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THE CO-OPERATION OF A LIBRARY STAFF WITH THE CRIMINAL INVESTIGATOR¹

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It might easily be claimed that in no other field than criminology and other applications of the law is the co-operation of a library staff with the investigator so necessary, because on the one hand there are no heroes in crime, while on the other, paradoxically, every criminal in a "going condition" is a specialist. Accordingly, those applications of law which have to do with the regulation of crime include every idea which the vast majority of the orderly have found necessary for the regulation of the unruly. They therefore cover, or seek to cover, every possible tangent to the normal and in consequence the investigator of crime and the co-operating librarian must scan for their material the widest possible range of human impulses and activities.

The questions immediately arise: "Are not these matters for a public library or a special library other than a law library?" Is not the law library essentially an archive of post-mortem considerations of the individual and post-facto considerations of his divergencies?" "Do librarians in different fields have similar or unequal opportunities for co-operation with the investigator in developing the position of the library as a factor in individual and public affairs?" To these questions, as far as the law librarian is concerned, the answer must be based upon the elasticity of his ideas of precedent. If he takes heed that the library in every field has evolved from an archive into an educational institution; that the aim of study and research is to prevent ills as well as cure them, or to increase man's wealth as well as tax him, he will find opportunities for co-operation in individual, municipal and legislative progress that by reason of his association with the law as a regulatory consensus of opinion will affect a wider number of individuals than can be reached indirectly by most other librarians.

This will be more possible if the law librarian cleaves to the idea with De Toqueville (*Democracy in America*), that the lawyer is the natural aristocrat under American conditions because of the range of information concerning history, jurisprudence, philosophy and other matters of culture which is associated with the study and interpretation of the law. Even if De Toqueville's observation may be chal-

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lenged by other men of letters and science under our modern American conditions, the law librarian must concede that the lawyer will have difficulty in maintaining a favorable position among these men unless his special library keeps apace with that co-operation and material which will sustain him.

It is not proposed, however, to drift into an abstract discussion of cultural or educational values. This memorandum is intended for the more utilitarian purpose of defining a measure of co-operation of a library staff in the professional progress of an individual, for whatever value it may have in suggesting extension of it to other individuals. The point is that it is hardly likely that the worker who needs the co-operation of a library staff will discover it by himself. I did not. The need leading to my discovery of it was almost identical with that of the New York magazine editor who wrote last month to one of my colleagues in the School for Police Officers of Berkeley, California, for the name of the publisher of a German book on scientific criminal investigation. My colleague in turn wrote to me, and I sent the information to New York from my Western outpost; information that might most easily have been obtained without delay of three weeks, by telephoning to the librarian or purchasing division of his nearest library. I likewise had heard of a book. It was one that discussed the handwriting the Junius letters and by means of it established their authorship. The book was not in my local library. I searched neighboring libraries after the usual manner of a borrower, all in vain. A chance engagement took me to San Francisco and I expectantly hustled to the great library of the University of California, only to learn that the book I was after was not on their shelves, and, in fact, had been out of print for forty years. I returned home, nursing a grouch against my fancied isolation, and in this frame of mind, for the first time and quite by accident, spoke to the librarian of my home library (Mr. F. F. Hopper, now of the New York City Library) about my half-year of independent search. I don't know just what he did, but within sixty days I was the proud possessor of an uncut copy, which I was informed had been unearthed for me in England by a simple routine procedure of advertising.

It was my first experience of co-operation, and let me point out that it was the librarian who assumed the initiative in placing the resource at my disposal. Therefore, to promote the discovery that you librarians can co-operate you must do something to overcome the borrower's lack of knowledge of your resourcefulness; something to overcome his distrust that you know nothing about his particular interests; and something to lead him to discover the idea that your

knowledge of bibliographical research is the co-operative tool which you have to offer. This must come from you as affording the simplest means by which the worker can become familiar with the idea. An ingenious student, to be sure, will find other and probably more complex ways of discovering it and however complex his method may be, it will be valuable to him so long as it is his own discovery. He must, however, beware of irritating other men by trying to teach them through his complex discoveries.

Professional progress includes as an essential proposition that the worker become familiar with his professional literature. Like many other propositions, this includes a sense of friction and where there is friction a lubricant of some type is indicated. In chemistry we have a special type of lubricant which has marvelous co-operative powers. We call it a catalytic agent or more simply, a catalyser. A very small quantity of a catalytic agent introduced into a chemical re-action will change a very large quantity of substances from one form to another, lubricate the course of the reaction tremendously and be recoverable at the end of the reaction undiminished, unchanged, and unfatigued in any way. A few pennyweights of platinum precipitated in a finely divided condition through a porous mat through which the gases of burning sulphur are forced, will convert tons and tons of the gases into sulphuric acid and yet outlast the patent rights of the process. Just such an agent can the library become in any case of individual or community progress and just such an agent have I found it to be in my own relations with its staff.

I believe the opening wedge in any co-operation that you have to offer consists in teaching the library user how to use the resources of the library in getting hold of literature which does not appear to be immediately available by reason of absence from the shelves. This is of particular interest to the law librarian because of a characteristic difference between a law library and a general or public library. A man usually goes into a law library and says, "Have you so and so on this or that?" And the matter usually ends as far as the co-operation is concerned with "Yes," or "No," on the part of the librarian. When the same man goes to the public library he asks, "What have you on this or that?" And the way is paved for an immediate co-operation in displaying everything available whether in sight on the shelves or not. In this co-operative way the reference librarian of the Multnomah Public Library of Portland, Oregon (Mrs. E. R. Rockwood), recently gave me a specially prepared list of everything in that library on criminology, and about the same time, one of the members

of the reference staff of the Tacoma Public Library (Miss S. Lindsay, public documents division), gave me a list of everything in the library in public documents on identification, the latter including a dozen or more much needed articles that I had not found alone in spite of my familiarity with this library.

This first step in co-operation taken, the second step, that of the proffer of instruction in the use of the various catalogs, descriptive bibliographies, and similar material available in the library, follows. I can safely say that the average library user looks upon the card index as the only catalog available and unless the library staff meets him part way he is very likely to learn nothing of the many book lists of different kinds which may be on the shelves and which are fundamental to his further progress in search of material pertaining to his problem which is not immediately available on the shelves. At my public library, through the co-operation of the present librarian (Mr. John B. Kaiser), I have repeatedly made use of such help in solving problems. A heated controversy, that I recall, concerned the origin of an explosion. The filing of legal proceedings depended ultimately upon the interpretation of the controlling conditions by fire insurance people generally, and by search among the descriptive memoranda published in library and government publications concerning special libraries and their collections, we ran down a pamphlet on "What Is a Fire Loss," in a distant special library and which gave me my answer. As in this case there not infrequently arises the necessity for going outside of the library for the particular book or pamphlet desired and here co-operative instruction in the use of the various cumulative indexes collected by libraries becomes available.

In my own case in seeking out the applications of the resources of the chemical and physical laboratory, in the solution of criminal problems, I consider my greatest single step up to this time, the arrival at an understanding and use of inter-library borrowing facilities through the kindly co-operation and instruction of the staff of my local public library. Where a few years ago I felt that I was restricted in my professional equipment to an unreasonable degree by the somewhat limited library facilities in the Pacific Northwest, I now know by trial that the major libraries of the entire United States are as freely available to me as if I were a resident within their jurisdiction. Let us take, for instance, my need for some information on the development of the applications of photography in court, to the exposition of determinative facts as to disputed handwriting. I was anticipating some cross-examination along these lines and had a blind reference

to "R. W. Piper: The Laws of Evidence and Scientific Investigation of Handwriting, American Law Register, May, 1879." Here was something clearly not on the shelf of my public library, but it was speedily found and borrowed from a neighboring law library. You can readily see that this is especially helpful co-operation, because a letter seeking to borrow a book has a greater credit value when written on the letterhead and by a public or law library than when written on the letterhead of an individual. Besides, the book wanted is described in technical terms and the recipient of the letter is not called upon to puzzle out that "The Red Ship" was the borrower's idea of "Rubaiyat."

The medium of communication between the library and the individual in matters of co-operation is the reference librarian, and here I can say to my colleagues, that the open sesame of using it is to tell the reference staff one's troubles. I have learned that you librarians are like other professional men and it is something which I would urge you to advertise a bit, that those questions which arise as a part of one's profession, however personal they may be to the inquirer, invariably arouse no personal interest in the reference librarian and pass out of his mind as soon as answered as a purely professional incident.

This is a matter of developed confidence which has had a profound effect in the solution of my own professional problems and which can be duplicated in the professional practice of anyone whom you will encourage to solve the few requirements that establish responsibility and a personal relation with at least one library. My questions and the reference librarian's contributions to their solution have come to run the gamut of my interests, always with result because of the powerful bibliographical tools with which the librarian works. My use of the library seems to run along three fairly well defined lines. The first and most frequent use is to refresh myself on information already acquired at some other place or time in my professional development and required for some problem in hand, arising in the ordinary course of business. The second use is seeking information or suggestions on ideas or problems entirely different in whole or in part from any previous experience. The third is recreation. In each of these the effective result has been increased by the encouragement on the part of the reference staff of a statement from me of my needs.

How important a co-operative attitude on the part of the reference staff is, will become apparent to both law librarian and library user as soon as it is fully appreciated that progress in criminology,

law, or any other subject of today is no longer a matter of chance, but is completely bounded and described in terms of the law of permutation and combination. The value of the library either to its individual users or the community is, therefore, directly proportionate to the skill with which the co-operation of the librarian is presented.

From this point of view the library appears as firm ground into which to dig one's heels in screw-pressing a professional or commercial development out of an utilitarian environment and I have already pointed out that the active co-operation of its staff in presenting its resources gives them all the power of a true catalyser. Under present conditions, without the benefit of the inter-library loan system, advanced thought in applied criminology away from the great library centers would be practically impossible. It seems to me, therefore, that the law library at large should be more than a collection of decisions. The law and its associated subjects such as criminology, in which I am interested, in its broad sense is the study of the work and thought of other men, past and contemporary, in order to be able by reason of conclusions that may be drawn from it to determine how to do the work of today and solve the problems of tomorrow. It seems to me that the law librarian should aim to develop the co-operative functions of his library to as great an extent as is being done in the public and special libraries in matters of business and general economics and to develop his collection of books and information to include, in addition to the theories of the law, the material dealing with the conduct and ambitions of people both as individuals and nations. The law library would then take its place as a true catalytic agent in the organization of progressive thought for the orderly and the accumulation of helpful co-operative material in the control of the disorderly.