

# Review Articles

## The Status of Librarians

*The Status of American College and University Librarians.* Edited by Robert B. Downs. Chicago: American Library Association, 1958. 184p. \$3.50. (ACRL Monograph Number 22.)

One is certainly grateful to Dr. Downs and the ACRL monograph editors for collecting into one volume the most important professional writings on the status of college and university librarians which have appeared in the postwar period (with the exception of the Robert W. McEwen's "The Status of College Librarians" which was published in *College and Research Libraries* in June 1942 and which is included). Dr. Downs has had a further happy thought which can be best explained in the words of his own preface: "Because the present monograph's chief aim is to provide practical assistance to librarians and institutions struggling with matters of status, it was decided to arrange the group of papers in reverse chronological order. Ordinarily, the recent data are being sought, and therefore it may be a convenience for readers to begin with the most up-to-date findings. . . ."

What is the status of the college and university librarian in America today? Are college and university librarians affiliated with the faculty? Do they have comparable or equivalent status with respect to voice and vote in faculty meetings, participation in academic functions, salary, tenure, sick leave, retirement, and sabbaticals, and are they thought of as being a part of the faculty group? A partial answer at least is supplied by comparing three general studies (general as applying to many institutions and as opposed to the study of a particular library personnel program) included in this ACRL monograph: Gelfand's 1949 survey of library staffs in fifty eastern liberal arts colleges, Lundy's 1951 study of faculty status for librarians in thirty-five representative universities, and Downs's 1957 survey, the most recent of its kind, of the current status of library staffs in 115 major universities. In 1949, Gelfand's picture of the librarian in

the academic community of fifty eastern liberal arts colleges showed that faculty rank and status was accorded to 24 per cent of this group, although 72 per cent of the chief librarians held rank. In 1951, Lundy's study of thirty-five universities revealed that 40 per cent of the group clearly identified the library staff with the teaching and research staff. Another 20 per cent had accepted librarians into the faculty with various reservations and limitations, and about 40 per cent either regarded librarians as a special professional group or else had found no solution as to the best method for recognizing the work of professional librarians. Dr. Downs's 1957 survey of librarian status in 115 leading universities shows that 54 per cent of the universities grant faculty status to librarians, with or without specific faculty ranking. In 35 per cent of the universities, the librarians are regarded as a separate professional group or they may be part of the administrative-employee class. Significantly, Downs notes that in 11 per cent of the total, in publicly controlled institutions, the librarians came under civil service regulations, although some of the top-ranking staff members in this group are exempted from civil service. Glaciers move faster than faculty status for librarians but it is evident in these general surveys extending from 1949 to 1957 (more evident if one goes back to the McMillen study of 1940) that the trend is in the direction of giving librarians full academic status with most of the rights and privileges of faculty members. It is also clear that the conditions of work and the amount of responsibility attached to various stages in the two professions are too different to allow of precise assimilation. Thus librarians who are normally identified with the faculty of a university rarely receive identically the same salaries, the same vacations, or precisely the same sabbatical privilege as other faculty members. Neither do all librarians agree that staff members must have faculty rank and titles to maintain a position of dignity and importance on the campus. Nevertheless, in spite of the diversity of opinion on the matter of desirability of such status, even among librarians, the

fact is that more and more colleges and universities are identifying their library staffs with the academic group. It is Dr. Downs's firm conviction that over the years the full identification of librarians with the faculty, with all the rights and privileges which this status implies, will create the best kind of library service to students and faculty. And, of course, he is fundamentally right. In time the second class status and/or "separate but equal" status will eventually become anomalous. This is not to suggest that every head librarian or professional library staff that has not yet reached faculty status should rush headlong into the battle, armed with copies of this report, to demand full faculty privileges. Neither should the head librarian or library staff that has not yet achieved all that Dr. Downs and others have in terms of status for professional librarians feel miserable, downcast, and frustrated. Too much preoccupation with staff status leads to fancied grievances, to dulling the imagination, and to the forming of a hard defensive crust on the mind which results in inflexibility. Dr. Downs and his contributors say clearly what must be done to achieve a satisfactory staff status. If conditions at Illinois and elsewhere seem somewhat remote from one's present situation, be of good cheer because if one has imagination, if he has a clear-cut conception of the library's role in the college or university, if he takes every reasonable opportunity to make known the nature and importance of this role, and if in public performance and personal conviction he measures library success in terms of quality rather than quantity, then in good time all librarians—from the head librarian to the beginning professional librarian—will be accepted fully as members of the instructional or academic staff of the college or university.

As every good compiler should, Dr. Downs introduces the authors and pages contained in this monograph by precise reference to the source of the maiden publication, and also summarizes the major points or purpose of each contribution. Apparently all but two of the articles have been previously published. They include Paul H. Buck's "A New Personnel Program for Harvard Librarians," Patricia Knapp's "The College Librarian: Sociology of a Professional Spe-

cialization," William H. Carlson's "The Trend Toward Academic Recognition of College Librarians," Robert H. Muller's "Faculty Rank for Library Staff Members in Medium-Sized Universities and Colleges," Felix Reichmann's "Hercules and Antaeus," Lawrence Thompson's "Preparation and Status of Personnel," Sidney H. Ditzion's "College Librarians and the Higher Learning," the Lundy and Gelfand studies previously mentioned in this review, and three contributions by the editor himself. Lewis C. Branscomb's "The Quest for Faculty Rank" (that title gives me a haunting sense of exile from a passionate paradise) and Robert M. Pierson and Howard Rowelstadt's "The Case of Faculty Status for Librarians" appear here for the first time in public print.

The whole book—though perhaps, it is less a book than a series of papers—makes an eloquent appeal on behalf of the importance of librarianship and its being highly regarded and intelligently rewarded by the institutions whom the librarians serve. One might hope that such a book was quite unnecessary, but even in these days no one can say that it is not needed, in view of the amount of shallow depreciation that is current in some places by administrators and faculty members who ought to know better—and frequently do, because in public address they continue to refer to the library as "the heart of the institution." This leads one to the optimistic conclusion that colleges and universities may get along without full recognition for librarians as faculty members but they cannot get along without libraries.—Guy R. Lyle, *Emory University Library*.

## Industrial Information

*Information and Communication Practice in Industry*. Edited by T. E. R. Singer. New York: Reinhold Publishing Corp., 304p., \$8.75.

Present practices and services in industrial libraries and information departments are discussed in this book. The distinction between an industrial library and an information department is not a sharp one. The industrial library which collects, abstracts, or-