EARLY CHICAGO LIBRARY LEADERS

ORIGINALLY PRESENTED AS: CLC: LIS 101

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The Chicago Literary Club

The idea of writing and presenting a paper to the Chicago Literary Club is an idea many of us have had and, indeed, have acted upon. Mine began when I saw that the roster of members included names that were familiar to me from the history of librarianship not only in Chicago, but nationally and internationally. One of them was Clement Andrews. I further noted that he had presented a paper to the Club on December 20, 1897, with the title, "Some Details of Library Administration." Knowing that Andrews was the first librarian of the John Crerar Library in Chicago, I thought, "Oh, nifty! There is his paper on library administration, and there must be others of those written for the Club by other librarians. I will simply look them all up and put together a sort of pastiche of views of libraries and their administration and history by some of those notable fellows." Once I had this in mind and was invited to consider writing a paper for this year, I had to come up with a title. Well, I thought that since it would probably be pretty basic administration, I would give it the title that has been announced: CLC: LIS 101. That would stand for the Chicago Library Club: Library and Information Science 101, numbered like a beginning course in Library and Information Science. Of course, since library and information science courses are almost always at the graduate level, it would not be likely that there would be a course with such a number, but why not stick with it?

Why not, indeed? It turned out that I had gravely overestimated the productivity of the librarians who have been members of the Club, failed to note that most of the papers they did write never made it into the Club's files, and thus found myself searching for substance while I still had only a title and a sort of idea that could not be fulfilled. At that point, I realized that some chunk of this paper would have to be about me. I would have to explain that I am a library historian as well as a librarian, that my doctoral dissertation at the University of Chicago, CARL H. MILAM AND THE AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION, included, say I modestly, one of the best histories of that Association for the years from its beginning in 1976 to the end of Carl Milam's tenure as its secretary in 1948, also that I have served as both president and executive director of that Association, long headquartered in Chicago, and was also, for four years from 1977 to 1981, an assistant commissioner of the Chicago Public Library. More or less bracketing those jobs were three years on the faculty of the University of Chicago's Graduate Library School (1974-1977) and two years as dean of the Graduate School of Library and Information Science at Rosary College (now Dominican University) 1995-1997. In all these library-related Chicago area years, which began for me in 1963, I have met people who knew or have written about some of the men whose names are also on the roster of Club members, and I have seen the results of their careers. And so I revised my goal somewhat and set out to write about just a few of them with special emphasis on their relationship to the Chicago Literary Club.

In some respects, I am reporting on a process rather than simply the substance of these men's careers. I am reminded that some years ago, I served on a panel for the National

Endowment of the Humanities. We were to evaluate a number of library projects being proposed to receive financial support from the Endowment. There were perhaps 125 projects to evaluate and the listing of their titles and basic details took up about six pages. There was a lot to read before we met as a group of a half dozen or so in Washington to discuss the proposed projects and to arrive at our final choices over parts of two days. On arrival, we received more instructions and set to work.

Two of the panelists were from California and clearly were completely in synch with their each other's enthusiasms and judgments. They held forth strongly over the first two pages or so of the projects, awarding almost all of them the highest grade possible -- a one out of five. The rest of us were more restrained. But then, I observed as we moved ahead that the Californians became more restrained themselves, awarding grades of three or four, seldom speaking about any project we were discussing, but rapidly shifting papers on their workspaces. It dawned on me that they had read only the first 20 or so projects and they were winging it on the others. On the evening of that first day, I reviewed our work and realized that, with those high scores from two out of the six of us, the projects on the first few pages were sure to get funded, while a far smaller percentage of those that came later would be so rewarded. The next day, I called attention to this fact, but the Californians noted that they were sure some of the best projects had come up early in our conversations. I was still concerned about it when I was asked to evaluate the experience, and I wrote to the convener of the panel after I returned home, made a chart showing the disparity of grading, and suggested that, even if nothing could be done now, in the future they might wish to consider allowing each panelist to award only so many ones or twos so that there would not be such disparity. I did not even suggest that it was possible that some panelists had done less than they should in reading and evaluating the projects. But I received a rather condescending reply. I was told that I probably had these kinds of ideas because I am a librarian and that I am, therefore, more interested in process than in substance. I puzzled over that letter for a while, then tossed it. I was never invited to another panel, but I think those Californians probably were.

Process affects substance in everything from cookery to sex, if one considers that substance is the result, the satisfaction, perhaps even the pleasure that derives from the process. Therefore, notably, I am rather proud of the fact that several of the men whom I will talk about tonight contributed to the processes of the Chicago Literary Club and therefore, ultimately, to its substance.

First, I note that I am not referring to any living member of the Club who happens to be a librarian. Susan Hanes and Bill Jones are not in my scrutiny. I think we are the three current librarian members. Instead, back to the beginning. Among the Club's earliest members was William Frederick Poole, who is credited with bringing to the Club the constitution and bylaws of the Cincinnati Literary Club. Our Club's early history reveals that the constitution that had been proposed had more Victorian grammar and an air of pomposity that seemed inappropriate to many members. They welcomed Poole's suggestions and we wound up with the documents we have, still serviceable after almost 140 years with some revisions, of course.

Poole had directed the Cincinnati Public Library before coming to Chicago to direct the public library here, starting in 1874. The Chicago Public Library had been scarcely more than an idea before the Great Chicago Fire of 1871, but the flood of donated materials, the intensity of the energy to be spent on rebuilding the city, and the need for a library meant that a director of Poole's stature was needed. In his Club paper, "Go West, Young Man, Go West: Cincinnati to Chicago," presented just two years ago, John Notz profiled ten men, Poole among them, who came from Cincinnati to Chicago between 1868 and 1873. Poole was scarcely young, over 50 when he arrived, but he brought energy as well as experience to the task of developing the public library. Too soon, he met with budget restrictions, but the library grew, opening deposit stations for public service throughout the city and occupying space in the new City Hall when it became available in 1887.

As a scholar and administrator, Poole was greatly respected among librarians, and in those days before microphones, he literally was often the voice for women in the early days of the American Library Association, which was founded in Philadelphia as a part of the USA centennial celebration in 1876. Initially cautious about the proposal to start the Association, Poole soon became a major leader, serving as vice president for several years, then serving two one-year terms as president. He seemed to regard Melvil Dewey, 30 years his junior, as somewhat bumptious as Dewey worked to organize the first ALA conference and in his ongoing position of ALA secretary, but the Association thrived with both kinds of leaders managing to work cooperatively.

Poole's background included the first general index to periodicals, which has been described by his biographer, William L. Williamson, as "a landmark of bibliographical history." The work went into other editions and Poole continued to work on it, maintaining his link to this major publication while continuing his administrative assignments. He was 65 years old when what may have been his greatest opportunity was offered to him. Trustees of the Newberry Library invited him to be the first administrator for this "great reference library of the West," as Poole described it. His task was "to assemble for it an outstanding collection of scholarly works, to plan a building to house its books and services, and to recruit and organize a staff to administer and serve the institution." He set out with assurance, supported by trustees with what appeared to be abundant financial resources, and with ideas that he was ready to test. That testing came in his encounters with Henry Ives Cobb, whom the trustees had hired as the architect for the building. Contrary to much other library architectural practice, Poole argued successfully for a building that would be airy, bright with sunlight, and adaptable to change with an emphasis on space for subject-departmentalized service. As he had done elsewhere, he recruited the best professionals he could find and, for a few years, all went well, but in 1892, a new, enlarged board of trustees picked up on concerns about his heavy spending on collections and his overall administration. He had never been much of a direct supervisor, but had picked strong people and led by example. The staff was not supportive, and the board proposed to replace Poole himself, allowing him to continue as consulting librarian at full pay for one year, half pay thereafter. He was 73 years old,

and his efforts to avert this change led him to overwork and to exhaust himself. He died on March 1, 1894.

Poole wrote ten papers for the Club between 1875 and 1893, and served as president from 1879 to 1880. When he was elected president, the custom was to inaugurate the new president in the spring and have his presidential paper be given then. But Poole was scheduled to speak in Boston on the date selected, so his talk was moved to the fall. Members were happy with this change, and the fall presidential paper has been the tradition ever since. So there is a change in process that affected the Club and has given a heightened sense of beginning and expectation to each first meeting of the fall.

Clement Walker Andrews, (1858-1930) was a New Englander as Poole was, but he came to librarianship through chemistry. (As I say that, I think of the Du Pont slogan, "Better things for better living -- through chemistry!") He received an A.B. degree from Harvard with honors and a year later, a Master of Arts in Chemistry. He taught Chemistry at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and was responsible for the laboratories, but also reorganized the Institute's several libraries. Andrews was just 37 when the directors of the John Crerar Library here in Chicago sought him out to serve as librarian of the new library. He presided over it for 33 years, retiring because of ill health and dying two years later, in 1930. He never married, but shared a home with three other bachelors. Doris Cruger Dale, his biographer, reports that "In his later years, he was something of a recluse, whether at Chicago or at Melvil Dewey's ... Lake Placid South," a Florida retreat where Dewey welcomed other librarians.

Andrews spoke at many professional conferences, enjoyed domestic and international travel, and was a participant and leader in the American Library Association, which he served as president in 1906-1907. He was part of the move to improve cataloging by providing catalog cards for sale in the areas of the Crerar's collection in the sciences and technology, and he was persistent in seeking the materials he considered essential to the library. One colleague noted that in 1926 Andrews purchased a periodical that had been on his original list of items wanted in 1895, "and its purchase closed the accession of a group which rarely if ever can be acquired in this age." Like Poole, Andrews planned and saw a new library built to his specifications when the Crerar moved into its own building at Michigan and Randolph, then opposite the central Chicago Public Library. Since then, of course, the public library building has become the Cultural Center, and the Crerar has moved twice, first to the campus of the Illinois Institute of Technology and then to the University of Chicago, where it retains its name and continues its specialization in the sciences and technologies. Its former home at Michigan and Randolph has been razed. The field of medicine has been added in more recent years. I have mentioned Andrews's Club paper, "Some Details of Library Administration," but three others clearly related to his work as a librarian, and he wrote five other papers for the Club, only one of which is in the collection at the Newberry.

Incidentally, John Crerar himself (1827-1889), whose gift of $2.6 million established the library that bears his name, was also a member of the Chicago Literary Club from 1875

until his death. He edited and read four informal papers during that period and left the Club a bequest of $10,000.

When Clement Andrews died, three other Chicago area library administrators wrote tributes to him, and all were somehow connected with the Chicago Literary Club. Theodore W. Koch (1871-1941), perhaps the most colorful, was then director of libraries at Northwestern University, and had been in that position since 1919. His experience before that had included several stints at the Library of Congress and the library directorship at the University of Michigan, where he had also acted as director of the School of Library Science. But he did such radical things as allow students to borrow materials, open the reading room on Sunday, permit the public to enter the periodical room, and provide services to departmental libraries. Impressive and positive as those actions seem to me to be, they caused him to run afoul of a very powerful trustee of the University and Koch found it expedient to return to the Library of Congress (LC).

Reading between the lines, I believe it is fair to say that Koch was a favorite of Herbert Putnam (1861-1955), the long-time Librarian of Congress, because it seems that when Koch needed to move, there was always a place for him at LC. Koch represented LC on an assignment that took him to England in 1917 to attempt to encourage the English to stop censoring scientific materials from Germany. He was moderately successful, but came back with reports about how the English were providing books for military personnel and was a major persuader of Putnam to start what became the Library War Service. With major support from the Carnegie Corporation, this service became one of the Seven Sisters of World War I, along with such groups as the Young Men's Christian Association and the Knights of Columbus. Camp libraries were built, staffed, and supplied with books; numerous librarians provided their services on troopships as well as in camps, and throughout the period of Occupation after World War I, there were librarians in Europe still providing the service. Koch wrote the book about it: BOOKS IN THE WAR: THE ROMANCE OF LIBRARY WAR SERVICE (Houghton Mifflin, 1919).

Actually, Koch wrote and published many items, was a recognized Dante scholar, translated from and into other languages, and did not let his administrative responsibilities keep him from participating in the life of the mind. This, of course, contributed to the respect that his academic colleagues and many of the powers-that-be in North Shore communities had for him. Charles Deering (1852-1927) left a bequest to Northwestern for the building of a new library and others in Deering's family contributed as well. Koch threw himself into the work of planning the library along with architect James Gamble Rogers. The Deering Library, housing several special collections, is still extant, practically dwarfed by the later library towers built adjacent to it, but even yesterday when I visited it, students and others were navigating its stairs -- no public elevator access! --to get to the music listening room and materials in music and art.

But what is Koch's association with the Chicago Literary Club? When I read that he had participated in a special 1921 program that the Club had in honor of the sixth centenary of Dante, I assumed he was a member. Not so. The other two speakers came from the University of Chicago and the University of Illinois. Koch's talk, "Synopsis of Dante: The

Man and His Work," was described in the publication based on the program as "ex tempore." When I read that his talk included more than 40 lantern slides -- and in 1921, that many lantern slides would have been a bulky boxful -- I pictured him jangling into the room with a hefty projector under one arm -- and those projectors used to get hot enough to fry eggs on -- I thought he must have been a member of the Club who had been overlooked as a speaker and who arrived to present his own views. But no -- he was one of the invited Dante scholars who evidently never became a Club member. It appears that he never presented an actual paper, as required by the Club, so his talk goes down in history as extemporaneous, with a list of the many slides, many of them reproductions from famous artists, that he presented.

George Burwell Utley (1876-1946), another easterner who eventually made his way west to Chicago, wrote another of the tributes to Clement Andrews. Utley earned a bachelor's degree from Brown University and membership in Phi Beta Kappa. He had hoped to teach English literature, but there were no jobs available, so he went to work in an insurance company. The offer of a position at the Watkinson Library in Hartford, Connecticut, launched him into librarianship and he moved on to the Episcopal Church's diocesan library in Baltimore, then, in 1905, to the directorship of the Jacksonville, Florida, public library. The library was just developing, thanks to a $50,000 grant from Andrew Carnegie. Typically, these grants from Carnegie provided funds for a building and required the community to provide the collections and services and to maintain the library. Carnegie made such gifts not only to public libraries in the U.S., but also to academic libraries here in the U.S. and to libraries in others countries as well.

Utley headed the first tax-supported library in the state of Florida, and served a population of 35,000. His pleasant personality as well as his accomplishments in two years in Jacksonville called him to the attention of the executive board of the American Library Association. They sought him out, interviewed him, and hired him as the ALA secretary, its chief executive. So he, too, came to Chicago. For two wartime years, 1917 to 1919, he moved to Washington as executive director of the Library War Service, reporting directly to Herbert Putnam. He is also credited with organizing the ALA Headquarters more efficiently and for providing stability as the longest term administrator of the Association up to that time.

Utley had scarcely returned to Chicago when he received the proverbial offer he could not refuse -- from Edward Ryerson, president of the board of trustees of the Newberry Library. The trustees lured him from his ALA position to direct the Newberry, and he remained there for the rest of his career -- until 1942, when another war was under way. His years at the Newberry included many activities in other associations, where his leadership was recognized with presidencies. From 1922 to 1923, he was ALA president, and later presidencies included the Illinois Library Association (1924-1925), American Library Institute (1937-1939), the Geographic Society of Chicago (1929-1931), and the Writers Guild of Chicago (1935-1937). From 1935 to 1936, he was president of the Chicago Literary Club, of which he had been a member since 1925. He had presented two papers, "Fifty Years of Librarianship," on March 1, 1926, the fiftieth anniversary year of the American Library Association, and "A Forgotten

Chapter in American Library History," on November 12, 1945. An ALA publication based on his 1926 paper was part of the observance of its fiftieth anniversary. Those Club papers are not part of the Club's collection, but may be in Utley's papers at the Newberry.

So these are the men who came from New England and the east to launch new careers in librarianship in Chicago. But the third man who wrote his tribute to Clement Andrews was a born and bred midwesterner who came to Chicago from Kansas City, Missouri, with his family when he was nine years old. He was Carl Bismarck Roden (1871-1956), whose work at the Chicago Public Library began when he was fifteen years old and his pay was five dollars a week as a page. He remained there until his retirement in 1950, when he was 79.

Although Roden completed the course of study at the Chicago College of Law and was admitted to the bar, he remained at the library for the security it offered, since he was supporting his parents. He moved up within the library, through positions in the cataloging department, as assistant librarian, and, for half of his career, as chief librarian. He was a big man, forceful, and, as Chicago bookseller Adolph Kroch described him, "His punctilious, grandiose manners might have been mistaken for haughtiness but were merely characteristics of a wise man who enjoyed his prestige and the various honors bestowed upon him without showing them off." He probably needed that presence when he received word that William Hale Thompson, the Chicago mayor known as Big Bill, had sent an agent to root out and purge the public library's shelves of pro-British materials. Yes, Big Bill shared some other notable Chicagoans' dislike of the British and all things British. But his agent was no match for Carl Bismarck Roden who arrived at the shelves where Thompson's man was purging books, loomed over him, and ordered him out. The agent left and never returned.

Roden joined the Chicago Literary Club in 1917 when he was 56, served as president of the Club in 1926-1927 and gave nine papers, including "What a Librarian Thinks About," on December 6, 1920. He wrote prolifically about libraries and, although he had no formal library education himself, he encouraged the start-up of the Graduate Library School at the University of Chicago in 1926. Robert Maynard Hutchins, chancellor of the University of Chicago, toasted him on the occasion of Roden's half-century at the Library, saying, "No educator in this territory has had so wide and deep an influence as Mr. Roden. None deserves so well the gratitude of this community." Leon Carnovsky, a professor in the University's Graduate Library School, noted that Roden needed no memorial of brick or mortar, saying he had created his own memorial -- but, actually, the Chicago Public Library has a Roden Branch, appreciatively named.

The Chicago Public Library connection allows me to include a celebrated Chicago personality who was not a librarian, but a trustee of the Chicago Public Library for many years. Preston Bradley (1888-1983), a Universalist minister who presided at the Peoples Church at 941West Lawrence Avenue, Uptown, was a charismatic speaker who began a radio ministry in the 1920s and led a congregation that outgrew site after site until they came to the new Church, dedicating it almost exactly 86 years ago --

October 10, 1926. The five-story building, which features space for an ongoing homeless shelter and numerous activities, still offers services every Sunday at 10 a.m. Although Bradley was accused of having counted as a parishioner every one who ever sent him a nickel after hearing him on the radio, there is no doubt of his caring, his commitment, and his status as a celebrity.

Among Bradley's public responsibilities was his service on the board of the state's teachers colleges as well as of the public library. I looked eagerly through his papers relating to those activities, always hoping to find the scribbled note to himself: "Not true!" "Who says?" or "Let's get out of here!" The pages are pristine, giving no indication of what he thought about things. Instead, it appears as though he was often used as a kind of tame bear to represent the institution or the board when things were getting hot. For example, when a Chicago Polish organization protested to the Chicago Public Library that many of the Polish materials were Communist in orientation, the board discovered, apparently to its surprise, that there were neither Polish librarians on the staff nor any Polish member of the board, although once, there had been. Bradley was among the board members who were expected to work for better relations with the Polish community. Anyone concerned with intellectual freedom, as I am, would be appalled at the alacrity with which the board got rid of those books, but that was another time with its own threats and reactions. Similarly, as a member of the teachers college board, when there was a politically-inspired hatchet attack on Karl Adams, president of Northern Illinois Teachers College, now Northern Illinois University, Bradley was among those designated to help straighten things out with Governor Horner, who was evidently behind the attacks.

One of the most attractive rooms in Chicago's downtown is still the third floor of what is now the Chicago Cultural Center, named Preston Bradley Hall in the trustee's honor when the building was still part of the Chicago Public Library. It still hosts the weekly Myra Hess Concerts and numerous other cultural and social events. Bradley, a recognized orator, knew that room when it housed the major reference area of the library, but he might now revel in hearing its acoustics put to good use.

Bradley joined the Chicago Literary Club in 1926, the same year Carl Roden served as president, and remained a member until his death in 1983 -- fifty-seven years, surely among the longest memberships in the history of the Club. Between 1931 and 1970, he presented eight papers to the Club. In the days when many civic and social events opened with prayer, he often gave the invocation, and he served the Library frequently as the speaker at various events in addition to many other appearances. In recent years, one advocate of his wrote that he should not be forgotten, although many of his causes and even much of his copious writing might seem passe. The gist of it was that he should be remembered as more than the last minister to wear a frock coat every day.

There are more men of libraries in the story of Chicago and they are men of the Chicago Literary Club -- Henry Eduard Legler (1861-1917), the Italian-born director of the Chicago Public Library who originated the idea of regional libraries in the city, one of which is still named for him, although it is no longer a regional library; Stanley Pargellis

(1898-1968), librarian of the Newberry, whom Richard Brown, historian of the library, credits with being the person who extended the Newberry's reputation far beyond this geographic region and who wrote what must be one of the Chicago Literary Club's most charming and perceptive papers and initiated the practice of filing the Club's papers at the Newberry; Pierce Butler (1884-1953), a philosopher of librarianship on the faculty of the University of Chicago after some years at the Newberry, and Alex Ladenson (1908-1987) lawyer and librarian who directed the Chicago Public Library late in his career and provided numerous useful publications on library laws. Their stories are there for another time and another teller.

Notes on sources: Most quotations are from the sketches of these library leaders which appear in THE DICTIONARY OF AMERICAN LIBRARY BIOGRAPHY (Littleton, CO: Libraries Unlimited, Inc., 1978.) Their respective biographers are: Ron Blazek for George Burwell Utley (pp. 525-527); Doris Cruger Dale for Clement Walker Andrews (pp. 11-13); Rolf Erickson for Theodore Wesley Koch (pp. 290-294); Bruce A. Schuman for Carl Bismarck Roden (pp. 441-443); William L. Williamson for William Frederick Poole (pp. 404-412). I also examined the papers of Preston Bradley at the University of Illinois at Chicago archives.