

INTER-OFFICE CORRESPONDENCE

200A
 US - Army
 Medical Library

FROM: AG

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TO:

COMMENTS:

MAR 26 1943

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Sounds good to me.

SUBJECT: Interview of AG with Mr. K. D. Metcalf, Pres. Amer. Library Assn., and Col. Jones of the Surgeon General's Library - March 26, 1943

Jones says Surgeon General's Library started about 1803 - first 60 years' history unimportant - John Billings came to the Library in 1865 and left in 1895 and the excellence of the collection and the scope of work are monuments to B's intelligence and ability. Billings started the Index Medicus in 1880. When he left in 1895 the Library was managed by a succession of Army officers with presumably literary tastes and interests. Fielding Garrison grew up with the Library but he did not become the librarian.

In 1930 the Library began to suffer from inadequate government support - the Index catalog was suspended 1932-35 for this reason. It had taken the best energies and most of the Library staff and when Jones took over in 1935 the collections were considerably disintegrated in the absence of any system for their care or accession. Jones saw Putnam (Herbert Putnam, Librarian of Library of Congress) in 1940 and he told Jones that the Library was in a bad way in point of serving the public, of internal management and of accessions, and Jones states that Putnam was right.

A new building was authorized in principle in 1938, expected to cost \$3,750,000. This money was not voted, however. In 1939, \$130,000 was voted to prepare plans and working drawings, and Eggers and Higgins of New York made these plans on expected cost of \$3,750,000 - size of building 279x206. Discussion then raged on subject of location of the building, one group in favor of its location at the Army Medical center and the second group in favor of its location in the City of Washington and near the Library of Congress. The District of Columbia authority for parks and planning and the D. C. Fine Arts Commission approved the plans the the hearings on the location were paralyzed as of December 7, 1941.

Jones said he thought at first that the building should come first and then a reorganization - now he doubts this order of procedure and indeed thinks that a study by a group to be appointed by the Amer. Library Assoc. should be made bearing on reorganization and policy.

At present Jones has leased 1/2 of the Allen Memorial Library in Cleveland as a protection for the old, rare books. Beginning July 1, 1942 some 60,000 have been transferred, but the full number has not yet been sent to Cleveland.

Library personnel Jones says totals about 60 plus eight in Cleveland. Many of these are on Civil Service appointment. The microfilm activity is increasing as are all of the Library's public services. Accessioning has been a hit and miss affair until recently. There are not more than 18 persons with professional library training out of the staff of 60 - Jones is vague on his information regarding numbers of persons on library staff but says that the payroll is \$215,000 a year.

Jones is 65 and has had no library training but has been on the job for the past seven years. He wants to have a policy established - indeed he would like any survey made to be published. Says that the Surgeon General has approved a survey and publication thereof provided the survey is not made upon any conditions of permission to request or secure further funds from Congress. Jones has no objection to surveyors studying the situation intimately and getting full information from library staff.

The Army Medical Center in Washington has its own library of about 30,000 volumes and the Army has no very direct motive for lavish support of the Surgeon Generals' Library except for services they obtain in the way of lending books and microfilming as done at the SGL. Jones believes that actual Army use does not justify either the size of the SGL or its budget. Its main claim is rather that of being a national medical library with a now irreplaceable collection of medical literature.

Metcalf says ALA would collaborate gladly in making a survey. Surveys have been done of the Chicago Public Library and for the Universities of Florida, Georgia, and Indiana. M. says at this time some librarians have ample free time to devote; some others would be very busy, but he believes a competent survey group could be secured.

I told Jones that if the RF were to make an appropriation it would preferably be made to the ALA and that the application should come from the ALA on the initial formal request of Col. Jones, and that I would be prepared to submit the matter to the Board on or before the June Executive Committee meeting and that the date line for the proposal would have to be the 5th of May.

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