

ANNUAL REPORT OF
THE TRUSTEES OF THE
NEW YORK SOCIETY LIBRARY

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THE TRUSTEES of the New York Society Library present to the shareholders its 185th annual report for the year ending March 31, 1939.

It is my sad duty to report the death on September 21st, 1938, of Frederic F. de Rham, who was a most valuable and active Trustee of this Library from 1919 to the date of his death.

The development of the Library during the past year has been notable for the extension of its usefulness to the members and to the outside world of scholarship.

The first obligation of a library toward its material is to see to its care, and with that in mind, the books are being cleaned by the latest library methods, although it must be said that dust proof stacks have not been invented as yet. Books in beautiful leather bindings are being treated with stimulating oils and many have been placed on the shelves in the Members' Reading Room, adding color and character to this beautiful room.

The next obligation is to make the library material quickly available and so the recataloging and reclassifying of the book collection has been progressing; the books are now being arranged in close subject grouping, rather than shelved by author arrangement.

The number of volumes issued for home reading was 55,846, or an increase of 7,736 volumes. When analyzed, this is an interesting figure in the light of the new system of charging for the delivery of books. It is evident that when two books were delivered regularly to all, many books must have lain unread. Paying for the privilege of delivery insures a greater probability of perusal. Where books are called for in person, fewer books are carried home, but those few are more likely to be read — which is, after all, the criterion of a library's effectiveness.

Delivery charges brought in \$1,263, which still only partially pays for this service. The majority of readers prefer delivery but many also use

the Library in person during the weekly interval between book delivery days.

The Parcel Post Act reducing the amount of postage on books sent through the mails, had an immediate effect on the shipping of books to out-of-town readers; 8,209 books were sent by parcel post, an increase of 925 volumes.

No records had been kept in previous years of those using the Library for reading or reference, until we moved into the present building. Not counting the groups or organizations officially visiting the Library, 3,013 people used the Reading Rooms.

In order to broaden the usefulness of the Library, an experimental series of book talks was given by Dr. William H. Lamont of Rutgers University. The lectures were such an evident success that we hope to carry out such a program in the future.

The exhibit cases throughout the Library have held many interesting displays during the year, notably the exhibit of Old Silver from the Goodhue collection, Early New York Laws printed before 1700, Herman Melville first editions, Prayer Books of Yesterday and Today, as well as records and documents of the very early history of the New York Society Library.

Important gifts were made to the Library in the way of books, but space permits only a few to be mentioned, such as the large collection of books presented by Mr. F. Ashton de Peyster. Among unusual items was a scrap book made by William H. Harison, who was a Trustee of this Library from 1837 to 1842. This scrap book, which was a gift of Miss Elizabeth Harison, contains an interesting collection of playbills, visiting cards, hotel bills and letters, one of which was from Alexander Hamilton.

During the recataloging of the foreign books in the Green Art collection, the German translation of the Nürnberg Chronicle was uncovered. It was printed by Anton Koberger at Nürnberg in 1493 and has over two thousand crude woodcuts as illustrations. This valuable piece of incunabula was transferred to the Rare Book stack.

We wish to record our appreciation to the Librarian and the Staff for their cooperation and loyalty during the past year.

For the Trustees,

LEWIS SPENCER MORRIS,

Chairman

April 25, 1939.