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THIS is not an article about the Best Books for a Business Man's Bookshelf. It will not tell how to choose books which will be impressive because of their titles or their sumptuous bindings.

It will try to show why every business place needs a library of useful books, and how to make the best use of it. Some people go on the theory that if a book has gold-topped leaves, deckled edges and an embossed cover it's a good book, but business men need to pay attention to the advice given his son by Lord Chesterfield: "make the substance of books the first object, and their binding the second."

The business library—which will be taken to include technical, financial, trade and all other collections intended for use in conducting affairs—is set up with the idea that profit will result, and this may take one or more of several forms. The profit may lie in information given an executive which aids him in making a difficult decision; or a member of the staff may use the library to work out a problem ranging from arithmetic to recommendations of high policy; or the library may be used to win the goodwill of customers; or it may be a blessing to the personnel department by adding another attraction to membership on the staff.

A well-conducted library will naturally become the centre of recorded news and information about the business in which its firm is engaged. It will reach out for information about other firms in the same line, and about conditions in the country, the continent and the world which impinge upon that business. But that is only the first, the preparatory stage. The efficient librarian in a properly-organized special library will be able not only to answer specific questions, but will be able to direct the executive to new avenues of approach to his problem. The librarian can be of real dollars-and-cents value by anticipating requirements and assembling data as a basis for

future growth of the concern. Librarianship is a highly skilled craft. In addition to knowledge of technical details the special librarian must have a wide understanding of all aspects of the business to which her library is contributing.

Value of the business library cannot be appraised in terms of the number of books taken out. One service given by your library may defray the cost for a year; merely by raising the efficiency of your staff, it may justify its existence without providing impressive statistical data about itself.

A shelf full of books is not always the answer to a business man's problem, but when in the course of human events he meets a \$64 question it is a great relief and benefit to have a shelf of books upon which he can call for an answer. The library need not be big in size to demonstrate its worth. A qualified librarian will know the best sources for facts to be incorporated in a reference department. In a very short time she will be in position to answer questions ranging through your own business, related businesses, and any miscellaneous matters you bring up.

Just as the library does not need to be big in order to be useful, neither need the business be big in order to use a library. In fact, there is hardly a business too small for its executive to require a library of some kind. In small industries it is impracticable to employ statisticians to keep track of current industrial and financial developments, so why not make use of the highly-qualified statisticians made available free or at very small cost through pamphlets and periodicals? If the business man feels that he cannot afford expensive research counsel, he can benefit from a library, because it is rare to come upon a problem which is so new that it has no connection with the past. Your library, containing the records of previous experiments

Size is not Essential

and accomplishments, will enable you to avoid the pitfalls into which others fell, and to take advantage of the successes and methods others have achieved.

How to Start Starting a special library for your business may be easier than you at first think. Look around your office and see the number of books accumulated by this and that worker. Some are used every day, and should not be disturbed; others are used infrequently by the men who hold them, and should be collected into one place for the use of all.

Having gathered together all the scattered books, pamphlets and periodicals, you will wish to add essential reference books, surveys (which are available at little or no cost from government offices and the offices of trade associations) and a few key periodicals covering your special field of activity with up-to-date information. The objective is not to build an elaborate collection of books, but to establish a department to serve all departments with basic and current information quickly.

Do not be overwhelmed by the crowd of books offered. Your own common sense and the advice of your librarian will serve to select those really useful. You may decide that you desire a comprehensive collection covering the field in which your business operates. You may wish, in addition, a standard volume on economics, a book on business methods, one on financial statements, and such supplementary reference books as directories and financial reports. It is wise counsel to start with specific desires, and then seek the books; don't let the supply of books dictate your demand.

Most special libraries endeavour to include some literature dealing with the historical background of the business to which they are attached, and some are charged with the duty of keeping this history up to date. Historical material is interesting, and very often helpful, but most business men will find greatest usefulness in current publications. Books giving basic facts, and periodicals and pamphlets with later information: these will be of daily use. Clippings of addresses, government pronouncements, notices of business changes, and news about competitors' plans: all these will be filed for quick reference. Even data gathered in conversation may be transcribed and filed.

There are lists of books available covering almost every subject under the sun, and a good librarian will

be able to run through the list applicable to your business and make a selection. If you left it to the librarian, she would probably recommend a few books dealing with the fundamental processes common to all kinds of enterprise, to form a background into which you could fit your own business. This is not a bad idea, because it broadens perspective and offers the opportunity to see avenues for expansion of activities and services. Sometime when you are in a thumbing-over mood you will come on surprising things in such background books, things which will be useful in your production department, your sales department, and your personal conversation.

Selection of current material is done by the librarian under policy instruction by the executive and within a budget decided by the executive. It is essential for the librarian to study her people. She needs to know their work, their interests, and their individual peculiarities. When a man calls up and asks for "that report from Ottawa", it is obvious that a knowledge of what that man is doing and what are his interests is at least as necessary as a knowledge of the reports.

Needs of Library The library needs room to breathe, quarters in which the books may be kept reasonably clean, sufficient shelf space and filing cabinets so that references do not get so crowded that items are hard to find, and adequate staff. It has been found to work well when the library ranks as a department responsible only to a higher official, with the librarian recognized as a department head. In some firms, the library is under executive direction of the general manager or the company secretary, a person who is interested in and appreciates the possibilities of service the library holds. Independence of the library from multiple control makes it possible to centralize all acquisitions of printed matter, and to ensure a more economical supervision of purchases. Business does not demand so much a staff trained to meticulous nicety in library detail as one that can sense the imminent demand for certain information and have it ready and accessible. The librarian should be briefed regularly by executives as to approaching interests, and she will, of course, keep abreast daily of published opinions and plans.

Without getting into an argument as to whether a "special" library is a "research" library, it can be remarked that never a day goes by without demands upon the business librarian for data, old and new, which will enable the executives to reach wise judgments.

Few people know the diversity of the librarian's activities. She will have an intensive knowledge of her own collection. She will know how to trace material, however exotic, demanded of her, and how to go about obtaining it from publishers, government departments, trade associations, other libraries, newspapers and individuals. Her alert mind, her interest in the business world and her instinct for team work in her job all combine to make the librarian a successful research worker. Her patience, intuition, imagination and orderly manner of thought help the special librarian to report thoroughly and quickly and correctly on the matter referred to her, or to present information on her own initiative.

Mention has been made of the growing importance of pamphlet and periodical literature. Let **Periodicals** us look at this non-book library content, starting with periodicals. Every reader will be aware of current publications in his own field which would be useful to him if readily available. In such industries as the chemical, the greater part of the literature is in periodicals and reports, which tell what is being done today. Financial papers and newspapers report current events, business changes, and all the miscellaneous information about stocks, issues, yields, and trends.

Many libraries do not circulate trade papers complete, but clip them and route the clippings to persons most interested, and then file a selection upon their return to the library. Happy indeed is the executive who has a librarian to follow the periodicals closely and draw to his attention quickly the latest analysis and information on matters in which he is interested. Even with a small budget, much can be done by a good librarian's judgment and initiative.

No business library in Canada can operate without the material issued by the Dominion **Pamphlets** Bureau of Statistics, whose publications are listed in Canada Year Book, 1946, page 1149. Pamphlets such as these are economical, because they give, at a low cost, the latest news and opinions on specific matters. They are in a form which enables the librarian to keep them with or close to basic books on the same subject, which assists quick service. Every pamphlet and printed report that reaches an executive's desk direct should be forwarded to the library under one of two heads: (1) it may be marked "file" as an indication that the executive may wish to refer again to the pamphlet; (2) it may be merely forwarded to be dealt with at discretion of the librarian.

Pamphlets are issued not only by the Dominion and Provincial Governments, but by societies and firms. This Monthly Letter is a pamphlet which tells, in the course of a year, many interesting facts about various aspects of Canadian cultural and economic life. Societies issue pamphlets at regular or irregular intervals to publicize their work, such as in fighting disease, or merely to report on their year's activities. This free literature, properly selected and intelligently filed, provides a splendid well of information.

There would be little use in a library unless some way were arranged for finding required **Indexing** information quickly, so an important step is to organize indexing and cataloging. The ability to turn to a well-planned, efficient index is a life-saver, and a good classification scheme is to the library what a well-planned layout is to the factory. It calls upon the librarian for mental alertness, physical dexterity and good housekeeping.

It must not be thought that the catalog is primarily for use of the casual visitor or for the personal use of an executive seeking information. It is a tool made for expert use. It is arranged for rapid, easy use, but one must know the rules. It will be full or meagre, depending upon the needs of the institution, the extent of the material, and the time that can be given it by the staff assigned to the library. It is false economy to cut indexing and cataloging too fine, because the very items left out in the interests of saving the work of a stenographer today may cost the executive dearly next month.

Turn now from the organization and mechanics of the library to consider specific ways in which it can prove its wide usefulness in your organization. Robert Benchley, after detailing an elaborate recipe for a salad, wound up the list of ingredients and quantities with the advice: "open the window and throw it all away". This advice might apply to what has been said about a business library unless we can supplement the recipe with comment that will show how to serve appetizingly.

About half the circulation of the Royal Bank **Fiction** library is of books of fiction. This conveys an important hint in days when employers are seeking means of attracting workers. Firms everywhere encourage sports, theatricals, public speaking classes, clubs, and other recreation: Now here is another service which will be widely taken advantage of. Whether the library is approached by a tired depart-

ment head seeking a detective story, or an equally tired stenographer looking for a love story, the free loan of a book means one or two evenings of relaxation. It also means enhanced contentment among the working staff, a blessing to personnel managers.

Reading Course In more serious vein, a reading course might be made up by the librarian in collaboration with the personnel manager or other executive. This could take the form of a course in the business, or in political and economic affairs, or in sociology or philosophy, or any other subject; or several choices of courses might be given. Such a procedure would be equally effective for a home office or for employees in isolated branches.

Research There is room for suspecting that many libraries are not as fully used as they might be. Socrates was right when he said: "Possession of books does not give knowledge." Most librarians will find that potential users have to be reminded of the library's facilities, and the library services carried unsolicited to their desks. The business librarian is, as it were, the reading eyes of her organization, scanning the material she receives with a view to finding articles and information which may interest or assist executives and department heads. She will not let periodical literature slip through "accustomed channels" to a standard list of recipients without scanning it to ascertain if it contains something to interest someone not on that particular list. She will be alert to see that bulletins on noteworthy happenings reach the executive without delay—even if she has to breach, for the time being, her well-ordered system of receiving, scanning, cataloging and shelving.

A Reading Service One of the saddest fates that can befall a business library is to have it sink into a routine of being merely a library. Unless it is performing a research function, it is not living up to what executives expect of it. It might be worth while to set up a library annex, when the institution is a large one, to read quickly and route to the proper officer all interesting material as it arrives. Those staffing the annex would have before them lists telling the particular interests of all departments, revised and renewed from time to time. Every periodical, pamphlet and other publication would clear through this annex daily, with a slip attached on which the

reader would designate the circulating route and the page on which an item of interest has been found. Under such a system no material would get on to a shelf without being drawn to attention of the executive or department head who might be interested in it: if he could not read it at the moment, his secretary would make a note of its availability and a paragraph digest of its content. After coursing through the hands of those interested in specific items, the publication would go into general circulation.

Executive's Part Having told something of what the library can do for a business concern and what the business executive might expect of his library, it should be mentioned that the executive has his part to play. It is a common fault of library users to ask for something in general, when the librarian can only guess at the phase he desires. For instance, if you ask for something on "credit", do you mean consumer credit, bank credit, intermediate or long-term credit, international credit, or what? It helps your librarian to serve you quickly if you are specific about everything not top secret when telling your wants.

If the library is everlastingly taking stock of itself, as it should, to ascertain if it is performing its full function, it is only good business for the executive to examine whether he is getting greatest possible benefit from the library. He may find that he is concentrating on problems in an effort to pull out of thin air the answers which would be available quickly if he gave his librarian a chance to search. Even if she has not the material on her own shelves, there are nine chances out of ten that she knows where to get it, and the last chance will be eliminated once she starts searching.

The role to be played by a special business library is limited only by two factors: the ability of the librarian to grasp what the business needs, acquire material with initiative and discretion, carry out her work with energy and enthusiasm, and follow through problems to completion; and the willingness of the executive and department heads to look upon the library as a living clearing house of information, give it a chance to demonstrate its ability to help them in their individual and business problems, and support it as they will find it deserves.