

**PAPERS AND PROCEEDINGS OF THE
TWENTIETH GENERAL MEETING OF THE
AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION
HELD AT LAKEWOOD-ON-
CHAUTAUQUA, N. Y. JULY 5-9, 1898**

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AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

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CONFERENCE OF LIBRARIANS.

LAKEWOOD-ON-CHAUTAQUA, N. Y.,

JULY 5-9, 1898.

ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT.

BY HERBERT PUTNAM, LIBRARIAN OF THE BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY.

Fellow-Members of the Association :

I AM a little doubtful under what title I serve as your president to-day, whether *de jure* or simply *de facto*. If, however, from a strictly legal standpoint I might question the power of the executive board to fill a vacancy in the presidency, yet an interpretation which confers so agreeable an office cannot lightly be repudiated by the beneficiary. Before the end of this meeting a constitutional amendment will no doubt be proposed which will establish a definite rule for the future. And in the meantime—as I serve under request of Mr. Hayes himself, very cordially expressed—I do so in comfortable assurance.

Submerging, however, matters of mere form is the grievous fact that I stand before you in this capacity because of your very grievous loss. It was pleasant in London last summer to hear Justin Winsor pay tribute to Richard Garnett as the foremost bibliographer of his time. And yet we of America, paying tribute to Justin Winsor, must go one step further: we must hold him the foremost *librarian* of his time, foremost in his conception of a work to be done and in the qualities which he brought to its service.

The younger of us knew Dr. Winsor only as librarian of a great reference library, with a reputation established—as a cartographer unexcelled in his field, as an historian thorough, sincere, untiring in research, content only with first sources; as a bibliographer patient, accurate, and prompt to disclaim knowledge where he had not exact knowledge; as an administrator careful, practical, economical, capable of shaping large projects, assiduous in detail; and as a librarian generous to the last degree in placing this knowledge and these capacities at the service of others. I have at times heard

some wonder expressed—with an implication of criticism—that Dr. Winsor could administer properly the Harvard College Library and find time for writing history. He found time *because* he could administer. He had a clear vision of the thing to be done, he had the experience which relieved him from experiment as to method, and he knew how to utilize the capacities of others.

He was not, indeed, associated actively with recent movements towards co-operation. He suspected device as a substitute for the man; and he certainly felt that co-operation might generalize to the neglect of particular conditions, and that the zeal for associated effort might tend to disparage the service done by individual effort acting with the special knowledge due to direct experiment and with the sense of responsibility due to isolation. In his presidential address in 1879 he advanced this caution:

"If the outlook for our new library philosophy be an encouraging one we must not fall into the error of overestimating it. The old philosophy was not so bad. Great libraries have grown under it, and great librarians have stamped their individuality on their work in a way that our later co-operative methods, if perfected, may have a tendency, not altogether satisfactory, to repress. What we may do by organization, important as it will doubtless prove, must not lead us to forget that isolation of endeavor has its advantages also, and that the librarian who merges his action in a union of forces loses in some ways while he gains in others."

Whatever doubt may have been implied in this suggestion did not withhold Dr. Winsor from the presidency during nine years of the Ameri-

can Library Association, organized to advance co-operative undertakings. Few members of the association so constant in attendance at the A. L. A. conferences, few kept so close a watch upon contemporary library endeavor; and no other librarian was, I suppose, so frequently consulted at crises in the organization and administration of public libraries throughout the United States.

His own later years were passed in a library not much called upon in co-operative undertakings nor dependent upon them. And no American librarian can forget the marvel of his decade of administration of a library of a different type. Panizzi raised a great dome wherein scholars might find studious refuge; his achievement was no greater than that of Justin Winsor when he *widened out* his reading-room so that it took in a whole city.

So the eminence of Justin Winsor was no partial eminence. He had the perception of a work to be done broadening with the opportunities which a democracy offers; he had sagacity in this choice of economic methods; he was independent of mere tradition, yet equally independent against innovation and calm against example; he had profound desire to open the approaches to learning, he was himself a scholar competent to lead the way, but he was too true a scholar to offer royal roads, or to countenance a pretence that to the accomplishment of thorough learning there is any mechanical substitute for laborious individual effort. In the aggregate, therefore, his career offers the best we have offered or are likely to be able to offer in one man of those administrative capacities in which, as a group, we may perhaps excel the members of our profession abroad, and those scholarly attainments in which as individuals we are fairly their inferiors.

It is matter of hearty satisfaction that this career did not close until Dr. Winsor had stood foremost representative of our association at the International Conference of 1897 as he had stood foremost at the conference of 20 years before.

Of all the events of the past year that conference must rank as the most important. Its importance lay not in the program itself. There were few topics upon it of strictly international concern; few that would not have been equally appropriate to a stated meeting of a local association; and the program as a whole lacked

unity and definiteness of purpose. The discussions were meagre and ineffective, and left an impression rather confused and kaleidoscopic.

But this was not a conference of views so much as a conference of persons and places. And in this latter character it had a significance most impressive. The conference of 1877 brought together 216 members from 11 countries. The conference of 1897 brought together 600 members from 21 countries. Holland, Spain, Portugal, Japan, Canada, Jamaica, West Australia, New Zealand, Ceylon, and South Africa, not represented in 1877 appeared in 1897. The gathering was too great for detailed discussion or even detailed acquaintance. But these might well be foregone for what took their place: the sense of the magnitude of the interests represented, and of the variety of the traditions, purposes, and characteristics entering into alliance.

That the hospitalities were lavish was to have been expected of our English brethren. For those which made the ante- and post-conference excursions a bewilderment of interest the delegates from the United States owe a particular gratitude, which cannot be briefly expressed.

The conference had no central bibliographic purpose, nor was it in furtherance of any particular bibliographic project. In these respects it lacked the significance attaching to the conferences relating to the Royal Society index. What these have already achieved is very notable. Two first barriers in international co-operation—jealousy as to the location of the Central Bureau and disagreement as to language—have been quietly surmounted. London has been accepted without debate as the place for the Central Bureau, and English as the language. That this latter decision was upon motion of an Austrian delegate adds to the significance. If it is the just desire of the Anglo-Saxon race to meet other nations upon a common ground the satisfaction is not diminished if the common ground is *our* ground.

The undertaking initiated by the Royal Society is entitled to our hearty admiration and support. It is so, although as to details we may question the decisions reached. For they will have been reached only after a deliberation which at least pays respect to the magnitude of the undertaking. If we cannot pay a quite equal tribute to the Belgian project of an uni-

versal catalog, it is not because we are Anglo-Saxons, but because a natural Anglo-Saxon caution renders us slow to accept so comprehensive a project entered upon with so meagre a comparison of experience and of counsel. If, however, the enthusiasm of the Belgians appear to have been over-impetuous we may remember that the undertaking sought governmental aid; and this aid might not perhaps have been forthcoming save at the particular time taken advantage of, nor might it have been continued unless interest was sustained by a prompt exhibit of results.

The Belgians have adopted a classification, and in this respect are a stage in advance of the Royal Society. But there has just come to hand the report of the committee of the Royal Society embodying the preliminary draft of a system of classification to be submitted for consideration at an adjourned conference to be shortly held. It will be your right and interest to be represented at this conference. In the meantime the system of classification ought not to be estimated from a hasty perusal. It may not, as has been suggested, exhibit the strongest argument for the decimal system yet advanced; but, if it presents only as many defects as the decimal system, it is for the purpose the inferior of the decimal system by every degree. For a catalog which is to be made universally available the classification universally current, or most nearly so, or tending to become so, is infinitely the most serviceable classification; and to my mind—although I do not represent a library using the decimal system—that system has now in its favor so weighty a presumption of use and tendency that any competing system must show very near perfection in detail to overcome it.

The Bibliographic Conference held at Brussels on August 2-4 of last summer included a polite hearing to certain schemes of classification and other matters in some respects contributory; but its chief purpose was to exhibit the Belgian project as it stood, and to secure for it international indorsement. The Belgian Bureau was complimented upon its undertaking and "authorized" to proceed with it.

Before disbanding, the conference in a resolution expressed "The wish that in higher studies greater weight should be laid upon bibliography." This was carried with two dissenting votes. We should be glad to know why these two dissenting delegates consider

the ambition expressed an unwholesome one. If the gentlemen are with us to-day I trust they will let us hear from them; otherwise we must regard with caution the projects for education in bibliography which Messrs. Little, Davies, and Gould may later set before us; and we must qualify the congratulations we might otherwise express at the recent establishment of courses in bibliography, bibliography, and library science at Leland Stanford, Dartmouth, and Columbia University, respectively.

The conference at Brussels did not close the international opportunities of the year. Later on there came from the Société Bibliographique de Paris an invitation to its 3d Decennial International Conference. The A. L. A. was requested to attend and report its progress during the decade. So far as I know the association failed of representation; nor can I find that it took part in the proceedings of 1887. According to the LIBRARY JOURNAL the Société Bibliographique is understood to be a Roman Catholic organization holding closely to doctrinal purposes, but has meant its invitations to apply to all who "though not sharing its convictions are not animated by a hostile spirit." I trust that our failure to respond will not be ascribed to terror of these reservations. On ordinary religious, as on ordinary political, questions our profession in the United States is, as a profession, without conviction—or perhaps one might more conveniently say, its convictions are all the convictions that find their way into print. But we should be pained to divide Catholic from Protestant on a matter of really deep feeling such as notation or classification or charging systems!

These conferences yield interesting opportunity to compare the attitude towards problems of administration held by the various nationalities represented. The difference, for instance, between Germany or Italy and France is a difference both of degree and of kind. If France seems listless, in Germany we see devotion, proceeding along the old lines; in Italy enthusiasm, seeking out the new. The moderation of the Italian is a surprise to the visiting librarian. I do not know among us, for instance, any system of inter-library loan quite so liberal as that which forwards a rare manuscript from Florence to the scholar at Palermo and charges the transportation to the government. Not even in our own country are the columns of the library journals more closely

read or suggested improvements more closely studied. In Italy as also in Germany there has been held since the last international conference a national conference. Switzerland preceded them. Let us hope that France will not be long behind them.

That libraries should lead in projects of international alliance and co-operation is in the very nature of things. The community that we each serve may be local; but the work that we do for this community inevitably takes us abroad. We are to help the citizen of to-day to an existence truly contemporary; an existence which takes advantage of the experience that has gone before and of the example that lies beyond our gate. This service discounts geographical and political barriers. It is necessarily international. We are inconceivable in isolation.

The projects for international conference, appreciation, alliance, and co-operation that have distinguished the past two years we may therefore welcome as a necessary development. And we should omit no effort to assume with dignity and efficiency the responsibilities which they involve for us. In these international undertakings as the leadership with us belongs among our learned institutions to the Smithsonian, the leadership among our libraries belongs to the Library of Congress. How gladly would we accept, if the National Library will assume, this leadership! We have rejoiced in the appreciation which has recognized the splendid possibilities of this institution in so splendid a building; we have rejoiced in every accession to its service of trained capacity; we are ready to accept in good faith as necessary from conditions of which we cannot have adequate knowledge a certain proportion of compromise with expediency; we congratulate Mr. Young on his identification with the beginning of a new career for this great institution; we congratulate ourselves for every sympathy that he has expressed for the ideals we have in view, for the work which we have in common; and we solemnly urge upon him to recognize that there is a work for him and for his library which is quite pre-eminent amongst us; that as his building stands the stateliest monument yet erected to library service, the library itself should stand as the culminating effort of the co-operating library interests of this country. In itself and by itself the Library of Congress has still meagre significance: it is but one of

us. As the leader in co-operative effort in this country, and as the representative of this country in co-operative effort among nations—as the *National Library*, in short—it has an opportunity for service, for power, and for repute that might lift it far above and beyond us. The work to be done for a beginning needs no daring imagination to conceive, nor extraordinary resource to carry out: it is simply to make national the work which is being carried on here and there by local experiment, such as the index to scientific serials or the comparative index to state legislation; and to do once for all the work that is being wastefully duplicated a thousand times over—such as the cataloging of current publications entered under the copyright law. If the National Library will but make use of the prestige to which it is entitled, and of the contributory energies that are freely at its service from all over the country, it will find little need of special resources to accomplish great ends.

The past year, which has seen so various projects for international alliance, has seen also extraordinary advance within our own borders. The enthusiasm for association which, not content with the opportunities offered by this single yearly meeting, led to the formation of local library clubs with several meetings a year, has proceeded a step further and brought together the local clubs in interstate conferences. A half-dozen such have been held during the past year, the last of which, at Evanston, represented the library interests of seven states. There is so much to be said, it must be said to so many people, and so many times and in so many forms to the same people, that it would be unsafe to prophesy a limit to such gatherings. They mean statement of principle, comparison of experience, exhortation, and that sense of power which comes from comradeship in responsibility; they begin with the ambition to know and they result in the ambition to do. It is pleasant to see such organization extending into the southern states; and we congratulate the Library Club of Georgia on its achievement in the establishment of a state library commission. A new library law for Tennessee shows that the progress in the south is not to be held east of the Blue Ridge.

We cannot claim that the general advance has been entirely free from impediment even in the north. In Minnesota a bill for the establishment of a library commission was defeated

through the opposition of Ignatius Donnelly. "It was not," said Mr. Donnelly, "within the province of the legislature to supply the people with books any more than it was with boots." Moreover, he doubted the practicability of what was to be attempted. Books were not read in a single day nor a single week. One member of a family did not peruse them and then return them. They were read by every member of the family. Circulation under such circumstances was a slow process. Again, how were these different libraries to be sent from part to part of the state? The whole thing was really a scheme for some dealer to job off a lot of books; and the \$5000 appropriation was intended "as a levy to pry a hole in the barrier and in the sacred name of intelligence and education to let in a flood of extravagance upon the treasury." Grammatic or epigrammatic, Mr. Donnelly may always be depended on to be cryptogrammatic.

And there are Donnellys in other parts also. One of them is guarding the treasury of New York City from a similar flood of extravagance. He also is determined that no liberties shall be taken with the sacred name of intelligence and education, even to the extent of $\frac{1}{1000}$ of one per cent. on the assessed valuation of the city. He censures the gift of land for a free public library to an "aristocratic institution" which, he says, gives nothing of value to the city in return. The aristocracy to which Mr. Van Wyck refers is presumably the aristocracy of learning, which has indeed, we fear, conferred little of value on the present administration in New York City.

There have been other perplexities in the metropolitan district. In Brooklyn a site for a library building failed on the ground that a public library is not an "educational" institution. In the face of this rebuff we can only take what comfort we may in the fact that a library section of the National Education Association was launched at Milwaukee last July, and that in England the attempt to impose income taxes upon public libraries was successfully resisted on the ground that such libraries are educational institutions.

But after all, the occasional impediment only adds relish to the general progress; and with this we have small reason for dejection. Among particular bibliographic projects of note there have been the new volume of "Poole's index," the first volume of the "Cumulative index," the supplement to the Peabody Institute cata-

log, the first volume of the "Catalogue of the Bibliothèque Nationale." The co-operative indexing of scientific serials entered upon by the Columbia, Crerar, Harvard, New York Public, and Boston Public libraries is already an achievement in having passed the preliminaries and being already under way. Its value in itself will be important. Its contribution to the Royal Society index in the experience it will yield as to method and detail may be more important still. The Buffalo library has been made free; a change which we in conduct of free libraries must, I suppose, welcome as the progress of the chrysalis to the larger natural life and service of the butterfly. The advance as indicated by the general structural development has in itself been sufficiently momentous. The Columbia Library has been completed and thrown open. The new library building at Providence is not merely well under way, but is to be completed in worthy amplitude, owing to the fine generosity of Mr. Brown; the competition at Newark has resulted in plans among the most interesting yet devised for a library of this type; a site has been purchased for the St. Louis Public Library which, if only reasonably covered, may give St. Louis a building larger than that at Boston; and the progress towards a new library building for Cleveland shows that Mr. Brett has still a few books left in spite of the free-access system, the perils of which so shocked certain of our English cousins last summer. And New York City itself has given us the best contribution yet made towards a scientific system in the determination of plans for a library building: consideration of principles, careful and deliberate investigation of existing examples, adoption of precise specifications, embodied in a provisional scheme; submission of this scheme to the criticism of librarians; an open competition in which, while the specifications were prescribed, other solutions of arrangement were invited; a second restricted competition in which advantage was taken of suggestions advanced in the first; and a final decision based upon the judgment of experts: the librarian himself adviser of the trustees throughout, and himself a member of the jury of award. We may not all agree as to the perfection of the plans adopted, but we can agree that the method adopted for determining these plans was in fact a *method*, and one eminently calculated to secure the best results. There were 12 firms of architects in the final competition. Of these, if my in-

formation is correct, 11 submitted plans based on the scheme suggested by the trustees; and 10 of the 11 testified that they did so after trying other schemes and discarding them as less satisfactory. The 12th plan disregarded the scheme entirely. It received recognition for its beauty and was rebuked for its disregard of administrative requirements.

I repeat: I believe that this competition in New York, in its method of procedure, in the constitution of its jury, in the award, and in the rebuke that accompanied the award, is the most important contribution yet made to the science of library architecture as an applied science.

Philadelphia's turn is to come next. After suffering long reproach for being without any free-library system whatever she has suddenly expanded a library system whose activity, measured by home use, leads the world. With an appropriation of \$1,000,000 she has made a start towards a central structure for this system. We wish her prosperity and trust she will not be content with a building less than the best or facilities less than the amplest, and we hope that in planning for this building she will avail herself of the example in procedure set by New York. If she can improve upon it, so much the better. A few such examples will establish a usage; and a definite usage as to procedure is the first step towards agreement in the application of proper principles to the thing itself.

It is with the application of proper principles that we as a profession have concern. It is there that, as an association, our responsibility lies, and it is there that the influence of these conferences may be felt. That they have a value to each one of us in the information they yield on particular points each one of us knows. But the service that they render in these directions is one that may be rendered very adequately as time goes on by the local associations. What we can do in these national conferences is to gather up the larger experience, to record tendencies, to estimate their effect for good or for ill, to determine principles, and then to throw the entire influence of this national associated opinion into the application of them. The proper exercise of this influence may lead us to interfere by counsel or protest in particular cases; for instance, where legislation is proposed, as in the Dingley bill, injuriously curtailing the facilities for the education which we exist to extend; or where, in a national department, whose conduct affects each one of us, and where continuity

of policy is important, an apparently satisfactory administration is abruptly terminated and an inexperienced one substituted. But, as a rule, our safer influence may be found in the enunciation of general principles, to which particular cases may be referred by the individuals interested as parties.

To this end our programs may be most serviceable if each be framed to comprehend a complete statement of a single problem—the experience, the points at issue, the discussion upon these, and, so far as possible, a determination of the better doctrine or practice. This is the theory upon which the present program has been framed. It takes up not one but two problems, but it attempts a reasonably complete exposition of each.

Our first deals with the education necessary to the proper practice of our profession itself. That we do constitute a profession we have casually announced as opportunity offered during many years past. I do not know that we have ever been contradicted, but this does not relieve us from responsibility to make good the boast. We know that ours is not one of the learned professions originally so-called. We must confess that admittance to its privileges requires as yet neither special education nor formal test. It is probably true that a larger proportion of the members of this association to-day are without professional training, except as gained in practice, than was the case when the association was formed 22 years ago. It is very likely true that of librarians to-day a larger percentage lack the higher academic training than lacked it before ever librarianship claimed to be a profession. But we feel our work to be so high, and so broad, and so deep a one; we see in it so unlimited a demand for the highest, and broadest, and deepest qualities, that though we none of us may possess them, we feel that the work itself is entitled to them, and rank them by this standard.

We have, however, I am sure, too sincere a respect for precision in terms to contend that a profession can be constituted without definite standards, a specialized education and a formal test. Now that as an association we have passed our majority it is very fitting that we should consider and determine all of these prerequisites. We have reached the age of self-consciousness; we are to pause and consider how we came to be what we are, how others may come to be like us. But something more than this: for we are to have presented to us