



It Is a Mistake To Recruit Men

BY RALPH MUNN

Director, Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh

Today's few library jobs which pay even \$4000 discourage the professional man with a family

THE TIME has come when the profession should re-examine the traditional belief that librarianship needs more and more men within its ranks. We do need more men, just as we need more women, who possess high qualities of vision, leadership and statesmancraft. But to recruit more and more of the average run-of-mine simply to get men is a mistake. It will operate against the profession, both by filling it with men of mediocre calibre and by discouraging the entrance of superior women.

Librarianship is still, of course, predominantly a woman's calling. The Public Library Inquiry finds, however, that the proportion of men in the accredited library schools has risen from 6% in 1920 to 14% in 1938, and to 22% in 1948. A further increase is forecast for 1949-50.

Library school directors report a stream of male applicants whose qualities are reflected in the following composite: no special interest in libraries or public service, but has read or been told by a vocational adviser that there is a shortage of librarians; is far less interested in salary and advancement than in security—he must have a depression-proof job; no cultural background and would never have gone to college had not the G.I. Bill made that the easiest path to take; college grades satisfactory, but no sign of continued scholarship or develop-

ment; in short, he is simply looking for a secure and not too difficult job.

FEW \$5000 JOBS

We can only hope that not many of the men who comprise this composite got beyond the library school directors. There is danger to the profession, though, in a great increase of men even when they are of average quality. The success of any profession depends upon the well-being of its members. We can draw many of our satisfactions from non-monetary rewards, but a decent standard of living is essential to all of us.

A compilation [see Lj, Sept. 1, p. 1185] by Alexander Galt, librarian of the Buffalo Public Library, in May 1949, shows that 20 of our largest public libraries offer only 113 positions with salaries of \$5,000 or more; only 326 additional positions carry salaries of \$4,000 to \$5,000. Other studies have shown that when other types of libraries are added, the number of positions paying \$4,000 or more is severely limited. To a single woman without dependents, an annual expenditure of \$4,000 will bring the necessities and a few of the frills of living. To a professional man with a family, \$4,000 is barely enough to clear the poverty line.

There are several countries in which librarianship reflects the dangers of filling

RALPH MUNN became reference librarian of the Seattle, Wash., Public Library in 1921, the year he received his B.L.S. from the New York State Library School. After a year as assistant librarian at Seattle, 1925-26, he became librarian at Flint, and left in 1928 to become director of the Carnegie Library and Library School, Pittsburgh. In 1934 he surveyed the libraries of Australia and New Zealand for the Carnegie Corporation. He also holds an LL.B. and an A.B. from the University of Denver, and a Litt. D. (hon.) from the University of Pittsburgh. (Trinity Court photo)

a low-salaried profession with men who are trying to raise and educate families. Those in the lower positions are so much concerned with Junior's need of a winter coat that they can bring no enthusiasm or creative thought to their jobs. Harassed by home responsibilities and expenses, they become hopelessly discouraged and frustrated.

The optimist will insist that all library salaries be raised until they offer adequate support to men with families. That would be a welcome solution, but it is wholly unrealistic at present.

HARMS WOMEN'S POSITION

The Public Library Inquiry confirms what we have all known, that "no one opposes the library, but few are willing to pay much for it." The recent conspicuous advances in library salaries are not due primarily to A.L.A. standards or to our own efforts. They have come naturally from the inflationary factors which have raised the country's entire salary and price structure, and from the old law of supply and

demand. There is evidence that inflation has been halted, and that the shortage of librarians is on the way out. Certainly we must struggle to bring all salaries up to appropriate levels, but we shall no longer have these natural economic forces working for us.

The further limitation of positions which are available to women is perhaps the most dangerous factor in the influx of men.

Women have had to become reconciled to the preference of library boards for men as top administrators. According to my own calculation, and I don't guarantee it, men now direct the public libraries in 71 of the country's 92 cities of more than 100,000 inhabitants. Men are now appearing in much larger numbers as administrators in smaller cities. The universities and major colleges display a strong preference for men, not only as chief librarians but as department heads.

This trend will be extended if the supply of men is greatly enlarged. Men will secure more and more of the attractive positions, not because they are abler than women but simply because governing authorities prefer them. Finally, superior women will no longer enter a profession in which too many of the rewards are reserved for men.

Economic conditions and the status of libraries in American life make it certain that librarianship will offer proportionately few salaries which are adequate for the proper support of a family. Throughout the predictable future it is sure to be mainly a woman's occupation. It should, therefore, be kept attractive to the ablest of women.

We must have men for many positions, to be sure. But let us make certain that they are men who give every promise of raising the standard and prestige of the profession as a whole, and not those who are merely seeking a shabby security in positions to which able women should advance.

BOYS AND girls are natural hero worshippers, and if more worthy objects are not provided they will find plenty of unworthy ones in the comics and the films. In the stories of the heroes of the great epics and sagas, once they find them, boys and girls soon substitute Sigurd for Superman and Beowulf for bandits, and and yet in the last fifteen years there have been almost no additions to our scanty number of "hero" stories with the distinguished exception of the books by Dorothy Hosford. Are publishers timid about publishing titles which are in this "special" field of literature, or are children's librarians so unaware of the rewarding nature of the field that they give little encouragement to publishers to make the venture?—Lillian H. Smith in Reading in Toronto 1948.