

## U.N.C. SCHOOL OF LIBRARY SCIENCE TOURS "THE NORTH"

It was spring in Washington. The cardinals and blue-birds were flying in from the south, and so the officials of the Library of Congress knew that it was time to expect their annual visit from Miss Susan Grey Akers and her students from the University of North Carolina School of Library Science. They had been coming for twenty-odd springs, not as long as the birds but long enough to establish a pattern. On March 10th we arrived, a gay group of twenty-four, happy at the completion of term papers and examinations, and eager for a back-stage view of the library world which would help us to formulate definitely our own plans for library service.

The schedule for the trip was a full one, but invariably stimulating us to renewed enthusiasm in the glimpses it afforded of librarianship of the most varied and highly developed types. For part of the tour the group visited libraries as a unit, for part it divided according to individual interests. In Washington we spent a day at the Library of Congress, an afternoon at the Government Printing Office; arrangements were made for us to be shown other outstanding libraries of our choice. Of course we wanted to see them every one, as well as the Senate in session, Mount Vernon, Washington Monument and Harry S. Truman, but on the trip, as in life at home, we had to reconcile ourselves to partial accomplishment. On our way to New York most of us stopped at the beautiful new Princeton library, but two of us chose instead to explore Somerset County's (New Jersey) organization of branches and bookmobile service. In New York all of us spent a day at the Brooklyn Public Library where we met members of the staff and alumnae of our school at a friendly buffet luncheon; we were driven to see branches of various types and the bookmobile in operation. In smaller groups according to our preferences we investigated a wide variety of libraries, but we all spent our last morning in the New York Public Library.

Everywhere we were impressed with the cordiality of our reception. The vital personality and broad vision of Dr. Luther H. Evans, Librarian of Congress, left us with the comfortable feeling that our national library was in very good hands indeed. At the Library of Congress we were invited to luncheon with the department heads and had the opportunity to discuss their work with them and to make plans for afternoon visits to the divisions that had most interest for us. In talking with them we realized, as we had not before, the importance of knowledge of foreign languages. French, German, Spanish and Italian were of course desirable, but Russian, Slavic and Oriental languages were even more needed in cataloging and in the political, social and economic fields. We were invited to sign up for positions, but were told frankly that we should be proficient in four languages to be assured of acceptance. Naturally there was no rush to the personnel office! Later we found a similar language emphasis in university and metropolitan public libraries, though only the National Gallery of Art expected four. Fortunately there is still plenty of work for the librarian who is not a language specialist in the subject divisions in the big libraries and in the branches.

Interested as we were in the libraries themselves, it is probably the librarians who left us with the warmest memories. It was a privilege to meet Mr. Francis St. John of Brooklyn, director of a library system that is definitely "big business." His combination of executive ability, enthusiasm for books and social awareness seemed to characterize librarianship at its best. Another personality that I will not soon forget is Miss Dorothy Van Gorder, of the Somerset County Library, who starting with nothing fifteen years ago when the county service was inaugurated, has built up a system that compares in the size of its basic book collection and in the variety and freshness of its selection with big city libraries. As we ate the traditional macaroni and apple sauce with her in a little rural graded school lunch-room, her love for her work, her interest in her patrons and her practicality so impressed us that we did not wonder that the county authorities had allowed her a free hand and a generous budget. In the New York Public Library

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Miss Ramona Javitz gave us this same realization of what one person with imagination and purpose can accomplish. The collection of over a million and a quarter pictures that she has built up of ephemeral materials at a negligible expense to the library is of constant use to designers, theatrical producers and social historians who need to know how people and places looked at a given time. Most of us felt a particular interest in meeting Mr. H. W. Wilson for without his indexes, standard catalogs and simplified catalog cards we embryonic librarians would be hesitant indeed about our plunge into the complexities of our first jobs. To us he seemed the grand old man of library service, friendly, unassuming, young in spirit in spite of his eighty-two years. He invited us back for another luncheon with him, and another view from his light-house tower, and when we become discouraged with what the individual can accomplish in this controlled and regimented world, back we should go.

We know now that there is no dulling sameness in libraries. We appreciated the impressive modernity of the United Nations building, but also felt the charm of the little pre-Revolutionary branch library in New Jersey with its double fireplace, its Dutch oven and its ghost. In our day-time visit we did not see the poor beautiful lady who died of a broken heart when her lover was hanged as a spy on the piazza, but we could well believe that she was there. We brought back with us a new concept of the scope of library service, as well as a deeper realization of its problems. And I think we left behind us a faint stir of envy at the grass-roots type of library service most of us would enter. I know of at least four people who expressed a desire to spend part of their vacations jolting along with me in my prospective bookmobile through the mountains of Western North Carolina. Exchange visits are not as valuable as exchange positions, but they might prove another small step toward "one world" of understanding and sympathy.

—Elizabeth G. Howe, Librarian-elect  
Henderson County Public Library,  
UNC Class of 1952.

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