

THE STUDENT AND THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY (A paper given at the Annual Weekend School of the Association of Assistant Librarians (Northern Ireland Division) on 24 October, 1970 at Newcastle, Co. Down)

B. J. C. Wintour

Deputy Librarian

New University of Ulster

Although the title of this paper is 'The student and the university library' I would like on the one hand to narrow the scope by confining it to the undergraduate student and on the other hand to broaden the scope by looking at the undergraduate in relation to both the university library and the public library. I was prompted to adopt this approach to the subject when I read in the Coleraine Chronicle earlier this year a report on the various reactions of some of the New University of Ulster's students to the expense involved in the official opening of the university. The reaction which interested me was the bitter protest that the money could more usefully have been spent on housing and library facilities. The reason for this reference to library facilities is explained further on in this newspaper report in these words:

"Students in the university ... suffered poor, overcrowded library facilities ... A roomy well stocked library in the New University of Ulster could offer facilities for both local people and students. At present students were forced to use the public libraries in Coleraine, Portstewart and Portrush, thus limiting the effectiveness of these libraries to the local community".¹

Apart from saying that the situation described is grossly exaggerated, I do not want to comment on this newspaper report because I hope that this paper will largely explain how this sort of student dissatisfaction, which is by no means unique to the New University of Ulster library, can arise, and why, however good a university library is, university students are liable to make increasingly heavy use of public libraries.

Let me first, however, dispel the impression, which you may have formed from the newspaper extract just quoted that the library needs of the undergraduate are ignored in universities. I do not deny that in the development of British university libraries in the first half of the twentieth century the needs of the undergraduate did tend to be neglected. Building up, improving, and organising the collections, mainly for the benefit of graduates and research and teaching staff, were the main preoccupations of university librarians. The undergraduate was largely left to fend for himself. With the expansion in student numbers after the war, however, and the many difficult problems which this brought in its train, the undergraduate began gradually to receive the sort of attention he deserved. University librarians woke up to the fact that undergraduates represent by far the bulk of the library's users. In addition to building up collections of books they began to wonder about the use that was made of them by the undergraduate. They began to ask themselves all sorts of searching questions. How easily could students find their way around the library? How well did they cope with the catalogues? How adequate was the book stock for them? What use did they make of bibliographies and reference works? How could the library service to them be improved? Questions like these found expression in pioneering library surveys carried out at the universities of Leeds and Southampton and since then several other university libraries have carried out similar surveys. In addition the University Grants Committee surveyed undergraduate use in several university libraries for the Parry Committee on Libraries and Dr Oppenheim conducted a survey of student reading habits at the London School of Economics.

The aspect of these library surveys that I would like to dwell on for a moment is what they

¹ *The Chronicle*, 8 August, 1970, p.1

reveal about the use made of public libraries by the university student. The 1959 survey at Leeds University² showed that 33% of the sample chosen had made use of libraries outside the university for reading and working on the premises, and 46% of the sample had made use of outside libraries for borrowing - as opposed to using them for reference purposes. Altogether 58% of the total sample had used libraries outside the university either to study or to borrow books. In examining the type of use made of the libraries the survey showed that about half had used them for curricular studies; just over a quarter had used them mainly for recreational purposes; and a quarter had used them equally for both purposes. Of the libraries outside the university used by the students Leeds Central Library had received by far the heaviest use. The Southampton survey of 1962³ showed that 48% of the sample used the Public Library - 38% for borrowing, 15% for reference, 13% to work with their own books. This is similar to the Leeds pattern, although the subsequent survey at Southampton in 1965⁴ revealed a decline in student use of the Public Library to 31% of the sample - 26% for borrowing, 11% for reference and 3% to work with their own books. The 1965 University Grants Committee survey⁵, however, produced a considerably higher figure for the use of public libraries by university students. This survey, which covered several university libraries, revealed that 49% of all students interviewed made use of a public library in term time and that 61% made use of the public library in their home town in the vacation. Dr Oppenheim found a similarly high use of public libraries in his survey of the reading habits of students at the London School of Economics⁶. He found that 58% of all students had regularly used the public library in term time and 54% during the vacation.

These bare statistics seem merely to indicate that a considerable use of public libraries is being made by university students, but if they are related to the fact that public libraries are also used by all sorts of other students - from schools, technical colleges, the Open University and other institutions - they assume a much deeper significance. The fact is that many public libraries in the United Kingdom are beginning to experience severe pressure from a variety of students, and now that those from universities are increasingly swelling the number, this pressure has become embarrassing, if not actually intolerable, in some areas. The City Librarians of Birmingham, Bristol, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Leeds, Liverpool and Sheffield made this statement in a memorandum prepared for the Parry Committee on Libraries:

"In lending libraries students from universities and colleges are the principal borrowers of a wide range of the textbooks provided. One or two of our number state that students monopolise our textbooks and standard works for long periods. Beside lending books to students, the public libraries provide for much of their general reading and reading supplementary to their courses".⁷

On the student use of the reference section these city librarians stated that 'accommodation in the reference libraries is frequently overtaxed by the number of students wanting accommodation'. These are views expressed by librarians of large city public libraries, but the situation they describe

² Tucker, P.E. 'The sources of books for undergraduates', *Journal of Documentation*. 17 (1961), 77-95

³ Line, M. B. 'Student attitudes to the university library; a survey at Southampton University', *Journal of Documentation*, 19 (1963), 100-117

⁴ Line, M. B. and M. Tidmarsh, 'Student attitudes to the university library; a second survey at Southampton University', *Journal of Documentation*, 22 (1966), 123-135

⁵ University Grants Committee. *Report of the Committee on Libraries*. [Chairman Dr Thomas Parry] (London, H.M.S.O., 1967) Appendix 3: UGC survey of undergraduate use of libraries

⁶ Oppenheim, A.N. Reading habits of students; a survey of students at the London School of Economics, *Journal of Documentation*, 18 (1962), 42-57

⁷ University Grants Committee., op. cit., p.19

undoubtedly exists in many smaller regional public libraries and in the metropolitan public libraries of London.

Why are university students making such embarrassingly heavy use of public libraries? The two obvious answers to this question - and the ones which I am sure must readily spring to the mind of the public librarian who sees the seats in his reading room monopolised by students - are the lack of accommodation and the inadequate bookstock of the university library. To a large extent these answers are correct, but I think one needs to delve deeper into the question and see all the other factors involved.

Undoubtedly the crucial factor is the post-war expansion of student numbers in the universities, allied to a gradual change in methods of teaching students. The 'Hale Report on University Teaching Methods'⁸ strongly advocated more use being made of tutorial teaching as opposed to the straight lecture. This method involves the student in doing a considerable amount of his own reading from prescribed lists of books. It is a method which has been gaining ground and has stimulated an increasing use of the library. This trend away from lecture-oriented teaching occurs at a time of vast increases in student numbers, and the combined effect is to create an undergraduate demand for books with which no university library, with the best will in the world, can adequately deal.

The fact is that there are far too many students chasing far too few books. The situation, unfortunately, is alleviated very little by students buying books for themselves. In pre-war years the habit of book-buying was common among students at university but in post-war years this habit declined so dramatically that in its report on university development during the years 1947-52⁹ the University Grants Committee felt it necessary to make the following statement:

"Students now tend to buy far fewer books than they did in the past. This is indeed not surprising in view of the increase in the cost of books which has taken place since the war. We would suggest nevertheless that even a small private library is an aim so desirable as to warrant some curtailment of private expenditure in other directions."

Since the University Grants Committee made this statement the situation has not improved, in spite of the fact that the grants of most students include an annual allowance for books, instruments and materials. It seems probable that not more than half this amount is, on average, being spent on books. This reluctance to buy books is not surprising when you consider that so many students arrive at university without ever having bought a textbook, some not even a book, before. Many students begrudge such a depletion of their resources, which all too many of them nowadays have to supplement by earning money in temporary vacation jobs.

The fact that few students these days build up their own personal libraries means that there is an increasing reliance on the university library for the books they require and a far greater undergraduate use of the library than ever existed in pre-war years. This has resulted in large numbers of students all seeking similar books. To a certain extent this situation has been made worse by the open access system which exists wholly or partly in most university libraries. The majority of students have almost unlimited access to the shelves, from which they can freely take books both for borrowing and for use in the library. This necessarily means that some students are going to be disappointed when they seek the books they require. Quite often the book will be on loan or in use in the library. The greater the number of students involved in a particular course of reading the greater the likelihood that this will happen. The unfortunate aspect of this is that the student often gives up all too easily when he cannot find the book on the shelf. He tends not to

⁸ University Grants Committee. *Report of the Committee on University Teaching Methods*. [Chairman, Sir Edward Hale] (London, H.M.S.O., 1964)

⁹ University Grants Committee. *University development, 1947-1952* (London, H.M.S.O., 1953)

find out whether the book is on loan and to have it reserved for him. This is because he usually needs the book quickly and he is not prepared to wait for the book to be recalled. There are, of course, other reasons why a student cannot find a book on the shelf and these too are related to the effects of the open access system. Library surveys have shown that students often make unintelligent use of the library's catalogues, failing, for instance, to realize the significance of symbols which represent special locations for certain types of books such as oversize or pamphlet materials. Often students fail to use the catalogues at all and go straight to the section of the library where they think a book will be. As you can well imagine, the success rate of finding a book in this way is extremely low. Account too has to be taken of the and-social behaviour of some students who retain books for their personal use by hiding them out of sequence in inaccessible parts of the library, or by simply removing them from the library without signing for them. University libraries are not in the habit of publicising records of their book losses, but, from personal experience and conversations with colleagues from other universities, I believe the incidence of theft is high.

If a student cannot find the book he wants in the university library and he does not, or cannot, buy it himself, what does he do? If he is an enthusiastic student he will seek an alternative source of supply in a library outside the university and often the most attractive source is the reference section of the public library, because here borrowing is not normally allowed, and the chances of the book he wants being available are therefore considerably greater. It is, however, not just lack of books or inability to find books in the university library which causes some students to use the public library. Increasing pressure of undergraduate use of the university library has resulted in a shortage of reader places in many of them. Some students, therefore, may seek alternative seating accommodation in the public library. On the other hand it may be that some students prefer to use the public library because it is more attractive, less complicated or less awesome. This seems to be the implication of some comments about university libraries made in a recent article by Mr Pipe, an undergraduate in his final year¹⁰. He says:

"We are still required to spend hours filling in borrowing slips and watching junior library assistants fiddle with outdated methods whilst we wait in the queues and think wistfully of our public libraries back home, with their Telex, their photocharging machines and even their computerized catalogues."

Further on in this article he takes up the praise of public libraries again when he says:

"We are only beginning to realize that libraries need a great deal of care in the designing stage and must be designed from the outset as libraries not as Greek temples, museums or warehouses. Once again many public libraries are ahead in this field."

Here is one student who is obviously attracted to public libraries, and I am sure there are many others like him. I myself have met students who have told me quite frankly that they preferred the public library to the university library as a place in which to work. The popularity of the public library for the student is also attributed to superior opening hours. In the memorandum which was presented by various city librarians to the Parry Committee on Libraries it was pointed out that the opening hours of public libraries were often longer than in university libraries and that holiday closing was much more limited than it was in a university¹¹. In the vacation, of course, most students leave the university campus and, if they go home and do any studying at all, they tend to use the local public library, especially if there are no other types of library in the area.

As you can see the reasons for university students using the public library are many

¹⁰ Pipe, C.C. 'The university and its library', *Library Association Record*, 70 (1968), 180-181

¹¹ University Grants Committee. *Report of the Committee on Libraries*, op. cit., p. 19

and varied, but in a great number of cases it is quite simply a question of personal convenience. If a student has lodgings a considerable distance from the university and an evening meal laid on there, he will naturally tend to use the nearest local public library in the evening in preference to making a long trek back to the university campus. With the expansion of student numbers universities have had to look further and further afield for accommodation with the result that students are finding themselves in lodgings increasingly remote from the university, which is itself often miles away from the town centre. It is interesting to note that this sort of problem exists in the United States as well. In an article¹² written in 1962 Mr Hamill, Librarian of Los Angeles Public Library, says:

“Students spend only a part of their day on the campus. After they have attended their classes, they transport themselves by automobile, often in car pools, back to homes located in parts of the metropolitan area far removed from the university or college library. Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that for reference and reading needs connected with his courses the student turns to the nearest public library which has suitable materials.”

Public librarians must naturally be rather concerned by the extensive student use of their libraries, especially if they find, as is the case in Birmingham Reference Library, that at times up to 60% of the seats available are occupied by students¹³. The situation must be a source of even more concern when it is remembered that student numbers, which are now, of course, being swelled by recruits to the Open University, are increasing at such a rapid rate. As Mr Hamill put it in the same article from which I quoted just now:

*“The many difficulties encountered by the public library in meeting this onrush of university and college students are augmented by armies of other students of all ages ... Public libraries have actually been overwhelmed at many times by the student horde. In fact, many members of our library staff are concerned that the non-student adult feels unwelcome in the confusion and hubbub created by student use. In many libraries, students have become the tail that wags the dog, and other would-be users of the library are simply not able to get access to the materials that they need or to receive the professional services they have every right to expect”.*¹⁴

This extreme situation has probably not yet been reached in the United Kingdom, but many public libraries must be getting very close to it.

What are the universities and their libraries doing to help alleviate the situation? This seems to me to be the sort of question that public librarians have every right to be asking. My answer to the question would be that universities and their libraries are trying to improve the situation in a number of different ways, as I will endeavour to show you.

Efforts are being made to encourage students to buy their own textbooks. It is true that nothing has come of the investigations which have been made into the ways of ensuring that students use their book allowance for the purpose for which it was intended, but there are distinct signs that university teaching staff are beginning to take an active interest in encouraging students to buy books. I have, for example, noticed in libraries in which I have worked that some lecturers asterisk on their reading lists items which they consider ought to be bought and some even go to the trouble of providing bibliographic details such as price or whether the item is available in paperback. Guidance like this is of great value to the student because one of his greatest difficulties is sifting out from the masses of reading lists which are presented to him those items which are sufficiently important to warrant purchase. This is why, even if a lecturer makes no positive suggestions about purchase, he should at least divide up his reading lists into

¹² Hamill, H. L. ‘The public library serves the university student’, *College and Research Libraries*, 23 (1962), 11

¹³ University Grants Committee. *Report of the Committee on Libraries*, op. cit., p. 21

¹⁴ Hamill, H. L., op. cit., 11-12

essential and secondary reading. Many lecturers nowadays do in fact do this. Efforts like these to foster the habit of book-buying are helped enormously by the presence of a good bookshop on the campus. A university bookshop carefully stocked, as a result of close co-operation between the manager and the teaching staff, with books relevant to the courses taught in the university can be a great incentive to student book-buying. Quite a considerable number of universities have bookshops on the campus now, and it is to be hoped that this will eventually help to revive the pre-war habit of book-buying among students.

There is, of course, a limit to what the student can be expected to buy, especially in some subject fields like the humanities and the social sciences where the reading can be very extensive indeed. For a great deal of his reading he will naturally rely on the university library, and for this reason the library must have accurate knowledge of his reading requirements. This is an area where cooperation between academic and library staff is absolutely vital, and I am pleased to be able to say that, in my opinion, a lot of progress has been made in this direction. It is becoming common practice for teaching staff to liaise with the library staff to ensure that the books that they recommend are available in the library. I think it would be true to say that in most universities strenuous efforts are being made by the library staff to get the teaching staff to consult them before they issue prescribed reading lists, and that, as a result of this, there is far more likelihood that university libraries have, or can obtain in good time, the items which appear on these lists. University librarians are also attempting to educate the teaching staff to give the library prior warning of what the Parry Report refers to as 'surges' of demand¹⁵. This sort of demand, increasingly common as the tutorial method of teaching gains ground, is created, for instance, by a lecturer recommending certain books to a large group of students for an essay which has to be completed in a short period of time. Prior warning of what is likely to be a sudden and overwhelming demand enables the library staff to place a temporary restriction on the use of the relevant books so as to ensure that all the students have reasonable opportunity to consult them. The closer the relations are between teaching and library staff, the greater is the university library's awareness of the true book needs of the undergraduate. I think that relations between teaching and library staff are a great deal closer than they have ever been before and that this is being reflected in a better organisation of the book resources available to the undergraduate in the university library.

As a result of this the majority of the undergraduate's prescribed texts will be found in the stock of the university library, but, unfortunately, not in sufficient quantities to satisfy the post-Robbins student numbers. The financial limitations of the library budget make extensive duplication of undergraduate textbooks impossible. A limited amount of duplication is usually undertaken, but beyond this university librarians are reluctant to go while their book funds are inadequate to purchase even single copies of important research materials. Occasionally university libraries are able to duplicate for undergraduates on a fairly large scale with the aid of money acquired outside the normal book fund. Keele University Library, for instance, was able, with the help of funds from the Nuffield Foundation, to establish a special collection of duplicate copies in order to ensure reasonable access to essential reading for the very large numbers of undergraduates who do the common first-year course at Keele. This situation, however, is rare, and normally duplication in university libraries can only be practiced on a small scale.

Because of their inability to provide enough multiple copies university librarians have resorted to additional methods of trying to ensure that the greatest possible number of students have access to the essential reading. The method which is most commonly employed is to restrict essential undergraduate textbooks either to use in the library or to overnight or short loan borrowing only. There are various ways of doing this. Some university libraries leave the restricted books on the open shelves with some indication on them as to the extent of their restricted use; other libraries place the restricted books behind the Issue Desk or in a separate room and issue them under strict control for specified loan periods, often as short as four hours and with heavy fines imposed for late return. Another way in which many university libraries are

¹⁵ University Grants Committee. *Report of the Committee on Libraries*, op. cit., p.43

able to relieve the pressure on certain books and periodicals, is by providing photocopies of articles or chapters from them and issuing them on restricted loan. This is made possible by the fact that photocopying machines are now available in practically all university libraries and by the increasing tendency for lecturers to recommend periodical articles or single chapters from books in their lists of prescribed reading. The undergraduate also benefits from the various methods to which university libraries have resorted to ensure greater availability and turn-over of borrowed books. These methods include limitation of the number of books which can be borrowed, reduction of the length of time a book can be out on loan before it can be recalled for the use of another reader, the imposition of really heavy fines on overdue books, and the tightening up of the security measures designed to prevent readers taking books out of the library illegally. Security measures seem to present a particular problem. For example, the uniformed official examining books at the library's exit gate does not seem to have had a really appreciable effect in reducing the size of book losses. In an attempt to improve the situation at least two university libraries - Lancaster University Library and Magee University College (now integrated in the New University of Ulster) - have resorted to the use of an electronic device for detecting the illegal removal of books, and other university libraries are seriously investigating the possibilities of this method for solving their security problems.

Allied to the increasing efforts which are being made to ensure that the books are available to the undergraduate are the efforts which are being made to provide him with sufficient expertise to find the books and to use the library intelligently. Whereas in the past the undergraduate was unlikely to receive anything more than a general introductory lecture about the library, given during his first week as a university student, he is nowadays in many universities quite likely to have, in addition, the benefit of a film or slides about the library, conducted tours, a booklet guide to the library, and even formal seminars of instruction in the use of the catalogues and bibliographical tools. The problem of helping the undergraduate to get the best use out of large and sometimes awesome libraries is now taken very seriously indeed. The creation in 1966 of the post of Sub-Librarian in charge of Library Instruction at Reading University Library¹⁶ is, to my way of thinking, symbolic of the new sense of responsibility towards the undergraduate that has developed in university libraries in the post-war years. This post represents an effort to provide organised and co-ordinated library instruction to the undergraduate, and, although, as far as I know, no other such post exists in the United Kingdom, a similar effort is made in many other university libraries, mostly under the aegis of a Sub-Librarian in charge of Reader Services. The almost universal interest which is now taken in the problems of how to instruct the undergraduate is exemplified in a novel way by the competition which Cambridge University Library staged in 1969 to help stimulate an intelligent student use of its resources¹⁷. This competition was based on a questionnaire designed to test the competitor's ability to use the library's catalogues and bibliographical tools. As an incentive to enter the competition three prizes of book tokens were offered for the best answers to the questionnaire. In spite of all the various efforts which are being made to provide library instruction for the undergraduate, few university libraries seem completely satisfied with the results or believe that they have found the ideal approach to the problem. Nevertheless, in my opinion, these efforts have had at least one valuable result, and that is that they have contributed to a more positive contact between the undergraduate and the library staff. This, I feel, has led to the undergraduate having a far less awed attitude to the university library than may have existed in the past, and a greater inclination to use it.

The undergraduate's inclination to use the university library will, of course, to a certain extent depend upon how attractive a place it is in which to work. In this respect I

¹⁶ Richnell, D. T. 'Library and the undergraduate, 2: The Hale Committee Report and instruction in the use of libraries', *Library Association Record*, 68 (1966), 360

¹⁷ 'Library's treasure hunt', *The Times*, 13 January, 1969, see also report in *The Book Collector*, 18 (1969), 382

believe university libraries have improved enormously. This is an opinion which is apparently not shared by Mr Pipe who, in the article¹⁸ I referred to earlier on, says:

“Even the most modern libraries are rarely imaginatively designed; how many, for instance, have sufficient study carrels or sound proof rooms for the typewriters which are preferred by an increasing number of readers? How many have large and comfortable chairs and tables for writing? How many libraries have adequate and efficient lighting and air-conditioning?”

My answer to Mr Pipe would be that many university libraries nowadays do in fact have many of the features of which he approves. The development of the new university libraries in the post-war years presented an opportunity for imaginative design, and I think the opportunity was grasped. Essex University Library, for example, incorporates all the features which Mr Pipe recommends except one - air conditioning - in place of which there is instead a highly efficient, but less expensive, ventilating system. I speak of Essex University Library from personal experience of working in it, but from what I have seen of other new university libraries they would also come up to Mr Pipe's standards. Imaginative design, however, has not been confined to the new university libraries. The old established university libraries which have expanded into new buildings have also displayed it, as I think you would agree if you had recently visited the universities of Birmingham, Edinburgh or Reading, to name but a few. I don't think that Mr Pipe need fear that British university libraries will be designed like 'Greek temples, museums or warehouses'.

University libraries these days are not only more comfortable places in which to work but they are also, as far as their book stocks are concerned, more satisfactorily arranged and guided than they used to be. This has helped to reduce the difficulties which the undergraduate encounters in finding his way around the library. A university library, however, eventually reaches the stage when the size of the book stock renders the task of unravelling its complexities too time-consuming for the undergraduate. In the United States some university libraries which have reached this stage have built separate undergraduate libraries which are capable of providing for most of the needs of the undergraduate student. In the United Kingdom, the idea of the separate undergraduate library has not gained much ground and Leeds University, which is in the process of building one, is, to my knowledge, the only library to give practical expression to the idea. Nevertheless, attempts are being made to help the undergraduate get over the difficulties inherent in a large and complex book stock. Liverpool University Library, for instance, in 1966 opened an Arts Reading Room with shelving for 60,000 frequently wanted volumes and seats for 460 readers. Some university libraries arrange for separate undergraduate facilities within existing buildings. A notable example of this is in Glasgow University where there is an extensive reference collection of undergraduate material housed in a separate undergraduate reading room. In many university libraries, however, the difficulty which the undergraduate might have in coping with a large book stock is considerably reduced because of the division of the library into reading room areas where groups of books on related subjects are brought together in a convenient way. From the point of view of the undergraduate a subject divisional arrangement is of great benefit because it breaks the library up into smaller, more easily manageable units.

In the creation of an improved library service for the undergraduate, university librarians have not been unmindful of the importance of satisfactory opening hours. In fact opening hours in university libraries are a great deal better than they used to be. Most of them keep open from 9.00 a.m. to 10.00 p.m. on Monday to Friday, and a few even manage to keep open for reference, but not for borrowing, as late as 11.30 p.m. On Saturdays most university libraries are open until 1.00 p.m. and a few keep open until 5.00 or 6.00 p.m. Even more significant is the growing number of university libraries which keep open for part of Sunday. These opening hours I have been describing relate to term time and they compare favourably

¹⁸ Pipe, C.C., *op. cit.*

with most public libraries. It is in the vacation, when most university libraries close somewhere around 5.30 p.m. that the opening hours compare unfavourably with those of public libraries. This, of course, is because there is a mass exodus of students and staff in the vacation, and the numbers who remain to use the library do not warrant evening opening hours. Efforts are now made to encourage the undergraduate to use the university library near his home town in the vacation. Most university libraries will provide reference facilities, in some cases even borrowing facilities, in the vacation to undergraduates from other universities, providing they have a form of introduction from the librarian of the university to which they belong. If wider use was made of these facilities and more vacation use was made of universities generally I think most university libraries would be prepared to extend their vacation opening hours.

Longer opening hours have undoubtedly helped to improve the university library service to the undergraduate, but their importance can be exaggerated. They primarily benefit the undergraduate who has residential accommodation on or near the university campus; the undergraduate who lives in lodgings a long way from the campus will still tend to use the nearest public library in the evenings, especially if the canteen facilities in the university and public transport are inadequate at that time of day. The greater the number of students who reside on or near the campus, the greater the number who will benefit from longer opening hours. The unfortunate fact is, however, that with increasing student numbers, the proportion of students who live remote from the campus is getting larger and larger. One solution to this problem lies in the style of student residence which exists in Essex University. Here there are residential tower blocks which are so designed as to provide both residents and non-residents with equal rights of access to facilities for cooking, entertaining and studying¹⁹. The result is that the undergraduate who lives in lodgings remote from the university has a pied-a-terre on the university site and can, therefore, enjoy most of the advantages of residence on the campus, which in Essex University include extremely generous library opening hours.

In spite of all the efforts which universities and their libraries have made to improve the conditions for the undergraduate the fact remains that the relentless pressure of post-Robbins student numbers has created a need for duplication of textbooks and an increase in seating accommodation beyond the ability of most universities to provide. The undergraduate will continue to use the public library as an alternative source of supply of both books and seating accommodation, and, in spite of the expansion of university book stocks, this use is liable to increase as university student populations get larger and larger. What is more, some university libraries positively encourage students to use the public library. Such encouragement reflects the appreciation which the university librarian has for the value of the public library service to the student. But what can the university librarian offer in exchange? Not a great deal really. University libraries are usually prepared to offer reference facilities to any serious external enquirers but rarely do they offer them borrowing facilities.

What is the reaction of the public librarian to this situation? Should the public library provide facilities only to those students who are not attached to a particular institution? Should the public library restrict tables in the reference section to library stock users only and refuse them to university library students, who merely want to use them for reading notes or for perusing their own textbooks? Can the public library continue to provide a service to students of educational institutions? The answer which the Librarian of Los Angeles Public Library gave to this question in the article²⁰ to which I previously referred was as follows:

"It is my continued and firm belief that it must accept the responsibility to serve the university and college student. Not only would the public library be socially unjustified in erecting barriers

¹⁹ Clossick, M. *Student residence: a new approach at the University of Essex* (London, Society for Research into Higher Education, 1967), p. 3.

²⁰ Hamill, H.L. *op. cit.*, p.12

against students, but it should actually welcome the opportunity to encourage students to become life-long consumers of its wares."

I believe that this is the sort of answer that most British public librarians would give. In my experience most public librarians lean over backwards to help the university student. For instance, when I was working at Essex University Library the Librarian supplied to the Borough Librarian of Colchester at the request of the Public Library Committee, a selected list of 76 titles in heavy demand by the university's students, and these were made available in the public library. Admittedly this was only done in 1965, and there was no follow-up due to financial constraints, but it nevertheless illustrates the invariably helpful attitude which public libraries display towards the university student. It is perhaps very presumptuous of a university librarian to say this, but I think the public library attitude could be summed up in this way:

"It would be unfortunate if public libraries sought to opt out of the burden that the expansion of educational facilities will bring. But to meet their obligations to their communities in general and to play a reasonable and worthy part in meeting the specific needs of students of educational institutions, public libraries will need far greater financial backing than they have so far received."

This was an opinion expressed in response to a questionnaire circulated in 1964 by the Librarian of Southampton Public Libraries to a number of the larger municipal authorities, asking them for their views on the present and future service to students by public libraries.²¹

As is so often the case the crux of the matter is seen as a question of finance. Undoubtedly public libraries have every right to use the increasing numbers of their readers who come from educational institutions as a lever to extract additional finances from some quarter. But should this not be done as a co-operative effort between public libraries and educational institutions? In the words of the Librarian of Los Angeles Public Library:

"The public librarian and university and college librarian should aid each other in the presentation of their financial needs to administrators and appropriating bodies. We need to understand each others situation and to help each other develop strategy".²²

Indeed far more co-operation generally ought to exist between public libraries and educational institutions in tackling the problems which have resulted from the student explosion. As Professor Parry said in a recent article²³ in the *Library Association Record*:

"It is a somewhat incongruous situation that students (both university and others) make extensive use of public libraries for reading and reference purposes, even to the extent of almost making a nuisance of themselves, without there being the minimum of consultation between their own library and the public library concerned ... Looking at the problem from the point of view of mere tact and worldly wisdom, I am sure that we must all, sooner or later, convince those authorities, local and national, which make funds available to us, that we are making the best possible use of them by co-ordinating and co-operating wherever possible."

²¹ Clough, E.A. 'Library services for students, (iv): Public libraries', in *Library services for students* [Preprints of papers given at the Annual Conference of the Library Association, Birmingham, 4-6 July, 1964 (London: *Library Association*, 1964), p.25

²² Hamill, H.L. *op. cit.*, p.14.

²³ Parry, T. 'University libraries and the future', *Library Association Record*, 70 (1968), 225-229