

bilities for state and national library services. Concerted group action is needed.

Organizationally, we have put our financial house in order. We are making encouraging progress in adjusting to new divisional groupings. Of course we have growing pains, but these are the signs of life and energy and necessary change.

We, the 20,000 members of the American Library Association, are weaving a tapestry of library services. The texture varies in strength and color. Here is the warp of strong, smooth threads. There is a spot of rich green, a gay touch of red—glowing

strands of silver and gold. As with any work of art, the pattern emerges slowly. Some human figures stand out from the background design. But there are thin spots, not yet woven, and spots worn away by neglect.

My hope is that the 20,000 strands we weave into the tapestry this year will strengthen and make more beautiful the design started 75 years ago. Only you can determine what kind of thread you will be in this ever-changing fabric. It takes many kinds and colors—but above all, each thread must be strong and true.

To the ALA on Its 75th Anniversary A Report to the ALA Council

CLARENCE R. GRAHAM

PRESIDENT, AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION, 1950-51

IT SEEMS particularly appropriate to me that the 175th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence with the theme, "A Re-Declaration of Independence" and the 75th Anniversary of the founding of the American Library Association with the theme, "The Heritage of the U.S.A. in Times of Crisis" should be observed during the same year. Coincidentally, each of these events took place originally in Philadelphia and on the fourth of the month—the ALA birthday being October 4 which is being named National Library Day.

It seems most appropriate that these celebrations should take place during the same year, because the ideas stated in that sublime document preserved in the Library of Congress are the ideas that librarians are fighting for each day.

In this period when we are engaged in

a world-wide conflict of ideologies, it has never before in the history of the world been so important that the *people* think.

Never before has it been so extremely difficult for the people to cut their paths through the jungles of censorship and propaganda in order to think.

And never before have "the people" had so little time to do their thinking.

As I have said many times before to many of you, a fundamental principle of democracy, it seems to me, is that if the people think seriously and if they think long enough, the result is true or *right* thinking. This statement is made without any preconceived ideas about what is true or right.

Therefore, if the above is true, the library (any type of library) is in the fearfully strategic position of being a keystone in our democratic civilization.

It is the fundamental service agency of a democracy. Its philosophy must be a non-Aristotelian logic that has for its entities and verities a system based on a dynamic urge for change. A logic that has for its fundamental rule, the rule of changing rules.

Mr. Graham is librarian of the Louisville Free Public Library, Louisville, Ky. His report to Council was delivered in Chicago on July 9, 1951.

If this concept of a library is taken up to be worked around, changed and developed—then my hope for the American Library Association is more optimistic.

During my term I have come to a conclusion that two major steps should be undertaken to improve and strengthen the Association.

1. That a system of Council representation based on a federation of state associations, in general like Recommendations 23 and 24 of the report of the Fourth ALA Activities Committee, would be a great forward step.

Then we would have membership representation and not a hodgepodge of inadequate representation by type of library.

2. I have spoken to many individuals all over the country who seem to agree with me that one of the things that would strengthen the Association, help us in our fight for intellectual freedom and potentially materially aid the individual library in its struggle for survival would be the establishment of some sort of an "Accredited List of Libraries"; that certain minimum standards would have to be maintained in order to display the "ALA Approved" rating plaque.

And then if Bartlesville, Okla., or any cities in Illinois, closer home to ALA Headquarters, wanted to censor library materials, we could bring all of the brilliant glare of negative national publicity to focus on the pernicious mental anemia of those benighted souls who seek to set themselves up as self-appointed censors of the public mind and morals.

In time, by the force of publicity, civic or institutional pride and the desire to improve standards, this accredited list could assume the importance of membership lists in the important regional educational accrediting associations.

Your problem as members of the Association is that you must not expect your president, your Executive Board, and even your Council, which is elected to represent you—to do your thinking and to solve your

problems for you. Periodically, you have an activities committee appointed to do some soul searching for you. I plead for each member of the Association to appoint *himself* a permanent activities committee and do away with these periodic binges of self-righteous reforming.

During this year I have traveled widely over this wonderful country of ours. I wish by some miracle it were possible for each member of the Association to serve as president. It would be rewarding to the Association, to the individual member and to librarianship.

I have never failed to learn something of importance in even the smallest library I have visited. I have been struck by the fact that librarians are increasingly becoming the leaders in their community. And yet in their own professional association, many are not contributing toward its own militant democracy.

One thing has always knifed its way into my vitals—the childlike faith which individual members of the ALA have shown in the power of their president to do something to change or improve their Association.

Upon librarians, I sincerely believe, rests the privilege of making it possible for humanity to seek among the resources of human knowledge for scraps to sustain them during this time of agony.

Let us fight for ourselves, our Association, and our libraries. Then we can stop fumbling with the fearful results of anticipated censorship and the dire results of unintelligent loyalty oaths and can become LIBRARIANS. This is what I call on you to do now!

With complete humbleness—and with the most sincere kind of honest sentimentality—I pray that you will accept your manifest duty as the true servants of mankind; to put all of your great talents and all of your tireless and selfless striving into the most wonderful task ever given to a group: the rescuing of your fellow man from the awful, tragic and suicidal darkness of his own ignorance.

**ALA MEMBERS BE SURE TO CHECK THE OCTOBER ALA BULLETIN
AND CAST YOUR VOTE ON MEMBERSHIP DUES PROPOSALS**