

# Your Library and Your Public

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HOW to make friends and influence their reading is one of the happy opportunities of a librarian. A library that is as comfortably attractive as home sweet home, and that has librarians as warmly understanding as favorite aunts, will do much to fill the wide open spaces of the reading-room, and to insure traffic jams at the loan desk.

The best publicity, of course, is courteous, agreeable service—service with a smile! A competent librarian, who knows her stuff, is good, but a friendly librarian who knows names and faces is better. Even if you can't find old Dr. Fussbudget's hazy reference to the Hippocratic treatment of measles, you will probably be able to seduce him by remembering that his name *is* Dr. Fussbudget, and by calling him that with subtle charm and sympathy.

Some medical schools give courses to verdant Freshmen on the anatomy and physiology of a library, as well as instruction in the operative technic necessary for book extraction. But most librarians put across the idea of the library as a glamorous educational institution by practicing the group method. Small lots of budding William Oslers and Harvey Cushings are taken gently by the hand and given a personally conducted tour of the library, along with simple instructions on how to make use of what they are looking at. If you are both charming and clever in your conductor's rôle, you can imbue the lads, and occasional lasses, with an enthusiasm that will bring them in, not too infrequently, to browse among the classics of their profession.

In case the spoken word be forgotten, the written word is made available in the shape of library information booklets, and by the posting of complete card sets for all types of library material, accompanied by sample call slips. As you well know, the folk who think that there is only one card for each book is legion.

Attention is drawn to special library material in many ways. A large glass-covered bulletin board near the library entrance shows to advantage the brightly-colored jackets of medical best-sellers, as well as the current monthly list of recent acquisitions. Mimeographed recent book lists sent monthly to every member of the medical staff and to every medical library in the country, advertise the library and its wares. Included with these lists there may be a number of intriguing references on some special subject.

A similar distribution of monthly lists of new material in limited fields is also desirable. Current bibliographies of the library's holdings in such present-day interests as poliomyelitis and rheumatic fever find favor with the Medical Faculty in general, while small groups of specialists like to get the library's recordings of such subjects as nutrition, peripheral vascular diseases, and hypertension. Often a list of new books and articles in his own field wins the pleased acceptance of one doctor alone. Specialists always respond to specialties!

Attractive arrangements of the library's other features are good publicity. Variety is the spice of a library, too! Glass cases of rare books, convenient files of prints, neatly shelved and labeled museum pieces, easily got-at theses and pamphlets, all help to advertise the library's usefulness. A browsing room with easy chairs, reading lamps and small tables invites the reader to the Elysian Fields of medical history, biography, fiction and curious miscellany. One of Northwestern University's specialties is its collection of novels and stories by or about physicians, and this collection, placed in the Browsing Room, attracts streams of students who like to renew their acquaintance with ophthalmologist Conan Doyle's *Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* or general practitioner Cronin's *The Citadel*.

A small shelf of recent medical books placed on or near the loan desk will attract those who might miss them in the stacks, and another shelf adorned with non-medical best-sellers draws many readers to the library. Popular fiction may well serve as a sort of "come-on" to the library's more legitimate possessions. These books, when suffering circulation failure, are sent for recuperation to the patients' library of a neighboring hospital. A few good non-medical periodicals, such as *Life*, *Time*, and *Reader's Digest*, often attract medical readers, as do the daily news-papers of the town.

Scrap-books of reviews of new medical books offer up-to-the-minute service to the discriminating reader, and such clipping collections are placed in the reading-room as a convenience to the busy doctor.

Library publicity that extends farther afield—one might call it extra-mural publicity—consists of staff ventures into journalism and the show business, that is, library exhibits.

It is quite common to find medical librarians writing learned articles for their own professional journals, and such literary contributions are, of course, valuable, not only for the presentation of professional problems and solutions, and for the noting of professional progress, but also for the favorable attention they bring both to the author and to his or her library. It is not so common, but quite as advantageous to write an occasional medical library article for a general library publication. This acquaints the profession as a whole with inside information as to the difficult and highly technical work of the librarian who ministers to the noble art of healing.

It is even less common, but even more advantageous, for the medical li-

brarian to write for non-library publications. Many medical journals welcome contributions by medical librarians. Almost every medical library, whether situated in a school or in a hospital, can make use of the official bulletin or journal of the institution. Attention is thus drawn to valuable material in the library collection. Such articles may include descriptions, with illustrations, of the library's rare books on surgery, on pediatrics, on ophthalmology, or other treasures. Or there may be a thrilling account of its first editions, of its print collection, of its museum collection. Educational articles on library procedures, problems, etc. may arouse your special public to a new and awe-struck appreciation of your value, and such articles are by no means dry reading if you spice them up with a bit of humor.

A medical library staff may also find for itself a place in the sun by producing general articles of a medico-literary nature. Not only medical history periodicals, but general medicine and surgery journals as well, often like to publish essays on the cultural interest of physicians—art, music, literature, etc.—and they fairly revel in pathological biography. An essay on a famous man with a famous disease will make your library famous too. Sometimes the fanmail gets to be excessive, what with letters and post-cards from most of the United Nations, all wanting reprints by return mail!

Library exhibits are a show business indeed! They start in the library itself, spread to glass cases on various floors of the building, and extend to medical convention halls and hotels. These exhibitions of books, pictures, old surgical instruments, medals and bookplates cover a range of subjects that is almost phenomenal. When a visiting personage, or even a local medical light, gives a lecture, material on that lecture is exhibited to the extent of the library's resources. This sort of exhibition is like that put on by a hospital medical library when a particularly fascinating case arouses the interest of practically the whole staff. All library material with reference to the disease and its complications is at once placed on view.

Intra-mural exhibits at Northwestern University's Medical Library are changed monthly and have included such subjects as *Medical Poets*, *Barber-Surgeons*, *Priests of Lucina* (history of obstetrics), *Medical Philately*, *History of Ringworm* (100th anniversary of Gruby's discovery), *Famous Press Specimens*, *History of Surgical Anesthesia* (100th anniversary of the first public demonstration), *Bookplates*, and the *Abt Exhibit* (honoring the great pediatrician on his 80th birthday).

Exhibits on the various floors of the Medical School consist, for the most part, of classics in the various divisions of the medical curriculum taught on that particular floor, such as *Classics in Pediatrics*, *Classics in Gynecology*, *Classics in Otolaryngology*, etc. Other cases show material on the *History of Medical Education*. These cases are large, well-lighted and well-placed in positions near the elevators. As a side-line, it may be noticed that the walls of the

corridors and the clinics throughout the building are lined with pictures belonging to and cataloged by the Library. Most of these are engraved portraits of medical men. Attached to the lower frame of each is a small card bearing the name of the physician, his vital statistics, and a brief account of his claim to fame. The subjects of the portraits are, of course, correlated with the subjects taught on the floor.

Last year, Northwestern broke into big time exhibiting at medical conventions in Chicago. Well-lighted glass cases are placed in the booth provided for the Library, and provision also is made for exhibits against the draped background. Books, pictures, old instruments, the original magazine articles first describing a disease entity, are advantageously arranged. Two members of the Library Staff are constantly in attendance to guard and explain the exhibit.

For the 1947 meeting of the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons, the Library exhibited the *History of Orthopedic Literature*; for the 1948 meeting, *Early Methods of Treating Bone and Joint Injuries. Monumenta Medica*, a rare book display, was shown at the 1947 Annual Conference of the Chicago Medical Society, and *Historical Material on Injuries of Bones and Joints* was exhibited at its 1948 Conference. When the Illinois State Medical Society met in May, 1947, the subject was *Early Midwestern Medicine*; at the 1948 meeting it was the *History of Physical Diagnosis*. At the October, 1947 meeting of the American Academy of Ophthalmology and Otolaryngology, the Library showed the *History of the Literature of Ophthalmology and Otolaryngology*.

The work involved in setting up these convention exhibits is difficult and exhausting, but the educational and publicity value is large. More and more people in the medical world are getting to know about Northwestern's Medical Library, and more and more people are getting to appreciate its resources. That the exhibits are considered valuable assets to the conventions is shown by the awards they win.

Henry Ward Beecher once said that a library is but the soul's burial-ground, a land of shadows. The medical library of the present day need not be a cemetery for dead souls or dead books. With appreciation of the publicity values of expert yet kindly service, and of intelligent yet subtle showmanship, no library need consign its wares to the dust and silence of the upper shelf.