

## LAST WORDS

In years to come new libraries should have carved in the stone above their porticos along with the names of the great figures in the history of literature, science, and the progress of printing the name of the obscure inventor of microfilm. Libraries and scholars all over the world already owe more to him than to almost anyone since the beginnings of printed books. Aside from the obvious advantage of saving library shelf space, the microfilming of newspapers makes for easier perusal for reference or research. An even greater boon to libraries, however, has been the possibility opened up through the microfilm of getting whole files of rare early newspapers and of filling in the missing files of others.

University Microfilms, Inc. has had under way for some time the most useful project of microfilming, with the advice and recommendations of a group of interested scholars in the Modern Language Association, the most inaccessible and important runs of English periodicals of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The microfilming of rare books and manuscripts has made readily available for American scholars some of the greatest treasures of foreign libraries without the expense of traveling. A vast amount of this work was done during the late war, when the fear that much irreplaceable European material would be destroyed by bombing and fire induced the American Council of Learned Societies in collaboration with the Modern Language Association to microfilm some millions of pages of printed and manuscript rarities, the negatives being deposited in the Library of Congress.

Another stupendous undertaking is the State Records Microfilm Project, sponsored by the Library of Congress and the University of North Carolina, the purpose of which is to make available on film the early legislative proceedings, laws, constitutional, judicial and other records of all the states. About two and a half million pages of printed and manuscript material have thus been made easily accessible to historians.

But microfilms have their limitations and can never quite take the place of the book for general reading. The vision of a library of the future with nothing but microfilm cards, compressing whole books within the space of a few square inches, is probably a nightmare that will never be realized.