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The Semi-Centennial of the Rochester Public Library

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During the last turbulent half century, Rochester has corrected an embarrassing gap in library services and, in the process, has acquired an enviable profusion of intellectual facilities. This accomplishment, in the face of two great wars and a crippling depression, reflects the community's resurgent vitality and marks its emergence as a metropolis. Guided by a succession of dedicated and farsighted leaders, its citizens have, on the one hand, given increasingly generous support and, on the other, made fuller use of their book resources. Quite fittingly, the central library, now celebrating the 25th anniversary of its construction over an old raceway of the city's water-power era, symbolizes the fact that in modern Rochester knowledge has become the most fruitful source of power.

Hesitant Beginnings

Although as a pioneer milltown Rochester became a market for books as early as 1818 and acquired its first social library four years later—within a decade of its permanent settlement—nine more decades rolled by before it was able to establish a public library.

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Partly responsible for this delay, no doubt, were the considerable merits of the early social and athenaeum libraries that for half a century served successive generations of young men. When the last such venture collapsed in 1877, Mortimer F. Reynolds, its chief backer, inherited the books and with great public spirit reconditioned and enlarged the collection to supply the nucleus for the Reynolds Library. Opened in 1886, that institution unfortunately suffered a loss, a decade later, of tax exemption on its source of income and was never able to maintain adequate services. Although it slowly increased its collection of books to 101,000, its total circulation in fifty years scarcely exceeded 1.5 million; its chief merit was as a reference library for a limited clientele.

Rochester began to awake to its deficiencies in the early 1900's. A report that Andrew Carnegie had given \$250,000 to Syracuse for a public library prompted Mrs. Helen B. Montgomery, first woman on the school board, to call in 1901 for similar action at Rochester. When a survey of local book resources, made two years later by the Chamber of Commerce, revealed that the total collections of the city's seven leading institutional libraries numbered only 180,000, barely one book per resident, several indignant protests appeared. "Rochester is disgraced," ex-alderman DeVillo Selye declared in 1904, and Mayor James G. Cutler echoed that opinion.

Many citizens, humiliated by reports of library developments at Buffalo, Syracuse, and most other cities of a comparable size, joined the campaign for a public library. If for a time other matters seemed more urgent to George Aldridge, the Republican boss, and to Hiram H. Edgerton his chief spokesman, when the latter became mayor in 1908, he, too, was ready to advocate the establishment of a library. Action was deferred, however, until a rumor reached Rochester of a plan at Albany to convert the abandoned buildings of the old State Industrial

School into a prison. To head off that possibility, Mayor Edgerton hastily proposed that the city clear most of the site for an Exposition Park and that it remodel Building No. 9 for a joint library and museum.

Because of its location in the northwest section of the city, far from the business district, the site seemed unsuitable for a central library, but the Mayor fully appreciated the situation. He recommended that Rochester commence with a branch system and locate the first branch as well as the administrative office at Exposition Park; it could then spread out as occasion permitted.

Mayor Edgerton's vigorous leadership brought action in 1911. When a committee appointed that March failed to secure a charter from the Board of Regents, the Mayor rushed a bill through the legislature authorizing the appointment of trustees empowered to establish and maintain a public library system. Edgerton named President Rush Rhees of the university, the Rev. Dr. Charles C. Albertson, Edward G. Miner, Daniel B. Murphy, and Charles H. Wiltsie to serve with Professor George M. Forbes of the Board of Education and himself as ex-officio members on the initial board.

At its first meeting in October, just fifty years ago, the board engaged Frank P. Hill of Brooklyn as consultant. Head of the Brooklyn Public Library system, he was an enthusiastic advocate of the branch system as the most effective means of serving a large populace. He urged that Rochester start with a branch and administrative office at Exposition Park and that it open new branches in other sections of the city as rapidly as possible, deferring the creation of a central library until a suitable opportunity arose.

This plan had an additional advantage in Rochester. It left the door open for the absorption of the Reynolds Library as the central branch, a development favored by many citizens. It also permitted a more rapid extension of book services to residents

who seldom had recourse to existing facilities. With these objectives in mind, the trustees hastened to bring William F. Yust, head of the Louisville Free Library, to Rochester as its library director.

Mayor Edgerton and the library trustees formally opened the first branch at Exposition Park on Nov. 8, 1912. Librarian Yust had established his administrative offices on the second floor above the library. He had assembled a staff of nine assistants, and they had already acquired and catalogued some 3700 volumes, many of which had been placed in circulation a few weeks before. Miss Adeline Zachert, in charge of work with children, developed a program for the distribution of books throughout the schools, and Yust proposed the establishment of library stations at the Polish Institute, the Hebrew Brotherhood, the Y.M.C.A., and other centers where such facilities might prove useful. The board approved these measures and authorized the creation of three additional branches in 1913.

A second or Genesee Branch was opened in October that year, but a limited budget of \$36,000 delayed further expansion. The total circulation in the first full year reached 274,372, nearly half of it through the stations in the 33 grade schools. Yust's hopeful plea that the city appropriate \$500,000 for a central building or apply to Carnegie for such a grant was quietly tabled by Mayor Edgerton as untimely. In addition to the ever present need for economy, he saw a renewed prospect that the city might receive \$400,000 from an estate left by Morton W. Rundel in 1911 for a memorial library and fine-arts building. Although its use was temporarily blocked by litigation, that fund, if coupled with the resources of the Reynolds Library, would, the Mayor contended, supply a central building and much of its maintenance cost. He supported the trustees in a motion for an amendment to the charter that strengthened their powers, and he provided funds in 1914 for the opening of the third and fourth branches,

named respectively Monroe and Lincoln. Expenditures increased 50 per cent during the first three years, but the circulation more than doubled.

War in Europe and America's ultimate involvement delayed further library developments at Rochester. In 1919, however, when Yust submitted a *Seven Year Survey*, he was able to report the establishment of three additional branches, the organization of several new library stations, and the launching of a distribution program at the playgrounds. This progressive increase in services had boosted the annual circulation to well over a million on a budget of slightly less than \$100,000. When the impatient Yust made a wry allusion to the fact that, like Jacob, he had served seven years for Rachel and had got only Leah, Mayor Edgerton reminded him that after a second seven years Jacob had won Rachel.

The prospect of another seven years without a central library seemed too fantastic to be taken seriously, and Yust persevered. Belated action by the trustees in granting 10 per cent increases to most of the forty full-time employees helped to buttress staff morale. The adoption in 1920 of a standard classification of posts with a promise of annual increments brought increased stability, yet attractive offers from other cities drew away several of Yust's early assistants. Promotions within the staff placed Miss Julia L. Sauer in charge of work with children and advanced Miss Marion D. Mosher, Miss Bernice E. Hodges, Miss Gladys E. Love, and Miss Ada J. White to other responsible posts. When Edgerton declined renomination as Mayor in 1921, his successor in that office, Clarence D. Van Zandt, took his place on the library board but urged the selection of Charles H. Wiltsie as its president. Earlier changes had brought the appointment of the Rev. Drs. Clarence A. Barbour and A. M. O'Neill as trustees in 1913 and the appearance of successive school board chairmen, yet few changes in policy had occurred.

One new development in 1922 had been the inclusion of the library under the state retirement system. Another was the appointment that year of Edward R. Foreman as city historian with responsibility for the compilation of Rochester's war service records and the publication of its community history. The death of former Mayor Edgerton prompted warm expressions of honor to him as the library's principal founder, yet much to Yust's disappointment it remained a system of branches, none of them built for library use and only one as yet owned by the city.

The Drive for a Central Library

Popular dissatisfaction with Rochester's library deficiencies was beginning to mount. Earnest resolutions in 1922 and 1923 by the Women's City Club, the Business Women's Club, the Joint Board of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, and other groups endorsed Yust's plea for a central library. Another year slipped by, however, before that goal was partially glimpsed. Even then it was only a temporary advance made possible by George Eastman's offer of provisional use of the old Kimball tobacco factory as a city hall annex and public library until the development of a civic center on that site could be undertaken.

The makeshift library in the City Hall Annex proved more permanent and more serviceable than was at first expected. Its allotment of 8000 square feet on the ground floor, with windows overlooking the river, provided an attractive setting and quickly stimulated an increased use of its books. Officially opened in June 1926, it multiplied the activity of the old business reference branch sixfold and proved that Rochester would take full benefit of an adequate central library. Fortunately by this date, the City Council had already designated the site directly across the river for its main library; only a lack of agreement with the Reynolds board seemed to obstruct action.

In spite of continuing delays on that count, the trustees launched a new era in 1926 by authorizing the construction of the South Avenue Branch. It was the first building erected by the city for library purposes and provided the largest area and best-lighted space in the system. Other sites suitable for branches were now acquired, and the board looked forward to a progressive displacement of its five rented quarters and the replacement of the five city buildings remodeled for library use. Plans were already drawn for an impressive new branch on Monroe Avenue.

When the trustees determined in 1928 to publish a 17-year survey of the library's development, Yust carefully avoided any allusion to Rachel or Leah. His records showed that the city's outlays on the library system had quadrupled during the previous decade, an increasingly generous support, which had enabled the staff to more than double the number of books and to treble the circulation. The courts had at last clearly established the city's right to the use of the Rundel fund (now estimated at \$800,000) for a new central library, and negotiations were afoot to bring the Reynolds Library into the picture.

Further delays occurred as the trustees of the Reynolds and the Public libraries endeavored to reach an agreement. In order to assure objective counsel, three out-of-town librarians were invited to study the situation and make proposals. While their recommendations that a merger be effected under public control, but preserving a distinctive Reynolds division, were receiving consideration, a move by the Municipal Museum to share in the use of the projected building raised an additional complexity. The onset of the depression late in 1929 and the unemployment crisis that followed prompted numerous pleas for a quick decision permitting an early start of construction in order to supply sorely needed jobs. Yust and the trustees, fearing that hasty action might prove disastrous, resisted both pressures. A

canvass of the opinions of librarians in a dozen cities that had tried joint museum and library buildings produced so many unfavorable comments that this scheme was dropped, but the demand for jobs was not so easily denied.

Finally in November 1931, just as Yust reached the retirement age, the board approved a five-year building program. It gave the construction of a new central library priority and recommended immediate action. That meeting also saw the election of John A. Lowe of the Brooklyn Public Library as successor to Yust. The trustees, however, gave their major attention to a soul-searching debate of various possible methods of curtailing services in order to absorb the first cut in the library's operating expenses.

For several months the library trustees faced an anomalous situation. Pressed on the one hand to hasten plans for the expenditure of over a million dollars on a new central building, they were confronted on the other hand by a possibility that the entire library system would be closed for the remainder of the year. That economy measure was forestalled as the library drastically reduced the hours at most of its branches and curtailed its outlays by 27 per cent. Most of the \$100,000 saved came from the book budget and from funds budgeted for supplies, but the staff also accepted a 10 per cent reduction in salaries in spite of mounting demands for services. Indeed both the circulation and attendance figures continued to climb, reaching unprecedented heights in these years as many of the unemployed turned to the library for distraction from their troubles or for help in developing new fields of learning. Only six cities in the country surpassed Rochester's record of circulating 8.3 volumes per capita, and all of these had higher per capita library budgets.

In spite of its drastic economies in 1932, the city announced a further reduction in the library appropriation for the next

year, slashing it to \$110,000, or less than a third of the 1931 budget. To meet this emergency, Lowe proposed that ten professional workers, three janitors, and nine attendants be dropped, that most of the remainder be placed on half time, and that five branches be closed and seven others opened two half-days a week, while the central branch should be operated 2:00 to 8:00 each weekday.

Popular indignation over the projected curtailment of library services soon produced results. Councilman Joseph L. Guzzetta offered an additional \$25,000 to keep all branches open for two half-days each week. Unsatisfied with this paltry grant, a citizens' committee headed by Professor Dexter Perkins vigorously demanded a full restitution of the library's legal revenue which under the charter entitled it to three mills on each dollar of the city's assessment, or \$193,000 in 1933. Emboldened by this support, the library sought and secured its full allotment in 1934 when the budget again topped the \$200,000 figure.

The dark year of 1933 hastened the decision to press ahead with the construction of a new central library on the South Avenue site. When final agreement with the Reynolds trustees was reached that November, providing for the physical merger of the book collections, a promise of \$263,000 in PWA assistance from the Federal Government prompted the city to award the first of a series of contracts; ground was broken on December 12. Librarian Lowe and Williams G. Kaelber, the architect, paid a hasty visit to the Enoch Pratt Library in Baltimore to study its divisional pattern and stopped off in Washington to examine the exterior design of the Folger Shakespeare Library. Their findings, at least in Baltimore, bore fruit in the new Rundel Memorial Building.

Brighter prospects also lightened the burdens borne by the hard-pressed staff. Federal aid under the Civil Works Administration permitted the library to resume the repair and binding

of books. Although an offer by the CWA to provide aides to restore full service at all branches was rejected because of its temporary duration, the determination to request an adequate budget in 1935 was strengthened. Construction commenced on the Rundel building, and the board also launched a repair program at the branches, several of which received state support as TERA projects. The library joined the historical society in backing the efforts of City Historian Foreman to produce a four-volume *Centennial History of Rochester*.

When Lowe and the trustees requested an appropriation of \$325,000 for full operation in 1935, City Manager Baker cut that figure to \$200,000. Again the Citizens Committee went into action and with the support of other groups successfully persuaded the City Council to add another \$40,000 to the appropriation, bringing it up again to the 1932 figure. Popular approval of this supplementary grant assured a still larger appropriation the next year when the opening of the Rundel Memorial Building gave Rochester for the first time an opportunity to enjoy well-rounded library services.

A Model System and Its Trials

The years 1935 and 1936 marked a turning point in the library's development. The death of Charles H. Wiltsie in May 1935 and of Edward Foreman the following February terminated long careers of usefulness at the library and brought the appointment as their respective successors of Judge Harvey F. Remington as president of the board and Professor Dexter Perkins as city historian. The adoption of the divisional system as a main feature of the new library called for a reorganization of the staff to man the separate divisions. The appointment of a dozen division heads and of several department heads called for an expansion of the staff. Fortunately the city, ready at last to

assume its larger responsibilities, determined at this time to resume full-time service, with a budget of \$366,837.

Although unexpected delays in the completion of the furniture contract postponed the official opening of the Rundel Memorial Building until Oct. 5, 1936, the popular response was enthusiastic. Over 3200 books were taken out the first day as 5600 visitors crowded in to see the new building. Completed at a total cost of \$1, 359,158, it was without doubt the most efficiently equipped building in the city. The convenient location of the Reynolds Reference Room and of eight subject divisions, around a spacious central hall on the first floor, afforded easy access to their books. The subject divisions—history, biography, literature, and fiction on the right, education and religion, social science, business and economics, and science and technology on the left—each with open shelves for circulating and reference books, assured patrons the attentive assistance of librarians familiar with the resources in their divisions and in the stacks below. A row of card-catalogue cases flanked one side of the central hall, while registration, loan, and return counters lined the other, leaving ample space between for book displays.

Three special divisions and four separate functions shared the second floor. At the head of the stairs was a magazine reading room. Beyond it, to the right at the end of the main corridor, the Rundel Art Gallery occupied a spacious room for the display of exhibits, with a small adjoining room for prints. Around the corner to the left was the art division, ready to supplement the public displays with books on every art. At the other end of the main corridor was the local history division. Here were assembled books from the old Reynolds collection and the public library that pertained to the region's history and also the large collection of pamphlets, manuscripts, and prints of the Rochester Historical Society, which had now deposited them under long-term loan in the custody of the public library.

The city historian's office was conveniently situated next to this division.

Around the corner to the right was the children's division in perhaps the building's most attractive room. Equipped with furniture designed for its special patrons, the children's room was surrounded by low open shelves, one section of which could easily be swung out on hinges to afford access to a hidden story-hour room. Adjoining this division were the offices of the department of work with children. There trained librarians counseled parents and teachers on the selection of suitable reading matter and supervised the program for juveniles in the branches, and the extension services in the sub-branches, stations, and schools.

Other library functions were similarly provided for. A separate young people's room, on a mezzanine over the fiction division on the first floor, supplied a congenial atmosphere for readers of high-school age. The third floor, though chiefly reserved for the administrative offices, for cataloguing and other work rooms, had in addition a lecture hall and two smaller conference rooms for public use.

Responding with enthusiasm to their new facilities, Lowe and his staff fell quickly to work. Limited at the start to a stock of barely 200,000 volumes (in the central library), almost half of them from the Reynolds collection, the public library undertook with vigor to expand its resources. By purchasing 38,000 books in the first year, it considerably improved the quality of all divisions. By a careful overhauling of the old collections— weeding out, rebinding, and cataloguing many books—it restored many to active use. And by stationing a reader's adviser at a desk in the main hall, it promoted a fuller appreciation of the library's resources by the public. Inevitably the circulation began to mount. Although the twelve branches, equipped with some 150,000 books, checked out well over half of the

2,067,084 withdrawals in 1937, the circulation at the main library topped 450,000 in the first full year of operation.

Of course the central library was more than a medium for down-town circulation. The Reynolds Reference Room and several of the subject divisions specialized in answering questions and in locating specific data for interested citizens. Business men of all sorts consulted the shelves of the business and economics division daily; antiquarians and genealogists pored over the volumes in the local history division. The telephone switchboard was kept busy shunting inquiries to the proper divisions as the number of reference questions soared to 73,919 in that first year.

Eager to promote its services, the staff took advantage of several new outlets. Miss Sauer gave a series of radio talks for children on "The Public Library Speaks," while several division heads contributed to a "Library Books Parade" on WHEC and wrote notes for a column on "Books Behind the News" in the *Democrat & Chronicle*. As the call for back issues of the *N. Y. Times* and of the local dailies increased, the library determined to purchase micro-film copies of the former and in 1938 installed its first Recordak machine for readers.

When the Gannett Co. offered some 1200 bound volumes of early Rochester papers, the library gladly accepted them, and 382 from the *Journal*, to fill out its files. But the great bulk of this acquisition and the problems involved in its use hastened a decision to undertake a filming program, which gradually made the back files of local papers, at first between 1818 and 1880, and later up to date, available for easy use on micro-film rolls. Fortunately the location at the library of an extensive file of reference slips, prepared by a local newspaper indexing project of the NYA during the depression, supplied a convenient guide to these early sources, one that the city historian found of great value and used extensively in the preparation of articles

for a new quarterly, *Rochester History*, launched by the library in 1939.

The outbreak of war in Europe had its inevitable impact on the library, as on other institutions. It supplied, in the first place, a topic for a series of public lectures in the auditorium; it also helped to direct many readers to the history and social science divisions for books on current events. But if the demand there increased, the over-all circulation in 1939 dropped 16,000 below the previous year's record of 2,294,000. The decline continued as the draft sent thousands of young men to army camps. Renewed prosperity, as a result of mounting defense orders, distracted other readers and drew off some of the experienced staff.

To meet this latter deficiency and to absorb a \$25,000 cut in its budget, the library closed on Saturdays during July and August in 1941 and effected other economies. But the problem of recruiting an adequate staff became increasingly troublesome as the war progressed. By means of gifts and a policy of purchasing books on discount, the library slowly increased its catalogued book stock to 453,500 in 1942, yet the gain resulted in part from a more active repair program coupled with restraint in the discarding of books. The number of registered borrowers dropped 5000 below the 1938 record of 86,148, and the circulation, now down to 1,772,000, reflected a decline in non-fiction as well as in fiction and children's books.

These reverses continued through 1945 before the tide began to turn. Pressed for economies, the library endeavored to spread the cost more equitably over the metropolitan region by asking \$3 fees from non-resident borrowers, yet only 500 of the 10,000 out-of-town patrons renewed their cards. Despite these and other setbacks, the staff carried on and, in fact, sought new methods of serving the public. By a special grant from the Kate Gleason Fund, it subsidized the publication in 1945 of *Rochester, the Water-Power City, 1812-1854*, the first of a series of

volumes written in the city historian's office. It also arranged for the production that year of a documentary film on the work of the library. *Not By Books Alone*, as the film was entitled, soon attracted wide interest and, because of the many requests for it from librarians in America and abroad, helped to renew Rochester's interest in its library.

A slight increase in the appropriation in 1945 gave encouragement. The appointment, two years before, of a supervisor of branches had prepared the way for a long-deferred reorganization of that system. Advanced rentals in some cases and increased maintenance costs in others called for a reappraisal of the five branches in rented quarters and of the four in remodeled structures as well. Fortunately a bequest, left by Darrell D. Sully in 1931, had finally become available in 1946 for the construction of a memorial branch. Accordingly when the owner of the Goodman St. Branch expressed a desire to make other use of the property, City Manager Cartwright recommended that a Sully branch be erected to replace it on city property at Culver Road and McKinley Street. Lowe and the board, however, resisted hasty action. A careful study, in conjunction with the planning commission, of the relative advantages of various branch sites gave high priority to that on Goodman St., they reported, and the use of the Sully fund was deferred.

The late forties brought two major developments. First was the inauguration at Rochester in 1947 of the Great Books study program with several of the discussion groups centered at the library. Second, and more important in the long run, was a grant by the Reynolds trustees of funds for a new audio-visual division. Although not opened until May 1948, the Reynolds Audio-Visual Division, which found lodgment in the former magazine room on the second floor, quickly demonstrated its usefulness. The 180 films acquired in the first year were

doubled in number during the second, and their circulation soared from 699 to 4498, reaching audiences that totaled 306,000. For the first time that year the book collection exceeded half a million, and the number of registered borrowers again began to climb.

Yet the renewed vitality of the late forties proved scarcely more than a holding operation. In the post-war inflationary trend, the library budget had fallen so far behind that staff deficiencies had become critical. Lowe partially met the challenge by importing a succession of library internes from England and other European countries. Unfortunately their one-year terms barely exceeded the necessary training period, and while these young women helped the staff to cover its numerous posts and added a fresh charm to the library service, the level of efficiency sometimes sagged. Perhaps the average citizen's preoccupation with the battles in Korea accounted for a renewed drop in book circulations in 1950 and for a decline in the number of questions asked. Yet that latter statistic, which had previously run counter to the general trend, had reached 100,000 in 1949 and would soon resume its climb.

When, after fifteen years in the new building, Librarian Lowe reviewed the system's development over the four decades of its history, half of it under his direction, he found ample grounds for gratification. The successes far outweighed the disappointments. If the book circulation was at a low ebb, a third less than in 1938, the new library's heyday, the use of the reference facilities had mounted, and new services, such as those of the audio-visual division, were reaching a vast new audience. He expressed gratitude to the staff members, thirty-six of whom had labored faithfully with him for two full decades, and to the trustees who had given unstintingly of their time. Indeed, one of the latter, Edward G. Miner, had served 30 years in that capacity, commencing with the establishment

of the system in 1911, while Judge Remington had completed two decades on the board, fifteen years as its chairman. Despite the latter's death in 1949, and that of two other devoted trustees within a year, a virtually new board, headed by Msgr. Joseph E. Grady, was successfully organized.

A Metropolitan Library System

New problems confronted the Rochester library in the 1950's. The impending retirement of John A. Lowe, deferred during 1951 to permit a careful search for a successor, came the next March as the board chose Rutherford D. Rogers, head of Buffalo's Grosvenor Library, as its new director. Two new trustees assumed increasing responsibilities—Dr. Wilbour E. Saunders, who became president in 1953, and J. Frank Traynor, who supplied leadership in the development of the county library system. That latter undertaking and the reorganization of the branch system comprised the major tasks of the new administration. Both the board and the staff had given much time to each problem, and some action had already been initiated. A coordination of these efforts with other library and civic movements was needed to assure progress.

Since the problem of developing metropolitan library services was not strictly a city concern, nor unique to Rochester, its officials stood to benefit by progress elsewhere. Fortunately an active campaign was under way on the state level to promote county-wide services. Spurred by this movement, the Board of Supervisors of Monroe County had created a committee in 1948 to review the facilities and discover the needs of the towns. Although no forthright action resulted, the committee's deliberations stirred great interest, and in 1950, when the legislature created a system of state subsidies for the promotion of county-wide library services, the Monroe County Library Association, of which Lowe was president, proposed that libraries wishing

to cooperate form a federation to undertake contractual services as subsidized by the state. The city library and most of those in the towns took favorable action, and in 1952 the Supervisors formally established a Monroe County Library System on this basis. They appointed a board of eleven citizens to manage it and placed the county's traveling library (which dated from 1923) under its jurisdiction. The trustees promptly elected Mrs. Edward H. Cumpston as chairman and chose Rogers, the new city librarian, as director of the county system.

Rogers, who had participated in the campaign for state support of metropolitan services, was keenly interested in the new challenge, but his first obligation was to the city system. Pleasantly surprised by their many fine qualities, as with fresh eyes he surveyed the Rochester libraries, he nevertheless found several weak points. Not only did the once-elegant Rundel building need refurbishing after fifteen years of use, but its divisional system, ideal in theory, had proved somewhat unwieldy in practice and called for revision. The necessity of assigning at least two trained librarians to each of the fourteen special divisions had sometimes resulted in a neglect of the simultaneous responsibility of staffing the library's twelve branches and eleven sub-branches and of supervising fifty deposit stations and 349 grade school collections. A nation-wide shortage of librarians had aggravated the problem, producing a high turnover among the junior assistants that further weakened the service.

To remedy the situation, Rodgers proposed, on the one hand, salary increases, especially in the lower brackets, coupled with regular increments to check turnover. On the other hand, he recommended a breaching of the barriers separating some divisions in order to permit their joint operation. He pressed ahead with renovations at the Rundel building and with repairs at several branches and secured the establishment of a new post of

public relations director. He expedited a revision of staff classifications, upgrading several key positions, and ordered a re-draft of the personnel regulations to assure greater and more explicit benefits and also to improve administrative standards. He proposed an expansion of the Reynolds Audio-Visual Division by opening to its use the small exhibit room that adjoined the gallery.

Inspired by the intense zeal of its new director, the staff acquired fresh enthusiasm for its work. This new spirit soon found expression among patrons, too, several of whom joined, in November 1953, to establish the Friends of the Rochester Public Library. Their purpose, as Professor Arthur J. May, the first president, declared, was to promote increased public use of and support for the library's facilities. The Friends soon announced plans for a book fair in the library's main hall and for an author's night at which all local authors of the year would be introduced and honored.

No doubt the most gratifying achievement of these transition years was the construction of the new Sully Branch. Rogers ended the long delay by quickly approving a newly proposed site in Webster Park, a mile east of the old Goodman Street Branch it was to replace. Built on a modern design with spacious and inviting alcoves for both adult and juvenile readers, with open bookshelves and counters arranged for efficient use by a small staff, it proved such an attractive magnet to book lovers that the circulation in its first year showed a 50 per cent gain over the old Goodman Street Branch and was a close second to Arnett, the system's most popular branch.

Rogers presided at the opening of the Sully Branch in Dec. 1953, but it was almost his last official duty. A call to become assistant librarian in the great New York Public Library had cut short his term in Rochester; fortunately the appointment of

Harold S. Hacker, his former colleague in Buffalo, as his successor assured continued leadership.

Hacker arrived at a propitious moment and proceeded to make the most of it. The new county system was successfully launched and ready for expansion. The new public relations office had won a hearing in several media and was beginning to produce results. The newly organized Friends were eager to assume responsibilities. Even the city administration was in a more responsive mood than for many years. And the staff, if inclined to keep its fingers crossed on the arrival of a second young Buffalonian, soon found its energies enlisted as never before.

Believing in democratic procedures, Hacker appointed a series of staff committees to seek solutions of pressing problems. He won agreement on a plan to accept the return of books at any branch, regardless of the place of issue. He installed a suggestion box in the main library and gave due consideration to the 108 notes left there in the first year. He relieved the guard at the front door of the duty of inspecting all books taken out. The trustees voted to throw their meetings open to the public and to welcome press representatives at all sessions.

Three closely related problems required early action. A staff shortage hampered the maintenance of services at the subbranches and distribution stations. The fact that many former patrons had moved to the suburbs emphasized the need to develop broader metropolitan book services and, at the same time, reduced the pressure at several of the subbranches. An oft-proposed city bookmobile seemed to offer a solution. Hacker strongly recommended it, but warned that, because of the cost, no fiscal economies should be expected, though the time of trained librarians saved fully justified the proposal. The fact that the purchase of a bookmobile occurred late in 1955, as the city was selecting the site for a new branch library on Dewey

Avenue, and shortly after the passage of a new and greatly improved salary schedule, proved Rochester's readiness to move ahead in several directions.

This flexibility was fortunate, for although no single action seemed effective in the increasingly complex situation, multiple efforts produced results. Thus while the generous salary increments granted in 1956 failed to check the high turnover, partly because several members had reached the age of retirement, the more attractive rates enabled Hacker to recruit many able young assistants and to assure them of rapid promotion. The prospect of new posts on the bookmobile and in the county system, which became a tri-county system in 1956, made Rochester seem more attractive to many of the recent graduates of library schools Hacker interviewed in these years. As a result he was able, in Sept. 1957, to report that 93 of the 94 professional positions on the staff were filled for the first time in many seasons.

Of course the real test was in the book circulation and in other responses to library services. Most of the statistical evidence was gratifying. Except for 1956, which showed a slight decline in some respects, every year produced an increased demand for books, for films, for records, and for inter-library loans. That last item, which jumped from 1500 to 15,000 in five years, graphically reflected the expansion of the county system into a tri-county system in which patrons of any library could call on the resources of all. The Rochester library, glad for the opportunity to serve an expanding area, hastened to plow the state's reimbursements for such services back into improved standards, higher salaries, and larger book orders.

Inevitably, as these trends progressed, the Rundel building became a center of activity. Not only was space found in its lower stacks for the headquarters of the county traveling library, and a berth for the city's huge bookmobile on the Broad

Street plaza, but the annual institutes staged by the staff for its own edification also attracted the interested attendance of librarians throughout the region. Even the periodic displays that now generally crowded the central hall had to be pushed aside during holiday seasons in the winter months when hundreds of students home from college and belatedly striving to complete their assignments, eagerly occupied the extra study tables brought out for their use.

No group contributed more to the mounting excitement than the Friends whose Annual Literary Awards, starting in 1957, filled another community gap. They continued their annual salutes to current local authors and undertook in 1958 to promote the sale of the second and third volumes on the history of Rochester by the city historian. Their most successful program was a weekly book-review session, held at noon on successive Tuesdays during the fall months. Books Sandwiched In, as it was called, immediately attracted overflow audiences, prompting the Friends to install a loud-speaker system in the corridor next to the auditorium. The stream of citizens hastening into the library on successive Tuesday noons added a new feature to the downtown landscape. Unwilling to see them dwindle at the close of the book-review series, the library tried a second series: Films Sandwiched In in 1958. It too was successful. From funds supplied by Rochester business firms, the Friends granted an annual scholarship for attendance at a library school. In many other ways they promoted the welfare of the Rochester Public Library.

Of course the welfare of the library was not exclusively the concern of a limited group, and numerous agencies generously lent their support. Not only did the press regularly insert advance notices of the bookmobile stops and other events, but reporters wrote news accounts of many library activities, while commentators both on the radio and T.V. made frequent men-

tion of new books and in other ways promoted library services. Both the Junior Chamber and the Chamber of Commerce backed special programs at the library, and the Superintendent of Schools joined Hacker in appointing a committee to seek a basis for more effective cooperation between the public schools and the public library.

These activities helped to assure continued public support. Although repeated pleas for a new Brighton branch produced no action, Hacker finally cleared all roadblocks to the new Dewey Ave. Branch. Completed in time for the convention of the State Librarians Association, held at Rochester in Oct. 1958, it won their admiration and a special citation from the New York State Architects, while again the public crowded in to see and use a model library. An unexpected opportunity to acquire the former Lake Ave. station of the Rochester Telephone Co. enabled the library to remodel it in 1960 as a commodious replacement for the old Charlotte Branch. Gratified by the efficient services of its Bookmobile, the library did not protest when the school board determined that year to close another sub-branch, leaving but four of the original eleven in operation. Yet, despite economies there and elsewhere, the library's expanding activities called for and received a city appropriation of slightly over \$1,000,000 for the first time that year, not counting \$157,000 received from the state and other sources.

Thus in a brief half century Rochester has developed a well rounded library system. Its directors and staff have won community support for their major objectives and respect for their achievements. They have met the challenge of Rochester's metropolitan emergence by devising the Pioneer Library System, which embraces in 1961 the five counties of Monroe, Livingston, Wayne, Ontario, and Wyoming. They have perfected new techniques of promoting circulation—notably the use of dustjackets on new books protected by mylar covers, the

enlistment of volunteers to take selected volumes to public meetings so that interested citizens can sign out pertinent books on the spot, and the "operation bullseye" under which the librarian takes the initiative in sending a significant new book to a civic leader who is currently confronted by the problems it discusses. Staff members have also responded to repeated requests for wider community service in related civic and cultural bodies, such as the Rochester Area Educational Television Association, of which Hacker has become president.

Although only thirty of those on the library staff at the opening of the Rundel Building in 1936 remain with it today—only two as heads in their original posts, J. Vernon Steinmann as assistant librarian and Miss Emma B. Swift as head of the local history division, and one branch head of that year, Miss Marjorie Burnett, who is head of a new branch on Dewey Avenue today—the library has recruited a staff of dedicated professionals, some of them the product in part of its own trainee program, whose spirit seems as youthful and as resilient as that of their predecessors at the dedication of the main library or at the founding of the system fifty years ago.