

News Release: American Library Association

Public Information Office
American Library Association
50 East Huron Street
Chicago, Illinois 60611
312 944-6780

From: Peggy Barber, Director
Public Information Office

For immediate release

Clara Stanton Jones, President Elect of the American Library Association, and Edward G. Holley, immediate past president, have joined with ALA Executive Director Robert Wedgeworth on behalf of the Association in urging the U. S. Senate to reject President Ford's nomination of historian Daniel J. Boorstin to be the twelfth Librarian of Congress.

Their statement follows Wedgeworth's July 30 testimony on the Boorstin appointment before the Senate Committee on Rules and Administration.

Statement of the Position of the American Library Association
Re: Appointment of the Librarian of Congress

The American Library Association wishes to establish recognition of the principle that the Librarian of Congress is an expert in the field of Library Science whose specialized training, knowledge, experience and administrative competence render him/her an authority in the practice of library organization and management, as well as the national and world leader in library development. The position is not a general cultural post with unspecified functions. It has strong, clear prerequisites for effective performance that can be met only by a qualified, seasoned librarian.

Over the past century Americans have led the world in the modernization of library organization and service. Apprenticeship was the original method of training in Library Science, as in law and medicine.

2.

Today, however, lawyers, physicians and librarians must have formal, specialized training because the practice of every profession in modern life is far more advanced and complex than in former times.

The various Librarians of Congress were architects and pioneers in establishing the disciplines of the developing new profession. Since 1864 only two Librarians of Congress (John Russell Young, 1897-99; Archibald MacLeish, 1939-44) have come to that post as newcomers. The others reached that pinnacle after apprenticeship and outstanding achievement in the field of Library Science. Their backgrounds were academic but their developed training-by-practice. In the context of today, Harvard, Yale, Princeton and Brown Universities have replaced retiring distinguished pioneers with formally trained librarians. It is an increasing rarity to find directors of major libraries who are not trained and experienced librarians.

European academic and national libraries still retain some of the elitist tradition from the past. The high degree of library organization in this country has been accompanied by the growth of a tradition of much freer access to library materials and more exhaustive service to patrons than is found in Europe. Although American influence is evident in evolving practices, there are more European library directors from the apprenticeship tradition than in America. However, even in Europe the path to librarianship now leads most commonly through the medium of formal library education. The newer European library leaders are modern professionals.

The Library of Congress is a giant institution of 17 million volumes, a budget of \$120 million, a staff of 4500, and an immense complex of services. Its classification and cataloging services are drawn upon by

3.

libraries around the world. Its many pilot projects spearhead the development of appropriate technology to increase efficiency in keeping with present-day demands. Direction of this entire, far-reaching program comes from the Librarian of Congress himself and is based on familiarity with the broad range of operations and their relative importance to the goals of service.

The library profession has produced its own renowned administrators who are an integral part of the intellectual leadership of the nation. The truly great library leaders of all periods merit the classification, "Renaissance man." They have enriched scholarship in the field of Library Science and contributed to the practical development of library service by means of lectures and writing based on broad professional experience and thought. A scholar coming from another field to the position of Librarian of Congress would be frustrated not only by lack of relevant preparation and experience but by the waste of talent diverted to a new and different endeavor.

The methods of earlier times were adequate for their day but, as with leading institutions in all fields, the Library of Congress is a far more complex, sophisticated operation now than formerly. Specific prerequisites for its directorship are as clearly defined as in comparable positions in the older professions. Library Science is comparatively young among the established professions. Perhaps for this reason it is not fully realized that in the operation of a library there is no substitute for mastery of basic skills. The services of anyone other than an eminent, seasoned librarian would be crippling to our great national library.

Clara S. Jones
Director, Detroit Public Library
President Elect -
American Library Association

Edward G. Holley
Dean, School of Library Science
University of North Carolina
Immediate Past President -
American Library Association