

REC'D JAN 13 1972

COLLOQUY ON NORTHERN LIBRARY RESOURCES

Edmonton, 16-17 June 1971

Cosponsored by

**The Arctic Institute of North America
Montreal**

**The Boreal Institute for Northern Studies
University of Alberta, Edmonton**

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COLLOQUY ON NORTHERN LIBRARY RESOURCES

16 June, morning session

Daily chairman: Mr. H.G.R. King
Session chairman: Mrs. A. Cooke
Rapporteur: Miss E. Salisbury

Mr. R.S. Jamieson, of the Boreal Institute, opened the first session of the first Northern Library Resources Colloquy. The idea for the Colloquy, he explained, had originated with Mr. Graham (Yukon Regional Library) and Miss Corley (Arctic Institute of North America Library). It was expanded into a definite plan by the AINA Library Working Group (at that time chaired by Dr. Ian Jackson, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources). Dr. Jackson approached the Boreal Institute, asking them to cosponsor the Colloquy with AINA.

Dr. H. Kreisel, vice-dean Academic of the University of Alberta, welcomed the Colloquy participants.

Mr. H.G.R. King, chairman of the day, began the morning's proceedings on an informal note, one that was to continue for the rest of the Colloquy. The first item on the agenda was the identification of the contents of northern collections. Mrs. Cooke, session chairman, said that the task of identification was a difficult one. Various ways of identifying collections to outside users were discussed: national listings, catalogs (such as AINA's), bibliographies (as at the Defence Research Board), accessions lists, and so on. One difficulty raised was how to classify material like unpublished reports, theses, and photos. Another problem was that of a universally acceptable cataloging system. It was suggested

that specialized institutions with northern collections be contacted, via questionnaire, to find out what their holdings were. It was generally agreed that such intralibrary knowledge of each others' holdings was desirable.

Second session

Session chairman: Mrs. A. Cooke

The topic for this session was the classification and organization of collections. However, the question of identifying contents of collections was reexamined, and it was agreed that library resource material should be listed and classified. The contents of collections, it appeared, were of two types: that which could be loaned out, and that which could be used within the library but which could not circulate. Films, film strips, videotape, theses, rare documents, maps, newspapers, and so on were all identified, and particular problems associated with their classification, indexing, and storing were discussed.

Afternoon session

Session chairman: Miss K. Blackie

Rapporteur: Mrs. B. Colyer

Disseminating the contents of collections to users was the proposed topic for this session. Catalogs, bibliographies, accessions lists, guides to the library were all ways of publicizing a library. For northern libraries, there were some special problems. One was selective distribution of information to clients. This could be done by computer search (as at the DRB, the University of Calgary), "current awareness"

listings, and quick indexes of recent acquisitions. Keeping up-to-date lists of acquisitions was seen as a necessity, but difficult to do in any sizeable library. Computers were useful in this area, especially when titles were adequately descriptive of contents (which they were not always). It was suggested that libraries should advertise their collections more widely. Various ways of "educating" users were discussed. The physical resources of a library could be expanded through use of microform; copyright problems here seemed to be minimal. Xeroxing too was available as a copying facility. Another user service was the selective bibliography. There were also various regional and national information services which could direct clients to appropriate library resources.

Second session

Session chairman: Mr. H.G.R. King

Cooperative schemes between libraries was the proposed topic here. Mr. King gave the SPRI's experience as an example of what could be done in this field: exchanges (of journals, reprints, and so on), and exchange of cards.

Two possible ways to facilitate cooperation were to split up the field of northern research among the various libraries, and to adopt a single classification scheme to facilitate information exchange. Other suggested standardizations were for cards sizes, place name spellings, and transliterations (chiefly of Russian words). It was suggested too that journal titles should be spelled out rather than abbreviated, to avoid confusion and loss of time in deciphering the shortened titles.

The exchange of cards was seen as useful, but the problem was that its usefulness depended on a standard classification. The question of an abstracting service for Arctic problems was raised; difficulties were legion here. Specialized abstracting services were variously available but often were quite costly. The session chairman at this point proposed that the participating organizations think of publications exchanges among themselves first, since that seemed the most fruitful of the possible cooperative schemes discussed.

17 June, morning session

Chairman: Mr. T. Ryberg
Session chairman: Dr. P. Adams
Rapporteur: Miss P. Smith

User needs was the topic for the first session, second day; the session chairman indicated that he would like a discussion of user needs in the North, of bibliographic services for northern users, and of user needs other than for books, journals, and so on.

First discussed were interlibrary loans (ILL), and the problems connected with such loans. Telex was seen as a good way to both locate and communicate loans. Rate of loss on books, it appeared, was quite low; in any case, books could be insured against loss. The session chairman asked how many of the libraries present actually served northerners; estimates ranged from 50% (Alaska) to 10%. The "users" themselves were defined as mostly academics and students, particularly for southern-based libraries like the SPRI. Generally it was agreed that most material could be lent via ILL or through copies of one sort or another. It was

also stated that ILL was vital and necessary but in practice less than completely efficient for northern purposes.

Specialized collections, it was determined, had specialized users for the most part. These people were a converted audience, and needed no incentive to use the library's resources. Nevertheless, a comprehensive bibliography of what material was available and where would be invaluable to users (though it would be a gigantic undertaking).

The question of a polar resources library was further examined. It was pointed out that the AINA Library Catalogue plus accessions list covered its holdings, and similar catalogs could serve other libraries in the same way. Regional centers could list holdings in their area, it was suggested, and it was pointed out that the planned Canadian Scientific and Technical Information (STI) system was intended to do just that. Microfilming holdings for exchange was discussed; it was suggested that such exchange be instead of exchange of original materials.

Second session

Session chairman: Miss M. Tremaine

The use of the computer in northern libraries was the subject of this session. The session chairman gave examples of various establishments which currently were using computers to produce bibliographies: AINA's Arctic Bibliography; the American Geological Institute Bibliography and Index; the US Geological Survey Abstracts of North American Geology and its updating of Chemical Analysis of Igneous Rocks; the National Science Referral Center; the Science Information Exchange, in the Smithsonian Institution in Washington.

A discussion of the practicality of computer applications followed. It was strongly urged that caution be exercised in any plans for computer applications; cost benefits absolutely had to favor the libraries before any computerization took place. In fact, computerization was liable to prove disappointing and costly unless it clearly could be shown that the computerization was both practical and necessary. And no library should start from scratch on the problem, but before even venturing into computerization should research the field carefully and thoroughly.

Finally, it was critical to get the computer analysts and the librarians familiar with each others' needs, capacities, and terms of reference before any successful computerization, useful to scholars and librarians, could be achieved.

The concept of an international polar bibliography was again raised and discussed. The one drawback to the project was that there existed no international coordinating body for such a project; funding was another obvious problem.

Afternoon session

Chairman: Dr. P. Adams
Session chairman: Miss N. Corley
Rapporteur: Mr. W. Makiuk

The proposed topic for this session was subject headings for northern topics. The session chairman said that dictionary-type catalogs (such as the Library of Congress catalog) were a useful model for headings; users were not bound to follow them in every detail and should innovate where it seemed appropriate to their particular situation. The CRREL bibliography in twenty-four volumes was another useful guide, as was the index to Arctic Bibliography, and the

index to Meteorological and Geophysical Abstracts. Subject headings kept in a looseleaf book were easier to use than headings kept in a card file. Geocoding and regional classifications were discussed; **standardization** was again the problem. The National Science Library, the Library of Congress, and UDC classifications were discussed as starting points for subject headings. However, all these were lacking in one or another area, for example, in not being up-to-date, in variations in orthography and transliteration, and so on.

Second session

Session chairman: Dr. P. Adams

The subject for this session was other problems in the specialized northern research library field. The session chairman asked for queries, then listed some points for the Colloquy to consider.

First was the question of whether or not to make the Colloquy an annual event. It was generally agreed that the meeting had been a good and valuable exchange, and that it should continue. The 1972 meeting would be organized around the dates of the major North American library association meetings. Since the Special Libraries meeting was in Boston in June 1972, it was decided that CRREL (based in New Hampshire) should host the next Colloquy. A committee was named to look after the arrangements, chaired by Miss E. Salisbury of CRREL, with Miss N. Corley, Mr. R. Ryberg, and Miss P. Smith.

The second decision was that the questionnaire was to be revised toward more sophistication, and then circulated more widely. Mr. Ryberg agreed to reword the questionnaire. Some points to be included in the new questionnaire

were: more questions on polar, not just Arctic material; to ask for more specific definitions of library contents; to ask for listings of unique materials, including videotapes, newspapers, photos, and so on and whether a registry of such material was available; to list translations and foreign holdings; to outline lending policy; to list what materials were available for exchange. Above all, the questions should be concise and easy to answer.

The chairman suggested that the Special Libraries Association's Geography and Map Division Bulletins on libraries and literature of cold and cold regions which concerned those present should be reviewed and updated, and resubmitted to SLA. The chairman offered to look after the job.

Another point was to create an informal bulletin to be circulated to Colloquy participants; this bulletin or newsletter would contain up-to-date information in the field. Mrs. Nottingham agreed to arrange this project. The newsletter would go out four times a year.

Finally, Mrs. Colyer of the National Science Library reminded participants that the NSL often received gifts which the NSL itself could not use, and that these donations were available as resources for filling gaps in collections.

Dr. Adams closed the meeting, thanking the individual participants and expressing the hope that the Boreal Institute and AINA would continue to lend advice and support to the Colloquy in the future.

COLLOQUY ON NORTHERN LIBRARY RESOURCES

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December 1971