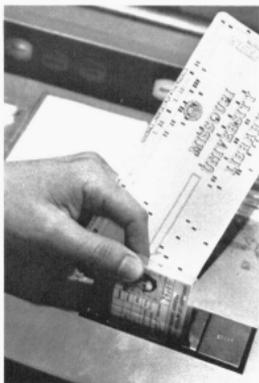




Library in a Bind



Boxes of library materials stacked along staircase landings give succinct evidence of crowded conditions in the library building.



By Barry Garron

The strengths are impressive: More than 1.5 million books and 18,000 current journals make the main library complex on the Columbia campus one of the largest in the Midwest; its microfilm collection is the second-largest of any research library in the country; its rare book collection is the best in the Big Eight; it is a nationally-recognized pioneer in library computer applications; its many fine collections — often contributed by alumni and other friends — are responsible for truly good scholars' joining the faculty on the Columbia campus.

It comes as no surprise to learn that the library's 1800 chairs and 85 carrels are filled regularly. After all, there are more than 21,000 students at Columbia, and the library is a vital facility in their learning experience.

"I'm in favor of things circulating," says Alma Bennett, social sciences librarian; "I believe in materials being used. It doesn't bother me to see things in disarray here at the end of a day. We can just say we've had a good day."

But these "good days" — and there are many of them — point up areas of concern to Dr. C. Edward Carroll, director of libraries for the campus.

He knows that the building was designed to hold two million volumes and, counting the items in the State Historical Society and the Western Historical Manuscripts collection, it already exceeds that number.

He knows that undergraduate students who hope to use the library in the evening had better come early to make sure they will have a seat. Even during the daytime, there are few empty chairs.

Carroll knows that the State Historical Society and the Western Historical Manuscripts are valuable resources but, together, they use up 18 per cent of the library's space. (The Museum of Art and Archaeology, although badly cramped itself, takes up space on the fourth floor.)

In addition, materials in those areas are mainly for graduate students. In fact, while the library can boast many fine book collections, an extensive collection of learned society journals and other valuable publications, books and space for the undergraduate — four-fifths of the campus population — are in short supply.

"The concern here seems to be for the graduate, the professional," Carroll says. He calls the undergraduate, "the forgotten man," in terms of book selection and facilities. Recently, Carroll initiated a

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new ordering system that cuts the amount of clerical work while increasing the undergraduate book supply.

He has also recruited two young librarians for the undergraduate library room. Reference assistants, often students in the University's new School of Library and Informational Science, are also available to help undergraduates.

Doing something about the actual size of the building is more difficult, though.

The main library building was built in 1914. It became crowded as the campus grew and a new addition was added in 1939. With time and continued growth the new addition also filled to capacity. Planners at the University foresaw the growth and another addition was completed by 1962. Since then, more than half a million volumes have been added to the library's shelves. The number of students on the campus has nearly doubled.

Dr. Homer Thomas, who was chairman of the committee from 1954 through 1968, recalls recommendations being made in the '50s for a new building.

"Plans were proposed to build a structure south of the present library," he said. "Space was reserved by the University Planning Committee, at our insistence, for the spot that's immediately south which is now the visitors' parking lot."

The plans never received the funds necessary to bring them to life and the visitors' parking lot is still the visitors' parking lot.

And as far as the library is concerned, apparently that's what it will remain in the foreseeable future. The University's 1971-72 budget request of \$75.5 million for capital improvements makes no mention of expanded library facilities for the Columbia campus. But, as is well known, the list of capital needs throughout the four campuses is long, and other areas also have strong cases.

It is hoped, however, that the funds for library improvements, an "extra" eliminated from the 1970-71 operating budget after the legislature passed the same total appropriations for the University as a year earlier, will be restored in 1971-72. Also included in the request for next year are the funds to operate not only the main library, but also the network of seven branch libraries, housed in the professional schools.

"The only one that has any space at all is the mathematics library," in the newly-opened Mathematical Sciences Building, Carroll said. If the veterinary medicine complex is built, that school will also have

enough library space. The chemistry collection, now crowded and combined with books on the other hard sciences, may move into the new Chemistry Building. The Engineering College is planning to rearrange its collection and add some space. Libraries for law, journalism and medicine face little prospect of getting more elbow room.

Carroll sees expansion of branch libraries as one way of buying time for the main library, but he does not particularly favor the plan as a long-range solution. "To break the library into little pieces is not efficient or defensible in an era of interdisciplinary study," he says.

Microfilm does not seem to be the ultimate answer, either.

"It's not considered economically profitable to take your present journals and put them on microfilm," Carroll explained. For one thing, people prefer the original form. For another, space must still be provided for the reader and for the microfilm-reading device. Like incoming books, incoming microfilm must also be shelved, further eliminating the fast-disappearing shelf space.

"It seems to me the only answer is a new building," the director of libraries concluded. In the meantime, however, library users can rest assured that the dedicated people the library has attracted over the years will make the most of every resource available.





The demands of undergraduates, graduate students and scholars make the library a busy place. At far left is Dr. Hellmut Lehmann-Haupt, one of the nation's experts on rare books.

