

RESEARCH FOR PROFIT

By ALICE LAUBACH*

A Business and Technical Library is established to serve, in the words of television, "a profit-making concern." Its main purpose is to keep the company personnel informed as to the current developments, along the lines they are working, and whatever else they want to know from print. Most technical libraries serve the company research department primarily, and ours is no exception. However, we do all the book and periodical buying for the other departments as well, and do literature searching on any subject.

In order to run a company library such as ours, the ideal librarian should have a knowledge of chemistry (at least two years in college) and a reading knowledge of German. Dutch and Russian would be helpful. She should also be a graduate librarian, with a good working knowledge of library procedures. This ideal librarian is a rarity and there is considerable debate as to whether a technical background or a library degree is more important, if you can have only one or the other.

Mine is the chemical background, which I feel is more important in this particular kind of library. As a chemist, I learned the terminology, and how to search the chemical literature, and find data. Consequently, we are able to answer over 95% of the questions that are asked. Also, we are often able to judge what is not of value, and thus save the time of our research people. We subscribe to twenty-five foreign periodicals, six of which are German. It is of help to be able to glance through them and spot developments of interest to certain individuals who do not normally see the magazine.

One is occasionally lost without a formal education in librarianship. I badly needed to know how to catalog—so I found a correspondence course at the University of Wisconsin. Some technical librarians with chemical educations obtain a library degree at night school. I find the Special Libraries Association of great help for I have a chance to consult with experts in my line of work and I always come back from conventions full of ideas to put into practice.

Technical libraries differ from school and public libraries in that book circulation is a very small part of the business. Reference work, such as preparation of bibliographies and literature surveys, is a very important function. Each time the telephone rings, and it averages twenty times a day for us, it may be a request for some data that will take a minute to find or several days. Most of the questions deal with the finding of chemical data, and can usually be answered in less than half an hour.

Periodicals form a large portion of any technical library. Much of the present technical literature is first published as magazine articles. Ph.D. theses, which contain the results of original research; proposed theories to account for known scientific facts; and survey articles covering the year's progress along certain lines, particularly textiles and plastics, form part of our periodical literature. Some articles are incorporated into books, but much of the material is never republished. It is very disheartening to work for days, or even months, on a chemical procedure, and find that someone else did the same thing two or a dozen years ago. It's expensive too, for this man could have been doing something more productive. So, it is up to the librarian to have those things available.

*Librarian, American Enka Corporation. Paper given in a Special Libraries symposium at the North Carolina Association Conference, High Point, N. C., October 21, 1955.

The Enka Library subscribes to approximately 200 periodicals, 150 of which are circulated around the company to any employee who wants to see them. Most special libraries circulate their material, by one means or another. We staple a mimeographed list, (different for each magazine), and let it make the rounds. It naturally follows that bound volumes constitute a large part of the library, and provide a wealth of material for searching. *Chemical Abstracts* and *Industrial Arts* are indispensable indexes in all technical libraries, and *Industrial Arts* is helpful to the business side as well.

You may be interested in knowing how we at Enka purchase our foreign periodicals. Stechert-Hafner, in New York, handles the German and Swedish subscriptions and some of our English ones. For the rest we correspond directly with the publisher. For *Philips Technical Review*, from Philips in Eindhoven, Holland and *Applied Research*, from Martinus Nijhoff in the Hague, both in the field of physics, we must write every two years for an invoice, or the subscription is automatically stopped. Our English subscriptions are usually paid yearly on receipt of invoice, by a bank draft in pounds and shillings.

In order to best serve the company, most libraries issue regularly some form of bulletin which contains abstracts of articles of interest to the company, and lists the materials acquired since the previous bulletin. We publish an *Accession List* every four weeks, giving the books, pamphlets and photostats purchased during the period. Our *Reading List* is issued weekly and contains selected titles of magazine articles together with abstracts of patents prepared by our Patent Department.

The Business and Technical Library at the American Enka Corporation was organized in 1951 with a full time librarian and assistant. It is under the Administrative Assistant to the Vice President in charge of Research and Development. As American Enka manufactures rayon and nylon yarns, an essentially chemical process, about 40% of our 3,000 books deal with either pure or applied chemistry. About 20% are business books—accounting, finance, management, materials handling, etc. The other 20% are technical books, dealing with physics, engineering, mathematics and textile technology. We also have a section devoted to catalogs of the various suppliers of chemicals and laboratory equipment.

American Enka is affiliated with AKU. Algemene Kunstzijde Unie is a large Dutch holding and operating company. There is a British Enka, an Italian plant, several in Holland and some German affiliates. The Central Research Laboratories of the AKU are located in Arnhem, Holland, and it is there that the central research library is located. It is a nice, large library, with a staff of about five. I visited it two years ago. They publish an abstract bulletin twice monthly, which our company uses, making one of our own unnecessary. We often request photostats of articles from foreign magazines, and they sometimes want data from us. We usually buy our own domestic photostats, using coupons from the John Crerar Library, Chicago, or the Bibliofilm Service of the United States Department of Agriculture.

Enka is building a new Research Center, and the Business and Technical Library will be up on the third floor. It is almost completed, and we hope to move in by the first of the year. The library is already painted a nice, soft gray, with coral-red doorways.

We will have a stack room, on two levels, each containing carrels, an office-workroom, a dark room for photostating, a report room and a large central room for the library. This will give us ready access to our periodicals, dictionaries and other reference material.

Occasionally questions arise that make it necessary for us to call on outside resources.

NORTH CAROLINA LIBRARIES

The Pack Memorial Library in Asheville has helped us considerably. Kay McDiarmid has also answered my SOS for material. We are very glad to fill inter-library loans or send photostats. So far, we have had very few requests perhaps because we are in the country, and few people know of our technical library. It is also the policy of the company to make the library facilities available to any local people that need them. If any of you want material by inter-library loan, we will be glad to supply it if possible.
