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Special Libraries: Putting Knowledge To Work

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ALTHOUGH THE TERM *special library* embraces spe-
cialized libraries and specialized collections of many types, the
strength and vigor of the special library movement have come from
the libraries serving business, industry, and government. These new
forms of special libraries, founded as working collections to provide
efficient information service, emerged in the first decades of the
twentieth century as a vigorous new movement, sharply differen-
tiated from both the mainstream of librarianship at the time and from
special libraries of earlier years. In 1928, Frederick Austin Ogg wrote,
"The growth of special libraries is the outstanding feature of library
history in the past twenty years."[1] This statement was reaffirm   y
years later by Jesse Shera, who characterized the twentieth ce   is
the era of special libraries and specialized services.[2]

EIGHTEENTH AND NINETEENTH CENTURY PROTOTYPES

While the special library movement dates from the rise of business
and technical libraries and the development of the concept of spe-
cialized information service in the twentieth century, prototypes of
these special libraries could be found in the eighteenth and nine-
teenth centuries.
Professional association and government department libraries
which served as on-the-spot working collections were most directly
related to today's special libraries. Legal and medical collections
predominated, because in both professions a considerable body of
literature had developed and professional training and practice dic-
tated its use.[3] Early legal collections for state and federal government
and collections in medical societies and hospitals date from the

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eighteenth century and continued to develop through the nineteenth century. During this time, a few early company and trade association libraries also appeared, concerned with scientific, legal or statistical literature. These latter libraries, however, were virtually unnoticed until later reports dated the establishment of their collections.[4] Other early special libraries have a less direct relationship to the modern special library. Scientific and historical society libraries which specialized by subject were also established in this period, but they usually operated as leisure-time libraries for their membership.[5]

Shera has suggested that, in a sense, some social libraries were special libraries in that they adapted to differences in reader interest by restricting their collections to certain subjects or by limiting their membership to a homogeneous group. However, these libraries are more directly related to the public library movement which eventually swallowed the survivors.[6]

The mechanics' and mercantile libraries of the era are sometimes considered predecessors of special libraries. But in his study of the origins of company libraries, Anthony Kruzas has pointed out that these and the early factory libraries are only indirectly connected to later special libraries since the mechanics', mercantile and factory libraries were primarily general, popular collections and were educational or social in purpose. In contrast, the later special libraries were directed toward the support of company operations through provision of technical or business information.[7] Although scattered references are made in mid-nineteenth century literature to libraries for scientific studies, professional scholars, or special collections for professional use, the newly emerging library profession was concerned with public and university libraries and with the organization and control of collections, and took a generally negative attitude toward the less accessible, poorly controlled, small, special collections with a doubtful life span.[8]

ORIGINS OF THE SPECIAL LIBRARY MOVEMENT

After 1876 the climate for special libraries began to change. Three developments were to create an environment in which the special library movement would flourish: (1) the transformation of American scholarship which led to such profound changes for the universities, for research and publishing, and for libraries; (2) the expansion of business and industry; and (3) the rapidly developing library profession.

The broadening of the academic curriculum to include scientific, technical, and professional education and the assumption of research as a university function[9] also affected the business and industrial community. Educated technologists as well as scholars were produced by the universities. The interest in research was carried beyond the university walls to industry which began to look to applied research for new approaches. Invention and technological innovation were moving from the workbench to the laboratory.[10]

Along with the increase in scholarly publishing in fields of interest to industry, specialized business publishing houses were being established to disseminate business and financial news. The federal government and trade associations began to publish research results, statistics, regulations and guidelines which formed part of the literature for business and industry.[11]

The business and industrial community was itself undergoing change. The industrial revolution brought unprecedented growth to industry, which in turn required not only more basic scientific knowledge and research, but also more and better management to assure progress and profit. The latter requirement led to the rise of the large business corporations, necessitating managerial, personnel and business information. More capital was needed to run these larger companies. Private businesses became public corporations; the financial community expanded to handle their needs and, in turn, developed its own need for information about the companies and industries it served.[12]

As the library profession itself emerged, in the quarter-century following 1876 it developed theories and practices on which the new special libraries could draw even as they were to diverge from its traditions. The emerging concept of reference service and the trend to subject specialization had particular import in leading the way for the establishment of technical and business departments in the larger public libraries. The first serious proposal that the library might add service to readers to its custodial function was made in 1876 by Samuel Swett Green of the Worcester Public Library.[13] Green's proposal that the librarian might make himself available for assistance to the inexperienced reader was generally accepted as desirable, but many librarians doubted that such a service was practical in terms of the time it would take. They also questioned whether it would be as efficient as better bibliographic techniques, or whether it was appropriate on a large scale or for scholars. Nevertheless, reference work, primarily of a directional or locational nature, gradually did become a

feature of library service and, by the turn of the century, was developing organizational forms and standard patterns of practice.[14]

In the same period, subject specialization in collections was gaining favor as a means to better distribution of library resources, to facilitate acquisition of special collections, and to allow libraries to offer better service to special groups (and thus to gain more support from such groups). In the large public libraries, this trend took the form of technical and business collections or rooms to serve members of the general public who were interested in such topics, including the business and industrial community. Even more specialized services were tried in a few libraries in the form of municipal reference departments and medical collections, both designed primarily for professionals rather than for the general reader. Reference service was usually offered in the departments, and the department head or librarian was sometimes a subject specialist.

The Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh established the first technical collection in 1895 as a reading room, then in 1902 as a department headed by an expert advisor on technical literature. The success of the move was demonstrated when, after one year of operation, the reference use of books in natural sciences and industrial arts had increased to 32 percent of the total reference activity.[15]

Another early technical collection was established in 1900 by the Providence Public Library, which hired Joseph Wheeler to provide "aggresive service" by which the library's service might be made more effective.[16] Wheeler was later to become one of the leaders of the special library movement. Other early technical rooms were established in Cincinnati (1902), Brooklyn (1905), Newark (1908), Minneapolis (1910) and St. Louis (1910).[17]

While public library technical collections had a body of literature to draw on and the technical reference rooms and departments found ready acceptance, counterparts to serve the businessman took longer to get underway. John Cotton Dana, the "founding father" of the Special Libraries Association, was a public librarian, and his efforts to develop business collections and encourage their use provide an interesting insight into the development of service to the businessman. He initially tried to interest businessmen in the services of the public library in his first position as librarian of the Denver Public Library. He promoted what he called "the literature of business" but appeared to have little success. The literature of business filled only a few shelves and users were equally scarce.[18]

After Dana moved to Springfield, Massachusetts, in 1898, he con-

tinued to explore means of serving the business community. Upon the conclusion of a survey of businessmen and librarians in 1899, he reported that: "Perhaps the business life, in this country at least, is so driving as to make it impossible for men engaged in it to continue an interest in books and literature." But, he suggested, if businessmen could not be persuaded to read books, perhaps they could be persuaded to use them.[19]

It was in the use of books by businessmen that Dana at last achieved success in Newark, New Jersey. In 1904, as head of the Newark Public Library, he opened Branch Number 1 (later named the Business Branch) in downtown Newark. Dana later reported that although the library could only guess at first what might be of interest in addition to a general branch collection, it soon found there was a great deal more business literature, primarily nontraditional, than had been supposed. By collecting and organizing trade catalogs, government documents and statistics, maps, railway and telegraph information, and city, telephone and trade directories, as well as business books and periodicals, a utilitarian business collection was developed which gained rapid acceptance. Dana concluded: "We are only at the beginning of a work, the size and importance of which we did not realize at all when we began."[20]

Newark's business branch was not emulated by other public libraries for several years, despite its well-publicized success. While combined business and technical departments were opened in some libraries, the second purely business department did not open until 1916 in Minneapolis.[21]

Samuel Ranck of the Grand Rapids (Michigan) Public Library recalled that at the turn of the century very few public libraries had the material and personnel to serve more than a limited part of the community. Further, Ranck said that the public library "was dominated largely by the ideals of polite literature . . . but it had very little in the way of service for the men and women who were doing the industrial and business work of the world." Ranck further stated that although there was very little such literature in existence, too many librarians felt that such material was often beneath the dignity of a library for ladies and gentlemen.[22]

The development of legislative reference bureaus to serve state governments was another factor that gave impetus to the special library movement through the legislative reference bureaus' development of extensive, analytic information service. Government law libraries at the national and state levels had a long history. The first

steps beyond the law collection toward legislative reference were taken when Melvil Dewey established a legislative reference section at the New York State Library in 1890. Reference services were offered and a number of publications—such as an index of state legislation, comparative legislation reviews and digests—were prepared. Even at that time, however, these services were not considered to be innovative since they were limited to collection and dissemination of information.

Ten years later, however, Charles McCarthy of the Wisconsin Legislative Reference Bureau did, through his zealous efforts to provide legislators with accurate and impartial information, set the pattern for legislative information service. Ernest Bruncken, first legislative reference librarian for California, pointed out that the time was ripe for such service; the period from 1900 to 1915 was notable for public interest in and support of government reform, and there was a pronounced movement toward the enlistment of expertise in the governmental process, part of which the legislative reference bureau could provide.[23]

McCarthy believed that successful government hinged on legislation based on complete and accurate information, and he actively sought out the legislators to learn their needs. The information prepared by his staff was analyzed and, if of general interest, was published as a booklet or issued in a bulletin. Under McCarthy, the Wisconsin Legislative Reference Department not only used standard legal sources but also resorted to clippings, pamphlets, and various outside sources. McCarthy's methods were widely copied in other states and his information service was to serve as a model and inspiration for the special library movement. By 1915, thirty-two states had some sort of legislative reference service, and in 1914 Congress passed legislation to provide such a service for Congress.[24] Legislative reference work at the municipal level was the local counterpart (and often the copy) of the state bureau. Municipal reference libraries were established in a number of forms: as a separate agency, as a city hall branch, or as a department of the public library.

After 1880, libraries began to emerge in earnest in business and industry. Two types were prevalent: libraries for technical and professional personnel, and libraries for business and commercial interests. They first emerged in certain instances where the size of the company or the nature of the business encouraged their development.

The technical libraries most often served research and engineering

firms, public utilities, and chemical or pharmaceutical manufacturers. Among the major pharmaceutical libraries established in this period were those of Eli Lilly (1880s), Parke, Davis & Co. (1888), and Abbott Laboratories (1888). Chemical libraries were found in such companies as the German Kali Works in New York (1890) and the Solway Process Company (1891). Among research, consultant, and engineering firms, the libraries of Arthur D. Little (1886) and Stone & Webster (1900)[25] are of particular interest. Their respective librarians, Guy E. Marion and George W. Lee, were among the first special librarians to develop their libraries into information departments; both men were influential in the early years of the special library movement and in the Special Libraries Association.

Marion and Lee each emphasized the efficiency and economy of the library as the central source of information, drawn not only from the technical literature, but also from the company's own records and reports and from outside sources. Both insisted that the library staff must be aggressive in promoting the library as a "weapon of business rather than a storehouse for books."[26]

Insurance company libraries of the day were primarily professional collections in law and actuarial science, although they would later branch out into business and management subjects.

Business libraries based on commercial information were emerging in investment banking firms such as Lee, Higginson & Company (1880), Investor's Agency, Inc. (1885), Harvey Fish & Sons (1885), White and Kemble (1893), Blair & Co. (1892), and William R. Compton Co. (1904). They were followed after the turn of the century by the commercial banks and business service companies such as Babson Reports (1904), the Business Bourse International (1908), and Moody's Investors Service (1909). These libraries evolved not from working collections of books but from records: annual reports and other company documents, statistical data, government documents, pamphlets, clippings, and often company internal reports and correspondence which were accumulated in the course of business and were nontraditional materials for libraries.[27]

THE FORMATION OF ASSOCIATIONS

Dissatisfaction with minority status within the public and university library-oriented American Library Association led to the formation of separate associations for special libraries. This action drew attention to the newly emerging special libraries and gave further impetus to

the movement. The associations provided a means of communication, cooperation, and coordination of effort both among the members and with the professions they served, and it was soon discovered that there were far more special libraries than had been suspected.

The first subject association to form was the Association of Medical Librarians (AML). During the 1898 ALA conference in Philadelphia, a small group of medical librarians and doctors met to form the AML. While the AML was initially interested in the improvement and increase of public library medical departments, it soon appeared that the new association was attracting medical libraries from companies, medical associations, hospitals and medical schools, and from libraries in related fields. To reflect this wider focus, the AML was renamed the Medical Library Association in 1907 and its goals were directed toward the concerns of all types of medical libraries, development of bibliographic tools, exchange of material, medical library training and work, and contact with the medical profession.[28]

The second subject association to form, also at an ALA conference, was the American Association of Law Libraries (AALL) in 1906. Exchange of materials, closer contact with the profession, indexing of legal works, and legal bibliography were its central concerns. A particular concern at the time was the removal of law librarian appointments from political influence. Although the AALL was invited by both the National Association of State Libraries and the ALA to affiliate, the law librarians felt, as had the medical librarians, that their problems were different and could best be served by a separate organization.[29]

The event which focused the attention of the library profession on the special library movement was the formation of the Special Libraries Association (SLA) in 1909 at the Bretton Woods (New Hampshire) ALA conference. The organizing committee consisted of John Cotton Dana, who was to serve as the first SLA president; Sara Ball, librarian of Newark's Business Branch; Anna Sears, librarian and F.B. deBerard, a statistician, from the Merchants Association of New York.[30] Unlike the medical and law library associations, which were concerned with specific subject libraries, the SLA planned to cut across subject lines and concern itself with the promotion and increase of libraries engaged in information service to business, industry and government, regardless of their organizational nature or subject specialty. Although the ALA itself looked askance at the new association's vague scope and there was some doubt whether an organization of such heterogeneous interests could be made suffi-

ciently coherent to be effective, the new association did not lack leadership among prominent librarians or support from specialized libraries.

One of the primary concerns of the SLA during its organizational period was the identification of special libraries. Many of the charter members of the SLA were associated with the special departments in public and university libraries or with legislative reference bureaus. The identification of other special libraries was difficult and early announcements frequently carried lists of SLA member libraries to illustrate the scope of the association.[31]

The subsequent growth of the association showed that there were indeed special libraries in existence; a year later, Frederick Hicks of the Columbia University Library reported that: "In less than two years this association has justified its advent into the library world . . . and has more than one hundred special libraries represented in its membership."[32] Seven subject committees were organized within the SLA: agricultural, insurance, commercial associations, public utilities, sociological, technology, and legislative and municipal reference libraries. These early committees gradually formalized into groups and later into divisions as the heterogeneous interests sorted themselves out by subject.

The SLA also found the definition of special libraries to be of major concern. The pioneers of the special library movement made a sharp distinction between the old use of the term *special library* as a catchall and the new idea that they were promoting. Richard H. Johnston defined the special library as "a library to which one does not repair, but from which emerges anything and everything applicable to the needs of a business firm. It is a library that is applied, rather than applied to."[33] Johnston's definition and John A. Lapp's concept of "putting knowledge to work" (which has been the association's motto for sixty years)[34] expressed the unique characteristics of the new special libraries. There were also those within the SLA, as well as in the library profession, who did not make such a distinction, however, and the legacy of confusion has remained. Today the term *special library* exists in at least two senses: (1) the general, which includes specialized libraries and collections of many types, and (2) the specific, indicating the library which provides specialized information service in business, industry, and government.

THE GROWTH OF SPECIAL LIBRARIES

Although both business and technical libraries grew in numbers

between 1910 and 1940, the greatest growth came first in the business libraries which served commercial and managerial interests. In the business sector, libraries tended to form in fields where there was "print to manage." In advertising agencies, banks, business and trade associations, insurance companies, investment companies, newspaper libraries, publishing houses, and managerial departments of industrial companies, libraries collected and organized a broad array of sources, largely nontraditional. In these libraries, the central idea of the special library movement—information service—found its successful application. Dana's conjecture that the businessman would use books was proving correct. Special librarians in business libraries stressed the value of their services and the efficiency and economy with which they could provide information, saving the executive's time.[35]

Technical libraries, on the other hand, operated in a different environment. It was not until World War I, when industrial research became an urgent necessity, that conditions favorable to the growth of technical libraries obtained. Technical libraries were more traditional both in service and in collection. Their clientele were the scientists and technologists in research departments. Their collections included the traditional forms of technical literature—books, journals, and often patent files and technical reports.

Few companies had research facilities large enough to warrant a library. Another limiting factor was the nature of the use of the literature which limited the appeal of the service concept. It was assumed that the scientist/technologist was in command of the literature of his field and he himself should undertake the literature review. This left little scope for the librarian to provide much more than reference service.

This situation was to change after World War I. Government and National Research Council studies found that expenditures for research increased from about $29 million in 1920 to $235 million in 1940. The number of laboratories grew from 297 in 1920 to 2,224 in 1940 and the number with a staff of more than 50 increased from 15 to 120.[36] This growth was paralleled by an expansion of library activity and it became an accepted practice to establish a library in conjunction with a laboratory.

Although the presence of a librarian in the business library had proven an effective aid to the businessman, there was still a good deal of resistance to delegating a similar responsibility to the technical librarian. It was evident that an efficiency of effort was needed, but

who was the most efficient—the researcher, the librarian, or an intermediate subject-trained literature specialist? The result was a series of answers which included, in different companies, combinations of all three, applied in different patterns of service. Most libraries, however, are able to include preparation of bibliographies, acquisitions bulletins, abstract bulletins and translations in their services as well as conventional reference work.[37]

Special libraries for government agencies have generally followed the same patterns as those for business and industry and have been affected by the same factors. Government legal collections were among the earliest libraries in the nation and the legislative reference bureaus of the 1900s were models for the special library movement. As government agencies proliferated following World War I, so did special libraries to serve them. Anthony Kruzas's statistical report on special libraries in the United States found that of the 699 government special libraries in operation in 1963, 20.2 percent were established between 1920 and 1939. The comparable figure for 1,324 company libraries is 26.5 percent.[38]

POST-WORLD WAR II TRENDS

World War II and the information explosion which followed it had an immediate impact on special libraries. Special libraries increased at an unprecedented rate. According to the Kruzas study, over one-half of the 8,533 special libraries known in 1963 were established after 1940 and 30 percent were established between 1950 and 1962. Among company libraries, 68 percent came into being after 1940 and 44 percent between 1950 and 1962. Government library growth for the same periods was 64 percent and 34 percent.[39]

Special libraries were now well-established adjuncts to research facilities. As research projects became group rather than individual efforts, the role of the technical librarian as the literature expert of the group was more widely accepted, and technical library information services expanded accordingly.[40]

At the same time, the information explosion was increasing the problems of information organization and dissemination. Corporate and governmental special libraries with access to their organization's data processing and computer equipment were able to take the lead among libraries in experimenting with new methods of information handling. Records processing, circulation control, and journal control and routing, and the development of current awareness, bibliogra-

phic and abstract services arrived early in special libraries. More recently, machine-readable data bases have found extensive use in special libraries.[41]

Special librarians working at the various levels of SLA undertook cooperative projects to improve access to information. Union lists of periodicals held by special libraries in various areas were prepared by most SLA chapters in the 1960s. In 1963 the Translations Center was established at the John Crerar Library as an outgrowth of a location index of translations begun by the SLA Engineering-Aeronautical Section in 1946. SLA units also initiated such publications as the *COPNIP* (Committee on Pharmaceutical Nonserial Industrial Publications) *List, Unlisted Drugs, Scientific Meetings,* and the *Dictionary of Report Series Codes.*[42]

As the need for and awareness of information grew, more elaborate information services appeared in some of the larger, research-oriented organizations. The goal of the special library movement has been the provision of information from any source to users in connection with their work-related needs in the most useful form— whether document delivery or analysis and synthesis of information. In practice, the realization of this goal has varied in each special library according to the environment in which it operates.

Some special libraries use the term *information service* or *information center* (or in the past, *information bureau*) to describe their services more accurately. In the 1960s, however, the term *information center* began to gain wider use, and with a different meaning. Many commentators have tried, with various degrees of clarity and success, to assign the special library and the information center separate functions in the information complex. Most see the information center as a larger activity, primarily engaged in the analysis and synthesis of information, with the special library unit in this activity providing the collection, organization, and delivery of documents.[43] The information analysis centers and scientific information centers which have been established over the past fifteen years are perhaps the clearest examples of this concept. In other situations, the information center refers to a larger unit in the organization that includes report- and technical-writing specialists and indexers. Such elaborate centers are, of course, limited to large organizations. In most organizations, the special library which provides extensive information service continues as the principal information unit within its organization and operates in effect as an information center.

Although some special librarians see the information center as a

competitor and foresee either the demise of the special library or its relegation to a custodial role, it is perhaps more logical to see it as the development of more intensive specialization and a greater "team" effort in information handling, just as science and technology have fragmented into many subjects and research has evolved from an individual to a group effort.

Public, university, and research libraries also experienced the increased demand from business and industry for information service in the post-World War II period, both from companies without special libraries and from special libraries which characteristically rely on outside sources for older, out-of-scope, and less-used materials. Although all three types of libraries had recognized a responsibility for sharing their resources with business and industry, the heavier demand for loans and a recognition of the need for more extensive services necessitated reassessment of their services.

Surveys of library service to business and industry in the 1960s provided a state-of-the-art report and brought out four important trends: (1) use by industry was increasing; (2) the heavy load of interlibrary loans was greatly diminished by the substitution of photocopies; (3) there was increased feeling among university and research libraries that there should be reimbursement for services; and, in consequence (4) more formal plans for service to industry were being studied.

The independent research libraries are heavily used by business and industry. The John Crerar and Linda Hall libraries, both directed to science and technology, estimated that in the 1960s three-fourths of their services were directed to industrial needs. These research libraries, which depend on corporate contributions for part of their support, usually offered membership services and were among the first to institute fee-based or contract information services, which were heavily used by industry. Crerar estimated that as much as 80 percent of its Research Information Service output was directed to industry or industry-related clients, the remainder being done for academic or institutional users.[44]

University libraries, particularly those in urban areas or where industrial or government agencies are located, also provide service to business and industry. While the general pattern of earlier years had been limited but free services, the more heavily used libraries were experimenting in the 1960s with nonaffiliated user charges or corporate memberships and several were experimenting with fee-based technical information services.[45]

Public libraries in large and medium-sized cities had continued the practice of establishing business and science/technology departments and provided some special services, the most common being lending privileges, company library cards, and reference service. A few public libraries offered more extensive research services or maintained outstanding collections in certain subjects. In general, however, public libraries fell far short of their goals of supplementing industry's resources, hampered by inadequate collections and lack of subject-specialist staff. While a few public libraries received financial gifts from industry, extra service fees were not in evidence.[46]

Since the late 1960s, however, a few public libraries have been experimenting with fee-based services, a notable example being IN-FORM at the Minneapolis Public Library. Public, university, and research libraries have generally rationed or limited services to business and industry rather than institute fees. However, the desire to provide better service and the added capabilities made possible by new technological developments have gradually led to various charges where the cost is obvious. The introduction of computer-based bibliographic services into university and research libraries extended their capabilities for search services and generated more support for user charges. Librarians became aware of the proliferating commercial services and freelance consultants (among them many librarians) who were selling research services which libraries could provide with the added support of fees.[47]

The philosophical and pragmatic implications of user charges have generated a great deal of debate within the library profession. While this debate may not be resolved for many years, it will certainly affect the quality and quantity of public, university, and research library service to business and industry in the future.

The character of the special library inherently fosters cooperation. Informal cooperation has always existed among special libraries. In the past few years, networks and other more formal special library cooperative plans have begun operation in some areas. Very large corporations and government agencies which support a number of special libraries have organized these libraries into systems.

Special libraries have followed the proceedings of the various government committees and commissions concerned with scientific and technical communications and libraries. Nevertheless, until the establishment of the current National Commission on Libraries and Information Science (NCLIS), special libraries have been largely

bypassed, except in the role of users, as active contributors to national information resources.

As recently as 1967, when the National Advisory Commission on Libraries prepared its report, the focus of attention was on the barriers to special library participation in networks. However, as interlibrary networks have formed, special libraries have strongly supported and participated in them, demonstrating that some of these barriers are not insurmountable.

Another barrier to special library involvement in systems and networks centers around the dual role of special library participation. While special libraries are readily identified as users by other types of libraries (and readily identify themselves as such), the potential contribution of the special library has not been recognized. Although special library use of outside resources has revealed their limitations to others, it has not revealed their strengths in in-scope coverage, the subject expertise of the special librarian, or in their experience in information service.[48]

In discussions in 1975 with the NCLIS about special library participation in the national program for library and information services, SLA representatives stressed that: "In the broad spectrum of libraries, the special libraries are little known. Their anonymity has prevented a wider use of their resources. They are potentially valuable contributors as well as obvious potential benefitters from networks."[49]

One hundred years ago, special libraries were virtually unknown and reference service was an idea whose time was yet to come. If 1876 was the landmark year for American libraries and the library profession, then 1909 was the landmark year for special libraries and special librarianship. The founding of the SLA in 1909 brought into prominence not only the modern special library in business and industry but also the "special library idea" of information service.

The factors behind the establishment of special libraries in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—the increasing size and complexity of business and industrial companies, the growth in both basic and applied research activities, and the increase in publishing output—continued to burgeon in the twentieth century and to provide a hospitable climate for the continued development and expansion of special libraries and special library services to business and industry. The annual increase in the number of special libraries in business and industry continues to be a significant development in the field today.

The central concepts of the modern special library movement—the utilitarian management of print whether in traditional or nontraditional form, the librarian as subject or information specialist, the clientele as businessmen, scientists, professionals or other practitioners who use information in the course of their work, and above all, the ideal of information service as the primary function of the library—now have sixty years of special library application behind them.

The "information explosion" and "information discovery" of the post-World War II period has presented new opportunities as well as new challenges in information handling, not only to special libraries but also to public, academic and research libraries who provide services to business and industry.

Modern special libraries, despite their contributions to librarianship and to access to specialized literature, and despite their development of new information-handling techniques, have continued to be separated from the mainstream of librarianship. Special libraries are an information resource which is little known and poorly understood both by those not involved with special libraries and by special librarians themselves. Yet, in the past decade, significant moves have been made on both sides to bring the resources of special library collections, expertise and, perhaps most importantly, the special library idea of information service to bear on the library profession's future course.

The first sixty years of the special library's existence have shown it to be an effective part of the organization it serves. The next sixty years is a challenge to show the special library to be an effective part of the library community at large.

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