

Report of the progress of the Jefferson County Medical Library during 1908 / Library Committee of Jefferson County Medical Society.

Contributors

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REPORT

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LIBRARY

PROGRESS OF THE JEFFERSON COUNTY MEDICAL LIBRARY DURING 1908.

LIBRARY COMMITTEE OF JEFFERSON COUNTY MEDICAL SOCIETY.

MR. PRESIDENT AND FELLOW-MEMBERS:—For the sake of history we may be pardoned for referring to the steps in the development of the Library. The Library was the outcome of a conversation which the speaker (August Schachner) had with Donald MacPherson, deceased, and Professor R. T. Halleck, Trustee of the Louisville Free Public Library, in the latter part of the year 1904. At this time I desired to establish, through the Louisville Free Public Library, merely a department of current medical literature. Soon after my first efforts I was fortunate in securing the assistance of Dr. James B. Bullitt, who rendered some invaluable services in the early development of the Library. Dr. Bullitt introduced the motion for the formation of a Library Committee, asking that the speaker be made its chairman. The committee originally consisted of Drs. Bullitt, Pfingst and Schachner. After Dr. Bullitt's departure from the city, the vacancy was filled by Dr. T. H. Baker, who likewise did valuable work on the committee.

After a trying existence on paper for about two years, the Library went into actual existence October 1, 1907. To those interested in the early part of the movement we

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would refer to the *Kentucky Medical Journal*, April, 1906, page 789, and *The American Practitioner and News*, February, 1908, page 55.

To-day, after an actual existence of fifteen months, the Library has 3,042 bound volumes, 30 unbound volumes and 3 charts, making a total of 3,075 volumes, not including 775 duplicate volumes. In addition, there are on file 56 journals, representing the best current literature; 625 visits were recorded during the past 11 months, and 591 topics were looked up.

From this it is plain that the movement began independent of this Society, then carried into this Society, and owing to the inability of this Society to provide sufficient funds, carried into the other societies. Because it was not confined to this Society it was given the name of the Jefferson County Medical Library instead of the Jefferson County Medical Society Library.

From these different societies were received representatives which constituted the present Board of Trustees. This Board consists of the following members:

August Schachner, President; W. O. Roberts, Vice President; C. H. Harris, Adolph Pfingst, Jefferson County Medical Society. Vernon Robbins, Secretary and Treasurer, Society of Physicians and Surgeons; J. Rowan Morrison, Louisville Society of Medicine; Ewing Marshall, Clinical Society; Ben C. Frazier, Medical Chirurgical Society; Dunning S. Wilson, Academy of Medicine; Thomas L. Butler, Surgical Society.

In preparing this, like the preceding reports, the writer had in mind a double purpose: First, to make a report of the progress during the past year; and second, to make comments that were thought might infuse additional interest, as well as correct and explain erroneous and imperfectly understood views.

Speaking of the purposes of a Medical Library, we quote the following views of that eminent scholar, Dr. Abraham Jacobi:

"A large Library, besides being the proof of existing culture and accumulated intellectual labor, fulfills its destiny by giving information. Here the medical man with scanty means will find his text-books and monographs to aid him in unravelling the obscurities of a difficult case on hand. . . . But what a library is most successful in is the inculcation in a great many of the habits of study and research."

Certainly this is the prime reason, "the inculcation in a great many of the habits of study and research," and this while the men are young and have plenty of time. This is the reason why the better informed, the more public-spirited have recently awaked here and there to the incalculable importance of the medical reference and circulating library.

Medical Libraries for the Smaller Centers, by Smith Baker, M. D., (*New York State Journal of Medicine*, July, 1908.)

In the minds of many there does not exist a clear distinction between a private and a public medical library. A private library frequently becomes burdened through books that are very seldom consulted, but books which, although having little or no value in a private library, would have a very different rating in a public library, because the same book that would be consulted perhaps once in one or more years in a private library would be consulted much more frequently if it were placed in a public library where it would be at the disposal of a great number of men. Therefore, every book has its value so far as public collection is concerned, and sometimes the oldest have the greatest value.

To those who are inclined to under-rate and consider as useless books that are no longer new, we would suggest that it is completeness that makes a library valuable. It is the number of such *so-called* useless books that gives to the British Museum its chief importance and lures scholars from the entire world.

I cannot refrain from again quoting an editorial bearing upon the development of the Medical Library:

The progress we have made within the past fifteen months is ample proof that if the hard efforts that have been made in the past will be continued in the future, we will soon have a library that will rank as one of the best in the entire Southwest.

"It only requires a word here and there to turn into it the library of a deceased physician, which would be dissipated and ultimately find its way to a junk shop. A little co-operation with neighboring library exchanges duplicates for things needed. The American Association of Medical Libraries conducts a clearing-house for just such purposes. Time is the all important factor in the growth of a library. A library which is kept sound is as sure to grow as an oak sapling. It is hard to stop it. One of the greatest libraries in this country, that of the College of Physicians of Philadelphia, organized when Philadelphia was a village, can be pointed to as a product of time. For nearly two centuries medical books have gravitated to it until it is a veritable treasure house of medical literature. Time does it. The community which contemplates organizing a library is squandering its best capital in delay. A library in a small community to which everybody contributes \$2.00 a year is worth twice as much as one in which the sum total is contributed by one or few individuals. The medical journals which are received in exchange and the books which are sent by publishers for review by the medical journals published in this State should all be finding their way into the libraries for the benefit of the whole profession. *The New York State Journal of Medicine is carrying out this plan. For the past two years and a half every journal received in exchange, and every book sent to this journal for review, have been preserved in the County Society Library, where they may be of use to the whole profession. With their characteristic spirit of altruism, physicians have*

not retained the book for their own as the price for writing reviews."—*Editorial, New York State Journal of Medicine, July, 1908.*

Time and co-operation will do the work. If we can receive the exchanges and the books sent to journals for review, together with the extra copies of works which medical teachers always receive, and the libraries of deceased medical men, the growth of the Library will be as rapid in the future as it has in the last fifteen months.

The importance of co-operation has been very clearly illustrated by the number of duplicates which this Library possesses, and this applies with especial force to smaller communities where five doctors have five sets of the same work instead of five doctors having five sets of different works, thereby increasing the scope of their library facilities, all of which can be accomplished by co-operation through a common center.

In judging a medical library, it is not uncommon to overlook the fact that a medical library is a technical library, and that the attendance of a technical library is quite different from that of a general public library. Visitors to a Free Public Library go more to be entertained and amused than to be enlightened, whereas in a technical library the reverse is the rule, and therefore it is plain that while the attendance of a free public library is a large one, the attendance of a technical library is always a small one. The one is important in proportion to its attendance, and the other is important according to its aim.

This brings us to another important part of a library, viz., its indexing. The indexing of the library bears the same relationship to the library as an index does to an individual work, and the value of any library, just like the value of any work, is very largely dependent upon the accuracy and completeness of the index. Therefore, the most important duty of a librarian is to be able to properly index the library in order that the treasures of the library can be unlocked with the slightest ease.

In this the library has been singularly fortunate in securing the services of Miss Mary Rademaker. In fact, I am compelled to say that, without such efficient services, our present results would have been impossible. Coming to us as she did with a general training in library work, she very generously utilized her vacation by going to the John Crerar Library, of Chicago, to secure special experience in order that her work here should be of the highest order.

In view of these facts, it is with the greatest reluctance that we consider the idea of losing her valuable services should the Jefferson County Medical Society assume the future responsibility of the library. We might also add at this point that it is the view of several, if not the majority of this Board, that the work of a librarian now and for some months to come, if properly performed, will be quite enough to keep a trained attendant occupied without the addition of other duties, and therefore these same members feel that to combine the duties of librarian and stenographer would not be consistent with the proper performance of both duties. *You can no more do impossibilities here than elsewhere.*

It is also the opinion of the Board that although it would be best to continue as an independent body, the lack of funds makes it necessary for them to transfer the responsibility of the library to the Jefferson County Medical Society entirely.

In doing this we make the following recommendation:

First.—That the President of the Jefferson County Medical Society appoint a Library Committee to take the place of the present Board of Trustees. This committee to consist of four members, two to be appointed for a period of two years, and two to be appointed for a period of one year, and each succeeding year two members be appointed for a period of two years to take the place of the two members whose terms will have expired. In this way there will be two hold-overs, which will perpetuate the experience of the Board.

Second.—That the present librarian be continued until March 1, 1909, in order that the incoming librarian may be properly introduced to the duties of librarian.

Third.—That this report be given the widest publicity throughout the State journals.

Lastly.—It is difficult for me to find words emphatic enough to express my sense of gratitude for the outgoing Board, who have so patiently and conscientiously aided in every way in the upbuilding of the library.

The Board wishes to acknowledge, with thanks, subscriptions from the following:

Drs. Thomas L. Butler, J. Rowan Morrison, Vernon Robbins, Ap Morgan Vance, Ewing Marshall, W. Hamilton Long, I. N. Bloom, T. H. Baker, O. H. Dilly, J. A. Flexner, M. L. Ravitch, J. M. Ray, James Chenoweth, William Cheatham, Bernard Asman, M. K. Allen, H. M. Pusey, Herbert Bronner, John B. Richardson, Jr., Ben C. Frazier, Carl Weidner, August Schachner, J. B. Marvin, John Moran, John R. Wathen, S. G. Dabney, J. Hunter Peak, A. A. Falconer, Adolph Pfingst, G. A. Hendon, Oscar W. Doyle, W. F. Boggess, F. W. Koeler, John G. Cecil, Gaylord C. Hall, C. Thompson, H. B. Ritter, C. H. Harris, J. Garland Sherrill, B. F. Zimmerman, Irvin Abell, H. C. Woodard, Curran Pope, H. H. Grant, J. P. Ferguson, Charles G. Lucas, Isaac Lederman, T. D. Fink, Hugh N. Leavill, Charles Sauter, Charles W. Hibbit, Geo. C. Leachman, Thos. C. Evans, B. J. O'Connor, W. Ed Grant.

BOOKS FROM THE FOLLOWING:

The James M. Holloway Memorial Library, The John A. Ouchterlony Memorial Library, J. Morrison Ray, Arthur McCormick, Bernard Asman, Charles G. Lucas, J. Letchworth Smith, John Moran, Ewing Marshall, New York Post Graduate School and Hospital, Charles H. May, American Association of Genito-Urinary Surgeons, Vernon Robbins, August Schachner, M. F. Coombs, J. Hunt. Stucky, Benjamin M. Ricketts, J. B. Marvin, George Rob-

ertson, E. O. Witherspoon, S. E. Woody, D. S. Willson,
E. S. Allen, Henry E. Tuley, B. J. O'Connor.

OTHER IMPORTANT AIDS FROM:

Mr. Peter Lee Atherton, Home Telephone Company,
Louisville Free Public Library, Dr. B. J. Lammers, Gen
Alfred. C. Girard, of the John Crenar Library; Mr. John
Brownne, of the New York Academy of Medicine; Mr.
Wm. Yust, of Louisville Free Public Library.

AUGUST SCHACHNER,

President Board of Trustees, Jefferson County Medical Society.