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SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE
ON THE
PAHO REGIONAL LIBRARY
OF MEDICINE

REPORT TO THE DIRECTOR

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PAN AMERICAN HEALTH ORGANIZATION
Pan American Sanitary Bureau, Regional Office of the
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SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE
PAHO REGIONAL LIBRARY OF MEDICINE

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Dr. Abraham Horwitz opened the meeting with a brief review of the objectives of the project. He expressed the hope that the Advisory Committee would examine the present activities of the Regional Library, look at future needs in the light of the project's objectives, and consider any factors that may be contributing to the slowness of its development. He appointed Dr. Martin M. Cummings Chairman of the meeting and turned the proceedings over to him. Dr. Cummings then appointed the rapporteurs, Dr. Armando M. Sandoval and Mr. Harold Bloomquist.

1. Summary of the Discussions

The background of the establishment of the PAHO Regional Library of Medicine was reviewed, the commitments of the various contracting parties were noted, and the Library's current resources and activities were described. The Committee then entered into a detailed discussion of its immediate and projected needs.

1.1 Physical Plant

The Committee felt that the current state of the Library's building was cause for much satisfaction. It expressed its appreciation to the Escola Paulista de Medicina for effecting, in accordance with the Agreement for the Establishment of the Regional Library of Medicine, a number of changes in the building that were necessary for improved operations, as well as its confidence that additional required changes would also be executed promptly.

The over-all stack capacity was judged to be adequate for the Library's activities for at least the next five years. The Escola Paulista de Medicina is planning to expand the present building when additional space is needed in the future.

The Committee recommended that the following changes be made as soon as possible:

1.1.1 Modification of the first floor so as to locate the entrance to the main reading room at the head of the stairs, build a separate room for cataloging at the present entrance to the reading room, provide a direct entrance from the hall to the Director's space, and modify the partitions in the Director's space to allow space for two offices and a conference room;

1.1.2 Provision of a room for the personal use of the library staff on the third floor;

1.1.3 Modification of space occupied by small offices and service facilities to allow more efficient discharge of library functions; and

1.1.4 Provision of carpeting for the tile stairs which at present are hazardous.

1.2 Equipment

It was the general feeling that certain equipment, such as tables, typewriters, and clocks, should be acquired without delay, even above and beyond present needs. The Chief Librarian was therefore requested to purchase this equipment promptly.

It was felt that the \$50.00 limit per item, without previous approval from PAHO, on the purchase of equipment impairs the Librarian's administrative effectiveness. Accordingly, PAHO was asked to explore the possibilities of a more flexible procedure.

The need for a direct telephone line was stressed. The absence of such a line is an impediment to efficient local service. Moreover, it is anticipated that a TWX service will be installed to link the Library with the region served, with PAHO, and with the National Library of Medicine.

Though binding is of unquestionable importance and serious consideration was given to establishing a bindery on the Library's premises, it was felt that for the time being the present system of using commercial binders should be maintained. The matter will be brought up again, after more experience is accumulated, at the next meeting of the Committee. The Librarian was asked to prepare accurate cost accounting figures for alternate binding methods.

Since Xerography has largely replaced microfilming as a document dissemination and procurement tool, the Committee believes that the Xerox equipment now on hand is sufficient to meet present photo duplication needs. Whether or not microfilming equipment is purchased will depend on the findings reported at the next meeting.

1.3 Library Collection

The Committee agreed that the expansion rate of the Library's collection has been slower, perhaps, than it should have been, even in the light of obvious difficulties. Top priority should be given to building it up rapidly, both by placing subscriptions for journals on the existing list and by ordering back files of journals from the United States Book Exchange. The Exchange should be asked to search for back numbers on a repetitive basis.

It was recommended that the Library's present list of periodicals - some 1100 titles - be used as the basis for building up the collection. This list is composed of the 450 journals subscribed to in the past by the Escola Paulista de Medicina and some 650 titles selected by the Librarian from standard lists of periodicals chosen to represent a wide range of subjects in a variety of languages.

The Committee felt strongly that artificial subdivisions in the periodicals list, such as indication of titles formerly purchased by the Escola Paulista de Medicina, should henceforth be abolished. It also recommended that instead of the Escola Paulista de Medicina paying directly for the 450 subscriptions it should contribute an annual sum to the Library equivalent to the cost of the subscriptions. Since these subscriptions would not be for specific journals, their cost should be based on the annual price index of medical periodicals reported in Library Journal.

Journal subscriptions should be processed as expeditiously as possible, so as to avoid any break in continuity. Whenever possible, air mail subscriptions should be placed for important reference tools, such as the Index Medicus. In addition, the possibility of air mail subscriptions for the most important weekly medical journals - for example, Lancet, New England Journal of Medicine, and British Medical Journal - should be explored.

The periodicals list should be reorganized and classified according to title, broad subjects, and country of origin. This new list would then be circulated to the Associate Director of the Pan American Federation of Associations of Medical Schools, who in turn would circulate it among the Federation's members for evaluation. Additions and deletions of titles could be made on the basis of their suggestions. Organizations in other health-related disciplines should be approached for similar criticism of the list. Also, the advice of local health-related professionals should be sought and acted upon.

With the exception of certain periodicals for which there is heavy demand, the beginning date of all back files will be January 1964. Local cooperating medical libraries in the state of São Paulo will be asked to provide photocopies of journal articles from their periodical back files, as identified from the São Paulo Union List of Serials. The cost of photocopies used in filling requests for regional interlibrary loans will be borne by the Library. The Biomedical Librarians' Group of the São Paulo Association of Librarians has indicated its willingness to cooperate in this matter.

The monograph collection should serve as a model, though it need not necessarily be exhaustive. A small reference collection, useful to the Escola Paulista de Medicina faculty and student body, would probably be sufficient. The existing monograph collection, numbering some 10,000 volumes, should be vigorously weeded out, and some 1,000 or so monographs of true historical interest retained, the balance to be disposed of in consultation with the Escola Paulista de Medicina.

1.4 Staff

The Committee agreed unanimously that the prompt appointment of a Director was an absolute requisite for the Library's success and was essential to the satisfactory progress of regional medical library functions. While the manifold tasks and desirable attributes of the Director are set forth in the post description of 5 January 1968, the Committee stressed that leadership qualities, administrative ability, and scientific competence are at least as important, if not more so, than an intimate knowledge of library technology. For the latter, the Director should be able to rely on the Chief Librarian and his staff.

During the period of search for a permanent Director, it is considered essential to have a Consultant Director on hand to implement the Committee's recommendations. Even so, it is hoped that the permanent Director will be appointed soon so that he can start selecting the additional urgently needed key members of the Library staff. Besides that of the Director, there are four administrative positions in the Library that should be filled by highly competent professional librarians - namely, Chief Librarian, Head of Intramural Reader Services, Head of Technical Services, and Head of Regional Services. The Committee feels that all these posts must be filled before the Library can begin to function at its best.

To assure adequate services to the Escola Paulista de Medicina and effective relationships between the Regional Library and the participating libraries in São Paulo, it would be highly desirable for one of these positions to be filled by a qualified Brazilian librarian, preferably recruited from among the present staff of the Regional Library.

In order to allow the Director maximum flexibility in managing the Library, it is recommended that present appointments to specific posts be made as temporary as possible and that the final job descriptions be left to him.

Several operational matters, such as length of the working day and salary re-evaluation, are in urgent need of further study.

1.5 Training

The in-service training program currently under way at the Regional Library should continue and be expanded. Staff members should be encouraged to continue their formal training in the sciences and in languages.

At present the Library cannot realistically consider offering training to personnel outside its own staff. Opportunities for training elsewhere should be explored for staff members of both the Regional Library and other libraries in Latin America.

1.6 Services

Local services in the Library are progressing well. The quarters are comfortable and the materials are in good order. The introduction of a

noncirculating policy guarantees to readers that materials will be available on the shelves. The photocopy service is proving to be successful, and the practice of using copies instead of borrowing original material seems to have been a widely accepted alternative.

In the matter of photocopy (Xerox) charges, the Committee felt that the Library should provide for free service to the faculty members of the Escola Paulista de Medicina at least a year, with this policy subject to review at the Committee's next meeting. Reasonable limits on the amount of material to be copied would, of course, be imposed. Escola Paulista de Medicina nonfaculty members would not have photocopy privileges, and the Library would copy only library materials from its own collection. No charges would be made for copies used in lieu of originals for interlibrary loan purposes.

The Committee felt that, despite the incomplete state of its collection, the Library can and should begin to function as the recipient of interlibrary loan requests from Brazil. Although at the beginning about half of the requests will have to be forwarded to the U.S. National Library of Medicine, this will not significantly increase the time required to fill Brazilian requests. Moreover, requests that can be filled from the Regional Library's own collection will reach the borrower more quickly than they would from the National Library of Medicine. As a start in implementing this policy, the National Library of Medicine should enclose a note with all interlibrary loans sent to Brazil informing the requesting librarian that future requests should be addressed to the PAHO Regional Library of Medicine in São Paulo.

When the current acquisitions plan has been fully carried out and when expertise in handling interlibrary loan requests has been developed, the Regional Library of Medicine can begin to act as the primary source of such loans for all of South America. Statistics on the use of the interlibrary loan service will be reported to the Committee at its next meeting. For the sake of consistency, the statistical form developed by the National Library of Medicine for reporting regional services should be used.

After the Library has been fully staffed and the collection has been built up, other types of regional medical library services will be extended to libraries throughout South America. Information concerning the implementation of regional services will be disseminated at that time.

2. Conclusions

Although the Scientific Advisory Committee on the PAHO Regional Library of Medicine recognizes that there are still many technical and administrative problems to be solved before full implementation of library services to all of South America will be a reality, it considers that the original goals and objectives for establishing the Regional Library of Medicine are sound and achievable. The need to improve health and health services by improved information services to the medical research, education, and practitioner communities will, in the Committee's view, be a powerful stimulus for the success of this important undertaking.

Finally, the Committee noted with great satisfaction the fact that the Director of PAHO expressed his deep personal interest by devoting two full days of his busy schedule to meet with his advisers on this project.