are restricted to the classified arrangement and I know that is a difficult one to work with. I would like to see an alphabetical arrangement by languages as I am quite sure that that would be one that would be supported by the people of each country and it would be most practical. An ordinarily intelligent man is generally able to use the Engineering index because that is entirely in English. He gets what he wants under the classified arrangement. Where you have seven or eight different indexes in as many languages it does not hamper the man who knows all those languages.

MR. MACFARLANE, (Commercial Museum, Philadelphia): I have in connection

with my library a translation bureau. We have a dictionary published in three languages, English, Spanish and Portuguese. I have Spaniards translating Spanish and Portuguese translating Portuguese. They all look upon this three-language dictionary as a nuisance. They prefer each of them to take a distinct dictionary of their own language. I, of course, have nothing to do with the translation work, but I merely state that the men who are familiar with the languages won't use or tolerate the dictionary with the three languages in, but each one prefers the dictionary of his own language.

MR. MARION: We have heard so much on that side I want to say a word on the other. I feel that it is a great opportunity to take up every month the international publication, (*Revue de l'Ingenieur et Index Technique*) and if there were, for instance, three good technical indexes I would have to go through three books. If we had Mr. Cutter's index, as I have followed him, he would have the three entries in one place and I would find them readily.

MR. DYER, (National Carbon Company, Cleveland): We take the journals in French, German and English, and one in Italian. I do not know what we would do if we had to carry five separate indexes if we wanted to look up all the material on some subject. It is something to be considered in an organization of special libraries.

MR. JOHN A. LAPP, (Indiana State Library): When the Special Libraries Association was first started the idea was that if we could start things and get someone else to take them off our hands it was the proper thing for us to do, because there is a big field to take up new things. It would be possible, of course, in Special Libraries to have a limited trades index, but the field of special libraries has grown so that I fear an attempt to cover the trades index would make the publication one-sided, so I have been very much pleased that the Wilson Company is willing to take it up on a commercial basis. We are giving as much assistance as the publication can give and from now on we will promote the trades index as much as we can, but I believe that it will be wise for us to follow the general developments of special libraries in the many fields which they are now occupying instead of specializing too heavily in one field.

MR. WILSON. It seems to me that the language question is a very large one; it is one of those questions that we ought not to settle on the moment. We must always look forward to the time when the American boy and girl are brought up to read

German and French, at least. If we are going to look into the future at all we must anticipate that French and German will be as easily read as English.

MR. R. H. WHITTEN: My point would be that while it is desirable to include foreign languages, still the simpler we can make our indexes the better. I think that a form of publication such as the Engineering index in its five-year cumulations in which are included articles in foreign languages as well as articles in English, all in one alphabetic subject arrangement, is the best for anyone who wants to get at a particular subject quickly. While I do not have the slightest objection to having the headings of a classified index in all the different languages, still I think that the alphabetic arrangement is the most convenient for most of the people that will use this index. I take it that it will be used, not simply by the largest libraries and a few scientists, but by engineers, special libraries and a considerable body of readers. I would oppose Mr. Meyer in so far as he would limit the index to English publications only. I think that we should have an index that would be as nearly universal as is necessary for American needs. It should include all articles in German, French, Italian, etc., that are important for American purposes. The index should be prepared with a view to serving the needs of the American engineer and reader in the quickest and best way possible.

MR. MEYER: There is one point Mr. Cutter mentioned that we have lost sight of a little, and that is the delay that is inherent in every co-operative scheme. Each country ought to undertake an engineering and technical index of its current literature that can be gotten up promptly. We have an example of that in the Reader's Guide. It is surprising the promptness with which it comes out. The advantage of promptness is one that ought not to be lost sight of.

MR. CUTTER: The main part of our work is: A man comes in and wants to know all that has been published on a certain subject recently. He wants to know the experience with this in the practical line anywhere in the world. Now, if with any division of index of any kind, alphabetical or by classification, there is a division by language of country, it simply means if you are going back five years and there are four parts to that index, to find all that there is about a subject in the last five years, you have to look through twenty volumes instead of five. The index I am advocating is not intended much for the use of small public libraries. Mr. Wilson himself will take up that. Sixty of the com-

mon technical papers will contain no foreign matters whatever, except, perhaps, the *Engineering News*. It is intended for the use of those people who even if they cannot translate the articles can find out what the article means. I think perhaps, part of my paper I had better read again, because that is the gist of the whole matter after all, viz., as to how an index is to be arranged, whether it is to be classified, alphabetical, or what. I tried to make this thing broad, and not to appeal to what you may call the public library trade. To get diplomatic representation and appropriation from the United States Congress and British Parliament especially to any such proposition as this where it is limited to only the English language I think would be very much more difficult.

DISCUSSION BY LETTER

The John Crerar Library,
Chicago, Sept. 23, 1911.

Mr. John Cotton Dana,
President, Special Libraries Assn.

Dear Sir:—

In the announcement of the forthcoming annual meeting of the Special Libraries Association there is a paragraph about the qualifications of the librarian and statistician of a "special library," which perhaps might be taken as the thesis of the Special Libraries Association, presented for discussion. As I am not able to be present at the meeting, I beg to record by letter my exception to a sentence in that paragraph. It reads as follows:

"It may be desirable to place in charge one who has no library training but who has extended training in the problems and scientific literature of the special industry or business served and who has an aptitude for the organization of information, and who may therefore be relied upon to learn and apply the necessary library methods."

The statement is not very clear, but I am, perhaps, not mistaken if I take it to mean that, in the opinion of its author, a Special library does not need to be in charge of a librarian, but that a specialist in the particular line served by the library would be preferable.

I wish to take exception to this view and to present as counter thesis this:

"To place in charge of a library a person who is not a librarian is to invite failure."

With "librarian" is here not meant "one who has gone through a library school," but one who, having certain qualifications for work with books, takes up the work of a librarian with the intention of making it

his life work. These qualifications should be both inherent, such as book sense, and acquired, such as the knowledge of the literature about books, and the facility of using books as tools. Having these qualifications, a librarian may be relied on to be able to acquire not only a perfect familiarity with ordinary methods of work evolved by other workers, but a quite sufficient knowledge of almost any subject, in order to render competent service to the users of a library, no matter how special. As to engineering, it may be recalled that there are no engineers at large, and that a mechanical engineer would not necessarily know more about electrical, or chemical engineering than a librarian, and moreover, he would probably not have the special aptitude for work with books which makes a librarian a *librarian*.

To use an example from a different line: Would the manager of an engineering plant choose an engineer for head of his department of accountancy? An accountant for an engineering plant must, of course, before he takes up his work, make himself familiar with engineering methods, but first and all the time must he be an accountant. Similarly, let us not forget that a librarian, in order to be able to give competent and satisfactory service through a library, must be, first, and last and *all* the time, a librarian.

Yours truly,

A. G. S. JOSEPHSON.

SELECT LIST OF REFERENCES ON THE OPEN SHOP.

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

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