diseases, including influenza, leprosy, poliomyelitis, filariasis (onchocerciasis), and leishmaniasis. Only lack of funds and personnel has so far prevented active work being undertaken in respect of these latter diseases.

It must be mentioned that the convening of several of the expert groups has been made possible only through a grant specially provided by the Office International d'Hygiène Publique, whose functions have been officially transferred to W.H.O.

Whilst the research and study aspects of W.H.O.'s work against communicable diseases are, as mentioned above, the responsibility of the Division of Epidemiology, the sending of consultants to a particular country is the administrative responsibility of the Department of Advisory Services in Geneva and of the Regional Offices of the Organization. The number of instances in which such help has been extended to national administrations is already considerable; chiefly it has been in connexion with the most important social diseases—malaria, tuberculosis, and venereal diseases—but W.H.O. consultants have already lent their aid in controlling certain of the epidemic diseases (typhus in Afghanistan and in some of the South American countries, poliomyelitis in India and Chile, filariasis in Ceylon, to mention a few examples). It is unfortunately beyond the scope of this article to go into details of such action, of which some echoes are to be found in the W.H.O. *Chronicle*.

Total Eradication of Some Epidemic Diseases

An attempt has been made in the preceding paragraphs to summarize the role of W.H.O. in the international control of epidemics. In conclusion, I may perhaps mention what is one of the basic policies of W.H.O. in connexion with such control. This is the principle, advanced by several Expert Committees and endorsed by the Committee on Epidemiology and Quarantine and the World Health Assembly, that total eradication of certain epidemic diseases can be achieved and must be attempted.

This is no idle fantasy or boastful anticipation; diseases which have been real scourges in the past have now been eliminated from whole continents, and the process is still going on, so to speak, under our eyes. Most striking instances are afforded by smallpox and yellow fever, and, in connexion with the latter, the eradication of *Aedes aegypti* from South American cities is an achievement of enormous significance. Eradication of anopheline species in Brazil, Egypt, Sardinia, and Cyprus opens up hopeful vistas in regard to possible victory over malaria. Where used systematically the new insecticides with residual action are proving effective against a wide range of insect-borne diseases, and their action is sometimes accompanied by side-effects as unexpected as they are beneficial. Cholera is gradually being relegated to the areas, comparatively limited in extent, where it is truly endemic. The cholera endemic zones have recently been delineated, and studies are now being made, under the aegis of W.H.O. and the Indian Research Fund Association, to determine the most effective means of ridding them permanently of the infection. Further international help may be required, but it will be a sound investment as compared with the maintenance by every country of a permanent organization against the invasion of cholera.

From the above it will be seen that W.H.O. has an important part to play in the international control of epidemic diseases, not only in rendering international barriers against them more effective, but in helping countries to stamp them out of their endemic foci, wherever possible, or in stimulating progress in the methods for their control.

THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION LIBRARY

BY

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The recognition of library service as an essential adjunct to the technical work of the World Health Organization and its Secretariat resulted in arrangements being made as early in its history as December, 1946, to deal with urgent library needs and requirements. During the third session of the Interim Commission, held in Geneva, March 21 to April 17, 1947, a thorough discussion took place on the nature and scope of the library and its relation to the Library of the Office International d'Hygiène Publique in Paris and to the Library of the League of Nations Health Organization, which was incorporated in the United Nations Library, Geneva.

Following negotiations with the Office International d'Hygiène Publique, the major portion of the library of that organization was moved in 1948 to Geneva and merged with the W.H.O. Library, thereby enriching W.H.O. with over 15,000 valuable journals and documents. A request had been made for a transfer to W.H.O. of the Health and Medical sections (the former Health Organization Library) of the United Nations Library. Because of the opposition to the idea of dispersal of the United Nations Library this transfer was not effected, but the policy of a long-term loan of material, as wanted, was adopted. Since the United Nations Library and W.H.O. Library share the same building, access to the material is easy, and co-operation between the two libraries is most satisfactory. The proximity to the large and well-stocked U.N. Library is a particular boon, especially in the field of bibliographic and reference works. Not many medical libraries have such ready access to the complete series of the *U.S. Catalogue and Cumulative Book Index*, the *British Museum Catalogue*, the *English Catalogue of Books*, the *Deutsche National-Bibliographie*, and the French, Italian, and Spanish bibliographic sources.

The basis of the W.H.O. collection has been formed by careful selection and purchase of books and journals covering W.H.O. fields of interest. The collection is particularly good in those subjects known as the five pestilential or "treaty" diseases—namely, plague, cholera, typhus, smallpox, and yellow fever. Recommendations for purchase are received from all members of the Secretariat. Conversely, the library draws to the attention of the specialists new publications in their particular fields. In order to do this current journals are scanned for book reviews, and publishers' catalogues and various current bibliographic sources from many countries are examined. When the Organization develops new fields of activity the co-operation of the appropriate section is sought at once, with a view to obtaining the necessary documentary material. Recently, basic collections have been acquired in the fields of health education, mental health, and nursing.

The library now numbers 5,000 catalogued books and about 2,000 bound periodicals, in addition to the 15,000 volumes received from the Office International d'Hygiène Publique. These figures do not include official documents, reports, and reprints. Of the 965 current journals received regularly, 785 are acquired through exchange with W.H.O. publications and 180 by subscription. Every effort is made to keep up to date the acquisition of annual reports of

health administrations, especially of those countries which are signatories to the W.H.O. Constitution. The following are among the special activities of the library.

Supply of Medical Literature to Member Governments

It has been the privilege of the library to assist in the provision of medical literature to member governments. From 1948 onwards 16,829 books and 6,363 journal subscriptions and many hundred photostats and microfilms have been supplied by W.H.O. to 20 member governments to give assistance in replacing collections, damaged during the war, to rehabilitate existing inadequate libraries, and to furnish nuclear sets of medical literature to countries where health services and standards of medical education are below average, but where now, with the co-operation of W.H.O., efforts are being made to raise the level. Since the war, lack of hard currency has been another reason why many governments have been unable to purchase basic foreign medical literature. One of the principles laid down in the constitution is that W.H.O. is to be an instrument through which the benefits of medical, psychological, and related knowledge are to be extended to all peoples "without distinction of race, religion, political belief, economic or social condition." As books go off to institutions in India, Burma, Ceylon, China, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, Finland, Egypt, Greece, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Iran, etc., a particularly keen satisfaction is felt that the library is helping to implement, even in a small way, this vital principle of the constitution.

Special literature recommended by appropriate technical sections of W.H.O. is also ordered through the library and sent to advisory and demonstration teams in the field all over the world. Thus an entomologist attached to a malaria team which is to be sent to Persia may have collected for him, in addition to the basic malaria literature which will go to his team, photostats of articles on mosquitoes of Central Asia, Persia, etc., from Russian parasitology journals or entomological journals. If these articles are not available in the W.H.O. Library or in Switzerland, air mail soon brings microfilms of them from the ever-cooperative medical libraries in London, Paris, or Washington, D.C.

Reference Work

The reference work presents many interesting facets and gives deep satisfaction to the librarians in its wide variety of requests. These range from requests for the best material on the history of international health work and verification of the statement that Alexander the Great died of malaria, to the most recent reference on terramycin for a meeting of the Expert Committee on Antibiotics. A letter arrives from Hungary asking for literature on measures for reducing bacterial contamination in operating theatres; a French public health expert writes for a complete bibliography on the geography of disease; the Regional Office in India seeks advice on the best classification to use for its library; a W.H.O. nurse in Borneo writes for all the latest material on premature babies; the matron of a school of nursing in Athens requests all the latest books on tuberculosis; the Medical Supply Service of W.H.O. wants to know the measurements of a Bradford frame; the Health Education Section asks for a certain film on sex education made in Michigan; the Nursing Section wishes to receive at once six copies of *Teach Yourself Malay* for field nurses; a call arrives for the basic books on anthropology for orientation courses for trainees for field service; the Editorial Section requests transliteration

rules, bibliographies on B.C.G., problems of homeless children, kwashiorkor disease, tuberculosis in merchant seamen, methaemoglobinaemia in infants caused by ingestion of water with high concentration of nitrates, "tropical risk" references for a Swiss inquirer, references on cybernetics, on paper chromatography. Such is part of the picture of a typical day in the life of a W.H.O. librarian.

The Library News

The *Library News*, which was begun in May, 1947, is a monthly mimeographed publication averaging about 35 pages. It contains a list of books catalogued during the month, a list of periodicals newly received, and a list of annual government publications added to the library. Since May, 1949, a supplement containing selected books and periodicals on subjects of special interest to W.H.O. has been added to each number. The subjects covered so far are: maternal and child health, venereal diseases, epidemiology and infectious diseases, malaria and tropical diseases, tuberculosis, hygiene and public health, nutrition, and pharmacology and therapeutics. The *Library News* is distributed free of charge to members of the Secretariat in Geneva, to the Regional Offices, and to medical libraries and universities.

Card Index to Current Periodical Literature

Because so many requests were received for articles in current journals, and for up-to-date bibliographies, and in order to compensate for the serious delay in the publication of the *Quarterly Cumulative Index Medicus*, all those articles appearing in current journals of interest to the Secretariat staff are indexed by author and subject and then filed. Duplicate cards are sent regularly to all W.H.O. specialists who wish to be kept informed of current articles in their particular fields. An average of 4,200 cards are typed per month. This index is an invaluable aid not only in locating a desired article quickly but in the compilation of up-to-date bibliographies and in verification of references.

In addition to these services an analytical index is compiled for W.H.O. documents and publications and for all United Nations and specialized agencies' documents which are of particular interest to W.H.O. At the present time, material containing health legislation is received by the library from about 43 countries in the form of official gazettes, periodical publications, and slip laws. Items of interest for inclusion in W.H.O.'s *International Digest of Health Legislation* are indexed on cards by subject and by country, thus forming a useful aid in the compilation of that publication.

The library staff, which includes French, Swiss, Belgian, Danish, Dutch, Costa Rican, English, Canadian, and American workers, numbers 17. One of them holds a medical degree as well as a degree of library science, 7 are trained librarians, and 9 are clerical workers.

The library's chief task is to enable all members of the Secretariat to obtain with speed, efficiency, and economy the information and library materials needed in the execution of their duties and responsibilities. Its services are also extended on request to regional offices, health administrations, specialized agencies, and individual workers in the health field. The collection is still inadequate to meet the demands made upon it. Common to all young libraries are the growing pains of adolescence, and the W.H.O. Library is no exception. It must be nurtured carefully, and a long-range point of view be maintained to ensure steady and continuous growth, for it has an important function in furthering the work of the Organization.