

II^e SECTION.
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INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGES

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There is no more important subject to be discussed at the Congrès International des Archivistes et des Bibliothécaires than that of the International Exchanges, as the value of that service to libraries cannot be overestimated. The time has come when the scientific and learned institutions, the public, the research workers and the students of literature demand the scientific and literary publications of the world.

Considering the question « Dans quel sens y a-t-il lieu de réorganiser et d'étendre le service des échanges internationaux » ? from an American point of view, it does not appear that reorganisation is what is needed, for a system of international exchanges working with the hearty co-operation of all nations has not yet even been developed on the lines of the existing conventions.

The present international exchange service is operating under two conventions made between certain Powers, and the work is based upon them. One of these, signed at Brussels in 1886 and officially proclaimed in 1889, made provision for the exchange of official documents and scientific and literary publications. The other, which was concluded and proclaimed at the same time, provided for the *immediate* exchange of the official journal, as well as of the parliamentary annals and documents of the contracting parties.

The conventions were broadly worded and allowed for the adherence of other states than those that became signatories at the time. The signers were the Plenipotentiaries of the United States of America, Belgium, Brazil, Italy, Portugal and the Algarves, Servia, Spain and the Swiss Confederation. Later the Argentine Republic, Paraguay and Uruguay signified their adherence, while Bolivia, Chile, Columbia, Costa Rica, France, Liberia, the Netherlands, New South Wales, Peru, Queensland and Russia have established international exchange bureaus without, however, giving their formal adherence to the conventions. From this it will be seen that there are eleven states that have adhered to the conventions, and an equal number that have established bureaus without adherence, while Great Britain, Germany and the other countries contribute no funds toward the organisation of this movement.

It is therefore obvious that under the existing conditions it is not re-organisation, but organisation that is needed, and this may be readily accomplished under the conventions now in force, as they form a firm foundation for a great international institution. The provisions in these conventions, made twenty years ago, may need revision in order to conform to recent international advancement, and it is possible that the Powers that have already agreed to the conventions and lent their support might be willing to re-open them, provided that the Powers that have not come in are willing to join in the organisation of an international exchange service.

The international exchanges, as now carried on, are of two classes: scientific and literary publications, and official government publications. The first named of these is of the utmost importance to the cause of education, both scholastic and technical, which the present service has materially advanced, by enabling individuals and institutions of learning to disseminate knowledge without restriction and practically without cost to themselves. The scientific institutions are appreciating more and more the fact that their endowments are entirely inadequate to provide for the many calls made upon them, and if in addition to printing their own publica-

tions they should have to purchase those of foreign institutions and pay the cost of transportation, it would mean that some part of their work would be abandoned. It is therefore to a system of international exchanges that they must look for relief in this matter.

The government exchanges are necessary in order that governments may ascertain what is being accomplished along similar lines in other countries, and as such publications are issued at the expense of the governments, they should also be distributed at their expense.

The International Exchange Service of the United States is under the direction of the Smithsonian Institution and was originally inaugurated for the purpose of transmitting publications presented by institutions and individuals in the United States to correspondents abroad, in exchange for like contributions from such recipients, as one of the most efficient means for the « Diffusion of knowledge among men », and the entire expense, including that for the exchange of documents published by the Government from 1850 to 1881, was paid from the private funds of the Institution.

Through the action of Congress, upon recommendation of the Department of State, the Smithsonian Institution is recognized by the United States Government as the American agency for the international exchange of governmental, scientific and literary publications. By the congressional resolutions passed in 1867 and 1910, a certain number of United States Government publications are set aside for exchange with those of foreign countries, to be sent regularly to designated depositories. In accordance with these resolutions there are now forwarded abroad 55 full sets of United States official publications and 33 partial sets; the official journal of the proceedings of Congress, « The Congressional Record », is transmitted by mail daily to each of the parliaments that is willing to reciprocate.

During the fiscal year ending June thirtieth, 1909, the number of packages forwarded through the International Exchanges of the United States amounted to 228,875. These packages were sent direct from this country to the one for

which they were intended, and from long experience this has been found to be the quickest and most satisfactory method. During the last year nearly two thousand boxes were shipped in this way without the loss of a single consignment. Shipments are made regularly at least once a month, should the sending be but one package, and to the larger countries every week.

A card index is kept of all correspondents and upon the cards are recorded the packages sent and received by each institution and individual. There are in the United States 3900 institutions and 8000 individuals recorded in this index, while the foreign institutions number 16500, and individuals 34232. A list of the foreign societies and institutions is published from time to time under the title « International Exchange List », latest issue being that of 1904.

The public documents received from abroad in exchange are placed in the Library of Congress. The publications received from the scientific and learned societies and institutions of the world form an important part of the Library of the Smithsonian Institution, and while these remain the property of the Institution they are in great part deposited in the Library of Congress.

The needs of the international exchanges under present conditions may be summarized as follows: The adherence of all the civilized nations of the world to the present conventions. The members of the Congress of Archivists and Librarians which is to assemble in Brussels next August can do much to further the movement by lending their efforts to arouse the interest of the scientific and literary institutions and societies and governmental authorities in their respective countries, to the end that official action may be taken. The scientific institutions and societies of each country should examine the workings of the International Exchange system and solicit exchange of publications from like societies abroad using the service as a medium of transmission.

Governments should provide a sufficient number of sets of their official publications for exchange purpose in order that each country may have a full set if desired, and in addition

there should be copies of the official journals of the parliaments, or similar bodies, for the interparliamentary exchanges.

Bureaus already established as well as those to be established should be granted an appropriation that will allow the carrying out in full of the stipulations of the conventions. A well paid and energetic staff with a well equipped office would ensure expeditious work and prompt delivery. The present facilities for rapid transportation would be greatly increased by each international exchange office having the franking privilege, such as is allowed in the United States, and the granting of special concessions by the postal authorities, through the International Postal Union, which could possibly be arranged should every nation become a party to the present conventions.

The International Exchanges should be extended to every quarter of the globe, and efforts should be made to bring the Powers to realize the necessity of perfecting an institution already established which has for its objet the « increase and diffusion of knowledge among men ».

