

2 MILLION VOLUMES IN MUSEUM LIBRARY BY A. D. 2022?—"THE DOCTRINE OF SUFFERANCE"

BY CARL W. HINTZ
LIBRARIAN

THE past few decades have witnessed a tremendous increase in size of the book collections of libraries throughout the world, and particularly in the United States. The problem of housing, organizing, and administering large collections has engaged the attention of many people—librarians and non-librarians alike—and proposed solutions have ranged from regional storage warehouses for the less used material to the reduction of books photographically to the size of catalogue cards to save space.

The latest warrior to enter the lists is Garrett Hardin, a bacteriologist, at Santa Barbara College. His article, "The Last Canute," which appeared in the *Scientific Monthly* for September, 1946, is a beautiful piece of satirical writing, which follows the Swiftian method of making a point by exaggeration. It is built upon the theme of a wealthy man who left \$20,000,000 to each of four university libraries on condition that for each ten dollars they applied for, one book had to be removed from the stacks forever and destroyed. The will was broken because of some smart alecks at Harvard, and the four universities got the money without any strings attached. Librarians fare rather badly at Mr. Hardin's pen, as he says that "libraries must have a well thought out system for getting rid of books, as they have for acquiring them. This seems obvious enough—to everyone but the librarian."

This proposal that books be evicted from the library is elaborated upon in a second article by Mr. Hardin: "The Doctrine of Sufferance in the Library," in the April, 1947, issue of *College and Research Libraries*. His thesis here is that all books shall be placed on the defensive after a certain period of time. Unless their retention can be justified, out they go. "No book remains in the library save on sufferance. This must be the basic principle governing libraries, at least college and research libraries."

SHORT LIFE FOR BOOKS

If the system Mr. Hardin outlines were adopted, he predicts that, in a college library, for instance, most textbooks would go out at the end of ten years, and the majority of monographs and reviews in the field of science, at the end of twenty years. Even original research papers could be destroyed after one hundred years or at the most two hundred, on the assumption that it is easier to make the discovery anew than it is to exhume it from the library after a lapse of many years. Mr. Hardin cites the classic example of Mendel's work remaining unknown for forty years, during which time at least three other investigators had independently reached the same results.

Granted that we are faced with a tre-

mendous flood of printed matter, it seems that some of the assumptions on which the alarmists base their case may be critically examined.

The prize example is cited in "The Last Canute"; namely, that if Yale University Library continues to grow at the same rate as it has in the past, it will have approximately 200 million volumes by A.D. 2040. It is true that research libraries have doubled every sixteen years on the average, but it seems questionable whether this rate of growth will continue. The realization that libraries are important to research, plus the development of new fields since the turn of the century, led in large measure to the tremendous increase in the size of book collections, in part, at least, made up of material published many years earlier. Eventually, the backlog of desiderata will be overcome—either because it has been acquired or because a supply is no longer available. When and if this happy stage is reached, libraries will be faced primarily with current production.

HOW MUSEUM LIBRARY GROWS

It is interesting to apply these figures to Chicago Natural History Museum Library in terms of its past and projected growth. According to the Annual Report of the Director for 1894-95, the Library was organized in March, 1894. By October 1 of that year, 6,520 items had been entered in the Accession Book.

Actual Growth	Annual Additions	Doubling Every Sixteen Years	Annual Additions
Oct. 1894— 6,520	} 2,091 1,716 2,650 2,950	1894— 7,000	} 438 825 1,750 3,500
1910— 39,980		1910— 14,000	
1926— 67,450		1926— 28,000	
1942—109,850		1942— 56,000	
1946—121,650		1946— 70,000	
		1958— 112,000	7,000
		1974— 224,000	14,000
		1990— 448,000	28,000
		2006— 996,000	56,000
		2022—1,992,000	

This table shows the actual growth of the Library as compared with the figures to be obtained from the "doubling every sixteen years average," together with the number of items added or to be added each year.

The table herewith shows actual growth has outstripped the average considerably, as we are now about where we ought to be in 1960. However, from this point on, the number of volumes that we would need to acquire annually to keep doubling every sixteen years rises sharply. Between 1958 and 1974, for instance, it increases to 7,000 yearly; from 1974 to 1990, to 14,000; from 1990 to 2006, to 28,000; and from 2006 to

2022, to 56,000. In other words, in order to double in size every sixteen years, the annual rate of acquisitions must constantly increase.

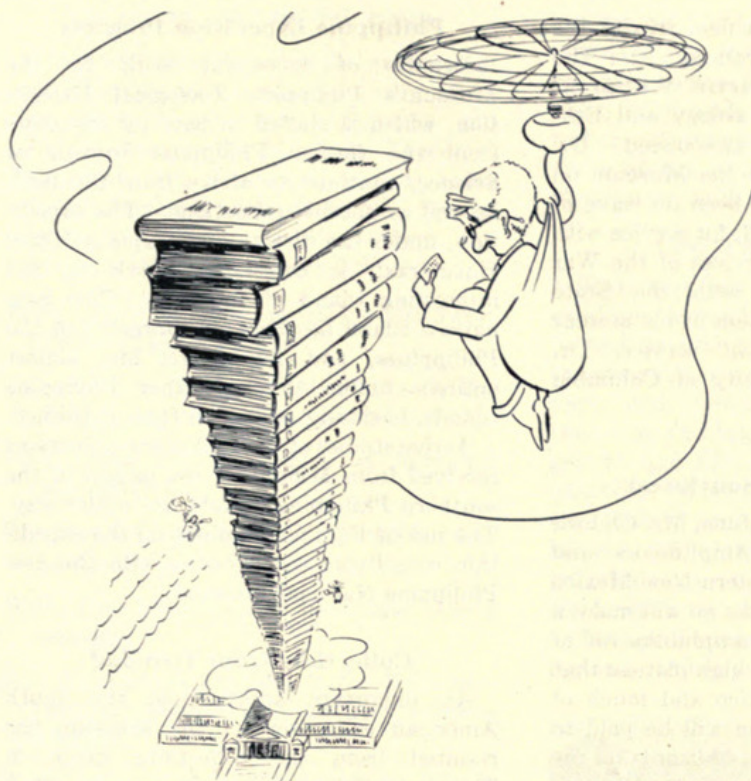
It is interesting, though dangerous, to speculate on the number of volumes of research interest published annually in the world. The Library of Congress, the largest American library, received a total of 2,984,619 pieces of new material during the fiscal year 1944-45, and disposed of, or consolidated into volumes in the course of binding, 648,326 pieces, leaving a net gain of 2,336,293 pieces. Of the total number of items received, 572,821 were classed as volumes and pamphlets. The remainder were unbound serial parts, unbound newspaper issues, maps, microfilm, motion picture reels, recordings, etc. Admittedly, the Library of Congress does not acquire a copy of all publications of research interest, but included in its total are many publications not of research value.

If we attempted to construct a rough figure in volumes for unbound serial parts and newspaper issues, we would arrive at a total of 650,000 volumes and pamphlets added annually. Multiply this by 100, and we would have 65,000,000 volumes by A.D. 2045—a staggering figure, but considerably less than the 200,000,000 volumes projected for Yale. Similarly, the 650,000 volumes added annually seem like a drop in a bucket compared with the presumptive 5,500,000 volumes that Yale would be adding from A.D.

2032 on in order to have its 200,000,000 volumes by A.D. 2040.

EVER INCREASING ACQUISITIONS

What other evidence is there to support the thesis that the rate of growth will slow down? In our own case, for instance, much of the material that we are now acquiring antedates the founding of this Library. Eventually we shall have filled in the gaps



LIBRARIAN OF THE FUTURE?

(Cartoon by Peggy Collings Brown)

in the collection or the material will no longer be available. This is not an indication that our rate of acquisitions will drop. Rather, it should increase with particular emphasis on securing current material and more complete coverage, so that it will not be necessary fifty years from now to go back in order to remedy deficiencies. However, it seems doubtful if we will ever reach a stage where we would be adding enough volumes each year to meet the figure under the doubling-every-sixteen-years formula.

What of the doctrine of sufferance? In our case, the older material is frequently referred to. Hardin's thesis that it is simpler to rediscover facts independently after a long lapse of time ignores the law of economy by suggesting that work already done should be duplicated rather than utilized. The fact that Mendel's work was not known until forty years later is a situation that would not reoccur, in all probability, in these days of research libraries and abstracting and indexing services. Furthermore, the suggestion that older material, which is presumably no longer useful to an experimental scientist, be removed from the stacks and forever destroyed is a denial that the history of science is important as a subject in its own right. Any humanistic aspects that the sciences possess would be ignored in favor of a stark utilitarianism.

Furthermore, the argument that unrestricted growth will lead to a situation where librarians will outnumber every other group in the population is ridiculous. Before books can be added to a library, they must be written and published. Closely allied to the question of speculating on the number of

research publications is the fascinating, though perhaps equally unanswerable one of the number of people engaged in writing them. For if libraries are to double in size every sixteen years, it is implied that the production of publications must constantly grow. If publications double, it is reasonable to assume that the producers of those publications will increase in number. In other words, Mr. Hardin's character who says, "If everyone is cataloguing books who on God's green earth is going to write them?" might well be paraphrased to read: "If everyone is writing books, who is going to buy, read, and care for them?" The need

for thousands of cataloguers will be brought about only by the existence of many more thousands of writers. Perhaps birth control at the source rather than euthanasia at the end is the answer.

Paleontology Field Trip

The Museum's 1947 Paleontological Expedition to western Alabama, after five successful weeks in the field, returned to Chicago on May 15. Mr. William Turnbull, Preparator in Paleontology, was in charge. He was assisted by Mr. C. M. Barber. In addition to several fine fossil turtles, mosasaurs, and whales, the most exciting specimen is an almost perfectly preserved fish. Nearly all of the specimens were from the Selma Formation of late Cretaceous time, although the whales and a few others were found in the Jackson Formation of the Eocene epoch.

Technical Publications Issued

The following technical publications were issued by the Museum during the last month:

Fieldiana—Geology, Vol. 11, No. 1. *The Family Diadectidae, and Its Bearing on the Classification of Reptiles*. By Everett Claire Olson. April 23, 1947. 54 pages, 8 text figures. \$.60.

Fieldiana—Geology, Vol. 10, No. 5. *Redescription of Taphrosphys Olssoni, a Fossil Turtle from Peru*. By Rainer Zangerl. April 30, 1947. 12 pages, 4 text figures. \$.20.

Books

(All books reviewed in the BULLETIN are available in The Book Shop of the Museum. Mail orders accompanied by remittance are promptly filled—The Book Shop pays the postage on shipments.)

The Ancient Maya. By Sylvanus Griswold Morley. Stanford University Press, 1946. Pp. xxxii+520, 152 illustrations, price, \$10.

The ancient Maya produced one of the most fascinating civilizations of the New World. Fittingly enough, Morley's book on the Maya is as outstanding as the civilization about which it is written. The book is the most up-to-date synthesis of the detailed knowledge that archaeologists have extracted about the Maya, their history, and their intellectual and artistic achievements.

Also, now that the picturesque Maya country of Yucatan and Guatemala is so easily accessible by air, the book is of value in providing an essential background for all those whose interest in native America impels them to visit the scene of the ancient ruined Maya cities and to see the Maya people of today.

Dr. Morley, an associate of the Carnegie Institution of Washington and one of the most eminent of Middle American archaeologists, has devoted a lifetime to the study of the Maya. In his book, he treats in detail the origin, rise, and decline of the Maya civilization and the final conquest of the Maya by the Spanish in the 16th century. He also gives a concise picture of the natural setting in which the Maya lived and describes the focal points about which Maya life revolved.

One learns of the central position that maize agriculture held among the Maya and of its intimate relation to religion and ceremony. There are excellent chapters on the system of hieroglyphic writing and on Maya mathematics and astronomy. Achievements in architecture and the arts are clearly described. Interesting sections are also devoted to various aspects of everyday life and to the structure of Maya government and social organization.

One of the book's most attractive features is the very large number of excellent illustrations and text figures. A number of explanatory tables further enhances the volume. The well-known French artist, Jean Charlot, has provided a colorful jacket. Finally, the Stanford Press is to be complimented on the over-all makeup of the book, the excellent type, and the fine quality of the paper.

ALEXANDER SPOEHR
Curator of Oceanic Ethnology

Models of a record-size squid and an octopus are suspended from the ceiling in Hall M (Lower Invertebrates).



Williams, Llewelyn. 1947. "2 Million Volumes in Museum library by A.D. 2022?
-- 'The Doctrine of Sufferance'" *Bulletin* 18(6), 4–5.

View This Item Online: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/25443>

Permalink: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/365292>

Holding Institution

University Library, University of Illinois Urbana Champaign

Sponsored by

University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

Copyright & Reuse

Copyright Status: In copyright. Digitized with the permission of the Chicago Field Museum.
For information contact dcc@library.uiuc.edu.

Rights Holder: Field Museum of Natural History

This document was created from content at the **Biodiversity Heritage Library**, the world's largest open access digital library for biodiversity literature and archives. Visit BHL at <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org>.