

CHAPTER XXII

RECENT PROGRESS AND CONDITION OF MUSEUMS

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The years 1929 and 1930 were years of active growth among museums. New institutions were founded. New buildings were erected and many existing ones were enlarged. Educational work was extended and improved. The ranks of the profession were strengthened. Museum work was accorded greater recognition and gained signally in value and effectiveness.

These past two years were the end of a decade, and there is occasion in reviewing them to compare recent developments with those of the longer period. This can be done readily since the present report is prepared concurrently with the finishing of a comprehensive survey. During the past year the American Association of Museums has been taking stock of the museum resources of the country¹ and has extended this inquiry somewhat into the past; in consequence a body of statistical information is available, and quite full presentation of it is in order since at present there is no report to which one can turn for even the most fragmentary data on museum conditions and trends.

Museums are grouped here into two main classes: (1) Public museums, and (2) university, college, and school museums. Public museums—existing under a variety of controls and supports—direct their attention to the people at large. Their distribution is related to population, and their character tends to be determined by the nature of their communities. University, college, and school museums—controlled and supported by their parent institutions—exist for the instruction of particular student bodies. Their distribution is affected by a tendency among colleges and universities to avoid large population centers, and their features are shaped chiefly by teaching needs.

¹ A "Handbook of American Museums," containing a condensed but comprehensive account of each of approximately 1,400 American museums, will be published by the American Association of Museums early in 1932 and will be available from their headquarters at the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C.