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LIBRARY

of the

COAST and GEODETIC SURVEY.

U. S. C. & G. SURVEY,  
LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES,  
DEC 17 1906  
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A Paper read, November 21, 1906, before the District of Columbia Library Association by Claude B. Guittard, Former Chief, Division of Library and Archives, Coast and Geodetic Survey.

An act of Congress, approved February 10, 1807, authorized a survey of the coast of the United States. Under this law President Jefferson commissioned Mr. Ferdinand R. Hassler, a Swiss scientist who had emigrated to this country, to obtain the necessary equipment in Europe as there were no facilities in this country for making instruments of the required precision. Mr. Hassler, familiar with the methods employed in the European surveys, considered certain books quite as essential as instruments to the success of the undertaking. Fundamental reference books in mathematics, astronomy and surveying were purchased in London and Paris; star-lists and other publications were donated by the great European observatories; eminent men of science, all of whom were greatly interested in the new undertaking of the young republic, were eager to aid Mr. Hassler, both by advice and what was welcomed more, printed matter at their disposal dealing with problems likely to be met in the progress of the Survey.

These, together with the instruments, were sent to this country as opportunity occurred, from London and Paris, successively Mr. Hassler's headquarters during the four and a half years necessary to obtain the complete outfit. The books thus obtained form the basis of the present Library. The collection has grown steadily, slowly in the first forty years of its history, more rapidly in later years, safely avoiding legislative shoals and administrative rocks. The first appropriation for books, maps and charts, as such, was made for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1876, and for the Librarian for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1886. Since these dates both Library and Librarian have been regularly appropriated for. Before 1886 the appropriation for Librarian was included in the two lump sums (the one for the Atlantic coast and the other for the Pacific coast) appropriated for the Survey, and though clerks were detailed as "Librarian" no mention of that fact is made in the appropriation acts. And before 1876 the appropriation for books, maps and charts was also included in the two lump sums above mentioned.

What is known as the Library of the Coast and Geodetic Survey is officially the Division of Library and Archives in the office organization of that service, which formed, by transfer from the Treasury Department, one of the constituent bureaus of the new Department of Commerce and Labor. The present staff consists of a librarian (officially chief of the division), three assistants, a stenographer and a messenger.

# National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

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The sum annually expended averages about \$1000.00. There is no specific appropriation for the maintenance of the Library, this item being included with others in the office contingent fund. By law all ordinary purchases from this fund are made thru the purchasing agent of the Survey by competitive bids. In the case of books the purchasing agent calls for bids from local and New York ~~the~~ dealers, the lowest bidder of course receiving the award. The Division, as is perhaps sufficiently indicated by its title, is charged with the care and proper use of the printed and manuscript collections of the Survey. These collections may be, and are in fact, divided into three very distinct classes or sections, viz: books, or the library proper, maps and charts and archives. I propose to treat these sections separately, giving in some detail the scope of each, and the manner in which their resources are made available for reference in the every day work of the Survey. I wish to emphasize the fact that this is essentially a working library, with very little dead wood on its shelves.

LIBRARY. *(I have eliminated 10,000 volumes since the war started)*

The Library proper comprises some 30,000 volumes, very closely confined to those branches of the natural sciences in which the Survey thru its various activities is directly or indirectly interested. These in brief are mathematical and physical geography, astronomy, physics, terrestrial magnetism, physical hydrography, and that part of geology which in recent years has developed into the practically new science of geophysics. With these should be included those branches of engineering that deal with the construction and maintenance of the various safeguards to navigation such as harbor works, lights, buoys, etc. Of all these different classes, the only one the Survey endeavors to maintain complete is that of mathematical geography, or rather that part of it represented by the publications of similar governmental bureaus or other institutions doing the same sort of work thruout the world. There is in the Library, then, a practically complete collection of the official results of geodetic, geographic, tidal, oceanic current, and magnetic surveys, together with tide tables, nautical almanacs and ephemerides. There is also a fairly complete collection of the publications of the principal astronomical observatories of the world, especially the star catalogues so vital to accurate geodetic computation and comparison. No particular effort has ever been made to build up a complete collection of the other classes mentioned, the aim being to place at the disposal of the Survey members merely a working library of necessary tools. Both the money available and the space allotted to the division have always kept afar the temptation to try to do anything more than this. Indeed the tendency has been, at least in recent years, in the opposite direction, to ruthlessly cast out all dead and out of date material. The <sup>same</sup> policy is held toward new accessions; one of the principal duties of the librarian being to cull out all matter not related to the work of the Survey. Approximately 1000 books and 350 pamphlets are added each year to the Library, and of the 1350 books and pamphlets thus added 85 per cent is received thru gift and exchange ( the greater proportion of the foreign publications bearing on the work of the Survey is received in this way) and 15 per cent thru purchase.

The collection as shelved is classified by a combination of the Expansive and Decimal systems. The relatively large proportion of geographical literature renders it desirable to use a less cumbersome notation and one more logical in its arrangements than the Decimal, and for this reason the Expansive system was adopted for this particular class. Thus we have the main division G (general geography), Gs (geological surveys), Gsi (geographic and geodetic surveys), Gsj (boundary surveys), each subdivided by the use of the Cutter local numbers. For the remainder of the Library, the Decimal is used, the larger classes again subdivided by the Cutter numbers. For instance observatory publications, 524 are treated in this way, as are also the collection of tide tables 526.9. (525.6)

The catalog is the usual author and subject card catalog, the two being filed in separate alphabets. L. C. printed cards are used whenever possible and L. C. rules to a great extent followed in the typewritten cards for matter not covered by the printed cards. A special feature that has proved of great use is a catchword card index to periodical articles of interest to the Survey. It includes many articles from minor periodicals not indexed in the printed lists and in addition had the advantage of always being up to date. In the interests of publicity and to call the attention of busy members of the Survey to material of probable interest to them, a bi-weekly typewritten bulletin of accessions and titles added to the periodical index is circulated thru the different division of the Office.

The Library is of course primarily for the official use of the Survey members, who are privileged to withdraw any number of volumes. There is no restriction, however, on the use of the books in the building by others, and in fact the collections are frequently consulted by men from other scientific bureaus of the government as well as scientists outside of the government service. The usual inter-library loans are carried on, the Library freely borrowing volumes from other libraries and as freely extending similar courtesies.

The charging system is a simple one, consisting of a receipt slip with blank spaces for the necessary data. These are arranged by the class numbers and returned to the borrower in exchange for the book. The receipts are checked and verified annually by the book inventory required of the assistants commanding vessels and field parties as well as of all persons employed in the Office.

Of interesting books in the Library there are few. These are mainly old mathematical, astronomical and surveying text books purchased in Europe by Superintendent Hassler or added by his successors, Alexander Dallas Bache and Benjamin Pierce, both eminent scientists, enthusiastic in all that pertained to their chosen work. Among these may be mentioned a 1528 Venetian edition (Latin) of Ptolemy's "Almagest", another (Greek) published at Basle in 1538, Sems, Johan., "Practijck des landemetens," Amsterdam. Wilhelm Janz., 16--(?), Metius, Adrian. "Arithmeticae libriduo; et geometriae, lib. VI." Lugd. Batavorum, ex. off., Elziviriana, 1626: Franekeræ, Balck. 1625. Unique in this country so far as I can discover is Daniel Schwenter's "Geometrical practice, published in Nürnberg in 1641. Touching more closely the interests of the Survey are the voyages of Cook, Vancouver and others in the North Pacific during the 18th and early 19th centuries.

MAPS and CHARTS.

45,000

The Survey exchanges publications with practically all the maritime chart-issuing bureaus of the world. Material thus received forms the larger part of the 38,000 maps and charts in the collection. 2,500 maps and charts are annually added to this collection. Each country issues catalogs and indexes of the charts published by them and the charts themselves are shelved in the order given in these catalogs. The shelving arrangement consists of cases with wide trays high enough to hold from 20 to 30 pieces. While, as stated, the bulk of the collection comprises charts used for purposes of navigation, quite a respectable proportion are maps (largely official) of this and other countries. They are shelved in cases similar to those used for charts, arranged by countries by the Cutter local numbers, and by dates under the locality. An author and subject card catalog of these maps is maintained tho their arrangement practically makes the collection an index to itself.

ARCHIVES.

12,000

25,000

7,000

By the law establishing the Survey, its fundamental function is the preparation and publication of charts fixing in detail the outlines of the coast of the U. S. for the use of navigators. With the progress of benevolent assimilation, its field has been extended to Alaska, to Hawaii and to other insular possessions. Essential to the accuracy of this work are the geodetic operations carried on from the beginning and recognized in the change of title in 1879. All of this work involves a vast amount of field work collecting the geodetic, hydrographic and magnetic data necessary for the compiling of accurate charts in the Office. The results of this field work, with the subsequent computations, are contained in some 60,000 volumes of records, 6,000 hydrographic and plane table sheets and 8,000 photographic negatives and prints. Containing as they do, the records of the Survey's operations from its beginning, and upon which all its scientific publications are founded, they are in constant demand for purposes of reference and comparison. It is therefore of primary importance that the material be immediately available at any time. A simple classification has been adopted, with a more or less mnemonic notation.

For reasons not necessary to enter into here it is of decided advantage to have all the different kinds of data for a particular locality together and here again the Cutter local numbers serve this purpose. The local number forms the first division, and this is subdivided using the notation. In most cases the year in which the record or computation was made is placed below the class marks, followed by the initial of the man doing the work. The collection as shelved is practically an index to itself, but in addition there is maintained a Rudolph index to places and subject. I shall not enter into the relative merits of the Rudolpher and a card catalog for this purpose but will say that the indexer is found quite satisfactory in actual use by members of the Survey. 3,000 records are annually added to the Archives.

The photographic negatives are numbered and arranged in chronological order as received. The photographic prints are placed in manila envelopes with appropriate labels and filed by subjects in a document size sectional office filing case. A card index of subjects serves as a ready means of reference to this material.

In the face of it this collection of the Survey's archives presents a rather unattractive array of figures and records of scientific phenomena. But it gains in interest when considered as a complete history of the federal government's activity in defining the land and water limits of this country and its possessions. Here are collected records which, correctly interpreted, show at one place the slow encroachment of the sea upon the land: at another the gradual extension of habitable land into the sea: the effects upon this earth of ours of natural phenomena all the way from sun-spots and the aurora borealis to earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. Nor is human interest entirely wanting. In the journals and log books written by commanders of vessels and field parties are to be found tucked away in obscure corners many a laconic tale of adventure and tragedy in the wilds and on the high seas. For in the ~~ninety~~ ninety years of its activity, the Survey's men have been "roughing it" in the truest sense of the word, from beyond the Arctic circle in Alaska to "rounding the Horn" and from Porto Rico on the east to the furthestmost outposts of the Philippines on the west.