

care in each local library, if only they are known to be preserved and accessible somewhere. Such a collection must include also the general mass of books sought and held by local libraries—the books for the ordinary reader, the daily tools of research. Its maintenance will involve processes—of classification and cataloguing—highly costly. Suppose the results of these processes could be made generally available, so as to save duplication of such expenditure upon identical material held by local libraries.

“A collection universal in scope will afford opportunity for bibliographic work not equalled elsewhere. Such work centred there might advance the general interest with the least aggregate effort. The adequate interpretation of such a collection will involve the maintenance of a corps of specialists. Suppose these specialists could be available to answer inquiries from all parts of the country as to what material exists on any particular subject, where it is, how it may be had, how most effectively it may be used.

“There are various bibliographic undertakings which may be co-operative. Suppose there could be at Washington a central bureau—with approved methods, standard forms, adequate editorial capacity, and liberal facilities for publication—which could organize and co-ordinate this work among the libraries of the United States and represent them in such of it as—like the new Royal Society Index—is to be international.

“If there can be such a thing as a bibliographic bureau for the United States, the Library of Congress is in a way to become one; to a degree, in fact, a bureau of information for the United States. Besides routine workers, efficient as a body, it has already some expert bibliographers and, within certain lines, specialists. Besides its own employees, it has within reach by telephone a multitude of experts. They are maintained by the very government which maintains it. They are learned men, efficient men, specially trained, willing to give freely of their special knowledge . . . . Of these men, in the scientific bureaus at Washington, the