

SPECIAL LIBRARIES ASSOCIATION  
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SPECIAL LIBRARIES: AN EDITORIAL HISTORY

Special Libraries, official journal of Special Libraries Association, began publication in January 1910. With the January 1965 issue it began its fifty-sixth volume.

Anna B. Sears, first Secretary of the Association, edited the January and February 1910 numbers but left the profession, and was succeeded by John A. Lapp who served as Editor until 1917. From 1917 through 1924, five different Association members assumed and resigned the editorial responsibility. Herbert O. Brigham provided seven years of continuity from 1924-1931, a seven-year period of growth in the Journal comparable to those years under Dr. Lapp's editorship. Two editors served during the next three years. Marian C. Manley then became Editor for the five-year period, 1934-1939. She was followed by two one-year term editors. The last of these individuals was a free-lance editor and librarian -- and the word free indicates the extent of her compensation.

Alma C. Mitchill took over as Editor of Special Libraries with the July-August issue, 1941, and continued through May-June 1951. The Association's Policies Committee, Beatrice Simon, Chairman, recommended on October 19, 1950 that with the retirement of Miss Mitchill as Editor, there existed the urgent necessity of finding someone who could carry on with all editorial work of the Association - a Managing Editor. This was in agreement with Miss Mitchill's own strong recommendation which she had been making for some time. For instance, in her 1950-51 Report as Editor she has written:

"For some time I have been advocating the editing of Special Libraries entirely at Headquarters. With the continued growth of SLA in membership and prestige, the magazine will naturally cover a wider area of subject interests so as to serve more adequately than it now does the diversified interests of SLA in all various aspects. In order to present a more professional journal to our members we should have someone who can devote far more time securing articles, planning special issues and sections, format, etc., than a voluntary editor who has her own job to occupy most of her waking hours."

Harry R. Snowden, Jr., a new graduate librarian with previous editorial experience, who had been Editorial Assistant, a staff position on a part-time basis since March 15, 1951, was the selection of Miss Mitchill, Mrs. Kathleen B. Stebbins, Executive Secretary, and the President, Mrs. Elizabeth W. Owens. Snowden assumed his duties as Managing Editor with the July-August 1951 issue although his actual appointment continued to be, so it seems, one of Editorial Assistant.

It should be noted that an Advisory Council action of June 1951 suggested that Special Libraries be edited by an experienced member of SLA who would work with an editorial assistant. The Publications Committee, Dora Richman, Chairman, on the other hand, recommended a professional editor using approved journalistic methods and procedures with subject content reviewed prior to publication by authoritative specialist members. The Voight report of June 19 developed a volume of statistical summary for Special Libraries and concluded that a paid editor would probably cost the Association more than not having a paid editor. Miss Mitchill's later words were even then being demonstrated, "...the magazine has always been the football of the Association...."

The Executive Board on June 22, 1951, did establish a three-person Editorial

Governing Board with Miss Mitchill as Chairman. Its duties were defined "to supervise the publication of the Journal." Originally a temporary committee, it became a permanent committee by Board Action on October 20, 1951. Its duties by Committee recommendation were to "be that of an advisory body to the Managing Editor; that it meet from time to time to discuss the policy of the magazine and to plan future issues." The Board, instead, deleted this part of the definition and defined the duties of the Managing Editor as "responsible for the make-up of the magazine, for securing articles for publication with the advice of the Editor-in-Chief, and for all business detail other than advertisements." The position of Editor-in-Chief neither existed nor was defined!

Snowden was to resign as Managing Editor in March 1952 and be replaced by Dora Richman, a member of the Editorial Governing Board and a special librarian, as Associate Editor to fill out the period until June 1, 1952. Snowden moved to an editorial position with another publisher and replaced Miss Richman on the Board. The word Governing was deleted from the Board's name in the July-August 1952 issue upon Miss Mitchill's recommendation as Chairman. On October 9 Miss Richman's title was changed to Editor.

The Association's Constitution and Bylaws described the position of Editor: appointment was made directly by the Board; the Editor on some matters reported to the Executive Secretary (as a Staff member) but for his editorial assignments, to the Board or its committee creation. Obviously such a situation was a source of confusion among and between the Board, the various-named editorial committees, the Editors, and

the Executive Secretaries. No doubt this contributed to Mrs. Stebbins' resignation in 1953, and to misunderstandings between her replacement, Marian E. Lucius, and the Editor.

The Lasser Survey of Association publications policy authorized by the Board on June 22, 1953, and received November 12, 1953 offered, according to Board opinion, little of the guidance sought when it was considered on February 25, 1954.

In July 1954, Miss Mitchill and her Committee urged a re-examination of the aim, composition, duties and responsibilities of the Executive Board, the duties and responsibilities of the Editor and the Editorial Office, the relation of the Executive Secretary to Special Libraries, and recommendations on how a restated editorial policy should be constituted.

Miss Mitchill's Committee made such recommendations at the October 7, 1954 Board meeting. They were received by a hostile Board and charges that the Committee was seeking more authority for itself. Most of the recommendations were either tabled or referred back to the Committee, and the Committee told that lines of authority at Association Headquarters had been spelled out by the Board on February 25, 1964.

By mail on November 29, 1954, a Special Board Committee was appointed to investigate thoroughly the whole situation and to present recommendations for Board consideration. The Committee on January 14, 1955 presented a detailed report, The Report of the Committee of the Executive Board Regarding the Special Libraries' Editorial Board's Responsibility, and and Association Publications. It was approved at a March 3, 1955 New Orleans meeting while at the same time a variety of earlier actions

were rescinded.

The Editor, according to The Report, should report directly to the Executive Secretary and "consult with the Committee on Special Libraries and keep them advised on all matters pertaining to the editorial and advertising content of Special Libraries."

"The basic functions of the Committee on Special Libraries should be the responsibility of determining the policy of the publication assigned to it as designated in recommendations approved by the Executive Board." These were further spelled out as to advice on selection of an editor, determine editorial and administrative policy, advise the editor, inaugurate new features, and to approve regional reporters.

Miss Richman's resignation was announced the next day effective with the April 1955 issue. The old reliable, Miss Mitchill, still a member of the Committee on Special Libraries, became Acting Editor.

A screening committee considered various possibilities in the appointment of a new editor, and when all circumstances were considered, felt it was best to appoint a professional editor with the best pertinent experience who would receive professional library advice from the Special Libraries Committee. One of at least 20 candidates, including some librarians with editorial experience, Mary L. Allison was appointed Editor effective November 28, 1955. Although not a professional librarian, she had been in publishing and research work with Publishers' Weekly, Grolier, the Educational Film Library Association, and elsewhere.

The position of Editor at the time of Miss Allison's appointment included 16 principal duties. Noted first was that the Editor, subject to the approval of the Committee on Special Libraries, plans the editorial and advertising content of Special Libraries and secures articles or selects articles from those voluntarily submitted. Other duties related to the production of the Journal, a news bulletin, and nonserial publications. Miss Allison's work from the very first was of high calibre, and in February 1956 she was made a permanent staff member and Publications Officer of the Association as well.

The 1958 revision of the Constitution and Bylaws contined the provision that the Editor was an appointment of the Board. Although this had never caused any problem between Miss Allison and Miss Lucius until her resignation in 1959, nor with Bill M. Woods after August 1, 1959, the ambiguous regulation was recognized.

A new Headquarters Personnel Committee Manual of February 18, 1961 spelled out that appointments of professional staff of Association Headquarters were to be made by the Executive Secretary with the concurrence of the Committee. The new description for the Special Libraries Committee approved earlier on June 5, 1960 read:

"The Special Libraries Committee shall be a Standing Committee of three members appointed for overlapping terms of two years. The Committee shall meet at the call of the Chairman or Editor who shall be an ex-officio member. The duties of this Committee shall be to advise on editorial policy of Special Libraries, defend this policy when necessary, review articles submitted, and advise on the general content."

The June 1961 revision of Association Headquarters job descriptions, and specifically for the Publications and Public Relations Director (title of a new position approved effective August 8, 1960 to which Miss Allison was appointed) read:

"Plans content of Special Libraries with the advice of the Special Libraries Committee (and) supervises editing production, and advertising program of Special Libraries."

No major change in this description is anticipated in a revision currently underway.

The August 9, 1962 Bylaws revision dropped the provision that the Editor be a constitutional position requiring appointment by the Board and implying that he worked directly under the Board or another properly designated body in performing his editorial duties. The Bylaws further state that the Administrator of Association Headquarters (Executive Director) "shall direct the functions and activities of the headquarters...."

The Executive Director and other Staff delegated to do so, perform a variety of duties working closely with all Association committees. Such Committees have continuing responsibility for policy recommendation to the Board of Directors and for other specifics as contained in committee definitions.

A February 1965 recommendation from the Special Libraries Committee and a subsequent recommendation from the Committee on Committees, that the name of the Special Libraries Committee be changed to read Special Libraries Editorial Advisory Committee, has been deferred pending a report from the Ad Hoc Committee to Investigate Special Libraries.

"SPECIAL LIBRARIES" -

Editors and assistants 1910 - 1940

March 1910-June 1917

Editor

John A. Lepp - Legislative Reference Lib., Indiana State Libr.

Assistant Editor

Ethel Cleland, Feb. 1912-Dec. 1915

Lillian Henley, Jan. 1916-June 1917

Contributing Editors

F.N. Morton, Sept. 1912- March 1917

H.H.B. Meyer, Sept. 1912-June 1917

D.N. Handy, Sept. 1912-June 1917

Business Manager

Guy E. Marion, 1910-?

Sept. 1917-June 1918

Editor

Ralph L. Power, College of Bus. Ad. Boston Univ.

Associate Editors

H.H.B. Meyer, Sept. 1917-June 1918

R.H. Johnston " " " "

Daniel N. Handy " " " "

Ethel M. Johnson " " " "

Maud A. Carabin Sept. 1917-Jan. 1918.

Helen Norris " " " "

Eleanor Kerr Oct. 1917-June 1918

Sept. 1918- Sept. 1920

Editor

J.H. Friedel

Associate Editors

Claribel R. Barnett Sept. 1918-Dec. 1921

Mary B. Day " " " "

Ella M. Genung " " " "

Edward D. Greenman " " " "

Mary A. Pillsbury " " " "

Herbert O. Brigham Dec. 1918-Dec. 1921

Edward H. Redstone " " " "

Advertising Manager

Laura R. Gibbs, Nov. 1919?

Managing Editor

Kenneth Welker, Apr. 1920?

Oct. 1920-Jan. 1923

Editor

Adelaide R. Hasse, Research Consultant, WPA

Associate Editors

As above, Oct. 1920-Dec. 1921

Claribel R. Barnett Jan. 1922-Sept. 1923

Alta B. Claflin " " " "

Abbie G. Glover " " " "

Joseph F. Kwapil " " " "

Rebecca B. Rankin " " " "

Herbert O. Brigham Oct. 1922-Sept. 1923

Feb.-Sept. 1923

Acting Editor

Oct. 1923-Oct. 1924

Editor

Laura R. Gibbs - Ref. Dept. Boston Public Lib

Associate Editors

Elizabeth Hanner  
Dorsey W. Hyde, Jr.  
Ralph L. Power  
Rebecca B. Rankin  
Margaret Reynolds  
Margaret Withington

Oct. 1924-June 1931

Editor

Herbert O. Brigham - Newport R.I. Historical Society

Assistant Editor

Prof. Henry H. Norris

Associate Editors

William Alcott, July 1927-  
Lewis A. Armistead, July 1927-Aug. 1928  
Daniel N. Hendy, July 1927-Apr. 1929  
M.E. Pellett, Sept. 1928-  
Rebecca E. Rankin, May/June 1929-

July/Aug 1931-May/June 1932

Editor

Ruth Savord, Council on Foreign Relations

Business Manager

M. Dorothy Howard

July/Aug 1932-June 1934

Editor

Florence Bradley, Metropolitan Life

Advertising Manager

Gertrude D. Peterkin, Oct. 1932-?

July 1934-June 1939

Editor

Marien Manley, Newark Public Library, Business Branch

July 1939-1940

Editor

Mrs. Virginia Meredith NAM

1940-

Editor

Grace D. Aikenhead