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DONALD F. CAMERON AND THE LIBRARIES, 1945-1966

BY FRANCIS JOHNS

Mr. Johns has been University Bibliographer at Rutgers since 1958

WHEN Donald F. Cameron became Librarian of the University in 1945, after having been a member of the Rutgers College English department since 1929, he was the first faculty member since 1884 to be appointed to the office. But his was to be no part-time function, as was usually the case in those more leisurely days, and as his predecessor for thirty-eight years George A. Osborn '97 had good reason to know.¹

Cameron was no stranger to library matters, for his connexion with the Library had started much earlier. In 1936 he was already a member of the Library Advisory Board (created in 1933), and was a moving spirit in the founding of the Associated Friends in 1937 (becoming its first Secretary), as well as in the establishment of the *Journal of the Rutgers University Library*, the first number of which appeared in December of the same year under the aegis of the Friends.²

His friend Peter Charanis has mentioned two other contributions of great significance to the growth of the University in both of which

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¹ The first number of the *Journal* contains some remarks by Osborn on the library, stressing the need in 1936 (!) for a new building among other things, which President Demarest in his "History of the Library" in the same number, supported.

² Cameron's own notes on the founding of the *Journal*, in addition to those of its first editor Professor Rudolf Kirk, are in the *Journal* for December 1962, pp. 1-5. They were published for its twenty-fifth anniversary.

Cameron played a prime role.³ Both could have been expected to have been natural developments in due course but they came to fruition when they did owing to his vision and concern for building at Rutgers the scholarly dimension of which the libraries were so integral a part. A concatenation of circumstances, one of which was the need for publications for the library's exchange program, led to the establishment of the Rutgers University Press. Mr. Osborn supplied some seed money, which with supplementing by the University, enabled the plans of the Committee on the Publication of Research, which Cameron chaired in 1935, to be implemented in 1937. Earl R. Silvers '13 was appointed the first Director and Cameron became the editor, playing an indispensable part in getting the Press into operation and serving as a member of its Council until his retirement.

Cameron, with William Cole and Walter Russell, made the initial proposal which led in 1943 to the establishment of the Committee on Research. Its recommendations resulted in the formation in 1944 by President Clothier, of the Rutgers Research Council which became a powerful force for the stimulation of scholarship in the University. Cameron's perception of the nature of University needs achieved implementation thanks to his capacity for working harmoniously with people. He demonstrated his ability as an organizer too when he served as General Chairman for the celebration of the University's 175th anniversary in 1941.

It was such a background of knowledge of the nature of the academic enterprise, together with his realization of the central place of the library in any plan for the development of Rutgers, which made Cameron's appointment in 1945 as Librarian of the University a logical one. He had gained fully the confidence of the President. He was to leave his mark, for it fell to him to lay the foundations for a university-wide library system when the post-war expansion came. He submitted his plan in February 1946.

The merger of the University of Newark, with its College of Arts and Sciences, School of Business Administration and Law School brought three libraries and over 2,200 more students into the University in 1946, at a time of soaring enrollment in New Brunswick with the return of the veterans of World War II. The College of South Jersey Law School, together with the College of South Jersey, also became part of Rutgers in 1950.

³ "Donald F. Cameron," *JRUL*, June 1966, pp. 33-37.

The first appropriations by the State for a new university library were made in 1952 and in 1956 the new building (now the A. S. Alexander Library) was dedicated and the Voorhees Library, which had served, with an addition, since 1904 was vacated.⁴ A new library in Camden was completed in 1957. The turn of Douglass came in 1961, with the opening of a particularly interesting and successful building to which Cameron devoted much time. In Newark planning for a new library was in progress by 1959 and, though it was not to be opened until 1967, the new Dana Library had the benefit of the experience Cameron had gained from the earlier buildings. It was a source of regret to him for he foresaw its weaknesses that, perhaps owing to university politics, a more satisfactory solution to the school's library problems was not devised when the new Law Library in Ackerson Hall was opened in 1965.

In 1956 Rutgers joined the Association of Research Libraries. The Association was a much smaller group then, consisting of forty-nine libraries, and membership was by invitation. It now numbers over a hundred of the principal research libraries of English-speaking North America. This recognition by his peers perhaps marks the moment at which Cameron's plan for the development of the Rutgers libraries into a system started to become visible. He had learned his trade, and after 10 years was sure that his perception of what needed to be done was correct. For that decade of work and after over twenty-five years at the university Rutgers gave him in 1957 an honorary Litt.D. "for guiding wisely the growth of the libraries until now they constitute a main source of strength for the University." It was both a rare distinction and a mark of confidence, for another ten years of work lay ahead.

At the same time the Graduate School, with the professional schools, took a leap forward. The enrollment of 2,736 students in 1957 increased to over 5,500 by 1964 and support for instruction and research had to be provided by the libraries on a greater scale than hitherto, with the always limited resources available. Even though the book-fund during the same period moved from \$142,000 to \$387,000, the necessity to use those growing funds as effectively as possible had to lead (as he had foreseen), to a breaking down of the prevailing insularity among the libraries of the colleges. The neces-

⁴ Cameron gave, in the *Journal* for June 1953, the basic plan for the new library, following it in June 1956 with another report. Roy F. Nichols '18 who gave the dedication speech, printed in the December 1956 issue, sketched briefly the history of the library.

sary first step, the centralizing of the ordering and cataloguing for the libraries, was completed with Douglass being brought in, in 1956. Meetings of the college librarians started, at first on an informal basis, systematic development of the collections was instituted and moves were begun to ensure as complete access as possible by the widely dispersed parts of the university to them. A first classic quantitative bench mark, the acquisition of the millionth volume, came in 1962.

This expansion hastened on the execution of the university's plan to move the science departments to University Heights (now Busch Campus) and entailed relocating the science collections from their *ad hoc* quarters on College Avenue. Cameron's long-standing objective, to create a central scientific library, moved towards realization with the establishment of the long-sought medical school at Rutgers in 1961. Thus was born, after much discussion and some complicated funding arrangements, the Library of Science and Medicine four years later. It represented a departure from the then accepted practice of having a separate medical library and was a bold decision which turned out even more economically justified for the State than had been initially thought, after the Medical School was separated from the University, for it gave the College of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey a second library in New Brunswick at a minimal cost. Cameron's plan was carried out and the Library of Science and Medicine was finally opened in September 1970, four years after he retired.

But Cameron was far from being just a "bricks and mortar" man, though it was said by his ARL colleagues that no one of his generation had built more new libraries than he had. The exciting and much-needed progress in library buildings, the capital gains—all of which in Camden, Newark and New Brunswick subsequently needed expansion as the university's growth continued apace during the next decade—had to be supported with the necessary budgetary development in terms of collections and staffing. This was a frustrating matter, as the competition in the university for available resources was intense and the rate of progress in these two areas could not keep up with the ever growing expectancy level of the university community for local library support on all the campuses. However the staff was nearly tripled, going from 45 to 131 during his tenure, and the book fund grew from some \$47,000 in 1945/6 to \$612,000 twenty years later, thanks to his persistence in keeping library mat-

ters constantly before the university administration, in order to support both the expanding student population and the newly established programs of research and instruction. It remained always necessary, for example, to exercise constant vigilance against devoting too large a part of the book funds to permanent and duplicative commitments but which did not add to the total university resources, in the belief that funding would continue to increase at the same rate. Events of the seventies were to prove him right. Cameron insisted—and it was only much later that this seemingly elementary truism was at least admitted among Rutgers planners—that library matters had to be attended to as part of over-all university planning and that they could not simply be left to catch up in due time.⁵

In national and local organizations and committees Cameron did his share and more on behalf of Rutgers but he chose not to be a peripatetic librarian, constantly at meetings of one sort or another. Though successfully giving the impression that he could always find time for his visitors, he was able to do so much during those years of rapid development, for committees had not proliferated then to the extent that they later did, because of his extensive knowledge of how the university functioned as well as his good relations with faculty members and administrators built up over the years. A not inconsiderable part of his success lay in his ability to know what to concern himself with and when to leave well enough alone. For example, he knew full well that problems of management in the libraries would grow—he called them problems of prosperity—but he knew that they would be solved by those who came after him and that his work was to create something for them to manage. He never allowed management to become an end in itself rather than merely a means to an end. He insisted too that he inherited rather than initiated policies for the libraries⁶ and certainly did all he could to further Mr. Osborn's principle of keeping the barriers between books and their users at a minimum—a principle difficult to maintain under the best of circumstances—but one of the basic matters which librarians forget at their peril.

His other contributions to Rutgers and New Jersey were many and varied but some of the personal qualities which contributed to

⁵ Cameron drew constantly upon the expertise of that *doyen* of library consultants Keyes D. Metcalf for support in furthering the implementation of his plans. This matter was one of the points dealt with in a report produced as a result of a seminar held in the Graduate School of Library Service at Rutgers in 1958, directed by Metcalf.

⁶ "A Librarian's Philosophy," *JRUL*, June 1966.

his professional achievement bear mention. As Librarian his style was low-key and generally restrained and very much his own. The loyalty he inspired stemmed from what today would seem a somewhat old-fashioned quality: he set a good example.⁷ Scotty Cameron exemplified too the traditional virtues of his covenanting forbears by eschewing the meretricious and holding firmly to the substance rather than mere appearances in his conduct of library affairs. He was well aware that it was by serving unswervingly the cause of its libraries that he served the University best in the long run.

⁷ Having recommended that the retirement age in the university be set at 65, though the regulations were not changed as a result, he opted for retirement on reaching that age. After setting this final example of holding to his principles, he continued his work for libraries by serving as a consultant for the Council on Library Resources.