

WILLIAM S. BUDINGTON

“To Enlarge the Sphere of Human Knowledge”: The Role of the Independent Research Library

UNLIKE THE OTHER CONTRIBUTIONS to this series, the present article does not deal with the college and university scene. What then is the role of the independent research library in such a context? The answer, of course, lies in the partnership which these distinctive institutions share with academic libraries in supporting and structuring the pursuit of scholarly research. By supplementing the resources provided in the nation's academic libraries, these independent institutions do help “to enlarge the sphere of human knowledge” —as stated in the objectives of one of this group. A better perspective will be gained of the contribution made by these libraries now and through the past hundred years if their profile and place in the historical scene are briefly developed. A look at the principal categories of independent libraries and some of the outstanding examples will conclude with a review of their special services and some of the changes which they have undergone.

NATURE OF THE INDEPENDENT LIBRARIES

The phrase “independent research library” is a relatively new tag and in order to be understood must often be con-

tinued with: “such as Folger, Newberry, etc.” Their recognition as a genre began to coalesce in late 1971 in a meeting at the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and in May 1972 the Independent Research Libraries Association (IRLA) was founded. The initial stimulus for their joining derived from the Tax Reform Act of 1969, with the threat (later actualized for some) of classification as private foundations and their ineligibility for federal funding under the Library Services and Construction Act (LSCA) and the Higher Education Act (HEA). A host of other common problems and interests continue to occupy IRLA members at their regular meetings.

In a broad sense, independent research libraries are not limited to the fifteen IRLA members. The overall qualifying characteristic relates to the word “research,” as noted above, which defines the role which they fill vis-à-vis the academic libraries. While most of the institutions to be noted herein are fairly large, the relevance of a few smaller libraries warrants their inclusion as part of the spectrum. Separately, each institution answers to the definition of “research library” put forward by the American Council of Learned Societies:

Research libraries may be defined as institutions whose collections are organized primarily to the needs of scholars and so to facilitate effective action on the frontier of every field of knowledge, traditional and novel.¹

Together, these libraries represent a distinctive and largely unique segment of the total resource for scholarly study and research in this country.

Other special characteristics of the independent research libraries have contributed to the formation of collections with parameters particularly adapted to the world of research.² The principal distinguishing feature is their free-standing status—not being part of a larger institution (as is a university library), a municipal body (as is a city public library), or a corporate entity (as are company, museum, or federal agency libraries). The independent library generally operates under its own charter or articles of incorporation, has its own board of directors or trustees and issues its own financial statement and annual report. The library's function and objective are to bring together the corpus of records necessary to intellectual inquiry in one or more disciplines, in dimensions as complete as possible, and with the optimum provision of scholarly apparatus and physical convenience.

The basis of their collection building may be usefully contrasted with academic and public libraries. In academe, response must be made to changing curricular needs, to shifting research interests of academic staff, and to project-oriented research; the public library, too, must answer to the reading interests of the hour, across a wide range of person-specific demands. These user demands thus shape the collections. The independent library, on the other hand, focuses on a relatively narrow segment of human knowledge and seeks to maintain eminence therein. The boundaries are sharpened by the nature of retrospective collections becoming available

and current research output and publications acquired. At the same time, a policy of collecting broadly within a field of interest prepares the library to respond broadly to scholarly inquiry. In a very real sense, the collection thus shapes its readership, which tends to be not exclusively local but regional, national, international, and of high scholarly repute. Access to nearly all these collections is uniformly open, without restriction to any particular affiliation or membership; because of the physical nature of the materials and limitations of reader facilities, any screening (when necessary) must be based on competence and specific need.

The fiscal support of the independent libraries varies according to their institutional nature. The present discussion sets up four primary groupings: subscription—proprietary, scientific society, historical society, and donor endowed. The principal funding source may be distinctive to each category, although income is generally derived from all feasible sources: memberships, endowments, fees, grants, sales, etc. Until 1973–74, these libraries received no benefits of tax support, being excluded from eligibility for HEA and LSCA funding. In the first instance, they did not qualify as “educational institutions,” despite their near-exclusive use by academic personnel; in the second instance, not being tax-supported disqualified them as “public libraries,” despite being accessible to the public. Since the 1972 HEA amendment, most have received annual basic grants; while the 1973 LSCA amendments technically qualified the independent libraries, these funds have been channeled in other directions by the controlling state agencies.

RELATIONSHIP TO AMERICAN LIBRARY HISTORY

It should be noted that, while of research significance today, each type of

independent library came into being in response to contemporary needs at a certain period in American history. Significant library developments since 1876 trace their origins even to the colonial era.³ Early library facilities were a far cry from those available even in the centennial year. Prior to the American Revolution, the only significant collections of books had been brought from England and were in the hands of individual scholars. In perhaps the earliest cooperative venture, some sixty societies of owners were recorded before 1776, pooling separate collections for a wider range of inquiry.⁴ These were succeeded by subscription libraries, whose support came from annual fees paid by those desiring use privileges; this arrangement afforded access by a much wider audience. As characterized by one of their eminent directors, proprietary and subscription libraries flourished greatly just before the reorganization of social forces that brought about modern American democracy.⁵ They were, indeed, the forerunners of the public library movement in several respects, laying emphasis on and tailoring service to the localized needs of the subscribers. These needs, popular or scholarly, established the individual patterns which thereafter provided the shaping precedents.

The intellectual forces of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries tended to cluster about the fledging colleges and the churches. Yet many individuals of active mind came together in other groupings as well, including societies with various interests. Benjamin Franklin, wishing to foster a "constant correspondence" of learned men throughout the colonies, organized the American Philosophical Society in 1743, the first of many learned societies. In due course, it assembled a library for its members' use, largely but not exclusively devoted to science. Similarly, those who nurtured

pride in the new country and its political components brought into being the historical societies for the study and collecting of landmark documents and the artifacts of the burgeoning land of new freedom and new culture.

Of public libraries as we know them, the country's first century had none, yet the foundations were being laid. The subscription libraries grew and prospered; most of all, the concept of a fully literate people, venerated since the Revolution, began to take form and substance. Educational reforms in the 1830s established the principle of tax-supported school systems for all children; public secondary schools began to displace the private academies. By the mid-nineteenth century, the thrust was developing toward public libraries as a rightful handmaiden of individual education. Neither the church- nor academically based library would suit the practical knowledge needs of the general populace and the energetically maturing nation. The Bingham Library for Youth in Salisbury, Connecticut (1803), and the Peterborough, New Hampshire, town library (1833) had indeed sprung up; it took an 1848 Massachusetts law authorizing establishment of the Boston Public Library (extended in 1851 to other towns) to spark the public library movement. The 1853 New York conference of librarians did not catch the fire, but the 1876 Philadelphia conference did, and the public library became an established, growing institution.⁶

This concept of the good which books could do for humankind was also firmly established in the tradesmen's and mechanics' institute libraries. In addition, it achieved visibility simultaneously with the building of personal fortunes, as corporate successes began to be achieved in the latter half of the nineteenth century. As such, it attracted the philanthropically inclined; all of the subsequently founded independent libraries came into being through the

beneficence of the well-to-do. Some were not bookmen themselves but caused endowed public libraries to be formed through bequests; others were avid collectors who wished their great holdings to be made available to the public for scholarly work and provided substantial buildings and permanent funding.

Thus did the subscription, society, and endowed libraries enter the current of intellectual development in America—independent of the church and the educational establishment which had custody of most formal libraries; responsive to otherwise surfacing information needs; paralleling the public library movement; and finally influenced by and benefiting from industrialization and capital successes. Not all such libraries survived by any means; many sank quietly; some of the weak were absorbed by some of the strong. Those continuing until today are undergoing change under fiscal stress and the strictures of space and unfriendly environments. But the collections established and nurtured by these survivors—some for over two hundred years—now provide to the world of scholarship a wealth of documentary resources, exceeding in the richness of their specific fields many of the collections of the academic community. Thus does the development of the independent research libraries relate to the history of their sister academic institutions; examination of the outstanding examples will add further historical perspective.

SUBSCRIPTION LIBRARIES

At a time when the college libraries were unaccessible and unsuitable to general usage and public libraries were as yet undeveloped, the subscription library provided the means to accumulate books for the use of its fee-paying members. Benjamin Franklin's Junto (or "Leather Apron Club") was a discussion group: needing books to substantiate their topics, they established

in 1731 the Library Company of Philadelphia, with fifty subscribers at forty shillings down and ten shillings per year. The first such library in the colonies, its main concern was to supply its members with the most recent books for leisure reading.⁷

The New York Society Library came into being in 1754, and the Boston Athenaeum appeared in 1807, patterned after the Athenaeum and Lyceum of Liverpool. The Boston group, originally fourteen men concerned with editing the *Monthly Anthology and Boston Review*, took pains to provide a facility particularly conducive to reading and the celebration of culture; its 1847 building (at 10½ Beacon Street) is now a National Historical Landmark.⁸

In these subscription libraries, members and shareholders could borrow; anyone with serious purpose was admitted to read, through one means or another. Their distinctive source of income has been membership assessments; for the Library Company's 450 members (reduced from 1913's 909), a share costs about \$20.00 with annual assessments around \$8.00. The Boston Athenaeum's 1,049 shares change hands (often by inheritance or gift) beyond the library's ken, thus producing no income. Annual assessments and "book-tickets" for friends provide some funds. For both institutions, subsequent endowments and gifts have supplied a major underwriting.

Initially, the two collections were not "built" but grew in response to their members' demands. The 1851 library survey by the Smithsonian's Charles C. Jewett notes them as two of the five collections in the country having 50,000 or more volumes. The Library Company was second in size only to Harvard, having in fact served as the "library of the Congress" when it met on the first floor of Carpenters Hall in 1774 (the library then occupying the second floor). Through the acquisition of contempo-

rary publishing, private papers, and collections and the merging of smaller subscription libraries as well as the larger Loganian Library, the Library Company can now lay claim to the nation's best representation of books by, about, and printed in Philadelphia; the third largest collection of contemporary material on the Revolution; important holdings on Afro-American culture and women's rights; and eighteenth-century American and English medicine, science, industry, architecture, design, and natural history. Recognition of the truly unique character of the holdings came at several stages. By 1935 it was recommended that a change in policy be made, from a general circulating collection to a "collected" collection; a later survey firmly urged that the Library Company consider itself a "research library" thenceforth.

While the Boston Athenaeum maintained its role as a retreat for the intellect and the spirit, it nonetheless came by several notable holdings, including George Washington's personal library. Through judicious selecting in history and the arts, as well as acquisition of important publications in other fields, it accumulated a broadly representative collection of variable depths. It has recognized strength in New England colonial books and pamphlets. Perhaps its most outstanding corpus is Confederate literature and imprints—initiated by William Frederick Poole and Francis Parkman with a visit to Richmond in June 1865 and strengthened by purchase in 1944 of Justice Williams' Confederate collection.

SCIENTIFIC SOCIETIES

While the scholarly societies came into being for purposes of intellectual inquiry and professional interests, their libraries were important focal elements of the society programs. Earliest among them, in 1743 as noted above, was the American Philosophical Society, with

Benjamin Franklin as first secretary. Its first years were a period of stumbling; a rival group, the American Society for the Promotion of Useful Knowledge, stirred it to action, and a merger occurred in 1769, with Franklin now the president. His aim was to encourage men to discover and to communicate whatever discoveries might "tend to increase the Power of Man over Matter and multiply the Conveniences or Pleasures of Life."⁹ The library was recognized as a means for promoting, preserving, and making this knowledge available. By exchange of the society's *Proceedings* and other publications with similar institutions throughout the world, the library has made substantial additions to its collections.

In subsequent years, many other such institutions came into being, most also incorporating libraries: the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (1780), whose library later formed the nucleus of the new Linda Hall Library; the Boston Society of National History (1831); the New York Academy of Sciences (1818); the Albany Institute of Science (1824).¹⁰ The library of the New York Academy of Medicine was born with its founding body in 1847, its first acquisition being the three volumes of Paine's *Medical Commentaries*. Occasion for the founding was the looming fear of the practice of quackery and the dissemination of misinformation, which the library and the 185 charter applicants hoped to counter.¹¹

Founders and society members were the principal users of the scientific society libraries. The American Philosophical Society included officers of the federal, state, and city governments as qualified entrants; many members were also working scientists at the University of Pennsylvania and the Franklin Institute. There was little, if any, general access "without proper introduction" until about 1900, when scholars were encouraged to visit, use, and publish their

findings. Members' dues provided the library's support, with wealthy individuals occasionally asked to share in the cost of such prizes as the Audubon *Birds of America*. The New York Academy of Medicine Library has always been open to the public, welcoming physicians, research scientists, teachers, students, and writers. The academy now numbers over 3,000 members; their dues merge with endowment income and special library fees to provide support. In recent years government contracts have supported substantial lending activity—with the New York State Library and the New York State Interlibrary Loan (NYSILL) network and, as the New York/Northern New Jersey Regional Medical Library, with the National Library of Medicine.

The academy's collections are perhaps not atypical of a large, 430,000-volume research library in the medical specialties and related sciences; there is heavy emphasis on serials and strong holdings of historically important materials (e.g., 50,000 rare volumes, 139 incunabula). In its early years the American Philosophical Society Library collected broadly in sciences, technology, zoology, and archaeology—becoming a general "research" library, without a specific acquisition policy. Strengths were uneven, varying with historical pressures, uncertain support, and the librarians' special interests. Due to the special concerns of Thomas Jefferson and one of the society's nineteenth-century committees, American Indian history and linguistics became a collecting specialty. A 1932 bequest led to reexamination of activities, and a 1940 committee laid down guidelines; acquisitions policies were sharpened in the 1940s and 1950s. From an "appendage" to the society, the library became an important resource in itself. Presently, history of science is the principal interest: all sciences in the colonies and U.S. to 1850; European backgrounds to those sciences and periods,

especially British and French; selected sciences and subjects since 1850 (e.g., Darwinism, genetics, quantum physics, flying objects). The library possesses over half of Benjamin Franklin's surviving papers, and Jefferson's manuscript draft of the Declaration of Independence is but one of many prized holdings.

HISTORICAL SOCIETIES

From the end of the eighteenth century until the third quarter of the nineteenth century, historical societies played a particularly important role as depositories for the records and cultural evidences of the growing new republic. They were largely the creations of concerned book and document lovers, who were proud of the founding events and valued the early records of the nation and of its component entities and regions. They sought to preserve these materials, publish them as source documents, and gather together libraries for related studies. Papers of many of the country's fathers have been published through these societies: John Adams, Madison, Jefferson, Franklin, to name a few. Some ninety historical societies were founded in slightly over seventy-five years, of which perhaps thirty survived. Later growth was encouraged by development of historical interests in American colleges and universities, although after 1875 much scholarly work shifted to the academic world. Many later societies became "joiner" havens, with genealogy a principal interest. Today, there are perhaps 2,400 historical societies in the U.S., more than in any other country.¹² Those established in the early and middle eighteenth century and surviving today add most significantly to the resources available for academic and general scholarly investigation. The five earliest societies are among the most notable.

In 1790 one Jeremy Belknap, clergyman, received the encouragement of

two New Yorkers—one a bookseller, the other a wealthy collector—to begin organization of the Massachusetts Historical Society. The following year, with charter membership of ten, the society was founded, holding forth that:

The preservation of books, pamphlets, manuscripts and records, containing historical facts, biographical anecdotes, temporary projects, and beneficial speculations, conduces to mark the genius, delineate the manners, and trace the progress of society in the United States, and must always have a useful tendency to rescue the true history of this country from the ravages of time and the effects of ignorance and neglect.¹³

The wealthy New York collector, John Pintard, following several years of planning, also brought the New York Historical Society into being in 1804, likewise with ten charter members. Its fundamental objective, too, was to preserve the priceless documentation of the era so that it be not lost to future historians. This again was the principal concern of Isaiah Thomas, the well-to-do Boston and Worcester printer and publisher, who in 1812 founded the third organization, the American Antiquarian Society—the first of the societies to have a primarily national rather than regional scope. Next in order came the Historical Society of Pennsylvania in 1824—somewhat tardy, due to the prior historically related activities and interests at the American Philosophical Society. In addition to document preservation, the Pennsylvania society has functioned as a museum and art gallery. And in 1831, with Chief Justice John Marshall as first president, the Virginia Historical Society appeared. Its focus continues today to be in books, pamphlets, records, and manuscripts relative to the first settlement or subsequent history of the state. In general, all of these societies are open to the public, particularly encouraging those of “serious in-

tent.” Financial support is derived from dues and, in varying degrees, from endowments, gifts, and sales of publications. Perhaps least fortunate was the Virginia society. Its substantial endowment in 1861 was invested in Confederate bonds, and a large part of its collections was burned in the Union occupation of Richmond in 1865. Private support has, nonetheless, enabled its renowned continuance.

Each society library over the years has tended to “build on strength” gaining eminence in particular historical periods or forms of material. Newspaper files, manuscripts, family papers, contemporary books, and pamphlets are commonly found specialties. The Massachusetts Historical Society, for example, is reputed to have the most important collection of American historical manuscripts outside the Library of Congress.¹⁴ New York is strong in pamphlets of the colonial/revolutionary/Civil War periods, as well as early New York and U.S. imprints, descriptions of Indian captivities, American slavery, and abolition; it has the fourth largest collection of pre-1820 newspapers.¹⁵

The latter medium is the preeminent feature of the American Antiquarian Society, newspapers being the special love of founder Isaiah Thomas, whose personal collections formed the library's nucleus. The holdings of all material printed in the geographic area of the U.S. pre-1821 are unsurpassed, with 75 percent of all such titles said to be represented; 1876 is the terminal date for collecting purposes. Specialties include almanacs, children's books, local history and genealogy, directories, songbooks, sheet music, lithography—the litany is lengthy.¹⁶

History of the middle Atlantic states characterizes the holdings of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, with that state the subject of major segments. Some thirteen million manuscripts dating before 1865 incorporate papers of

the Penn family as well as military and political leaders of the Revolution.¹⁷ The Virginia society's four million manuscripts include papers of English and French colonizers, colonial governors, revolutionary patriots, and founders of the Republic. As with the other societies, much of its 250,000-volume book collection is primarily designed to support scholarly exploitation of the manuscript sources. An example of special holdings is a group of architectural works; of those recorded in British North America prior to 1776, 90 percent are here represented.¹⁸

Some historical societies gathered all manner of antiquities, in addition to the written and printed records. The American Antiquarian Society discontinued this museum function in 1908. The New York and Pennsylvania societies, on the other hand, still exhibit furniture, paintings, and other contemporary cultural inheritances.

THE FRUITS OF BENEVOLENCE

The latter half of the nineteenth century brought the gradual emergence of free public libraries. These were increasingly viewed as proper objects of public support, for the general betterment of society. At the same time, our urbanizing and industrializing nation saw the accumulation of personal fortunes whose owners also found satisfaction in the founding and endowment of such libraries. In 1848 the will of John Jacob Astor provided funds (added to by son and grandson) for books, a public library building, and the maintenance thereof. The library opened in 1854, and by 1875 it boasted 150,000 volumes, none of them "light nor ephemeral." After 1870 the library which was brought together and endowed by James Lenox became available for public reference. And in 1866 Samuel Tilden left his own library of 20,000 volumes and the bulk of his estate to the Tilden Trust; the trust was empowered to es-

tablish a free public library in New York City, though the funds did not become available until the 1890s.¹⁹

In these three beneficences is seen a pattern to be repeated a number of times in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: on the one hand, the wealthy individual as collector who bequeaths to society his library and the funds for its maintenance; on the other hand, the individual who may not have had the time or inclination to collect books, but for whom a library was an institution of highest merit and so was established by bequest as a personal memorial. Some became integral parts of academic institutions—the Clark, Clements, Lilly, and John Carter Brown libraries need no introduction. Among the remaining "independents," all were established in one of these two ways, subsequent to 1876: in the order of their founding, the Newberry, Crerar, New York Public Research, Huntington, Morgan, Folger, and Linda Hall libraries.

The Newberry and the Crerar

These two institutions have, from their founding, operated almost in tandem.²⁰ Established in the city of Chicago within a period of seven years, the Newberry and Crerar libraries came into being through endowments left for the purpose by businessmen achieving their wealth in that thriving metropolis. Walter Loomis Newberry derived his fortune largely from real estate, while Crerar was in the railroad business, both as a supplier and an officer of several roads. Neither library is based on books belonging to the founder; both were incorporated as free public libraries under a special act of the Illinois legislature. The operating objectives of both institutions were determined by their first boards of trustees; so far as is known, Mr. Newberry made no specific directives, and Mr. Crerar philosophical-ly sought as his "aim and object the

building up of character." By this time the Chicago Public Library was already well established; after its founding in 1887 the Newberry board characterized its own mission as "primarily for the use of earnest and advanced students . . . a scholar's library." Similarly, the Crerar trustees recommended in 1894 "a reference library, embracing such departments as are not fully occupied by any other existing library in Chicago."

The latter principle brought about one of the earliest examples of inter-library cooperation, with a series of meetings between the directors of the Chicago Public, Newberry, and Crerar libraries. Heretofore, both the Chicago Public and Newberry collections had espoused general coverage. By written agreement in 1896, the public library continued to acquire "all wholesomely entertaining and generally instructive books, especially such as are desired by the citizens for general home use." The Newberry and Crerar accepted responsibility for research-level, reference collections—the former designating the humanities (especially history, literature, philosophy, and music) and medicine (until 1906, when the collections and responsibility went properly to Crerar). The Crerar concentrated on the physical, natural, and social sciences. Both libraries then and now admitted the public freely, limited principally by their seating and user facility capacities; in addition, as with other research libraries, when the materials sought are of fragile or otherwise threatenable nature, access has been limited to scholars and others of specific proven need.

Probably 65 percent of Newberry users are connected in one way or another with the academic world; the remaining 35 percent frequent the genealogical sections or are individual (but worthy) researchers for the media, business historians, and other writers. Of Crerar's users, some 60 percent are associated as students or faculty with one

or another domestic (and even foreign) institution; the remaining 40 percent are drawn from business and the professions. Support for the two Chicago libraries is still largely from the endowments, though annual giving by friends (corporate and individual) is now critically important to each institution. Support for associated projects and activities is derived almost entirely from fees, contracts, and grants by federal agencies and various foundations.

The Newberry collections have been created over the years, as its president has said, partly by design (per the 1894 agreement), but also accidentally, fortuitously, and opportunistically. As with libraries described earlier, the availability of collections for purchase, accession of others by gift, and the adding of retrospective and current items when selected by staff have all shaped the profile of the holdings; they "grew rather than being built." Presently, the concentrations are on western civilization from the Middle Ages to the mid-twentieth century: in Europe, through the French Revolution and Napoleonic era, especially the Renaissance; in England, deep into the nineteenth century; to the revolutionary period in Latin America, and in North America to World War I (except mid-twentieth century for the Middle West, especially in literature). The Newberry's great "collected" collections have provided the essential structure: Count Pio Resse and Hubert Platt Main in music, the Ayer collection on the American Indian and western Americana, the Greenlee (Portuguese), the Graff, the Novacco, the Probasco, the Wing, the Silver—all names for scholarly conjuring.

In contrast to many of its companions, the Crerar Library has been relatively little influenced by addition of whole collections. As a library of science, technology, and medicine, it has tended to emphasize the wide range of current publications, especially serials

and journals. In its earlier years, the great retrospective files were built; from time to time, too, the landmark works were also added so that, in the words of Crerar's first board president, every student could have "a knowledge of the history of the subject he pursues, and should have at hand the means of investigation from the beginnings." The early works are now comprehensive in their coverage. In a few areas, special gifts have afforded particular strength—the Grulee collection (pediatrics), Pribram (bacteriology and microbiology), Spallanzani (experimental biology and medicine). A major modification in Crerar's scope came about in 1951, when the social sciences were dropped, being considered fully adequate in other Chicago libraries. Extensive holdings in economics, education, labor relations, history, religion, political science, law, and philology were transferred gradually by sale and gift to other libraries, first preference being given to the Chicago area. As far as possible, recipient institutions were recorded for each item, since the National Union Catalog showed (and still does) Crerar as the holding library; requests for these items can be usually referred to the present locations. Regrettably, the large number of transfers (some 150,000) did not permit correction of NUC records.

The New York Public Library Research Collections

Library facilities in New York City were poised, in the 1890s, to enter a new phase. When the Tilden Trust became available for the establishment of a free public library, the city fathers decided to combine its resources with those of the Astor and Lenox libraries, and in 1895 the New York Public Library was chartered. In 1897 the city agreed to build and maintain the central library on the site of the old Croton Reservoir, and the facility opened finally in 1911. The Free Circulating Library,

whose support was partly private and partly public, had been founded in 1878; in 1901 its eleven branches were also absorbed by the new NYPL. The branch system now consists of some eighty-four branches and has been supported primarily by public funds. The Research Libraries, based originally on the Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations, occupy the structure at Fifth Avenue and Forty-second Street and are supported primarily by endowment and contributions; in recent years public funds (both city and federal) have become increasingly critical to continued operations.

Some twenty subject divisions now occupy the central building and annex, part of the Library and Museum of the Performing Arts at Lincoln Center, and the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, located in Harlem. Use of the research collections by the academic community has traditionally been heavy, especially by undergraduates; the collections were not easy to use, yet the wear and tear were excessive. This situation was relieved in 1970 through establishment across the street (diagonally at Forty-first Street) of the Mid-Manhattan Library. The Research Libraries have long been recognized as having some of the nation's (and the world's) great collections. Thus users arrive not only from the numerous scholarly institutions of the city but also from the intellectual centers of other nations as well. The business community, the arts, the various professions—all go to make up the vast numbers dependent on the "library of the lions."²¹

The Huntington, the Morgan, the Folger

Among the most noteworthy of the independent research libraries are those whose founders were also collectors, who developed discriminating tastes and skills in book-world dealings, who were imbued with genuine sense and feeling

for the essence of history, culture, and scholarship. They also, fortunately, possessed the means to acquire boldly and in large numbers. Most importantly, they were committed to the idea of establishing continuing institutions in order that their libraries might be of public benefit and sustained into the future for scholarly investigation. These also belong to the century since 1876, and their enabling wealth came from the sizable business enterprises developed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The fortune of Henry E. Huntington was born in railroading, as was that of John Crerar, and amplified in other business enterprises. His book collecting began in personal interest and reading and mounted in the 1890s. By 1906 he had made his private decision to found an institution to preserve his library and art collection for the use of others. His interests focused on English literature and Americana, broadening to the history and literature of the English-speaking peoples. After his retirement in 1910, Huntington became an avid collector, acquiring entire private collections and multiple lots in single transactions. In 1919, by deed of trust, the Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery came into being, given to the people of California, under the direction of a self-perpetuating board of five trustees. In the first indenture the general terms of intent is stated: "to promote and advance learning, the arts and sciences, and to promote the public welfare by founding, endowing, and having maintained a library, art gallery, museum and park."²² Further funds were transferred to the trust prior to his death in 1927; although near the end a last codicil withdrew a substantial sum, the institution was, nevertheless, amply endowed.

The second great collector/founder was J. Pierpont Morgan, of the banking world of New York. His collecting in-

stinct was first apparent in his boyhood accumulation of autographs. By the turn of the century he had acquired a number of important American and English literary manuscripts, his first Gutenberg Bible, copies of each of the first four Shakespeare folios; and he thus emerged as one of America's foremost collectors of books, manuscripts, and objects of art. Like Huntington, he acquired large collections which had been painstakingly brought together by the original owners, merging them into his own rapidly growing holdings. His sumptuous personal library building on Thirty-sixth Street was occupied in 1906. Following his death in 1913, the library passed to his son, the second J. P. Morgan, who made many judicious additions—not in the form of entire collections but by individual selection. In 1924 ownership was relinquished to a board of trustees, together with a sufficient endowment, for administration as the Pierpont Morgan Library, described as "an educational institution dedicated to the pleasure and enlightenment of the American public and to the furtherance of study and research by men of all nations."²³

The third in this series of privately collected and now independent research libraries is the Folger Shakespeare Library, brought together by Henry Clay Folger and his wife, Emily. His specific interest had been ignited by an essay on Shakespeare by Ralph Waldo Emerson. An early gift to his wife was a \$1.25 reduced-size facsimile of the first folio. Over the following forty-five years, during which he became president and board chairman of Standard Oil of New York, the Folders collected books, manuscripts, objects of art, and memorabilia relating to Shakespeare and the Elizabethan age. This was done, in due course, with the full intent of establishing a research library by gift for the advancement of literary study in the U.S. To this end, property was acquired

in the nation's capital, across the street from the Library of Congress, whose facilities would thus be easily accessible to scholars using the new building. Begun in 1930, shortly before Mr. Folger's death, the Folger Library was dedicated in 1932. The trustees of Amherst College (his alma mater) received by bequest the funds and responsibility for completing and maintaining the building and for administering and adding to the collections. The endowment, subsequently enlarged by Mrs. Folger, is the principal source of support for the library's upkeep and programs; foundation grants and gifts in cash and kind are now increasingly significant.²⁴

Users of the Huntington, Morgan, and Folger Libraries closely resemble those of the other independent research libraries: primarily scholars from U.S. and foreign colleges and universities, most of them at or beyond the Ph.D. level and qualified to work in the fields of the respective collections. At the Huntington, 1,200 or more researchers are registered annually from over 160 institutions of higher learning. The Folger has similarly identified nearly 160 different source universities in a given year. At the Morgan (and the others) exhibitions are primarily for the public, but the reading rooms are occupied in close study by visiting scholars.

Collection profiles have built on the patterns established during their lifetimes by the founders. The Huntington's general guideline is Anglo-American civilization since the Renaissance, encompassing British history from its beginning to the start of the Victorian period; American history to the end of the nineteenth century (except to the present with respect to California), and both British and American literature to the present day. Exemplary collections include medieval manuscripts and seals from the eleventh to the fourteenth century; the history of printing (includ-

ing 5,400 incunabula); Renaissance history and literature; U.S. history, including manuscripts and printed works of the colonial and early federal periods; English history from the Middle Ages to 1820; English literature from Chaucer to the present; and American literature, especially fiction, to 1930.

The Morgan Library's illuminated manuscripts are perhaps the foremost of its many jewels. Its manuscript collection, dating from the fifteenth century forward, represents every significant English and American author. For its collection of incunabula and printed books, every effort has been bent to acquire the finest copies available. The Bible and liturgy are of particular interest, as is literature of the Reformation. In printing history the Morgan Aldines and Caxtons are outstanding. Fine bindings, drawings, prints—the breadth of Mr. Morgan's interests are still reflected in the library's exhibits and catalogs.

At the Folger is to be found, not unexpectedly, the largest collection of early Shakespeare printings in the world: e.g., first folios, 79; second, 58; third, 24; fourth, 36. In its broadened scope, the collection mirrors western civilization from the invention of printing to the early eighteenth century. Scholars may measure Shakespeare's impact on his contemporaries and succeeding generations or may study the sources of his ideas and attitudes, thus reviewing the institutions and culture of the Renaissance. Modern reference and bibliographic works are also present, as required for the scholar's use.

THE LAST QUARTER CENTURY

Of the final two examples of independent research library collections of significance to scholarly work, one began with a bequest of money, and the other is, again, the personal collection institutionalized for continuing serious research: the Linda Hall and the Eleuth-

erian Mills Historical Libraries. The first of these was established in memory of his wife by Herbert F. Hall (a grain merchant of Kansas City) through a trust which specified only that the library be open to the public and that it be located on the grounds where the Halls had lived. After consultation with various librarians (of whom one was head of the Crerar Library), the trustees adopted a proposal that the Linda Hall Library be "a specialized library center which will make available to Kansas City and the surrounding geographic area, services and facilities not adequately provided at the present time . . . a free library open to the public, covering the fields of basic science and technology. . . ." A research and non-circulating collection, its profile was thus nearly identical to the Crerar's, except for the exclusion of medicine. Supported entirely by its substantial endowment, it fell victim to the regrettable IRS classification as a private, operating foundation, thus being subject to taxation and required to disburse a proportion of its assets each year. Users of the Hall Library are drawn largely from educational institutions, industries, and professions of the area; substantial service extension is also provided through interlibrary loan and photocopies.²⁵

The Eleutherian Mills Historical Library is perhaps less widely known than the other institutions. Yet it is representative of the smaller, highly specialized independent libraries whose holdings are largely unique and of considerable depth. In 1961 there was founded the Eleutherian Mills-Hagley Foundation, which brought together three distinct collections, all generally related to the Du Pont family or the corporation. Pierre S. Du Pont had received a charter in 1953 for the Longwood Library, containing his extensive collection of books and papers relating to past generations of his family. Similarly, Henry Francis Du Pont had built a

somewhat smaller collection at Winterthur. Meanwhile, the corporate archives (up to 1902) had been established in the Hagley Museum. With formation of the foundation in 1961, a building was constructed for the combined collections, as the Eleutherian Mills Historical Library.²⁶

Both the Linda Hall and the Eleutherian Mills holdings have built along the original parameters. Like the Crerar, the Hall library has emphasized current serials and monographs and has also acquired great strength in historical works, with fine copies of the landmarks of science and technology. Its first growth came with the purchase of the library of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (Boston), whose holdings of basic journal and serial runs (1665-1945) were extraordinary. Some smaller collections have since been added, but current buying through the years has been the principal mode of acquisition. Especially successful have been the thousands of exchange arrangements with foreign institutions, particularly the many institutes and academies of the USSR, as well as Oriental-language purchases and other arrangements. The Eleutherian Mills Library emphasizes American economic history of the Middle Atlantic states and now also collects the records of business firms in the Delaware River area. Its three founding collections brought together some 2.5 million manuscripts, mainly from the nineteenth century but with some dating back to the fifteenth century. The papers of John J. Raskob are examples of more recent additions.

SPECIAL SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES

In addition to the basic research library functions of acquiring, organizing, preserving, and making available their scholarly resources, the independent research libraries present a variety of auxiliary activities, some common in most libraries, some unique to this

group. All undertake to provide changing exhibits drawn from their collections, for public viewing and often astonishment. Nearly all undertake programs of publishing, a commonly found genre being catalogs of collections and exhibits. The Library Company of Philadelphia issued its first catalog in 1741; the Massachusetts Historical Society's "Collecting for Clio" was a well-known exhibit catalog; the American Philosophical Society has recently produced guides to the literature of electricity and a calendar of its Darwin letters. Other publications include the Boston Athenaeum's bibliographies of Confederate literature and imprints (1917 and 1955); the Newberry's books for the Renaissance English Text Society; the Pennsylvania and Virginia Historical Societies' respective *Magazines of History and Biography*; the American Antiquarian Society/Readex Microprint project of providing microforms of early American imprints; and the Crerar's regularly issued journals of scientific abstracts (metals and bioanalytic technology now defunct, leukemia still current after twenty years). The foregoing can only be cited as sketchy examples of thousands of volumes issued over the centuries.

Seminars and lectures for the scholarly and cultural communities are offered by several of the libraries. At the American Philosophical Society, a University of Pennsylvania course is given in materials and methods in studies of early American science. The Newberry offers the Kenneth Nebenzahl, Jr., Lectures in Cartography, the Newberry Renaissance Conference, and the Newberry Library Seminars in the Humanities (for the Associated Colleges of the Midwest, whose secretariat is housed at the library). Both the Huntington and the Folger provide extensive educational and tour programs, with staffs of docents.

Fellowships and grants-in-aid make possible extensive as well as short-term

stays by scholars at the American Antiquarian Society and at the Newberry, Huntington, and Folger Libraries. Living accommodations in library-owned properties have also been provided in some instances, and nearly all the independent libraries attempt to offer study space for optimum conditions of research. Similarly, photocopying facilities are universally present, for scholars in residence as well as the filling of requests from the world over. Conservation of the collections is a critically important function, given the nature of many of the holdings. Extensive programs of filming are under way in several institutions; staffs of conservators with special work facilities are present also, but most of the libraries are deeply concerned that not enough is being done, due primarily to lack of the necessary funds.

As academic institutions find it increasingly difficult to provide extensive facilities and resources in limited fields, several of the independent libraries have taken it upon themselves to form "centers of research" in specialties of their strength. The American Antiquarian Society has enlarged its capacity to serve as a center for advanced studies in American history, literature, and thought. The Newberry has established centers for the History of the American Indian and for the History of the Family, and most recently the Hermon Dunlap Smith Center for the History of Cartography. At the American Philosophical Society is the office of the Survey of Sources for History of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology. Foundation grants and individual gifts and bequests underlie most of such undertakings.

Activities of unique character include the Folger Theatre Group, which utilizes the theater embodied in that library's building. Crerar has, for nearly twenty years, provided contract library research in the sciences, technology, and

medicine, on a reimbursable basis. Both Crerar and the New York Academy of Medicine have contracts with the National Library of Medicine to serve as Regional Medical Libraries for two of the eleven such regions in the country. Both of these institutions serve also as special resource libraries under contract to their respective state library systems.

The Crerar has operated the National Translations Center for twenty-six years. Formerly under government funding and serving as the Special Libraries Association Translations Center, it is now self-supporting. Special services and activities of like merit can, of course, be cited in hosts of academic (and other) library contexts. Their sampling here is to emphasize that the independent libraries are not the elite, exclusive, ivory tower picture of irrelevance often laid on them. Each, in its own way, responds daily to pleas of scholars and urgent requests of wide-ranging content. The nation's Bicentennial, as may be imagined, has been a far from peaceful time for many of these libraries.

REQUIREMENTS FOR CHANGE

As was noted earlier, several of the independent libraries are surviving examples of institutional types, many other examples having disappeared by failure or absorption. Survival has required shifts in objectives, scope, and affiliation by many of them. The Library Company of Philadelphia, in the 1930s and 1940s was uncertain of its mission, for example; from 1943 to 1955 it was, in fact, operated by the Free Library of Philadelphia (the city's public library). Affiliation was considered with the University of Pennsylvania, the American Philosophical Society, and the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. A new location next to the last-named institution was decided upon in 1960; in a cooperative mode, the society now houses the manuscript holdings of both libraries,

while the Library Company cares for the two rare book collections. A new role as a fully research-oriented library was finally arrived at by the company.

Crerar Library added a new role in 1962, when it moved from its outgrown 1920 building in Chicago's Loop to the south-side campus of Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT). Though fully independent of IIT, it entered into a lease-contract with the Institute to manage the IIT libraries, one of which shares the Crerar building. Simultaneous operation as an independent research library, a quasi-academic library, and a free public library has presented challenging and generally satisfactory experiences.

Sharpening of acquisition policies has been undertaken in several of the institutions—enforced either for efficiency or fiscal economy. The American Antiquarian Society, by 1900, discontinued its interest in anthropology, archaeology, ethnology, and ethnography, and in 1908 it closed its museum. A sharpening of acquisition policy was instituted in 1940 at the American Philosophical Society, and the Crerar restricted itself in 1951 to the physical and natural sciences as described earlier. The Newberry stopped trying to be a general reference library; it also trimmed its purchases of works of the period after World War I (except for the Midwest), in Russian history, and of current periodicals of contemporary interest only. In many of the libraries, de facto modification of acquisition policies has occurred, as funds become increasingly limited; and offers of purchase of individual items or collections which would once have been snapped up are now declined.

Funding difficulties have been experienced in some degree in nearly all the institutions, in company with their academic colleagues, although fund raising has also met with moderate success. The Library Company obtained private funds for its new building in 1960, and

the American Antiquarian Society raised \$1 million for its renovation. At the American Philosophical Society, a fund cut of 30 percent was budgeted in 1974—fortunately offset by a newly arriving endowed fund. The Boston Athenaeum, in its 1975 report, noted the sale of various objects d'art to the Boston Museum of Fine Arts for \$1,225,000. Even despite other gift income of \$600,000, it was determined that another \$1 million is needed in the Athenaeum's endowment, and a "quiet effort" is being made among the proprietors—the first such effort since 1874.

CONCLUSION

In retrospect, the independent research libraries have diverse origins and have traveled many paths toward today's complex of library resources in this country. The motives for their founding are many, and their varying sizes belie the uniform significance of their collections to the national resource. In one sense, our national libraries might be thought to constitute "independent" libraries, for their development has been directed to the information needs and records of a whole discipline or, for the Library of Congress, to the whole of the American people. Their essential role in the federal structure and their

dependence on the political process have caused them to be excluded from this review, recognizing nonetheless that academic library history must still pay them obeisance. Undoubtedly, too, other "independent" libraries deserve more visibility than is afforded herein. The James Jerome Hill Library has acquired new and perhaps yet undefined roles in the academic world of Minneapolis/St. Paul. In Cincinnati the Lloyd Library has recorded over a century of meaningful contributions in the pharmaceutical, botanical, and biological sciences. Space, regrettably, must call a halt at this point.

By their distinctive modes of formation, support, and collections "built to strength" rather than curricula, the independent research libraries attract the best of scholarship. In doing so, they supplement academic library resources in unique and unmatched dimensions. In truth, to quote again from the objectives set by Isaiah Thomas in 1812 for the American Antiquarian Society (from which our title derives), they "have a tendency to enlarge the sphere of human knowledge, aid the progress of science, to perpetuate the history of moral and political events, and to improve and instruct posterity."²⁷

REFERENCES

1. American Council of Learned Societies, Committee on Research Libraries, *On Research Libraries* (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Pr., 1969), p.xiii.
2. William S. Budington, *The Independent Research Library*. Paper prepared for National Commission on Libraries and Information Science (1974). (ERIC ED 100 390)
3. See, for example, Sidney L. Jackson, *Libraries and Librarianship in the West: A Brief History* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1974).
4. Lucille Morsch, "Foundations of the American Public Library," in Carl M. White, ed., *Bases of Modern Librarianship* (New York: Macmillan, 1964), p.30.
5. Charles K. Bolton, *Proprietary and Subscription Libraries* (Chicago: American Library Association Publishing Board, 1917), p.2.
6. Elmer D. Johnson, *Communication: An Introduction to the History of Writing, Printing, Books and Libraries* (3d ed.; New York: Scarecrow, 1966), p.157, 169, 172.
7. *Why the Library Company Should Move* (Philadelphia: 1960); Edwin Wolf, II, "The Library Company of Philadelphia," *Encyclopedia of Library and Information Science*, Vol. 15 (New York: Dekker, 1975), p.1-19.
8. Walter M. Whitehill, *A Boston Athenaeum Anthology* (Boston: 1973), 48p.; Mary C. Crawford, "The Boston Athenaeum," in

- Thelma Eaton, ed., *Contributions to American Library History* (Champaign, Ill.: Illini Union Bookstore, 1961), p.191-96; Jackson, *Libraries and Librarianship*, p.290-95.
9. Private communication, Whitfield J. Bell, Jr., Sept. 5, 1975.
 10. Johnson, *Communication*, p.152.
 11. *The New York Academy of Medicine: One Hundred and Twenty-five Years, 1847-1972* (New York: n.d.).
 12. Charles F. Hinds, "Historical Society Libraries in the United States," *Encyclopedia of Library and Information Science*, Vol. 10 (New York: Dekker, 1973), p.435-45.
 13. *Ibid.*, p.436.
 14. Private communication, Stephen T. Riley.
 15. *The New York Historical Society—Welcome to the Library* (n.p., n.d.).
 16. Clifford K. Shipton and William Z. Nasri, "American Antiquarian Society," *Encyclopedia of Library and Information Science*, Vol. 1 (New York: Dekker, 1968), p.219-24; *American Antiquarian Society—A National Research Library of American History* (n.p., n.d.).
 17. Private communication, Nicholas B. Wainwright.
 18. Private communication, John M. Jennings.
 19. Johnson, *Communication*, p.173, 236.
 20. L. W. Towner, *Every Silver Lining Has a Cloud: The Recent Shaping of the Newberry Library's Collections* (Chicago: 1970); L. W. Towner, *An Uncommon Collection of Uncommon Collections* (Chicago: 1970); J. Christian Bay, *The John Crerar Library, 1895-1944* (Chicago: 1945); John Crerar Library, *Acquisitions Policy* (Chicago: 1953), p.5-16.
 21. Private communication, James W. Henderson, Jan. 6, 1976. Johnson, *Communication*, p.172, 236.
 22. *The Founding of the Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery* (San Marino, Calif.: 1969), p.306. (Reprinted from the *Huntington Library Quarterly*, Aug. 1969).
 23. George K. Boyce, "The Pierpont Morgan Library," *Library Quarterly* 22:21-35 (Jan. 1952).
 24. *The Folger Shakespeare Library* (Washington, D.C.: Published for the Trustees of Amherst College, 1933); Philip A. Knachel, "Folger Shakespeare Library," *Encyclopedia of Library and Information Science*, Vol. 8 (New York: Dekker, 1972) p.582-91.
 25. *Linda Hall Library: History, Collection and Services* (Kansas City, Mo.: 1974); Private communication, Thomas D. Gillies, Sept. 16, 1975.
 26. Robert W. Lovett, "Review of John B. Riggs, *A Guide to Manuscripts in the Eleutherian Mills Historical Library*," *American Archivist* 34:198-99 (April 1976).
 27. American Antiquarian Society, *Proceedings, 1812-49* (Worcester, Mass.: American Antiquarian Society, 1912), p.3.

William S. Budington is Executive Director,
The John Crerar Library,
Chicago, Illinois