

THE BIOLOGY-MEDICAL LIBRARY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

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During the early days of the University of Chicago, about 1896, the Biology Library was established as an entity. It was housed in rented rooms on Fifty-fifth Street and had, as a nucleus of the present library, about 8,400 volumes. The only library attendant was a recruit from the student ranks.

The Biology Library remained in those quarters two or three years and was then moved into the new Zoology Building, one of the group designated as the Hull Laboratories. The first librarian was appointed in 1898 and served about two years.

In 1900, Miss Emma L. Dickinson was appointed Librarian and served in that capacity until the summer of 1928; then, owing to the growth of the Library and the demands for reference work, she was made reference librarian of the biological and medical group, and the administrative and executive work of the Library placed in other hands.

When first housed in the Zoology Building, the Biology Library consisted of three stacks of four divisions each. In 1900, two more were added and with the growth of the Library more stacks were added from time to time until there was no more space and from then on the congestion became progressively greater. The funds, at first, were small and had to cover the diverse needs, but they increased as the Library grew.

With the establishment of the new medical group in 1927 the Biology and Billings libraries were incorporated into one library and placed under one administrative head; the Billings Library being in charge of a trained assistant, and the librarian-in-charge, for the time being having offices in the Biology Library. The Biology Library, having outgrown its quarters in the Zoology Building, was moved, in the fall of 1927, into the old Physiology Building, now called Culver Hall. The new quarters consisted of: office, reading room (seating about fifty), and four large stack rooms now housing approximately 50,000 volumes.

From 1896 to 1927 the Biology library served the departments of Physiology, Physiological Chemistry and Pharmacology, Hygiene and Bacteriology, Pathology, Anatomy, Zoology and Botany. As the

University, until 1927, was not engaged in clinical instruction, there was no effort to make the Biology Library serve as a medical library, although a large number of books of a non-clinical nature were housed in it, since many of the departments served had a certain fundamental interest in medicine.

In 1916 definite plans were made toward clinical instruction in the University. A sum of \$5,300,000 was raised for a medical building including a hospital and endowment. At a later date Dr. Billings gave his own library to the University with the stipulation that a reading room be provided in the Hospital building so that the staff therein might have constant access to his library. The actual placing of the library in the University was in 1922. Also, about this date, Dr. Billings gave a further sum of \$25,000 as an endowment for the purpose of continuing the subscriptions to journals included in his library.

The plans for the new medical building were begun in 1923 incorporating the "Billings Memorial Library" as it is called in honor of the late Dr. Billings (the father of the donor of the Library). This was included from the beginning, without a definite idea as to its administration. Dr. Billings, however, had expressed himself as wishing that his library should not necessarily be kept as a unit but that it should be shelved according to any general policy adopted by the University.

Since the old Biology Library had so greatly outgrown its old quarters that it was physically difficult to administer and conditions were rapidly growing worse, it was realized that some new provision must be made for it, and, in 1926 or thereabouts, a committee was formed to study the situation, and make recommendations to the University Administration. The following possibilities were suggested:

1. Transfer of the Biology Library to the Physiology Building (as was done).
2. Making the Medical Library the central library and leaving only a small branch library in the old quarters in the Zoology Building.
3. Finding quarters for the central library in the Harper group and leaving a small branch library in the Biological and medical groups.

The consideration of these possibilities occupied the Committee for some time. One great difficulty was the shelving of individual sets. It was finally decided that the two units of the Library should be under the same administration and that the shelving of books and periodicals should be a purely administrative question. After this decision was made, no more trouble arose as to the division of the Library and the majority of the Faculty users do not care where a book is shelved as long as it is accessible.

As a matter of expediency, when the new Billings Library was completed, the clinical material, of chief interest to the clinical staff, was placed there.

It is the policy of the present administration that all new clinical material be housed in Billings up to the capacity of the library and that of a general or a purely historical nature be housed in Biology. It seems to be a reasonable and suitable division and since the establishment of messenger service between the two units, a member of the Faculty, wherever he may be located, may secure a wanted volume in a very short time from either library.

The libraries now contain approximately from 50,000 to 60,000 volumes and subscribe to about five hundred periodicals, while many more are received as gifts or as exchanges.

In order to make this one of the great scientific libraries it is necessary that back files of the periodicals be completed and that the best reference books in all the varied field of biological and medical knowledge be on its shelves. Recently there has been donated, from various sources, a sum of some \$50,000 for this purpose. This amount is to be divided into five annual sums of \$10,000 each over a period of five years.

The Biology Library and Billings Library have, as an administrative staff, the Librarian-in-Charge, the Reference Librarian, and two trained assistants; one being in charge of the Billings Library, and the other being in charge of the Biology Reading Room. Besides these there are student assistants and a messenger for the joint use of both libraries, so that at any time there is a sufficient personnel to care for the reading public. Both libraries are open from 8 A. M. to 10 P. M. every week day except Saturday, when the Biology Library closes at 5 P. M. This does not affect Billings which is open all day Sunday as well. Both libraries are closed on holidays.

Books and periodicals are loaned for home use to students, with certain necessary reservations, while a very generous method of loans is given to all members of the Faculty and graduate students.

This arrangement is, of necessity, temporary, as this growing young giant will outgrow its quarters again within a few years. There are tentative plans for an enlargement and when this takes place we shall see another shifting of the medical and biological quarters, this time to a building where there will be ample room for growth. Even though this may take a number of years to accomplish it is a worthwhile dream of the future.

In the meantime, both libraries are serving an ever growing public and serving it more efficiently than could be the case in the early days of the Biology Library.