

## The North Carolina Chapter Of Special Libraries Association —A Team Of Special Librarians

By

RICHARD C. DAVID



RICHARD C. DAVID, *research librarian, Liggett & Myers Tobacco Co., Durham, served as guest editor for this issue of NORTH CAROLINA LIBRARIES. A member of this journal's Editorial Advisory Board, David is president of the recently-organized North Carolina chapter of Special Libraries Association.*

The date, April 6, 1966 was a memorable one for all professional special librarians in North Carolina, in that these people from industrial libraries, science-technical libraries, research center libraries, medical libraries, university special libraries, and business libraries converged on Durham for the installation of the new North Carolina chapter of S.L.A. and installation of newly elected officers.

Prior to April 6, special librarians in this state held membership in either the Washington, D. C. chapter, the Oak Ridge, Tenn. chapter, or the Georgia chapter, whichever was nearer. Membership in these distant chapters resulted in very limited participation in chapter meetings by Tar Heel special librarians. This factor, among others, motivated the formation of the North Carolina chapter.

The new chapter will provide a common meeting ground for the continued education of its members. Attending chapter meetings will help professional librarians to stay current on new innovations in the rapidly growing service area of data processing and information storage and retrieval — traditional library functions. Special librarians can expect to grow in value to their respective places of service through participation in the activities of this newly organized chapter, which has the distinction of being the

first S.L.A. chapter in the state. At present there are 35 S.L.A. chapters throughout the nation.

The philosophy underlying special librarianship and all handling of technical information today is succinctly stated in the S.L.A. Bylaws: “. . . to encourage and promote the utilization of knowledge through the collection, organization, and dissemination of information; to develop the usefulness and efficiency of special libraries or information centers . . .”

The essential difference between the special librarian or information specialist and another kind of librarian lies in the former's closer relationship to a specific field of information and clientele. The special librarian must be constantly alert and enthusiastic in meeting challenging situations.

We recognize certain forces for change in the information field today. First, there is a need to identify those methods of analyzing and presenting information which are best

adapted to the requirements of highly training scientific and research personnel. So, the central problem thus moves from that of technology to that of adequate individual communication.

A second major change is in the rapid growth of knowledge in all fields. The technical disciplines, chiefly the sciences, have turned loose such a flood of information that even the wealthiest of corporate and collegiate libraries do not know what to do with it. About 90% of all scientists who ever lived are now at work, and it seems that most of them are publishing their findings. Today there are about 7,000 journals related to the biomedical sciences alone. In 1965, in the field of chemistry alone, these learned pioneers published 6,700 articles every fortnight. The net result of all these changes, and those in technology, is to cause the special librarian to place less emphasis on the organizational functions of collecting and disseminating information and more on those of evaluation, selection, and presentation so that the continuing education of the research specialist can be as painless and efficient as possible.

A third major development that changes the position of the special librarian or information specialist is the increased recognition of the importance of information and the consequent increased availability of funds for work with information handling. In individual organizations, new emphasis has been placed on information management. Shortages in special libraries and limited budgets in the past have not always made it possible for them to function as information centers; in fact, new systems were sometimes set up apart from an existing library in the same organization. It is important that we as special librarians continue to develop professionally and to manifest our abilities and experience. We believe the special librarian in all fields has an exciting and challenging future.

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## BOOK SELECTION IN THE UNIVERSITY SPECIAL LIBRARY

*By*

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The collections in the special libraries at Duke University have been built to their present state by the combined efforts of the faculty and library staff.

Each department has a library representative who, upon receiving recommendations from his fellow faculty members, orders for his department. This system has proved to be the best plan, since no librarian could possibly be familiar enough with the different disciplines to order for his collection. Each field is so specialized that the task is difficult even for the specialists. Then too, as each special field changes or enlarges, the faculty knows of library needs long before the librarian is aware of them.

The library staff as well as the faculty is on the alert for titles in the special library and participates in book selection. For instance, when a special field has been developed by a faculty member who later leaves the University, the staff helps to keep titles in this field from being overlooked.

After scholarly series are selected, the library staff must see that they are put on a continuing basis. Items not readily available are filed in the desiderata file, and second-hand catalogs are checked in an effort to locate them. Here the University depends on the faculty for retrospective material. This file is made up chiefly of requests for such material, and there is a constant search to fill gaps in periodicals and serials.