

The Library

CHAPTER XXII

The library of any college is the focal point of such an institution. It usually has to start from scratch with its growth depending to a great degree on the initiative of the head librarian and the president. A college library cannot be built over night and requires the constant building by members of the faculty; they know their areas and the greatest needs of those areas.

Boise Junior College was fortunate in this regard since it started with some three thousand volumes that had been collected over a period of 40 years by its predecessor, St. Margaret's Academy. The books were good, but only partially satisfied the needs of a beginning college. "The original library collection included many text editions of literary works. Number one in the accession book was a thin little selection of Browning's poetry."¹

The college library has been very fortunate in the quality of its librarians. The library itself is principally wrapped up in two individuals from 1932 to the present; except for the first five years, the College has known only Mrs. Mary D. Bedford or Miss Ruth McBirney as head librarian.

When the College started out in the fall of 1932, there was no regular librarian for the first two months. Bishop Barnwell had engaged the services of students to act as librarians until he secured Miss Elizabeth Buehler who served from November 1932 to the summer of 1934. She had little in the way of finances to buy books; actually the major purchases were multiple copies used for assigned reading, principally in the social sciences.

Mrs. Mary T. Hershey, who served the College as Latin instructor from 1932 to 1934, was also the librarian for the first two years after the College had been separated from the church. The library still had a very limited amount of money, but Mrs. Hershey did an outstanding job of serving students and of supervising the student assistants who did the clerical duties. She worked well with the faculty in their desire to build larger college offerings. In 1936 she relinquished her library duties when the president requested that she become the registrar alone.

For the 22 years she was with the College, Mrs. Hershey adapted herself readily to any task and gave unstintingly of herself to both faculty and students alike. When she retired in 1953 as Registrar Emeritus, the following words appeared in the front of the 1953 *Les Bois* under her picture: "To Mary T. Hershey for her many years of selfless devotion to this college and for her zeal in helping students plan their college careers, this edition of *Les Bois* is dedicated."

Mrs. Charlotte Gould Gaylord served for a little over a year as librarian. She had had her preliminary training in this field at the University of California and had come to Boise to serve the Boise Public Library, but left that job when she married. She resigned as College librarian in late October of 1937 and was succeeded by Mrs. Mary (Dresser) Bedford.

Mrs. Bedford was one of those delightful personalities who worked well with everyone and while she had had little library experience when she came, she spent the next few summers

in library schools in the universities of the Northwest securing more background. She was to serve in an active capacity until 1953 when her health made it necessary to retire. The 1956 *Les Bois* was dedicated to Mrs. Bedford "For her many years of active service devoted not only to the college library but to the general growth of this institution and for her continued interest in Boise Junior College now as Librarian Emeritus. . . ."

It was during Mrs. Bedford's years as librarian that a number of large collections were given to the library and her early way of working with the faculty members in their book selections was largely responsible for the fact that no cleavage developed between librarian and faculty members. As a result of this there was no library committee for many years. The department heads and individual members worked with the librarian in a most cooperative way. When she retired in 1953, the total accessions had reached 15,000.

The present librarian, Ruth McBirney, attended Boise College in the mid thirties, graduated from Whitman College, and took specialized study at the University of Washington where she received her Bachelor of Librarianship. She served as assistant librarian from 1940 to 1942 and then returned to Boise in the early winter of 1953 to become head librarian after she had been many years with the American Library in Paris, France. She has done an excellent job working with the faculty in building a library and has been with the College during every phase of its growth. She is very adaptable to the needs of a growing college, visualizing changes and modifications that must be made to fit the temper of a changing college in a changing world.

The College was fortunate in both of its locations since unusual facilities were at its doorstep, e.g. State libraries and the Boise Public Library. The latter, financed by Andrew Carnegie in 1905 and known as the Carnegie Library, had 42,000 volumes in 1939 and the State Library had a greater number of non-

fiction (a total selection of 40,000 by 1939) and was located for many years in a basement area of the State House. In this same building were facilities of the Idaho Historical Museum with some 2,000 books and journals covering Idaho's history; fortunately, this was just across the corridor from the State or Free Traveling Library. The State also had the Law Library of Idaho located in a central area on the first floor of the State House, to serve primarily the State Supreme Court and the lawyers of Idaho. It was a depository² of the Library of Congress and Federal Library sources and likewise, had many books that the ordinary college library would not have, such as a complete record and journals of the Continental Congress and the Revolutionary Period from 1774 through the adoption of the Declaration of Independence until the surrender of General Cornwallis in 1781.

In early years, the college library was good mainly for quick reference in the dictionary or encyclopedias, browsing, and assigned reading from the multiple copies of books on reserve. The public library took over for the college library when students had any research to do, such as term papers, supplementary reading, etc. Even though the college library had the *READER'S GUIDE TO PERIODICAL LITERATURE* beginning with 1915, it had very few back files of the periodicals indexed, and students had to depend on the resources of the public library.

In September 1940, in view of the heavy use of the public library by college students, the college and public library administrations agreed to hire cooperatively, an additional professional librarian who would work as cataloguer³ at the college in the mornings and evenings when student use was heavier there. This arrangement was discontinued at the end of two years when the college enrollment dwindled because of World War II.

In about 1948, again recognizing the renewed burden of demands for service by college students, the college administration agreed to pay for a student page who worked at the public library during the six-week period devoted to freshman research papers. In 1954 this was expanded to cover the entire school year, with the college paying for ten to twelve hours per week of student assistant time. In spite of the fact that the college library was growing, it could not satisfy all of the student's needs for research materials. Even in 1968 this cooperative arrangement is still in effect and the college students continue to use the public library facilities heavily.⁴

During the period from 1932 until the District was created in 1939, the largest single addition to the library were the vol-

umes secured from the defunct Gooding College which closed its doors in 1937. The president of Boise Junior College visited the Gooding Library and with the assistance of the librarian, Mrs. Mary Bedford, and representatives of the faculty from each department, 800 volumes from this 4,000 volume library were selected and purchased by Boise Junior College.

In succeeding years until 1960, the College received various collections of private libraries, ranging in numbers from 50 to 1,500. The largest single collection was the Rockwell Memorial Library when 1,504 books were given to the College in 1944 by Senator Ervin E. Rockwell in memory of his wife, Lallah Rookh Rockwell. It included some 40 volumes on the life of Abraham Lincoln and had a wealth of books by English and American authors including Washington Irving, Rudyard Kipling, Longfellow, Shakespeare, Tennyson, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Sir Walter Raleigh. There was also a number of small collections such as one by Victor Hugo.

Along with these books was a beautiful grandfather clock and a pair of Schroder paintings which were a part of Senator Rockwell's own library in Bellevue. These are now in a suitable place in the College library. They did not come with the original collection, but were sent to the College when the Senator's estate was probated on May 10, 1957.

Other gift collections included the historical books and files of J. Neilson Barry, given to the College in 1957; books received from Mrs. Carey Nixon in 1956; and a selection of books from the library of Mrs. Margaret Cobb Ailshie in 1960.

The Barry Collection is an unusual one since it has marginal notations on such journals as those of Lewis and Clark and is further outstanding for its illustrated maps in the margins made by Mr. Barry—one of the real authorities on the geographical conditions of the Oregon country.

By 1945 the library had over 10,000 volumes and it was increased to 13,300 by 1950. Some seven years later it had in-

creased to 20,000 and by 1965 there were 40,000 volumes. Over the eight year period from 1957 to 1965, there was an average of 2,500 new books added each year. In 1967-68, 11,000 volumes were added.

In 1966 the library received its first grant from the Federal Government for \$5,000. This was followed in successive years by \$23,496, \$21,242, and \$15,043. A \$100,000 grant was received from the State in 1970, making a grand total of \$164,781 over the five-year period from both the State and Federal Government.

Between 1944 and 1965 there had also been an increase of students; from 200 to 2,800. This of course called for a new library building. When the College started in 1932 the library had been in a small room some 20 feet by 30 feet, but had grown so that it occupied two lounges in St. Margaret's Hall by 1934. Finally in 1939, it was moved to the east wing, the former assembly hall. With a student body of 459 at that time, it was necessary to increase the size of the previous year's library collection as well as the staff.

When the College moved from the campus at St. Margaret's Hall to its new campus along the Boise River in the fall of 1940, the library tripled its area and occupied the east end of the new Administration Building. This area included a large general reading room, a reference room and stacks. This could easily accommodate 125 students or one-fourth of the student body that attended the first year on the new campus. At the end of the first year there were 6,500 volumes in the library. The students were enthusiastic about their new library, in a new building, on a new campus. It was truly a far cry from the limited facilities of previous locations.

In the school year of 1945-46, hundreds of G.I.'s returned to their classes at Boise Junior College. There were 649 students in the regular curricula, 63 in summer school, and 119 in the Vocational Department, bringing the total to 831 students. With this growth, the library found it necessary to encroach on

adjoining classrooms in the immediate succeeding years. In 1955 it was expanded to the second floor of the Administration Building where the major portion of the stacks were located, occupying what had been the Chemistry Department, laboratories, and classrooms, with a stairway connecting the first floor to the stacks on the second.

The need for far larger facilities for the coming years was apparent by 1960. The College proposed to meet this need by a bond issue and met its first set-back in 1961 when its request to the Boise public was defeated, although it received over 62 percent of the total votes cast. A year later the bond issue was approved by the residents of Boise by over 81 percent. Plans were developed by faculty, librarians, and administrative personnel for a building that would accommodate some 300 students on the main floor and take care of 80 thousand volumes when completely occupied.

In the fall of 1964 the library was moved to the ground floor of its new, two-story building which had some 41,000 total square feet. By this time it had grown to a book collection of 35,000 volumes and was receiving 380 magazines annually, plus 14 daily or weekly newspapers. It also had a collection of nearly 750 phonorecords and 200 tapes which were used in English, humanities, and language classes. The student body had 1,800 day students and about the same number at night and the library had increased its open hours to 68 a week. Part of this new service included an Instructional Materials Center housed on the second floor which was managed by the College, but cooperatively owned by it and the school districts in Southern Idaho and Eastern Oregon. The College also owned a wide variety of projectors and audio equipment which made it possible to present subject material in almost every field taught in the College to both day and night students.

At the present time, fall 1969, the College has over 75,000 volumes including nearly 5,000 reference volumes and of course, the use of the two libraries previously referred to—the State

Library which now has 75,000 volumes and the Boise Public Library which has approximately 72,000 volumes.

One of the latest additions to the Boise State College library is the Vardis Fisher Memorial, donated to the College on March 13, 1969. It includes rare books, a file of Fisher's own photos, letters, speeches, microfilm, tapes, newspaper columns, manuscripts, and the basis for his 35 books written during his lifetime.

The College is fortunate to have this memorial from Mrs. Fisher, the wife of Idaho's recent author and ". . . one of the most remarkable of American authors . . ."⁵

During the past two years, more than 50 percent of the second floor of the library building has been occupied for library purposes alone, replacing the classrooms which had been built in a modular construction made possible by removable partitions on the second floor. At this time, the College is preparing to add to its present library building by a new construction program hopefully scheduled for 1970.

¹Letter of November 26, 1968 from Miss Ruth McBirney to Dr. Chaffee.

²The Boise Public Library was also a partial depository for government documents whose selections complimented those received at the Law Library.

³The librarian-cataloguer hired at this time was Miss McBirney.

⁴Letter of November 26, 1968 from Miss Ruth McBirney to Dr. Chaffee.

⁵From comment of Clark Kinnaird, King Features writer.