THE POSTGRADUATE MEDICAL JOURNAL

London

May, 1966

LINCOLN MEDICAL LIBRARY

DAVID G. BURGESS,

Librarian, Lincoln Medical Library.

THERE has been a significant resurgence of interest in the whole question of medical library provision, due partly to an ever-growing realization of the desperate need in non-teaching hospitals for an efficient book, journal and information service for consultants and junior medical staff, and also to the publication of two important items dealing with the subject. The first of these, the Sheffield Regional Hospital Board Working Party on Medical Libraries' Final Report (1965) deals in quite a full and practical way with the various needs of the region, and gives certain recommendations for the setting up of libraries. Its interest for those engaged in medical library provision, regardless of geographical location, will be immense. The second, the Library Association's Hospital Libraries: Recommended Standards for Libraries in Hospitals (1965) covers medical and non-medical provision, and is less detailed than the Sheffield report.

Set in the context of this awakened interest in the subject, it may be interesting to examine the library at Lincoln, which has been designated a future area library in the Sheffield plan. Lincoln Medical Library is a department of the "integrated" hospital library at the County Hospital, this integrated library being, in its turn, a branch of the City of Lincoln Libraries. It is not intended at this point to set out the full financial and administrative details of the service, which have been covered in an article by the present writer to be published in April this year in the *Library World*. It is sufficient to state that the librarian and his assistant are both employed by the City Libraries, their salaries being paid largely by means of an annual grant from the Lincoln No. 1 Hospital Management Committee. The closest co-operation has existed

between the two authorities for very many years, and there has been, on both sides, a complete committal to the future development of the hospital library service. The stock is jointly financed, and therefore jointly owned, and this has resulted, if not in unlimited funds, at least in financial provision which makes it possible for the librarian to give a service consonant with that envisaged by Cornelius (1966) in his description of the functions of an area medical library. In the case of Lincoln, of course, there has been no regional library on which to draw, and a greater degree of self-reliance has been necessary.

We have always tried to place the emphasis upon the service rather than upon the actual library, since the bookstock is just one of many factors in the provision of a full-scale library service. It is the writer's belief that the librarian's place, at least in a geographical sense, is an "unfixed location". The librarian as consultant must be prepared to leave his library and spend a great deal of time in the hospital departments and the surgeries of general practitioners, discussing a variety of subjects including the selection, acquisition, cataloguing and classification of departmental material (this frequently takes the form of occasional papers, reports etc., and presents considerable difficulty as regards cataloguing), the use of bibliographical tools in original research, the compilation of indexes, etc. This has again and again proved to be the most useful role of the librarian at Lincoln.

Bookstock

The basic stock of books and journals is, of course, of considerable importance, since this is the material immediately available for urgent needs. The books at present number over 500,

and range from Wheeler and Jack's "Handbook of Medicine" to Scanga's "Atlas of Electron Microscopy". Monographs are purchased, since without them a library is merely a textbook collection, uninspiring for consultant and houseman alike. With the nearest university library some forty miles away, the university atmosphere must be provided, if only in a very minor way, at local level.

Some 43 journals cover the fields of medicine and surgery fairly adequately. Many more must, however, be added, and one would want to achieve a total of 75-100 eventually, with at least one journal dealing with the fields of Psychiatry, Physiotherapy, Social Medicine and others not at present represented. It is not the policy at Lincoln to spend part of the slender resources available on the binding of journals. Experience has shown that unbound copies are far more useful from the point of view of loans. The loan of one issue does not result in the temporary loss of a whole year's copies, and from the point of view of postal loans to General Practitioners, it is much less costly to send the single issue. It is true that photocopying will probably be the ideal answer to loan problems, but this library has not the access to equipment capable of making a fair copy of an article in a bound volume.

Bibliographies

The stock of bibliographies is of paramount importance in any library, and especially where so great a percentage of material must be borrowed from outside sources. It may be of interest to record here the main bibliographies used at Lincoln:

1. Index Medicus and Cumulated Index Medicus
2. Abstracts of World Medicine
3. International Abstracts of Surgery
4. Hospital Abstracts
5. Hospital Literature Index
6. British Medical Booklist
7. Postgraduate Medical School Library Bulletin
8. Chester Beatty Research Institute Classified List of Selected Current Literature
9. Excerpta Medica-Sections: II Physiology, Biochemistry, Pharmacology and Toxicology. VI Internal Medicine, XVI Cancer (Experimental and Clinical)
10. National Lending Library for Science and Technology Translations Bulletin
11. British National Bibliography
12. Whitaker's Cumulative Booklist
13. Cumulated Book Index.

Other bibliographical works in our collection are "World Medical Periodicals", published by the World Medical Association, the "Select List of British Medical Periodicals", sponsored by the British Council and the Royal Society of

Medicine, "A Medical Bibliography", by Garrison and Morton, "Bibliography of International Congresses of Medical Sciences", prepared by W. J. Bishop, "A Select Bibliography of Medical Biography", compiled by J. L. Thornton and others and "Translators and Translations", published by the Special Libraries Association. A work which is not at present in the library, but access to which is possible through the Lincoln City Library is the British Union Catalogue of Periodicals, which is invaluable for obtaining locations of medical journals.

Loans

Adequate bibliographies are essential in tracing material, but where the supply of that material is concerned much depends on goodwill and cooperation between libraries. Lincoln Medical Library has been fortunate in its friends: the librarians of institutions such as the Royal College of Physicians and the Royal College of Surgeons have taken a most active interest in the library's progress, and have again and again provided material needed urgently. Great use is made of the telephone, and sometimes as many as ten long-distance calls are made in a single day, in order to secure the loan of an item urgently required. This is one of the most heartening factors in provincial library provision: that the full resources of the medical libraries of this country can be mobilised on a reader's behalf. It is a common occurrence for an item not in our stock, and requested as late as 5 o'clock one afternoon, to be lying on the consultant's desk at 9 o'clock the following morning, a loan having been arranged with a London library. University Medical Libraries are similarly most helpful, and loans are also obtained from the libraries of learned societies. Inevitably the majority of loans are obtained by recourse to subscription lending libraries, and the three sources most frequently used are:

(1) *The National Lending Library for Science and Technology*

About 90 per cent of all journal loans are from this one source. Just under £100 is spent each year on loan forms, and this is money well spent. The vast majority of the 70-100 items borrowed each month are received by return of post. It is essential that full and accurate details are provided by the borrower, since the N.L.L. service does not set out to be an information service, nor does it guarantee to go to great lengths to trace obscure items.

(2) *Donald Ferrier Ltd. and H. K. Lewis and Co. Ltd.*

One hundred and thirty books are on loan from these two libraries at any one time. Without these subscriptions it would be impossible to supply the books requested by our readers. In case it should be thought by anyone that the number of subscriptions is excessive, I might add that we never have more than five unused, and that we frequently have waiting lists for subscriptions. I would also point out that the amount of money spent each year on these subscriptions would, if used for book purchase, provide only about two shelves of books.

(3) *The National Central Library*

By virtue of being a branch of a public library system, we have access, through the East Midland Regional Bureau, to the vast resources, not only of libraries in Great Britain, but also of foreign libraries. Loans from foreign sources are arranged by the National Central Library.

Monthly List

It is the present writer's belief that any medical library, if it intends to ask favours of others should make some attempt to offer a service in return. The field of medicine and its related subjects is very well covered from a bibliographical point of view, but there is always a gap somewhere, either as relating to coverage or to method of treatment. At Lincoln we have attempted to provide a service for our own readers and for outsiders which will help, in however small a way, in keeping them up-to-date with current literature. The Monthly List, compiled mainly by recourse to the two main general British Bibliographies attempts to provide a record of newly published material on Medicine and a variety of allied subjects. This list was started in 1963, and is now sent to about eighty libraries and medical men outside the normal boundaries of our service. It is not intended to be ranked as an important bibliographical tool: it is rather an "extra" guide to the literature for librarians who have many others, and a "poor man's guide" for those who do not have access to the normal sources. Any "Secretary/Librarian" who has this list together with the Index Medicus, and who has subscriptions with a medical lending library and the National Lending Library, could provide the elements of a book and journal service for medical staff. In fact the librarian knows of hospitals where this system has proved an effective "half-way stage" in the setting up of a full library service.

At the library a bibliography on cards has been compiled since July 1963, this bibliography including entries for all books appearing in the monthly list. A broad subject entry is given for each item, and there is an author index. This bibliography is useful in that it provides a quick means of checking the date of latest editions of standard works, and of tracing any medical book published during the last three years. A reader who wishes to know of recent books on a subject can be directed to this bibliography, where, under the subject chosen, he will find material arranged chronologically, the most recent items being at the front of the section. It is our intention in the near future to begin a system of noting on the author card, where relevant, the references of any reviews that have appeared, so that a reader may be able, by using the bibliography, to trace useful information about books in which he is interested.

Information Service

The information service at Lincoln is very heavily used, and we deal with about 70 queries each week, these ranging from a simple request for an exact definition of a term to one for a comprehensive bibliography. Requests for information come from consultants, junior medical staff, general practitioners and others. Medical students on vacation make considerable use of this as of other services. Where information is required urgently, the telephone is used in order to cut down delays. The "Directory of Medical Libraries in the British Isles" (1965) is particularly useful in providing information about the subject interests, the services provided, and the basic stock of libraries in Great Britain. The second edition of this work, regrettably, does not include a subject index, and it is to be hoped that the compilers may be persuaded to revert to the practice of the first edition when the third is prepared.

Often a request for information reveals that the reader is engaged in long-term research or extended study, and in such a case we offer to provide up-to-the-minute details of new books and articles dealing with the subject as soon as they appear. This is comparable to the service normally carried out in libraries of industrial concerns, the librarian acting as an information officer. In order to acquaint himself with new material of interest, the librarian examines every item contained in every journal coming into the library. He also examines each entry in the Postgraduate Medical School Bulletin, and all appropriate sections of the monthly Index Medicus, the Abstracts of World Medicine, the International Abstracts of Sur-

gery, *Excerpta Medica*, and the National Lending Library's *Translations Bulletin*. When an item appears to be of interest to a member of staff or G.P., a card is sent to him giving full details of the reference, together with an offer to obtain a copy for loan. Record is kept at the library under the reader's name, and if the reader telephones a request for the item, this record is turned up, thus guarding against the possibility of incorrect or garbled details being given.

Postgraduate Education

During 1965, after consultations between the Director of Postgraduate Medical Education in Lincolnshire and the librarian, a new project was started. This involved the compilation by the librarian of a bibliography covering the subject of each month's postgraduate lecture. Copies of the bibliography are provided for all who attend the lectures. When full-day meetings are held, a display is mounted of books and journals relevant to the subject under treatment. Lincoln has been designated as a future Medical Centre and since in such a Centre, the library inevitably becomes a focal point, the progress made so far in identifying the library with postgraduate interests augurs well for the future.

Advisory Panel

One way in which the consultant staff keep in touch with the library service, and, indeed help to shape its policy, is through the library sub-committee of the Hospital Management Committee. This panel of consultants is always ready to give advice and criticism, and is in fact the forum in which the medical staff can air their views. The librarian is empowered to purchase any book for stock without prior consultation with the committee, provided that its cost does not exceed £10 10s. Where a more expensive item is concerned, the panel makes a final decision.

Departmental Libraries

Departmental libraries are encouraged by the librarian and all possible assistance is offered in their upkeep. This does not mean that material which would more profitably be shelved in the main library is kept stagnating in the corner of a consultant's room. On the other hand, the rather disparaging tones used by some librarians when dealing with the subject of departmental libraries (too often the term 'bench books' is used to describe what, at least in the present writer's view, should be a vital central core of information in a department) appear to suggest that the librarian

has some God-given monopoly where literature is concerned. Union catalogues, of course, are essential, and where the library can carry out the processes of ordering and cataloguing material for the departments this too should be done. The departmental library, however is a useful factor in the therapeutic work of a hospital, and the librarian who sets out to abolish it runs the risk, not only of losing the co-operation of the medical and laboratory staff, but also of betraying the best interests of his own profession.

Nursing Staff

To turn to the needs of nursing staff, these are kept constantly in mind when the librarian selects his stock. Books which the Sister-tutor considers of use to her students, but which are outside the normal province of the nurses' library (an excellent small library housed in the School of Nursing) are purchased for the medical library, and nursing staff are invited to borrow them. Classes of student nurses come to the librarian for instruction in the use of reference books, and on these occasions he assists them in test projects.

Conclusion

In writing this account of the development of the library service in Lincoln, an attempt has been made to put forward the reasons behind the policies adopted. This library has been a pioneer project, and as such its interest lies perhaps more in what has been attempted than in what has been achieved. Lincoln Medical Library does nothing that a fully-functioning hospital library (perhaps 'area library' is a better term) would not expect to do. Unfortunately there are very few fully-functioning hospital libraries in this country, and therefore the functions of such libraries are not within the knowledge of the majority of medical men and hospital administrators. To help in bridging this gap in knowledge, the Medical Section of the Library Association offers immediate practical advice to any who care to contact its secretary. Those of us who administer medical libraries also are at all times available to give details of the services we provide and to offer suggestions regarding the setting up of such libraries in other areas. As members of the library profession we are not content to sit back after diagnosing the present deplorable state of medical library provision in hospitals. The hospital that considers it impossible to provide a full library service can still be assisted in initiating at least

a good book and journal service for its staff, and this for less than £300 per year. No Hospital Group can afford not to spend this amount of money in attempting to supply its medical staff with the life-blood of their profession.

REFERENCES

- CORNELIUS, E. H. (1966): The Library (in Proceedings of the conference on "The Postgraduate Medical Centre"), *Postgrad. med. J.*, **42**, 112.
- DIRECTORY OF MEDICAL LIBRARIES IN THE BRITISH ISLES. Compiled by the Medical Section of the Library Association. Second edition. The Library Association. 1965. 36/- (26/- to members).
- HOSPITAL LIBRARIES (1965): Recommended Standards for Libraries in Hospitals. London: The Library Association.
- WORKING PARTY ON MEDICAL LIBRARIES (1965): Final Report. Sheffield Regional Hospital Board.
- LIST OF BOOKS ON MEDICINE AND ALLIED SUBJECTS issued monthly. Copies sent on request to The Librarian, Lincoln Medical Library, County Hospital, Sewell Road, Lincoln.
- For details of the library building and its furnishings, together with a statement of the financial and administrative arrangements see an article by the present writer in the LIBRARY WORLD (vol. LXVII, No. 790, p. 290, April 1966).
-